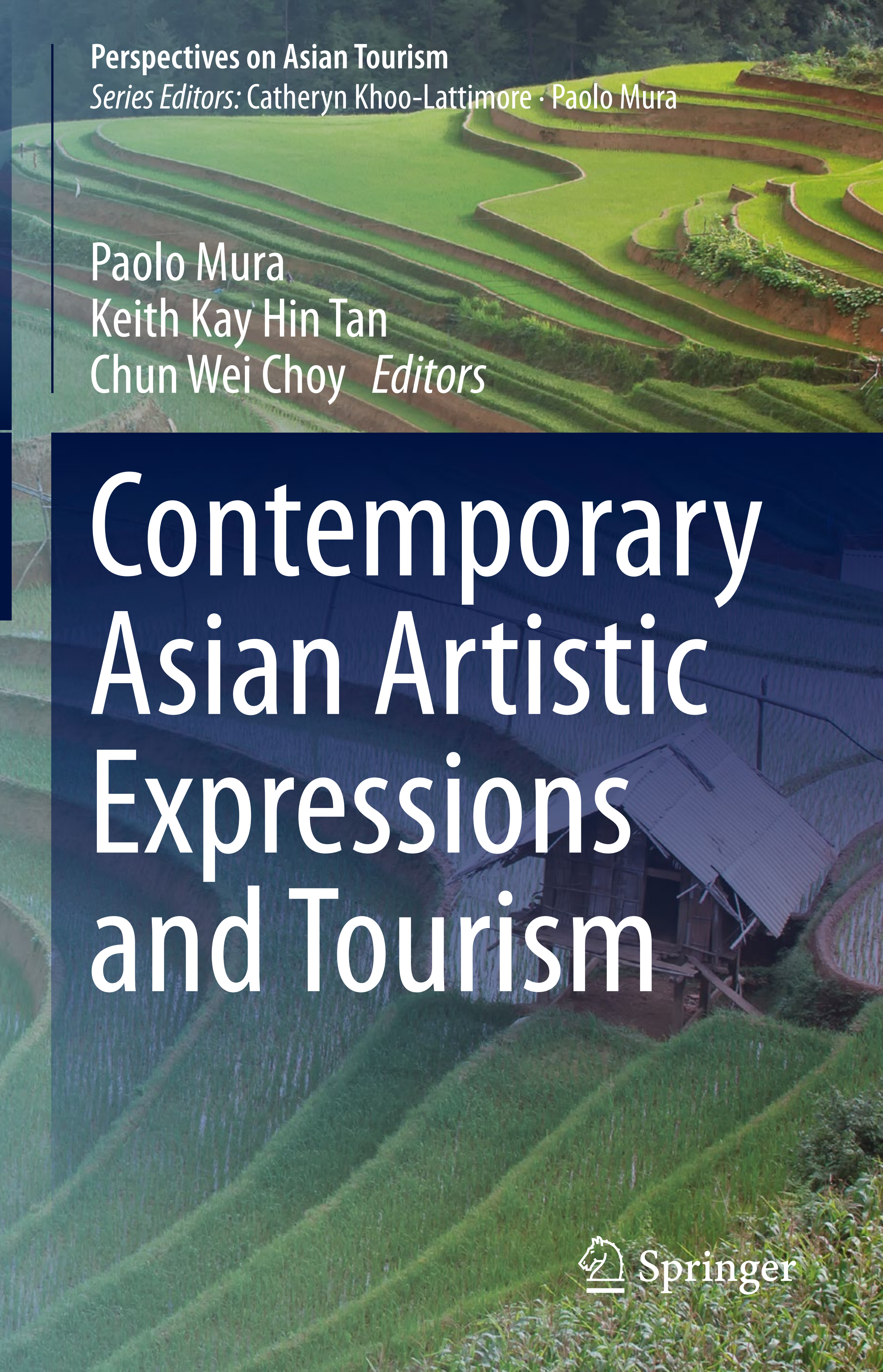

Perspectives on Asian Tourism

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Paolo Mura
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Contemporary Asian Artistic Expressions and Tourism

Springer

Perspectives on Asian Tourism

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Contemporary Asian Artistic Expressions and Tourism

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Chapter 1
Contemporary Asian Artistic Expressions and Tourism – An Introduction

Paolo Mura, Keith Kay Hin Tan, and Chun Wei Choy

Abstract This introductory chapter presents and critically discusses the various themes underpinning this book. Firstly, it provides an examination of the notion of 'contemporary art', including an overview of the existing definitions and debates in the current literature. Secondly, this chapter discusses the nexus between tourism and contemporary art by providing an overview of the past studies conducted on cultural and heritage tourism. In this section, the various themes underpinning the different parts of the literature on art tourism (e.g. identity, authenticity, commoditisation and capitalism) are considered. Thirdly, a discussion on the relationship between tourism and Asian contemporary art is presented, which also includes a part problematising and questioning terms like 'Asia' and 'Asian art'. Finally, an overview of the different chapters that constitute the backbone of this collection is offered alongside the four themes around which the book is structured.

Keywords Asian contemporary art · Art tourism · Heritage tourism · Cultural tourism · Asia

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This book explores the nexus between tourism/tourists and contemporary Asian artistic expressions (e.g. artists, objects, intangible artistic productions, digital manifestations, etc.) in Asian tourist spaces and the experiences they provide. It was conceived as an attempt to address issues and conceptual tensions surrounding important concepts and constructs which nevertheless attract debate from different quarters. Some of the more important of these include the terms 'contemporary art', 'tourism', and indeed, the appreciation of what it means to identify with Asia as both a tangible place and an intangible construct of identity. What is contemporary art and how is it different from other forms of post-classical design, such as modern art? How does contemporary art intersect with tourism in a post-modern society? Is there a phenomenon that can be called 'Asian contemporary art' and, if so, how does it differ from non-Asian contemporary art? These are some of the questions that propelled this book, which reflect the ongoing debates on contemporary art discussed in various arts disciplines.

Undoubtedly, forms and expressions of art have received considerable attention from tourism scholars. As we will discuss in the second part of this chapter, studies on cultural and heritage tourism, and their related conspicuous body of knowledge generated by tourism scholars, often involve considerations of arts. Yet, Franklin (2018) has recently emphasised the limitations of discussing 'art tourism' within the broader context of cultural/heritage tourism. As he pointed out, "a more dedicated research field is also needed to keep track of its rapid growth and development as a primary driver of regional and urban regeneration and for the much expanded exhibitionary complex it encompasses" (Franklin 2018; p. 399). In other words, the 'world' of arts surely intersects other 'planets', such as heritage and culture; yet, it is also a distinct realm with its own aspects, approaches and disciplines.

This is particularly true if specific forms of art tourism, such as contemporary art tourism, are referred to. In this regard, the term 'contemporary' has been employed in studies exploring art tourism (Klien 2010; Checa-Gismero 2018; Scott 2010). Moreover, studies that have discussed the nature and meanings of Asian contemporary art and its links to Asian tourism/tourists have appeared in the literature (Du Cros and Jolliffe 2011; Ooi 2003, 2005; Jenkins and Romanos 2014). However, with few exceptions (see Origet du Cluzeau 2017; Perera 2019), the diverse and multifaceted meanings and implications of 'contemporary art' and 'Asian contemporary art' have been rarely contemplated by tourism scholars.

This introductory chapter presents and critically discusses the various themes underpinning this book. Firstly, it provides an examination of the notion of 'contemporary art', including an overview of the existing definitions and debates in current literature. We believe this to be particularly significant as it links the current discussions surrounding art disciplines to the meanings of 'contemporary' and 'contemporaneity' as they relate to tourism scholars. Secondly, this chapter discusses the nexus between tourism and contemporary art by providing an overview of the past studies conducted on cultural and heritage tourism. In this section, the various themes underpinning the different parts of the literature on art tourism (e.g. identity, authenticity, commoditisation and capitalism) are considered. Thirdly, a discussion on the relationship between tourism and Asian contemporary art is presented, which also includes a part problematising and questioning terms like ‘Asia’ and ‘Asian art’. Finally, an overview of the different chapters that constitute the backbone of this collection is offered alongside the four themes around which the book is structured.

1.1 What Is Contemporary Art?

Contemporary art represents a complex and fragmented phenomenon as it encompasses traditional artistic expressions (e.g. painting, sculpture, etc.), new digital and non-digital productions (e.g. online art, digital sounds, visual art performances, digital manipulations, installation art, etc.) and artists belonging to diverse movements and schools of thought (e.g. pop art, *arte povera*, street art, conceptual art, among others) (Origet du Cluzeau 2017). In general, contemporary arts are defined as forms of expression that encapsulate “new fields of creation, that take into account what our civilisations have accumulated; they renew the forms of artistic expression and push forward the concept” (Millet 2008; p. 9). Contemporary artworks can assume multiple shapes, forms and manifestations: from Marina Abramović’s (2010) performance entitled “The Artist is Present” to Damien Hirst’s installation art entitled “The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living” (1991); from Sam Taylor-Johnson’s film “A Little Death” (2002) to Banksy’s street art and “urban interventions”. Importantly, within the realm of contemporary art, “innovation is more important than aesthetics and beauty: the important element is the message” (Origet du Cluzeau 2017; p. 32). From this perspective, expressions of contemporary art often act as forms of provocative criticism of (post) modern life.

Danto and Goehr (1997) argue that the concept of ‘contemporary art’ began to emerge into consciousness in the mid-1970s, after a period generally referred to as ‘modern art’, which flourished approximately between the 1880s and the 1960s. However, they also warn readers on the difficulty to anchor definitions of contemporary art to historical timelines. This line of thought is echoed by other scholars and artists, who rejected essentialist definitions of ‘contemporary’ based on historical periods or styles. Heinich (2014, p. 34), for example, points out that contemporary art is not merely a period in the history of art but an aesthetic category or new paradigm in which “what is required is to transgress common sense boundaries”. From her perspective, transgressing the boundaries of art assumes two main meanings. The first refers to a shift from the usual criteria employed to define and assess artwork. In this regard, Heinich (2014, p. 35, emphasis in the original) maintains that “the most important transgression of the usual criteria defining art is that the artwork is no longer exclusively the actual object proposed by the artist, but rather, the *whole set of operations, actions, interpretations, etc. brought about by this proposition*”. As such, the discourse produced about the object proposed by the artist, alongside the context in which the object of art is produced, becomes more important than the object itself. The second meaning of transgression discussed by Heinich (2014) refers to the use of new materials and modes of presenting art. In this respect, the development of the internet and digital technologies play an important role in the way art is produced and displayed to an audience. More specifically, in contemporary art the use of digital platforms facilitates the audience's multisensorial stimulation, which complements and goes beyond the merely 'visual' experiences of classical and modern art. Importantly, Heinich (2014) emphasised the important role of mediations in making these transgressions and contemporary art approachable and understandable to the public.

According to Smith (2009b, p. 2), forms of contemporary art represent "an interrogation into the ontology of the present, one that asks: What it is to exist in the conditions of contemporaneity?". He argues that 'contemporaneity' is shaped by three social forces, namely globalization, inequity among individuals and groups, and an infoscape accelerating the speed and complexity of communication of information. Although these forces partly existed during the time of modernity, they emerged evidently since the end of the 1980s. As such, the term 'contemporary' cannot be equated to 'modern' as it assumes new complex meanings. These meanings incorporate notions of what is 'immediate', 'contemporaneous' and 'cotemporal'. Contemporary art is 'immediate' because it is current, a product of the issues, tensions and breakthroughs of the same moment of which it is experienced. It is 'contemporaneous' as it is art that is being produced at the same time as other objects/phenomena/forms of art. It is also 'cotemporal' because it is art that is happening/existing in a specific time, in a particular way of being with time that is different from other ways of being with time (Smith 2009b).

Smith (2009b) also identifies three streams of art production/artists that constitute contemporary art. The first includes forms of art characterized by "retro-sensationalism" (e.g. artists like Damien Hirst – one of the members of the 'Young British Artists' – and Takashi Murakami – who conceptualized the "Superflat" theory), "remodernism" (embodied by figures like Richard Serra and Jeff Wall) and "spectacularism". These forms of art embody the aesthetic of globalization. The second stream refers to forms of art that, in the aftermath of a postcolonial turn propelled by the end of colonialism in the second half of the twentieth century, is "shaped by local, national, anticolonial, independent, anti-globalization values" (Smith 2009b; p. 7). Finally, the third stream involves groups of younger artists interested in investigating "the changing nature of time, place, media, and mood today" (Smith 2009b; p. 8) through small-scale making.

An interesting debate adding complexity to the notion of contemporary art concerns the role of art in post-modern capitalist societies. While traditional ideas of art as an expression of freedom have been ubiquitous in discussions surrounding classical and modern arts, Stallabrass (2004, p. 4–5) argues that in contemporary society "it is possible to see free trade and free art not as opposing terms but rather as forming respectively a dominant system and its supplement". In other words, in contemporary society, forms of art, capitalist flows and market commodities often overlap. In this system, Stallabrass (2004) argues, contemporary artefacts are produced, consumed and traded as forms of commercial commodities shaped and regulated by capitalist forces. Likewise, contemporary artists often become pop celebrities worshipped by the masses. To reify his argument, Stallabrass (2004) contends that museums of contemporary art, biennales and art events in general are produced and organized around commercial ideologies that aspire to attract more consumers to the art scene for revenue purposes. This discussion is particularly relevant within the context of tourism, a social phenomenon that, as discussed in the following paragraph, has often been criticized for its role in commoditizing art for tourist-capitalist consumption.

1.2 Art and Tourism in Contemporaneity

The nexus between art and tourism has been explored in the literature from different angles and perspectives (Franklin 2018; Graburn 1976, 1984; Hughes 2000; Hume 2013; Rakić and Lester 2013; Tribe 2008), which mirror different understandings and definitions of art and art tourism. Most of the discussions concerning the relationship between art and tourism have appeared in collections focusing on cultural tourism and heritage tourism (Boniface and Fowler 2002; McKercher and Du Cros 2002; Richards 2001; Smith 2009a; Smith and Robinson 2006). This is not surprising as art, culture and heritage are intertwined concepts (Hughes 2000; Richards 2001). Some authors, such as Littrell (1997) and Williams (1958), regard culture as a wide concept that includes a social group's system of values and beliefs as well as its patterns of behaviour, ways of life, and material production (e.g. artefacts, crafts). Drawing upon this notion of culture, Richards (2001) claims that:

> …cultural tourism therefore covers not just the consumption of the cultural products of the past, but also of contemporary culture or the 'way of life' of a people or region. Cultural tourism can therefore be seen as covering both 'heritage tourism' (related to artefacts of the past) and 'arts tourism' (related to contemporary cultural production) (p. 7).

However, Hughes (Hughes 2000) argues that attempts to mark clear boundaries between cultural tourism, heritage tourism and arts tourism are often a matter of positionality. Indeed, a visit to a museum or an art gallery could include experiences in which art, heritage and culture overlap. Moreover, an increased interest in creativity, creative industries and creative economies within the field of tourism (Bonink and Hitters 2001; Richards 2011; Waitt and Gibson 2009) has brought to the fore the intersections and porous boundaries between high/elite arts, commercial popular art and entertainment in the tourist experience. The intent of expanding the scope and audience of art has also been propelled by a postmodern drive contemplating "democratic and pluralist participation in the institutions and practices of culture" (Smith 2009a; p. 6). In this regard, previously accepted distinctions between 'fine' arts and pop culture within the realm of cultural and heritage tourism have been questioned or abandoned by tourism scholars (Hughes 2000; Wheeller 2009).

Recently, Franklin (2018; p. 399–400) has defined 'art tourism' as "any activity that involves travel to see art and would include those people who travel very specifically to see art somewhere else as well as those who often or occasionally include visits to see art among other activities during tours, holidays or other trips away from home". More specifically, he emphasises the need to distinguish art tourism from cultural tourism as "at present, art tourism is currently obscured under cultural tourism's voluminous bounds – which are as inappropriate as they are unwieldy and overloaded" (Franklin 2018; p. 399). According to this line of thought, as a rather heterogenous category including diverse experiences and motivations, cultural tourism represents a rather broad frame to understand the specificity of experiences of art tourism. In this regard, Franklin (2018) draws upon Stylianou-Lambert (2011), who contends that visitors to art museums may not be necessarily driven by the desire to learn about other cultures, an aspect often regarded as a primary motive for tourists engaging in cultural tourism. As such, many art tourists may not qualify as cultural tourists.

Going beyond definitional issues, one of the aspects that has been highly debated in the literature concerns the meanings and significance of tourist art, including souvenirs. Graburn (1976, p. 3) argues that artefacts produced in the 'Fourth World' can be categorized based on the intended audience (e.g. functional traditional art produced by a cultural group for internal use or commercial art created for external groups) and the traditional aesthetic and formal criteria employed (e.g. the use of processes and materials traditionally used within the cultural group or the use of other groups' traditions). Importantly, he contends, the interplay between art's audiences and aesthetic forms/functionalities is continuously shaped over time by different social forces, including cultural contact, acculturation and commercial/tourist demand/consumption (Graburn 1976). In this scenario, tourist art may incapsulate – to different degrees – both traditional aesthetic forms/techniques (according to artisans' expertise and knowledge) and less traditional production criteria (according to tourists' desires and commercial needs) (Scott 2010). Although this raises questions concerning tourist art's authenticity and commoditisation (see Cohen 1988; MacCannell 1976), Hume (2013, p. 2) contends that "rather than being destroyed, […] the aim of the souvenir artefact is altered and it now communicates to and coheres the ephemeral community of tourists, and provides a path of integration between guest and guest, host and host, guest and host, or tourist and destination".

Tourist art has also been investigated by tourism scholars and social scientists in relation to its power to shape individual and collective identities. Adams (2006) explored the nexus between artistic productions (e.g. artistic objects and their related narratives), identities (and their possible multiple representations) and tourism among the members of some local communities in Tana Toraja, Indonesia. More specifically, by focusing on those locals whose lives have been affected by the raise of tourism (the "tourates", a term she borrows from Causey 2003), she emphasizes the role of tourism and Toraja tourist art in shaping, renegotiating and representing social and cultural identities within and outside the community (Adams 2006).

Besides studies on tourism and art in general, there has been growing interest in exploring the relationship between tourism and contemporary art. It has been argued that contemporary art propels spatial mobilities (including tourist mobilities) more than precedent forms of art as it is often created, displayed or encouraged by local authorities not only in traditional art hubs, such as museums, but also in non-traditional art spaces, such as formerly abandoned industrial areas or non-touristic city neighbourhoods (Heinich 2014; Origet du Cluzeau 2017). As such, forms of contemporary art (and events based on contemporary art) may become pull factors for tourists and residents to visit both rural and urban areas. Perera (2019), for example, points out that in Madrid forms of contemporary urban art, such as graffiti and street art, are included in tourism development plans and policy documents as strategies to attract tourists to different neighbourhoods of the city.

Origet du Cluzeau (2017) segments contemporary art tourists into different groups based on their involvement into (and appreciation of) the art scene. These are great amateurs and collectors (for whom contemporary art represents the core motivational drive for visiting a destination); fair amateurs (who conceive contemporary art as one of the main reasons behind the choice of a destination); eclectics (travellers who would visit a museum of contemporary art as a part of their holiday experience); and onlookers (who may encounter and appreciate forms of contemporary art accidentally during their holiday experiences) (Origet du Cluzeau 2017).

Some commentators have argued that experiences and spaces of contemporary art are often conceived as attempts to satisfy, reiterate or produce (mostly Western) tourists' fantasies about authentic experiences and local ways of living. In this regard, by referring to the '*Bienal de La Habana'* organised in Cuba since 1984, Checa-Gismero (2018, p. 314) argues that "the nation's cultural industries, mirroring the current official tourism agenda, interpret tourists' fantasies and responds to them via the discursive elements, material objects, and spatial arrangements of the Bienal exhibition". As such, spaces in which contemporary art is displayed to international tourists are often contested sites of power and struggle in which perceptions of authenticity are constantly (re)negotiated, (re)shaped and (re)invented. However, Scott (2010) points out that contemporary art's process of commoditisation (mainly to accommodate tourist consumption) should not be perceived necessarily as a negative phenomenon. Indeed, commoditised contemporary art is characterised by hybrid objects and expressions of art that encapsulate new cultural meanings and profound dialogical relationships between artists and tourists. Moreover, in discussing whether and how aspects of tourist commercialisation affect Balinese artists' well-being, Jenkins and Romanos (2014, p. 304) have pointed out that "Balinese artists have for centuries blurred fine and commercial arts, local and global influences, and traditional and modern forms in response to global markets and travelers. Much of this blending has contributed to well-being".

1.3 Contemporary Asian Artistic Expressions and Tourism

Discussions concerning tourism and contemporary art in Asia cannot transcend the complexity of meanings attached to the terms 'Asia' and 'Asian art'. 'Asia' is a problematic concept both from a geographical and socio-cultural point of view. Geographically, the physical boundaries of what constitutes Asia are fluid and encompass a mosaic of different cultures, traditions and nation-states (Mura and

Khoo-Lattimore 2018). From a socio-cultural perspective, Said's (1978) groundbreaking – and highly contested – analysis in *Orientalism* emphasises how the 'Orient'/East has been politically, culturally and linguistically constructed (and objectified) as the 'other' by Western writers. Likewise, Ang and Stratton (1995, p. 67) have reiterated the idea that "both "East" and "West" are imaginary entities constructed through a mutual symbolic mirroring in a battle of overlapping, interested Self/Other representations". Drawing upon this line of thought, 'Asia' and 'Asianness' are often referred to in the literature as oversimplified and homogeneous concepts (Yang and Mura 2016).

The use of the term 'Asia' itself seems to reinforce socially constructed binary concepts (e.g. East/West; Asia/West; global/local) rather than pave the way for more hybrid and less dichotomous approaches to knowledge and identities. In this regard, by critiquing decolonizing calls for alternative discourses in tourism studies, Zhang (2018, p.132), a Chinese scholar who has lived in New Zealand and Sweden, invites us to "recognize the contaminated diversity each of us embodies". With regard to assumed Asian/non-Asian differences, she asks the following question: "In the end, are we really so different from one another?" (Zhang 2018; p. 132).

The debates surrounding the concept of 'Asia' make the notion of 'contemporary Asian art' equally problematic. Undoubtedly, multiple historical and socio-cultural forces have contributed to shape Asian culture in general and Asian art in particular. Among them, colonialism and its postcolonial legacies represent some of the most important ones. In this regard, Clarke (2002, p. 239) points out that Asian contemporary art tends to be accommodated in "pre-existing Western frames of understanding", which tend to simplify or stereotype Asia/Asians and their related artistic productions. However, Turner (2005) points out that contemporary Asian art cannot be solely framed and understood based on an 'Euro-American paradigm'. Rather, "the histories of particular countries, as well as contemporary political and social changes within those countries, have had a tremendous influence on the development of art practice" (Turner 2005; p. 2–3). More specifically, (post)colonialist forces need to be understood within a context in which universalist and globalizing forces (mostly intensified by the development of information and communication technologies) intersect with historical events (and unique local reactions to globalization) specific to each nation/region of Asia. As such, Asian contemporary expressions of art often embody and mirror the ongoing tensions between global and local socio-cultural forces and flows.

Within this scenario, tourism is one of the social forces that has contributed to produce, shape and reinvent both Asia and Asian contemporary art. There are abundant examples in the existing literature that point to tourism as one of the agents actively (re)constructing or reinforcing (often stereotypical) discourses of 'culture', 'heritage' and 'tradition' in Asia. Moreover, there are also studies focusing on Asian contemporary art and tourism. Despite this, the term 'contemporary' is often employed by tourism scholars unproblematically and unquestioningly within discussions concerning tourism and Asian art. In some instances, the terms 'modern art' and 'contemporary art' are used interchangeably or without explanations of the meanings attached to these different notions. In-depth and complex debates surrounding the nature, meanings and implications of ‘contemporary art’ discussed by art historians and artists (as presented at the beginning of this chapter) have not previously appeared in the tourism literature.

1.4 Structure of the Book

The paucity of studies and lack of debates specifically focusing on contemporary Asian artistic expressions in tourism constitute the rationale for this book. Based on a desire (and need) to propel new understandings of contemporary art and tourism in Asia, contributing authors from the Indo-Pacific and beyond executed chapters relating to art, tourism, contemporaneity and Asia which have been compiled into this volume. Reflecting their multi-faceted origins and aspects, meanings associated with terms like ‘Asia’ and ‘contemporary art’ in the different chapters are, by necessity, multiple and even conflicting, reflecting the great diversity of thought and artistic opinion in and about one of the most heterogenous areas of the world. It is through these different viewpoints that they fulfil the various definitions of contemporary art discussed in the first part of this chapter. The book is divided into four main parts, which together reflect the four main themes of this compendium:

Part I. Contemporary art, tourism and place making

Chapter 2: Ambassador Yōkai: Facilitating non-Japanese visitors in learning Japanese culture through Japanese folklore in Anime (*Sze Yin Chee*)

Chapter 3: ‘Academic Tourism’ and art: Student submissions as a means of capturing meaning at Pulai Village, Kelantan *(Keith Kay Hin Tan, Sze Ee LEE and Chun Wei Choy)*

Chapter 4: Beneath the paintwork: The street art of Sibu, Sarawak *(Ian Aik-Soon Ng)*

By examining the contribution of art and artists to place-making and identity, Part I looks into the relatively under-researched area of contemporary sources of identity and heritage. It shows how the dividing line between artists and tourists can sometimes be blurred because of the highly accessible nature of contemporary art. It also explains the importance of art and popular visual culture as a catalyst to visitor understanding of otherwise mysterious cultural practices which nevertheless serve as important anchors of identity in a variety of destinations.

Part II. Contemporary Asian art, identities, communities and tourism

Chapter 5: Revisiting ‘Singapore’ on tour at the Venice Biennale (*Desmond Wee)*

Chapter 6: Art intervention in a community context: The meaning, approaches and reflection as inspiration for creative tourism experience (*Chiamei Hsia)*

Chapter 7: The survival of cultural patterns in Malaysia’s contemporary visual landscape (*Sherry Fresia Blankenship and Keith Kay Hin Tan)*

Expanding from Part I’s discourse about art as a place-maker, Part II examines the living and sometimes casual use of art in the everyday lives of different communities. The chapters focus on issues to do with re-visiting the idea of national identity, the contribution of art towards creative tourism experiences as well as the survival of cultural patters which can best be observed through casual tourism. By examining art and identity from a 'top-down' as well as 'bottom-up' point of view, this part of the book points to how Asian societies sometimes produce, preserve or display art as a by-product of daily life, which nevertheless become part of the 'tourist gaze' (Urry 1990) when curated, experienced or casually observed by visitors either directly by contact with art and its by-products in various towns and cities, or otherwise indirectly, via exhibitions explaining a national identity to diverse visitors in a third-country biennale situation.

Part III. Contemporary Asian art and tourist objects

Chapter 8: Motorbike helmet art as a contemporary design form for crafting tourism souvenirs of Thailand (*Aristeidis Gkoumas, Miyoung Seo and Federico D'Orazio)*

Chapter 9: Merging batik and stained glass: Creating contemporary Asian art from traditional craft objects (*Keith Kay Hin Tan and Chun Wei Choy*)

Chapter 10: What do I get? Punk objects as meaningful and valuable souvenirs (*Kok Leong Yuen and Paolo Mura)*

The important contribution of contemporary artistic objects and souvenirs to the tourist experience is discussed in Part III. The chapters examine souvenirs from the production as well as consumption angle, and deal with objects that are not traditionally considered souvenirs, as well as the merger of traditional craft processes from different regions to produce contemporary forms of art which, via the targeted use of technology offer a more sustainable future for both art and craft production. By also examining souvenirs from elements of society sometimes viewed as 'marginal' or even undesirable, this section reflects the post-modern nature of much contemporary Asian art that is seldom discussed in tourism literature, but which is nevertheless important to appreciate the contribution of the urban working class of Asia in particular in creating objects that they themselves desire, which in turn also attracts touristic interest.

Part IV. Contemporary Asian art and multisensorial tourist experiences

Chapter 11: Digital art and virtual tourism mobility: A critical discussion *(Rokhshad Tavakoli and Sarah N.R. Wijesinghe)*

Chapter 12: Contemporary Malaysian pâtisserie: Tales of Asian creativity confined by Western traditions *(Kai-Sean Lee)*

Chapter 13: Multisensory restaurants, art and tourism – Case study of Ultraviolet by Paul Pairet *(Anne-Claire Yemsi-Paillissé)*

The final section acknowledges the pervasive influence of technology in every aspect of contemporary life. In particular, it examines the hitherto unlikely combination of technology, art and *haute-cuisine*, as well as how the importance of food has elevated the gastronomic experience into an art form in certain parts of Asia. Part IV opens the door for future research in an area of tourism studies that is still in its relative infancy, and examines gastro-tourism from a new visual angle. It links food to a multi-sensory tourism experience whose importance may grow in tandem with the increasing wealth of Asia's residents and its visitors in the twenty-first century.

1.5 Chapter Conclusion

This book is a compilation of a variety of qualitative studies examining contemporary Asian artistic expressions and their relationship to tourism across many different countries. Written by contributors from across Asia as well as from the West, it represents an unconventional tour across different neighborhoods, communities and nations which are all linked by the production, consumption or appreciation of artistic products or their derivatives by or for tourists and other visitors. It points to the growing importance of studies about Asia's present and future, which will help to complement the many studies about Asia's important history and heritage which together represent the touristic landscape of this very important region of the world.

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Part I

Contemporary Art, Tourism and Place Making

Chapter 2
Ambassador *Yōkai*: Facilitating Non-Japanese Visitors in Learning Japanese Culture Through Japanese Folklore in *Anime*

S. Y. Chee

Abstract The popularity of Japanese animation (a.k.a *anime*) has grown exponentially outside Japan over the past few decades despite being made primarily for Japanese viewers. This growth has garnered an increased awareness and interest in Japanese culture among scholars on the topic, particularly on the medium's history or impact on non-Japanese viewers, who would be drawn to visit Japan. Notably, Japanese *anime* feature *yōkai,* or supernatural beings, which were drawn from Japan's rich folkloric heritage and adapted to reflect Japanese society's changing thoughts and feelings. This author conducted a study to investigate if *yōkai anime* could make the implicit aspects of Japanese culture, such as worldview and beliefs, more accessible to non-Japanese viewers who were interested in visiting Japan. To do so, this study applied the phenomenological method alongside the Cultural Iceberg Analogy theoretical framework to analyze the responses of a focus group of non-Japanese audience to a *yōkai anime* clip. All focus group participants could connect the three different levels (Surface, Intermediate and Deep) of Japanese culture in the selected *anime* by connecting the *anime's yōkai*-based visual cues with their pre-existing knowledge of Japanese culture. The study has also found that the participants further deepened their understanding of Deep Japanese cultural aspects through shared analysis and discourse on the *anime,* concluding that the consumption of *anime* adaptations of *yōkai* folktales fostered deeper understanding of Japanese culture amongst non-Japanese viewers.

Keywords Intercultural communication · Folklore · Animation · Anime · Yōkai · Bakeneko

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2.1 Introduction

Japan is well known and well-loved for her popular culture exports such as the animated cartoons or *anime*, comics or *manga,* television dramas and video games (Allen and Sakamoto 2014). This has led the Japanese government to form policies and efforts to bolster Japan's contents tourism, in which Japanese entertainment media, culture and lifestyle are commodified to promote Japan's attractiveness to non-Japanese audiences. Japan's contents tourism would then raise Japan's soft power by garnering international goodwill and support for Japan and drive international tourists to visit the nation. In short, the more non-Japanese viewers learn about Japanese culture, the more attractive they will find Japan, and the more likely they will visit the nation (Iwabuchi 2015).

Japan's contents tourism ability to instill a deeper appreciation of Japan's culture among non-Japanese audiences is echoed by *anime* historian, Susan Napier (2001). Napier (2001) posited that avid non-Japanese *anime* viewers were able to learn about Japan's culture through repeated viewings of *anime*. However, Napier's claim was formed from observations on the development on *anime* amongst North American viewers and not by empirical research.

Napier's claim has led this author to undertake an exploratory study regarding the ability of *anime* viewers to connect the superficial to deeper aspects of Japanese culture in an *anime* episode that prominently featured an adaptation of a *yōkai* folktale. To understand folktales on *yōkai* (Japan's supernatural beings), one requires a knowledge of Japan's customs and beliefs. Therefore, this author conducted this pilot study to investigate if non-Japanese audiences are able to learn more about Japanese culture by viewing an *anime* episode featuring an adaptation of a *yōkai* folktale. If continued exposure to *anime* can help non-Japanese viewers learn about Japanese culture, then exposure to a deeply entrenched aspect of Japanese culture such as *yōkai* folktales in *anime* would improve the non-Japanese viewers' understanding about deeper aspects of Japanese culture such as their worldviews and beliefs.

This study asks the following research questions: (i) Does the selected Japanese *yōkai anime* contain cues to the multilevel aspects of Japanese culture? (ii) Are these cues into Japanese culture visually represented in the selected *yōkai anime*? (iii) Can the non-Japanese viewers pick up on these Japanese cultural cues? (iv) Can the non-Japanese viewers relate the relevant Japanese cultural aspects behind the selected *yōkai anime's* cultural cues?

To answer these research questions, the author firstly conducted a phenomenological study by analyzing an episode of the *Ayakashi: Samurai Horror Tales anime* episode and identified visual cues that denoted Surface elements of Japanese culture (i.e. traditional attire, marriage rituals, etc.) to the Intermediate elements (i.e. the significance of traditional attire and rituals) and to their deeper elements (i.e. worldview and philosophies) as prescribed by the Cultural Iceberg analogy (Hall 1976 as cited by Ting-Toomey and Chung 2012). Then, the author conducted a focus group interview with non-Japanese participants recruited through convenience sampling.

These participants were all Malaysians who had direct or indirect contact with Japanese culture. They were asked to view the selected *yōkai anime* together and then discuss how the *anime* was relevant to Japanese culture. The participants' discussions were transcribed and then analyzed using the Cultural Iceberg Analogy theoretical framework to ascertain it they could identify and expand on the Japanese Surface, Intermediate and Deep cultural cues.

2.1.1 Anime, Yokai *and Japanese Society*

Black-and-white children-centric Western animation were broadcast in Japan as early as 1909. By 1915, Japanese studios began to create their own original animations, which were referred to as *anime*. Notable Japanese studios such as Toei Animation shifted away from making live-action films that featured live actors to producing full-length feature animated films for the cinema (Napier 2001).

By the 1960s, feature-length animated films declined in popularity, while serial animation formats were favoured, following the rise of television. During this period, anime became an established industry in Japan that differed from the animation of the West by adopting more adult-oriented and complex storylines. Anime also was closely tied to the Japanese comic or *manga* industry, with landmark titles like *Astro Bo*y, created by the Godfather of *manga*, Osamu Tezuka. This was adapted for television in 1963 (Napier 2001).

By late 1970s to 1980s, *anime* television series were again adapted to feature-length animated films referred to as Original Video Animations (OVAs). One such example was the 1973's *Space Battleship Yamato* which was adapted from a popular television *anime* series of the same name. During the 1990s, *anime* matured into a medium that carried intellectually sophisticated discourse such as *Ghost in the Shell* and Studio Ghibli's *Princess Mononoke* that explored themes of humanity and existentialism (Napier 2001).

Over the past three decades, the popularity of *anime* had grown exponentially outside Japan. The *anime* market that was worth 26.1 billion yen (approximately USD 240 million) in 1985 grew to 213.5 billion yen (approximately USD 1.97 billion) in 2002 (MDRI 2014; JETRO 2005) and 2.09 trillion yen (approximately USD 19.3 billion) in 2016 (Association of Japanese Animation 2017). In 2002, the *anime Spirited Away* (under the leadership of director Hayao Miyazaki) earned 30.4 billion yen that year, the first Asian animated film to be awarded the prestigious Academy Award. (Foster 2015a; JETRO 2005, 2013). The total market value of *anime* and *anime*-related goods was 2.09 trillion yen (approximately USD 19.3 billion) in 2016 (Association of Japanese Animation 2017).

Anime series are also extensively influential as they have garnered fans, from the masses to leading Hollywood directors. John Lasseter, founder of the acclaimed animation studio Pixar, was often quoted as saying that he drew inspiration from Studio Ghibli's *anime,* directed by Hayao Miyazaki (Breszki 2014). The Wachowski siblings, directors of the *Matrix* trilogy films, also claimed that they were influenced by Mamoru Oishii's seminal *anime*, *Ghost in the Shell* (Oreck 2001).

This may sound quite counter intuitive, as scholars have found that *anime* creators and even leading industry figures like Hayao Miyazaki and Mamoru Oishii, have produced *anime* primarily for Japanese viewership (Breszki 2014; Ruh 2004). Yet, *anime* has taken root in North America, Europe and Asia and has led to the rise of the global *otaku* (Japanese popular culture super-fans) subculture and the proliferation of *anime*-related merchandise and services that cater to these fans (Allen and Sakamoto eds. 2014).

Studies into *anime* have increased proportionately to this medium's popularity. However, past scholars focused on *anime*'s historical and technical development in foreign markets and the impact it has on its audiences in those countries (Allen and Sakamoto eds. Allen and Sakamoto 2014; Denison 2011; Mckevitt 2010; Otzmagin 2008; Allison 2006; Napier 2001). Research into *anime* audience reception tend to focus on the subculture of *fansubbers* (fans who subtitle *anime* into other languages and distribute these versions through unlicensed channels), *otaku* (superfans of *anime* or Japanese pop culture) culture (Denison 2011; Mckevitt 2010), *anime* viewing habits (Pelliteri 2008 as cited by Yamato 2014; Lee 2011), and fan consumption of *anime* content, such as merchandise and services (Otzmagin 2008; Allison 2006; Napier 2001). Very few studies have so far focused on the intercultural communication aspect of *anime* except for a small body of studies that examined *anime's* role in teaching the Japanese language or culture in a classroom (Fukunaga 2006).

Additionally, *anime* creators liberally borrow folktales of *yōkai* from sources such as *Hyakumonogatari Kaidankai,* (A Gathering of One Hundred Supernatural Tales) from Japan's Edo Period (1600–1868 AD). The Japanese view these folktales of *yōkai* as a treasured part of their cultural heritage, which has led to their continued adaptation in present day popular entertainment media and even government mascots. (Reider 2003, 2005, 2010; Foster 2009).

Folklore scholars such as Reider (2003, 2005, 2010) and Foster (2009) have gleaned insights into different aspects of Japanese culture from studying the *yōkai*, even shedding light into Japanese beliefs, philosophies and worldviews. Reider (2003), in her studies into the *oni* (ogre) found that this *yōkai* was originally a form of *kami* (deity) in Japan's Shinto and Buddhist beliefs that was used to explain phenomena such as lightning and natural disasters. In current times, the *yōkai* has been made gentler and cuter, which Reider (2003) credits to Japan's post World War II socioeconomic growth. Reider (2003) points out the characteristics of Lum in the 1980s *Urusei Yatsura anime* series. The character kept the *oni* features and behaviour but was made more relatable as a humorous and sexy Japanese housewife, living in modern Japan with modern problems such as keeping her sex life in balance with her husband's work life. Therefore, the evolution of the *yōkai* in Japanese media reflected the changes in Japanese society (Reider 2003, 2005, 2010; Foster 2009, 2015b).

In parallel with these fields, there has also been a rise in studies on "Japanese contents tourism", a term that encapsulates the Japanese government's efforts to direct fans of Japanese popular media in supporting real-world tourism to Japan. This emerging field of academic inquiry into Japan's contents tourism has developed following the Japanese government's "Cool Japan" policies that fund, develop and promote Japanese brands and contents industries; such as *anime*, *manga*, video games, television dramas, films, literature, fashion, food, and lifestyle. "Cool Japan" is intended to engender positive reception to Japanese values and culture among international audiences and bolster Japan's soft power, which would in turn, foster Japan's attractiveness and a deeper appreciation for the nation's culture amongst non-Japanese viewers and tourists alike. Such international support and goodwill would make it easier for Japan to further her political goals and boost her economic growth. In summary, Japan's popular contents or media franchises aimed to teach non-Japanese consumers about Japanese culture and propagate their attractiveness so that more of Japan's cultural contents would be marketed (Iwabuchi 2015).

Current Japanese contents tourism papers are case studies which have focused on the motivations of the youth segments of international tourists for visiting Japan (Agyeiwaah et al. 2018; Tung et al. 2017; Okamoto 2015). There are also studies on the influence of Japanese media franchises to boost tourism in areas of interest related to these media franchises, such as visitors' reception of the Studio Ghibli's museum (Denison 2010) and the revitalization of historical locations in Japan which resulted in the tourism-related *Sengoku Basara* video games which are based on Japan's Warring States Period (Yamamura 2018). These papers, however, do not analyze the processes that take place prior to the visitors' deciding to visit Japan, or particularly, on how popular media teach non-Japanese viewers or visitors about Japanese culture.

2.1.2 **Yōkai Anime** *as a Carrier of Japanese Cultural Cues*

To rationalize *anime*'s popular culture phenomenon, scholars Lee (2011) and Pelliteri (2008, as cited in by Yamato 2014) found that non-Japanese audiences actively sought and consumed Japanese media for their inherent "Japanese-ness." This coincides with the Napier's (2001) statement that the more non-Japanese audiences viewed *anime*, the more Japanese cultural references they were able to identify and relate to. One can infer from these findings, that anime may act as a carrier of Japanese cultural cues. However, Napier's (2001) claim was made without empirical evidence but was based solely on observations.

Culture is defined as a learned system of codes that are shared by members within that community. These codes inform an individual of his decisions – the behavior and ideals appropriate within that culture and which are not. Cultures use numerous means to disseminate these codes, though individuals would learn these codes of conduct primarily through direct interactions with their peer groups such as their families, friends, colleagues and business associates. They also may pick up cultural cues through channels of folklore and the mass media (Ting – Toomey and Chung 2012).

Folklore can be defined as the stories, such as myths and legends, that a people or the folks, tell themselves in order to make sense of the world around them. Therefore, folktales are shaped by a culture. Folktales are only passed on to future generations if members within a culture deemed them useful in shaping the next generation's values and behavior. Hence, a culture is shaped by its folklore, and folklore is evolved according to the changing needs of its people (Dundes and Bronner 2007; Koven 2003; Bascom 1954).

Likewise, mass media also functions to shape and be shaped by the culture that produces it. The commercial nature of films and television motivates creators to make their productions appealing to as wide a spectrum of the audience as possible. Thus, these productions must match a culture's tastes and beliefs (Tubbs and Moss 2008). Intercultural scholars have found film to be an effective tool to learn about the culture that has produced it, for the very deliberate and staged manner in which films are written, directed, performed and edited can highlight a culture's more ambiguous aspects such as its norms and values (Cardon 2010; Mallinger and Rossy 2003).

The combination of folklore and animation is particularly effective in delivering these cultural cues. Eminent folklore scholar, Stith Thompson, posited that Disney's adaptation of European folktales was successful because "the cinema, especially the animated cartoon, is the perhaps the most successful of all mediums for the presentation of the fairytale. Creatures of the folk imagination can be constructed with ease and given lifelike qualities" (1976, p. 461, as cited by Koven 2003, p. 177). This is elaborated upon by Hoffer (1981, p.3, cited by Wells 1998, p.5), who states that "If it is the live action film's job to present physical reality, animated film is concerned with metaphysical reality – not how things look, but what they mean".

Thus, accessing channels that contain cultural codes on a culture's view of itself, particularly one that has perpetuated since a culture's early history, would prove to be a valuable source of knowledge for visitors that come from outside that culture. This is demonstrated by the differences in international reception of two animated films, *Pompoko* and *Spirited Away*, which were produced by renowned Japanese animation studio, Studio Ghibli. Both *Pompoko* and *Spirted Away* are *anime* movies that centered on *yōkai* or the supernatural. *Pompoko* was a hit in Japan when it was released in 1997 but was poorly received internationally. North American film critics considered *Pompoko* unwatchable and too bizarre as these film critics were unable to understand the Deep cultural cues in the *yōkai* folklore found in *Pompoko*. *Spirited Away*, on the other hand, which was loosely adapted from *yōkai* folklore, made the film more accessible for audiences outside Japan. It was so well received that it became the first foreign animated film to win an Academy Award in 2002 (Foster 2015a).

2.2 Research Methodology and Design

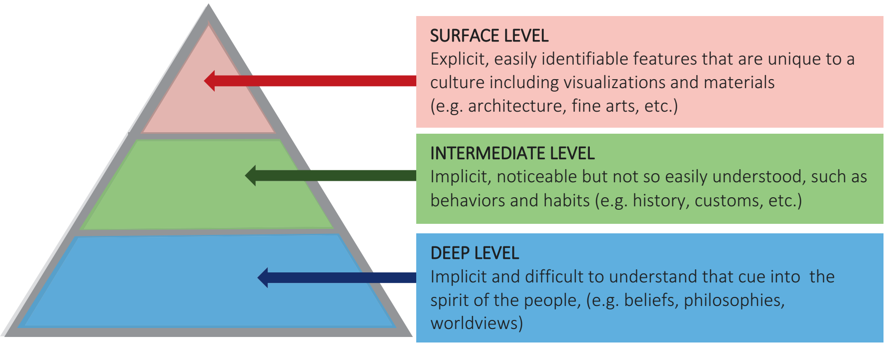
2.2.1 Research Methodology

To answer this study's research questions, the author employed a qualitative research method, specifically the phenomenological method, to discern if the non-Japanese audience can pick up Japanese cultural cues from *yōkai anime*. Phenomenology allows the author to study how a group of individuals who have shared similar lived experiences are able to form meanings in order to understand a specific phenomenon (Creswell 2007). This will, thus, enable this author to analyze the process that this study's non-Japanese focus group participants go through to learn about Japanese culture from the selected *yōkai anime*.

2.2.2 Theoretical Framework

Cross-cultural and intercultural communication scholars do not share similar definitions for cultural cues. Therefore, this study adopts Edward T. Hall's Cultural Iceberg model (Hall 1976, as cited by Ting-Toomey and Chung 2012), as described in Fig. 2.1. This is a heuristic theoretical framework which can be applied to analyze a culture according to its explicit or obvious cultural cues, and its implicit or hidden ones.

The Cultural Iceberg Analogy was first formulated by Hall (1976, as cited by Ting-Toomey and Chung 2012), an American anthropologist and cross-cultural scholar. The Cultural Iceberg was created to aid American diplomats, who come from a low context society that does not have rigid, unspoken social rules, to better understand high context societies such as the Japanese who have many rigid and unspoken social rules.



SURFACE LEVEL
Explicit, easily identifiable features that are unique to a culture including visualizations and materials
(e.g. architecture, fine arts, etc.)

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL
Implicit, noticeable but not so easily understood, such as behaviors and habits (e.g. history, customs, etc.)

DEEP LEVEL
Implicit and difficult to understand that cue into the spirit of the people, (e.g. beliefs, philosophies, worldviews)

Fig. 2.1 Cultural iceberg analogy and corresponding cultural cues

Hall (1976, as cited by Ting-Toomey and Chung 2012) likened culture to an iceberg, for the Surface level aspects are easily discernable to people outside that culture. However, it is more difficult to identify or understand Intermediate and Deep levels that make up the culture's core values which inform the uniqueness of its Surface level aspects. Intercultural or cross-cultural scholars need to understand these core values to better understand and, therefore, better communicate with members of that culture.

The Surface Level is for explicit cues that clearly differentiate a culture from another at the external level such as mannerisms, dress code and dining customs. The Intermediate and Deep Levels are designated for cultural cues that are implicit or internal to the culture and not easily understood by those outside the said culture. A culture's behavior and habits at the Intermediate level, such as its wedding rites, may be easily recognizable, but the significance of these acts may only be understood by those within that culture. A culture's Deep Level aspects encompass that culture's core beliefs such as its worldviews, philosophies and values. To understand a culture's Deep aspects would require dedicated learning on the part of the researcher, for even members within the culture might not be aware of them (Lachner et al. 2015; Lei et al. 2015; Schmiedel et al. 2015; Hall, 1976, as cited by Ting-Toomey and Chung 2012).

2.2.3 Research Design

This study was conducted in two stages. In the first stage of the study, episode ten of *Ayakashi: Japanese Horror Classics* was coded deductively using the phenomenological method and the Cultural Iceberg Analogy. This *anime* episode was chosen for its clear focus on the *Bakeneko yōkai,* a large cat spirit that can shapeshift (Foster 2015b). Also, the cues found in this selected *anime* episode could be tied to literature on *Bakeneko,* particularly that of the *Nabeshima Bakeneko Incident*, a famous legend that tells of a *Bakeneko* avenging a stricken mother whose son was wrongfully executed by his lord or *daimyo* (Foster 2015b).

The second stage of this study investigated the non-Japanese participants' ability to identify visual cues in the *anime* and connect these cues to the relevant multi-level aspects of Japanese culture according to the author's coding. A total of five participants were recruited via convenience sampling. These participants were Malaysian colleagues and post-graduate students in a Mass Communication faculty in a leading university in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. They would either have direct contact with Japanese culture through work relations or travel or indirect contact through media centered on Japanese culture or history presented in the English language.

These participants were then required to complete a questionnaire that assessed their *anime* viewing habits and their exposure to Japanese culture. All five participants recorded themselves to have become familiar with Japanese culture either through direct contact or indirect contact with Japanese culture. Three out of the five participants identified themselves as avid *anime* viewers.

This focus group was capped at five participants as this was deemed an ideal number of participants for a non-commercial research topic (Krueger and Casey 2015). Also, not all the participants were equally familiar with the deeper aspects of Japanese culture such as the *yōkai* subject matter. Therefore, a smaller focus group would encourage more open and fluid discussion amongst the participants and aid the less experienced or less knowledgeable participants to keep up with discussions (Krueger and Casey 2015). In addition, these participants were familiar with one another, and had expressed great enthusiasm for travel to Japan and for Japanese culture, which the author inferred would yield richer findings as they were comfortable with each other and are open to participate actively in discussions.

Their discussions would be recorded and analyzed in accordance with stage one's codes. This stage would employ an iteration between inductive and deductive coding methods. Table 2.1 below contains an overview of these participants' attributes.

The participants were gathered in a classroom at a university campus in Selangor, Malaysia on ninth July 2015 and they watched the same anime episode that the author had coded earlier, which is episode ten of *Ayakashi: Japanese Horror Classics* (Dir. Nakamura 2006). For the sake of expediency, the participants watched only the later half of the selected *yōkai anime* episode (00:12:20–00:20:42) that revealed the *bakeneko* and established its motivations to take vengeance on the samurai clan that had harmed its mistress, an innocent peasant woman.

The focus group's discussion lasted for 41 minutes and were recorded with an audio recorder, which was then transcribed. The author then coded the cultural cues in the discussion and compared them to the cultural cues coded in Table 2.2. The similarities and differences between these two transcripts were then analyzed. The themes and patterns of these cultural cues would form the findings as stated in the following paragraphs.

Table 2.1 This study's focus group participants' profiles

Participant	Gender	Age	Exposure to Japanese culture	*Anime*-viewing habits
P1	Male	Late 30s	Has indirect contact with Japanese culture through various media (English novels and movies on Japanese culture).	Has watched *anime* since he was 6 years old
P2	Female	Mid 20s	Has direct contact with Japanese culture through travel and homestay in Japan.	Does not watch *anime*
P3	Male	Mid 20s	Has direct contact with Japanese culture through business trips and contacts in Japan.	Has watched *anime* since he was 13
P4	Female	Mid 20s	Familiar with Japanese culture and language through local organizations that focus on Japanese culture.	Has watched *anime* since she was 9 years old
P5	Female	Mid 50s	Has indirect contact with Japanese culture through various media (English novels and movies on Japanese culture).	Does not watch *anime*

Table 2.2 Ambassador Yōkai's stage one's inductive coding categories, sub-categories and coding definition in the selected yōkai anime episode

Category	Sub-category	Coding definition
Surface level	Shinto – Cat Spirit	Visuals through the *Bakeneko*'s Character Design or Character Movement (portrayed through the character's body on screen or through a camera's point-of-view) that cue into the appearance of a Cat spirit and/or use of supernatural powers. These indicate Shinto's animistic belief that even animals and inanimate objects have a spirit or a sentience.
Intermediate level	Shinto – duality of appearance	Visuals through the *Bakeneko*'s Character Design or Character Movement that denote the dual nature of the *Bakeneko*'s appearance – from corporeal to incorporeal, from a singular entity to a multitude of cats.
Deep level	Shinto – Duality of *aratama-nigatama*	Visuals through the *Bakeneko*'s Character Design or Character Movement that contain cues to be affected by human agency to either become *aratama,* malevolent or *nigatama*, benevolent through supernatural powers.
Deep level	Buddhism – Karma	Visuals through the *Bakeneko*'s Character Design or Character Movement (portrayed through the character's body on screen or through a camera's point-of-view) that cue into the *Bakeneko*'s motive or drive to punish the guilty and avenge the wronged. This indicates the Buddhist concepts of Karma or Vengeance as Karmic Retribution.

2.3 Findings

The following subchapters will discuss the findings for this study's two stages. The first stage focuses on findings from the author's deductive coding of the selected *anime's* multi-level cultural cues. This is followed by the findings from stage 2, as outlined in Table 2.3. These focus on the five participants' discourse and their understanding of the Surface, Intermediate and Deep cultural cues from the selected *anime*.

2.3.1 Stage One Findings in Response to Author's Deductive Coding of the Selected Anime

The following Table 2.2 outlines the cultural codes that the author had coded into the *anime's* transcript. The author had focused on the adaptation of the *Bakeneko yōkai* and the *Nabeshima Bakeneko* Incident folktale. Viewers would require a clear understanding of the Surface, Intermediate and Deep Japanese cultural cues to understand the cultural context and meanings of the *yōkai*. Their understanding would demonstrate through the author's facilitation of the *anime* how non-Japanese viewers, can learn the significance of implicit cues of Japanese culture through *yōkai* folklore. Also, the codes generated at this stage would inform how the Surface,

Table 2.3 Ambassador yōkai's stage two's deductive coding categories, sub-categories and coding definition, revealing the emergent Japanese cultural cues in the selected yōkai anime episode

Cultural Iceberg model level (total counts)	Emergent cultural themes	Emergent cultural codes
Surface Level Cultural Cues (84 counts) Visual cues audience picked up from the *anime* that reflect explicit cues into Japanese culture	**Human Realm (34 counts)** Cues related to the man-made realm	**Architecture (5 counts)** References made to the setting or backgrounds in the *anime* that are tied to unique Japanese features such as the paper screens (*shoji*) and wooden frames
		Attire (5 counts) Traditional Japanese costumes donned by *anime* characters
		Facial Markings (7 counts) Patterns found on the faces of the *anime* characters
		Symbolic Objects (17 counts) The props or tools present in the *anime*
	Spirit Realm (50 counts) Cues related to the supernatural realm	**Supernatural (30 counts)** Abnormal features, behavior, emotions or events that indicate obvious but general supernatural activity
		Cat Spirit (20 counts) Supernatural activity that specifically indicate the cat features and behavior of the *Bakeneko yōkai*
Intermediate Level Cultural Cues (26 counts) Visual cues audience picked up from the *anime* that reflect implicit cues into Japanese behaviour and habits	**History (3 counts)** Japan's historical periods, important events and social features.	**History (3 counts)** Japan's historical periods, important events and social features.
	Custom (23 counts) The combined cultural cue that reflect the meaningful and shared behaviour displayed by the Japanese people at individual or social levels in the *anime*	**Ritual (8 counts)** Ceremonies that the Japanese practice at key events of their lives. Usually involve a series of complicated and meaningful gestures, with or without tools or at specific times or spaces
		Practice (7 counts) Behavior that the Japanese practice collectively on ~~at~~ a communal or social scale
		Symbolic Gesture (8 counts) Deliberate or unconscious behavior that carry intention. Simpler and shorter than rituals

(continued)

Table 2.3 (continued)

Cultural Iceberg model level (total counts)	Emergent cultural themes	Emergent cultural codes
Deep Level Cultural Cues (21 counts) Visual cues that participants discussed that cued into implicit Japanese cultural practices of belief, philosophy and worldview which are followed by the majority of members in that culture, which are sometimes even taken for granted	**Belief (17 counts)** The combined cultural cues that reflect the system of beliefs found in Japanese culture (Animistic Belief, Superstition and Karma)	**Animistic Belief (7 counts)** The reverence the Japanese people have for nature, animals and objects
		Superstition (7 counts) The widely held albeit sometimes irrational belief that people have to ward off evil or invite good fortune.
		Karma (3 counts) The Buddhist concept and belief that accumulated good and bad deeds determine one's fate.
	Worldview (3 counts) Deeply rooted concepts that inform the Japanese people of their place in the world through (Social Structure)	**Social Structure (3 counts)** The roles, behavior and status symbols that indicate an individual's place in society
	Philosophy (1 count) Values that inform the way the Japanese people lead their lives (Bushido)	**Bushido (1 count)** The unique code of conduct that is central for the samurai, Japan's historical elite social class

Intermediate and Deep cultural cues would emerge and connect to one aother in stage 2.

This author finds in stage one, the *anime's* Surface cultural cues leads to Intermediate and Deep cultural cues. For example, the *anime* had adapted the *Nabeshima* folktale's *bakeneko* and represented it as a large and menacing cat spirit that has shape-shifting abilities. This *anime's bakeneko* uses its supernatural shape-shifting powers to seek revenge on behalf of its mistress, an innocent woman, who was kidnapped and enslaved by a high-ranking *samurai* lord. This anime's portrayal of the *bakeneko* as cat in spirit form denotes the Japanese Surface level cultural cue of the Shinto belief that animals have spirits. Its ability to change from corporeal to incorporeal forms is tied to the Intermediate level cultural cue of Shinto belief in the *yōkai's* inherent ability to shape-shift.

These two cultural levels lead to the Deep level cultural cues of the Shinto concept that *yōkai* could be made *aratama* (malevolent) or *nigatama* (benevolent) through the actions of humans. In this case, the *bakeneko* is portrayed as benevolent in avenging its wronged mistress but becomes a malevolent force towards her oppressors. In addition, these cues also denote the Buddhist concept of Karma, which is used in the *anime's* narrative to justify the *bakeneko's* vengeance and its actions in punishing the samurai lord who had harmed an innocent woman. The author finds that these cultural cues can be connected vertically as Surface cultural cues would lead to Intermediate ones, which would then lead to Deep level cultural cues.

2.3.2 Stage Two Findings in Response to Focus Group's Reponses

As stipulated in the Cultural Iceberg theory, the non-Japanese participants was able to discern this *anime's* Surface level cues easily. This *anime's* Intermediate and Deep cultural cues was not easily discernable to participants who were not familiar with Japanese culture. As seen in this study's stage one, the author was able to identify and code the Intermediate and Deep cultural cues after examining the literature pertinent to Japanese Shinto and Buddhist beliefs alongside *yōkai* folklore. These codes would now form the foundation for stage two of this study, in which a focus group of non-Japanese viewers would be tasked to analyze the *anime* and discuss its relevance to Japanese culture. The emergent cultural cues, codes and themes from the participants' discussions are as presented in Table 2.3.

Based on Table 2.3, the author found that the participants were able to identify the Surface, Intermediate and Deep cultural cues such as Cat Spirit and Karma and as the author found that the participants were able to identify the Surface, Intermediate and Deep cultural cues through cues such as Cat Spirit, Karma and other cues listed in Table 2.2. Apart from that, the participants were also able to expand on these cues, such as the Surface level cues of Japanese architecture and attire, the Intermediate cultural cues of Japanese history and customs, and the deeper cultural cues such as those related to Japanese social structure and philosophy like Bushido. These cultural cues that the participants have discussed are referred to as emergent cultural codes and themes in Table 2.3. Although the participants could not precisely identify Shinto beliefs such as *aratama* and *nigatama*, they could identify Shinto's animistic nature.

The participants could connect two or more cultural levels vertically (Surface to Intermediate to Deep cultural cues; Surface to Intermediate or Surface to Deep). They were also able to connect the cues horizontally (e.g. Surface to Surface; Intermediate to Intermediate). As shown in Table 2.4, the three avid *anime* viewers, participants P1, P3 and P4 achieved the highest vertical connections of cultural cues despite the differences in their exposure to Japanese culture. P2, the participant with direct exposure with Japanese culture, but did not watch much *anime*, could only connect Surface and Intermediate cultural cues. Therefore, this supports Napier's (2001) claim that the avid *anime* viewer can understand deeper cultural aspects of Japanese culture through *anime* that feature Deep cultural aspects, that would be difficult for non-Japanese to understand, such as Japan's folklore about *yōkai*.

The following sections will showcase the manner these participants had successfully identified and connected the multilevel cultural cues of the Cultural Iceberg Analogy through their observations and discussions during the focus group session.

Table 2.4 Frequency of multilevel cultural cues in this study's focus group's transcripts

Participant	Exposure to Japanese culture	Avid anime viewer	Surface level cues (counts in transcript)	Intermediate level cues (counts in transcript)	Deep level cues (counts in transcript)	Vertical connections (counts of connected surface, intermediate and deep cultural cues in transcript)	Horizontal connections (counts of connected surface, intermediate or deep cultural cues in transcript)
P1	Indirect	Yes	36	4	5	3	1
P2	Direct	No	7	2	0	1	1
P3	Direct	Yes	9	6	4	3	0
P4	Direct	Yes	13	13	6	6	3
P5	Indirect	No	23	6	4	2	4

Firstly, this study will elaborate on the horizontal connections that participants were able to form (i.e., Surface to Surface, Intermediate to Intermediate), followed by a section on the vertical connections (i.e., Surface to Intermediate to Deep). The focus group's ability to form horizontal connections demonstrates the ways *anime* was able to broaden their understanding of Japanese culture; whereas the vertical connections show that the *anime* had facilitated their deepened understanding of Japanese culture's implicit cues.

2.4 Horizontal Connection Through Two Levels of Cultural Cues

2.4.1 Supernatural and Cat Spirit Cues

This theme is the most prevalent Surface cultural cue in stage two's coding. The participants could easily connect the supernatural events and the *yōkai's* cat features and behavior that the creators have prominently featured in this episode. The Cat Spirit code accounted for 20 counts, while Supernatural accounted for 30 counts. These were most easily discerned through prominent visual cues such as fanged teeth, claw-like fingernails and other cat motifs with the strange sounds, human possession and other such supernatural motifs used throughout the *anime*.

Participant P1, the avid *anime* viewer with indirect contact with Japanese culture, had learned of the significance of symbolic objects in relation to Japanese culture such as shown in Table 2.5. In the scene discussed in Table 2.5, participants P1 and P2 said that they first learned of the *Bakeneko yōkai* appearance when the *anime's* protagonist, the medicine seller character, had used shamanistic-like tools called *tenbins* (weighted scales with bells) to detect the movement of the invisible *Bakeneko yōkai* character.

Table 2.5 Sample of participant's discourse on supernatural and Cat Spirit cues

Turn	Participant	Discussion	Cultural Code	Cultural Theme
97	P2	It's like the bell…the bell is ringing (pointing at *anime* screen that is being projected)	Symbolic Object	Human Realm
98	P1	Lower to the ground…that you can track its movements without actually seeing it. Yeah	Cat Spirit	Spirit Realm

Table 2.6 Sample of participant's discourse on Human Realms and Spirit Realms through Symbolic Object cues

Turn	Participant	Discussion	Cultural code	Cultural theme
99	P4	I am quite surprised that in this particular episode they actually showed that, no matter how many talismans (1), or no matter how many whatever ways the person tried to stop the *Bakeneko (2)* from entering the rooms, he can just break through and break through and break through and even managed to, uh, like, enter people who are still in the room.	(1) Symbolic Object (2) Cat Spirit	(1) Human Realm (2) Spirit Realm

The Surface cultural cues mentioned above proved to be a rich starting ground for all the participants to make vertical connections to Intermediate and Deep Level Cues (Refer to Stage Two Findings, Table 2.9). Participants could connect Surface levels cues horizontally, such as the Spirit Realm cues to Human Realm cues of Symbolic Object in T99 (Table 2.6).

2.4.2 Animistic Belief in Old Japan

Participant P4 mentioned that she saw similarities between her readings on samurai culture present in the *anime* and her studies into Japan's previous historical periods. This allowed her to connect the Intermediate Level cues of History to Deep Level cues of Worldview (Social Structure) and Belief (Animistic Belief) as seen in Table 2.7.

Table 2.7 Sample of participant's discourse on intermediate level cues of history to deep level animistic belief cues

Turn	Participant	Discussion	Cultural code	Cultural theme
148	P4	I think, maybe, this *anime*, uh, whoever wrote it, was trying to portray a time where Japan is, well, still quite old. I mean, this is definitely not the Meiji era, I think it will be the…	History	History
149	P4	Yeah. Maybe even before the Tokugawa era, because, very obviously, they had *samurais* and *daimyos* and whatever not.	Social Structure	Worldview
150	P4	So, at that time, they were more animistic, they believed in spirits more (1), because, obviously now Japan has changed ever since the Meiji era (2).	(1) Animistic Belief (2) History	(1) Belief (2) History

2.5 Vertical Connections Through Three Levels of Cultural Cues

2.5.1 Reverence of Animals in Modern Japanese Culture

Very early into the focus group session (T58 – T66), participant P3 connected Surface to Deep Level cues. He had direct contact with Japanese culture through working with the Japanese and the *anime* reminded him of their cultural beliefs and practices. However, P3 was able to do so as the participant had travelled to Japan for work and had seen T60 firsthand (Refer to Table 2.8).

That said, participant P1, who did not have direct contact with Japanese culture, was also able to connect Surface to Deep level cues by connecting his observations with the *anime* as well as practices shown in Western media. This indicates that, in the absence of direct contact with Japan's culture, P1 was able to learn about Japanese superstition by connecting it to similar beliefs outside Japanese culture and media as seen in Table 2.9.

2.5.2 Social Structure and Relationships Between Characters Through Attire and Architecture

Some of the participants connected all three levels of culture when they discussed the mother and daughter relationship between two characters in the selected *yōkai anime*. Their relationship was established in other episodes of the same *anime* series that the participants did not watch during their focus group session.

As shown in Table 2.10, participants P2 and P4 had correctly identified the relationships of the deceased girl's character and her mother through the mother

Table 2.8 Sample of participant's discourse connecting surface to deep level cultural cues

Turn	Participant	Discussion	Cultural code	Cultural theme
57	P3	The show reminded me of my time there. They tend to believe (1) all these spirits taking form of another…(2)	Animistic Belief Supernatural	Belief Spirit Realm
58	P3	…another object (1) and...You know what, their shopping malls there, they have places where your dogs and cats…where you can bring your dogs and cats to shopping malls (2). They have place for your dogs and cats to rest, to eat and drink at shopping malls.	Animistic Belief Practice	Belief Custom
59	P3	I mean, I go there quite often, and I got a shock la. Because, like, there's every station for your dogs and cats to drink.	Practice	Custom
60	P3	It portrays la, like, what Participant E says right, they think that Mount Fuji is like… some form of… uh…	Animistic Belief	Belief
61	P3	Yeah, sacred deity (1) or something like that. They always describe it… they always have been telling me they believe that spirits are everywhere. They are omnipotent, omnipresent (1). They have been telling me. They can take dog form…they can take form of other… (2)	(1) Animistic Belief (2) Supernatural	(1) Belief (2) Spirit Realm

Table 2.9 Sample of participant's discourse connecting surface to deep level cultural cues

Turn	Participant	Discussion	Cultural code	Cultural theme
187	P1	Ah, what about the salt thing? Because it looks like if it trespasses salt…	Symbolic Object	Human Realm
196	P1	They throw salt over their shoulder…	Ritual	Custom
198	P1	…because spirits cannot walk past salt. So, for me, I drew correlation because	Superstition	Belief
199	P1	Western supernatural (1) stories use salt as barrier (2) as well.	(1) Supernatural (2) Ritual	(1) Spirit Realm (2) Custom
203	P1	But I know, that, women believe that to keep evil spirits at bay (1), they will put it across (2)…	(1) Superstition (2) Ritual	(1) Belief (2) Custom
205	P1	…doorways or portals.	Ritual	Custom
207	P1	That is what I drew from here, except she (the character in the *anime*) threw a bucket of salt at it (the *bakeneko*).	Symbolic Object	Human Realm
209	P1	I know they tried to kill it with salt and all that…	Superstition	Belief

Table 2.10 Sample of participant's discourse connecting surface to intermediate and deep level cultural cues through attire and architecture cues

Turn	Participant	Discussion	Cultural code	Cultural theme
133	P1	Oh, because I would attribute things such as nurse maids, which is also common in Asian culture. I guess…she wasn't…	Social Structure	Worldview
134	P4	She was too richly dressed (1) to be the maid (2) of the house already…	(1) Attire	(1) Human Realm
			(2) Social Structure	(2) Worldview
140	P2	She is inside (1) the main room (2)	(1) Social Structure	(1) Worldview
			(2) Architecture	(2) Human Realm

Table 2.11 Sample of participant's discourse connecting surface to intermediate and deep level cultural cues through use of salt

Turn	Participant	Discussion	Cultural code	Cultural theme
265	P5	It has a taste of this salt!	Symbolic Object	Human Realm
266	P4	And then the cat's eyes from round became square	Cat Spirit	Spirit Realm
267	P5	The cat is going "Oh no!"	Superstition	Belief
268	P4	"It's too salty!" (laughs)	Superstition	Belief
269	P5	"Ow!" (laughs)	Superstition	Belief

character's costume which indicated her high social status to counter P1's inference that she was only a nurse maid, someone with a low rank in Japanese social structure. P2 supported P4's claim in T140 through the reference to Architecture, indicating the special status of the main room in the house which is reserved for important family members of a *samurai* clan. They had correctly inferred the higher social status of the mother character through her dressing and her location within the house.

2.5.3 Salt and Its Effect on Yōkai

As shown on Table 2.11, the participants were engaged in a lengthy discussion on salt and its use in the *anime*. This discussion yielded a very clear transference of cues through all three cultural levels. All participants drew on both the *anime*'s visual cues and subtitles to identify the salt in a pot that the maid character had thrown at the *Bakeneko yōkai and* had hurt the *Bakeneko badly*. Participants P4 and P5 built upon each other's remarks. It was clear that all participants understood that salt was used by the characters in the *anime* to ward off the *Bakeneko* because it is part of the superstitious beliefs that salt is a powerful symbol of purification in Shinto and among other cultures in the world.

2.6 Discussion

2.6.1 Limitations of the Study and Future Research Directions

This study was limited to an *anime* episode which was selected for its clear focus on the adaptation of the *Nabeshima Bakeneko* Incident folktale. This research design aided the author to clearly code the participant's anime viewing habits which helped them to identify the Surface, Intermediate and Deep level Japanese cultural cues and connect one level to another.

At the end of the study, the author finds that participants P3 and P4 who had direct contact with Japanese culture and had avid *anime* viewing habits, had the highest number of vertical connections of cultural cues in the *anime*. However, P1's ability to identify the highest number of surface level cues, has managed to match P3's vertical connections. This researcher is inferred to be tied to P1's avid *anime* viewing habits despite P1's indirect contact with Japanese culture, which is concurrent with Napier's (2001) statement (Refer to Literature Review, p. 5). Future research can be done and the findings can be strengthened by assigning two sets of focus groups. Those with indirect contact with Japanese culture can either watch numerous adaptations of the same folktale in different *anime* series and study the effects the folktale has on deepening their understanding of Japanese culture and their desire to visit Japan.

2.7 Conclusion

In stage one, the author could identify and code Surface, Intermediate and Deep cultural cues as shown in Table 2.1. Notably, the author had identified the *yōkai* character's design and role in the *Ayakashi anime's* narrative which reflected deep level Japanese Shinto beliefs such as a *yōkai's* ability to shift from being an *aratama* (malevolent) or *nigatama* (benevolent) agent depending on the interactions humans have with the *yōkai*.

In stage two, the focus group participants were able identify Surface to Deep cultural level cues found in the *anime* episode and connect the cues horizontally, such as Surface cues to other Surface level cues, such as the use of talismans. This was used by the *anime's* main character to defend himself against the *Bakeneko*. Thus, this confirms the use of a Human Realm tool, the talisman, that is unique in Japanese culture to interact with a Cat Spirit that is also unique in Japanese culture. Participants could also connect these cues vertically, such as connecting the Surface level cue of salt's ability to harm or repel supernatural beings to Deep level beliefs of such as the importance of purification rituals in Shinto.

As shown in Table 2.4, avid *anime* viewers with direct contact with Japanese culture, such as P3 and P4, had the highest counts of vertical connections. However, participant P1, who did not have any direct contact with Japanese culture, was still able to access the Deep cultural cues by being able to identify the highest number of Surface level cues. The high number of Surface level cues is inferred to have led him to make more Deep Level connections compared to those who were not avid *anime* watchers. Thus, this research concludes with the that higher exposure to *anime* could lead viewers to become more familiar with Japan's deeper cultural aspects.

As stated in this study's literature review, scholars studying Japanese popular culture have claimed that the uniqueness of Japanese media appealed to non-Japanese viewers (Pelliteri, 2008 as cited in Yamato 2014; Lee 2011) and that exposure to such media had deepened their understanding of Japanese culture (Napier 2001). The promotion of Japanese media industries by the efforts of the Japanese government can motivate non-Japanese viewers to visit Japan (Agyeiwaah et al. 2018; Yamamura 2018; Tung et al. 2017; Iwabuchi 2015; Okamoto 2015; Denison 2010).

Thus, this study adds to the fields of studies mentioned above that the commodification of deep Japanese cultural cues such as its worldviews and beliefs in *anime* featuring *yōkai* folklore has facilitated non-Japanese viewers to attain a deeper understanding of Japanese culture. Future scholarship on Japan's *anime* studies, Japanese contents tourism and intercultural communication could expand on this study's findings to ascertain if an optimal level of exposure to Japanese media or *anime* viewership is desirable for non-Japanese visitors to facilitate their understanding of Japanese culture which would in turn, strengthen these viewers' commitment to travel to Japan.

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Chapter 3
‘Academic Tourism’ and Art: Student Submissions as a Means of Capturing Meaning at Pulai Village, Kelantan

Keith Kay Hin Tan, Sze Ee Lee, and Chun Wei Choy

Abstract As more and more universities move away from traditional examinations as the primary tool for measuring student performance, artwork produced by students as a means of grade attainment in programmes outside the traditional scope of graphic and/or fine art courses are beginning to emerge worldwide. When students are tasked with capturing the essence of unique places on the cusp of tourism development via hand-drawn artwork, the resultant creations are both a by-product of academic tourism that arises from organised student field trips and also a potentially new, personalized and contemporary form of art that captures the spirit of emerging tourist destinations that would otherwise continue to languish outside the ‘tourist gaze’. This chapter describes how a contrasting, ‘students’ gaze’ captured the essence of a centuries-old former gold-mining village in rural Malaysia. Via artwork originally produced for academic submissions, it translates the contemporary narrative of a unique community into tangible form, showing that tourists can in fact create souvenirs to represent historically-significant communities, thus helping their identity evolve into heritage.

Keywords Academic tourism · Students’ gaze · Field trip · Identity · Heritage · Art · NARA document · Hakka · Kelantan

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3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the case of how student artwork submitted as part of an architectural design module captured meaning at Pulai Village in Malaysia's Kelantan state, ultimately allowing the conversion of the student art into souvenir objects as part of the village community's attempts to re-orientate its economy away from agriculture towards tourism. It identifies an emerging 'students' gaze' that can help sites with 'tourism potential energy' (Tan 2017) develop into actual tourist attractions, aided by student-produced souvenir objects as the ultimate outsiders' contribution to tourism development.

3.1.1 The Importance of Visual Imagery for Tourist Destinations

Travelers have long captured the essence of places they visit via images. Pictures, whether hand-drawn or photographed, are therefore vital in communicating the image of a destination to other travelers, and are often the critical factor in placing a destination firmly within the 'tourist gaze' (Urry 1990). As tourism itself is often said to be 'experience-based', symbolic images are therefore critical in building up expectations for a destination, with existing studies showing that visual images (especially those combined with some written text) are seldom neutral, instead communicating meanings "*beyond any initial intended messages*" (Small et al. 2008, p.19).

These images, as with so much else in the tourism industry, have been linked to the 'sign-posters' and 'gatekeepers' identified by Urry as so important in the creation and marketing of tourist destinations. While discussing the symbolic role of postcards in representing destination image, Milman (2011) identified tourism as particularly visual, dependent on pictorial media like brochures, postcards, travel guides and other, increasingly electronic forms of visual communication as a form of advertising for a tourist destination.

Milman's description of tourism's visual palette dovetails with the description of art by Morris (2013), who described artistic expression as "*making the extraordinary out of the ordinary – to entertain the brain*", at the same time describing science as "ma*king the simple out of the complicated – to understand our existence*" (p.12). Art produced under the social sciences umbrella is therefore of particular interest in capturing meaning in emerging tourist destinations. Particularly worthy of study are the works of amateur artists not intended for sale or display, or art produced by students solely for the purpose of grade-attainment in a non-art-based programme, which nevertheless demands the creation of artwork as a means of communicating meaning. This, indeed, has often been the case for students of architecture.

3.1.2 The Role of Art in Architectural Studies

Before the twenty-first century, architectural drawings across the world were dominated by hand-drawn plans, sections and elevations that communicated orthographic projections of buildings to quantity surveyors and builders for the purpose of costing and construction. These were often accompanied by detailed, hand-drawn perspectives of the building, which, together with the site model, served as the principal method to communicate the appearance of the final product to the client before the commencement of construction. This gives architecture a particularly art-based heritage, so much so that the turn-of-the-twentieth century 'arts and crafts movement' was as much a movement about architecture as it was about decorative art (Colquhoun 2002).

The advent of computer – aided – design (CAD) from the 1990s onwards, and more recent 'Building Information Management' (BIM) systems has, however, changed the way architecture is communicated, to the extent that it is no longer even necessary for architects to be able to draw anything substantial by hand, despite the expectations of many clients, especially at the 'outline proposal' or 'sketch design' stage (Chappell and Dunn 2016). Recognizing the need to maintain linkages to the historical spirit of architecture, however, many universities have chosen to sustain at least one or two modules, or submissions within modules, which encourage manual drawings and sketch-work as a means of communicating the *genius loci* of a site in a way that cannot be captured by either digital modelling or regular photography. By doing so, these universities inadvertently convert their students of architecture, for the brief time that they attend field-based site visits, into artists and academic tourists, whose impact on the destinations they visit can be quite profound.

Whereas Urry (1990) decried how the era of mass-communication was responsible for much cultural change, leading to what he described as 'post-tourist' behaviour with the resultant ability to attribute different meanings to touristic objects, his question whether "it is in fact possible to construct a postmodern tourist site around absolutely any object" (p. 102) was a premise which, in the realm of academic tourism, continues to be re-asked and re-answered throughout the world, with important consequences to many sites, especially those destinations on the margins of the regular 'tourist gaze'.

3.2 Field Trips and Academic Tourism

Most academic studies on field trips have focused on their effect on student learning, with some studies suggesting they provide little positive effect (Orion 1989, 1993), (Fuller et al. 2006), whilst other studies praise their potential for innovative and engaging learning, especially in socially diverse contexts (Boyle et al. 2007); (Castleden et al. 2013). Even if the 'jury' on the effectiveness of student field trips as a means of improving learning is therefore still to reach a conclusive decision, what can perhaps be agreed is that “narratives about place and identity have tremendous power to influence the meanings that students attach” (Elwood 2004, p. 55).

For sites which possess ‘tourism potential energy’ without active tourism interest, however, there exists a unique possibility for students, or any other pioneering visitor, to translate the narrative about place and identity into tourist objects that will themselves go on to influence the meanings that subsequent visitors will attach to the place in question. When such objects take the form of works of art, they challenge the idea that heritage producers and consumers cannot be the same type of people, showing instead that the same type of people *in different circumstances* can in fact be both the producers and consumers of heritage-related tourist objects.

This idea that tourism research focusing on students should treat them not only as data collectors and/or research participants but, indeed as consumers of touristic experiences and therefore tourists in their own right has the ability to broaden the scope of tourism research to create dialogues with a variety of other academic disciplines that involve field-trips as one of the set-piece items of their academic calendars.

3.3 Methodology

This study was conducted over a 4-week period, beginning with a field-trip involving 84 undergraduate students of architecture and 7 lecturers from a leading Malaysian University on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur who visited Pulai Village, Kelantan in September 2018 as part of a student project to design a ‘visitor interpretive centre’ for the village, whose history and gold-mining origins date from at least the 1700s (Carstens 1980). Pulai Village was chosen as a site for architectural study due to its age, remoteness and its unique identity as one of the only remaining gold-mining settlements in West Malaysia, and one made even more unique because of the inter-marriage between the village’s Hakka-Chinese population and the *orang asli* native peoples of the district, the latter themselves now a distinct animistic minority in a state whose population is dominated by Malay people professing the Muslim faith.

This inter-marriage between an originally immigrant community and a native population whose traditions revolve around the natural forest landscape, coupled with a low population density and a remote setting originally only accessible by river has preserved Pulai Village as a virtual time-capsule within an increasingly urbanized and industrialized Malaysia. The contrast between the lifestyle of the villagers and the mostly urban students who participated in the research was therefore also a study of contrasts in experience, identity and perception.

This series of contrasts was an ideal fit for a taught module whose outcomes emphasized poetics as well as the experiential qualities of space in architecture that are not easily captured by standard digital photography. As part of their analysis of the macro-site context, the students were therefore tasked with producing a series of drawings that would capture their personal interpretation of the village, which could be either realistic or abstract, as long as they were honest as well as immediate (i.e. not influenced by later internet searches). Students were allowed to decide on their own area of focus, although issues of materiality, memory and phenomenology were suggested.

The students' narrative and the work that some produced were eventually seen to be of an adequately high quality to be converted into postcards for sale by the village's newly-developed museum, thus creating a unique example of tourist-produced souvenirs. These add to the growing acceptance that postcards, having made the transition from inexpensive communication tool to collectible item, are now slowly emerging as a resource for academic research in their own right (Phillips 2000; Cleave 2014).

3.4 Interpreting Pulai Village

There is not yet a discernable tourist experience at Pulai Village. Some of this is due to the same remoteness that has protected its explicitly Taoist character in the context of, originally, rule by an Islamic Sultanate and now its survival within the most 'politically Islamic' state in the Malaysian federation. The lack of meaningful accommodation options in Pulai also means that the few visitors who do arrive stay in the nearby town of Gua Musang, itself a nascent eco-tourism destination built around large limestone caves.

With a population of fewer than a thousand residents occupying an 'old village' next to the Galas river and a 'new village' built closer to the community's centuries-old cemetery (see Fig. 3.1), Pulai Village is, nevertheless, more authentic than most other locations of a similar age in Malaysia if regarded thru the lens of the NARA Document on Authenticity, (ICOMOS 1994) with its stress on unbroken use rather than tangible originality. The continuous inhabitation of the village through several major changes in economic activity (from gold-mining to rice-farming to rubber-tapping and now to the beginnings of tourism) as well as several changes in political allegiance (including Siamese, Japanese, British and Malaysian) has, indeed, resulted in an old village with few really old buildings, with even the settlement's main *Shuiyuegong (Water Moon)* temple building mostly the result of an enthusiastic, 1984 reconstruction (Carstens 2007). This lack of originality, however, posed no barrier to Malaysia's tourism minister naming the temple (the name of which has several alternative spellings in the roman alphabet) as one of Kelantan state's top ten tourist attractions in 2009 (Khaw 2013)

The importance of oral, rather than tangible history to the heritage of Pulai Village is therefore paramount. Indeed, due to the education level in the village being generally low (Khaw 2013), story-telling has emerged as the residents' main method of sharing their experiences to outsiders. Legitimizing this history, however, carries its own risks, as memory has long been treated as a contentious historical source (Perks and Thomson 2006).

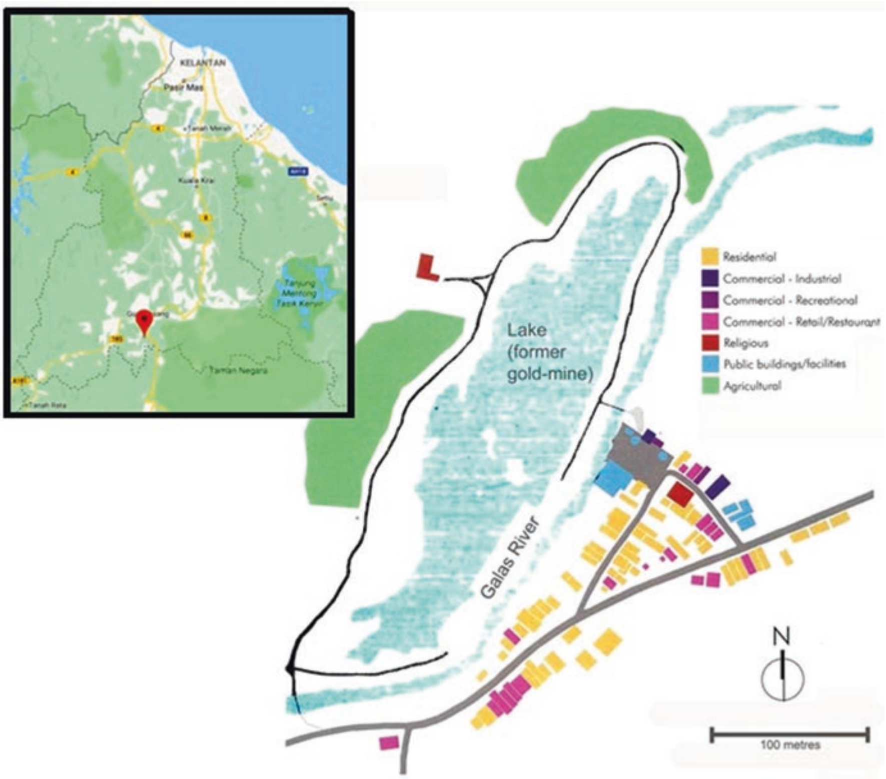
KELANTAN
Pasir Mas
Tanah Merah
Kuala Krai
Tanjung Mentong Tasik Kenyir
Taman Negara
Tanah Rata
Lake (former gold-mine)
Galas River
🟨 Residential
■ Commercial - Industrial
■ Commercial - Recreational
■ Commercial - Retail/Restaurant
🟥 Religious
■ Public buildings/facilities
🟩 Agricultural
N
100 metres

Fig. 3.1 Pulai Village site plan with insert showing location within Kelantan state

3.5 Challenges Faced in the Research

The issues of partiality and subjectivity relating to both the story-teller and the audience underpinned the challenges of using memory as a primary means of heritage transmission at Pulai Village. Its unique status as one of only a small handful of predominantly ethnic-Chinese settlements in Kelantan state gives it a special status that further skews stakeholder perceptions in a positive direction, increasing the settlement's perceived heritage value and importance because of geography alone.

The mixed-use of Mandarin, Chinese dialects, standard Malay and even Kelantanese amongst the villagers was an additional filter affecting the accurate transmission of oral histories from one generation to the next. This is further compounded by the fact that the dominant language of the surrounding area has shifted from Siamese/Thai to Kelantanese to standard Malay during the life-span of the village. Although within the village itself, generations of residents have managed to cling on to the Hakka dialect, there is now also a discernible shift towards Mandarin, especially amongst village youth. As mentioned by the president of the Pulai temple in his opening address to the student researchers, which was delivered in Mandarin:

"the history I can tell you about this village is the history I was told by my ancestors… if you think my story is fiction, it would therefore be my ancestor's fault."

3.6 Tangible Strategies

Recognizing the risk of depending solely on oral history, the president explained how the village council decided in 2017 to move forward with the construction of a museum to house the tangible heritage of the community. Given the fact that one of the most important roles of cultural heritage is in fact to form the distinct identity of a place (Groote and Haartsen 2008), it was clear that the village council hoped, via the creation of a museum, to use tourism as a vehicle to help preserve its heritage, as the previously mentioned ranking by Malaysia's tourism minister had not yet proven enough to ignite a tourism-upswing by itself. Funded by public donations to the temple committee, this museum, structurally complete in 2018, has already attracted donations and loans of historic artifacts from current as well as former village residents who subscribe to the idea that Pulai has a unique heritage worth celebrating.

As one of the first groups of visitors to gain access to the museum compound and the artefacts to be displayed, two of the authors for this chapter, who were also the module co-ordinators in charge of the student visit were given an unprecedented insight into the decision-making process behind the desire to create awareness about the heritage value of Pulai. Acknowledging that the creation of a museum would open up the main village square to tourism (and potentially, therefore, attach a greater commercial importance to it in the long-run), the village council earmarked the top level of the three-floor museum building for a twenty-bed boutique hotel, intentionally adding tourism to the economic mix of the village for the first time.

3.6.1 Creating a Tourist Destination

Whereas the long history of Pulai village can be argued to 'legitimize' its desire to be considered a heritage tourist village, the desire of community leaders to create new developments to facilitate urban renewal and economic growth often clashes with visions of living cultural heritage and continuity (Hitchcock et al. 2010b). Whereas Hitchcock *et al* further identified weaknesses in state-led tourism development initiatives in Southeast Asia due to their tendency to present ethnicity in an "*idealized manner that has little bearing on either modern twenty-first century reality or historical accuracy"* (p. 269), the community-driven initiative at Pulai Village identified domestic tourism in particular as a way to strengthen the economic standing of the community by connecting it to the wider community of ethnic-Chinese Malaysians in particular.

These domestic tourists would require no idealized reminder of their culture, but would instead, it was hoped, become partners in helping the tiny population of Pulai village sustain itself even as populations of other Southeast Asian villages shrink due to falling birth-rates and increased levels of rural-urban migration. Rather than being a threat to the village's cultural heritage, the community's heritage tourism plans were therefore welcomed by the vast majority of residents who regarded it as a useful link to the outside world, providing income, visitors and cultural meaning in the same way that the trade in physical goods used to provide sustenance until the later part of the twentieth century.

Although the creation and marketing of souvenirs is also acknowledged to be an important element in the 'making' of any significant tourist destination (Wilkins 2011), it is clear that genuine historical artefacts cannot be sold away for income without damaging the viability of any museum (effectively turning it into a shop or auction-site). Whereas souvenirs are often regarded as 'trivial', studies have also shown that, regardless of monetary cost, they are often amongst the most 'valued' of items procured during a vacation (Littrel 1990).

At Pulai, however, students as well as lecturers noted a clear lack of souvenir items of any sort relating to the village, leading some students in fact to take home rubber seeds from the settlement's rubber plantation as the most authentic souvenirs of their visit. The students' behaviour thus agreed with the premise of Hitchcock et al. (2010a) that "*for the tourist, the authenticity of the artifact is often linked to the perceived authenticity of the experience*" (p. 227). This unscripted action of the students thus confirmed their status as academic tourists, who sought out souvenirs as a tangible memento of their travel even for a visit lasting only 2 days which was loaded with project tasks. The lack of souvenir options was thus identified as an opportunity to convert student photographs into artwork and the latter into pioneering souvenirs for the village, in the form of limited-edition postcards.

3.7 From Photography to Art

Photography is a generic tourist practice, and has long been associated with the visual paradigm of the 'tourist gaze'. The importance of photography is such that Xie and Garner (2009) referred to it as a vital medium with the ability to "*appropriate and decontextualize time and space… among the best souvenirs of recreation and travel.*" (p. 178).

Photography is becoming, however, also increasingly 'impersonal' because the ubiquity of digital cameras has allowed the number of images captured by the average tourist to rise exponentially. In a group travel setting, this also means that large numbers of travelers will inadvertently end up with the same or at least very similar pictures, all taken at the corresponding 'best time' as recommended by the tourist sign-posters or gatekeepers (Urry 1990).

Art derived from photographs is therefore a way to re-capture the personalized quality that existed in early, black and white photography, when the number of travelers was much lower and film cameras were rare and expensive enough to mean that duplicates of the same image were only very seldom encountered, even when comparing pictures of the same place taken at roughly the same time.

Photography was such an expensive activity in colonial Malaysia before the First World War that many of the commissioned photographs of buildings from that period in fact performed the dual task of private keepsake as well as souvenir postcard (Wong 2011). The latter was also a means of paying for the cost of the camera or film, and, in the case of more elaborate buildings, raising funds for the owners of the building being photographed. This study re-created this idea over a century later by converting amateur art into postcards, showing that contemporary art, as a personal medium can help to support the heritage of even very old communities, especially if those communities have few existing or reliable sources of documentary evidence to do the same.

For the students who visited Pulai in September 2018, the majority of the art produced was drawn one, 2 or even 3 weeks after the end of their field trip and their return to Kuala Lumpur. As non-art-major students, this was due to both the practical constraints of sketching without easels in the hot and humid environment of Pulai and also the desire to stretch the time taken drawing to coincide with their marks-bearing submission deadline, which was 3 weeks after their site visit. This resulted in a 'double-translation' of Pulai by the students, first from reality to digital photographs, and then from digital photographs to artwork. The final conversion, from student artwork to postcards, was performed by the authors on behalf of the students and the university.

Rather than being a disadvantage, the time-gap between the capturing of photographs and the production of artwork allowed for a further study of the images in question, ultimately yielding data which would otherwise be overlooked (Richter 2011). Whereas Richter further identified the risks and ethical problems involved in researcher-driven photographic research involving people, the advantage of photographic documentation in architectural studies is that communities are often proud that their buildings attract the attention of outsiders, as long as they themselves do not appear in the travelers' photographs, thus avoiding the 'secrecy' and even 'deception' sometimes employed by social researchers (Richter 2011, p. 210).

3.7.1 From Art to Souvenir Object

Whereas, from the perspective of tourists, it is common to see art as a product, rather than to engage in a study of the abstract thought processes of creative individuals, early scholars such as Arnheim (1969) argued that artistic activity is in the main a form of reasoning. This agreed with Eisner (2002), who presented artistic imagery as having a profoundly generative as well as qualitative effect. In their discussion about rhizomes, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) indeed pointed to how assemblage thinking can help in a socio-spatial sense; this shows how the discipline of teaching in particular can benefit from a more flexible framing of space and spatial thinking, such as that commonly practiced by artists.

When conceptualizing an intangible event or a tangible site through a work of art, academic tourists in particular are therefore invited to see both as a dynamic and ever-expanding potential idea. Conceptualizing destinations through art can thereby serve as a vehicle for more productive or inventive thinking, where multiple orientations provide different viewpoints through the repetitive act of multi-layered perception. This shows that rather than being a one-off event whose influence begins and ends on the prescribed dates of a field trip, the self-production of art-based souvenir objects serves to extend the depth of experience of academic tourists beyond the realm of souvenirs as commodities into the realm of self-directed learning, which is increasingly desired by universities worldwide (Boud and Falchicov 2006).

Yet, aside from studies on creating craft objects for personal use as a means of saving money (Campbell 2005; Jakob 2012) or the discussion of 'crafting' as a hobby (Kim and Kwon 2017), there is a dearth of studies documenting the self-production of souvenirs by tourists, and still fewer where the tourists are also students. Yet, the growing desire of universities to move away from traditional examinations as the primary tool for measuring student performance suggests that the future will produce more, not fewer examples of innovative student submissions in fields not directly related to art or tourism which could nevertheless have a 'second life' as tourist objects after their primary role as marks-bearing submissions is achieved.

This is especially important because writers like MacCannell (1999) have premised that the tourist experience is a quest for authenticity, a word whose meaning Wall and Xie (2005) suggest is itself disputed. This has led other writers to argue that as our understanding of authenticity varies, it is becoming more important to identify the 'producers' of authenticity, especially when this involves the sale of tourism products (Hashimoto and Telfer 2007; Hughes 1995). This study, therefore, seeks in part to examine the producers' perception of their perceived authentic experience of a unique destination only just emerging into the tourist gaze.

3.7.2 Capturing the Essence of the Built Environment

Although each student who visited Pulai was asked to produce two A3 panels of hand-drawn art, s(he) was not limited to how many images could occupy those two panels. Submissions therefore ranged from 2 large images to 16 small vignettes, depending on the student's interpretation of the macro-site context of the settlement.

As the most ornate building in the village (despite its 1984 re-construction), the centrally-located 'Water Moon' temple was a favourite for most students. "It has a very spiritual feeling… when I first went in, locals were sitting around the internal courtyard, the [space] makes it very easy to talk to them…" said a Malaysian student from Ipoh. "I liked the colour…. I don't usually think that pink suits temples…

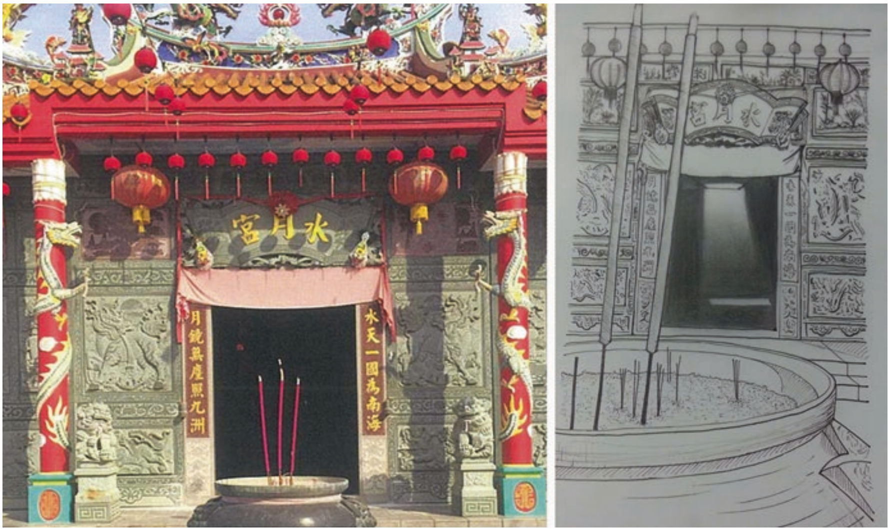

Fig. 3.2 Evidence of human scale at the “Water Moon” temple forecourt, view towards main entrance (left: student photo; right: student pencil render)

but it suited this one… because unlike the red [urban] temples, this one was more subtle… more in keeping with the rural environment” related a female student from Egypt, “It perhaps could have been a little bigger… that would have emphasized its importance more… as a gathering spot it was rather humble… but I guess it fit into the village which is very…united” (Fig. 3.2).

As informed by the temple president (who, as a lay head of the ‘secular’ Taoist temple had functions dissimilar to the abbot of a Buddhist monastery), the building, although new, has its origins in a mud-brick structure dating from the 1700s on the same site. Like the village itself, therefore, the temple’s authenticity derives from the principle enshrined in the NARA Document on Authenticity (ICOMOS 1994) which ranks the continued use of heritage as more important than physical originality. In common with most Taoist temples in Malaysia, the Pulai temple also displays the elaborate Oriental style synonymous with Imperial-era Chinese architecture, which, as one of the tutors on the trip mentioned was “so nice to see”, thus agreeing with Lowenthal’s premise in 1985 that “*we generally treasure relics more for being old-fashioned than old*” (Lowenthal 1985, p. 127).

Equally ornate but even newer than the village temple were two traditional Chinese gazebos built on either side of the town square (Fig. 3.3). As explained by the village head, “the large tree facing the square was planted by my father… I was afraid that some people would eventually want to chop the tree down to develop the square… I ordered the building of the gazebos to preserve the tree, to mark the square as a gathering place [for the community].”

Although at the time of the students’ visit the two gazebos were only 5 years old, they were still desirable subjects for the ‘students’ gaze’. “Really prominent…

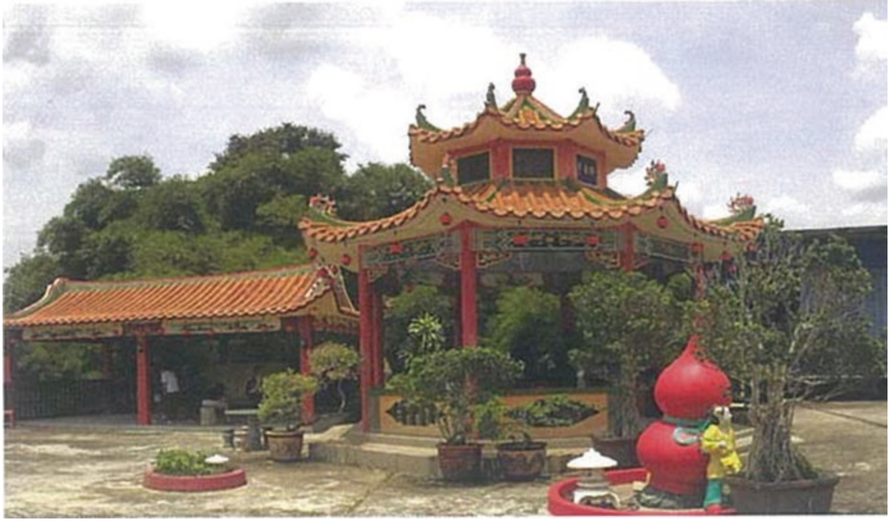

Fig. 3.3 Pulai Village Square gazebo

matching with the temple" said one student. "Very important… a good shaded gathering point which was great for our trip… you could sit there without buying anything… very useful" said another. The use of the gazebos as a staging area for musical performances celebrating the Chinese 'mooncake' festival which coincided with the students' trip lent additional importance to the structures by showing them as fully functional spaces, day and night, and not merely built to add a decorative flavour to the square.

3.7.3 Capturing the Essence of a Way of Life

The human scale of Pulai that so endeared the students to the village is a by-product of its remoteness, which has kept its population, and hence also its demand for modern architecture low. This remoteness is exemplified by the fact that roads linking the village to the outside world only began to appear in the years between the first and second world wars (Carstens 1980). Prior to that date, all traffic was waterborne via the Galas river, a navigable waterway ultimately linking the village to the South China Sea. The earliest immigrants, from the traditionally Hakka-speaking provinces of Southern China had not in fact intended to make Pulai their permanent home. As explained by the president of the temple committee, "They wanted to find enough gold to return to China as rich men…. Only the ones who didn't find their fortune ultimately stayed behind".

This early assumption that Pulai would be merely a temporary place of work and refuge meant that the building of basic infrastructure was neglected for the first few generations of residents. Medical and healthcare infrastructure was particularly poor, which in the long-run, gave rise to the religious devotion of the inhabitants, who turned to the goddess *Kwan Yin* to protect them from both illness and disaster, with the occasional assistance from the *'tongji',* an early Chinese folk religion shaman, whose skills nevertheless combined elements of traditional Chinese herbal medicine.

As explained by the temple president, this devotion to *Kwan Yin* has survived into the twenty-first century, with different dates around each Chinese New Year being dedicated to fasting and prayer as well as temple offerings, cleaning, and, relatively unique in Malaysia, the journey of physical effigies representing the deities out of the Pulai Temple to different locations to encourage safety and general well-being.

By contrast, as the country's most urbanized ethnic group, traditional Chinese culture and language is under threat from multiple directions elsewhere in Malaysia. These include an education system that favours Malay, English and Mandarin over traditional Chinese dialects like Cantonese, Hokkien and Hakka, as well as a Western-oriented business culture in Malaysia's cities that emphasizes efficiency over tradition. Coupled with the growth of the monotheistic religions of Islam and Christianity throughout the country, the survival of identifiably traditional, rural Chinese communities in Malaysia is therefore seen as a welcome relief by even some of the relatively young:

"I was born in Pulai but worked in Kuala Lumpur for many years" said one resident in his late 20s. "I didn't like the KL lifestyle, the high living expenses…. I prefer working on my farm". A member of a traditional lion dance troupe echoed this opinion. "In Pulai there's no need to rush… more freedom… wake up early and sleep early… [I] appreciate the culture and the tradition".

Conversations with older Pulai residents also made clear their general satisfaction with their way of life. "We finish work before breakfast" said a rubber tapper, as he sipped tea in a café next to the village square. "The government also helps out with development grants, so it's a pleasant life". Another villager, who had spent many years in the much larger city of Ipoh in the adjacent state of Perak added "we don't really need money here [anyway]… apart from tea and some essentials… there's nothing really available to buy here".

For the student visitors themselves, this intangible, laid-back character of the place was an additional touristic draw. "Apart from the temple, my favourite part of the visit was the people themselves… you can see how they accommodate visitors, but at the same time the locals still have their daily activities… the locals enjoy being there… the village square is a true gathering space, [it's] not just for tourists" said a Malaysian student from Kuala Lumpur. This simple lifestyle, whilst appealing to many, was, however, also clearly contributing to a nascent gap dividing the community, not purely by generation, but certainly by ambition, with the majority of ambitious younger residents moving to larger towns in the district or beyond in search of opportunities for more fulfilling work.

As a strategy to maintain the continuity of the village as well as its culture in the face of this gradual shift, the village council has capitalized on the great diversity of Hakka religious beliefs and practices (Lagerwey 1996) as well as the popularity of lunar holidays and honouring ancient deities as a means of attracting back its younger residents. The success of this strategy was evident to the authors of this

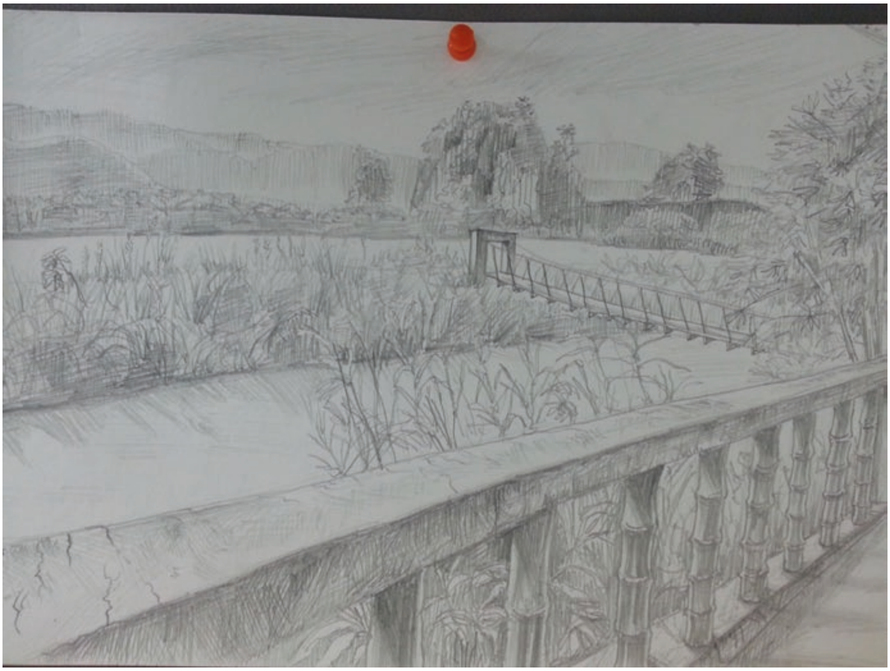

Fig. 3.4 Suspension bridge across the Galas river, Pulai Village

chapter, who noted large numbers of working-age youth and children with ties to the village who attended the 2018 Pulai mooncake festival, which also attracted other Malaysian visitors from elsewhere in Kelantan state and beyond.

The idea that Pulai is sustained by 'natural travellers' was therefore also something that was captured by the 'students' gaze'. The presence of two rustic suspension bridges across the Galas river (Fig. 3.4) separating the community from their historical gold-mine (now a lake supporting aquaculture) was another favourite with students, as much for the imagined danger of using them as any sense of cultural expression or beauty, reinforcing the idea that danger (even only the feeling of danger in a situation which is inherently safe) is itself a psychological attraction for a certain class of (especially young) travelers (Mura 2010).

The ability of the students to capture the essence of this unique lifestyle as a prelude for their major architectural design project shows how, even in the digital age, contemporary hand-drawn art is still an appropriate (and perhaps even the most appropriate) media with which to document the essence of a historical site whose history is nevertheless buried under layers of more recent embellishment. Converting this art into visitor-created postcards aimed at future groups of tourists to Pulai was the culmination of this study, which showed that academic tourism should be identified as an important area of tourism studies in its own right. It also showed that with proper marketing and publicity, contemporary tourist art can help to convert a site's 'tourism potential energy' into actual tourism interest.

3.8 Producing Student Post-Cards

The earliest recorded postcards were produced in the mid-1800s. Originally made of thin, buff-coloured card, with an imprinted stamp, a space for the address on the front, and correspondence on the reverse, most contained no outward imagery, and were expressly designed to be an inexpensive form of communication. One of the most major design refinements of the postcard took place in 1902, when British publisher Frederick Hartmann introduced the ‘divided back’ format which allowed for the entire reverse side of the card to contain an image (hence the increasingly archaic name ‘picture postcard’) which has dominated postcard design ever since (Connor 2000).

Due to the comparative expense and novelty of photography in the early 1900s, postcards were also one of the earliest forms of communication to make the transition, after use, to becoming a souvenir item (Cleave 2014). According to Connor (2000), almost everyone bought and sent cards compulsively at the peak of the postcard craze, which reached its zenith around 1903, at which time such cards were also seen by many as a new art form. Such was the popularity of postcards, that for a time, the collectability of postage stamps was linked to their use and ‘cancellation’, with mailed, stamped postcards commanding the highest demand. Indeed, Cleave (2014) premised that to get a feel for life, especially from the past, requires both visual and written history, with used postcards being one of the best mediums for providing both in a particularly personalized way.

As economic progress around the world gradually offered greater opportunities for travel beyond the privileged classes, the role of the postcard grew to encompass that of travelers’ guide and destination planner prior to the mass-availability of the printed guide-book and long before the internet age (Wong 2011). In this way, postcards were the tourism ‘signposts’ of the inter-war twentieth century, showcasing images relating to transport, scenery, cityscapes and even ‘current events’ that were important in helping period travelers decide if, how and when to travel to certain destinations.

After the Second World War, postcards became ubiquitous items in most tourist districts, sold through many corner shops or stalls, in enormous variety. Their popularity matched their commonness, as they had been used, ever since the ‘golden age of postcards’ in the first decade of the twentieth century (Gifford 2013) to express gossip, holiday messages and even romance through words and images, pre-dating contemporary emoticons by several decades, although bearing close similarity to them in spirit if not in form.

The twenty-first century has seen a swapping of the primary and secondary role of the postcard, where its souvenir function has persisted, albeit in reduced form, even as its role as a communication tool survives only for its novelty. Studies like this have shown, however, that it is the postcard’s potential as a research object that is just beginning. It is in this latter, interpretive role that the students were challenged to come out with their unique visual responses towards the site of Pulai. In some cases, students reinforced their drawings with captions which later accompanied their completed post-cards.

As one student wrote on the reverse of her drawing capturing the natural essence of the village, "…visual and ecological quality of the site must be preserved and development should be balanced". Labelling sketches of the village houses, the same student wrote "…using architectural means, the rainwater from the four corners of the house returns [to the courtyard]… a metaphor for health and wealth flowing to the residents."

On the one hand, captioning of this sort prevents a complete misreading of images that could, in some circumstances, be confused with other destinations of a similar type, even in other countries. On the other hand, an over-reliance on captioning carries with it a risk of over-generalization (Chaplin 1994). This can potentially mislead uninitiated visitors as to the meaning, commonality and interpretation of elements of vernacular architecture that are by nature evolutionary and subjective. If over-used, captioning therefore risks presenting vernacular architecture and ethnicity in the 'idealized' manner that was previously identified as a problem by Hitchcock et al. (2010b).

Whether captioned or un-captioned, student postcards such as these therefore represent the translation of research data into visual documents that serve as tangible 'conversation starting points' to create an avenue for further active dialogues about the human history of the village, with the potential to save the oral narratives of the past for a younger generation who may require new ways of listening to their ancestors.

3.9 Summary and Conclusion

Whereas the growth in non-classroom assessments in university courses worldwide is creating new forms of student assessment and 'blended learning' (Latchem and Jung 2010), this chapter has shown that the need for alternative evidence of learning is also contributing to a renewal of interest in forms of communication that were previously thought to be old-fashioned, outmoded or obsolescent.

This documented experience of students visiting a unique Malaysian village represents an example of how amateur student art can be at once contemporary, retrospective and academic all at the same time. It identifies academic tourism as a suitable instrument to help places with 'tourism potential energy' evolve into destinations with active tourism interest, by translating the intangible heritage often hidden in behaviour and narratives into tangible objects which can then concurrently function as works of art, souvenirs and academic submissions. The academic tourists who visited Pulai in 2018 ultimately created destination images that were the sum of their perceptual beliefs, ideas and impressions derived from a variety of sources which were then re-interpreted using a variety of art media, a selection of which was ultimately re-produced via the time-tested medium of the picture postcard.

This study shows that, whereas it is generally accepted that the cultural adaptation of traditional handicrafts for the souvenir trade can be damaging to the integrity of cultural heritage (Hitchcock et al. 2010a), there exists an alternative if the destination itself offers no obvious souvenir items to the visitor. By instead offering itself as an object of study for the ‘tourist gaze’, a visual narrative can be produced which can be later ‘souvenirized’ without altering the character of the destination or the physical items produced by its residents.

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Chun Wei Choy has established himself as one the most interesting and exciting mixed media artists working in Malaysia today. His multi-layered collages draw constant inspiration from his environment; from the repetitive facades of suburban Malaysia, to the vast abundance of the countryside. Chun Wei is an artist whose predilections and ideals of art are based predominantly on design language. His immersion in graphic design studies provides design-oriented conceptual readings and contextual imagination into his chosen practice in fine art. This confluence of design and contemporary art-making is germane to an exciting development of his journey, clearly distinguishing Chun Wei from his contemporaries. Currently He is also lecturing and tutoring Fundamental Drawing and 2 Dimensional Design at Taylors College-Foundation modules and also pursuing postgraduate (PhD) studies on Art-based research (through art practice) at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM).

Chapter 4
Constructing an Art-Life: Tourism and Street Art in Sarawak

Ian Aik-Soon Ng

Abstract *How do street artists engage with multiple influences as they generate a tourist space with their distinctive art?* With that poser this chapter adds a segment to the composite perspective of place-making and tourism, filtered through the eyes of muralists in an emerging destination on the South China Sea. For distinction amidst extant research, it privileges the voice of the artist as it analyses the responses from five identified streams of practice in what is relatively a young offshoot of contemporary art in the state of Sarawak, Malaysia. The contrasting experience of each practitioner fuels a discussion on influences in place making in a destination-that is seeking connections with global tourism. Findings reemphasize that, in contrast to Western and liberal contexts, postcolonial places are relatively conservative – culturally and politically – with artists taking more cognisance of patron agendas (than their own) as they appropriate an essentially American art form. Significantly, the sense of local identity is palpable in art content. Nevertheless, and no differently, the personal voice of the artist does rise above expressions that include tagging, communicative graffiti, doodles, pop art, historio-cultural archiving, tracing, and "the self-portrait", among others. The tourist – the last of a tripartite commissioner-agent-consumer, stake holding – absorb such expressions in the (local and international) city and in cyberspace as a composite place.

Keywords Street art · Identity · Glocalization · Art patronage · Cultural tourism

4.1 Introduction

The subject of street art and the tourism space has been researched through various angles with increased interest over the last 10 years. These perspectives include *place making* (Lew 2017; Mokras-Grabowska 2014) *tourist perception* (Yan et al.

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2019; Jażdżewska 2017) *politics and commodification* (Molnár 2018; Ulmer 2010; Hultman and Hall 2012; Russell 2010) and *identity and social media* (Poppi and Kravanja 2019; MacDowall and de Souza 2018; Dar and Hunnicutt 2017; Nowak 2017; Philipps et al. 2017). While by no means exhaustive the cited categories provide a useful framework for devising a direction of inquiry for investigating my context of interest. The material of the said studies are North American and Eurocentric, and thus give rise to the question, *In what ways do postcolonial societies engage with the phenomenon of street art?* Further, the methodological approach of most (except, perhaps, one – Molnár 2018) appear to privilege analyses which lead to cognitive outcomes that privilege systemic commentary. While I am considerably informed by them, my interest is equally in the ethnographic narratives of the artist as a subjective conveyor of phenomenological experience: *What is the artists' story?* The premise of this inquiry is that the story of the painter – and behind the painting – adds to a viewer's appreciation of the painting: Agent narratives compound art knowledge. I contend that, as tourism space is constructed "bottom up" in the process of place-making (Lew 2017) the ensuing question is equally instructive: *How do influences encountered by street artists contribute to the character of tourism spaces?* Whether attempts at place making can be regarded as being successful depends very much on what "success" means, and to whom. This is an area of research suggested by Lew, and thus, in closing I discuss the balance between personal gratification and contribution to place making by employing the following question: *How do street artists see place making in tourism against their personal agendas?*

4.2 Definitions, History & Context

To many viewers the notion of street art could be described as any form of art, any product that has some artistic quality, found on the street. They would not be incorrect, and neither would the simplistic consciousness reduce their enjoyment of the work. For the purposes of critical comment, however, an operational definition is needed. While there is implicit understanding in the literature of what qualifies as the phenomenon of street art, one particular categorisation that splits it into *graffiti, street art* and *wall mural* is, in my view, most helpful (Ulmer 2010, p. 493). The said paper on the making of urban space in Detroit goes further by providing a glossary of terms that sub-categorizes the genres into Grafitti (graffito, piece & tag); Street art (paper paste-ups, posters, reverse graffiti, scratchiti, signage, stencils, stickers & street installations); and Murals, with a qualifier on its in-exhaustiveness. More importantly, the street where the art occurs needs to be understood, both, (i) simply, as the thoroughfare for circulation and public use in the built environment and (ii) academically, as a space for critical discourse. Citing earlier studies, the author posits that occurrences of municipal objections to less savoury street art (as of the first category) are akin to tense battles over urban space "because the street 'is public in its orientation and in its creation, in its access and in its passage, yet private in its strictures'" (Newman and Shields 2013, p. 521).

Contestations are a characteristic – if not the hallmark – of street art. The origin of street art is well documented to be the subways of New York in the late 1960s, but it has come some way from those antagonistic days. Scholars since 2012 have viewed it as "either a subculture of graffiti or a form of post-graffiti (McAuliffe 2012) …an act of non-violent civil disobedience (Irvine 2012) …*critical* rather than *criminal* forms of communication" (Ulmer 2010). At its most honourable, street art aims to "re-image and re-imagine the city" and, second guessing a critical geographer (Lefebvre 1996), to "(re)claim the right to the city". My own observation is that, street art at its most civil can be, compositely, social commentary, cultural celebration and touristic plan.

Street art should be understood as a genre with a history. Encyclopedias may record it as an "urban trend of defacing public property with spray-painted words or images… primarily associated with street gangs, underground culture, and rebellion against authority… (growing) up as an art form in New York City in the 1970s, showing up on subway cars, billboards, and buildings" (Sheposh 2017). That street art is now accepted as a subset of contemporary art is not refuted - not on account of its mellowing into "respectability" or its contemporaneous birth in the late 1960s. Rather, it is the fact that street artists, like contemporary artists, "generally focus more on the concept or idea behind the art than on technique or assigning meaning to a specific work", and hence is also known as postmodernist art (Sheposh 2017).

The focus of this study as a response then is the extent that a postcolonial South-East Asian place – such as the majorly indigenous state of Sarawak in East Malaysia – can engage with this art form born of a socio-political culture bred from Judeo-Christian and Liberal tradition.

One of 13 states of Malaysia, Sarawak has a land area of 124,450 sq. km. (a little smaller than Greece, and a little larger than South Korea). The largest of her 27 ethnic groups is "the Iban people, who make up 31% of the population, followed by ethnic Chinese (28%), Malay (20%), Bidayuh (8%), Melanau (6%), Orang Ulu (5%), Indian, Eurasian and smaller indigenous groups (2%)". The language, traditions and cultures of each group differs one from the other.[1] Significantly, discounting the Chinese and the Malays, the four largest groups – totalling exactly half the total population – are First Peoples. The religious matrix appears as "Christianity 42.6%; Islam 31.3%; Buddhism 12%; Tribal 5.2%; No Religion 3.9%; Taoism/Confucianism 2.6%; Others 1.3%; Hinduism 0.1%; Unknown 1.0%[2]" The predominance of indigeneity and Christianity therefore sets Sarawak apart from the rest of Malaysia which is predominantly Malay-Islamic.

Sarawak was loosely controlled by the Sultan of Brunei until September 1841 when he transferred rulership to the Brookes who then ruled as "White Rajahs" until

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[1] From Business Events Sarawak, http://businesseventssarawak.com/sarawak-destination/facts-at-your-finger-tips/ (accessed 17 November, 2019).

[2] From NECF Malaysia, http://www.necf.org.my/newsmaster.cfm?&menuid=45&parentid=144&action=view&retrieveid=1000 (accessed 17 November, 2019).

July 1946 when they ceded it to the United Kingdom for Sarawak to become a British colony. Malaysia was granted independence in 1957, and Sarawak self-rule in July 1963 whereupon it joined Malaysia as a state in September of the same year. Sarawakians are fierce about their identity distinction from West Malaysia which houses the federal government.[3]

With this context then, we can expect the art of Sarawak to be unique. Although participants in my research recall teenage encounters with seeing large murals on school walls, the first mural - or street art - in Sarawak did not appear until the second decade of this century. The earliest year mentioned is 2013.

4.3 Literature Review

(i) *How do street artists engage with multiple influences as they generate a tourist space with their distinctive art?* (ii) *In what ways do postcolonial societies engage with the phenomenon of street art?* and (iii) *How do street artists see place making in tourism against their personal agendas?* were the research queries mentioned at onset. As primary question followed by two subquestions, their derivation as outcomes of matching the knowledge gap with contextual interest will become clear when we consider the current discourse in street art.

4.3.1 Place Making

The street art phenomenon has been seen as "mural tourism", a niche form of cultural tourism (Yan et al. 2019, referencing Skinner and Jollife 2017). In the larger scheme of things, however, it is about how places are constructed to be effective magnets for tourists. In seeking to understand where the contribution of the street artists lies it is perhaps best to dissect the phenomenon of place making itself. Clearly, places may be made by individuals in communities who have resided in particular localities for considerable periods, who have solidified ways of living – with attendant cultural expressions – that give their locality an identifiable character, distinct from other places, however subtly. At one end of spectrum, therefore, places are made from a bottom-up, organic and incremental mode while, at the other, places may also be consciously planned, configured and managed by statutory or corporate bodies with the intent of generating economic benefits to, both, the localities and the national entities of which these localities form a part. These polemical modes have been labelled *place-making* and *placemaking*, respectively, both subsets of the generic term, *place making* (Lew 2017). In Lew's proposition, street art would figure as the tangible "public art" in a table of tangibility scale and

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[3] ditto

Table 4.1 The excerpted tourism place making continuum

Rubrics	Place-makings	Mixed place makings	Placemakings
Driver of change	Individuals, local groups, human agency	Collaborative, NGOs/NPOs	Government, developers, socio-political structure
Process of change	Bottom-up, organic and incremental, minor placemaking, unintentional worldmaking	Co-management, co-creation, public participation	Top-down, master planned, hyper-neoliberal placemaking, intentional worldmaking
Tourists	Alternative tourists	Specialty tourists	Mass tourists
Authenticity	Objective authenticity, real, sense of place, vernacular	Constructed authenticity, staged	Inauthentic, contrived, fantasy, disneyfication, simulacra, placelessess
Market orientation	Local directed, craft tourism	Regional and national directed	International directed, industrial tourism
Experience	Existential, experimental	Experiential	Recreational, diversionary
Fame	Unknown, unimportant	Regional importance	Famous, important

Source: Lew (2017, p. 451)

tools of place making (p. 456). But more pertinent is his critique that “both place-making and placemaking are inherently political processes” (p. 457) with as many worldviews as there are individuals and groups, and that the resultant difference will be reflected in “different place makings, some of which are potentially incompatible” (p. 458). As the findings of my fieldwork will later show, this incompatibility is evident.

Rubrics are essential in analysing places for comparison. In Lew’s tabulated analysis (p. 451) there are at least 16 rubrics, out of which six are, in my view, relevant for understanding how street art contributes to the making of place in Sarawak. These are *Process of change, Tourists, Authenticity, Market orientation, Experience* and *Fame*. An excerpt of the table (Table 4.1) may be used as an organisational device showing inter-relationships of influences, and can act as a framework for pegging street art. Further, Lew’s suggested future research questions do lend a possible direction for exploring and assessing the phenomenon of street art, and they are (i) *who defines success?* (ii) *whose story is being told through placemaking?* (iii) *who owns the new touristed placemaking landscape?* (iv) *how do tourists contribute to place making?* and (v) *how do people know, experience, and engage with place makings?* These are consolidated and operationalised in my summary discussion later.

Another paper using the city of Lodz in Poland as a case study of the process of top-down endeavour in creating a tourism space, specifically art-tourism space, lends some research precedent. It analyses the sum effect of 30 murals in an urban fabric called the Urban Form Gallery. Significantly, it summarises by stating that tourists increasingly seek out sights “off-the beaten-track” (in terms of non-mainstream attractions) and that planned, mural-affairs of this civic dimension

Table 4.2 Relationship between tourist art-space and themed experiences

Comprehension levels for understanding art tourist spaces (Mokras-Grabowska 2016)	Themed tourist experiences (Yan et al. 2019)
Real space experienced by tourists	Wall and art
Perceptual space memorized by tourists	Historical experience and visit evaluation
Virtual space derived from secondary sources	Pre-visit perceptions of the site (not studied)
Mental space (symbolic, derived from 1st three)	Image of a trail of art and history

"colonises new areas, perceived previously as not attractive" (Mokras-Grabowska 2014). The suggestion that top-down impetuses colonize is taken.

4.3.2 *Tourist Perception*

The study on Lodz was further developed (Mokras-Grabowska 2016) and subsequently extrapolated upon by others in a research work on themed experiences using the Berlin Wall (Yan et al. 2019) to derive an alternative matrix for assessing street art. Table 4.2 summarises the proposition. If tourists comprehend places by the nature of space formations (real, perceptual, virtual and mental) then, it is argued, the composites of the phenomenon (tangible art, history, expectations and memory) has a relationship to the comprehension. Grasping the connections may help in more effective tourism planning.

This suggests that artists work in a continuum beyond mere wall and spray can. Indeed the virtual world (exemplified by social media) is in fact the (increasingly) real experience of the street artist and tourist. The degree to which historical narratives of, both, the locale and its canvasses are understood and mobilised by artist, tourist and tourism planner alike is dependent on the craft of manipulating perception in each situation.

4.3.3 *Politics and Commodification*

A study on rights to impact on urban space states that "not only do leading street artist often situate their work within critical race theory and post-colonialism… street art is (also) performative and political in and of itself" (Ulmer 2010, p. 499). This study, investigating calls for a democratizing of public space highlights the fact that the producers of content that define urban space often have only the strength of their content to counteract the power that controls the locations they need to realise their art.

Another analysis of tourism place-making in localities of Sweden concluded that tourism localities are defined through social structures, and that public, non-profit and commercial stakeholders negotiate meaning as destination economies develop (Hultman and Hall 2012). While the discourse illustrated how tourism places are varied according to contrasting forms of governance, it is its premise that bears assertively on our gaze on the Sarawakian street artist. The premise is that constructionism rather than essentialism defines place ultimately. Citing numerous authoritative sources – MacCannell and Lippard (2013) for sight sacrilization and Appadurai (2010) for translocalities – the paper calls for places to be regarded not as closed vessels but porous vehicles that privilege relationality.

In a separate study, the weight of "governance" is seen as neoliberalism with examples of taggers being the bravest, though most misunderstood, radicals fighting back to regain the publicness of public space from the point of view of freedom and right to shape (or write into) it (Russell 2010).

The issue of commodification is another aspect of artists' rights being challenged. An investigation into the difficult terrain of intellectual property rights argued that the fragmented and contested commodification processes of street art are complicated by "multiple, intersecting markets… mass merchandizing techniques… and the ambivalence of the artwork once it is reproduced" (Molnar 2018). In investigating how recent developments in digital media create a new ecology for the commercialization of street art the author suggests that there is as yet no easy resolution to the artist's dilemma. There is the inevitable juggling of unpaid artistic contribution to the community and the possibly payablework, and the inescapable structure of mass merchandizing within an infrastructure of "digital ecology which puts a 'premium on photographic dissemination'" (Molnar).

4.3.4 Identity and Social Media

Within the tussels of politics and commodification the street artist has to constantly address their positionality – or how they want to present themselves to the world - an ontology that does not differentiate between the physical and digital.

An article on globalisation and local appropriation of graffiti that approximates the focus of my research – literally and geographically – discusses the issue of identity (Nowak 2017). In acknowledging that street art (in this case, graffiti) is an American import, a global visual form, the author investigates how the form has been absorbed into Australia, and how it has morphed in consequence. Unpacking the interviews in *Style Wars*, the 1983 documentary about graffiti in New York directed by Tony Silver, he observes that "graffiti provides young people with a sense of connection, pride and enjoyment … every city has its own particular style. Graffiti from Australia can easily be distinguished by graffiti artists… Australia has its own particular style". Beyond pop culture the identity motivation is more serious: The author cites an indigenous hip-hop artist accentuating his ethnicity: "I don't do this to advance hip-hop. I do it to advance myself as a human and as an Aboriginal, advance the awareness of my culture, especially on a contemporary tip." Finally, to diffuse the tension between a "subversive practice and mainstream culture" the Japanese concept of glocalisation is put forward as a possible compromise "to emphasize that each is in many ways defined by the other, and that they frequently intersect, rather than being polarised opposites" (Nowak).

The ineluctable influence of social media on street art cannot be denied, and research is plentiful and current, all detecting its positivity. While three of the papers mentioned in my introduction provide useful knowledge on the techniques and machinations of the medium – particularly Instagram and Flickr – (Poppi and Kravanja 2019; MacDowall and de Souza 2018; Philipps et al. 2017) it is the discussion on dual identities – the fusion of the physical and virtual – that is most relevant to my context (Dar and Hunnicutt 2017). According to the study the identity name (or tag) in place of the real name of the artist is crucial to their existence which is increasingly (though not totally) carried digitally via social media. A street artist is as real and present as he appears (or is perceived) on social media. The virtual name is the identity.

Artists experiment with different names, attuning themselves to practitioner feedback before settling for one which – though used frequently – is not necessarily subject to permanence. It can be changed at will. An artist uses a group of the like-styled as a reference and basis for underpinning their own identity, and in that sense construct their identity collectively. The irony is that anonymity is prized (Nowak). "Nobody ever listened to me until they didn't know who I was", the author quotes Banksy, indisputably the most famous, anonymous, graffiti artist, as the literature reveals.

One aspect of identity that was not detected in extant literature is synonymous with the question, *Who am I in terms of my roots, cultural make up and beliefs?* How this unravels in Sarawak is scrutinized later.

4.3.5 The Research Question

The Sarawakian street art experience may be classified as youthful when compared to those in the more highly populated and urbanised cities in the reviewed literature. Whether it can be seen to be at an earlier stage of what other places have gone through is certainly a question that will arise. However, taking the postmodern view that expressions are situated and can be as diverse as the multiplicity of contexts that make up the societies of the world, it would not be surprising that Sarawak has something to add to the body of knowledge.

This chapter takes a positioned look at the production of street art from the artist's point of view to capture the experiential aspect of the culture producer. This is premised on the fact that the street art that contributes to place-making for tourism is very much shaped by the personalities that produce the art as they navigate the social realities of the place in which they perform. It seeks to answer the question of how the indigenising (or localising) of a hybridised global art form creates the tourist space of an emergent society. In amalgamating the three queries stated earlier it adopts the research question, *How do street artists engage with multiple influences as they generate a tourist space with their distinctive art?*

4.4 Methodology

With the framework of research queries mentioned the following research objectives naturally ensue.

1. To investigate the relationship between the artists' personal stories and their art
2. To analyse the influences that shape street art content, and
3. To assess the extent that street artists contribute to place making for tourism.

I was fortunate to be familiar with a sample artist and a couple of team leaders of the first Art festival of Sibu, the third largest town[4] in Sarawak. They formed my initial contacts. Questionnaires comprising 21 questions were sent to a handful of better known street artists (suggested by my initial contacts) in Sarawak. Their answers to Questions 12 and 14 revealed additional artists to whom the same questionnaire was promptly sent. From the response of this second set of participants a total of 11 names arose. Co-incidentally, to Question 13, *Roughly, how many regular wall artists do you think there are in Sarawak?* one of the respondents had answered, *From my observation, 11 artists in Kuching city. I'm not quite sure in other part of Sarawak. There are some who wanted to try doing wall art but most of them gave up half way* while two others answered emphatically, *Not more than 10* and *There should be 10*.

All 11, named artists were contacted and extended the questionnaire. However, two did not return their answers after extended time, and thus had to be registered as uninterested. The inclusion of 9 out of 11 named artists give this research a coverage of 82%. The original sample artist, although not named, was added to the list to make ten respondents. He was added on account of his involvement in the Sibu Art festival twice.

Digital communication was conducted with all ten respondents for clarification where their answers to the questionnaire were incomplete or merely in point form. Although face to face conversations were desired, particularly to be conducted with site visits, this was only possible with five of the artists (aaroncwl, jagung 1991, artsydaphy, d2kzuhairin and leonardsiawartart) as the others were away on location. Interviews lasted between 90 and 180 min, invariably interspersed with walking-tour discussions of murals in the town of Sibu and Kuching,[5] the capital of Sarawak. As all participants in this research have public Instagram accounts their Instagram names (with their permission) are used in this chapter.

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[4] Population 248,000 in 2010 (https://www.sarawak.gov.my/web/home/article_view/240/175/, accessed 19 November, 2019).

[5] Population 618,000, ditto.

Table 4.3 Interview questions under their overriding research queries

1. To investigate the relationship between the artists' personal stories and their art (Issue – culture producer, identity)
01. Would you kindly tell me a little about yourself, please, to introduce yourself?
04. What were your thoughts and feelings after you'd finished this first work?
06. What part does wall art play in your life? What does it mean to you?
12. Besides yourself, who do you think are the other important Sarawakian wall artists? In what way are they important?
13. Roughly, how many regular wall artists do you think there are in Sarawak?
14. How many Sarawakian wall artists have an impact on tourism? Who? How?
15. If you had to rank them in order of impact on tourism, would you rank up to ten artists, please? (It's ok if you can't make 10.)
16. How do you balance your wall art involvement with the other parts of your life (income generating work, family, other life areas, etc.)?
17. If you had to choose one piece of your work that you feel best represents what your wall art passion and belief are all about, which piece would it be? (Please insert a pic here.) Why is it the best representation of you?
21. What do you hope to do with your art from now going into the future?
2. To analyse the influences that shape street art content (Issue – identity, place making)
02. When did you first come across the idea of street art/ wall art/ mural art/ etc.? And what were your thoughts and feelings when you first encountered it?
03. When did you first decide to do this art yourself? What happened? (Please insert a pic here so it's easier for me to understand your story.)
05. What response did you get from the public?
07. Have you had any responses from tourists to your work? (Tourists simply means travellers from anywhere who come and go, people who just visit for leisure.)
08. Do tourists or tourism affect your art? If so, how?
09. What do you want people to think or feel when they look at your art?
3. To assess the extent that street artists contribute to place making for tourism. (Issue – place making for tourism)
10. Do you think your art contributes something to tourism? If so, what does it contribute?
11. Do you think your wall art is different from wall art in other parts of the world? If so, how?
18. Do you think your wall art represents Asian contemporary art? How?
19. How does your art add to the tourists' appreciation (consumption) of Asian contemporary art?

The interview questions which solicited written replies are here mapped against the research objectives and shown in Table 4.3. (Questions were sequenced to anticipate subjective flow and not according to sequence of objectives.)

Transcripts of all five interviews were coded for reference, and Instagram portfolios of all ten artists making up the sample base of this research analysed for discussion.

Although taxonomy is not often a requisite exercise in interpretive analysis-- particularly with subjects such as mine where individuality and variety accompany art and artists so definitively – I would argue that the criteria for understanding differentiation do suggest categorisation as a means for sharpening our understanding of the facets of motivations, performance, place and direction of artists. The findings revealed at onset that an artist's dominant persona could conceivably fall into any one of the following categories: *hobbyist, graffitist, commercialist, patron-artist, and institutionalist*. It also became clear that any one artist may adopt a combination of personas in a scale of predominance at any one time. The matrix of persona could alter according to the influence – or combination of influences – encountered at any one time or with each piece of art. A matrix of influences (Table 4.4) therefore assists in navigating the discussion in this section. As the literature review has shown emphatically, these categories are not to suggest a containment of an artist within a category: Artists work with overlapping roles and purposes. Some selections of artwork therefore appear under two persona columns, and, in fact, the fluidity with which the artists traverse between categories is testimony of the youthfulness of the street art phenomenon in Sarawak.

Findings from interviews, site observations and internet searches are presented with the voice of the artist as privilege. Following Gubrium and Holstein (2009) the artists' narrative is given as much space as it warrants for the purpose of constructing situated and interpretive knowledge. The presentation uses examples of art provided by the artists majorly, and photographed or downloaded by this author in lieu of a timely response, and seeks to provide answers to (i) how the artist engaged with the phenomenon of his art, (ii) what influenced the artist to derive the character of the outcome, and (iii) how the artist saw their personal agendas against the (tourist) space made. These may be read with their personas (Table 4.4) as a backdrop.

4.5 Findings & Discussion

4.5.1 The Hobbyist

To say that the basis of street art is drawing may be stating the obvious, but graphical expression as a pastime is often the impetus, reason and reward for many to launch into (and stay with) art as a hobby which may sometimes appear in public spaces. Typical of one in the hobbyist category, aaroncwl, an educationist in his early thirties, paints for leisure. Starting with the Zentangle Method[6] – a technique of pattern drawing devised for enhancing creativity and well-being – his current preoccupation is with the self-named *Zendala* – a hybrid of Zentangle and the Asian mandala (Fig. 4.1).

Posting profusely on social media would soon lead to an invitation to illustrate the covers of a book on Borneo aesthetics with his signature style, and it was

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[6] A free-doodling method with wellness agendas originated by Rick and Maria at https://zentangle.com/

Table 4.4 Personas evidenced in artwork according to figure number

	Personas				
Artist by their Instagram[a] name	Hobbyist	Graffitist	Commercialist	Patron-Artist	Institutionalist
aaroncwl	1, 2		2		3
ameysheikhali					8, 20
amy.amin		14	5, 13		5
d2kzuhairin	17, 18	15, 16			
artsydaphy			9, 10, 11, 12		
dean590	5?	6,			8
jagung1991		25		26, 27, 31	
leonardsiawart			22, 23, 24	21, 22, 23, 24	
sonialuhong			4, 5		
twenty_fifth		19			
(government departments)[b]					28, 29, 30

[a] See ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS for *url* links to each artist

[b] An art event initiated by an institution in Sibu garnered 53 murals solicited from various schools and government departments. Although none of the artists were sent the questionnaire the two leaders of one of the participating departments did provide this study their written analysis of the event. I selected the three murals – 28, 29 & 30 – on the basis of my judgement of the best representative illustration of the overall impact of the project

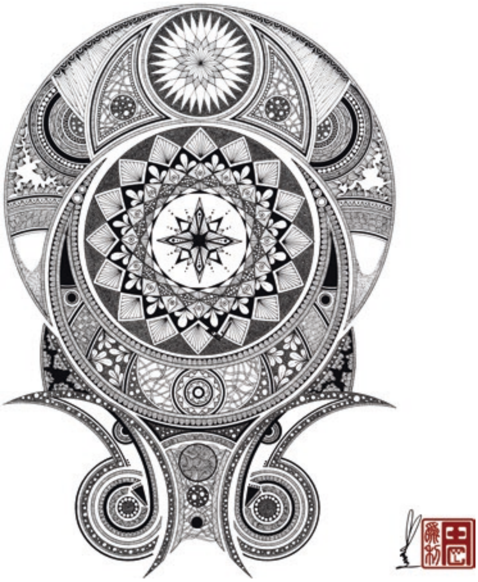

Fig. 4.1 Borneo Serenity 2016. (Source: aaroncwl)

exposure on this platform that resulted in his initiation into street art. Socialising in cyberspace with the artist jagung1991 (clearly the only street artist of import in Sibu) led to an invitation to assist in the linework of a wall mural which ended with an emotional uplift at accomplishing a scale far exceeding the maximum A3 sizes he was used to. Despite widening his experimentations in muralling by participating in the 1st and 2nd street art festivals of Sibu in 2017 and 2018, wall art remains "a casual thing… doing it when I have the time, and when I feel like it (although it) gave me a platform to inspire and share my ideas with the public… to tell a story and hopefully invoke thought" (AC-Q06).

The content of aaroncwl's art, interestingly, stays close to the locale which nurtured him – in spite of his globalised outlook from tertiary education in West Malaysia and Australia, places where he first accosted, respectively, (a) the works of graffitists on storm drain walls and (b) the emblematic and narrative work of Banksy. He feels that his fondness for "native patterns and elements" is a way of contributing to tourism in Sarawak, and that, additionally, "story or meaning behind the artworks" distinguish his from wall art of other places that tourists may come from (AC-Q10&Q11).

And what might that meaningful story be? In selecting the one piece of work that best represents his passion and belief he chose *Ibu Pertiwiku*[7] (My Motherland) (Fig. 4.2) "as it was drawn using the Zendoodle style which I am known for, and because the patterns (and) the colours represent me as a Sarawakian, inspired by the (tropical rainforest) nature here" (AC-Q17). With depictions of hornbills (also abstracted for the base in Fig. 4.1), the Rafflesia flower and the primate *orang utans*

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[7] *Ibu Pertiwiku*, in Malay, translates to "My Homeland".

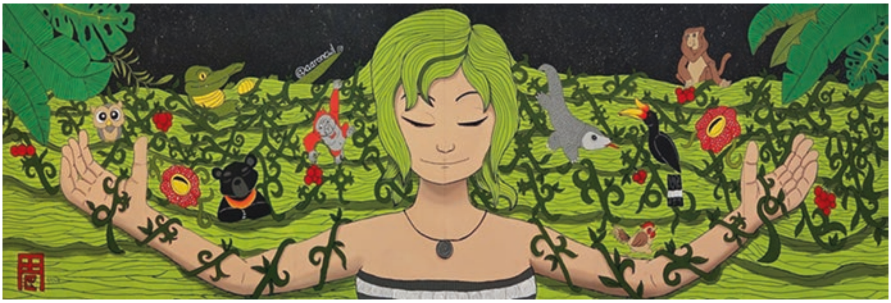

Fig. 4.2 Ibu Peritwiku. (Source: aaroncwl)

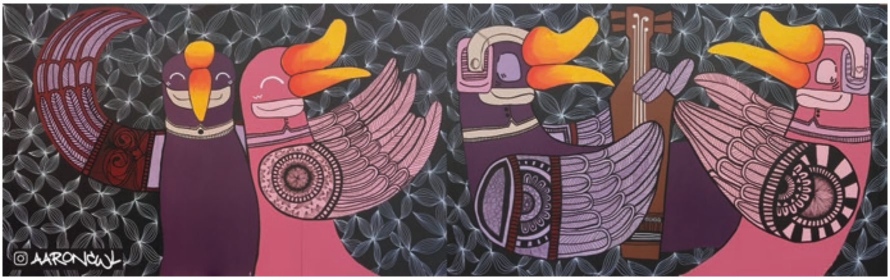

Fig. 4.3 Bumi Kenyalang. (Source: aaroncwl)

(icons of Sarawak) an implicit personal agenda is verbalised when he sees himself embarking on future exploration in the knowledge of "native craftsmanship and artistry" (AC-Q21).

By the third Sibu Street Art Festival, July 2019, increased sophistication has taken the form of a merging of trends: The soothing repetitive patterns of Zentangalism background a scene of performing hornbills. Entitled *Bumi Kenyalang* (Land of Hornbills) (Fig. 4.3) the state icons are paired on account of their intrinsic monogamy - this to symbolize not the harmonious multi-culturalism of Sarawak (as one might have thought) but a symbiosis between land and inhabitant, a balance that obligates a responsibility to love and care for the land. As can be expected, a *kenyalang* in centrestage plays the *sape*, an indigenous guitar while the surprise rests in the contemporary headsets and Zentanglist shoulder tattoos on the musicians.

Typical of the hobbyist, first crossings with muralling often repel as much as they attract. Recalling her initiation, what comes to sonialuhongs, mind is fascination and curiosity with the artistic process behind the huge mural on her primary school wall, an innocence soon counter-foiled by revulsion on confronting the seediness of generic street art comprising "mainly crude graffiti featuring obscene words and references" (SL-Q2). She lost interest. Years later, intrigue and dejavu would resurface when her graffitist group, 9livesborneo*,* received a wall art commission from the city council. Met with enthusiastic passer-by response – "many drivers and motorcyclists honked in support as we were doing it" – with media and public enquiries, as well as with a wedding photoshoot in front of her work in progress, the finished work would be, a few days after completion, glazed over with the sprayed-on slogan, ‘F∗CK THE GOVERNMENT’. It was an ironical twist, no doubt – a free and unsigned, counter-culture expression overshadowing gentrified graffiti – but sonialuhong was undeterred, as she says, “We fixed it soon after… that’s the reality of such a visible art form like street art: it is an open conversation, and anyone can give their opinion” (SL-Q05).

The real irony for this research, however, is the fact that this artist doesn’t see herself as a street artist. A freelance graphic designer, writer, and translator, and “active in the Kuching art scene, being involved in a number of creative initiatives and morphing into a visual artist during my spare time” (SL-Q01) her current interest is pyrography,[8] and commercialism is the acknowledged objective (SL-Q16) as her Instagram post attests (Fig. 4.4).

It is perhaps the epitome of irony that, notwithstanding her nonchalant relationship with the genre and industry – or perhaps, freneticism – of muralling, her iconic piece, *The Leaping Feline* (Fig. 4.5) in the state capital named Cat (Kuching), remains an indelible milestone in the growth of Sarawak street art. The personalisation of this joint effort with amy.amin as well, as its community and place character, may have a lot to do with its resulting reputation. “It is my artistic style, belief in the importance of multiracial unity, and aspirations for a progressive community that doesn’t forget its roots, all poured into one” (SL-Q17). The hybridization of common cat and rare and protected snow leopard suddenly makes sense.

When does art transcend hobby? To my fill-in-the-blank query, ‘I started as a …, but I now see myself as a …?’ Dean590, another Kuching artist, responded with “hobbyist” for both. The surprise in the self-evaluation is when one considers the energy and savviness the artist invests into the activity. Self-styled as “Muralist. Graffit(ist)” he was the only one to initially respond with a digital portfolio rather than links to Instagram accounts and written answers to my interview questions. Effective as advertisement and journal, the portfolio evidences a soul in search of specialisation and focus with descriptors such as “MURAL. GRAFFITI. PORTRA IT. INSPIRED BY HUMAN EXTERNAL EMOTIONAL STRESS”. Starting as a straightforward graffitist (Fig. 4.6) in the first half of 2015, he had matured somewhat by the latter half of 2017 (Fig. 4.7).

Analysing the plethora of press interviews, YouTube videos, my interview material, social media posts and our WhatsApp chats, the background for his self-positioning becomes clear. In his late twenties and fully employed with the largest national oil company, his passion is astutely divided between work, family and business. Immensely likeable, he sends research data with personal asides: “First of all I’m really sorry for the late reply … basically this year, 2019, I’ve decided to stop doing any wall job so that i can concentrate on launching my Cafe … it’s a graffiti

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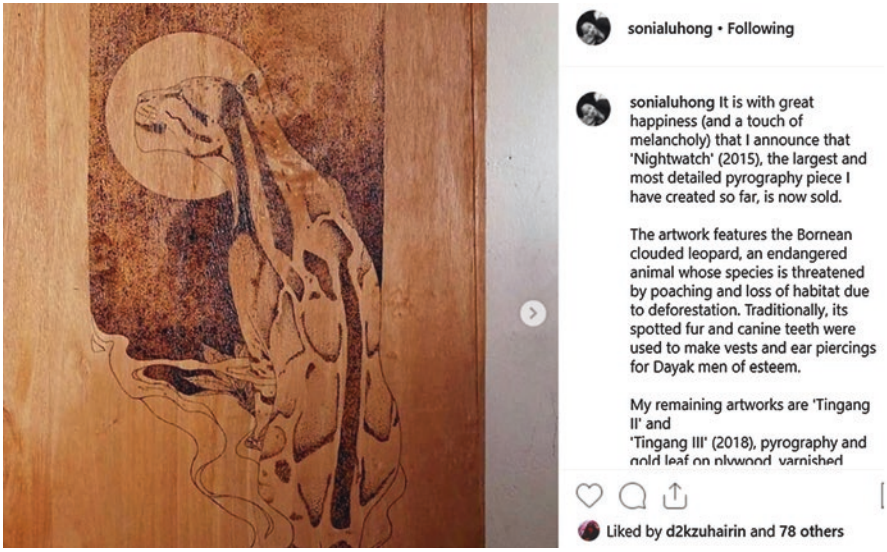
[8] Pyrography is “the art or process of producing designs or pictures (as on wood or leather) by burning or scorching with hot instruments” (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pyrography, accessed 3 July 2019).



sonialuhong • Following

sonialuhong It is with great happiness (and a touch of melancholy) that I announce that 'Nightwatch' (2015), the largest and most detailed pyrography piece I have created so far, is now sold.

The artwork features the Bornean clouded leopard, an endangered animal whose species is threatened by poaching and loss of habitat due to deforestation. Traditionally, its spotted fur and canine teeth were used to make vests and ear piercings for Dayak men of esteem.

My remaining artworks are 'Tingang II' and
'Tingang III' (2018), pyrography and gold leaf on plywood, varnished

Liked by d2kzuhairin and 78 others

Fig. 4.4 Nightwatch. (Source: sonialuhong)

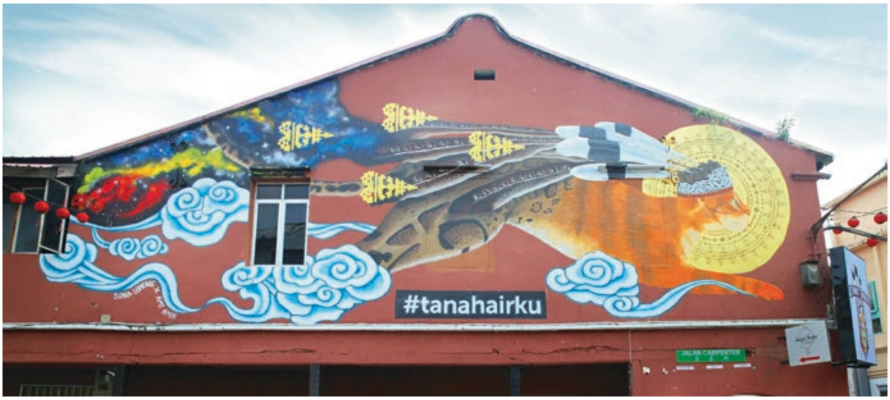


Fig. 4.5 The Leaping Feline. (Source: amy.amin & sonialuhong)

and café Kind-a-thing … so ya … but still sketching just to let everything feel like Normal =)" (Personal communique, 26 Jun 2019).

Amidst a complete and balanced life, he still leaves Sarawak with one of the most instagramable – and hence touristifiable – murals, a cooperative project with ameysheikhali entitled *Children* (Fig. 4.8). Along with *The Leaping Feline,* it remains one of the two most indelible outcomes of the Tanahairku[9] Project in

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[9] *Tanahairku*, in Malay, translates to "My Homeland".

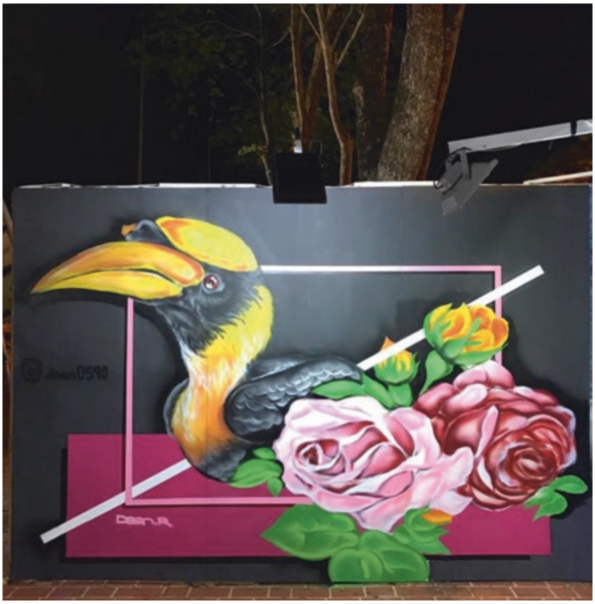

@dean0590
Dean.R

Fig. 4.7 Hornbills. (Source: dean590)

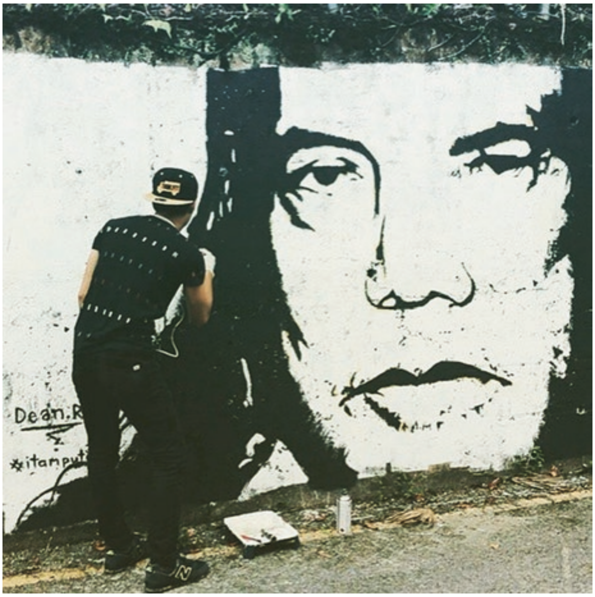


Fig. 4.6 SARIP. (Source: dean590)

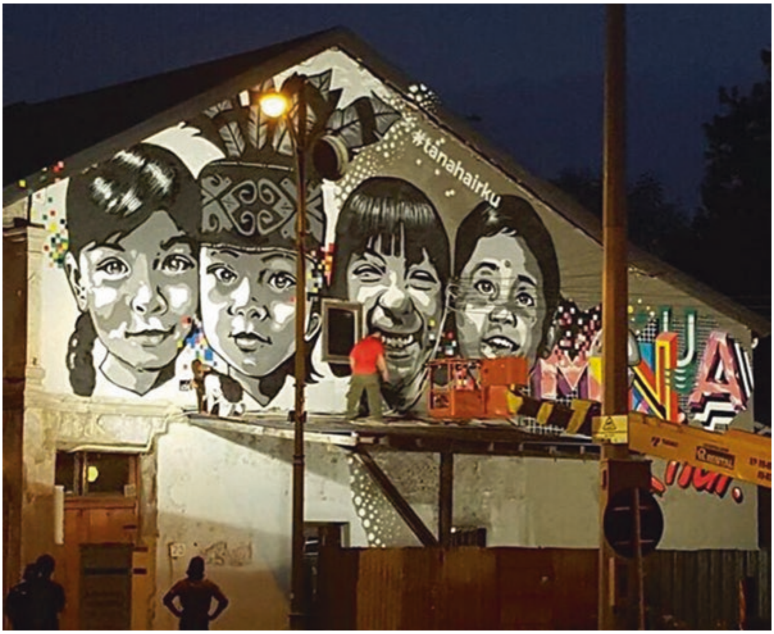


Fig. 4.8 Children. (Source: ameysheikhali & dean590)

Kuching, 2015. Sponsored by the national oil corporation, the mural depicts children of four local ethnicities.

4.5.2 *The Commercialist*

Tagging and graffiti are not the only starting points for drawing on walls. Akin to the hobbyist, love and training in drawing and painting (taught as *Seni Lukis*, or 'Art' in schools) can lead to requests from acquaintances to decorate their homes, as artsydaphy found out when asked in 2013 to paint an American icon on bedside walls of a house that was, both, new and – in the artist's eyes – very expensive (Fig. 4.9). Starting with uncertainty and trepidation, her reaction on its completion was, nevertheless, "Wow, I did it!" (DS-Q04). The bulk of her work now comprises enhancing commercial properties, metaphorically giving life to brick and mortar as in, for example, depicting animals on the façade of a pet shop (Fig. 4.10).

As a commercialist (my term) she had to double up with freelancing for a couple of years before resigning her salaried job with tears to launch a full time career with "murals, portraits, digital illustrations, a little bit of graphic design and … content on YouTube" (DS-01). Diversity of products and the importance of social media are paramount for this "main income… 9-6, Mon-Sat" endeavour (DS-16). Harnessing Instagram for constant dissemination of personal presence, she offers "Yeah, we get

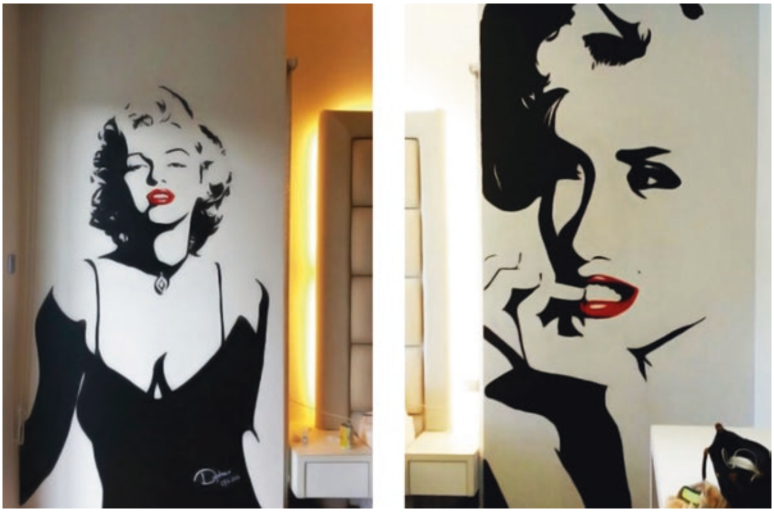


Fig. 4.9 #53 Marilyn Monroe Mural. (Source: artsydaphy, 2019)

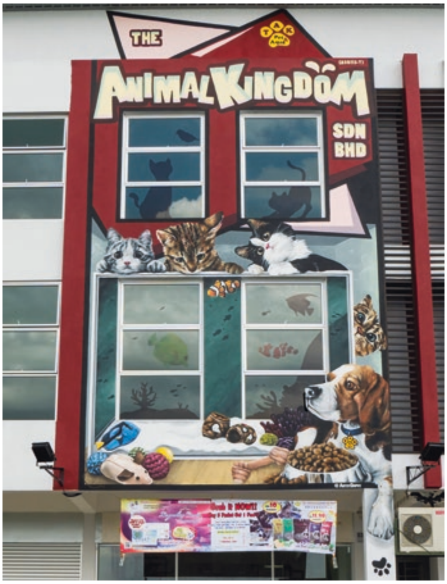


Fig. 4.10 Animal Kingdom (For a video recording of the painting and installation process of Animal Kingdom, see https://www.instagram.com/p/Ba5_CXpgGa2/). (Source: artsydaphy, 2017)

tagged on Instagram" in answer to "Have you had any responses from tourists to your work?" (DS-07). Her followers currently number 2,210 (instagram.com/artsydaphy/, accessed 2020.04.26, 1442h).

Foregoing doubts were probably unfounded with the steady inflow of commissions as commercial outlets appeared to be increasingly aware of the customer attraction qualities (if not the beauty and space-place enhancement effect) of wall murals. Clients sometimes requested for subsequent additions to completed murals as a show of patriotism as, e.g. the diver in Feast & Furious was added on when a Sarawakian diver became the first Malaysian woman to win an Olympic medal – a bronze in the 10 m platform at the 2012 Olympics (Fig. 4.11).

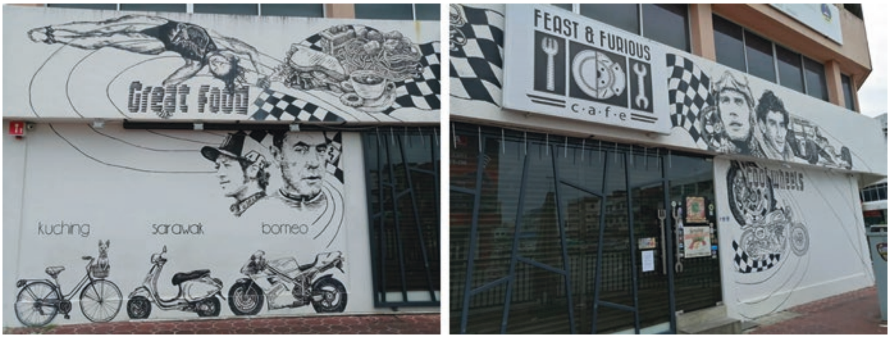


Fig. 4.11 Feast & Furious. (Source: Author, 2019)

Reflecting on locality-character for tourism, she perceives that her art indirectly represents (Sarawak) culture although her "take is a little more modern but mostly still with some Sarawakian elements". It's a hybrid formulation suggesting that something local is "progressing like the rest of the world", and that even traditional, indigenous art "can still adapt to modern architecture, interiors and tastes in general" (QS-10). She relegates differentiation from the rest of the world to "growing up with our climate and culture" (DS-11) bringing in a sense of the environment as an art ingredient. Thus, constructed environments in Kuching, where she is based, can be the subject for line work that documents the street elevation of a row of pre-war shop houses facing the Sarawak River on the banks of which this state capital is built. Commissioned strictly for commercial purposes by the prestigious Waterfront Hotel its value may be seen in how it was later protected with sheet glass (Fig. 4.12).

In the best sense of the term, commercialists render a professional service to profit motivated concerns. To her credit artsydaphy is not short on clientele; but, tellingly, the urge to transgress onto community art, or art with a cause, is not a temptation, and this is perhaps a rubric to differentiate artists who do not navigate between personas from those who do.

Amy.amin qualifies as a commercialist – and only just – on the occasion of being sought out via Facebook to "decorate" a guest house. Beyond that it is a wonder that art and agendas find space in the life of this young "wife, a mother, a student currently pursuing my degree in Communication" to "produce arts & merchandises" (AA-Q16). Not one to turn away the steady stream of wall-art commissions, she brands herself as a full-time, Kuching-based artist who's been actively involved in the local art scene since 2013. Presently a core team-member of 9livesborneo (discussed in Sect. 4.5.3) and distinguishing herself with a trademark of cats fused with galactic elements, her most recognisable mural is the joint effort with

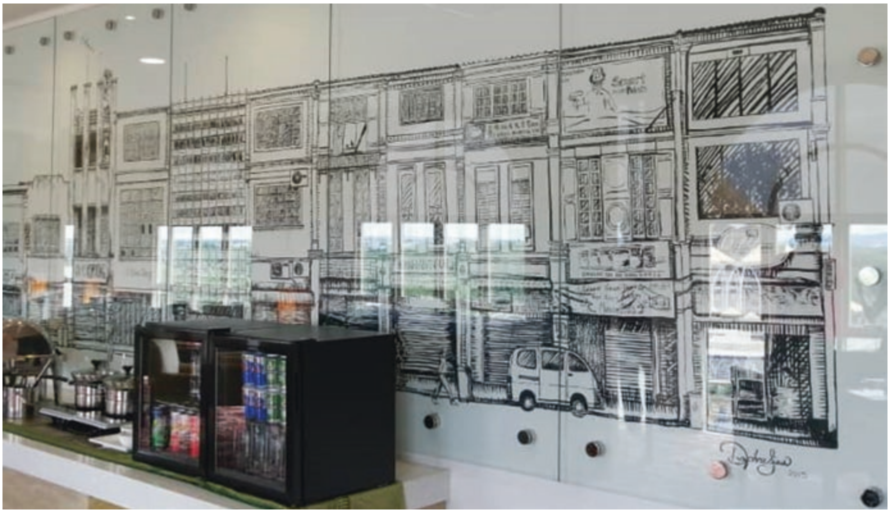


Fig. 4.12 Waterfront Shophouses. (Source: Author, 2019)

Sonialuhong described earlier (Fig. 4.4). The hybrid cat-and-clouded leopard with indigenous headdress amidst stylised, East Asian clouds is totally in keeping with her first commission for a city-centre guesthouse where animals, again, transcend biological stratification to assume identities of adventurers in a reality that "is about cats going out for outdoor activities such as camping, kayaking, and climbing" (Fig. 4.13).

The needs and perceptions of tourists do bear significantly on her murals. The popularity of GoREST Guesthouse as backdrop for goodbye-self/wefies and the constant requests for repeat-themes have moulded a conviction that tourism does affect her art. There is a subtle pressure to stay with cat themes. Sojourning astro-cats notwithstanding (Fig. 4.14) Sarawak culture remains the primer that cannot be precluded. Beyond client-contentment is an underpinning personal philosophy: "Wall art has (an) important part (to play) in delivering a message – or conveying an idea – the same time (that it acts) as a decor to the space. Most of my murals were created with specific theme(s) such as unity between different races in Sarawak, the awareness and importance of wildlife conservation, and the importance of education" (AA-Q06).

In the traffic of people, currency and tourist experience, where tourists hunt down her murals for photo opportunities - thus bringing business "to nearby shops" - amy.amin is intentionally clear on her motives: "I want people to be happy when they look at my art. But there are some people (who) hate my drawings. There are also some people confused by my art (while others) love my art. But I honestly appreciate the different feedback as it helps me grow and improve myself" (AA-Q09).

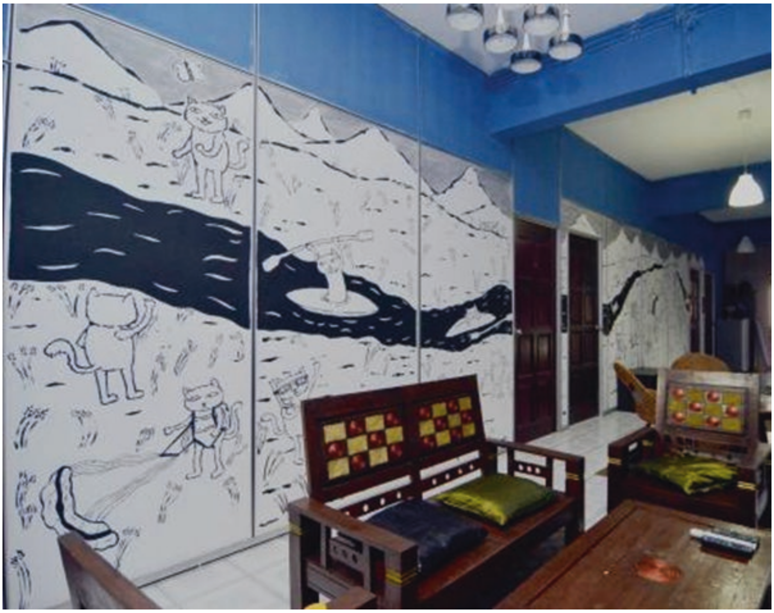
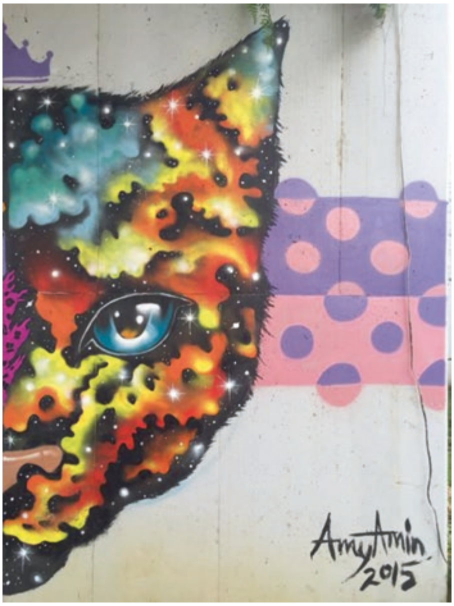


Fig. 4.13 GoREST Guesthouse. (Source: amy.amin)

Fig. 4.14 Kucing Angkasa, 2015. (Source: amy.amin)


AmyAmin
2015

In plotting a future, she lists (i) curating exhibitions with her art collective, and (ii) conducting art classes and workshops, with (iii) doing an art residency that ends with a solo exhibition (AA-Q21).

4.5.3 The Graffitist

While hobbyists and commercialists invariably toe the line, operating within socially acceptable and statutory norms graffitists are quite the opposite. A certain forceful attitude seems to be a prerequisite, if the voice of Sarawakian's lead writer is considered. "I am d2kzuhairin (d2k). I am the founder of 9lives", the participant opens his written response, unequivocal about his status as the head of 9lives-borneo, a loose collective of graffitists based in Kuching. With 2,620 posts and 1,898 followers on his own Instagram account (instagram.com/d2kzuhairin/, accessed 2020.04.26, 1707h) - relatively profuse in this genre locally - his reputation as the originator of this contemporary (albeit imported) trend is not easily refuted. Gentle mannered, with a slight air of seriousness, he came across as one immensely likeable at our three-hour interview and walking tour.

It is not difficult to accept his suitability as leader of the pack, the glue that keeps the movement intact with identity, particularly when we consider his own attitude towards graffiti. Among the gathering of artists researched d2kzuhairin possessed the strongest "devil-may-care" and counter cultural approach. The off-beat, if not anti-establishment, perspective evolved from a zany, initiatory street art – painted literally on the street surface – of college days in 2011 (Fig. 4.15) with the attendant comment: "Happy days… One day as a legend. I'll do it again one fine day… #artrebels #tb #memories", posted in July 2013. If any symbolic starting point[10] is needed for Sarawakian street art or muralling then this must surely be it. It lasted a day before the unsolicited "*vandalistic*" energy – encouraged by only a lone lecturer in the art faculty – was erased with black paint.

Annoyed but undeterred ("Why doesn't the faculty spend their energies on artistic output instead of sports…?") this would soon lead to his first try out on the city streets, in which the multivalent words, "*anok jak*", were seen for the first time. Teaming up with twenty_fifth his first venture (Fig. 4.16) is the quintessential graffitist work – spray work on an urban, concrete siding (a "wrong place", as he describes it) "doing a street art using any resources we had at that time. It was a leftover (bit of) paint after some event" (HZ-Q03).

The free and individualistic spirit is starkly discernible from his interview answers. From first encounters came the notion of fun and an urge to "do it". This

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[10] As opposed to the 'symbolic' the 'chronological' dates of the first mural post on Instagram of each artist discussed in these findings are (using date format, yyyy.mm.dd): twenty_fifth (2012.11.23), d2kzuhairin (2013.07.04), amy.amin (2014.01.29), ameysheikhali (2014.05.05), dean590 (2015.01.15), jagung19911991 (2015.04.06), leonardsiawartart (2015.08.31), artsydaphy (2015.11.16), aaroncwl (2017.06.09), sonialuhong (2018.05.20).

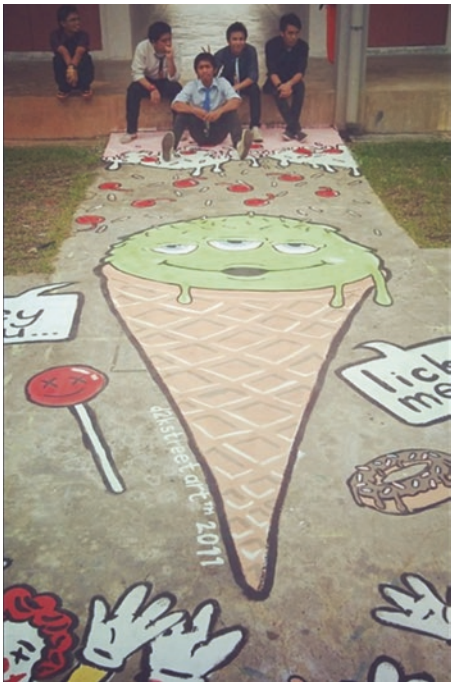


Fig. 4.15 I Scream Melting. (Source: d2kzuhairin, 2013, July 4)

has ossified into a quiet confidence, an insulation that permits the doing of what he does. Unperturbed by negative responses to his body of work – from tourist responses who say that "it was something weird and probably it's just me and my own way of doing art" – he is quick to state that "my art is my art… every artist has their own identity and style" in response to the question of whether his wall art is different from international art (HZ-Q11). In the atmosphere of such outer rumblings he verbalises the experience of an intimate psychic distance: "(I) really enjoy it, and it feels really satisf(ying) the moment your colours (make) contact with the walls" (HZ-Q04). Questioned why he chose a particular piece of work (Fig. 4.17) to best represent his passion and beliefs, he retorted with "Why? Because I don't care what people say, and keep doing what I'm doing" (HZ-Q17) - a stance that would delight any subscriber of the notion that art belongs to the free spirited. And he takes some pains to clarify that "*anok*" in the Sarawakian vernacular means "tease" or "scold", while "*jak*" is an acronym for "*Jangan Ambil Kesempatan*" – "Do not take advantage": It's a plea for viewers of his murals not to be overly critical, as it would be received as taking advantage of artists who are sharing their emotions and talent freely and vulnerably. At a cryptic level *Anok Jak* is also an acronym for "*Aku Nak Orang Kita Jangan Ambil Kesempatan*" – "I want our people not to take advantage".

The message in art is important to d2kzuhairin, as are human relationships. "Any wall would do for me. What matters the most is what we want to tell in the visual – the message we are trying to (communicate)" (HZ-Q06). So what is he communicating, particular in the tourist space? It is not immediately clear. Perhaps it is an

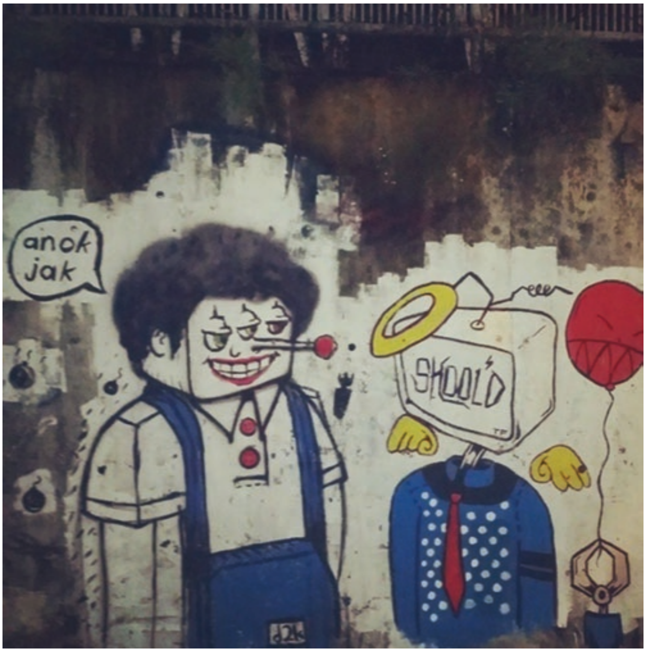
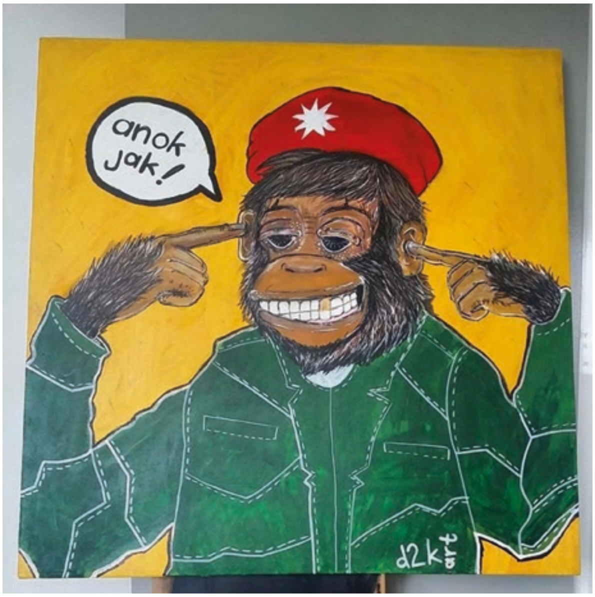

anok jak
SKOOL'D
d2k

Fig. 4.16 Behind Wrong Place. (Source: d2kzuhairin)

Fig. 4.17 Unknown. (Source: d2kzuhairin)

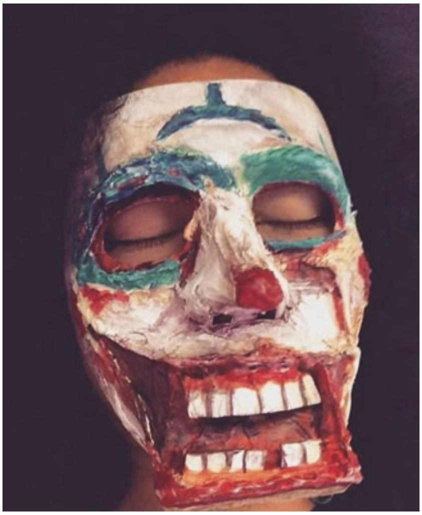

anok jak!
d2k art

emotion. His intersection with touristic aims is laudable, even if a bit idealistic: "… street art is like a piece of memory that (tourists) can keep in a photo or (something) to be there yourself to experience it … Art is very subjective and people will always have different thoughts. I just wanted people to think, open up your mind. (To tourism) my art contributes beauty … of art filled with colours, images (that) can attract people and bring people together" (HZ-Q08-10). His meanings are, perhaps, open to interpretation, merely an invitation to reflect upon.

His commitment to art is unabated. He doesn't appear to be waiting for a big break. The proverbial art version of the rookie waiter temporarily at tables, awaiting, is not an accurate analysis of his ambitions. His future hope seems altruistic rather than selfish as he says that it is to spread "… good vibes and positive minds so that art can be a (respectable and viable) career for the future (HZ-Q21). And meanwhile, while not waiting at tables, he does "do graphic designs, events, and some other services like shoe cleaning or whatever I can do" – and that includes his enduring passion of mask-making. Helped out by a dear friend while going through a bad patch he gifted the friend with a creation of glue sticks melted with candle and then coloured (Fig. 4.18).

While d2kzuhairin grew up in Sabah and has worked in Hong Kong, he chose to return to his city of birth in East Malaysia "because I miss Kuching". His compatriot from first-mural days, twenty_fifth, however, migrated to West Malaysia for employment. Still somewhat an art-life on the periphery, twenty_fifth is unambiguous about what he does: "…what I do is called graffiti" (TF-Q02). A self-acknowledged backup component of 9livesborneo (who only makes up the numbers when called upon), the 28-year-old major in illustration now works in event management in Kuala Lumpur. While most of his body of work is in Kuching he responded to my interview by representing his identity with his first piece in Kuala Lumpur, a weekend freelance foray that meets no employer objection (Fig. 4.19).

Fig. 4.18 Payaso, Sept 2017. (Source: d2kzuhairin)



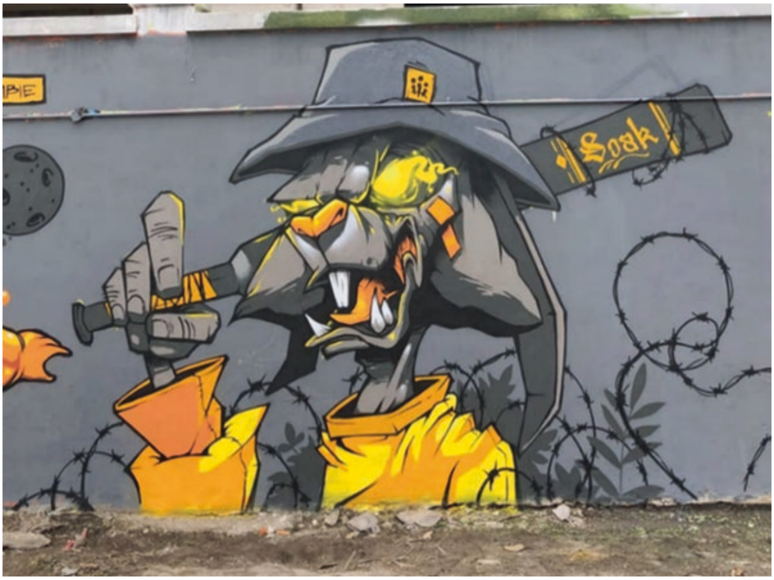


Fig. 4.19 The Ampang Park Rabbit. (Source: twenty_fifth)

Adamant that every wall art in every city is differentiated by its own uniqueness, helping to “attract people,” he is unsure how his might contribute to tourism other than knowing that “in Kuching we get a lot of positive response from the locals and also the tourists” (TF-Q05). He senses that he is making an impact with “a lot of response from tourists… when they saw us doing our piece they get excited and start taking pictures” (TF-Q07). In a sense I would number among the enthusiasts as, on seeing the image, I messaged him “Btw, your piece is really awesome!” – soliciting a respectful retort, “Tq sir.” The reverent tone with street-quick grammar is typically Asian.

With talent and intelligence, and aware of the movements of street art in the region by citing the fact that, in Asia, Indonesia and China already have their own annual international events it is curious that he is unsure of what his graffiti art contributes to tourism: “When I do a piece, in my head I’m only think(ing) of expressing myself (through) my art (to) share it with (the) public” (TF-Q10). Surprisingly, he feels he hasn’t any work to be proud of yet, although it is nevertheless heartening that he notices the growing recognition of his identity “because of the rabbit and glowing eyes as my trademark” (TF-Q17). In the light of his present development it is understandable that he doesn’t see his work as contemporary art although he’s “trying my best to fit into Asian contemporary art” (TF-Q18 & 19).

Parental pressure is another sub-influence shaping Sarawak street art. Artists who do not forsake being bohemian, yet cannot sustain the bohemian life, may have to morph their declared status and identity from graffitist to muralist. Ameysheikhali is an example. He started wall art as a graffitist but “today I look upon myself as a muralist”. Having co-created *Children* (Fig. 4.7) with dean590 he appears to have

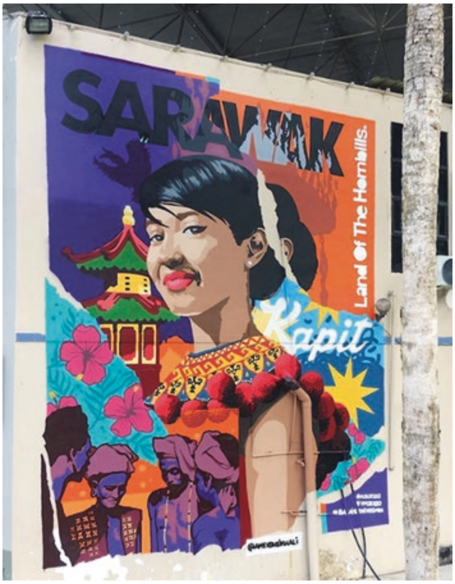


Fig. 4.20 Gambong 2019. (Source: ameysheikhali)

now geared onto institutional agendas with *Gambong 2019* (Fig. 4.20) a mural sponsored by the National Visual Art Gallery in a tourist-space-creating programme-of-insertion in preparation for Visit Malaysia Year 2020. Incontextual self-expressions of formative days have here given way to symbolism in literalism - the dominant subject in tribal costume, the national flower, a Chinese pagoda, 'Sarawak', 'Land of Hornbills', and a yellow star straight out of the Malaysian flag - in an appeal to the tourist that is anything but incontextual.

The import of 9livesborneo cannot be overestimated. This collective will have an unshakeable place in the history of street art in Sarawak. Akin to a fellowship of warriors, they are fighting for a space for expression against oppositions as real or mundane as under-appreciation of art or the need to make a living.

4.5.4 The Patron-Artist

Being most cited with reverence by his peers in my interviews, leonardsiawartart is indisputably at the forefront of Sarawak street art. With a realist style, he propelled local street art into the international scene by representing Malaysia for the first time at the Benalla Wall to Wall Festival, Victoria, Australia, 2018. The personal narrative he infused his entry with, and the weight of emotion that colour his recounting, set him apart as an artist for which patronage is not unjustified. As he describes *Fishing Fun* (Fig. 4.21) in his colloquial English,

> *The place where they held the festival is 2.5 h drive from Melbourne. Basically it's a village … in the country. I'm a country boy, too. I grew up in my grandmother's* kampung

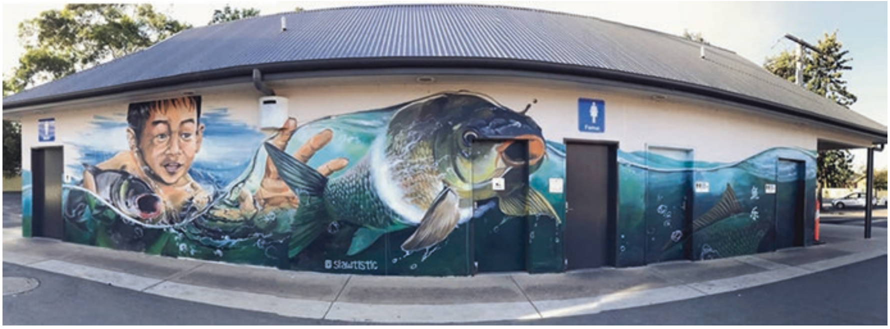


Fig. 4.21 Fishing Fun. (Source: leonardsiawart, 2018)

> *(village). She and her sons – my uncles – used to own a fish farming business. So during my childhood days, fish farming business is very fun for me because during the harvest festival they always switch on the spotlight, blast it on the pool, release the water – so that it's full of mud – and* (and here his pace quickens) *the fish jumping here and there! Back in those days, '80s kids got not much entertainment like now, so during the harvest festival all, like, we take off our clothes, leaving one underwear – like* kampong *mar, you now! Then we jump in the pool and catch the fish. That's how I got my memory. On the other hand, back to the Wall to Wall Festival held in Benalla which is also a kampong, this is how I got the idea to paint my self-portrait on the wall. I'm a kampong boy and Benalla is also a kampong. Somehow they have the inter-relation … and co-incidentally, that wall is a public toilet wall. Usually after my uncle catch all the fish they will put it on the floor outside the toilet so that we can calculate how many heads before send to the wet market. So when I looked at the toilet wall, immediately that memory keyed into my head, so I decided to paint that piece on the wall. I am there to spread such joy to the village.* (He smiles widely now as he narrates) *And one of the* (Benalla) *villagers told me, "The boy is actually talking to me!" Then I said, "Oh, really! Oh it's quite happy to know that!" It means, in a way, my street art delivers such effect: It's able to communicate with people. The boy on the wall is me, from a photograph I have.* (Interview transcript.)

A street artist cannot survive on festival invitations alone though they catapult them irrefutably to the top rung of recognisability. In the case of leonardsiawartart it consolidated his already firm position with prominent societal personalities at home base. Among other patrons is the neighbourhood committee of a central portion of heritage Kuching. For them he has completed a series of four murals documenting (or memorialising, as he says) the "sunset businesses" such as metal crafting, textile trading, soy-drink selling, coffee-brewing and cuttlefish-roasting, etc. – disappearing trades he perceives as an entrepreneurial spirit immortalised in *The Original Flame* (Fig. 4.22).

The value of patronage cannot be underestimated, although the artist admits that choice of content and form of depiction are (consequently) a compromise between patron agendas and artist vision. Backed by an influential civic person related to the India Street Committee it has resulted in brushwork realism that documents the cultural heritage (some still living, as in a 40-year-old metal worker) of a Colonial past. The patron-artist relationship influencing content is significant. The late, textile-trading grandfather of the civic person is depicted powerfully on a gable wall at

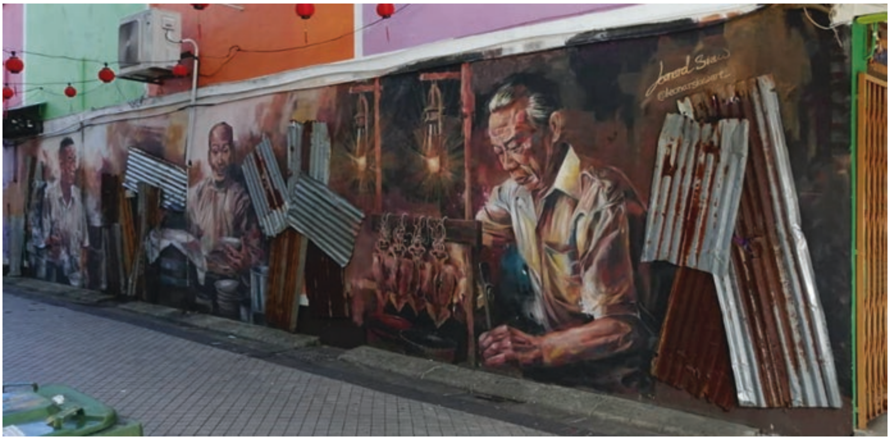


Fig. 4.22 The Original Flame. (Source: author, 2019)

a strategic junction of old Kuching: The choice (not begrudged by the artist) was the "client's". Accompanying the Chinese gentleman as subject is his Indian business neighbour. The archiving of social history in this contemporary art is a direct response to place-making.

Economic necessities are no less emphatically felt by full time patron-artists, but it is perhaps their singularity of stylistic vision that makes them differ from the straightforward commercialist. It may be the reason why muralling in cafes and other commercial places with an identifiable consistent realism continue to bracket leonardsiawartart's portfolio that contains, essentially, socio-historio narratives. Articulate and attentive in conversation – with the occasional wit in nomenclature – it is not unfathomable why he not only survives but leads in the Sarawakian street art scene. *Paw*(pour) *the Wine* (2015) and *Dangerous Waite*r (2019) are his first and latest paint-to-commissions (Figs. 4.23 and 4.24, respectively).

Close on leonardsiawartart's heels – if not already an established practitioner in his own right – is jagung1991, based in Sibu. Perhaps best known for his hyper-realism, particular applying to town names as civic icons, he has iconised his hometown of Sibu, the nearby Sarikei, and Miri, the largest town of the three, with the shiny balloon style inspired by hugeart and fanakapan (Fig. 4.25). In 2018, a layering of line work of local buildings against a rotated figure ground of the Mona Lisa (Fig. 4.26) won him a placing to succeed leonardsiawart in Benalla 2019.

Before arriving at this high point in a fulltime career that started in May 2015 he had traversed the full gamut of street art practices – from graffiti to political statements to decoration of food and beverage outlets, gallery pieces and, more recently, spray art workshops – the range an inarguable evidence of passion and commitment to what is often regarded as a nebulous art career. His largest piece, The Humanist, is later discussed under the section, The Institutionist.

On completing what he acknowledges as the most representative of his art and philosophy is his Malaysian submission in a narrow alley in Victoria, Australia in

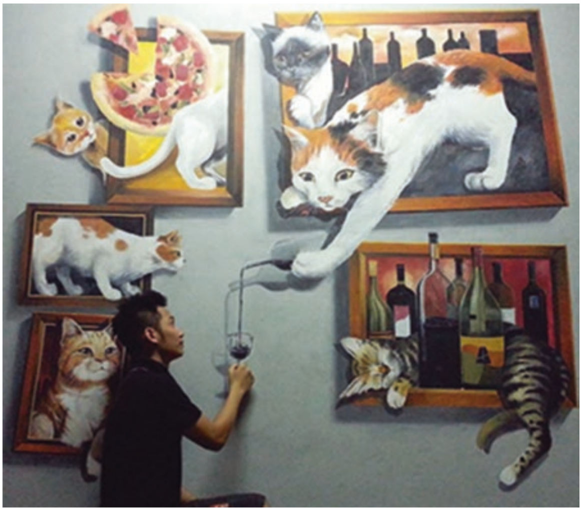


Fig. 4.23 Paw(pour) the Wine. (Source: leonardsiawartart, 2015)

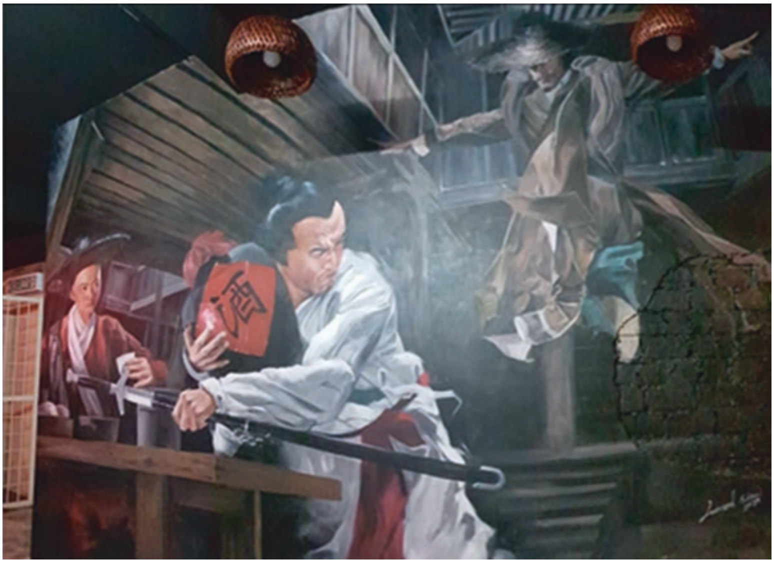
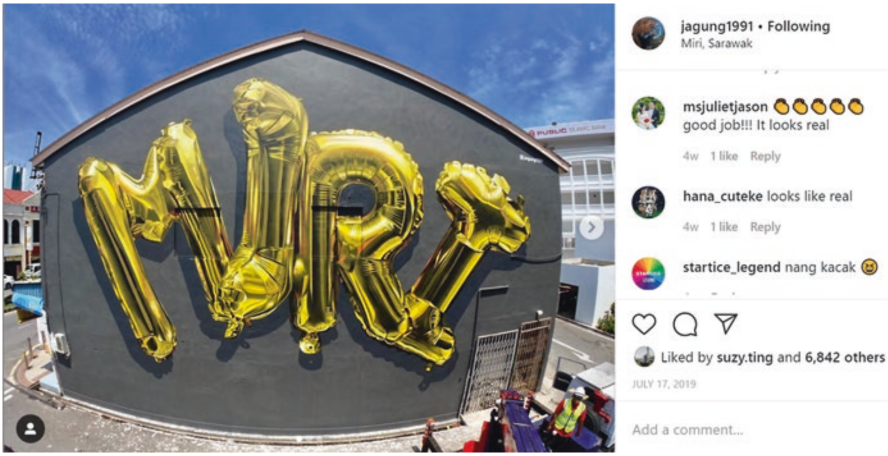


Fig. 4.24 Dangerous Waiter. (Source: leonardsiawartart, 2019)

April 2019 (Fig. 4.27). His proud sharing on Instagram, accompanied by an exemplary self-declaration, sums up his experience in a tone that is as angst-soaked (relative to his predecessor's) as it is informative and moving.

> *From the composition of this wall you can see the two sides of a painter. That painter is me. I want the painting to interpret the difficult trials I ha(ve) faced in the past four years, from having a low comprehension of everything to hav(ing) the opportunity to draw my own*


jagung1991 • Following
Miri, Sarawak

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good job!!! It looks real
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Add a comment...

Fig. 4.25 Miri Balloon. (Source: jagung1991, 2019)

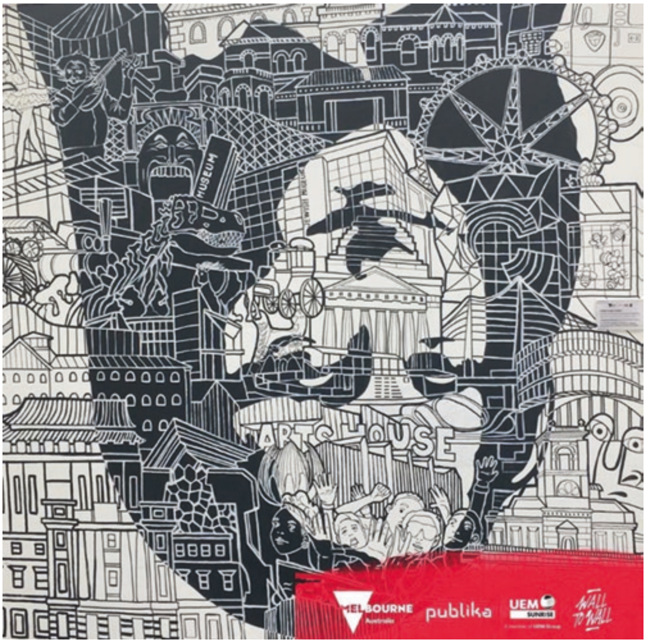

Fig. 4.26 Ambiguous Art. (Source: jagung1991, 2018)

masterpiece in Melbourne. This is a milestone that I have never imagined since the beginning, because it is neither simple nor conventional to nurture the survival of this art in a place like Sarawak. It is a fantasy come to life! I am desperately creating art works and paintings, entirely for my family, friends, and guests to see my growth and affirm the value

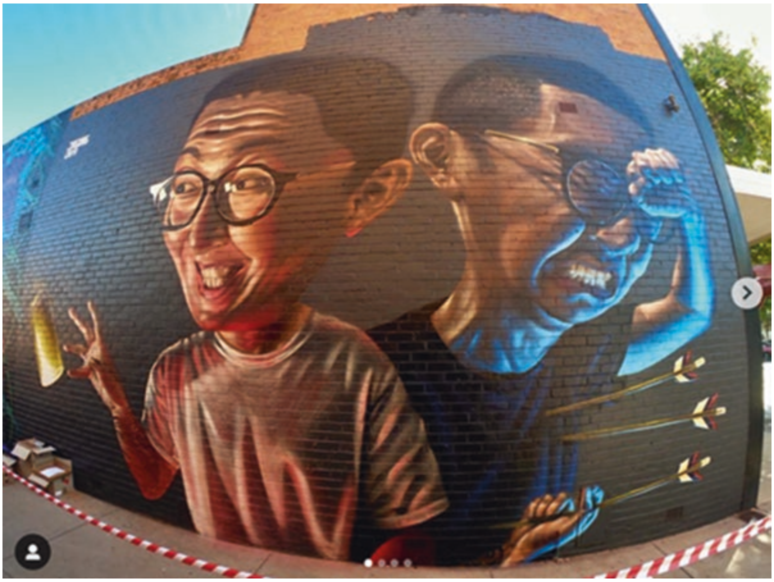

Fig. 4.27 One minute of performance on stage, 10 years of hard work off stage. (Source: jagung1991, 2019)

> *of art. In May 2015, I officially became a full-time artist. At that time, I was able to develop this industry with all my strength and motivation till I became the first person to be a full-time muralist! Since this path, I have relied on the guidance of no mentor to improve my own deficiencies. I improve(d) mostly by self-study or observing or listening to other art workers and friends on what they do differently. The guidance of no mentor does go a long way, because it takes a lot of martyrdom, but the martyrdom experience (with) different customers, the pressure of the media, the expectations of parents, the source of economy, and etcetera are necessary. These (show) the perseverance and persistence of each painter, and (that) the so-called ideas determine the solutions! I enjoy the process of painting every time. Although my body is exhausted, my heart is always fulfilled and satisfied! The audience of my murals may just spend a few minutes watching the experience and taking pictures, but each piece is the result of how many twists and turns the painter has experienced. This is also (an illustration of) a Chinese expression that is defined as the one-minute on-stage performance that is worked for ten years off-stage.*[11]

Who can deny the artist's conviction and commitment to his art in a narrative like that? The narrator would have us believe that he had undergone a baptism by fire and trials that would have broken the backs of lesser mortals. The self-confessed existential tension between pain and pleasure places him well within the fold of art pioneers across art genres and forms in Sarawak. "Art is my life, my life is art (艺术生活化, 生活艺术化)" was his answer to "What part does wall art play in your life?" (JG-Q06).

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[11] (https://www.instagram.com/p/Bwo7rSMhPZK/, accessed 13 Jun. 19).

4.5.5 The Institutionalist

Replacing dilapidated concrete-block fencing in the centre of Sibu town with sturdier plastered brick (Fig. 4.28) gave the caretaking organisation of a Muslim cemetery the idea that decoration and messaging might be delightful purposes benefitting both the sacred property and the public thoroughfare it fronts. Thus, led by a people's representative, the Board of the Islamic Welfare Trust invited well-nigh all the local governmental agencies (governmental departments, secondary schools, colleges, NGOs, etc.) to take up wall segments which came with RM1,500 subsidies to facilitate execution of each wall art. Save for the condition that the nature of the art should be Islamic, no other constraints were stipulated. Information comes from interviews with the team leaders of two of the wall murals. The following selection from the 53 murals provides a notion of the effect of this ribbon of art in the public realm.

An analysis of the 53-piece collection via the criteria of (i) presence of text (ii) language of text, (iii) type of message, and (iv) content of message presents the following finding:

- All but one mural have text.
- The language in each of the 52 murals with text is 71% Malay, 15% English, and 2% Chinese, with the remaining 12% comprising dual languages from the three languages mentioned.
- Of all the 53 messages (or graphical depictions if there were no text) just over half, 51%, are typologically religious and Islamic, e.g. Murals 34 & 45 (Fig. 4.29) while the remaining are civic (23%) educational (17%) and social (9%) in nature.

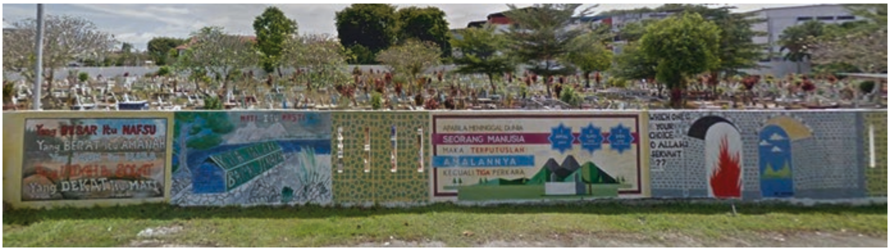
Yang BESAR Itu NAFSU
Yang BERAT Itu AMANAH
Yang MUDAH Itu BOLAT
Yang DEKAT Itu MATI
APABILA MENINGGAL DUNIA
SEORANG MANUSIA
MAKA TERPUTUSLAH
AMALANNYA
KECUALI TIGA PERKARA
WHICH ONE IS YOUR CHOICE O ALLAH SEKUAT ??

Fig. 4.28 Sibu Cemetary Wall with Mural 19 to Mural 22. (Source: Google Maps, 2019)

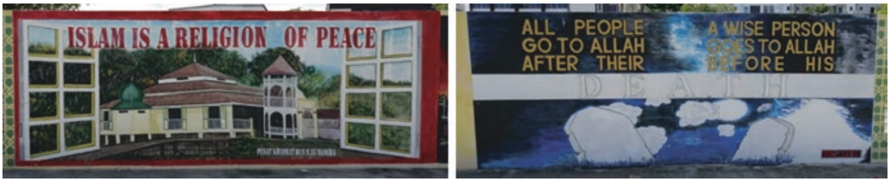
ISLAM IS A RELIGION OF PEACE
ALL PEOPLE GO TO ALLAH AFTER THEIR
A WISE PERSON GOES TO ALLAH BEFORE HIS
DEATH

Fig. 4.29 Murals 34 & 45. (Source: Author, 2019)

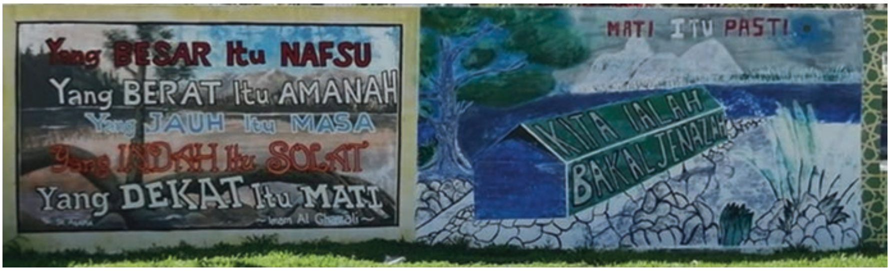

Fig. 4.30 Murals 19 and 20. (Source: Author, 2019)

- Message content is almost, majorly, reminders of the pre-eminence of the after-life (43%), e.g. Mural 19 & 20 (Fig. 4.30); and calls to be good citizens (40%). The remaining 17% bear notes to enjoy life.

What would viewers (locals and tourists alike) feel on experiencing this public display? In the words of a female, non-Muslim, mural leader interviewed in a separate series, residents felt that the murals were "scary" and they were "frightened, they don't dare to drive past (at) the beginning of the project, but now (the) scenario is ok, since people (have got) used to it already". Further, the response of tourists is (to this respondent) unknown, although it is reckoned that "(not many) tourists spend time to visit the murals" (KR-P09). Another mural leader, on the other hand, male and Muslim, had no criticism about emotional effects. Rather, he merely mentioned the unfortunate lack of artistic cohesion that has resulted in a *rojak*[12] (random mix). Significantly, in responding to the question, "In your opinion, to what extent did the project meet the objectives of the organiser(s)?" he records two objectives with differing achievements: "To spread the message about living a good life before death, and life after death – Yes. To beautify – Not really" (ND-P03).

The alternative value of institutionalised street art – if the festivals now going into its third year is a barometer – can be in the extent it reflects the cultural differentiation in a multicultural context, and could in fact be the peculiarity that endears a place to the 'other'. For closing, the first respondent states, "I wish (that) the organiser(s) can really take care (of) the public's feelings and respond (accordingly) as we (all) live under one roof. Respecting is very important (KR-P10); while the second, "(In future, they) can have a certain theme which can actually give out positive messages to remind (us) about (the) good life rather than about death" (ND-P08). Cemetery murals – tracts though they may be to many others – can in a way (according to him) be considered street art in "that they do have messages to be told to the public in an open setting, viewable to the public" (ND-P06).

While the purpose and consequence of institutionalist murals can be variously perceived, in the vision of the less religious they may result in notable people-centred images as evidenced in the largest mural in Sarawak, painted by

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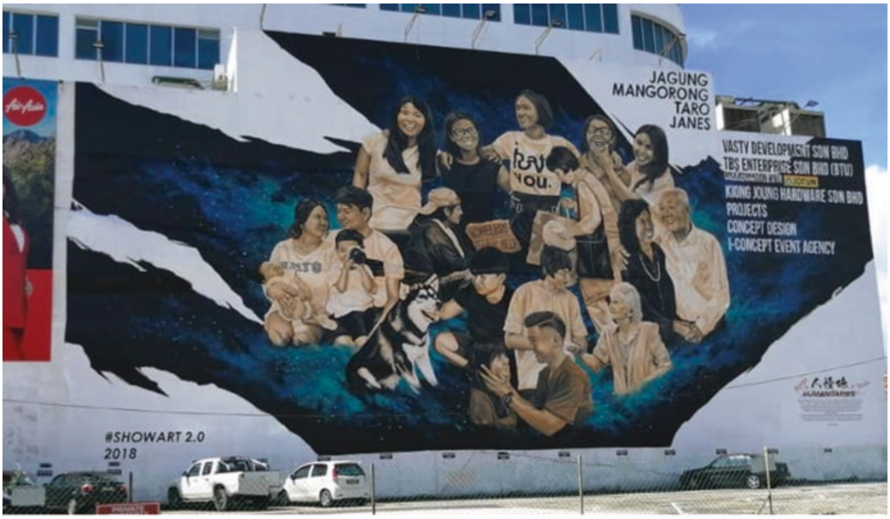
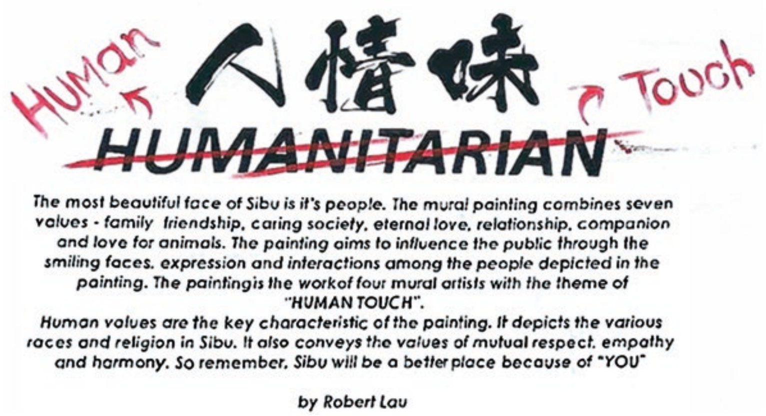
[12] *Rojak* is a tossed Malaysian fruit salad mixed with prawn paste.


JAGUNG
MANGORONG
TARO
JANES
VASTY DEVELOPMENT SDN BHD
TBS ENTERPRISE SDN BHD (BTU)
KIONG XIUNG HARDWARE SDN BHD
PROJECTS
CONCEPT DESIGN
I-CONCEPT EVENT AGENCY
#SHOWART 2.0
2018


人情味

Human Touch

~~HUMANITARIAN~~

The most beautiful face of Sibu is it's people. The mural painting combines seven values - family friendship, caring society, eternal love, relationship, companion and love for animals. The painting aims to influence the public through the smiling faces, expression and interactions among the people depicted in the painting. The paintingis the workof four mural artists with the theme of "HUMAN TOUCH".

Human values are the key characteristic of the painting. It depicts the various races and religion in Sibu. It also conveys the values of mutual respect, empathy and harmony. So remember, Sibu will be a betterplace because of "YOU"

by Robert Lau

Fig. 4.31 Largest Mural in Sarawak (top) with Mission Statement (bottom). (Source: Author, 2019)

jagung1991 in Sibu (Fig. 4.31). Commissioned by an affluent, community leader the footnoted explanation – an ode to humanitarianism – unabashedly declares a desire to influence society with "seven values – family, friendship, caring society, eternal love, relationships, companionship and love for animals" (Fig. 4.31). From the illustration of these two contransting endeavors it would appear that top down generation of street art tend to be didactic.

4.6 Summary Discussion

4.6.1 Defining Success: Politics, Control and Perception

Whether street art in Sarawak is a success is not in question. Most of the interviewers relate interest from tourists and locals, some spectating to mild distraction. While emotional responses may vary between tourists, what is incontestable is the noticeability of the product. Even the controversial cemetery walls of Sibu grow on public consciousness and acceptance with familiarity, with some saying that it is finally just a row of colour along the street. The Sibu street art series appear here to stay, as it finished its third run in 2019. Perhaps noting that the Benalla Street Art (in its 5th year) can draw tourists to a rural town of 14,000 people – with a piece in their inaugural festival, 2015, "voted 8th best in the world (and) earning international acclaim!"[13] – the Sibu local council aims to emulate such success for their relatively larger town of 248,000.

If the international festival is a model, then the idea of community benefit needs to be approached more rigorously with sponsors and wall hosts coaxed to lift the event beyond painting on mere plywood boards for quick disposal at festival end. The support of the tourism board is constant with the street art automatically featured in institutional marketing activities along with the more renown events such as the Rainforest Fringe Festival and the Rainforest World Music Festival.

Commercial entrepreneurs are perhaps the most consistent sustainer of street artists, with commissions to enhance their premises for customer increase, a demand that sees steady growth. This is evident particularly in the experience of jagung1991 and leonardsiawart. Corporate, public art statements (such as *Human Touch*, Fig. 4.31) or other projects of social responsibility (such as the *Tanahairku* project, Figs. 4.5 and 4.8) are as yet rare occurrences. And it appears that it will be the festival – in a more intensely funded manner, when it happens – that will establish the art form and its practitioners as legitimate culture producers to bring about place-evolution. Sarawak has yet to graduate from a place of the municipal street art event with local participants to an international destination for a multi-national street art festival. The process will be "successful" by empowering both artists and community in allowing mutually cooperative agency to shape their space legally – in the way they want. Citing studies in place-making and the making of place (Shaw and Montana 2016; Kolås 2004) Lew states that the definition of success "is a political economy question, with a focus on development, social change, control, and empowerment in the placemaking process" (2017, p. 460).

Art is very much an expression of the individual, and even if coteries are formed they exist like fraternities focused on a shared art form of which interpretations are as multifarious as there are personalities. Not so when institutions or corporations partake of the energy. The singlarity of imposed aims and agendas may then be foregrounded, often disparate from the artists' convictions. The Sarawakian experience does not appear to have encountered such disjuncture.

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[13] See Benalla Street Art at http://www.benallastreetart.com.au/aboutus

4.6.2 Story Content: Narrative and Production of Culture

The issue of whose story is being told is, quite rightly, a tussle between placemaking and worldmaking. It is about, both, content and contestations; and in a place like Sarawak the aberration from its West Malaysian counterpart is yet to hit our consciousness in a big way. The use of clichéd (though admirable) icons as a stamp of identity – the hornbill, the tendrilled flora, the *orang utan* and the Raffelsia flower – can be as loud as it is tired. It depends on the skill and spin of the artist. Less common is the clouded leopard, hence the unforgettable quality of *The Leaping Feline* (Fig. 4.4). And further in the grey are the trees, mountains and clouds that characterise the tropical haven that is Sarawak, as yet under-exploited, I feel. But these are all emblems of nature, and safe subjects.

Localised, there is the ubiquitous cat of Kuching town, and, even more specific, there are the historical characters of Little India in the heritage centre of Kuching, immortalised by leonardsiawart in his tetralogy of traders, tradesmen, craftsmen and boatmen. Literal and realist, perhaps, but in adding figurative and archival representations to the tourist space, it heightens narrative accessibility. Sibu has the main Foochow diaspora (a community originationg from Fujian, China) and the peculiarly Methodist dominance - vast repositories of narratives yet to be tapped.

In the cerebral and abstract arena, hybridity is the name of the game as influences come from all directions – movies (Figs. 4.9 and 4.24) ethnicities (Fig. 4.8) morphed species (Figs. 4.5, 4.14, 4.17, and 4.19) calligraphy (Figs. 4.20 and 4.25) and even, possibly, New Age spirituality (Figs. 4.15 and 4.16). Is Sarawak's story being told in it all? Conservative essentialists may not think so. Might a straightforward depiction of heritage (Figs. 4.3, 4.4, 4.7, 4.12, and 4.22) prove more representative of the place? Seekers for progressive expressions of traditionally formulated aesthetics may share the same disdain. The quintessential artist however, may disagree. Art for art's and the artist's sake may yet find a comfortable place in the Bornean landscape.

There appears to be an inclusive attitude as far as subjects – and hence, cultures – go. Ethnicities, media influences and art styles are embraced in their myriads. There is no obvious evidence of censorship or impositions of narratives at all. And this may be a scenario and milieu worth fighting for as the majority population of Sarawak – the First Peoples – are as yet in the process of being given greater presence in the national conversation. Ironically, it might be the anti-hegemonic direction of the graffitist that best mirrors that socio-political process. This isn't a wild imagining, for, in a sense, in absorbing and transforming all sorts of influences, the street artist may be one of the few activists engaged in an ontological struggle, one that makes worlds. The world, in the imagination of the muralists of Sarawak, seems to be one that is of and for Sarawakians in all its multitudinous variety. Some balancing wariness may not be out of place: Researchers have suggested that worldmaking may be "the 'very commonplace acts of *normalizing* and *naturalizing*' one preferred world view of people, places, and pasts over another" (Hollingshead et al. 2009, p. 431).

4.6.3 Place Making for Tourism: Identity of Person and Place for Tourism

In the final analysis, the brush strokes of art-life on the street paint a picture of an authentic place in the world as much as it unveils the personalities performing in a particular, geographic and cultural location. This research has attempted to be reflexive toward the artists' heartbeat as they negotiate a facet of life that fuses employment and mission, in many cases. While the artists may find contentment in the undisturbed practice of their art, the ever-present gaze of the tourist may sometimes disrupt the serendipity. It is not now possible to exist oblivious of the impingement of tourism in places where readily available visas and international transportation are a reality. If the preferred strategy is a compromise of mutual benefit then it is best to be aware of tourist-wants even if it does not imply succumbing to their every fancy. One of the biggest definitions of tourist wants – certainly so by the wide extant discourse – is that of the authentic place. We have to ask, therefore, if the muralists we have encountered are partaking in the making of places of authenticity, and how effectively they are doing so.

The artists are place makers, even if unintentionally so, if we premise that wall murals occupy a visual space in the urban fabric, impinging upon and altering it, giving it a previously non-existent character. Street art may be a cultural expression of great freedom, but place making, however, as a phenomenon, has strictures of its own; and street art needs to be understood for where it fits into the matrix of place classifications in tourism research. Understandably, because of the language of disadvantaged communities that gave rise to graffiti writing as the origin of street art – or perhaps *on account* of the need to redress the political imbalance – the language of the art finds dissonance with the upper middle class controllers of urban space, be they municipalities or business corporations. The person of colour working out of New York and the Iban-Malay spraying in Kuching, may both be writing what comes naturally, but when fame sets in, the protagonist may be compelled to be intentional in the message carried by their art. What should they say?

There is as yet no Sarawakian Street artist that may be termed "world famous" (if Instagram followers are an indicator[14]). Significantly it is the pair who represented the country in an international street art festival that lead in impact. Sarawakian street art comprises mainly graffiti and muralling, with the latter predominant. It is a relatively young art form in Sarawak, and few are its performers of import, and, additionally, they are youthful (in their late twenties and early thirties). In consequence street art has been described as still "fresh" and, less complimentarily, an "old model" borrowed from abroad (Interview transcript). How it can intersect with the search for local, or Bornean identity, to increase its localised authenticity in a postmodern counterstrike to lend a genuinely original dimension to world tourism is something a little beyond the full grasp of the representatives showcased so far. The desire exists, though the worth of that pursuit is a little hazy in the light of the real need not to lose sight of income generation. Helping Sarawak make a differentiated tourist place is therefore an indirect result of attending to the programmes of clients and sponsors – tempered simultaneously by personal preoccupations. It will be some time yet before an inner sense of security sets in sufficiently for seasoned artists to consider motives that might propel Sarawak to the fore as a place of unique aesthetics. Initiatives have already begun, nevertheless, such as that tabled by the artistically broader Borneo Art Collective in Kuching, for example.

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[14] Banksy's account records 6.7 million followers. In the Asian region, street artists with strong followings include jamesjeanart (Taiwan) 925 k followers; alexfacebkk (Bangkok) 46.8 k followers; t-w-o-o-n-e (Melbourne) 30.5 k followers; and xememex (Hong Kong) 14.2 k followers. Against this the top two Sarawakian artists are jagung1991 (Sibu) 20.6 k followers; and leonardsiawart (Kuching) 3.7 k followers. (All accounts accessed 28 November, 2019.)

Structuring itself as a "sharing platform with a vision to reconnect the missing narrative of Borneo with the world" the Borneo Art Collective are clearly focused on Bornean art as it sees "foreign values and culture" as the embedded condition it accosts in their hope "to recollect missing narratives, reconnect people, and re-educate the public about native art and culture" (Teo 2017, p. 23). While no muralist as yet counts in the gathering, the openness and visionary breath of this platform signal possibilities for aesthetic fertilisation to precipitate a stronger presence of Sarawakian art in the world.

"The main goal of our collective is to engage with artists across the island of Borneo – where we are based – to connect these creative people… giving Borneo the creative voice that has been silent for so long…" (ibid.). There is a hint of counter-culturalism that is not foreign to the genre of street art. Almost manifesto-like, the originator asserts that "if we are serious about evolving the narrative of contemporary Borneo art and culture… we need to be the evidence of what we believe, and what we believe is that, through conversing with the world, Borneo can turn itself into a destination for experimental art" (Teo 2019, p. 17).

4.7 Conclusion

The art-life on Sarawak's streets may be a construction by just 11 protagonists – with perhaps an equal number of supporting players (some, mere assistants who fill in the patches after delineations by the lead artist) – and hence any tree depicting the growth of Sarawakian street art-life can fairly be described in relative terms as a sapling. The crossings between artist categories for me extends the metaphor: It's more a *ficus* than a typical, tap-rooted, single-trunk growth – particularly that germination often starts by parasitizing on cracks in walls.

The variety of characters and personalities currently infused with street art-life is relatively limited (though not homogenous) and the tourist spaces in the process of being created are only beginning to give the state a unique, yet variegated, character. The patriotic fervour is evident, but the lure of a globalist, trend-induced sensibility undeniable.

This profile of an art-life is very much the sum total of subject-content, process-history and artist-personality - the trilogy of components having yet to garner sufficient recognition, to claim a narrative space for the reflection that it deserves. At time of writing the commissions keep flowing in, judging by the delays in response to my inquiries with the typical excuse of being 'busy with a project on site' or having 'been busy and only just returned from abroad' on completing one. As the shape of the tourist space described by mural art continues to morph as an outcome of youthful energy, it is also pertinent that we accept that the shelf life of street art is considerably shorter, and also more vulnerable, when compared to traditional, gallerybased artwork. Conversely, the idea of shelf life is also characterized by the continued emergence of freshness. Even now, as I write, Instagram posts by the participants of this study show wider forays with more dynamic and arresting narratives in images and videos. The need for periodic documentation of this tourist space, therefore, is imperative. This modest chapter seeks to contribute to that agenda.

Acknowledgements I am grateful to the artists who shared their stories for this research project and for granting their permission to use images of their work given to me or which I extracted from their Instagram accounts. To inspect more of their work you may access these urls:

https://www.instagram.com/9livesborneo/, https://www.instagram.com/aaron-cwl/, https://www.instagram.com/ameysheikhali/, https://www.instagram.com/amy.amin/, https://www.instagram.com/artsydaphy/, https://www.instagram.com/d2kzuhairin/, https://www.instagram.com/dean0590/, https://www.instagram.com/jagung1991/, https://www.instagram.com/leonardsiawart_/, https://www.instagram.com/sonialuhong/, https://www.instagram.com/twenty_fifth/.I am also grateful to Sarena Abdullah for invaluable comments on an earlier draft of this chapter. Errors and omissions, if any, are, naturally, all mine.

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Google Maps, Fig 28. Sibu Cemetery Wall. (Jalan Tun Abang Haji Openg, accessed 18 June 19).

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Part II

Contemporary Asian Art, Identities, Communities and Tourism

Chapter 5
Revisiting ‘Singapore’ on Tour at the Venice Biennale

Desmond Wee

Abstract More than ten years ago in 2009 at the 53rd *Venice Biennale* was the *Singapore Pavilion* in which the artist, Ming Wong, housed his exhibition entitled ‘Life of Imitation’. Aside from the fact that it was awarded ‘Special mention’, the celebration seemed to extend to discourses of ‘homecoming’ when ‘Singapore’ went *on tour* in Venice and eventually *returned* to Singapore. This coincided with the very contents of the reflexive art installation based on collections of various genre, exhibiting a kind of mimesis for its own sake, questioning the authenticity of an imagined past and the reliving of memory in how identities are made and remade. How does the experience of this artwork project the past onto the present, and the present onto the past, questioning the nature of identity amidst the culture of place? This paper situates the complexities of memory and nostalgia as displaced subjects and argues how touring and mobilities shape the reconstruction of meanings through the affordances of space and identity in contemporary Asian expressions of art. It contextualizes identity discourses and explores the connections between the re-imagination of a past, the remaking of memory and the deconstruction of national discourses. The research positions a reflexive and experiential self within the spaces of the exhibition and contemplates how they are used, experienced and performed through the use of photographs, documentaries and painting. What is imagined and represented through artform in a mobile and mutating cityscape is revealed through materiality in terms of the relations between artefact and audience, and emergent imaginaries instilled by cultural objects by ‘revisiting’ Ming Wong’s ‘Life of Imitation’.

Keywords Tourism · Memory · Nostalgia · Identity · Re-imagination · Singapore · Venice Biennale

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5.1 Introduction

In our contemporary age, in an age of mobilities of all sorts, cultural identities become mobile and morph with emergent spaces. What began as being ‘away from home’ in a normative tourism hermeneutic cycle of leaving home to a destination and then returning home, collapse when we have varied and emergent meanings for what home, belonging and identity are, what destination is and the complexities of processes in between. Through groundbreaking work on a de-territorialization of culture, Clifford’s (1997) notion of dwelling and travelling moves beyond a fixity of place and people, and postulates culture itself with the propensity to travel. Unfortunately, “despite the cognation between travel and tourism, the revitalization of the concept of culture has not been much inspired by insights from the tourism study” (Sørensen 2003, p. 864). Hui (2008, p. 307) adds that tourism is better conceived “as a continuum of practices that occur in many diverse spaces, interspersed throughout many types of mobilities.” The relationship between tourism, everyday belonging and how they contribute to the making of identity become an important research subject. However, little research has been done on the relationship between tourism, identity making processes and how they are performed (see Wee 2017).

Places are produced and reproduced on a daily basis through an embodied relationship with a world that is never finished and always ‘becoming’ (Seamon 1980; de Certeau 1984; Pred 1984; Thrift 1997). They are performed on unstable stages as they are reproduced and reimagined. However, rather than performing social practices in a void, the materiality of places are embodied within their contingent meanings. Cresswell (2004, p. 39) asserts that place is the “raw material for the creative production of identity rather than an *a priori* label… [and] provides the conditions of possibility for creative social practice.” This creativity underlies a performance that ensues as part of an everyday experience of place in the construction of self in which ‘the performance offers cultural content for that identity’ (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998). In this sense, places are becoming less about their static and immanent attributes, but more about “the webs of stories and narratives people produce when they sustain and construct their social identities” (Bærenholdt et al. 2004, p. 10). By extrapolating space onto the realm of tourism, Bærenholdt et al. (2004, p. 10) consider tourist places as “hybrid places of home and away”.

The issue of modernity at hand contextualizes a home that is not only fluid (see Bauman 2000a), it is also constantly being displaced, misplaced and replaced. Lippard (1997, p. 20) describes a paradox of modern mobility and global-scale relations as a “threshold between a history of alienated displacement and a longing for home and the possibility of a multicentered society that understands the reciprocal relationship between the two”. This history cannot be underestimated because it is the historical process that paves the way for memory and nostalgia in the making of modern identities. This is evident as Smith and Campbell (2017, p. 613) argue that “[o]ver the last decade there has been an increasing concern to re-examine and re-consider the nature of nostalgia, and to argue that rather than simply being a reactionary desire to return to an idealised and fetishized past it is a far more complex phenomenon". What follows is how the imagined past, through art and nostalgia, inform the making and remaking of history.

> Self-consciousness emerges under the sign of that which has already happened, as the fulfillment of something always already begun. We speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left (Nora 1989, p. 7).

Pierre Nora's (1989) masterpiece 'Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*' refers to 'the acceleration of history' in which old, real memory "of sorted historical traces" (p. 8) is contrasted with the modernist change, "a memory without a past that ceaselessly reinvents tradition" (p. 8). While memory is in permanent evolution prone to reconstruction, history is the reconstruction of what is no longer. Memory is actual and present, while history is the representation of the past.

René Magritte made the familiar disturbing and strange, employing surrealism to engage what lay between representation and reality, between surface and essence, between text and image, between the knowing and the seeing, describing that:

> … a painted image intangible by its very nature hides nothing, while the tangibly visible object hides another visible thing - if we trust our experience… if we remember that the visible can be hidden, but the invisible hides nothing; it can be known or not known, no more (cited from Foucault 1983, p. 57).

Magritte attempted to liberate the mind by allowing unconscious knowledge to recapture a memory he was trying to evoke. What is more or less hidden, more or less visible, is encapsulated by an overall sense of trust, that is, what we trust when we experience an artwork that relates the past into the present and questions the nature of identity amidst the culture of place.

Veijola (2006) further illustrated this complexity of experience and feeling as she revisited her home and contemplated her role in the process:

> How do you know and experience a place you knew as a child; and how does that place know you? At which point do strangers turn into friends, tourists into neighbors, locals into visitors, and places into tourist destinations? Can *Heimat* be revisited? How is ontological security, guaranteed by being at home and having a home, produced and managed in the modern world? How does one trust a place? (p. 91)

'Revisiting' a painting, an image, a film, a text or a place is about trust, especially if *it is* for the first time or *as if* a first time; hence presupposing variegated forces at work. Magritte 'reimagined' art as a critical tool to engage the viewer's mind by challenging normative perception of phenomena. He detached objects from their names, *Ceci n'est pas un pipe* in 'Treachery of Images' (1929), revealing language to be an artifice - full of traps and uncertainties. Nora (1989) reminded us through 'remembering', of our need to "protect the trappings of identity; when memory is no longer everywhere, it will not be anywhere unless one takes the responsibility to recapture it through individual means (p. 16). What emerges is a complex relationship between understanding the traps, and complimenting this with the desire and need to trust, but what is this connection to 'Singapore' and the Venice Biennale?

More than 10 years ago in 2009 (7 June – 22 November) at the 53rd *Venice Biennale*, Ming Wong housed his exhibition entitled 'Life of Imitation' at the *Singapore Pavilion* in Palazzo Michiel del Brusa. This complex and provocative installation, which won ‘Special mention’, explored an inter-textual rendering of Douglas Sirk’s film, ‘Imitation of life’ (1959) in which a black widow’s daughter tried to pass for white. In the exhibition was also ‘In love for the mood’, another word play with Wong Kar Wai’s film ‘In the mood for love’ (2000), in which *Maggie Cheung* (the actor whose role became iconic in this film) was represented across various media and distorted through image, being, language and space. The outcome was a reflexive art installation based on collections of various genres, exhibiting a kind of mimesis for its own sake, questioning the authenticity of an imagined past and the reliving of memory in how identities are made and remade.

This chapter contextualizes identity discourses as represented by Wong’s ‘Life of Imitation’, as well as, how ‘Singapore’ went *on tour* in Venice and eventually *returned* to Singapore. It explores the connections between the re-imagination of a past, the remaking of memory and the deconstruction of a national discourses. In a way, it is a 10-year anniversary tribute to an artwork that engaged materiality in terms of the relations between artefact and audience, and emergent imaginaries instilled by cultural objects. By looking at the poster of ‘Life of Imitation’ (see Fig. 5.1), it is clear that there is an, arguably ‘Asian’ expression of art, but the relation to tourism begs the question on what the connections between Ming Wong, ‘Life of Imitation’, the Singapore Pavilion and the audience of the art work are. The answer is complex, seemingly needing a ‘tourist’ perspective in order to understand

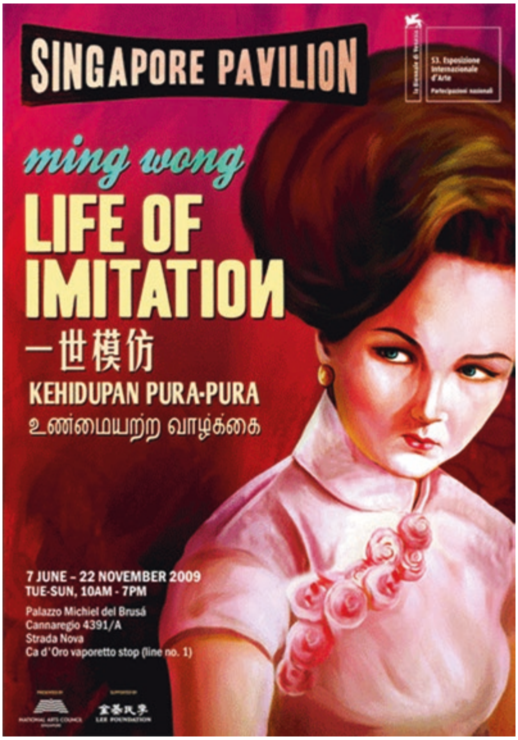

SINGAPORE PAVILION
la Biennale di Venezia
53. Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte
Partecipazioni nazionali
ming wong
LIFE OF IMITATION
一世模仿
KEHIDUPAN PURA-PURA
உண்மையற்ற வாழ்க்கை
7 JUNE – 22 NOVEMBER 2009
TUE-SUN, 10AM - 7PM
Palazzo Michiel del Brusá
Cannaregio 4391/A
Strada Nova
Ca d'Oro vaporetto stop (line no. 1)
NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL
LEE FOUNDATION

Fig. 5.1 Poster of Ming Wong’s ‘Life of Imitation’

cultural identity. Traditional tourism discourses seem to be challenged within a creative realm of 'public culture place-making' (Hollinshead 2004) in which a supposed identity inherited through a combination of history and discourse is juxtaposed with identities that are contingent.

This research positions a reflexive and experiential self within the spaces of the exhibition and contemplates how these spaces are used, experienced and practiced, accompanied by secondary research involving brochures, art journals and newspaper articles. In the week-long period spent at the Singapore pavilion, I explored my positionality as a tourist, a researcher and most importantly, a Singaporean, in understanding how the sense of belonging through memory and nostalgia is represented, performed and reproduced through Ming Wong's artwork. Reflexivity was crucial since it was necessary to understand the personal context that framed this research and the relationship towards tourism. Hence, the status of remembering is manifold. On one hand, it is necessary to document Wong's reflexivity in remembering the past through othered memories, and on the other, it situates my own remembering of his memory a decade ago, and our collective reminiscence of growing up in a city we no longer live in. This reflexivity was what Löfgren (1999) postulated in vacationing as a mobile kind of belonging experienced in a "cultural laboratory where people have been able to experiment with new aspects of their identities, their social relations…" (pp. 6–7). As such, what was imagined and represented through art-form in a mobile and mutating cityscape is now revealed here in a diffusion of home and away, and embodied in terms of subjectivities, visualities and materialities. The writing style in this chapter is informed in part through a kind of 'virtual curating' (see Tribe 2008 in 'Art of Tourism') in which art is represented in novel ways as text. It follows an ABACABA Rondo musical form, which also translates loosely to 'how are you' in the Malay language.

5.2 Eradicating, Remembering and Identifying

When Ming Wong was awarded "Special Mention" for 'Life of imitation', it was a first time achievement for Singapore, that is, the Singapore Pavilion and Ming Wong as a Singaporean. 'Life of Imitation' represented Singapore through a personal exposition that exposed the slippages informed by what it meant to be Singaporean. In a Straits Times newspaper article entitled "S'pore wins award at Venice Biennale", Tara Tan (2009a) wrote:

> Berlin-based Singapore artist Wong, who said representing Singapore at the Venice Biennale has been the peak of his career, called this 'a big homecoming'. Said Wong, whose works often explore the tensions of multicultural identities and representation: 'I do what I do because of where I come from, where I was born and where I grew up'.

Why did Ming Wong choose to use the notion of 'homecoming'? Could it be accrued as a celebration of the success of the artwork and the acknowledgment of home as part of entrenched identities that encompassed his representation? Was it because he no longer lived in Singapore and most of his exhibitions were located all around the world? What was clear for Wong was that his identities were incorporated within his work. At this point, all seemed to coalesce at the Singapore pavilion: Singaporean artist, Singaporean work and Singaporean identity. Indeed this was what made this work 'Singaporean', and by the same token, 'Asian', by considering the representations of what are 'Chinese', 'Malay', 'Indian' and 'Other' in both the installation and the nation state (see Wee 2014).

The same can be said for contemporary Asian expressions of art if we ask whose voice it is that is being rendered. What is Asian? Are there underlying involvement of 'othered' gazes and ingrained post-colonial implications? More importantly, does 'Asian' apply to the setting of the art, the inspiration of the art form, the style of the artistic object, the ethnicity of the artist or the space of the exhibition? The answers to these questions do not require a debate as to their fixity, but challenge the very entanglements of how art and culture are produced and reproduced under different umbrellas bearing names that sound both alike and different at the same time, a la the 'Asian' adage *same same, but different*.

A significant part of 'Life of Imitation' considered how identity and language were performed in Singapore given the stage of a flourishing cinema during Singapore's pre-independence and its subsequent 'loss' amidst the nation's modernizing project. The exhibition scrutinized how identities were being reconfigured, how they came to be through a glorification of the past, their colonial ways of seeing and being seen, as well as, the challenges of the nation state apparatus in the making of Singaporean discourse. These were reflected with certain objects and artefacts that interacted, informed and provoked the audience through a kind of intentionality in a reverse gaze (see Gillespie 2006).

One of the installations included in 'Life of Imitation' was a documentary entitled 'Mr Wong Han Min' (2009) by Sherman Ong. Wong was a private collector of rare film artefacts and contributed paraphernalia such as old film posters, handbills and documentation of the first cinema buildings in Singapore (see Fig. 5.2). In an account of his 25 years as a collector of Singapore film memorabilia, he related a "life-threatening experience" in which he salvaged material from a wreck while dodging bulldozers and cranes in an old warehouse that was being torn down. For him, the importance of collecting can be traced to his childhood interests, but also to the fact that his collection was explicitly about 'cherishing and preserving' both film heritage, as well as, its place in the construction of Singapore's national identity. This preservation marked both the use value in terms of appreciation, that "if they're gone, they're also no longer available" and also the saving of material aspects of a memory for future generations.

It was clear in his monologue that Wong Han Min's passion for collecting was fueled by his desire to preserve film heritage as part of his Singaporean identity. But what was his personal stake in his collection? Was his mission a part of his identity as Singaporean? If so, how was his affirmation of Singaporean identity related to the heroics of preserving the memory of place? Towards the end of the film, Wong Min Han made an interesting remark in this context, that someone (a foreigner) had offered him a handsome sum of money for the collection, to which he elaborated,

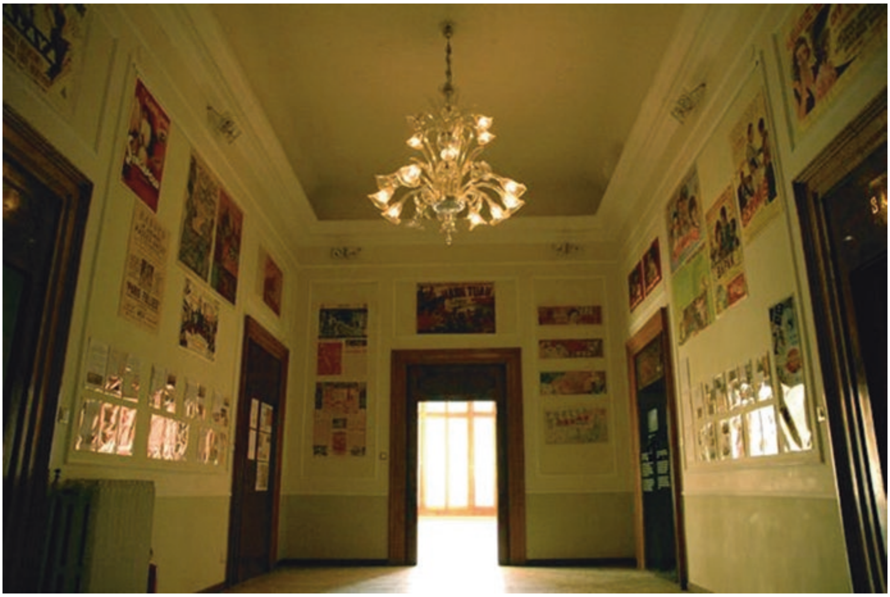


Fig. 5.2 The Singapore Pavilion at the Palazzo Michiel del Brusa containing collections of film paraphernalia belonging to private collector Wong Han Min. (Photographed by Desmond Wee)

"with that money, I can retire comfortably, maybe I'll live in Penang Malaysia, and I'll start a new collection on Malaysian cinema".

Rather than looking at patriotism and how identity informed this patriotism by alluding to Wong Han Min's ideals of collection, it seemed that the very act of collecting was already, almost *a priori*, a dedication of the self towards a project to do with national identity. Wong's acknowledgement of self as champion of film preservation, to save *its* essence from being lost was also at the same time, a project to save the memory of the thing being lost. This point is also exemplified by Kwok et al. (1999, p. 6) when they described the case for heritage and memory as the "process of remembering and transforming, of recollecting a past and projecting a possible future" through place inheritance. It would appear that on one hand, a remembering of something historical constituted a part of Singapore's heritage or identity and on the other, it can also be looked at in a way in which *remembering* itself is what determined Singapore's identity.

Chang and Huang's (2005) article entitled 'Recreating place, replacing memory: Creative destruction at the Singapore River' discussed the personal and collective memories associated with place and their staged reflections in ironic ways, such as 'remembering to forget'. Wells (2007, p. 140–142) described the capacity of the modern state to penetrate and organize public life, that "the constant demolition and reconstruction of urban space must figure prominently in any consideration of how capital shapes the materiality of the city." It becomes clearer now, that Wong's portrayal of the golden age of cinema in Singapore is not only a loss of buildings and retention through memory and materiality, but how a Singaporean understanding of identity is shaped through ethnicity and language, and reshaped through their remembrance.

Rather paradoxically, one could destroy ‘artefacts’, intentionally or otherwise, in order to create a nostalgia in terms of what *was* there and subsequently produce cultural heritage because memory is already obliterated (see Nora 1989). These representations incorporated as imaginations of an experienced past become a ghost of something more permanent and embedded visually as memory and identity. Yet in terms of nation building, this kind of reproduction of culture is based on “nostalgia [that] can incorporate both a strong sense of loss, while at the same time a sense of hope or longing for a better future” (Pickering and Keightley 2006, p. 925). Likewise, Ming Wong’s work is also a reproduction of culture questioning this very notion of ownership through performance: What are the significance of self and nation as identities that are being destabilized and re-stabilized through artistic discourse? What are the social and cultural implications on cultural memory through art as performance and practice?

5.3 *Leaving* Tourist Souvenirs

In *Filem Filem Filem* (part of ‘Life of Imitation’), Ming Wong depicted through polaroids taken of old cinemas, a lost era of the golden age of film during a pre-independent Singapore (see Fig. 5.3). It was a time nostalgically framed as the city before the nation, of which most of the cinemas in existence then have now been torn down. Eliza Tan’s (2009b) review entitled ‘Staging Identities, Performing Plurality’ saw *Filem Filem Filem* as a “production of performative dexterity because the constructedness and constructability of memory and identity implicates authenticity or originality as an illusory claim” (p. 34). It was a documentation of “a quasi-nostalgic portrait of identity as it is bound up in the construction of the past through images” (Tan 2009b, p. 34), allowing for the critique of the desirability and ‘uniqueness’ of Asian identity as a “selling point for the promotion of economic trade and international relations” (Tan 2009b, p. 35). What was clear in Tan’s (2009b) description were both memory and identity as emergent constructions, rather than normative representations determined for the sake of nation branding. In other words, Wong’s work depicted the constant shifting of identities through memory losses, nostalgia and recapitulations and what was not locatable at any particular point in time.

Tang (2009), curator of the exhibition, described the polaroid series as “the fate of beautiful but now haunting ‘architectures of entertainment’ shaped by modernist Art Deco, Bauhaus, and International Style, vernacularized for the Asian tropical climate” (p. 10). What was staggering was less the architecture, but the spaces in which the architecture was embodied. This ‘tropical’ climate was perhaps more an ornate ‘Asian expression’, going back to Western romanticisms and exoticisms of

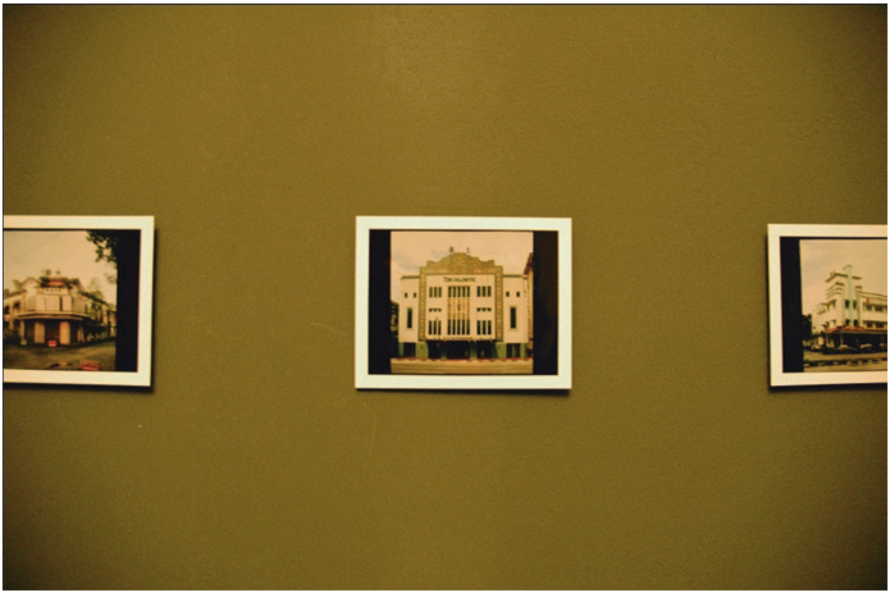


Fig. 5.3 The 'Majestic' at *Filem Filem Filem*, Singapore Pavilion. (Photographed by Desmond Wee)

the jungle, neglecting the harsh winters of East Asia. On a more metaphorical scale, Koolhaas (1995) critiqued:

> The irony of Singapore's climate is that its tropical heat and humidity are at the same time the perfect alibi for a full-scale retreat into interior, generalized, non-specific, air-conditioned comfort – *and* the sole surviving element of authenticity, the only thing that makes Singapore tropical, still. With indoors turned into a shopping Eden, outdoors becomes a Potemkin nature – a plantation of tropical emblems, palms, shrubs, which the very tropicality of the weather makes ornamental (Koolhaas 1995, p. 1083).

The contrived production of the landscape and environment in Singapore that Koolhaas (1995) depicted would sit with Anderson's (1991) argument of nationality as cultural artefact of an 'imagined community' existing in the imagination of people as a result of the modern, capitalistic project. The outcome would entail a reduction of the individual imagination, being limited and sovereign to the outright representation of the national community. If what Tomlinson (1991, p. 80) adheres to as the 'sense of national identity' is the individual experience of the imagined national community, then what we seem to be witnessing is a (non)sense of national identity, in which history is portrayed as reconfigured simply because it is already disfigured and forgotten.

During the first week of the exhibition, two of the exhibited polaroids disappeared and a security camera was thereafter installed in the room. In their place were what looked like 'blank' polaroids with the following inscribed, "Missing 6th June 2009" (see Fig. 5.4). Aside from disregard and theft, another way of looking at the disappearance is as an anti-heroic performance, one that heightens the very

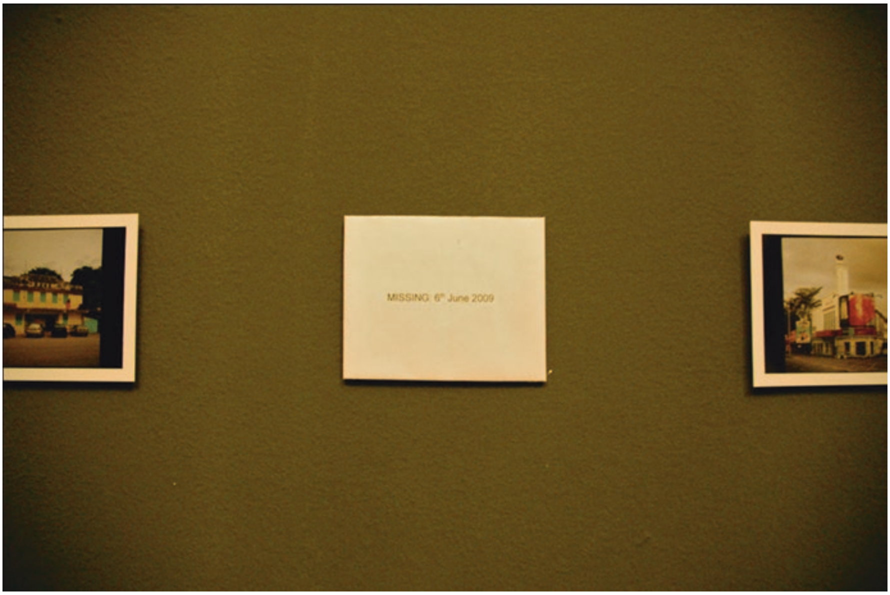


Fig. 5.4 The 'missing' polaroid at *Filem Filem Filem*, Singapore Pavilion. (Photographed by Desmond Wee)

sense of transience by questioning the form of memory. The 'blank' polaroids seemed to interrogate the exhibition and the self within the frame of the exhibition in order to ask, perhaps the same way Magritte would: *what was missing - the images or what they represented*? In another ironic twist, the missing polaroids cemented what Ming Wong elucidated as the play between the demise of an industry and its infrastructure with the insecurities of language and identity politics.

The polaroids were missing as much as they were missed. Paradoxically, the ones that were *not* missing will probably not be missed as much. In the same light, Augé (1995) comments about the retrospect of older locals who used to know a place:

> For what they see projected at a distance is the place where they used to believe they lived from day to day, but which they are now being invited to see as a fragment of history. Spectators of themselves, tourists of the private, they can hardly be expected to blame nostalgia or tricks of memory for objectively evident changes to the space in which they still live, which is no longer the place where they used to live (p. 56).

Whether objectified as touristic souvenir or 'tourists of the private' (Augé 1995), a new way of seeing, encapsulating memory, dealing with difference and foreignness, become exemplifications of tourisms comprising both the familiar and unfamiliar concurrently. This tourist dynamic involves notably a kind of unfamiliarity with the supposedly familiar, and a familiarity with the somewhat unfamiliar; it forces a reconsideration of the construction of space, and the self in place. Adele

Tan (2009a) in the exhibition preview of the Singapore Pavilion described eloquently:

> The photograph’s notoriety as an imprecise and untrustworthy medium has required that they are accompanied by captions. It is out of these colourful and limpid surfaces that we must construct the fuller picture of *meaning* as Wong’s Polaroids incite us to call their bluff as already encompassing a fully-fledged and understood set of terms. If the theatres are truly the ‘dream palaces’ for the local masses, and that Wong desires his photographs to be akin to the tentative vulnerability of human portraiture, then that should remind us that the images of narratives of history or of ourselves are yet to be determined (p. 125).

In this respect, the injection of nostalgia toward the historical image is only realized upon its loss, the loss of the things in which memory is represented and triggered. As a process of remembering that is explicitly emotional, nostalgia then becomes an important phenomenon in understanding how the past is both brought to bear on the present (Smith and Campbell 2017, pp. 612). In other words, it is about utilizing the visible signs of what used to be, to decipher the ‘unfindable identity’, “… of what we are in the light of what we are no longer” (Nora 1989, p. 18).

The souvenir exists to “allow the possibility of a capitalisation of experience” (Crang 1999, p. 251) but they are also self-reflexive, facilitating a “reciprocity of gaze that is a characteristic of aura” (Rickly-Boyd 2012, p. 281). In fact, material discourses of identity in the guise of [~~a~~] portable artefacts such as postcards “… may reflect, invert, mediate, or serve to create their own performative contexts for experience and understanding in which people reveal themselves to themselves …” (Tilley 2006, p. 17). Hence, the authenticity of experience, [and not only the climate as Koolhaas 1995 suggested], may be separate from the authenticity of the site and objects toured, as it is action-and emotion-based (Rickly-Boyd 2012, p. 274). For Tan (2009b, p. 34), the collection of polaroids with no negatives, exposed “a relation with impermanence, tourism and souvenir culture…” (Tan 2009b, p. 34). Afterall, “[t]he snapshot, like all souvenirs, is not simply a pictorial form but an object… that connects us to other times and spaces by its material presence”. The logic is not purely metaphoric and iconic but also metonymic—its presence reminds us of a larger whole” (Crang 1999, p. 253).

The polaroids in themselves, constituted the object of a tourist practice and re-presented space across time in the re-imagining of memory as souvenirs. It was this reimagination that Ming Wong used to challenge the way in which we looked at identity, by inverting Sirk’s ‘Imitation of Life’ (1959), like Magritte when he inverted the Mermaid in *Collective Invention* (1934). This ability to exist outside its moment of time, to be reinterpreted in creative ways, instilled a recuperation of experience (see Benjamin 1968) and afforded an aura, or an afterlife, in the making and remaking of souvenirs, mementos, posters, photographs and paintings evident in ‘Life of Imitation’.

Levell (2000, p. 36) iterated that “the actuality of a souvenir is not necessarily contingent upon the spatio-temporal context of the cultural encounter between the subject and the object, as is often assumed in a reductive, literal interpretation, but rather its being is predicated upon the tale that can be told.” Ming Wong questioned the making of culture in terms of language, and its discourses through a making of a nation, and in so doing, encountered the self in the construction of identities. Through a reification and reproduction of the imaginary that is informed by the socio-cultural conditions of the actual, his installation played across the boundaries of reality and fantasy. It assembled the commingling of narratives through the flows and interactions of these dynamics in space. In a rather strange way, the polaroid thief seemed to understand Wong's work better than anybody else, especially since the two endorsed descriptions of the polaroids served as a relation with impermanence (Tan 2009b) and a call to bluff (Tan 2009a), by *leaving* a 'tourist' souvenir and *leaving with* a 'tourist' souvenir.

5.4 Singapore in Venice

In many ways, the circulation of tourism discourses and imaginaries is a negotiated process in which situated actors engage in tourism practices to (re)produce "stereotypic images, discredited histories, and romantic fantasies" (Bruner 2005, p. 76). "While there is ample scholarship on the production and consumption of tourism discourses and images, much less attention has been given to their actual distribution within the circuit of tourism" (Salazar 2012, p. 867). These fantasies are incorporated into lived spaces as 'social practice' (see Löfgren 1999, pp. 6–7) and as 'tourism practice' (see Salazar 2012, p. 865), feeding the nature of tourism imaginaries and their global circulation. Hence, the personal connection based on imagination, memory, nostalgia and experience, alters the perception of place and engages the creation of an alternative, imagined place (Urry and Larsen 2011).

According to Gravari-Barbas and Graburn (2012), tourist imaginaries constitute the spaces in which the performance of practice takes place, creating:

> …shared representations, fueled by – or associated with – material images (postcards, posters, blogs, films and videos, guide books, brochures, magazines, as well as handicrafts and other artifacts) and intangible ones (legends, tales, accounts, speeches, anecdotes, memories), worked by the imagination and socially shared by tourists and/or the other actors in the tourism system (indeed sometimes by both sides, even if they do not share the same meaning).

It is clear that in the context of a modern society characterized by the omnipresence of images, material and intangible images play an important role (Harvey 1989, p. 290). In fact, these images have a dynamic relationship with imaginaries, and are constantly reworked to confirm or reject the closeness between the "real" and its representation (see Gravari-Barbas and Graburn 2012).

'In love for the mood' was recast in which a new *Maggie Cheung,* played by *Klaune Saunders*, played the estranged role of *Su Lizhen* as she rehearsed her confrontation with her husband about his infidelity, in video loop sequence. What was exposed was a depiction of language as representation of identity: the four official languages of Singapore cemented by national ethos, over the demise of other languages (see Wee 2009). *Maggie Cheung* was trying to learn the language, as projected on three different screens with various time lags, creating an echo-like effect

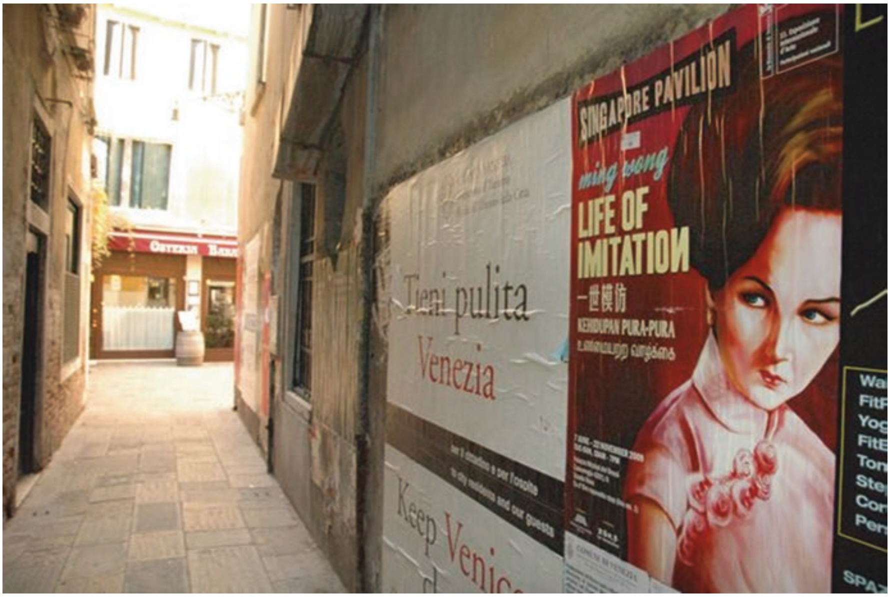


Fig. 5.5 'Life of Imitation' on a street in Venice. (Photographed by Desmond Wee)

that would have been disenchanting to a speaker of Cantonese. Yet, it was precisely this that probably portrayed Wong's identity (and the author) as one who dabbled with English, Malay, Mandarin and Cantonese, and the insecurities associated with them.

What was more interesting about *Maggie Cheung* was the fact that she conveyed her disdain about infidelity and her insecurity with language across space. 'Life of Imitation' as evidenced on the poster (see Fig. 5.1 or Fig. 5.5) was written in English with translations in Chinese, Malay and Tamil, corresponding in wholesale fashion with the CMIO (Chinese Malay Indian Other) quadratomy, a colonial based system in Singapore in which ethnicity was determined for the purpose of 'racial ordering' (Wee 2009). This system included English as the official language, largely to do with the assumption that emotions 'speak English' in order to standardize a linguistic (and cultural) universal (Wierzbicka 1999). Hence the fact that *Klaune Saunders* was a "Caucasian actress" (Tang 2009, p. 10), that is, the 'O' as opposed to the 'C', 'M' or 'I', made her rather *un-tropical* (see above, Koolhaas 1995 and Tang 2009), and exacerbated her role in 'In love for the mood'.

This evolution into a current form of multiculturalism seemed to trigger a response from *Maggie Cheung*, where language was translated into a bodily manifestation (see Edwards 1999) in which she appeared to be travelling and personifying her identity, away from the Singapore Pavilion. Perhaps it was a kind of resistance in which she could repossess "… jurisdictions of space and the discourses involved in reproducing identities within the CMIO heritage precincts in Singapore" (Wee 2012, p. 93).

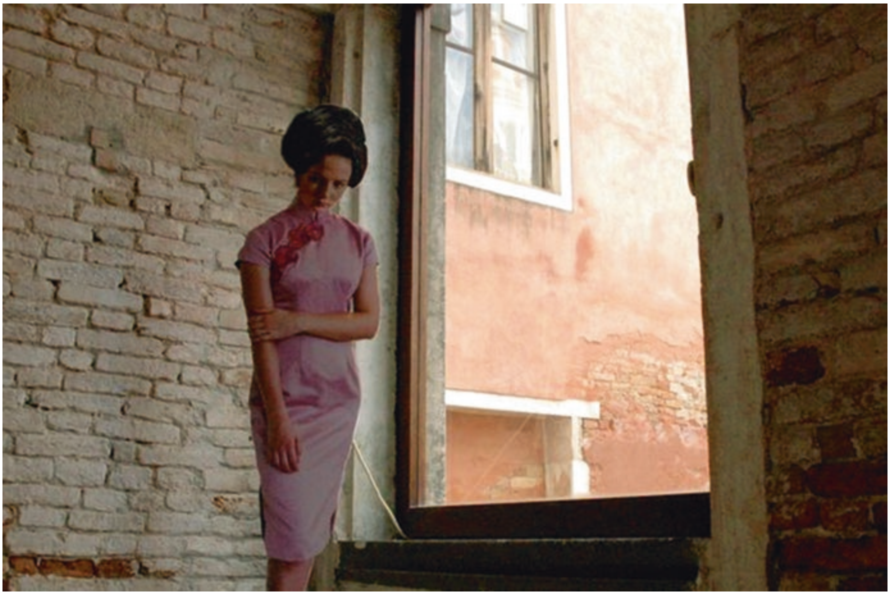


Fig. 5.6 Standing placard of *Maggie Cheung* at the entrance of the Singapore Pavilion, on top of the stairwell. (Photographed by Desmond Wee)

Maggie Cheung maintained her pensive gaze along the streets and embodied spaces in which she was more than sheer image, but existed in relation to a tactile body in time and space (see Fig. 5.5). She was *sightseeing* as much as she was being seen, a sightseeing that strayed beyond Adler (1989) and MacCannell (2011) unto which the object had the ability to be the protagonist. Afterall, Benjamin (1968, p. 188) reminded us that “to perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return.”

Maggie Cheung was a tourist in Venice (see Fig. 5.5 and Fig. 5.6). Looking immaculate in *cheongsam*, she mysteriously occupied spaces with a rather nondescript gaze, imbuing a figurative presence that produced an affect in spaces of cultivated intensity, ‘hitting human bodies’ in a way, in a non-compromising manner (Wetherell et al. 2018), and *looking back at us*. This created an atmospheric ambiguity:

> … between presence and absence, between subject and object/subject and between the definite and indefinite – that enable us to reflect on affective experience as occurring beyond, around, and alongside the formation of subjectivity (Anderson 2009, p. 77).

For the first time in 2006, the 59th Cannes Film Festival used a photographic image of a scene from a film in the poster: Maggie Cheung (without italics) as herself, the actor in ‘In the mood for love’ (2000), seemingly unrecognizable except for the stylized framing of Wong Kar Wai’s directing, her hairdo and the high, stiff collar of her *cheongsam* (see Fig. 5.7). Once again this involved a throwback into the nostalgic quality of this film which confused the audience into a real experience in

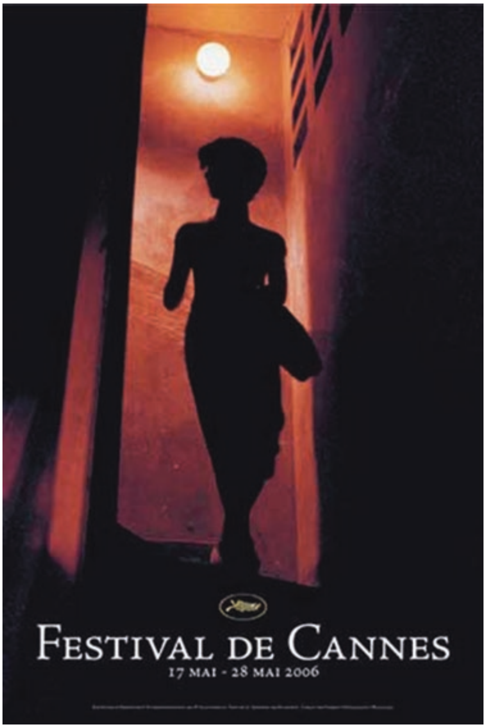


Fig. 5.7 Poster of the 59th Cannes Film Festival in which Maggie Cheung was walking down the stairs

memory and cyclical episodes up and down narrow stairwells, like *Maggie Cheung* who was also standing on the top of the stairs in Venice (see Fig. 5.6).

The shadowy movement and reflexive stance of the omnipresent *Maggie Cheung* personifies the everyday, one in which the audience is unwittingly attracted to. She embodied 'Life of Imitation' and went beyond the boundaries of the Singapore Pavilion into the intimate spaces of Venice (and elsewhere), implicating a tourism based on invariable determinants of space (Crouch 2005), gravitating towards practices that multiplied creatively based on the negotiation of spaces. This very intricate network of touring in order to understand self and belonging seems to be transferred across spaces in the making of identities.

5.5 Interlude : Singapore in Venice in Singapore

Tang Fu Kuen, the curator of 'Life of Imitation' put it very succinctly in the Straits Times article (Tan 2009b) entitled "Age of identity crisis":

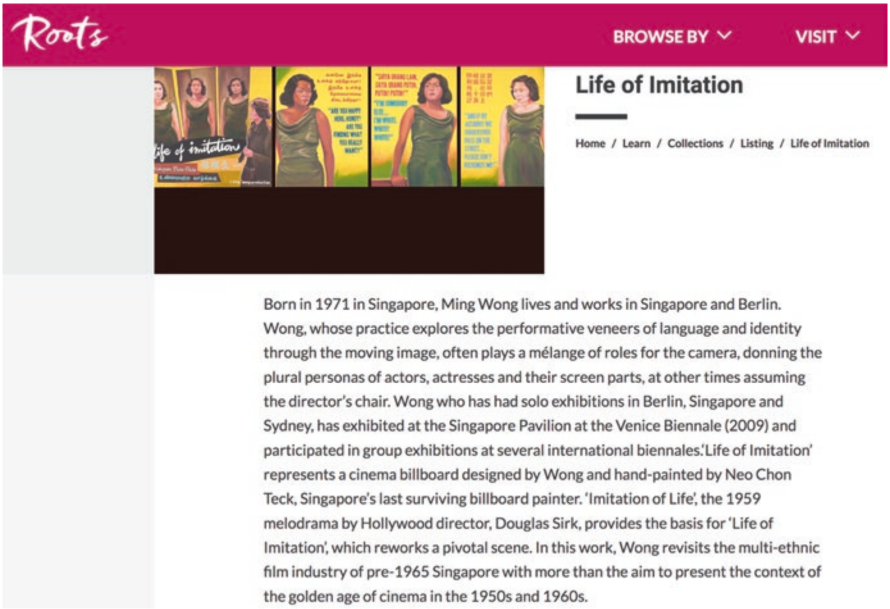
> I would like it very much that the work goes back to Singapore. In fact I would say that it is critical. Not because it won Special Mention, but because the work belongs back in Singapore where it would find its fullest resonance, community and meaning.

Palmer (1999) referred to national identity as a very *personal concept* as an individual draws upon the differing identities available to them, constructing their sense of selfhood. In a way, it was for the artist, an identification of self in space, a place in which he grew up in, rather than quick attribution to what nationhood represented. This of course, undertook a different pathway towards nationhood when 'Life of Imitation' did indeed *return* to Singapore after 6 months on tour at the Venice Biennale, and continued its life form at the Singapore Art Museum (22 April – 22 August, 2010) in a *homecoming* exhibition where emergent notions of identity were performed as *homegrown*. In a reflection of the work, Xu (2010) wrote:

> Life of Imitation is an exhibition of liminality - the past versus the present, the real versus the fictional, the archival versus the invented. It is an exhibition that traces, questions and perhaps, for a few, finds the answer to the roots of identity. It negotiates the space that is often neglected by many and uncovers the intricacies of our identity and how it is often, unwittingly, interwoven and interconnected to the larger whole.

In furtherance to the 'roots' of identity in which several did perhaps discover, a current page on the website of the National Heritage Board of Singapore under the header 'Roots', also championed this cause (see Fig. 5.8). Since then, 'Life of Imitation' had gone on several tours including the Frye Art Museum, co-organized by the Singapore Art Museum (22 January – 27 February, 2011) and the Contemporary Art Tasmania Gallery (24 March – 24 April 2011).

What unfolded through the commingling of artist and work in the identities that related 'home' to 'Singapore' was an embodied and emergent subject. The honoring



Life of Imitation

Home / Learn / Collections / Listing / Life of Imitation

Born in 1971 in Singapore, Ming Wong lives and works in Singapore and Berlin. Wong, whose practice explores the performative veneers of language and identity through the moving image, often plays a mélange of roles for the camera, donning the plural personas of actors, actresses and their screen parts, at other times assuming the director's chair. Wong who has had solo exhibitions in Berlin, Singapore and Sydney, has exhibited at the Singapore Pavilion at the Venice Biennale (2009) and participated in group exhibitions at several international biennales.'Life of Imitation' represents a cinema billboard designed by Wong and hand-painted by Neo Chon Teck, Singapore's last surviving billboard painter. 'Imitation of Life', the 1959 melodrama by Hollywood director, Douglas Sirk, provides the basis for 'Life of Imitation', which reworks a pivotal scene. In this work, Wong revisits the multi-ethnic film industry of pre-1965 Singapore with more than the aim to present the context of the golden age of cinema in the 1950s and 1960s.

Fig. 5.8 Website of National Heritage Board (Singapore) under the section 'Roots'. https://roots.sg/learn/collections/listing/1244286

process of 'home-coming' was at the same time a *home-(be)coming* in which the meanings of 'Singapore' as home were constantly reproduced. The artwork was embodied not only as part of its creator, but within the spaces of identity in which the artist identified with, in which the artwork was brought home to. Ming Wong's exhibition seemed more *Singaporean* now than it was ever before.

The question *why* 'Life of Imitation' belonged to Singapore is the same question asking how the sense of place, the ownership of space and the cultivation of self, contributed to the making of identities. If Tang, the Curator (in Tan 2009b), insisted that 'Life of Imitation' belonged in Singapore and needed to return back to Singapore, it also meant that while in Biennale, 'Life of Imitation' and hence, the Singapore Pavilion, were *on tour* in Venice.

The exhibition itself begged the question as to who the audience was, to whom the exhibition was targeted at, and how such complexities of a nationhood was represented and consumed. Through association to various senses of mobility, the Singapore pavilion could be conceived of as *subject* doing tourism, especially since the artist dealt with spaces that were being displaced, misplaced and replaced. Tourism in this sense constituted aspects of movement and flows across relational spaces, as well as, connections between people, concepts and things. Inasmuch as they attracted tourists and contained tourists, national pavilions at the Venice Biennale were also 'tourists' at the same time. Much can be said given this subjective quality about the materiality of the pavilions and their contents, as well as, the embodied tourist spaces that inhabited the pavilion. Lury (1997, p. 77) considered "the ways in which the capacity of objects travel and stay still is constituted in and helps secure particular relations of dwelling-in-travelling and travelling-in-dwelling, and to suggest that these relations are constitutive of both very object-ness of objects and the organisation of space." In this respect, the Singapore Pavilion became a part of touring culture, touring as much as it is being toured (see Sonnenburg and Wee 2016).

Cultures travel as much as people, yet what are involved in the movement of culture are the mobilities of people and objects (Rojek and Urry 1997). A materiality is engaged in terms of the relations between artefact and audience, the memories instilled by these objects by both their representations and their loss, and the mobilities informed by a touring Singapore Pavilion. According to Crouch (1994 cf. 1999, p. 2), "tourism practices happen in places that are culturally defined" as he cited Bachelard's (2000) abstract notions and sense of sites of being inflected by an actual knowing of spaces in material, everyday encounters. This hermeneutic of everyday life "leads one toward the body as a domain in which meaning and the experience of everyday life merge" (Oakes 2006, p. 243). In this sense, the body exists within a place that is not only subjective and objective, but also private and public, and performed as part of everyday spaces as sites for tourist consumption.

When Koolhaas (1995) in 'Singapore Songlines: Portrait of a Potemkin Metropolis… or Thirty Years of Tabula Rasa' wrote, "Singapore Mantra: don't forget to confirm your return flight", (p. 1087), he begged the question of returning to the roots, but *what roots*? Rather than a projection of national rhetoric, 'Life of Imitation' at the Singapore pavilion was an exposition that exposed the slippages informed by what it meant to be Singaporean. What were reproduced were complex, discursive notions of self, identity and nationhood that needed to be ‘routed’, in order to be ‘rooted’ (see Gilroy 1993; Chambers 1994; Augé 1995; Appadurai 1996; Hall 1996). The significance of home in the material and affective lives of people were being destabilized as home was recreated through emergent spaces of performance of dwelling amidst flux and movement. A seemingly simple idea of what constituted home was in disarray when the subject of becoming was premised through various modalities incorporated in travel, tourism and mobilities. Hence, the focus in this section on the return leg and journey back ‘home’, rather than the usual emphasis on the destination and the journey towards the destination, reveals the ‘tourism’ incorporated *within* the making, unmaking and remaking of identities.

‘Life of Imitation’ never really returned to Singapore because it never left Singapore. Instead, ‘Life of Imitation’, the ‘Singapore Pavilion’ and the artist, Ming Wong (and even the author of this chapter) *revisited Singapore*, perhaps through *sightseeing*, in what could be encapsulated within the framework of *Contemporary Asian Expressions of Art and Tourism.*

5.6 Conclusion

The making of identity in our modern world is ‘liquid’ (Bauman 2000b), like ‘solids that melt into air’ (Berman 1983) in and around the *ciel-bouteille* (Magritte 1940). Indeed there is a vague point in Magritte’s mermaid (in *Collective Invention*, 1934), somewhere in the middle, where the real imagination and the imagination of the real meet. Likewise in this chapter, revisiting place is about straddling imagination and memory and finding the halfway point in which nostalgia evokes new ideas of reimagining self in place, and participating “in a performance that will bring an imagined past back to life” (Salazar 2012, p. 870). This study of Ming Wong’s ‘Life of Imitation’ considered the emergent aspects within the exploratory and dynamic spaces of the Singapore Pavilion, where objects and artefacts were experienced, where identities were produced and reproduced through visualities to create new spaces as ‘Singapore’ toured Venice and returned back where it belonged.

Tourism images and ideas easily travel together with tourists, from tourism-generating regions (which are also destinations) to tourism destination regions (which also generate fantasies) and back. However, tourism imaginaries “do not float around spontaneously and independently; rather, they ‘travel’ in space and time through well-established conduits, leaving certain elements behind and picking up new ones along the way, and continuously returning to their points of origin” (Salazar 2012, p. 868). The temporary space in Venice in which the Singapore pavilion was located, how ‘Singapore’ was mobile on the streets in Venice and finally, how it ‘returned’ to Singapore all contributed to how ‘Singapore’ was on tour in Venice. These contexts provided a link to understand how identities are practiced while ‘on tour’ across emergent spaces.

Yet, while on tour, there were many ‘traps’ as embodied in the representation of Ming Wong’s texts, starting from Magritte (1929) and Nora (1989), to Wong’s mimicry being “sly and comic, and the video loops soon expose slippages in acting guises and stances” (Tang 2009, p.10), Wong’s Polaroids inciting us to ‘call their bluff’ (Tan 2009a, p. 125), “memory and identity [in *Filem Filem Filem*] implicates authenticity or originality as an illusory claim” (Tan 2009b, p. 34) and Wong’s audiences as “[s]pectators of themselves, tourists of the private, they can hardly be expected to blame nostalgia or tricks of memory…” (Augé 1995, p. 56). Augé (1995) with his trappings of supermodernity and the making of non-place, questions the making of ‘Life of Imitation’ and confusing identity through a relinquishing memory in place of self. In a way, in creating this cultural text, Ming Wong was being the tourist of himself, spectator of self.

‘Life of Imitation’ in the Singapore Pavilion at the Venice Biennale imbibed something of the toss between the losses that have been remembered and the losses in view of particular remembrances. However, rather than presenting a national movement of nostalgia, Ming Wong has cleverly weaved a deconstruction of loss into a de-formulation and questioning of identity. This was reiterated by Tilley (2006) when he emphasized, “Whatever we remember, and the manner in which we remember, we get a different past, a different sense of place, and a different landscape every time” (p. 29). Tan (2009a, p. 125) was also quick to suggest that Ming Wong’s work was “less the standard charting of a history of Singapore cinema than it is asking of what did Singapore ever have that matters so much to us now?” The Singapore Pavilion was about representing Singapore as a nation, tracing a temporality from which Singapore traversed from city to becoming a nation and the temporary constructs that failed to continue after independence. On a deeper level, it was also a reflexive survey in questioning the epistemological and performative constituents of identities, ethnicities, language and place and their entanglements in the making of Singapore.

My participation at the pavilion as a tourist, researcher and local was about performing ‘Singapore’, discovering the intricacies and intimacies of local knowledge through historical and artistic accounts, taking souvenirs of thought and contemplating my own identities in terms of my identifications and dislocations. Ahmed (2000) maintained that it is through the very loss of a past that the ‘we’ comes to be written as Home. Ming Wong produced a work that demonstrated that the buildings and places that ‘no longer exist’ were embedded within identity politics that over-exist. How do we understand Wong’s mind or the things that influenced him? As a product of post-colonialism – is he already changed by a Western representedness or did he instill some ‘Singaporean’, authentic or otherwise in his work? The modern condition reflects incessantly, new ways of perceiving identity. In playing with language and parodying identities, Ming Wong seemed to be making this transition lucid.

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Chapter 6
Art Intervention in the Community Context: Community-Based Art Practice as an Inspiration for Creative Tourism

Chiamei Hsia

Abstract Seeking satisfaction in self-development and the creation of self-identity has emerged as a desired transformation experience in the discussion of creative tourism. To delve into what has driven the need and motivation for such a transformation experience, the author has employed the case study of Taiwan community-based art practice (CAP) as an analytical approach to conceptualize the idea of self-change within creative tourism. By anchoring the discussion of self-identity construction in relation to a transformation experience, this article provides examples that illustrate how art practice within the context of community serves as a vehicle to fulfill the satisfaction of self-development. In addition to the conceptualization of self-development in the context of creative tourism, the article also explores the features of community art practice as a method to mobilize community change and extend the notion of contemporary arts to a social change agenda.

Keywords Community development · Community arts · Creative tourism · Culture tourism · Self-development

6.1 Introduction

It was a hot and humid summer day in a small village in southern Taiwan where an extraordinary scene taking place. The streets were packed with visitors, bikes, and cars, this was an uncommon site for an agriculture-based village like this Bantou community with a population of less than 700. Visitors flooded into a local "theme

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Perspectives on Asian Tourism, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-4335-7_6

park" featuring a garden, a lotus pond, sculptures, and artworks. From there the visitors continued their tour wandering small alleys, searching for the serendipity, ceramic artworks, placed in unexpected corners. A similar scenario took place in the Togo community; another remote rural village in Tainan County located in southern Taiwan. Known for its agriculture-based art experience, the Togo community has hosted the "TOGO Rural Village Art Museum" art event annually since 2012. "The whole village is the museum", the slogan that the host organization proudly announces, is actually a collective vision cultivated by the local community and a collection of young entrepreneurs and artists dating back to 2006. The artworks of both communities share commonality in their motifs and rural location. The art themes are inspired by the local context but stay accessible to the visiting audience. Visitors can sit on bench-like sculptures or interact with the figures on the murals. The artworks are installed in a rural setting and scattered throughout the entire village or community. The art experience becomes a treasure hunt. Visitors biking along rice paddies or exploring the village on foot, may be surprised to discover an unexpected art installation alongside the road. The uniqueness of the vernacular landscape, the aesthetic quality of the artworks, and the authenticity of the local culture account for its popularity and exemplify the characteristics of this type of arts-based community tourism. Disseminated through social media and word of mouth, community arts tourism became a trend in Taiwan and activated a series of projects designed to cultivate the community arts industry through a variety of responses from policy making to private sector investment (Fig. 6.1).

In its urban setting, the iconic *Blue Print* mural became a city landmark and drew enormous publicity and visitors. Located in the Hai-An Road Art District in the city of Tainan, the original artwork *Blue Print* created a major impact within the art intervention movement in Taiwan and has been raised in discussions on urban development. The birth of the Hai-An Road Art District was not the result of a properly executed urban regeneration program but rather an intentional remedy for a

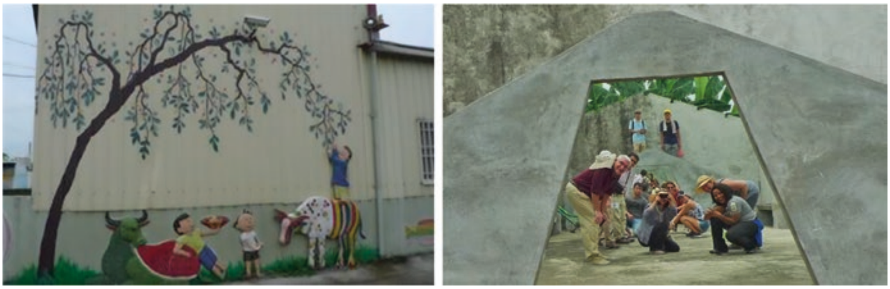

Fig. 6.1 Community arts tourism as emergent leisure activities in Taiwan

Left: The iconic image of community arts work in Bantou went viral through its dissemination on social media

Right: *Mirror House*, an art installation work in Togo community. Artists renovated one of the abandoned houses into an interactive art space and attracted visitors to the space with its mirror display

Photos are courtesy of the author

disastrous failure of urban planning by the city government (Chen 2005, 2015). Tainan, recognized as a rich cultural heritage city in Taiwan, is known for its traditional architecture and historical sites. Experiencing rapid economic growth through the 1980's to 90's, Tainan City government initiated an urban regeneration program and aimed to resolve overcrowding issues on one of the busiest commercial streets, Hai-An Road, in 1993. The idea was to widen Hai-An Road from 10 m to 40 m (32 ft to 131 ft), and move the original ground-level businesses to a proposed underground shopping center. The incorrect identification of one of the geographic strata (Chen 2005) halted the underground commercial street development due to unstable soil. The project was therefore terminated and left an "incomplete" Hai-An Road in the center of the historical business district for years. Characterized as a "bleeding wound" in the heart of the business district (Chen 2005), nearly 200 units of a half-demolished building were standing along the Hai-An Road and depreciated the commercial district for a decade. Suffering from a plunge in revenue and worsening living conditions, scholars, artists and local residents sought a possible solution to stop the "bleeding". In 2003, former gallery curator Tu Chao-Hsien introduced art installation projects to improve the cityscape. With Tainan City government's support and funding from the Council for Cultural Affairs, Tu invited artists, architects and citizens to participate in this experimental art renovation event. The idea was to turn the demolished houses into artworks. Today, numerous artworks such as murals and art installations characterize Hai-An Road as an avant-garde art street and earned Hai-An Road the designation of creative Art Museum. The remaining vacant spaces, after demolition of the houses along Hai-An road, created a stage-like urban space and provided an experimental venue with ever-changing art performances (Wang 2014). However, the unsettled property ownership of the building's façade,

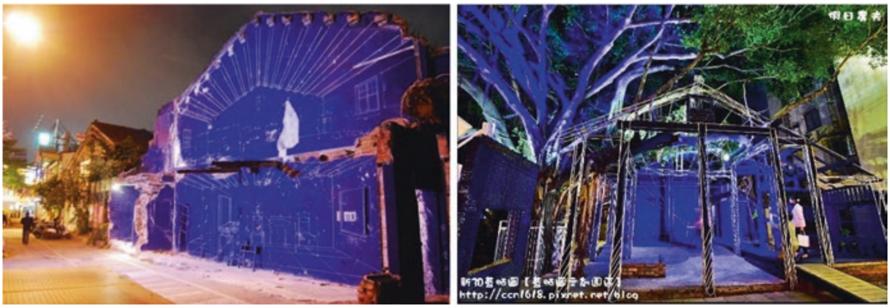

Fig. 6.2 Art as remedy in urban setting
Left: The original iconic artwork
Blue Print on the Hai-An Road from 2003 to 2014
Photo is courtesy of the blogger Gloria Ng. Retrieved from https://slowandtravel.com
Right: The new installed artwork
Blue Print in 2014 on Ximen road, West Central District, Tainan City
Photos credit to https://ipapago.tw/

an urge for economic development and safety issues led to the dissolution of the artwork *Blue Print*[1] mural in 2014 (Fig. 6.2).

Debates, rebuttal and discussion still continue after the dissolution of *Blue Print*. Some art critics see the story of *Blue Print* as one that ends in the defeat of art's intention due to the macro-forces of capitalism and modernity. As more tourists flooded Hai-An Road, commercial activities and street vendors seemed to gradually take over the space and dominated the original artwork's setting. Local community activist Kao pointed out that such phenomena was not an isolated incident; cultural value seems to yield when it comes to the clash between economic development and urbanization.

6.2 Community Arts as Cultural Tourism

The outcomes seen in the Bantou Village and Togo Community have demonstrated a significant environmental change and creates alternative economic activities for local business. The popularity of the original artwork *Blue Print* also prompted a second art site for the creation of a 3D model *Blue Print* and facilitated programming for the Blueprint Culture and Creative Park. Numerous scholars have advocated on behalf of the positive impacts that community arts as creative resources have to promote local heritage and provide potential economic growth. Timothy and Boyd (2003) perceive arts-based community tourism as a way to enhance local heritage and culture by framing community arts as a tourist destination. Aquino et al. (2012) see community arts tourism as a new creative industry and an economic niche within the consumption market. While professionals and policy makers see arts as a remedy to various issues, the attempt for this phenomena to be replicated in various locations have raised questions and call for scrutiny and analysis of the negative impact of popular tourism; a concern that resonates with already overdeveloped tourist sites and is a prevailing thought in the cultural tourism industry.

Cultural tourism, as one of the most important segments of global tourism (OECD 2009), encompasses the industries that account for economic growth, job creation, small and medium businesses, environment improvement, public space amenity, transportation, quality of life enhancement, and cultural heritage preservation. With the robust growth of cultural tourism, within the experience economy, it is inevitable to encounter its influence and potentially adverse impact on both host destinations and tourists. Numerous scholars have identified the unfavorable outcomes due to the commodification of culture driven by mass production and consumption. These consequences include but are not limited to the diminishing unique experience in the growth of aesthetic and spatial reproduction (Rojek 1995), the "placelessness" in terms of the weakening of a place's identity (Relph 1976;

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[1] The iconic artwork Blue Print has accumulated a tremendous reputation and led to the construction of a second art site after the demolition of the original one.

Freestone and Liu 2016), the decline of the city's attractiveness due to a vicious overdevelopment cycle (Russo 2002), and a globalized and monotone cityscape boasting facilities equal to other similarly developed locations (Zukin 2010).

In the cases of the Bantou community, the TOGO Rural Village Art Museum and the Hai-An Road art district, some local residents see the community arts as "cultural capital" and leverage it as art-based tourism for economic development. The novelty of the art medium and nostalgic atmosphere as a motif has distinguished them from the conventional art museum experience and created a niche within culture tourism. Visitors see the authenticity in the daily-life based art themes generated from local culture and community; that resonate with their own experiences. These unique art sites have increased the popularity and garnered reputation through the dissemination on social media. However, the concerns of potential tension and discord when visitors start to flood the village en masse call for a balance between economic development and the tranquility of life. Most importantly, what will be left of the community or local business when the novelty and uniqueness of community arts becomes exhausted through the mass reproduction of cultural tourism? Some community activists see this trend and are concerned that this mass consumption may result in the commercialization of the local culture. One of the residents shared his view that the second *Blue Print* will not signify the same message as the original one; due to the site-specific features being lost in context.

Another critique of reproduction of community arts has focused on the ownership and legitimacy of "community" arts. In the Bantou village, a private-owned local "art theme park" has become so popular and dominated the area so much that some visitors can get confused in the park and are forced to ask: "Where is the community?" This fad-like phenomena surrounding community arts tourism has raised questions and critiques. The publicity and popularity of these original community arts successes inevitably drew the attention of other "followers" and created the practice of the serial reproduction of culture for sake of tourism. Ironically, such publicity and popularity were never the community's original intention when the arts practice was initiated. The conundrum rests on the tension between economic development, community autonomy, and well-being. As some local business owners embrace the idea of community arts tourism, others value the quality of life and residents' well-being over increasing economic development; is there any possible alternative approach or solution that can benefit both without compromising the community's values or economic growth?

If seeking a unique experience in understanding a different culture and acquiring a distinctive intellectual engagement are core elements of cultural tourism, what possible strategy or action may we employ to counteract these issues? Identified by Richards and Raymond (2000), an emerging innovative mode of creativity-led tourism has drawn our attention and is perceived as a potential antidote to the above mentioned problems (Richards and Wilson 2006).

6.3 Creative Tourism

Labeled as "creative tourism", this new mode of tourism emphasizes the interactive experience and promotes a deeper involvement in the activities to enhance personal development in creativity potential and identity creation (Richards and Raymond 2000; Richards and Wilson 2006). The quality of learning experience and cultivation of creative capital through active participation has distinguished creative tourism as an innovative approach that stands in contrast to conventional cultural tourism. According to Richards and Wilson (2006), the rise of creative tourism has been linked to a dissatisfaction with postmodern modes of consumption and an increased desire for self-development as a part of active learning experiences. Different from classic modes of cultural tourism, tourists as an audience spectating in a culturally endowed location, the creative tourism participants are more actively involved in the organized events and enjoy the reflexive interaction provided in the creative and participatory activities (Richards and Wilson 2006). The increasing lack of satisfaction with the modern consumption experience has become noticeably prevalent and is connected to a distain of the idea of unskilled consumption. This form of consumption, which is based on external stimuli, is short-term and requires no skill or experience; such as an activity like watching TV (Scitovsky 1976). The desire for seeking an unique and genuine experience has served as the vehicle for the demand for more creative and participatory activities along with the travel experience. Creative and participatory activities come in many types; which include, but are not limited to, handicraft, porcelain making, painting, sculpture and carving, photography, perfume-making, folk music, jazz improvisation, gastronomy and cooking courses, geology or language.[2] The trend for this creative tourism reflects a need for creativity to fit within a variety of social events. In some cities, creativity has been utilized as branding for their distinctiveness. In terms of production, creativity is often related to the development of an "experience economy" (Poulsson and Kale 2004). Creativity, other than serving as vehicle for production and consumption, has become a strategy in policy making as well as a measurement for private sector investment. Richards and Wilson (2007) perceive such development of creativity as a "creative turn" and attribute the dwindling competency of culture as a facility for generating distinctions and satisfaction experiences to such demand of creativity. To understand what the content of creativity entails, Mel Rhodes (1961) provided a systematic approach to conceptualize the perception of creativity. Rhodes perceived that the contents of creativity involve a person's traits and ability to grasp the elements of subjects (person); a prolonged and mindful thinking/learning process to incorporate materials into a solid or articulated form (process); the relationship between human beings and their environment or social climate that foster or allow an invention to be made (press); and the final outcome in the form of an idea or tangible product that stands for the inventor's innovation and intention (product).

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[2] Extracted from a summarized list of example of creative tourism (Richards and Wilson 2006) in a study of Creative Holiday in the Dutch national newspaper, de Volkskrant (26th February 2005, p.V10).

Adhering to this creation-emphasized approach, a branch of art intervention practice under the umbrella of community development discipline adds extra nuance to the field of community arts and serves as method for civic engagement. Labeled as community-based art practice (CAP), this particular approach facilitates the integration of cross-sector collaboration and generates a mechanism for creativity. By leveraging arts as creative resources and participatory approaches, the CAP process demonstrates its ability to transform the inherited ingredients from a local context into creative assets: community arts. These artworks signify community concerns and shared values; provides a venue for participatory experience and garners public attention for democratic involvement. By examining the CAP showcases, this article aims to propose an alternative analytical lens through which to conceptualize the idea of creative tourism. First, before delving into the CAP case studies, a review of community arts in relation to contemporary arts and community context is introduced through an analysis of the development of public arts. Secondly, an introduction of art intervention and community development practices of the local context in Taiwan is presented to provide a backdrop on which to discern the nuances of community-based art practice. Finally, a theoretical application will unfold that enriches the concept of creative tourism by adding a psychological dimension and thorough explanation inspired by the CAP process.

6.4 Community Arts in the Context of Public Art vs. Contemporary Art

Distinguished from Modern Art, Contemporary Art refers to art produced during late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In the development of art history, Contemporary Art is considered a new paradigm of art production that covers a wide range of art practices in terms of materials, approaches, styles, intentions and agendas. To be attributed to Contemporary Art is to be included as a representation of ever-present society by characterizing it as "the art of today". The features of an ever-changing art mode and its reflection on ongoing social discourses serve as the core value of Contemporary Art. In this context, community arts can be categorized with its own genre of art; focused on a community context and under the larger umbrella of Contemporary Art.

The idea of art serving as a repository for human values and the restoration of social standards has been accentuated through the power of social discourse on the arts (Jensen 2002). It is believed that art has the power to shape society for the better through its never-ending transformation as well as its ability to facilitate and stimulate conversation and inquiring critical questions. The intention of public art was built upon this tenet and as such is embodied through a variety of measures on both a public policy level and within the private sectors. Public art, a notion prevailing in

North America between 1920 and the early 1930s, aimed to cross the boundaries of art making and art experience by facilitating the incorporation of art interaction into the everyday life of the viewers (Decker 2011). Promoted through the Percent for Art program in 1930s and the National Endowment for the Arts act in 1960s in US, the expansion of the scale of public art and the accumulation of artworks had well publicized the concept of public art; yet evoked debates and rebuttals as well. Scholars and artists raised questions about whether public art earned its legitimacy by displaying the artworks in public spaces and called for an advanced public art agenda with ties to social intervention (Lacy 1995). In response to the request for social intervention by the public art, a number of artists developed innovative approaches to address social issues by inviting community engagement in the process and emphasizing participatory action. These projects, mostly initiated during the 1980s and early 1990s, tended to be responsive to local cultures and contexts, and focused more on the collaborative process than the creation of objects. Lacy (1995) coined the term "new genre public art" to define the "interactive, community-based projects" that grew out of this period. Becker (2004) perceived this new genre of public art as a venue to "communicate and interact with a broad and diversified audience about issues directly relevant to their lives". Mesch (2013), attributes the transition of public art, into the community arena, to the activist's mobilization in response to social injustices and a rejection of globalization. Social issues such as cultural identity, environmental confrontation, and political and economic injustice had become the motifs and themes within the broader content of Contemporary Art and were addressed through the interaction between artists and diverse audiences. Such an activism agenda was advocated and promoted by grassroots community arts proponents (Cohen-Cruz 2002). They believe that community arts should build the social capital, a grassroots network that aims to disseminate knowledge and ideas to a broader audience, and ultimately encourage change.

In Taiwan, utilizing art as a catalyst to generate public conversation began in the 1980s. Scholar Tseng (2012) sees the lift of martial law in 1987 as a critical factor in liberating art from its confines of political intention to the expanse of social connection. In a combination of public art critique and analysis dating from late 1980s to early 2000, scholar Hsiao (2003) provided a glimpse of southern Taiwan public art development. Based on his observations, Hsiao considered the transition of the public art agenda from political propaganda, to the confrontation and rebellion against authoritarianism, as a threshold to a new era within the public art movement. The active civic movements of the late 1980's covered a wide spectrum of social issues and provided fuel for art activists. "Art intervention", a phrase that featured throughout the art movement through the 1990s to 2010, has characterized democratic development in Taiwan through various art forms within the public arena. Numerous social events and civic engagements were more or less were fused with some forms of art intervention. Tseng (2012) perceived the government-funded art intervention programs and community development policies as influential factors to the community arts trend in Taiwan.

However, some artists argued that not all community arts were necessarily held up for activism; community arts can simply serve as a venue for local reflection and cultural celebration. Instead of perceiving community arts as final products or art objects, Dewhurst (2012) advocates an alternative approach to address the concept of community arts by asking “when is community art”. He perceives community arts as an evolving practice that acts in a collaborative and organic way, and offers a list of ontological questions to conceptualize the idea of community arts.

Inspired by the educator Nelson Goodman’s article (1968), Dewhurst (2012) adopts Goodman’s strategy in the discussion on the nature of art to re-address the conventional view of art. In Goodman’s (1968) original discussion, he asked readers to consider not just “what is art” but also contemplate the question of “when is it an art”. Following Goodman’s example, Dewhurst proposed a set of analytical questions. In order to comprehend the concept of community arts, the questions should focus on the context in which community art is made, the reason behind it, the purpose of the community art, and the audience who engages with it. The following figure illustrates Dewhurst’s idea of community arts and guides us to map the field of community arts (Fig. 6.3).

Based on Dewhurst’s (2012) analysis, he believes that community art should emphasize the process of art practices, and equalize the roles of each participant. In Dewhurst’s vision, artists are not as consequential in practice, but are active participants who contributed to the art practice. Community artists are made and defined by the process of work. They emerge through the relationships developed in the art practice and the interaction between each participant. Dewhurst’s conceptualization

What is it about?

What social issues or ideas are meaningful to the community?
Who is “the community”?
What forms of cultural expression do people in the community use?
What role does place play?
What materials, methods, skills are unique to this community?

Who is the artist?

Who initiates the project?
Who is the audience?
How are decicions made? and by whom?
Who chooses the leaders/organizers?
Who is involved in the design/script/planning?

When is the art?

When does/did the art start?
When will/did you know it’s done?
Who decides if it is art? and how?
If its not art, then what is it?
At what memoent does it become art?

Why do it?

How does the work change individuals?
communities? policies?
Who will it reach/touch/impact?
How will it impact the participants?
the audience?
What social economic, political factors contribute
to the issues/ideas in the work?

What is learned?
What is taught?

What will/did the participants learning?
What were/are some unintentional learnings?
or teaching?
Who determines what is taught and learned?
What will/did the artist learn?
Who is the teacher? Who is the learner? When?

Fig. 6.3 Analytical question set for community art conceptualization. (Adapted from the original visual essay of Dewhurst 2012)

of community arts resonates with the quintessential elements in the community-based art practice promoted by the City of Taichung in Taiwan; a program under the policy of community development in response to mobilizing civic engagement in public issues on a community-wide scale. Launched in 2006, the Urban Development Bureau of Taichung City introduced a community-based art practice by emphasizing a grassroots approach that focused on local issues. Throughout the years of implementation, the quality and quantity of community participation and community art sites in the City of Taichung have garnered a nationwide reputation and established landmark progress in terms of community development. The City of Taichung accumulated a tremendous community arts showcases and serves as a significant CAP case study.

6.5 Community-Based Art Practice (CAP) in the City of Taichung, Taiwan

Under the community development policy initiated by the central government of Taiwan, the Urban Development Bureau of Taichung City launched a community development program in 2002. During the nascent stage of program implementation, the Urban Development Bureau employed a top-down approach and recruited both professionals and practitioners with expertise in urban planning, landscape design and architecture as the core members of the consulting team. In 2004, the community development policy led by the central government adopted a grassroots approach and encouraged community organizations to provide proposals based on local issues and community needs. This community-initiated proposal strategy changed the conventional top-down approach to a variety of public policy making procedure. By 2006, the Urban Development Bureau of Taichung City officially launched the community-based art practice (CAP) to encourage citizens to address local environment issues. Grants for arts practices that include place making and public space improvement on local scale provide incentive for broader participation (Hung 2011). Labeled as “Gu-Gong-Gou-Liao” (雇工購料), a Chinese term that was widely used by locals and refers to hiring-labor-purchasing-materials. The idea is to emphasize the community-initiated approach and to provide resources to communities with which to apply their proposed art ideas to the actual sites. Such a grassroots approach has stimulated creativity for solutions to environmental issues and ways to improve public spaces.

Under the program’s framework, a Coordinate Center was established to assist individual communities fulfill their missions; the work includes but is not limited to consulting in proposal writing and art project programming, organizing community workshops, providing guidelines for budget compliance and onsite construction. Three main features under the program framework characterize the CAP projects in the City of Taichung; a learning course with focus on acquiring advanced knowledge in community development, as well as participatory community workshops

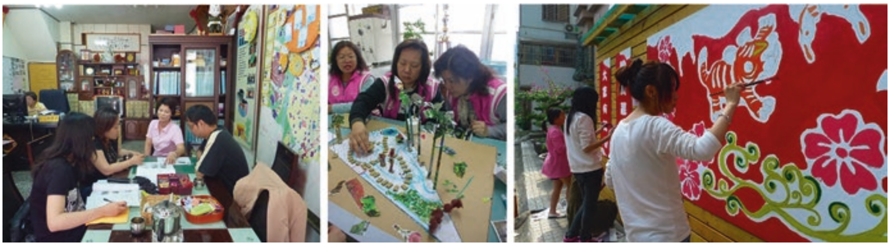

Fig. 6.4 The CAP procedure under the Taichung City community development program framework
Left: Participants had discussion for the CAP proposal writing
Middle: Participants utilized the collage method to illustrate their design idea
Right: Participants gathered at the site and conducted a mural painting
Photos by courtesy of the Coordinator Center of Taichung Community Development Program

aiming to aid in community consensus formation and in facilitating collaboration, and community capacity building through onsite artmaking and construction. Figure 6.2 illustrates the CAP procedure and activities involved in the process (Fig. 6.4).

Today, hundreds of community arts sites generated through the CAP process are scattered throughout the city of Taichung and cover a wide range of environment improvement scenarios. In the Shui-Nan community, years of participation in the CAP program successfully transformed a deteriorated alley and neglected spaces into a pleasant neighborhood environment. The positive experience within the CAP projects has motivated the Shui-Nan community members towards advocacy in cultural heritage preservation. The attempt to preserve a deteriorated historical tobacco building in a re-zoning site has propelled residents to reach out for resources and activate their civic mobilization. The effort in securing the tobacco building has lifted the community's expectations of their ability to improve their environment as well as increase civic engagement. In Jing-Ping, the community members used the CAP project as leverage to address the chronic street-litter and cluttered-scooters problems in the neighborhood. Seeking solutions for these chronic issues, Jing-Ping community members proposed a CAP project aiming to transform the 4 ft wide alley space into an artistic pedestrian walkway through the introducing of an artwork installation and mural painting along the corridor space. In Jhong-He, the community development association had successfully galvanized residents to participate in the CAP project and remodeled an abandoned old house into a community social gathering space. By introducing a nostalgic art theme, the revamped house serves as reminiscence of a traditional grocery store and signifies the local cultural restoration. Figure 6.5 illustrates one of the CAP projects and provides an example of the contrast between before and after.

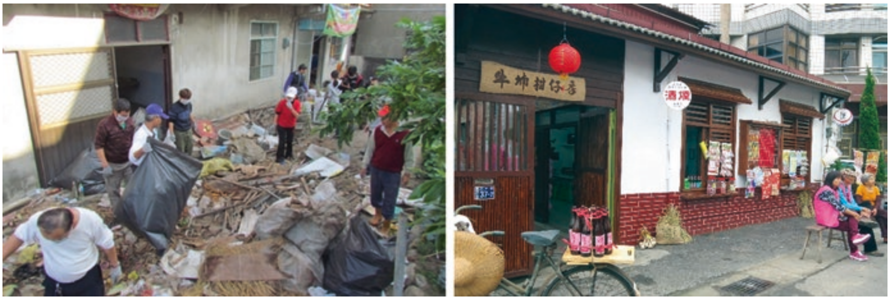

Fig. 6.5 Jhong-He community CAP project
Left: Local residents provided a vacant house to the Jhong-He Community Development Association for the CAP project
Right: The CAP participants transformed the vacant house into a traditional grocery store with the functionality of a community center
Photos by courtesy of the Jhong-He Community Development Association

6.5.1 *From Soul Searching to Community Building*

The CAP participants shared that a sense of community pride had been incubating throughout the CAP process. One of the participants described the process as soul searching, "… before [the project]…I never thought of our community anything special…it was just like other ordinary communities" she recalled, "…but now, it's different, we have something to tell…things we can show to others… it's like our community has found its soul.[3]" The dynamics generated from the conversation of the art practice was active and reciprocal. The CAP participants eagerly shared their thoughts and reflections during the art practice process. Participants described how they extracted the components from local history and community memory as art themes and motifs in the artworks. When they reconstructed the local history through a variety of activities such as workshops for childhood memory sharing, interviews from lifetime residents and elderly, and community asset mapping, the CAP participants described the process as a journey of community soul searching. Through the act of community asset mapping, participants collected materials that related to community assets by identifying the historical sites, significant landmarks, important event venues or people whose stories were worthy of re-telling to construct a varied narrative of local history. When reaching a consensus, a particular community history or local story may turn into an art theme or become a design motif in the artworks. A series of artmaking preparation workshops were organized to determine the art forms, materials, sites, and construction plans.

Residents with special skills like carpenters, painters, writers, poets, home builders and musicians were recruited to collaborate for the art project. "Community got talents", one of the participants shared her reflection during the art practice. "You never thought of your neighbors or community residents with special talents aside their work skills being valued and needed… if it were not the art project we are working on…we would never know…" described one of the participants who organized preparation workshops for the on-site construction. Upon the completion of the artworks, participants shared a strong feeling of self-attainment and a greater sense of belonging. The challenges and difficulties participants were forced to confront and overcome during the CAP process helped to reinforce community bonding and increased the development of community pride. Participants shared that the inner dynamics of the community had changed after the art practice; residents are proud of their communities and happy to be part of something meaningful. They shared that "our community is alive".

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[3] Extracted from an interview transcript conducted in 2016.

6.5.2 Community-based Art Practice as Vehicle for Community Change

One of the most significant features of the community-based art practice (CAP) is the lasting collaboration momentum uopn completion of the CAP project. Participants shared that the process reinforced community bonding and that the collaborative partnerships formed during the CAP process served as a vehicle driving the community work momentum. Ideas and thoughts generated during the CAP process were still fermenting afterward, and propelled participants to take further action. Activities aimed at preserving local cultural heritage and intergenerational integration, or programming with a focus on elderly welfare and neighborhood quality of life, took place when community members garnered local support and resources. A sense of self-efficacy was developed when participants managed to fulfill the new mission of community work. Individuals cultivated one's self image and identity through the engagement in a variety of community work; a sense of purpose and belonging were enhanced when they perceived their contribution as meaningful and part of the community. Community, in this context, serves as a representation of a collective identity and signified a future shared vision. The CAP, in its unique way, provided the platform to incubate such a mechanism and became the powerhouse behind further community change.

In the field of education, community art can be utilized as part of the curriculum in public education (Chappell 2010) and as a conversational tool for social justice (Dewhurst 2012). In this context, the artworks are extensions of this knowledge (Chappell 2010). In community cultural development, community art is a way of cultural expression. It is a collaborative work and communication media with which to express identity, concerns, and aspirations (Goldblartt 2006). Across multiple disciplines, the concept of community art varies and evolves in different areas. Nevertheless, there are several pertinent elements involved in community art: art, learning, and social change (Chappell 2010). Artist Kotleba,[4] the cofounder of the nonprofit organization Baltimore United Viewfinders, shared her thoughts on community art; all art is meant to communicate, to be experienced by others, and therefore can be considered social. It is the liberating practices of community arts, rooted in social justice, that elevates the voices of the invisible residents. She believes that the art is not a symbolic act, it is an action that encourages dialogue critical to the development of the community as a whole. The art positions itself as the object on which future dialogues can grow. Through this collaborative and creative process, powerful individuals are able to investigate self-identity through the cultivation of a consciousness of one's own self as part of the collective.

If being contemporary art requires an immediate response to society, the empirical practice of self-adapting learning process and the mechanism that captures the contemporaneous gestures to that response and practice, the community-based art practice (CAP) in Taichung case then demonstrated its most evident attributes to these distinctive qualities. It consists of an intentional agenda that is responsive to current issues and community concerns, exploring these topics through modes of artistic expression, and a self-learning mechanism focused on capacity building and is used as platform for experimental art intervention. The elements shaped within the community-based art practice are worthy of further discussion and scrutiny. This brings our attention to the fact that mechanism generated from the CAP is helping to shape community identity and keeps increasing the collaboration momentum that may shed light on the conceptualization of creative tourism.

6.6 Community Practice Exchange in the Context of Creative Tourism

As noted earlier, the features of creative tourism revolve around the concept of skilled consumption; a creative mode that emphasizes "reflexive" experiences during the tourism activities. Richards and Wilson (2006) perceive the personal development in creativity potential and identity creation as critical components that are cultivated by these reflexive activities. The quality of developing skills, enhancing the learning experience, and cultivating creative capital has characterized creative tourism as an innovative approach to self-development. Similar ideas are also advocated by several community development associations through the promotion of the community practice exchange program and its emphasis on interactions with host communities and deeper involvement in local activities. Initiated in 2016, the

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[4] Anne Kotleba has worked with the Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art in Biloxi, Mississippi, to help Gulf Coast residents celebrate the rich history that is culturally and emotionally important for rebuilding homes and lives. She also has served for 3 years as the resident artist at the Harrison Country Juvenile Detention Center and the Gulf Coast Adolescent Offenders Program. Her expertise and passion lies in community art practices, and has organized and facilitated community arts projects all over the country and world.

International Association for Community Development (IACD) has organized multiple community practice exchange tours and visited dozens of communities in India, Nepal, Chile, and Indonesia. The reflexivity, knowledge acquisition and capacity building promoted in the creative tourism platform resonate with the essential components of the community practice exchange (PE) tours. The PE participants shared that the participatory activities organized by the host communities signified a sense of community efficacy and created an intimate connection between the participants; individuals developed a deeper engagement with local issues and community concerns by "being there" as a participant rather than as a" visitor". Such participatory activities accentuate self-exploration, compassion sharing, skill development, and self-attainment acquisition.

Comparable experiences were also shared by the CAP participants in their community arts tours. Through years' cultivation, numerous community arts sites have garnered the public's attention and prompted the development of these community practice exchange tours. Featured as community practice exchange, this type of community-based tourism experience highlights knowledge exchange, local story sharing, art inspiration, brainstorming workshops, and social networking. Participants actively engage with local activities organized by the host community with the focus on the local community development's history, CAP experiences, and the artmaking creation. Visitors, in return for their invitation to participate, would share their stories and experiences, and exchange suggestions or inspirations in the brainstorming workshops. Different from the conventional cultural tourism, the community practice exchange emphasizes a reciprocal mechanism and intentional agenda with a focus on self-learning and experience sharing. Host organizations leveraged it as a self-exploration learning opportunity to motivate participants more engagement in their community work. Motivated participants perceived the community practice exchange experience as a catalyst for galvanizing their community residents and neighbors participating more in local activities; the inspiring stories and achievements of the host communities had sparked their imagination and passion for their future community vision. This type of community practice exchange tour has its significant impacts on community development practices in Taiwan and triggeres the ripple effect to other cultural exchange events (Fig. 6.6).

6.7 Self-Development in the Transformation Experience

Self-development, as one of the major drivers for creative consumption (Richards and Wilson 2006), anchors its core discourse on the concept of self-identity development. The desire for unique leisure activities, an authentic and genuine experience, as well as the ability to build one's course in life have become the main discussion surrounding tourism. Research has identified that tourists seek unique and genuine adventures and activities with which to piece discrete fragments of an experience into a coherent story in which to project themselves; a story about who

Fig. 6.6 Community practice exchange trip in Taichung, Taiwan
Photos by courtesy of the Coordinator Center of Taichung Community Development Program

they are. The development of this individual narrative allowed them to construct an identity in which a coherent life history was embedded (Richards and Wilson 2006). In a backpacker's research (Noy 2004), the concept of self-change is defined by accentuating the need for self-exploration through an inward search for self and provides the explanatory power necessary for the motivation to visit. From self-development to self-change, such inward change cultivation resonates with the prediction of new economic value: transformation. Pine and Gilmore (2011) perceived the transformation economy as an advanced experience economy from creation to transformations. Rather than passively experiencing, participants seek to adopt a more active approach to self-change through a transformation mechanism. Apparently, the act of experiencing itself is insufficient to denote the concept of self-change or transformation. What prompts this initial inquiry relies on the question: Why people seek to change or to pursue self-identity?

In the psychological field, Breakwell (1986) considers the threats to identity as fundamental factors in motivating individuals to take action and respond. In Breakwell's original approach, analyzing the individual's coping strategy when one encounters a threat to self-identity is a way to understand the construction of identity. In guiding the construction of identity, Breakwell proposed a model of the identity process based on four principles: self-esteem, distinctiveness, continuity and self-efficacy. Research has shown self-continuity serves as a fundamental component in identity construction and in the development of a robust self (Erikson 1964). Continuity, referring to the notion of preserving continuity of the self-concept, serves as a motivator of action by pursuing the maintenance and development of self-identity (Breakwell 1986). What Breakwell suggested resonates with the reflections of the CAP participants.

In the community-based art practice (CAP), the participants shared an anxiety and fear of losing control of one's life to modernity and globalization. This fear had driven them to "do something". Residents described a sense of loss and disconnection from the community when "neighborhood is no longer the one they were familiar with" due to the urbanism.[5] Such fear of deprivation of self-autonomy and a sense of crisis motivated community members to seek a change and reach out for resources through participation in a variety of government-funded programs. Throughout a yearlong CAP process, participants described an inner community dynamic change between interpersonal and intergroup interactions through an identification mechanism. Through this mechanism, individuals align themselves to the emergent collective identity: community. Individual senses of self-esteem, distinctiveness, and self-efficacy were fulfilled and enhanced through the collective action: community-based art practice. Participants perceived the artworks as one's self-extension through the act of artmaking in sculpture, painting, mosaic mural, and onsite art installation. The art theme and motif extracted from the local history reconstruction and individual childhood memory sharing allowed participants to develop an individual narrative through the artmaking process. By relating a personal story and childhood memory to the local history, the individual developed a sense of continuity and built a connection to the community. Landau et al. (2008) argued that constructing and maintaining a culturally meaningful narrative of the self serves a significant psychological function to minimize the existential threat of passing time and the end of life. In other words, the maintenance of self-continuity is biologically driven and culturally constructed. This assumption also brackets the motivation of individuals seeking strategies for self-development in order to conceive of oneself as a significant and valuable agent of the society. In the CAP process, the assembly of individual art pieces at the site signifies a distinct and individualized whole self as a part of a current local history. Individuals become meaningful actors in the act of community rebuilding; a transformed-self was developed by internalizing the collective community history into one's narrative. Such a transformation mechanism in the CAP process provides for a possible framework to conceptualize the idea of self-change within the context of creative tourism. By coping with the new challenges of the postmodern society, individuals seek to adopt new approaches and activate a transformation mechanism to reconstruct an evolving self-identity; a creation of self-concept that resorts to endogenous power to cultivate an adapting and robust self.

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[5] Extracted from interview conversation conducted in summer 2016.

6.8 Conclusion

If seeking creativity serves as the path to satisfaction, self-development and the creation of self-identity, then the commnity-based art practice (CAP) case study in Taiwan provides a probable framework with which to delineate the mechanism involved in the CAP process that demonstrates the self-change momentum within the context of self-development. In the CAP process, participants developed an individual narrative of the artmaking process and projected their self-images in the artwork. Individual distinctiveness was accentuated in the artmaking process through relations to personal stories and experience. In a list of creativity-based activities in Richards and Wilson's research (2006): art crafts, porcelain and pottery making, drawing, sculpture, carving, folk music, cooking course and perfume-making; revolve around the central idea of an internalization process through art expression. Participants acquired the knowledge and skills as the first step, then learned how to "create" the artworks or products by integrating the ingredients or inspiration from the local context within their creation process. Such a learning and creation experience serves as a pivotal component to the development of a sense of accomplishment and self-attainment. Creativity, as counteracting the commodification of the cultural tourism product in Richards and Wilson's (2006) framework, provides an outlet and platform to enhance the self-development in response to the ever-changing world. To emphasize the creation process behind creative tourism, creativity should be utilized as an approach or strategy to ignite an individual's imagination and cultivate a resilience to the postmodern social challenge rather than an end product.

By analyzing the Taiwan CAP case study, the internalization mechanism and transformation experience in the community identification process adds a psychological dimension to the conceptualization of creative tourism in relation to the construction of self-identity. As noted earlier, the CAP participants perceived the community-based art practice as a journey of community searching. To some degree, the individual self-exploration journey is synchronized with the community soul searching process. In the CAP process, a sense of self value and pride was incubated throughout the process and motivated individuals to take a higher moral ground. The virtues and moral qualities of participants were cultivated and enhanced through the collaboration and volunteer work. It is transformed into a collective spirituality and represented through the concept of a community soul. Through this creation process and soulful act, individuals perceive themselves as no alienated actors but meaningful part of a society. The inspiration of self-development and self-change within the CAP process provides crucial component to conceptualize the essence of creative tourism. By adding an extra note, the soulful acts in creative tourism industry, an advanced experience economy as transformation economy will lift the consumption culture into a deeper sense of satisfaction and self-change that constitutes the spirituality.

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Chapter 7
The Survival of Cultural Patterns in Malaysia's Contemporary Visual Landscape

Sherry Fresia Blankenship and Keith Kay Hin Tan

Abstract This research serves as a means of examining the representations of the ordinary, everyday visual culture found in the urban landscapes of Malaysia that reveal the history, values, and aesthetic sensibilities of Malaysian society to a resident traveler from a North American background. By examining the immediate contrast that exists between a society where culture is embedded in most aspects of everyday life compared to a society where culture is seldom discussed, this study serves as an artistic reflection of the people and the environment while also translating social, cultural, religious, and historical processes and values into visual forms that are integral to a concept of the culture. In addition, these visual references, which are presented in this chapter as a bricolage, serve as a representation of the formal elements (colours; motifs; materials; aspects of nature; traditional crafts; cultural integration) that combine to make the visual environment distinctively Malaysian. It shows that in countries where political control influences what is presented as 'high culture', the artistic evidence available in the common street can sometimes provide a greater variety of cultural representation than state-run museums. The research shows how, both overtly and covertly, cultural patterns associated with vanished ways of life continue to be represented in the visual iconography of Malaysia even as they disappear from its official and intangible identity. The findings suggest that under these circumstances, casual tourists engaged in random encounters can in fact experience greater cultural meaning and authenticity than cultural tourists exposed to carefully curated experiences.

Keywords Malaysia · Visual landscape · Casual tourism · Historical and cultural influences · Traditional crafts

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7.1 Introduction

Having arrived in Malaysia from Athens, Ohio, a small college town in Appalachia (United States), where the greatest form of embellishment is the use of bricks that were made locally, Malaysia offers a vast contrast with its variety of materials and decorative motifs. The bricks are what define Athens: brick streets, brick houses, brick college buildings as well as paved roads. In the 1800s, Southeastern Ohio became a prime location for the brick industry because of the discovery of the clay particles found underneath the hill-topped soils. The buff bricks were produced at the standard building size of 3.5 × 2.25 × 8 inches to be used for the construction of buildings and the pavement of roadways. There was little decoration with the exception of the word 'Athens' imprinted on those produced in the town for the very practical intention of creating a college in the new Northwest Territory of the United States in the early 1800s, and they have not changed since that time. All of the campus buildings are made of bricks decorated only with the variety of wooden window frames and cupolas painted white on each of the buildings on the college campus. By contrast, the variety of ornamentation on every surface, the use of various materials and motifs, and the lushness of the natural environment in Malaysia suggest a very different richness of creativity, materials, history, and craftsmanship (Mc Kenzie 2019; Bella 2015).

Every Southeast Asian nation has experienced not only somewhat similar cultural histories but also different cultural histories from the others. Cultural transformations have been caused by such factors as colonization, war, and migration. In Malaysia, during the period of British rule, the three main ethnic groups (Chinese, Indian, Malay) were segregated into different working industries. Some groups prospered in the business sector while others felt disadvantaged. The Malays in Malaysia are differentiated from the Chinese and the Indians, by being closely associated with the religion of Islam. Malaysia went through difficult times from its transition under colonial administration to the post–World War II era, leading up to independence in 1957. These factors, as well as its historical and pluralistic background, have resulted in different artistic and cultural traditions. The country's pluralistic society has produced a variety of beliefs and practices that are represented in its diverse arts that blend into the lives of its people (Ibrahim 2004).

Despite Malaysia's head-start in tourism, having hosted, for example the Pacific Area Tourism Association (PATA) Conference as early as 1986, the opening up of the previously closed economies of Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar to mass-tourism since the early 2000s has changed the tourism landscape of the region, with recent tourist arrival numbers growing rapidly in Indochina even as they flatten out in Malaysia (Othman et al. 2014; Noor Zatul and Buchmann 2019).

This trend points to the need for foreigners to view Malaysia, and for Malaysians to view themselves, in a way that acknowledges the rich diversity that exists in people's everyday lives. Rather than the 'curated experience' of museums, galleries and even archeological sites that exist in great numbers throughout Malaysia as well as the rest of Southeast Asia. This study points to the importance of street life as the custodian of Malaysia's living arts and crafts, and therefore its cultural patterns. These are particularly accessible to casual tourists who may not have the time, money or inclination to engage in the immersive, curated experiences that mark out the cultural tourist as a distinct type of visitor (Tsaur and Chung 2018).

By identifying the Malaysian cultural patterns that can be of interest to the casual tourist, this research points to new possibilities for the country to re-position itself in the face of stiff competition from neighboring countries, whose monuments are bigger in scale and more firmly located in the 'tourist gaze' (Urry 1990). However, the everyday authenticity that presents itself to casual visitors in Malaysia may be drowned out by the deafening noise of increasingly famous 'tourist attractors' (Peterson 1994).

7.1.1 Beginnings of Malaysian Crafts

Malay traditional crafts using natural materials can be traced to the primitive age that was formed by the environmental influences, which in turn, cultivated motifs in surface decoration for handicrafts. Here, patterns were formed by the repetition of the motif as the unit is repeated at regular intervals over a surface whereby the element of repetition helps to form the design. A pattern is composed of one or more motifs, multiplied and arranged in an orderly sequence. They have been used in various forms including ceramics, textiles, and wood carvings. The motif serves as a theme—a dominant recurring visual element that provides the balance and consistency in the design (Legino 2012). The motif is a messenger delivering the thinking of the artisan to the spectator in abstract form that has inner meaning.

Despite the relatively recent emergence of Malaysia as a nation-state, the existence of Malay traditional craft products using natural materials has been traced back to primitive times. The flora, fauna and cosmic patterns that beautify traditional Malay crafts show their deep connection with the natural environment which has played an important role in the lives of the people living in Malaysia for generations. Elements from the natural environment are the most important in traditional Malay handicrafts. Malay society has had a long tradition of various kinds of craft goods including weaving, batik, pottery, ceramics, sculpture, wood carving and embroidery. These goods were not only created with the desire to be beautiful but also to include/reflect the philosophy of the makers. Motifs, images, or features used for a base in visual artworks were often repeated and combined with others to create a pattern. This use of patterns has evolved into a distinctive design language throughout Malaysia and has been applied to all her crafts. This use of patterns bridges cultural, ethnic, religious, and racial boundaries that have been able to transmit cultural values and history while creating group memory and identity that then preserves Malaysian cultural heritage (Duxbury 2003).

Malaysia's place in contemporary Southeast Asia is a product of both its ancient and its recent history. Although home to some of the oldest known buildings in Southeast Asia (Dumarcay and Smithies 1998), the vast majority of its historic towns and cities were laid out by European colonial planners from the sixteenth century to 1957. Geography played a major role since the country straddles the ancient trade routes where the monsoon winds meet, and therefore, attracted visitors over thousands of years though not tourists in the contemporary sense of the term. These early travelers brought their cultures, languages, and religious beliefs that the Malays expressed as *"adat—tradition comes from the mountains while religion comes from the seas"* (Moore 2002, p. 9). The earliest Indian, Chinese, and Arab traders as well as the later colonial powers of the Portuguese, Dutch, and British all impacted on Malaysia. The intangible identity of pre-twentieth century immigrants and colonizers rapidly left their marks on the tangible identity of the country in the form of new towns and buildings especially prior to the era of mass-immigration. The majority of Malaysia's inhabitants were located in seaside or riverside villages, whose architectural traces have mostly not survived into the twenty-first century, leaving the colonial towns laid out by European powers as the oldest of the major surviving relics from the country's past.

These colonial towns became beacons for immigration, especially from the territories of modern-day Indonesia, China, and India throughout the century preceding the Second World War in particular, greatly enlarging heterogeneous communities of peoples that had existed in very small numbers throughout peninsular Malaysia, in particular, since ancient times. This resulted in Malaysia's history and culture, and therefore design, being infused by multiple ethnic groups, religions, and beliefs. This unique interaction of cultures has contributed to the present-day heritage and national Malaysian cultural identity within a plural society with a very rich cultural heritage based on the separate traditions of the various races that constitute Malaysian society. Its location on the trading route between China and India has interested traders, invaders, and settlers since the first century (Edwards 2016). Over time, Malaysia has assimilated peoples and cultures from many countries that came with a variety of purposes. The country is now a federation of 13 states and three territories spread out around the South China Sea in the Malay Peninsula as well as the north and west of Borneo, mostly populated by Malay, Chinese, Indian, and indigenous peoples.

Typically, the selection of motifs from nature came from the close association of the craftspeople with the environment including the cosmos. They delivered moral values of gentleness and politeness that respect others with cooperation, tolerance, and consideration. These craft motifs would use certain symbolic elements that related to people's spiritual life. The way of life at the edge of the forest and along a riverbank where they utilized the materials to apply moral education served as a reminder to everyone in the house (Haron and Yusof 2014). These influences encouraged people to feel, to practice, and to recall experiences whereby they encoded the lives of the people who have been impacted by them. They provide associations with the places that offer contemporary sensibilities. These places are the manifestation of human culture where people develop and realize an identity—where they imbue the space with meaning, changing spaces into places (Ujang and Zakariya 2015).

All these crafts thus have a double origin in religion and the utility of the everyday (King 2017). Over the centuries, this mix of cultural elements in the urban environments has given both social and emotional connotations to the structural and physical aspects of the places that have become centers of meaning constructed out of lived experience. Despite changes to the political landscape of Malaysia, the subconscious integration of these diverse cultural influences over time, particularly in urban settings, has given expression to the actual physical structures of these places that today represent among the most cosmopolitan visual narratives to be found in Southeast Asia. Climate, however, also inevitably affected Malaysia's history by annihilating the past with the combination of humidity and torrential rains that have in some cases wiped out all traces of ancient settlements (Moore 2002). Consequently, it is the everyday engagement and lived experience or response to contemporary structures that allow Malaysia's multicultural population to form a shared social and emotional subjectivity without the obvious glue of a dominant language, religion, or cultural norms.

It can be seen that textural patterns, often applied to building facades and sidewalks, may suggest connections between the patterns and the culture of batik and weaving as well as with the patterns that have integrated orthodox Islamic restrictions regarding the representation of human or animal forms. From the experiences and photographs included in this chapter, much of what is in evidence has come from various craft traditions and religious beliefs as well as the rich plant environment. Though stone endures the longest, some of the woodwork found in Malaysia has been around for equally as long, perpetuating this custom-steeped craft (Moore 2002). What is uniformly evident is that the cultural experience that Malaysia presents today stems from an integration of several long periods of dominant, cultural influences: the Prehistoric Era beginning c2500 BC, the era of Hindu-Buddhist influence from the first to twentieth centuries AD, the Islamic Era beginning in the fifteenth century, and the most recent, the colonial era from the sixteenth to twentieth centuries that began with the Portuguese (1511), followed by the Dutch (1641), and finally the main European influence, the British, who created modern Malaysia beginning in the late eighteenth century through controlling and federating each state (Edwards 2016). The integration of cultural influences over time, particularly in urban settings, has given expression to the actual physical structures of these places. Consequently, it is via the everyday engagement and lived experience or response to these structures that a shared social and emotional subjectivity has been formed, making them fully accessible to the casual tourist.

7.2 Methodology

The visuals collected for this study all come from public spaces: building facades, sidewalks, malls, apartment complexes, commercial enterprises, train stations, religious institutions, museums, parking garages, and parks. Together they are representative of contemporary as well as traditional Malaysian crafts. All the locations examined in this study are accessible to the casual tourist and offer a microcosm of the visual aspects of the history, influences, and natural environments that create the visual language of Malaysia, thus representing an important store of its authenticity. This investigation began through photographing small points of personal visual interest. Some examples, therefore, have their origins in the beginnings of historical or colonial Malaya while others are from new construction in order to illustrate that the phenomenon of using textures, patterns, and intricate motifs has continued over time with variations in purpose, style, materials, and colors.

A culture's representation can be seen in the specificities of the material object and in visual systems of communication that are used. "The minutest detail, event, or artifact is an essential part of the chronicle that we would call history" (King and Chartniyom, p. 197). The cultural identity of Malaysia reflects a process of formation due to the constantly changing external forces" (Bauhauddin, Aldrin, p. 16). To better understand and appreciate the existing artefacts within the everyday phenomenon of change, this study therefore analyzes the visual environment through the use of photographs as a methodology. Photos are complex, and the information they contain can provide a logical context for possible identification of the image through evidence, interpretation or speculation. This content analysis is able to help support statements about the significance, effects, or interpreted meaning of the representations (Pauwels and Margolis 2011). As a Westerner, there is likely some unintended prejudices of subject, perspective, or even comparisons, but these can also be a positive because what is visually attractive to an outsider may be more likely to transmit an obvious depth of meaning.

Some scholars premise that the use of photos is a relatively new method of collecting research data since they stress the unprecedented importance of imaging and visual technologies (Mitchell 2008). Until recently, photos have served as reflections or confirmations of findings rather than tools for interpretation. In this study, however, the photos are the data (Petersen and Østergaard 2003). The photos examined in this research are used to portray, describe, and analyze social phenomena and cultural artefacts. The research includes photographs taken in towns and cities along the west coast of peninsular Malaysia as well as Sabah and Sarawak in Malaysian Borneo. Together, these represent repositories of both contemporary and traditional crafts. The photographs were not determined beforehand but grew from photographed materials intentionally including both the details of place and the surrounding natural environment (Petersen and Østergaard 2003).

The photographs were taken from 2017 to 2018. They show the fascination with the various details seen on the streets which include decorative architectural elements on roofs, the myriad uses of tiles on buildings, walls, and sidewalks; the metal work on fences and gates— that illustrate the great variety of patterns and richness of colors. These aspects of the visual culture could be ancient or contemporary or any sort of combination, because when exposed to something visual, it is human nature to investigate (Rose 2016). These photos provide a direct link from the visual stimulus to introduce the visual into an otherwise semantically oriented research world preoccupied with words. The photos afford the reader to see and experience the details that became so visually interesting that the larger scope of buildings, gardens, landscapes, or waterfronts were overlooked. The details that spilled into the streets and gardens and public places provided both a locus of wonder, as well as a sense of other times and/or places. Additional photos continued to be collected predominantly from Subang Jaya and Kuala Lumpur with a few from Sarawak.

All of the photographs were taken in a square format to minimize direction and allow them to work together as tiles that could be easily interchanged and/or compared. All of the images were taken in natural daylight though at varying times of the day or the calendar year. The photographs of tiles attempted to capture the complete tiles which were for the most part, also in square formats. Photographs of natural plant life were taken near or adjacent to various man-made artefacts. All were taken in four colors even if the subject was monochromatic. All images were taken straight on unless physically impossible due to scale, location, or other barriers. The photographic collection presented in this article is not limited in terms of time as it illustrates how contemporary Malaysian public spaces pay homage to the traditional and are often juxtaposed. Some examples go back to the beginnings of the country while others are from newly built malls and apartment buildings, train stations, walkways and other new constructions. The phenomena continue with variations in purpose, intention, style, material, color, etc. but clearly represent a unique Malaysian aesthetic that might reflect the traditional or explore the new, always with a cultural/historical/visual connection. The 144 photos selected by the authors for use in this study, (presented below as Fig. 7.1), not only capture the natural environment which has served as a source of much inspiration for the craftspeople over the centuries but also illustrate many of the crafts, adaptations, and locations over time.

While photography can provide useful visual field notes it would be a mistake to see the images as a scientific record of events. The images were instead chosen for their particular ability to record small details of Malaysia that often go unnoticed though available to everyone at this point in time. They were produced with an iPhone 6 camera in what was intended as an impersonal documentation of visual details. The use of photography was a means of focusing on the richness of the everyday visual world available to the casual tourist. They are able to not only bring attention to specific aspects of Malaysian life but also to encourage others to consider/contemplate/question their possible meaning that might encourage further interest and/or investigation. Publication of these photographs as part of this article serves as a means whereby readers are provided with a way to become sensitive to the cultural implications of known and unknown locations. In contemporary society, viewers are now much more ready to question images, recognizing that social reality is constructed as well as reflected in photographs. It also challenges readers to consider other interpretations (Richter 2011).

The additional consideration of materials, sizes, textures, and colors that occur throughout the samples shows the visual acumen important to Malaysian society as well as a command of scale, colors, and materials that certainly maintains the *horror vacui* (the filling of the entire surface of a space or an artwork with detail with few plain surfaces) of Malaysian visual culture. What appears in the artwork becomes a complement of what does not appear—the invisible reveals as much as the visible (Eenoo 2013).

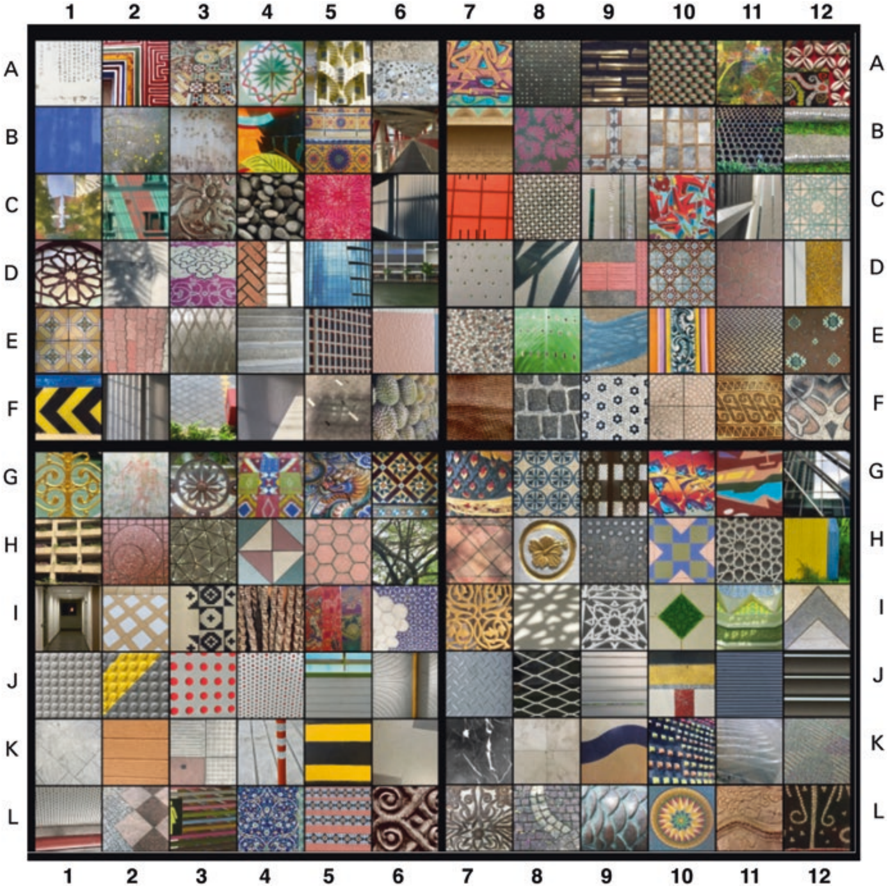

Fig. 7.1 A bricolage of Malaysian visual patterns

Some of the images capture the integration and/or reference to the historical, cultural, and artistic aspects of forms to reveal a contemporary Malaysian integration of these forms. For instance, image A 12 documents the traditional weaving and bead work of Eastern Malaysia while images I 7–12 capture details of the contemporary mosque in Cyberjaya. Many of the photos show the tile work of sidewalks such as B10, F8, H5, J10, K3, L8. Then there are samples of old wood carvings: G7 captures the details of an ancient boat, while L6 shows the detail of a column where the craftsman dug deeply into wood which was the style due to the type of wood used. Various religious traditions can be seen in A2, D1, E10, G5, and L10, each with its own materials and colors and motifs from the Buddhist to Hindu to Muslim. Five of the photos focus on the circle which was used through most of the religious traditions. Over 20 are symmetrical. More than half are textural either physically or visually while over 100 are geometric. The use of colors is not only a reflection of the materials being used but also an imitation of the vivid colors in the plant life that surrounds the people living here. What has become a way of life, a way of seeing, is here an embodiment of not only the reverence and appreciation of the natural world but also an explosion of creative uses and visions of this place. This continuous integration and recognition of the natural environment provide for a rich and varied visual heritage.

These photos are glimpses of the Malaysian experience that envelope the people of Malaysia throughout their daily lives. These forms are echoed back in the man-made traditions and the man-made interactions with nature, even within the cities. There is a visual conversation that occurs over and over again with each turn that offers moments of pure presence, a transition to a sensual realm to be enjoyed and encouraged as it spontaneously erupts amid the everyday. The Malaysian people have maintained varied and energetic visual expressions with the ability to continually evaluate and develop and evolve beyond the horizon of the conceivable.

7.3 The Cultural Basis for the Development of Malaysian Visual Culture

Two facets of travel and tourism are emphasized in this study. The first is the accessibility of Malaysia's visual culture to the casual tourist. By walking around cities, historical areas, suburban neighborhoods, and even shopping malls, casual visitors gain exposure to key characteristics of Malaysian culture, history, and visual artefacts without necessarily looking for them, because they are in fact interwoven with daily life. Secondly, museums, cultural institutions, businesses, and government buildings also celebrate Malaysia's visual heritage, albeit often through less pluralistic lenses. Both aspects of the visual are thus integrated into contemporary life in ways that connect, adopt, integrate, and embrace the forms, materials, colors, and influences that echo and reinforce visual language.

The current visual environment within Malaysia has also been greatly influenced by three major belief systems— Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam and their artistic representations that are frequently developed through the use of motifs from the natural environment and traditional crafts in combination with religious and cultural expressions. Since each of the major religions is recognized and their holidays and celebrations integrated into contemporary Malaysian life in food, modes of celebration, openness and inclusion, large numbers of rituals are embedded into daily life and accepted as part of the calendar year. In places of worship, tourist attractions, and even shopping areas, cultural and religious metaphors can therefore be seen throughout the built environment. The materials, colors, and patterns tend to combine into a distinctive visual language that becomes a *horror vacui*.

7.3.1 Woodcarving

At the beginning of the first century, Hinduism had a major influence on the development of culture in the Malay world. Development of handicraft, particularly wood carving, became associated with the status symbols of the administration that then accorded recognition to the art of wood carving under this system. Originally, wood carving was produced for recreational purposes only. Eventually, highly-skilled craftsmen were designated royal artists. The concepts and designs evolved from Malay symbols to status symbols for the palace. These motifs and patterns designed for the palace had their own significance and philosophy that distinguished the ruling class from the ordinary people.

While the creation of Malaysian wood carving motifs is associated with the ancient Malay kingdom of Langkasuka under the influence of Hinduism, in the early days of Islam, the Malay carving motifs accommodated Islamic principles. For example, vegetal designs tend to be bio-morphic while floral designs express the underlying order and harmony of nature. Flora is one type of motif that predominates both wood carving and weaving due to the wealth of forest and plant life in Malaysia. Plants have always been a basis of inspiration containing the leaf, stem, tendril, fruit, and more prominently the flower (Said 2002). Flowers and trees might be used as motifs for the decoration of textiles, objects, and buildings. Additionally, spices and flowers carry sweet fragrances and may also possess medicinal powers. These plants remain significant sources for motifs. The contemporary environment surrounded by plants encourages an appreciation of their forms that also inspired the art of traditional Malay wood carving and reflected the beauty of the culture of Malay society (Hussin et al. 2012). Malay carvings were inspired by Islamic motifs after Islam arrived in Malaysia, but Malay motifs continued to preserve the Malay cultural identity and to distinguish it from the original Islamic motifs that are more related to other Middle Eastern cultures such as Arabic, Persian and Turkish (Said 2002).

The arrival of Islam to the Malay world reduced the dominance of Hinduism. The faith in Islam influenced all activities particularly wood carving where motifs of living things changed to plant motifs in stylized forms based on Islamic calligraphy. Islamic values began to be embedded in the carvings. A large number of animal motifs were replaced by plant motifs. Islamic influence in Malay society led to the development of geometric motifs in wood carving. Arabesques did not conflict with Islamic teachings; therefore, the carvings developed a relationship with the creator in an abstract form. The use of plant forms symbolized nature and gave meaning to the religion. The motifs characteristically inclined toward humbleness and subservience as a mark of respect to others and submission to Allah. The various motifs common to Hindu culture are entrenched in Malay culture and are reflected in Malay carvings. However, these motifs have been changed by the carving specialists so that the elements fulfill Islamic values.

Since Malaysia is a tropical country characterized by a variety of plant families the Malay Muslim artists were motivated to produce very unique motifs. This tropical environment has influenced the artists and inspired them to form relationships (al Jarah 2017) that give a sense of contemplation and suggest a sense of unity through the use of rhythm and repetition. The quantity of the flora motifs has predominated the creative work of Malaysian designers mainly due to the wealth of forest and plant types in their surroundings.

As a result of the growing promotion of state-sponsored Islam in Malaysia from the 1970s onward (Chew 2000; Abu Talib 2015), the design assemblages relating to Islamic ornamentation in particular today, also serve as symbols of social status. Biologically, Malaysia is a tropical country characterized by a variety of plant families that from the emergence of the Islamic sultanates onward, motivated generations of Malay Muslim artisans to produce unique, plant-based motifs. The tropical environment which influenced the artists and inspired them also provided a sense of contemplation and unity through rhythm and repetition. The quantity of flora, as opposed to fauna motifs which have dominated the creative work of Malaysian Muslim designers ever since, is mainly due to the wealth of forest and plant types in their surroundings, as well as an orthodox interpretation of Islam that frowns on the creation of images of 'living beings' (Haron and Yusof 2014).

The easy shapes of the circle, square, and straight line served as a foundation of the Islamic designs that came, in part, from Arab astronomers and cartographers who used compasses and rulers. These shapes were joined, repeated, rotated and entangled to create complicated formations. In other examples, the background is substituted by dissimilarity between light and shade. Sometimes it is impossible to differentiate between foreground and background. Selected geometric designs are made by fitting all the polygonal shapes together like the pieces of a puzzle, leaving no gaps, and thus removing interplay between foreground and background through the use of tessellation. The idea of space in Islamic art is totally different from Western models which typically adopted a linear viewpoint and split the picture space into foreground, middle ground, and background (al Jarah 2017).

The ornamentation in Malaysia's traditional mosques channeled the community toward understanding the identity and framework of design thinking in ornamentation (Utaberta et al. 2012). The wood carvings were transformed into geometric and/or floral motifs. It appears that geometric designs were preferred in Islamic designs due to the significance of science and technology in Iran and Central Asia at the time. Also popular were designs incorporating calligraphy. Later, vegetal and floral patterns that were derived from architecture, strongly influenced the geometric transformation of the floral and figural. Flowers and leaves continued to be considered eminently suitable as motifs in various sorts of carving because they represented the beauty of the natural world and did not offend the sensibilities of pious Muslims.

In addition, the aesthetic use of flowering shrubs and trees were used in the Malay landscape to serve as decoration for the houses. A typical Malay timber architecture, such as a house, would be adorned with more than 20 carved ornaments (Utaberta et al. 2012). The designs of carved panels reflected the social rank/status of ownership thus mosques, houses, and resorts showed differences. "A motif can be associated with the period of the carving, status of ownership, skills of craftsmen and placement of the carved components in a building" (Shaffee and Said 2013).

7.3.2 Textiles

The textiles of Malaysia are also one of the living visual arts contributing to the enrichment of the cultural development on the country. The cultural significance of cloth remains important with certain recurrent themes in its use and function in community ritual and the social context (Ramlan 2019). They developed under Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic influences as seen in the motifs of the flora and fauna used with mathematical order. Like the wood carvings, the designs of the textiles were also taken from the natural environment that surrounded the weaver's world. The composition of the motifs in these decorative styles was developed in frieze or wallpaper patterns. For instance, most of the motifs in the songket cloth are derived from flora and fauna whose patterns filled the whole of the fabric where the concept of beauty comes from the religion of Islam itself (Nawawi et al. 2015).

7.3.2.1 Batik

Batik, a technique of wax-resist dyeing applied to whole cloth, is made either by drawing dots and lines of the resist with a spouted tool or by printing the resist with a copper or wooden stamp called a cap. This creates symbolic meanings and associations as well as geometric forms. There is a direct relationship between these forms and the history, mythology, and social practices of the country. The motifs express the influences of the religious and cultural as well as the traditional values, histories, and cultures in the batik designs. These motifs represent many things symbolically whereby they are the proof of unification of the traditional community with the cosmos (Sidek n.d.). Batik contributed a new decorative technique for fabric printing influenced by its location, history, and cultural diversity within the context of the Malaysian material culture and traditional values. Sometimes there are motif arrangements within a central panel or a framing border. The element of repetition contributes to the rhythm and unity in which a single motif or element appears again and again. The designs, created predominantly by people of Malay origin, are based on traditional aesthetics which are unique to Malaysia. They transverse both the traditional and the modern motifs: flowers, leaves, fruits derived from plants as well as from various parts of plants. The beauty and features of plants are selected from specific elements such as flowers, leaves, shoots, tendrils, fruits and stems. Flowers with their different shapes and colors are favored motifs. The flowers that have grown in the vicinity where the batik craftsmen have lived and worked have, over the generations, acquired symbolism reflecting their day-to-day functions as well as their use in rituals. Batik has been maintained as one of the richest and most varied textiles of the world, marked by invention, chance happenings, and re-use of revered images of the past (Ramlan 2019).

The use of plant or floral motifs in batik sarongs are related to those used in Malay wood carvings since the technique of printed batik used wood blocks to print color on the fabric. Therefore, there is a direct relationship between these forms and the history, mythology, and social practices of the country. For instance, after independence, changes occurred whereby the wood carvings became more geometric and floral similar to arabesques. These motifs express the influences of the religious and cultural as well as the traditional values, histories and cultures in the batik designs that represent many things symbolically, whereby they are the proof of unification of the traditional community with the cosmos (Sidek n.d.). Moreover, the national cultural policy identifies key characteristics of Malaysian batik design and encourages batik makers to adhere to these design principles as a form of maintaining national heritage. In this way, this form of traditional and cultural identity is being preserved along with the development of other Malay art forms.

Religious and foreign floral symbols have been incorporated into Malaysian batik sarong motifs over time. Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam have also influenced some batik sarong motifs. For example, a design motif that was influenced by both Hinduism and Buddhism can clearly be seen in the *kawung* motif (inspired by the fruit from a kind of sugar palm plant). This was formed with geometric shapes on the surface decorations of Buddhist and Hindu temples in Indonesia. In Malaysia, batik makers replaced the *kawung* motif with the star anise motif to keep the shape of the motif and to neutralize the non-Islamic symbolism contained in the original *kawung* motif. Other cultural influences can be identified in Malaysian batik i.e., the phoenix motif that had Chinese origins while motifs of European flowers such as roses and lilies came from the interaction with the Dutch. This can be seen in the works of batik sarongs that use the bird motif by representing only the wings in a stylized manner, being shaped from leaves or flowers. The motifs that were influenced by Buddhist and Hindu motifs underwent a modification process in Malaysia to conform to the guidelines of Islam during the eighteenth century when influential Muslim traders came from the North Coast of Java and encouraged batik production.

Islamic geometric design principles are one of the significant features to be added to Malaysia's batik sarong tradition. From the beginning, only geometrical patterns were used for headdresses, in keeping with the Islamic prescription of the representation of living things. The formation of geometric motifs, an essential part of Islamic art, combines various basic shapes whereby the geometric motifs are closely related to the craftsman's knowledge of mathematics, in order to ensure accuracy (Legino 2012).

7.3.2.2 Songket

The songket (a type of brocade) motifs found in Malay textiles are evidence of the journey and history of the Malay people in creating their cultural identity. Songket, a luxury product traditionally worn during ceremonial occasions as sarongs, shoulder cloths, or head ties and *tanjak*, a headdress that is a type of weaving in which a thread is pulled from the background cloth or a thread of gold or silver is woven into the design. The sense of growth, unity and human spirituality are expressed in songket motifs. The motifs, derived both from stylized flora and fauna, as well as gaps in the motifs, are designed according to religious beliefs. They have transitioned from animist belief to the assimilation of Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic ideologies. Spatial harmony, balance, rhythm, repetition, and size of the motifs express a high level of artistic achievement.

Historical texts have pointed out that the songket motifs exist in other Malay arts such as batik, wood carving, mat weaving and even dancing, architecture, music, and weaponry design. Malays look to nature as a way to comprehend the supreme being (Bahauddin and Aldrin 2003). These designs represent the process of nurturing life and seeking perfection. Nature represents the vehicle for humankind to use in trying to understand what faith and religion will offer in achieving the higher level of spiritual beings. A songket motif was utilized in the roofing design of the National Library in Kuala Lumpur, established in 1966. The architectural firm responsible for the design, Kumpulan Akitek, wanted to use these motifs taken from nature to symbolize the notion of growth, spiritually and physically.

Though empty spaces can be an instrument to create balance and harmony as well as effective visual communication, the dominance of fullness becomes logical as it diminishes the presence of emptiness (Eenoo 2013). The *horror vacui* has evolved as a reflection of the culture and the environment. The patterns that decorate the whole songket fabric are filled with motifs, most of which are derived from flora and fauna. The use of patterns, repetitions, and fullness of surfaces continue to the present day despite the changes in scale, purpose and material. The frieze patterns are used as borders or infinite strip patterns that run horizontally on a plain background. Wallpaper patterns are two-dimensional repetitive patterns based on symmetries in the pattern. Contemporary applications can be seen throughout the urban Malaysian environment that now include metals, concrete, and various types of tiles and bricks, that are often patterned, painted, or pierced in combination, to resonate with a unique Malaysian aesthetics.

7.4 Analysis: Comparing the Visual *Bricolage* of Contemporary Photographs with the Historically Important Visual Culture of Malaysia

Existing studies have premised that cultural tourists are heavily motivated by visual cues. Tsaur and Huang (2018) found that tourist participation in tourism activities varies along double, independent, yet continuous scales, where most tourists show both serious and casual characteristics but are normally partial to either serious or casual participation. Although the relative paucity of ‘signature’ architecture in Malaysia can be seen as a disadvantage in any effort to benefit from the growing phenomenon of 'architourism' (Shaw 2015), by allowing the casual tourist to instead sample the diverse socio-cultural assets of the nation at virtually no cost, Malaysia's easily-accessible visual *bricolage* offers an authentic socio-cultural environment. This is unique in ASEAN where even the ordinary street landscape has been described as unique and interesting (Marwick 1991).

From the discussion of the history of Malaysia along with the historical and natural influences made evident through its traditional and contemporary arts, crafts, design, and architecture, the set of photographs used for this study interweaves the manmade interpretations of the physical and spiritual world into the visual realm. The photographs were all taken informally, selected via convenience sampling in order to reflect the commonplace, everyday imagery that presents itself to urban residents of Malaysia in various towns and rural locations. They are examples of how Malaysia allows casual tourists to go beyond the expected to a more profound appreciation of its culture to gain a deeper, more personal experience of society, which is a basic component of the motivation to travel (Suvantola 2002). This study, though a single tourist's perspective, therefore documents and extends knowledge about a society at a particular time that increases and complements the value of the existing written research, much of which focuses on the traditional and the contemporary in isolation from each other.

Evidence of the various types and styles of Malaysian woodcarving can be seen in C3, D1, E10, G7, G9, H11, I 9, I11, L6, L7, L10, L11. Each uniquely illustrates an aspect of the various purposes, periods, styles, and religions. C3 clearly represents the skill of the woodcarvers in capturing the floral plant life in a natural style. This use of floral elements was evident throughout in Malaysian homes, in royal buildings, and in religious structures whether Hindu, Buddhist, or Muslim, though the Muslim wood carving was often more typically stylized with geometric patterns as in G9 with a pierced treatment. Others were handled more as a relief as in L10, and E10 that are examples of carvings from a Hindu temple in which the carved wood is painted with festive colors. Each of these decorative treatments would be painted with a variety of colors throughout the temple for the purpose of keeping people happy. L11 shows the top view of a lizard with the curve of its body and hind feet. This use of realism was abandoned or modified with pattern and geometry when Islam came into prominence. I11 illustrates an assemblage of various carvings that allow the patterns, caused by the piercings, to create areas of light and shadow that would play around the spaces throughout the day. G9 is a more contemporary treatment of woodcarving using thinner boards that are pierced, creating patterns that reflect on the interior throughout the day. G7 is a slightly different use of woodcarving since it was done on the front bow of a small fishing boat and then painted with cheerful colors to represent a water fowl.

Floral motifs are used throughout the country with a wide range of the materials from tiles to ceramics, from carpeting to beads and of course, wood. Photos A4, B5, C12, D3, D10, E1, E10, E12, F9. F12, G1, G3, G6, G8, I3, I6, I7, L4, L5, L7, and L10 all illustrate different types of floral motif found in all categories of Malaysian craft. With such a rich abundance of plant life, given the great variety of flowers, artisans are ever inspired to find ways to express their abundance, variety, and beauty. Much of the tile work, used for flooring and pavement, establishes simplified geometry which was also used in the batik patterns and songket weavings. In fact, the wood blocks would be used for printing the floral motifs so there is a strong integration of these expressions that allowed for a great variety of styles.

The weaving traditions of Malaysia are reflected in A12, C5, D3, F7, F11, F14, K12, and L12. Like the previous examples, these images reflect centuries of influence in terms of techniques and materials. F7 and I4 are samples of fabric made from bark in Malaysian Borneo. A12 illustrates the embellishment of woven fabric with shells arranged in the form of the anise seeds. C5 is a contemporary example of batik cloth using stylized flowers while D3 is an example of carpeting in a mosque that incorporates stylized flowers and vines. F11 uses a fish pattern that is woven with pattan leaves. K12 is a contemporary carpet designed by a Malaysian company that is intended to echo pattan weaving. Lastly, L12 shows a small section of a weaving from Malaysian Borneo using applique floral motifs. The common theme that unites the images is that all of them represent a tangible link with the past, without this being a conscious intention of their use. Their purely functional display thus exposes the fabric of the country’s traditions, conditions, influences, and beliefs in a physical expression. By offering a passive continuity from the past to the future via elements that can easily be overlooked or ignored, such everyday items reflect the centuries of effort of common individuals whose legacies are unconsciously contributing to a nascent national expression, while at the same time embellishing the very spaces necessary for them to thrive and endure.

7.5 Conclusion: Contemporary Perspectives of Cultural Identity Through Art

Tan Sei Hon, an independent Malaysian art curator and respected self-taught painter, feels that it is a particularly good time for Malaysians to think about their history of living together. In an interview, he suggested in a discussion on this topic, that the use of pattern and decoration in the public sphere was quite typical of Asian cultures (Tan Sei Hon 2018). This may be true, but the Malay components have unique qualities. From the pre-Islamic era when the Malays were practicing Hinduism or Buddhism, figures and images of deities were used as well as animals but with the arrival of Islam, these motifs of living beings were discouraged. Animal motifs were transformed into flora and vegetal motifs. Geometric motifs and those derived from nature, principally from the plant world, were used. Also popular were designs incorporating calligraphy. Flowers and leaves continue to be considered eminently suitable as motifs in various sorts of carving because they represent the beauty of the natural world and do not offend the sensibilities of pious Muslims, as wood carving was meant to represent visual values. Unfortunately, often the contemporary carvings are simply duplication without an understanding of the beauty or meaning. Some motifs are significant forms from the Hindu-Buddhist traditions with symbolic meanings. From early Malay life, the flower (the dominant motif) has been used to express the physical beauty of a young Malay girl. We recognize the material properties of images/objects that become intertwined with the active social process that shapes its meaning.

The findings of this study support the idea that contemporary Malaysian designers have begun to redefine their role with self-confidence and the ability to face local problems to develop dignified, relevant and aesthetically pleasing solutions for the local audience(s). They have begun to realize that the International Style may not be an appropriate method of solving design problems without reference to culture. For example, the iconic Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur realize a uniquely Malaysian design, despite being the product of a foreign architect's office. The American architects drew from Islamic culture as well as consideration for Malaysian craft and design. The plan of the towers is generated from two overlapping squares that form an eight-pointed-star, a pattern frequently found in Islamic design (Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects 2015). Unlike most contemporary sky scrapers, the towers have not only created an overall texture rather than the modernist smooth, stark, facades, but have also created a unique skyline for Kuala Lumpur. In addition, the project utilizes local materials and patterns inside with a Malaysian wood set in a stainless-steel grid and a marble floor derived from a *pandan* weaving pattern. These references to the materials, beliefs, as well as the local environment maintain a strong sense of Malaysian culture and reinforces the beauty of its aesthetic traditions even as it approaches the future.

Possibly, it is easier for an outsider to notice the intricacies and details of another culture that are so different from his/her part of the world, which can then, paradoxically, increase local awareness. The benefit of this awareness is that it is now stimulating Malaysian artists and designers to begin to embrace the notion of a unique Malaysian visual language. During an interview with interior designer Indra Ramanathan of iPartnership, he agreed that though Asian countries had visually similar vocabularies in that they all used vibrant colors and textural motifs, each was unique (Ramanathan 2019). The influences that have impacted Malaysia are not the same of those of Thailand or Vietnam, for instance. Each has a distinctly different visual vocabulary. Ramanathan's work has incorporated many of the textiles, colors of the natural environment, use of geometry as well as the visual aspects of native fruits such as the *mangosteen* and the *durian*. He is very aware that clients tend to be afraid of being too "local", but he has found ways to use the Malaysian visual vocabulary in a contemporary context.

Unlike so many other places, travelers and causal tourists will find that Malaysia's visual culture is an integrated/living aspect of Malaysian life that can be found on the streets of cities and villages and not necessarily separated into museums or heritage sites, though such institutions do exist as well and provide a basic educational foundation for the tourist to the complexity of the development of the country. The utility of most Malaysian museums for this purpose is however limited due to their generally high level of politicization (Abu Talib 2015). The findings of this study therefore show what is not obvious in the country's mostly state-sanctioned museums—that the history, the religions, the crafts, and the natural environment resonate with life that continues into the present and indeed, heralds a future which may very well be more, rather than less plural than the country's already multi-faceted past. Despite decades of deforestation, the findings also show that the natural beauty of lush plant life still surrounds the imagination if not the reality of Malaysia's artisans, architects, and designers, and continues to serve as important subject matter throughout Malaysian life. This adds to the premised truism of Morris (2013, p. 263) that "public art is not only available to everyone but is theoretically free of any religious or political bias". This study shows that in places where political control dictates the visual culture of 'high art' available in museums, galleries and theatres, it is the every-day, casual art of the street and pavement that can still reflect the complexity of a society that has no dominant form of artistic expression.

This complexity is aided by two factors. Firstly, Malaysia has not undergone the level of urban redevelopment that has been implemented throughout large parts of, for example, the USA, thus allowing casual tourists to witness a significant amount of cultural history in the streets, which are often filled with local shops that utilize the structures that have served them for decades. Any modernization is undertaken by the people who live and work there, not by large scale government implementation. They tend to maintain the traditional and simply add to it, not remove it, allowing walks through neighborhoods to offer insights into the people, their customs, and their past. Secondly, the survival of a complex past is further aided by the fact that Malaysia was not the victim of major wars or civil conflict in the post-colonial era, unlike many other Southeast Asian countries.

Malaysia's culturally-inspired visual culture, physical form, activity and meaning, all therefore combine to create a sense of place where people are able to create meaning and to give themselves a sense of identity. These everyday places are in turn dynamic and continue to regenerate as people adapt to new meanings that might otherwise have detached them from their culture and identity. Individuals need to belong to a place where they are able to develop an affective link between people and places, whereby they create an attachment to the emotion and feeling of the people. Places may provide support for specific goals or activities while also assisting in developing and maintaining self and/or group identity. They may contribute to cultural self-definition. Place is space imbued with meanings—meanings layered in the social and cultural construction of places (Ujaing and Zakariya 2015).

These findings can be applied to both tourists and Malaysians. Just as the tourist should, ideally, be vigilant, aware, and interested (even, preferably, somewhat knowledgeable about history and culture), the same applies to residents who possibly do not recognize, much less appreciate the smaller details of their own heritage as it surrounds them. Unlike museums, this history and culture is part of the texture of the streets that has to be experienced in order to be recognized and appreciated. They represent materials, colors, applications, purposes, and craftsmanship that are essentially invisible until noticed, recognized, and more importantly, valued, failing which they risk being lost in the quest for 'modernity'. Most cultures today are undergoing rapid change, and young people in particular want to be "current", which may lead to the discarding of the traditional rather than the valuing of it

(Yang et al. 2018). The interest shown by casual tourists in particular can therefore help local people to value their uniqueness rather than rushing to modernize and possibly losing it. This in turn might encourage the younger generation to want to continue rather than lose their traditions.

Fundamentally, this chapter describes, via a simple observational study, how the Malaysian visual landscape is made up of designs that are both rooted in influences centuries old as well as newly invented. The characteristic *horror vacui* is one aspect—composed of small elements that embrace the living environment of plants, trees, flowers, and fruits that flourish throughout the year and that have evolved over centuries. The Malay designs reflect the splendor and beauty of the aesthetic elements or ornamentations adorning them that carry deeper philosophical and sacred meanings. They are not merely objects of beauty but also serve as a means of creating an environment of peace and tranquility. The integration of the traditional with contemporary design elements moves toward sustaining the nation's heritage and values (Shuaib and Enoch 2014). Aspects of the various cultures integral to the population include various indigenous Malays, Chinese, and Indians along with the rich intricacies of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam, each of which embodies traditions of materials, patterns, architectural elements, colors, and additional motifs which still retain enough of their individual autonomy as to be traceable back to their historical and/or cultural roots. These legacies have formed a rich and unique visual environment throughout the country that has evolved and continues to the present. The result is a prolific, unique and specific visual language that signifies Malaysia's contemporary built environment as textured, repetitive, colorful, lyrical, symbolic, geometric, and vegetal. These visual forms, this *horror vacui,* survive and continue in urban settings through the traditional and contemporary uses of wood, metal, tiles, paint, weaving, landscaping etc.; and can be found in architecture, pavement, gates, fences, malls, gardens, fabrics, and parks in a range of colors and textures that are uniquely Malaysian.

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Part III

Contemporary Asian Art and Tourist Objects

Chapter 8
Motorbike Helmet Art as a Contemporary Design Form for Crafting Tourism Souvenirs of Thailand

Aristeidis Gkoumas, Miyoung Seo, and Federico D'Orazio

Abstract This research investigates the impact of helmet designing on tourism consumption and place-making of mature destinations in Thailand. In particular, it evaluates helmet art as a means of creating souvenirs for international tourists. Designing helmets for Thai destinations was launched in April 2018 as a pilot project between a leading Thai University and a domestic company of motor accessories. Twenty-five art graduate students designed their prototypes for a special series of customized-helmets with Thai destinations of Bangkok, Pattaya, and Chiang Mai as a theme. The company displayed the collection for sale in three roadshows in the aforementioned areas. Applying the ethnographic method, this study was based on 75 in-depth interviews with visitors at the roadshows and helmet buyers. The findings indicate that customized helmets are a novel and distinct type of souvenirs for destinations in Thailand. According to the buyers, the uniqueness of the designs fosters the use-value and the exchange-value of the helmets, whereas the creativity of the graphics enhances their sign-value. Additionally, the results suggest that helmet art can be used as a promotional tool for branding tourism destinations. Also, helmet designs project the personal interpretations of the artists regarding each destination that may strengthen the brand image and coincide with the perceptions of the tourists/buyers about the place. The originality of our work stems from the fact that for the first time in tourism literature, helmet art has been examined as an effective tool for delivering tangible mementos of popular tourist destinations in Asia.

Keywords Helmet art · Creative design · Destination branding · Place-making · Tourist souvenir · Tourism destinations · Thailand

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8.1 Introduction

Crash helmet designing appears in literature as a means for optimizing the materials or the shape of the helmet in order to protect motorbike riders from injuries, improve ergonomics and comfortability and decrease morbidity and mortality (Ehrlich et al. 2001; Patel and Mohan 1993). Additionally, although helmet artwork was very popular worldwide, contributing significantly to the distinctiveness and attractiveness of each helmet, there are only a handful of studies that have examined the esthetic value and the emotional impact of helmet graphics (Singh 2009). On the other hand, there are cases where helmets have been used as an instrument for political protest, such as the 10,000 yellow helmets displayed outside Milan's stock market (Mini 2013). Our study suggests that helmet design, beyond being used as the element for political manifestation or a stimulator of emotions, can be utilized as a tangible remembrance of visited tourism destinations. This chapter in particular, explores helmet art as a mediator for creating souvenirs for tourist destinations such as Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and Pattaya. Previous studies on souvenirs examined the different types and varieties of artifacts, material products, and objects embedded in the local heritage or ethnic art. Our research goes one step further by investigating the process of transforming a non-traditional product, such as the motorbike helmet, from a commodity of everyday use to an idiosyncratic local souvenir for mature tourism areas.

The designing of customized motorbike helmets started in 2018 as a research project for the graduate students of the Product Design Department of a public university in Thailand. The design prototypes combined traditional Thai art with global contemporary art forms. The quality and the diversity of the designs impressed the supervisor of the project who initially had planned to organize an art exhibition with the helmet prototypes. However, after sharing his idea with faculty members from the Tourism Management Department, he decided to focus on three popular Thai destinations as the main theme of the art show. Moreover, the two departments agreed to further explore the potentials to link creative design with innovation in tourism using the collection of customized helmets about tourism places as the stepping-stone for future research endeavors. The plan of the project comprised of five phases.

The first phase referred to the efforts of the supervisor of the project to approach a domestic company of helmets in Bangkok, in order to investigate the possibility of including the design prototypes into their production line. The director of the company was very positive about the proposal and he promised to launch a special series of helmets dedicated to Thai tourism areas. The second phase consisted of the completion of the graphic design for the prototypes by the students for Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and Pattaya. The former two are major urban destinations and also the biggest metropolitan centers in Thailand, whereas, the latter is a famous coastal destination for the international tourism market. The third phase included the display of the prototypes during the Helmet Art Show at the campus of the University in Chonburi province. The fourth phase involved the production of the prototypes, making them available for sale in three roadshows in Chiang Mai, Bangkok and Pattaya (Fig. 8.1).

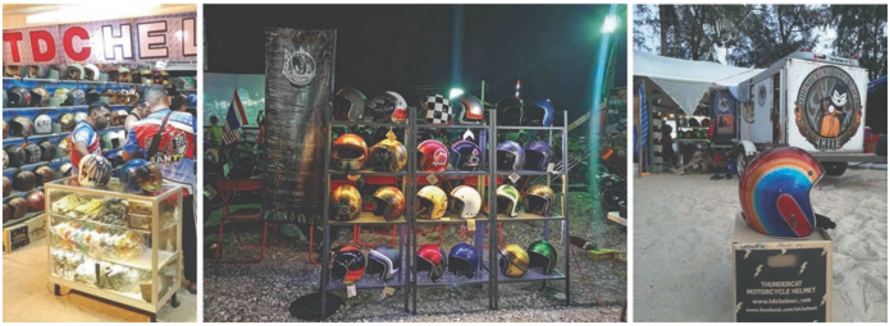

Fig. 8.1 The collection of helmets at the roadshows in Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Pattaya. (Source: Department of Product Design Photo Archive)

The fifth phase consisted of exhibiting the collection of customized helmets in art galleries, design symposiums, and museums in Korea, China, Malaysia, and Taiwan.

By applying the method of realist ethnography, this research analyzes the impact of helmet art on tourism consumption. In particular, this chapter examines graphic designing as a creative art-form capable of converting customized motorbike helmets into tourist souvenirs of Thailand. By editing the indicative views and quotations of the participants and helmet buyers at the roadshows, the researchers provide an interpretive analysis of the contribution of helmet art to place-making and branding of popular tourist destinations of Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and Pattaya. The objectives of the study include the following:

1. to analyze helmet art as a representational tool of Thai destinations from the perspective of local artists
2. to examine helmet art as a motif for creating tangible mementos of Thai destinations
3. to investigate helmet designs as a promotional instrument for enhancing the brand image of Thai destinations

8.2 Graphic Design as a Helmet Artwork

Throughout history, humans have always tried to manifest cultural, spatial or personal identities on functional products of their daily life, with a certain type of style. Design is closely related and dependent on the emerging immaterial culture which is expressed as an *epiphenomenon* of technological advancements of the post-industrial era. (Moles and Jacobus 1988 p. 377). In particular, graphic design not only mirrors the ideological perceptions and the cultural values of the society, (Drucker 1999) but also consists of a mediator for the construction, reproduction and/or transformation of social, cultural and interpersonal relations (Barnard 2013). Moreover, it creates a sense of inter-connectedness between the globalized patterns of consumption and the particularities and tendencies of local economies (Barnard 2013).

In addition, graphic design displays a form of visual and esthetic communication (Rodríguez et al. 2015). Graphic communication can be viewed as the constant interaction between the values and beliefs of groups and communities and several formal attributes of design including colors, shapes, lines, and layouts (Barnard 2013). From a semiological perspective, graphic design constitutes a visual language of signs and a conveyor of messages, which carry constructed meanings and reflections of social and/or individual identities (Barnard 2013).

The crash helmet is a wearable product to protect the head of the motorbike rider. The design of the helmet serves a dual purpose. First and foremost, it should ensure a substantial degree of safety and utility. The quality and the type of the materials used, the level of performance, and the graphics distinguish one brand from the others and also sets the price range. Depending on the cover shape, helmets are divided into four categories, namely: full-faced, half-faced, open-faced and off-road. There are several helmet companies around the world, each following a different marketing strategy, applying promotional activities based on the current style trends, purchasing power and consumption patterns of a specific segment of the market, or the weather conditions, social factors and cultural preferences of each country.

Secondly, helmet design is a form of artistic expression with the designer as the creator of sensory attributes and esthetic arrangements within the field of ‘new art’ (Moles and Jacobus 1988). Helmet design operates as a pictorial representation of an emotion-laden art-form through which the designer puts an abstract idea into a graphic formulation (Singh 2009). Hence, it can be claimed that designing a helmet is a manifestation of the perceptions and emotions of the artists on the prototypes (Singh 2009). The designer is endowed with the capacity to transform the work of art into an instrument of esthetic valorization of the helmet as a commodity. From this perspective, the designer becomes what Moles and Jacobus (1988) described as a meta-artist. In other words, ‘a potential maker of new art’ who operates as a broker of transduction of messages and meanings to the users of products (Moles and Jacobus 1988 p.381). Commodities elicit emotions for consumers that are determined by the appraisal of goals, standards, and attitudes associated with these products (Desmet et al. 2001; Ortony et al. 1988). The helmet as a product reflects the anticipations, conventions and dispositional likings of prospective buyers. In this study, we try to explore helmet design as the representational expression for generating emotional responses and creating symbolic associations with tourism destinations in Thailand. We further investigate helmet art as an interactive communication channel between the designer and the tourist, with a rather influential value on the purchasing decision.

8.3 Motorbike Culture and Helmet Use in Thailand

Motorbikes are by far, more popular than automobiles in Thailand and based on the official statistics of the Land and Transportation Department, in 2018 the number of registered vehicles exceeded the 20,000,000 figure. In a country with over

69,000,000 people, this is a rather astonishing number, accounting for nearly 1/3 of the entire population. The main reason for the high number of motorbikes is the affordable cost of buying a new bike up to 150 cc, which is significantly lower compared to prices in other Asian countries. However, the increased number of motorbikes on the streets of Thailand has resulted in more accidents and deaths, raising issues regarding the safety awareness and attitude of Thai drivers. Unfortunately, Thailand was ranked the second most lethal country in the world for road deaths according to the World Health Organization in 2017. The death toll on Thai roads has increased dramatically during the last 10 years, with motorcyclists accounting for 74% of the total fatalities (WHO 2018, p. 245). In order to reduce mortality, the Thai Government in collaboration with the World Health Organization launched in 2011 the *Decade of Action on Road Safety*, declaring 2012 the starting point of the 100% helmet use campaign. The radical and immediate actions of intensive traffic enforcement, street camera recording, and police controls have obliged motorcycle riders to obey the laws and take the matter of safety seriously by wearing helmets when driving motorbikes.

The current president of Thai Roads Foundation, Ms. Ruangsorn claims that the ‘percentage of children wearing helmets is only seven percent’, (Mattimore 2018). From the statistics, it can be inferred that Thailand has no helmet culture and even if the number of motorcycle users has risen, yet helmet sales have not increased accordingly (Mattimore 2018). It is fairly certain though that cultural values, personal styles and the ever-present fashion tendencies, international developments in design and consumption habits are also determinant factors which affect the helmet buyer’s decision process. From the limited amount of information that we could gather regarding the market trends and preferences for crash helmets in Thailand, it seems that color, an integral component of the design, plays a significant role when choosing a helmet. To some extent, the importance of the color is associated with Buddhism and Thai tradition. In Thailand, colors matter and each day of the week corresponds to a specific color based on the color of the God in Hindu mythology who protects that particular day (Claudio 2016). Therefore, Thai helmet buyers place emphasis not only on the uniqueness of the design, the type of shape or the style novelty but also on the color. According to the online discussions, the most popular colors for helmets are white and black, whereas yellow and orange are considered to be more visible and therefore, better for safety (Sky Rider 2015).

8.4 Research Design and Methodology

8.4.1 Timeline of the Research

This study was carried out in seven interconnected phases. Table 8.1 displays the timetable and the workflow of the study according to chronological order. The first phase addressed the meetings with the director and the owner of the helmet company, in order to explain the details and the objectives of the research and setting the

Table 8.1 The timeline of the research

Month	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Year	2018								
Phase One									
Meeting with the owner of the helmet company	🟩								
Phase Two									
Research design	🟨	🟨							
Research steps	🟧	🟧							
Topics of interest	🟦	🟦	🟦						
Phase Three									
Interview protocols		🟥	🟥						
Purposive sampling		🟩	🟩						
Phase Four									
Conducting fieldwork		🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦		
Phase Five									
Data analysis and decoding			🟨	🟨	🟨	🟨	🟨	🟨	
Phase Six									
De-briefing							🟥	🟥	🟥
Phase Seven									
Draft report of findings								🟩	🟩

timetable. Additionally, at this initial stage we wanted to get the approval of the owner of the company for conducting interviews with the customers and also to ensure his willingness to contribute to our study. The second phase referred to the development of the research design, plan and areas of interest. The third phase related to the selection of the purposive sampling, setting up the interview protocols, drafting the basic interview structure and choosing recording equipment and processes. The fourth phase corresponded with the completion of the fieldwork by interviewing the visitors and helmet buyers at the roadshows in Bangkok, Pattaya, and Chiang Mai. During this phase, field notes and the participatory observations of the researchers were used as supplementary sources of data. The fifth phase of the research was associated with the analysis and coding of data, transforming codes to categories, locating disjunctures and recurrences and finally interpreting the data for crafting a narrative with flow and consistency. The sixth phase comprised of the debriefing of the draft report by three professors from other universities. The seventh phase involved the creation of a draft report with the findings and the main conclusions of the study.

8.4.2 Data Collection Processes

The evaluation of the customized helmets project was based on qualitative and quantitative approaches. The direct participatory observation and in-depth interviews have served as the main analytical tools of the study. These methods have been proven to be more useful in understanding the perceptions, meanings, and interpretations of personal experiences of the participants (Marshall and Rossman 2011; Paraskevaidis and Andriotis 2015). In order to explore the symbolic as well as the exchange value of helmets as souvenirs, we used semi-structured questionnaires to collect a substantial amount of information by giving the respondents an opportunity to engage in larger discussions among the researchers and the subjects. The data collection was conducted between May and October 2018 in Bangkok, Pattaya, and Chiang Mai. Seventy-five in-depth interviews were taken by the researchers at the venues of the roadshows. Respondents were males and females between 23 and 34 years of age, and were tourists from Asia and the Pacific, Europe and the U.S.A. The sample in particular, consisted of (n = 18) Australians, (n = 15) Russians, (n = 12) Chinese, (n = 10) Japanese, (n = 8) New Zealanders, (n = 7) Koreans, (n = 3) Americans and (n = 2) British.

The interviews lasted from half an hour to two hours and all the sessions were recorded on iPads or notebooks. All interviews were conducted in English. Apparently, there were no substantial problems with non-native speakers. However, native speakers were more talkative, so more time was dedicated to interviewing them than the other informants. It should be mentioned though that the conversations with many of the native English interviewees lasted much longer. These provided valuable insights regarding the purchase decision for the helmets, the symbolic value of the designs, the cultural encounters between hosts and guests and the quality and characteristics of the tourism products of each destination.

Apart from some basic demographic data such as age, gender, number of visits in Thailand, country/place of origin and income, the questions focused on the analysis of the pictorial representations of destinations on helmets, the esthetic appraisal of each design, the symbolic, social and cultural connotations of helmet themes with the brand elements of each destination as well as the significance and the novelty of helmets as tourist souvenirs.

The study also used some quantitative information regarding the number of visitors at the roadshows, the number of prototypes produced, and finally the number of helmets sold during the domestic exhibitions in Bangkok, Pattaya, and Chiang Mai. In our attempt to ensure the validity of the findings we asked three faculty members from other educational institutions to debrief our data. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), debriefing can help to uncover any hidden biases, assumptions or perspectives of the researchers that could harm the credibility of the study.

8.4.3 Progress Flow of the Project

A faculty member from the Tourism and Hospitality Management Department was appointed as the scientific coordinator of the research. In April 2018, a kick-off meeting between the coordinator and the director of the company took place in Bangkok in order to develop the timetable, set the action plan and discuss the objectives and challenges of the whole endeavor. It was agreed to give the students a one-month period for creating the design prototypes. The company provided white helmet shells for the graphic design prototypes. In a special workshop open for graduate students, the coordinator explained the overall goal of the project. He emphasized the role of helmet design as an innovative art-form for the promotion of Thai tourism destinations.

The students started sketching and rendering their design covers by applying diverse techniques and various mediums (Fig. 8.2). The colors and the lines of many

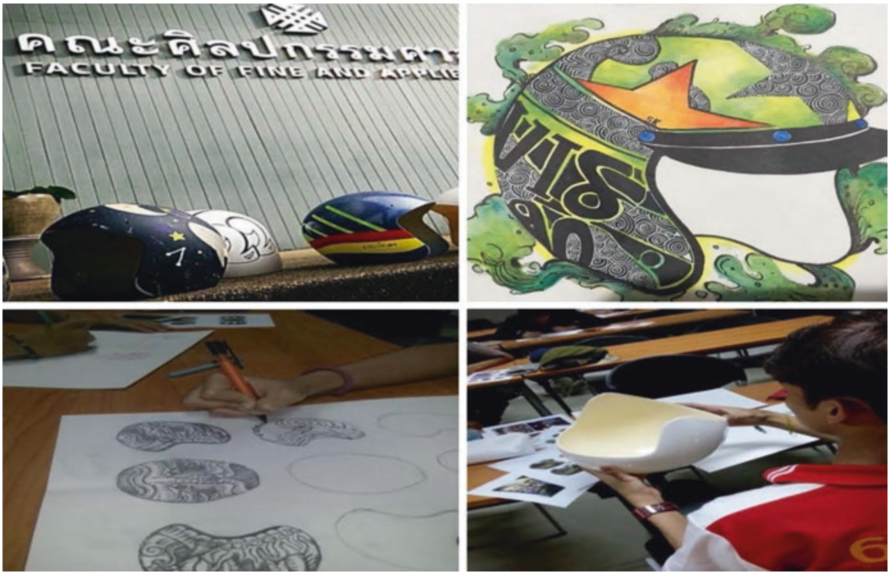
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Fig. 8.2 Art students working on helmet prototypes. (Source: Department of Product Design Photo Archive)

drawings were inspired by the Thai tradition. Different regions in Thailand were characterized by distinct colors. For example, the traditional color of Northern Thailand is purple, which is also the color of the traditional skirts of the North, called ~~[them]~~ *Lanna* (Gavanagh 2013). With regard to the other two tourism areas, the color of Bangkok is green, while the color of Pattaya is blue. Most of the work of the students combined the colors of Thai culture with the generic biker's approach, using explosions of sharp and light hues or displaying symbols like tags on the total surface of the helmet, similar to the style of graffiti and murals created by Keith Haring on the Lower East Side in Manhattan, New York. Based on the explanations of the students, this garish street style is very popular among the young riders of Pattaya City, who park their motorbikes at the beachfront every night while drinking and dancing until the morning hours. By contrast, the tendency for teenagers in Bangkok is to use black-based helmets, decorated with a few tones and skulls, according to the designated color and name of the bike group or gang. These two different approaches were evident in the pictorial representations of Pattaya and Bangkok. Generally, the themes of the design for Bangkok entailed a dark and gloomy style, whereas those for Pattaya followed a more gaudy and cheerful direction.

In a special gathering before the Helmet Art show, the students exhibited 25 helmet prototypes to the owner and the graphic designer of the company. 10 designs in particular, displayed visual images of Bangkok, 8 of Pattaya and 7 of Chiang Mai (Fig. 8.3). Each art student explained the source of inspiration, the symbolic connotations of shape, color, form, lines, and style of his/her artwork. Those with better English and communication skills (n = 14) elaborated more on their designs by analyzing the signs, symbols, and meanings behind their helmet graphics. According to the descriptions of many students, the designs centered on specific key elements of the image or the reputation of each destination, to project their personal experiences and subjective interpretations. Interestingly enough, the prototypes of students from the same home town, like Bangkok (n = 8) and Pattaya (n = 6) portrayed completely different representations of these destinations, to give the project a sense

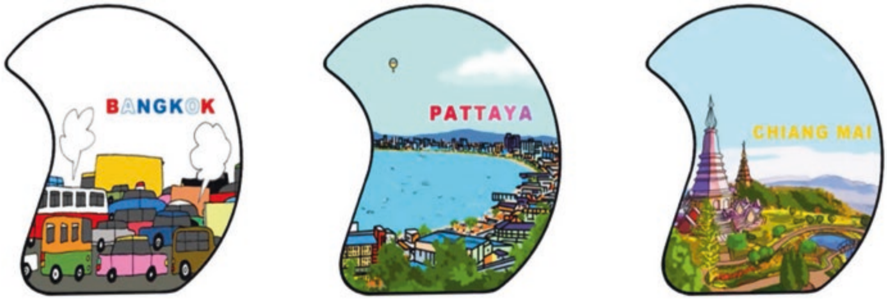

Fig. 8.3 Helmet graphic prototypes for Thai destinations. (Source: Department of Product Design Photo Archive)

of artistic diversity and thematic plurality. The comments and remarks of the students were recorded and at a later stage of the research, transcribed in order to make a comparative analysis between the interpretations of artists and the perceptions of helmet buyers regarding each destination.

The company initially decided to produce 500 helmets with 20 copies of each prototype design. The helmets were delivered on the last week of May and samples were exhibited in the main showroom of the company in central Bangkok on 5 June, 2018. It was estimated that on the opening day, more than 300 people visited the shop, and 36 of them purchased helmets. In the following weeks, sales increased dramatically, encouraging the executives of the company to order a second line of production for another 500 helmets. Apart from the permanent showroom in Bangkok, the company decided to run several roadshows initially in Thailand and at a later stage, in other Asian countries. A month later, two different exhibitions were displayed in the street markets of Pattaya, and Chiang Mai for 3 weeks. Visitors showed great interest in the collection of the helmets and 34 of the buyers admitted that they were taken aback by the originality of the themes. A selection of helmet prototypes were exhibited in various symposiums and art galleries, including the *Asia Network Beyond Design 2018 - Genesis* in Seoul, Korea, held in the Dream Forest Gallery; the Shanxi Ink Hedong Art Museum in China; the design convention at First City University College in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; and the Tainan Chin Shang Gallery, Kaohsiung Cultural Center, in Taiwan. The novelty and the diversity of the designs generated positive comments while receiving dithyrambic critiques from the audience and art experts.

8.5 Helmet Art as a Political Manifestation

The helmet design has served as an instrument to convey political statements or radical messages due to its high level of visibility as an everyday accessory, especially in metropolitan areas. In several cases, helmets have been used as objects for political and cultural activism, social justice or stimulators for political change. Such an action was the impressive installation of 10,000 yellow helmets in Milan, Italy by the construction industry workers in front of the Milan's Stock Exchange, to celebrate *The Day of The Anger* in 2013. Similarly, in February 2014 during Ukraine's Protest Movement, local artists painted more than 100 helmets. These were worn by protesters to protect themselves in a massive demonstration during clashes with the police. Helmet graphics also provided the tool for a collective rally, like the *'Riding or Religion'* initiative in September 2018 in Alberta, Canada, when a group of bikers objected to helmet exemption for Sikhs believers.

Apart from the political connotations and associations, helmets functioned as the creative form of contemporary design and artistic expression. For the last 10 years, several exhibitions on helmet art have been organized in European countries and in the U.S.A. An illustrative example of helmet designing for artistic purposes was that of *Helmet Art Show Skull Canvas*, at The Barber Motorsports Park Vintage Festival in the UK, organized by Hot Rod Artist, Larry Gardinier. The collection of over 40 designs for helmet covers, created by various artists from around the globe, was displayed at a visible spot of the Barber Motorsports Park Vintage Festival (Volgarino 2014). Also, helmet art has drawn the attention of designers in Asia, developing unique styles and patterns. The plurality and diversity of this emerging trend have stimulated the interest of Asian museum curators and gallery directors who have started to include helmet design in their collection or events. Such an attempt was evident in the exhibition of *Asia Network Beyond Design* (ANBD) held in Seoul, Korea, in June 2018.

8.6 Helmet Art as an Innovative Tool for Destination Branding

Destination branding has been defined as the complex marketing process and multiple communication strategies that the local tourism stakeholders, authorities, and enterprises use to increase the competitiveness, create the distinctiveness and strengthen the image of their place (Cai et al. 2009; Hall 1999; Morgan et al. 2006; Nickerson and Moisey 1999). The destination brand is built upon selected elements of the cultural, social, natural or economic capital of the local community (Gnoth et al. 2007). Hence, destination branding is the continuous process of interaction between visitors and the providers of tourist services and products (Framke 2002). The quality and the nature of this relationship is crucial for the perceptions of tourists and their level of emotional attachment with a specific destination (Framke 2002).

Souvenirs are integrated components of tourism branding, operating as tangible representations or fragments of the image of a site, event or location through the agency of a narrative (Hume 2009; Stewart 1984). However, in design, narrative can be used as a concept to describe elements of the context of a displayed object, such as its impression, origin, identity and profile (Childs et al. 2013). In this sense, the narrative of a designed object conveys meaningful messages and perceptions to the potential users through the visual arrangement of color, shape, form, space, texture, and size (Blaylock 2003). Contemporary design can serve as a vehicle for artistic expression perpetuating the personal preferences of the creator and also inscribe socio-cultural, local, regional or national identities as well as ethnic, religious or historical values. During discussions with the students about their work, it is evident that every design depicts a distinct story in the form of a visual narrative. It is the personal interpretation of each artist about the image of the place and its brand experience. As one female art student explained:

> For me, Pattaya stands for nightlife and endless partying next to a rather dirty beachfront. These icons are the main components of my design and I try to use lines and colors that give this mixed sense of pleasure and sea pollution.

It should be noted that the themes of the helmets have captured certain social, cultural, historical, religious, or geographical elements of each destination. As most of the art students stated, the helmet prototypes demonstrate the visual depictions of specific features associated with the place, what Aaker (1997) defined as brand personality. According to his analysis, brand personality is a set of human-like characteristics of sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness, which are important determinants for the competitiveness and the positioning of the destination in the domestic and international tourism market (Aaker 1997). During the presentations of the prototypes, it was clear that the design of each helmet projects the particular interpretation of the destination brand through the eyes of local artists. Since all the students are Thai, it can be claimed that the helmets are personal representations of the brand personality and image of Pattaya, Chiang Mai, and Bangkok, from the local perspective. The description of Ice, a 20-year-old art student from Bangkok, supports this finding:

> Bangkok is my city. I was born and lived there all my life. There are many different attractions, but I have chosen to pick up shopping malls and the Grand Palace as the key elements of my design because for me these are the icons capturing the feeling of the place for the visitors.

The purchase decision, however, entails a degree of concurrence between the artistic representation and the tourist gaze. Discussions with the buyers revealed that the tourist image of the visited place was in accordance with the pictorial depiction of the destination, displayed on each helmet. Several scholars have claimed that the tourist's imagination incorporates the brand elements, which visitors attached to a place (Aaker 1997; Cai et al. 2009). In fact, the external associations that the tourists create in their minds underpin the image and determine the reputation of the destination, thus constructing the notion of competitive identity in place branding (Anholt 2016). Customized helmets as reintegrated pictorial fragments of local sites, attractions, practices or events of Bangkok, Pattaya, and Chiang Mai have created a system of memory and nostalgia for visitors as souvenirs. Decoding multiple excerpts from the interviews revealed that the perceptions of the majority of helmet buyers about the image of Thai destinations were similar to those of the art students. In other words, through the design themes of the helmets, the brand personality, as the contested interpretation of the destination by the Thai students, coincides with the brand identity, namely the tourist conception of the visited place.

8.7 Customized Helmets as Souvenirs of Thailand

In his classical labor theory of value, Marx (1976) argued that each commodity has a direct relationship with man, satisfying a specific need (use-value), while it further facilitates an indirect relationship in exchange power with other commodities (exchange-value). Souvenirs are objects which operate often as the mediators to the remembrance of places and/or material reminders of travel and tourist experiences (Paraskevaidis and Andriotis 2015), usually associated with attractions, sites, events and memories (Morgan and Pritchard 2005; Ramsay 2009). Tourism literature displays a wide range of studies on souvenirs, ethnic artifacts, and traditional arts, examining their representational, symbolic and commercial value for the visitors, mainly from an anthropological, sociological and economic perspective (Hume 2009). For years, the pioneering work of Graburn (1984) has dominated the research on tourist arts, providing certain typologies regarding the production and development of functional and commercial material objects of local tradition, as souvenirs. Other studies have further investigated the role of the souvenirs on tourism experience and practice as incorporated elements of increasing commoditization of everyday social life and the apparent development of global consumer culture (Hume 2009; Watson and Kopachevsky 1994).

The customized helmet consists of a post-modern expression of functional art that enters the international and domestic tourism market. This acknowledgment follows the rationale that the emerging mediascapes, ethnoscapes, and ideoscapes allow the free dissemination of ideas, commodities, and capital in contemporary society, making the boundaries between the consumer market and art system increasingly blurred. (Appadurai 1996; Stallabrass 2004). In the realm of global cultural flows, tourism provides an open terrain of interconnectedness and interchangeability for people who seek experiences, practices, products, and events of authenticity, in places away from home. To this end, a helmet could set an illustrative example in which artistic expression meets souvenir novelty. The unique design of each helmet displays an authentic pictorial and esthetic representation of Pattaya, Chiang Mai, and Bangkok through the eyes of Thai art students.

Discussions with the visitors at the roadshows disclosed that purchasing a customized motorbike helmet entailed a use-value, an exchange-value and a sign-value for the buyer. The use-value of helmets commands a dual functionality for the visitors. The first refers to the value of the helmet as a memento of the tourist experience and the second applies to its utility as a product for everyday use. This was explicitly illustrated in the comments of Kim, a 28-year-old male from South Korea, who visited the roadshow in Pattaya:

> I found helmets for tourist destinations an excellent idea for a souvenir. It's the perfect reminder of my trip to Thailand and also something that I can wear when I drive my scooter in Seoul.

However, the use-value of the helmets is measured proportionally with the use-value of another commodity. Hence for the buyers, the use-value of the helmet develops a quantitative comparison with other souvenirs sold at the local tourist market, taking into account the simple abstract equivalent of money spent for the purchase, as the main indicator for evaluating the exchange-value. Analyzing the narrations of several buyers, it becomes evident that the price was directly correlated with the use-value of the helmet as a functional product and a novel type of souvenir. As Yin, a 23-year-old female from China stated:

> There are so many souvenirs to buy here in Chiang Mai, mostly related to ethnic/traditional arts. Although cheap they all look identical or similar. On the contrary, each helmet design is unique, and I believe it's a value-for-money because it offers at a reasonable price a useful product.

It seems that the uniqueness of the designs predominates the use-value of the helmets. In fact, although practicality and functionality are important elements for choosing the helmet as a tangible souvenir, the sign-value of the helmet as a commodity prevails in the minds of the visitors. Baudrillard (1981) suggested that in post-modern societies, commodities are produced, traded and consumed more as signs rather than as mere products. He further claimed that the symbolic identity of the commodities is of utmost importance for the consumers, who are ascribed a certain sign-value for the products they purchase (Baudrillard 1981). Often, the sign-value of non-mass-produced tourism souvenirs outweighs their use and exchange value, since the visitors-buyers identify them as precious possessions of travel and significant reminders of tourist experience (Paraskevaidis and Andriotis 2015; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988).

The helmet serves a dual functionality as a decorated utilitarian object and as a symbolic artifact of visiting Thai destinations. Its sign-value is associated with the original and exclusive qualities of the design. Each helmet projects a pictorial metaphor of a particular destination through the lenses of the artist. It is the end-product of an abstract artistic idea that displays the representations of Thai tourist places based on the interpretation of the designer while meeting the esthetic preferences of the visitors. From this point of view, purchasing the helmet as a souvenir fosters an atypical form of a relationship between the artist and the buyer, by creating an imaginary bond for both through the system of tourism consumption. The decision of visitors to buy a specific helmet constitutes simultaneously an indication of appreciation for the style of the product and also the manifestation of sharing the designer's esthetic views, symbolic interpretations and artistic representations of the destination. Such an argument was confirmed by Keith, a 34-year-old Australian male who said:

> The theme of the Buddhist temple, I believe, is an indicative element of Chiang Mai. I really like the soft lines of the design and the purple color of the helmet which directly associated with the North Thailand culture.

From the analysis of the testimonies of the buyers, it can be inferred that each customized helmet has a certain symbolic value because it depicts a distinct representation of a tourism destination. The visitors at the roadshows were fascinated by the collection and the diverse designs of the helmets. Previous studies suggested that buying cheap, mass-produced souvenirs was considered to be a rather popular tourist practice (Paraskevaidis and Andriotis 2015; Peters 2011 ~~[11]~~; Swanson and Timothy 2012). By contrast, several buyers of the helmets stated that the most important factor for their purchasing decisions was the uniqueness of the design. The singularity of the theme offers a sense of exclusivity, making each helmet a novel, off-mass production, commemorative commodity of visiting Pattaya, Bangkok, and Chiang Mai. For many visitors, the act of buying a specific helmet signifies a token of differentiation and distinctiveness through acquiring a souvenir of personal taste and unique value. The statement of Aiko, a 26-year- old female from Japan is illustrative of the intention of several buyers to differentiate themselves from conventional tourists by buying a customized helmet as a souvenir:

> I travel a lot. So far, I have been in more than 7 countries in Asia. I try to buy something unique from each country. This is the first time that I have seen motorbike helmets as souvenirs. I am very happy that I bought this helmet as a reminder of my visit to Bangkok.

A noteworthy finding of our research indicates that this imaginary type of accordance between buyers and artists refers only to the helmets with positive connotations about the destination. From the discussions with the visitors at roadshows, the helmets which depict cheerful representations of each place were the most popular. Several visitors asserted that the likeability for the positive themes invigorated their purchase decision. The statement of Paul, a 33-year-old male from New Zealand confirms this claim:

> I am fascinated with the design of this helmet. I bought it as a souvenir of the bright side of Pattaya. I want to bring back home a buoyant reminder of my visit here.

Each customized helmet unfolds an exclusive story with representational signs and symbols for each destination. Through this implicit motif, the helmet becomes the tangible memento of visiting a popular tourist space with the unique ability to sustain the authenticity of the travel and the novelty of the tourist experience. This fact is substantiated by the majority of the buyers, like Olga a 29-year-old female from Russia:

> The main reason for buying this particular helmet is that it represents an original idea of Pattaya. The sun, the beautiful beachfront with the palm trees and the view from the Buddha temple describes to a large extent my impression of the city. And all expressed vividly on this helmet.

Although some helmets with rather pessimistic depictions drew the attention of visitors, 65 of the buyers showed a preference for optimistic designs. The mainstream tendency toward selecting a helmet was to avoid negative memories with the visited place, especially for places like Pattaya, whose reputation in the international and domestic tourism market was commonly associated with sexual exploitation and prostitution (Longjit and Pearce 2013). By observing the buying patterns of visitors, we concluded that the helmets which portrayed a rather positive image of the destination were significantly more vendible. For several buyers, the selection process and the final decision to purchase a specific helmet were inextricably intertwined with their intention to acquire a commemorative object as a token of remembrance, associated with pleasant memories and extraordinary travel experiences of the once-in-a-lifetime visit to the well-established tourism places of Pattaya, Bangkok and Chiang Mai.

8.8 Conclusions and Future Applications

The aim of this chapter is to analyze helmet art as a creative form of designing souvenirs for mature tourism areas in Thailand. Designing helmets for Thai destinations was the research project for graduate art students of a leading public university in Thailand with the cooperation and support of a domestic company of motor accessories. Starting in April 2018, the students designed 25 helmet prototypes which depicted their personal interpretations about Pattaya, Bangkok, and Chiang Mai. By using the design prototypes, the company produced a collection of customized-helmets, which were then displayed for sale at the main showroom in Bangkok and at the roadshows organized in Pattaya and Chiang Mai. Inspired by the goals and using the tools of the ethnographic method, this study followed an interpretive and exploratory approach for the investigation of the interrelations of helmet art with tourism consumption and destination branding. Our research was based on 75 in-depth interviews with visitors and helmet buyers from the roadshows in Bangkok, Pattaya and Chiang Mai. However, discussions with the art students about their helmet designs, field notes from our recorded observations and impressions regarding the customized-helmet collection and the informants, as well as conversations with the owner of the Thai company, provided additional sources of data for analysis.

The findings of our study indicate that customized helmets were unique and idiosyncratic souvenirs of Thailand. In fact, the uniqueness of the designs transformed the helmets into tangible personalized mementos of tourist and travel experience in Thailand. In search of authenticity and originality, most [~~of the~~] buyers stated that the sign-value exceeded the use-value and the exchange value of each helmet. On the other hand, the prototypes reflected the personal interpretations of the art students regarding Thai tourism destinations. From the interviews, we derived that the customized helmets projected positive representations of each destination, which affected the purchasing decision of the visitors at the roadshows. From the testimonies of the buyers, it can be inferred that the helmet graphics have strengthened the brand image of Thai destinations by depicting strong elements of each place with high symbolic significance for the visitors.

Our work has been the first attempt to explore the impact of helmet art as a contemporary Asian expression of design on place-making and destination branding. By presenting the results of a research project on designing helmet graphics for mature tourism places in Thailand, this chapter provides a successful paradigm of using creative art-forms to stimulate tourism consumption and offer authentic tourism souvenirs. It should be noted though that the language barrier was a major limitation for this study. The inability of the researchers to speak and understand Thai has restricted the research sample only to international English-speaking tourists. Therefore, future research needs to evaluate the opinions and views of domestic visitors on helmet art as a motif for creating tangible remembrances of travel experiences. Furthermore, a systematic, comparative analysis on the importance of crash helmets as tangible mementos for other destinations in Thailand or abroad will provide data for the appraisal of helmet art as a potential tool for tourism marketing.

The findings of this study suggest that helmet art may develop a new, prosperous segment for the souvenir market in Thailand. Designing new product lines on motorbike accessories such as gloves, uniforms, jackets, tank bags, key tags, luggage, and motorbike covers could provide a whole new domain of expression for Asian contemporary art, while enhancing business innovation, upgrading the quality of place-making process and increasing the profits for domestic companies and local tourism stores.

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He exhibited his work at Museum Kröller-Müller [Otterlo, NL], Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Centraal Museum Utrecht [NL], De Kunsthal Rotterdam [NL], LASCA Gallery and Inmo Gallery [Los Angeles, USA], Gallery White Box [New York, USA], Today Art Museum [Beijing, CN] and many more.

D'Orazio lives and works as an artist and teacher alternately in the Netherlands, Italy, the United States and Thailand, where in 2002 he was Laureate of the Unesco-Aschberg Bursaries for Artists 2002/2003 [Faculty of Fine Arts Chiang Mai].

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In 1994 he was awarded the Touche Material Price and in 1997 his inflatable book 'O' was mentioned as one of the 'Best Designed Books 1996' by Foundation CPNB. In 2001 he was invited to make a sketch design for a special coin for the occassion of the wedding of [then] crown prince Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands with Máxima Zorregieta. In 2006 he was invited by the Chief Government Architect to make a permanent work for the penitentiary in Vught.

His artwork 'Full Love Inn', a love hotel on poles that for one month was used as a real hotel-room in the centre of Amsterdam got worldwide media coverage after it was reported by Reuters press agency.

Chapter 9
Merging Batik and Stained Glass: Creating Contemporary Asian Art from Traditional Craft Objects

Keith Kay Hin Tan and Chun Wei Choy

Abstract There is a noticeable divide between the cities, districts and countries that produce traditional craft objects and the sources of mostly touristic demand for these same objects. This involves issues of perception, authenticity, the 'exotic' and commodification that have also acted to suppress the prices available to the producers of traditional craft, especially those made in the developing world. At the same time, the market for high-end art shows virtually no barriers in terms of geographical demand or pricing, creating a two-tiered 'art universe' in Asia. This chapter investigates how the technology of scanning and 3D glass printing can help bridge the gap between contemporary Asian art and traditional craft techniques by allowing the transposition of traditional batik art imagery into the medium of glass, resulting in a 'stained glass effect'. By creating a hybrid Asian art form that elevates the traditional craft of batik above its increasing tourist-dependency whilst also reducing the perceived 'western-centric' nature of traditional stained glass, it points to new potential for craft techniques in contemporary Asia. It suggests that, rather than being the herald of 'souvenirization', heritage tourism demand can in fact play an important role in encouraging the adoption of technology to make the art and craft industry a viable place for a new generation of craftspeople, thus ensuring that the future can be as equally interesting, varied and authentic as the past.

Keywords Art and craft · Souvenirization · Heritage tourism · Batik · Stained glass · Authenticity

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9.1 Introduction

Traditional craft objects are items that are typically hand-made, using skills that are often passed down from one generation of craftsmen to the next, without any formal training or education in colleges or universities ‘adding value’ to the process. Although many craft goods have origins in usable or wearable objects, the changing global economy and the rise of mass tourism, especially in the years following the Second World War have increasingly relegated the role of craft industries to that of a ‘souvenir supplier’ to the much larger tourist industry (Campbell 2015). Despite this relegation, some types of craft, because of their long association with particular countries, districts or ethnic groups have become imbued with “*cultural significance… symbolically perceived as markers of… national identities”* (Hitchcock et al. 2010, p. 221).

At the same time, any attention to ‘fine’ craftsmanship is also increasingly subject to the economic demands of increasing efficiency of manufacture. Space for the expression of thought through hand-made objects is, as a result, slowly disappearing from our consumer landscape (Vallard 2016). If this trend is left unchecked, craft objects risk permanent relegation away from the unique creative place they have occupied for much of history, from where, through creative making and re-making, they have managed to expound many layers of direct and indirect poetic narration about society, culture and place.

Any resulting, ‘producer-led’ standardization will inevitably mean slimmer profit margins for craftsmen as more and more tourist-dependent ‘art shops’ sell more or less the same products (Cooper 1984). This, ironically, risks the gradual loss of traditional craft production techniques in favour of yet more mass-production as a short-term solution which will then result in the same, or even worse long-term consequences, especially in poorer craft-dependent communities.

The transformation of craft objects into souvenirs and the subsequent erosion of their cultural significance has been dealt with by writers such as Littrel (1990), Cohen (1993) and Causey (2003). Whereas the souvenirization of craft objects often involves attempts to make the souvenirs look older than they are (Hitchcock et al. 2010), fewer attempts have been made to use the opposite strategy, i.e. ‘modernizing’ a souvenir object using modern technology, whilst at the same time maintaining its handmade identity in order to preserve the idea of craft as a unique creative place. This study focused on how cutting-edge 3D printing techniques, together with techniques borrowed from Indonesian paper art and European stained glass can transform one of the most important and ubiquitous craft items in Southeast Asia – batik – into a contemporary Asian art form.

9.2 Background

9.2.1 Batik

The term ‘batik’ is derived from the Javanese word ‘tick’, meaning to drip or write points, whereas ‘ambatik’ means to draw, write, paint or drip (Nordin et al. 2012). As an art-form, batik therefore refers to a traditional medium of using wax-resistant margins and dyes for inscribing organic and stylized natural and cultural motifs on cloth. Whereas articles of similar production occur in cultures throughout the Indo-Pacific as well as parts of the Middle East and Africa, the term ‘batik’ has, in the twenty-first century come to be most commonly associated with items produced in Southeast Asia, especially the functional *sarong* or *kain panjang* lengths of cloth popular throughout Indonesia (I-Lann 2012).

There are two main schools of opinion regarding the evolution of batik in Indonesia (Latifa and Hasibuan 2016). They are principally divided into those scholars who believe that batik is an indigenously Indonesian art form, and others who believe its origin can be attributed to Indian influences from the Silandra and Sanjaja periods in Java (Laarhoven 2012). Regardless of these differences, both schools concur that the activity of creating batik was initially part of the leisure activities of native women in the lull period before seasonal crop harvesting. Its origins were as items for domestic use rather than trade, and it was not until the sixteenth century that batik-making became a cottage industry to meet increasing demand from the Javanese royal court (Latifa and Hasibuan 2016).

Further testimonies of lifestyle events expounded by early colonial sources as discussed in Legino (2012) mentioned how the batik sarong was common to Java long prior to its appearance in Malaysia. Historical documentary writing like *Sejarah Melayu* (the Malay annals) (translated by Leyden in 1821) indeed provided rich historical accounts of Malay culture and dress, describing the range, type, use and styles of Malay dress which were considered as appropriate for a hot tropical climate.

Recent batik scholars have indeed described its long-standing impact on the clothing culture of the greater Malay Archipelago (Legino 2012). For example, Latifa and Hasibuan (2016) described how, conventionally, Indonesian batik was used as a piece in a person’s attire, such as the *kemben* covering women’s breasts or the still-popular sarong which is traditionally wrapped around the body and tucked in at the waist or armpits, or in more specialized functions, such as the *selendang* used to carry infants. Just as clothing worldwide has been the subject of much re-interpretation throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, batik is therefore also a process which is still evolving, especially in Malaysia, where its use is heavily influenced by its parent Javanese tradition, having been actively produced in Malaysia only since the turn of the twentieth century (Leigh 2000; I-Lann 2012; Zening 2016).

9.2.2 Stained Glass in Malaysia

Although Malaysia's tourism authority would have visitors believe that batik has a long heritage in Malaysia, the reality is that it is a relatively recent import, sharing just over a century's presence in the country, roughly the same time period as most of the country's stained glass. The main difference between the two art forms is that Malaysian batik is strongly associated with its Malay-Muslim population, whereas stained glass is seen as not just a vehicle of Christian religious expression, but more specifically, a Western-centric version of Christianity with roots in the colonial era.

This is because stained glass appeared in Malaysia in tandem with the rise of Christian missionary activity in Malaya, especially after the ceding of Penang island to the British East India Company in 1786, which marked the beginning of British involvement in the politics of the Malay peninsula. It owes much of its genesis to the Paris Foreign Missions (*Missions Entrangers de Paris*, MEP) who established a major seminary in Penang in 1809, which by the late nineteenth century became known as 'College General'. This allowed French priests to commission churches and explore the possibility of importing missionary teachers into the territories then administered by the British East India Company in Southeast Asia, namely Penang, Malacca and Singapore. Converts gained from Catholic schools created a demand for yet more churches, and many of these were built in the French Gothic style, incorporating European-styled stained glass.

A desire to 'stand-out' in a plural society has allowed an interest in stained glass to survive the end of the colonial period. Whereas examples found in colonial-era churches often follow the 'traditional' model of silica mixed with metal oxides and bound together by lead cames often manufactured in France or Belgium (Cowen 2008; Tan 2011), more recent examples increasingly come from non-traditional source countries like the Philippines. Still more recent are locally-manufactured examples utilizing non-traditional techniques. These movements away from 'traditional' sources of stained glass as well as 'traditional' techniques of manufacture have, however, not yet been fully accompanied by a shift in the style of imagery (and especially, religious imagery) displayed on stained glass panels. The authors addressed this gap by looking at the challenges as well as benefits of merging Malaysia's batik and stained glass traditions to examine the potential of expanding the role of both outside their traditional cultural milieus. This was of additional importance to domestic tourism within Malaysia because, as stated by Butler et al. (2012), there is a general lack of cross-religious understanding between the country's major ethnic groups, and at best only marginal cross-cultural appreciation of their tangible and architectural heritage.

9.2.3 Significance

Whereas the historical significance of batik and stained glass is intertwined with that of clothing and architecture, any scholarly and contemporary study of either tradition cannot ignore their importance as forms of cultural art. Indeed, Farish (2010) argued that batik, like the Malay/Sumatran language, was the lingua franca linking the peoples of Southeast Asia before the colonial period, with batik produced in Java and Sumatra eagerly traded by communities throughout the Malay Peninsula, Borneo, Sulawesi and other parts of the Malay archipelago, constituting a vital form of non-written communication prior to the era of widespread literacy. This compares well with the traditional role of stained glass as a communicator of Christian theology to those unfamiliar with the written word.

Like the value of significant art objects, the making process, the type of motifs used and material quality itself are of great interest to art and cultural historians of Southeast Asia as visual-signifiers and markers of time and place. Farish (2010) in fact premised that to be understood, batik should be read as a 'narrative' containing statements about the wearer and the surrounding world. This is especially important given the inscription of Indonesian batik in 2009 on the 'Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity' by UNESCO (Steelyana 2012). To understand batik's contemporary narrative, and how technology can merge this with a contrasting medium such as stained glass, it is therefore necessary to appreciate the artistic narratives currently prevalent in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia, the region's two largest producers of batik art.

9.2.4 Contemporary Artistic Narratives in Indonesia and Malaysia

As early as 1983, Sabapathy and Piyadasa premised that in the context of Malaysia, "*that which exists as an indigenous art tradition does not have sufficient conditions to qualify as a parent tradition for modern art*" (p. vii), remarking on a common attitude of the 1980s that equated 'modern' art with 'alien' values that were incongruent to the cultural values of Malaysia at that time. This hindered the development of a contemporary art tradition in a country which was then still struggling to establish its own post-colonial identity.

The same problem was not, and is not, apparent in neighbouring Indonesia. Indeed, as far back as 1953, the pioneering 'Nanyang style' art exhibition titled '*Four artists in Bali*' identified the latter as the one place in Southeast Asia where art and life was 'inextricably meshed' (Kwok 2000; Sabapathy and Piyadasa 1983). Whereas the 'Nanyang style' is itself seen as a twentieth century creation unique to

Southeast Asia, albeit with roots in immigrant Chinese art, the survival of traditional Balinese art, in both its subject matter and techniques is mostly made possible by what Campbell (2015) described as “the innate connection between painting and religious function” (p. 94). This ‘differing ability’ of Indonesian and Malaysian artists to preserve and adapt their cultural identity into their artwork was examined via oral interviews in Malaysia and Indonesia in late 2017 and early 2018.

9.3 Methodology

Interviews were divided between Malaysia and Indonesia to identify differences in artistic development between the two neighbouring countries whose common history as constituent parts of the Majapahit Empire beginning in the thirteenth century has left an indelible mark on the visual culture of both countries. By interviewing three artists in Malaysia, and then also an artist and an architect in Jogjakarta regarding the role of art, artists and design in the public space, this study re-created the conditions of the ‘Four artists in Bali’ exhibition more than six decades later by engaging both the producers and consumers of art as part of a background study on the development of creative expression in Malaysia and Indonesia. The data was then used to sensibly situate the on-going influence of traditional art on contemporary production in general and the batik tradition in particular.

The artists were chosen based on the diversity of their output, which, it was hoped, would be matched by a diversity of opinions regarding the role of art and artists in society. Because this chapter deals with contemporary forms of art, there was also a conscious decision to interview younger artists whose styles, opinions and methods might still be fluid. Rather than focus on famous artists, this research also sought out artists who were either engaged with society through second jobs as educators or otherwise struggling professionals whose works could be identified as non-commercial and therefore more reflective of artistic desire than economic necessity, in order to better engage with later discussions regarding the role of formal versus informal education in artistic development.

Jogjakarta was the focus of this study in Indonesia because of the city’s status as one of the main centres of Indonesian batik (Steelyana 2012). At the same time, the study sought to identify an artist whose works transcended the boundaries of a single material, reflecting the inter-material focus of this chapter. Lastly, an Indonesian architect who was trained in Malaysia yet working in Jogjakarta was chosen as a good example of a transnational professional with an understanding of both countries from a personal as well as professional point of view. All the interviews were informal and unstructured, although they were audio-recorded with the participants’ agreement. The interviews in Malaysia were conducted in English, whereas those in Jogjakarta were conducted in a mixture of English and Bahasa Indonesia. Rather than analyzing the transcripts via the coding process that is common in interview-based qualitative research (Willis 2010), the interviews were instead reviewed to highlight both the common and different opinions that exist on both sides of the

Straints of Malacca regarding pressing issues faced by contemporary artists and designers which affect the quality, quantity and narrative of their output. The participants' names appearing in this chapter are all pseudonyms to maintain their anonymity.

9.4 Interviews

One of the immediate differences between the Malaysian and Indonesian artists interviewed was how difficult it was for the Malaysians to afford to be 'only artists'. All three Malaysians were in their mid-30s or older, one single and two married with children. Two lived in Kuala Lumpur whilst the third lived in Penang. Rather than the rural craftsmen so often associated with traditional Malaysian art forms, the three men: Al, Zach and Chew, represented themselves as contemporary artists, whose urbanity was part of their self-identity and whose art was not focused on ethnic, cultural or religious themes. In the case of Chew, a mural-painter, the city also provided his canvas.

9.4.1 Artists' Views on Formal Education

Al and Chew were both university graduates with day-jobs as educators, which was necessary for them to survive in the increasingly expensive city of Kuala Lumpur. The only full-time artist (and non-degree holder) Zach, meanwhile, explained that a formal education was not necessarily an advantage for those engaged in art and design: "*If I went to school, the limitation of the imagination would be higher. The impact of what the teacher says would be high*". The university-educated and university-employed Ed agreed that education was not a pre-requisite: "*To be an artist, you don't have to attend school… it can be self-taught… it is not like a professional course when you are regulated… there is no such thing as law in art… school is just to give you a piece of paper… I don't know of anyone who would hire an artist based on their certificate or degree*".

Overall, the Malaysian artists we spoke to were of the opinion that formal education was good at creating effective professionals rather than artists, with academia's contribution to the artists' craft at best limited to the teaching of the processes, tools and techniques of art, with artists themselves left to create their own language. By contrast, the academy-trained Indonesian artist, Rafik, interviewed in his Jogjakarta studio in 2018 was more supportive of the role of education, suggesting that if he were to compare the relative importance of education and ideas: "*both of them should be in balance; if someone has only skill, without formal education, it would be difficult for them to grow from a technical or capability point of view… but similarly if someone has no natural skills, it would be very difficult for him to pick them up via formal education alone*".

The effect of this dichotomy on artists' ability to earn a living in Asian countries increasingly obsessed with academic qualifications as a marker of social status was stark. The interview with Al, conducted at the university campus where he teaches in Kuala Lumpur, included his remark that "*contemporary art in Malaysia is generally perceived as foreign and especially Western… whereas traditional Malaysian art has been relegated to 'craft' status*". This led him, eventually, to make the damning statement that there is in fact *"no such thing as Malaysian art*".

9.4.2 Art, Identity and Commercialism

Rather than being seen as a loss to the productive spirit of Malaysian artists, this removal of national identity from their works was seen by some as necessary, even helpful to their expressive development, albeit detrimental to their commercial interests. Zach, interviewed in his rented studio in George Town, Penang, opined that the best artist should be "*a citizen of the world… who services the world*". Zach, whose works were mostly sculptural, felt that artists needed 'complete freedom' and that it was unnecessary for their works to have any 'short-term function'. Confessing that his might be a minority view, he added that "*Commercial and investment concerns dominate Malaysia's art market… self-trained, self-expressive artists like me are becoming marginalized*".

The third Malaysian artist interviewed, Ed, agreed with the common opinion that commercialism dominates the art market, but suggested that this was both good and bad, because: "*the world is driven by money… if this is too excessive, then freedom of expression drops… but the good thing is that it provides a means of living… commercially-driven art does sell.*" Back at his university campus, however, Al pointed to a way to bridge the gap between expression and money, by stating that "*freedom is more important to express original, functional art".* This link to function connected the interviews with the four artists to the Indonesian architect Putra, and to the 'craft space' in general. This set the scene for our eventual focus on batik art and its ability to bridge the gap between contemporary expressionism, the functionality of craft and the potential of cross-pollination between industries such as art, architecture and tourism.

When Putra was interviewed in early 2018, he was in the midst of completing a multi-generational family house in Jogjakarta, and was beginning to design a hotel aimed at student travelers and their families in the Kaliurang district in the outskirts of the city. As a young Indonesian architect who was trained in Malaysia, Putra had a keen understanding of the similarities and differences between how art and design is perceived in both countries.

"*Architects and designers have freedom*" [in Indonesia], said Putra, a viewpoint that had also been shared with us by the Indonesian artist Rafik, who during his interview a few days earlier (also in Jogjakarta), stated that freedom of expression in Indonesia is 'much higher' than in Malaysia, where he understood that due to cultural and religious reasons, "*many things are being banned*" (especially before the ground-breaking Malaysian general election of May 2018, when the country changed government for the first time in its post-colonial history).

At the same time, the built environment of Jogjakarta, being less regulated than in comparable Malaysian cities included many buildings which were erected by craftsmen with little formal education using traditional materials such as bamboo which adapt well to the local climate without the need for air-conditioning or other environmentally-depleting design solutions. The fact that these were in increasing demand also by tourists yearning to experience ‘other ways of being’ was not lost on Putra, who explained the economic benefits of designing with natural materials and using traditional techniques, resulting in buildings which tourists can enjoy at a fraction of the cost of ‘conventional’ hotels. This merger of different cultural, craft and architectural traditions however usually concentrates on using a traditional technique in place of a modern one. The challenge of our study was to do the opposite, by using a modern technique to enhance a traditional method without replacing it, a process we began by identifying thematic and technical links between past and present arts and crafts production.

9.5 Creating Thematic and Technical Links Between the Past and the Present

Figurative art in Indonesia and Malaysia can trace its origins to the Hindu-Buddhist Majapahit Empire that encompassed much of present day peninsular Malaysia, Sumatra, Java and Bali during the thirteenth–sixteenth centuries (Dumarcay and Smithies 1998). It was strongly based on depictions of the *Ramayana* which made its way on to surfaces as large as the bas-relief sculptures of Borobudur temple in Java to the hand-held *wayang kulit (*shadow puppet) cut-outs that survive in West Malaysia and Indonesia to the minute ‘pen and dye’ paper-tooling techniques displaying traditional Majapahit court costumes and stylized landscapes that (thanks to tourism) has survived as a production technique on the island of Bali in particular. The scale and mostly secular nature of the third of these traditional craft forms made it the most appropriate thematic and technical link between ancient religious art and a more secular, twenty-first century product.

Paper-based artwork in Bali is a true craft, in that, outside ‘named’ galleries, sellers of paper-based artwork often sell their wares based on how long it took them to produce the work, often explaining to tourists how ‘*this piece took one day to produce’* or ‘*this piece took me a whole week’*. The makers and sellers are often also the same person, and in some particular examples, are craftsmen whose skills have been learnt from previous generations of the same family, with no college training intruding to ‘corrupt’ this ‘pure’ tradition. The result, although attractive for the tourist gaze (Urry 1990), results in a commodification of similar products, with all but the finest examples of work unsigned by the craftsman, and all catering to the same groups of (tourist) buyers.

Here, Campbell (2015) explained how the vacuum created by the demise of the Balinese royal houses (as patrons of the arts) has been filled by the desire (some would say need) to make art for sale to tourists. Whereas she identified Balinese art collectors as a group opposed to this development due to its perceived threat to Balinese culture, she also identified Balinese artists themselves as valuing the relationship with tourists in general and foreign collectors in particular for the commercial opportunities created, and even as a sign of 'cultural vitality' which allows for their art-forms to be known overseas.

The disputed role of tourism in preserving traditional methods of production (if not necessarily products) is connected to the contrasting view of 'heritage' that exists generally between Western and Asian viewpoints. Whereas Hitchcock et al. (2010) stated how Western notions of 'authentic' heritage often focus on the tangible (and especially, the tangible that is un-altered and therefore *original*), Asian viewpoints are more greatly influenced by criteria such as those contained in the NARA Document on Authenticity (ICOMOS 1994), which stresses a continued use of heritage rather than its physical authenticity as a hallmark of importance. This difference of emphasis has been connected, amongst others, to Confucian ideas of impermanence to the difficulty of preserving physical objects in warm and wet climates in general (Long and Sweet 2006; Hitchcock et al. 2010).

Creating thematic and technical links between the past and present is therefore an important means of ensuring heritage continuity rather than heritage preservation. This is important especially to societies such as Bali where the tremendous growth of tourism has already created separate markets in art created for religious reasons and art made for touristic purposes as well as Malaysia, where increasingly few traces of the country's pre-Islamic civilizations are reflected in recent examples of its 'traditional' arts and crafts.

9.5.1 New Responses Inspired by Craft-Tourist Products

Craft products are commonly appreciated for both their materiality and appearance. At the same time, they are also seen as 'progressive' by some, because the traditions they portray and/or reflect slowly evolve with time (Vallard 2016). This identifies craft objects not as passive entities but as objects that embody the authenticity of place as imagined by the minds and created by the hands of skilled and independent craftspeople, not assembly workers. Only then can new responses to craft production, in the face of technological change, serve to preserve the authenticity that so many tourist buyers demand.

As early as 2002, Eisner premised that the technical/making possibilities of art production are constantly changing as their 'media' is manipulated. In order to elevate craft production to the same level as the art-making process, hitherto traditional methods of production will therefore need to be more open to flexible experimentation of both layering and material properties. This will infer a creative thinking process as new, possibly unfamiliar materials react to one another, allowing the

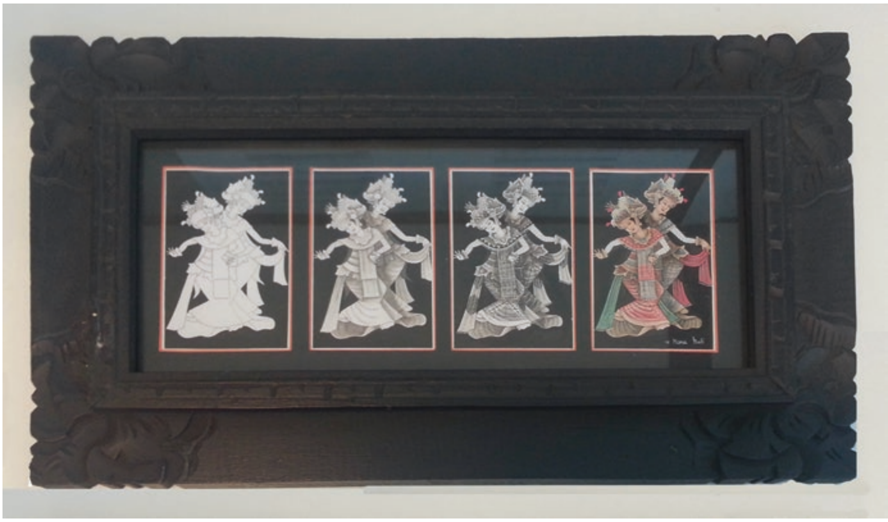

Fig. 9.1 Balinese dancers, ink on paper, with the addition of coloured tincture as a finish, Ubud, 2018

artist-producer to see different perspectives and react to them. Any new response to traditional craft should therefore pay more attention to the value of meaning in material handling. As stated by Eisner regarding the experience of art connoisseurship:

> *The way something is formed matters. We tend in our culture to differentiate between content and form. What is said, for example, is believed to constitute content. How it is said is believed to constitute form. It's all very tidy. However, what is said cannot be neatly separated from how it is said. Form and content interpenetrate. The way something is spoken shapes its meaning; form becomes content.* (Eisner 2002, p. 197)

Artists in Bali, for example, increasingly sell not just the products of their labour as craft, but also express their means of production as an additional attraction for buyers interested to perceive authenticity even in relatively inexpensive souvenir products. An example can be seen in Fig. 9.1, illustrating four panels showing the production process of an ink-on paper souvenir art piece from Ubud, Bali, using techniques that are as traditional as the imagery conveyed.

The replacement of the original plant-based colours by commercial dyes is one of the few changes that have affected this type of artwork since the advent of mass tourism changed the landscape of Bali permanently from the 1970s onwards, when the Indonesian government developed a tourism strategy to present Bali as a *benteng terbuka* or 'open fortress' for tourism that it hoped would merge an openness to tourism with a high level of cultural integrity, local protection and control (MacRae 2015).

9.5.2 Tourism and the Personalization Craft Objects

By presenting the process of his work in a non-mysterious fashion, the craftsman responsible for creating the framed souvenir in Fig. 9.1 was completely unconcerned with keeping trade secrets or family traditions out of the knowledge of foreign tourists or competing artisans. A casual conversation with the seller indeed rendered all necessary knowledge about the production process, including drying time, type of colours used and how to achieve the best shadow effects. Indeed, knowledge of the process by others was to some extent perceived as a good thing, to increase the cultural vitality of Balinese art in the way described earlier by Campbell (2015).

The same is true of batik art, both in Indonesia and Malaysia, where the larger batik showrooms are seldom complete without a production floor where workers put finishing touches on to pieces of batik cloth which are then sun-dried prior to packaging or temporary framing for sale. Indeed, the more interactive of these showrooms often invite tourists to participate in the making of batik prints or paintings, sometimes charging visitors for the pleasure of creating their own, personalized, works of art. Acknowledging the long-term risks of tourist souvenir self-production to the authenticity of traditional craft, the authors investigated how the alternative, addition of technology can ensure heritage continuity by upgrading touristic craft products into works of art that continue to reflect the skills of traditional craftsmen even in the age of mass-tourism and personalization.

9.6 Technology and Heritage Continuity

A desire to preserve an acceptable level of ‘authenticity’ despite the disruptive effects of technology on traditional art and craft processes was one of the challenges of this study. As premised by Anastasiadou and Vettese (2019), this is to ensure that the ‘dignity’ of original materials can still be reflected in any contemporary creation which models itself after a historical object or technique. This meant that explorative experiments could start at any point in the symbiosis between conceptualization, perception and making.

9.6.1 3D Printing on Glass

The touristic personalization of art has its parallels in the use of 3D-printing as a technique that can create one-off examples of almost any product, limited only by the size of the printer and the budget of the purchaser. Whereas traditional stained glass was often the product of laborious effort and complicated and therefore expensive logistics, 3D printing allows for the transfer of almost any image on to a glass surface, with minimal loss of definition depending on the quality of the original scanned image. But to do so whilst removing all traces of craft techniques would ultimately downgrade the resultant pieces not just from 'art' to 'craft', but further, from 'craft' to the 'manufactured' – thus removing the idea of 'art' so completely from the production of images as to render the finished product no better than an advertising panel.

3D printing represents a technology that allows consumers to create bespoke objects using additive design toolkits which then build these items on a layer-by-layer basis through a series of cross-sectional slices (Berman 2012). The use of technology in 'heritage innovation' has indeed been discussed by Reino et al. (2007), bringing writers such as Andersson (2007) to further premise that technology is altering how tourist experiences are created, mediated and consumed. When technology becomes integral to 'creative lifestyles', it allows for the design as well as manufacture of personalized products which are not connected to the global 'manufacturing chain' which has been criticized as being brand-dependent and increasingly 'inauthentic' (Klein 2000).

The combination of three processes (pencil etching, batik art painting and the colouring of glass) involved a series of alternative ways of artistic combination and separation. These rather simple yet precise starting points generated many alternatives for further action. Decisions were guided by the desire to reflect all three 'traditional' processes in a way that would be noticeable in the final product. The important steps of modelling and simulation as described by Dyrssen, (Dryssen 2011), were therefore embedded into the process of making that was integral to this study. This culminated in the creation of a sample prototype of a 3D-printed glass panel in February 2019 (see Fig. 9.2a). An interview was then conducted with the

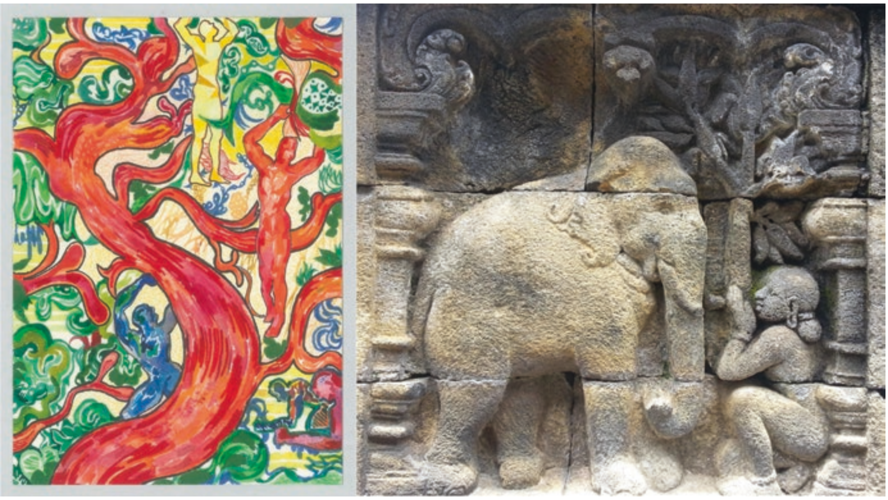

Fig 9.2 (**a**) (left): Hybrid Asian glass 3D-printed in 2019 (**b**) (right): Bas-relief in stone, temple of Borobudur, Java, ninth century

owner of the glass-printing facility which served as the process partner, to determine perceptions regarding continuity and change.

9.6.2 Perceptions of Continuity and Change

The owner, an engineer by background, confirmed that he had been in the business of creating decorative glass for over two decades, and considered 3D printing an ‘evolution’ rather than a ‘revolution’ of technique: “*This company began* [3D printing on glass] *three and a half years ago…. The technique itself is around eight years old… makes our job easier… transfers knowledge from one medium to another*”. His engineering background contributed to his interest in the technical advantages of the new technique: “*Colours cure and dry instantaneously… creating and embossed effect… in comparison to the* [earlier] *laminated film technique, it’s more realistic looking*”.

At the same time, he acknowledged that to really create meaningful objects required the eye of an artist to support the technology, to prevent his company’s products from turning into ‘manufactured objects’: “*We have designers… the artistic concept is created by the seniors… the artistic discipline is still important…* [although] *we’ve eliminated human error,* [but] *the machine is like an operator…* [and] *young people are at risk of becoming less creative because of an over-reliance on Google and the Internet… beauty* [still] *needs to come from the brain… honestly, we struggle to hire young people who can draw and design.*

He emphasized that ultimately, he saw his products as works of art, where technology exists to support the ideal of traditional craft, rather than replace it: “*… the design remains the most important thing… most of the ‘originals’ come from our own free-hand library which has been digitized… we started out twenty-five years ago using actual lead joints with film overlays… most of this is being replaced by our digital technique… I consider this a growing industry* [because] *digital technology still has a lot of room to move”.* He considered his product not only technologically superior to ‘traditional’ stained glass, but even aesthetically superior: “*… beauty is the main thing I like about my own product… traditional stained glass is sometimes not pleasing to the eye close-up, but our product is pleasing both nearby and far away”.*

Whereas the Malaysian artists interviewed earlier had lamented the commercialization of the art space and the lack of cultural continuity in the country’s artistic scene, the viewpoint from the technologically-enhanced perspective of the engineer was satisfied, positive and hopeful. Where the artists required full-time jobs in order to support their desire to be artists, the engineer instead struggled with the ability to find the correct type of workers in the correct numbers to serve his expanding customer base.

At the same time, the engineer’s interest in the transfer of knowledge from ‘one medium to another’, and also from experienced to junior staff showed a concern, albeit from a commercial viewpoint, about the survival of design, and by extension, arts and crafts knowledge within the digital economy. By embracing, rather than rejecting technology as a solution, he nevertheless identified the ability to draw and design as central to creating successful products, thus placing ultimate value on craft techniques, even when the tools to create them are different.

9.7 Re-Creating the Craft Effect Through Hybrid Contemporary Art

The separation of art from craft is largely a post-Renaissance concept. Even more recent is the notion that art "transcends what you do, and represents what you are" (Bayles and Orlands 2010, p. 7). Regardless of function and religious or secular imagery, both Malaysian and Javanese batik contain meanings that describe social status and personal details (I-Lann 2012). Using the definition of Bayles & Orlands, batik is therefore an art form created through a craft technique. Moving forward, the flexible transferability provided by digital 3D printing allows for the representation of not only the richness, but also the texture of batik to be 'felt' on glass. This evolution of traditional craft into contemporary art also allows for a far greater emphasis on 'quality' than was ever possible using traditional techniques alone.

9.7.1 Enhancing Two Dimensionality in an Asian Art Form: The Art of Layering Through Digital and Material Printing Technology

Both batik and stained glass are characteristic of two-dimensional art forms. Both are 'stylized', using (in the case of batik) figurative, often exaggerated motifs or (in the case of stained glass), formal, often symmetrical motifs laid over the entire surface of a visual plane. Buster and Crawford (2010) termed this composition device a "visual field" which can be interpreted as different patterns across a picture plane. Hybrid art combining both techniques must therefore operate not just in juxtaposition, as in a painting/depiction of a scene or a figure, but as a form of layering. Such graphic flatness of 'field composition' appears in many batik motif-patterns that were referenced for this study. This culminated in a new composition titled "*Tree of Life and Grace",* a triptych work of digital glass art that was produced specifically for this study, with a close-up illustrated as Fig. 9.2a.

The panels act as graph (or grid lines) with x and y axes. In a two-dimensional painting plane, fields might be made of carefully repeated motifs (Buster and Crawford 2010). In the "*Tree of Life and Grace*", however, fields lie on the plane of the x and y axes and can be layered, one over another to form a z axis, thus producing a three-dimensional composition. The almost schematized depiction of nature through the integrated use of basic lines, shapes and dots was the result of an intimate study of Javanese and Balinese techniques and how these could be enhanced by technology. Whereas batik evokes playful characteristics of essentially two-dimensional design principally through the interplay of light and dark and the evolution of a shallow-space configuration, it also depends greatly on techniques of abstraction. The application of additional contoured layers of differing colour intensity and granularity in the "*Tree of Life and Grace*" created a decorative composition which is unlike the western counterpart of resorting to a "*chiaroscuro* effect" (Betti and Sale 1997).

*Chiaroscur*o is the Italian for describing the light-dark of tonal (as well as volumetric) modeling techniques founded and employed widely by artists like Caravaggio and Da Vinci during the Renaissance. This tradition and its effective medium has therefore been the conceptual tool for the deployment of western visual narratives for almost six hundred years. The illusion of depth – through the placement of human figures and objects in linear perspective thus became the accepted way to understand observed reality in the Western world until the advent of the camera in the late nineteenth century.

9.7.2 Asian artistic Attitudes via the Batik Medium

The visual space and effect consideration in batik is the complete opposite of the western visual model. Visual depth and illusion is not the focus of interest, but rather a strong impression of flatness in visuality and how the visual field is communicated. At the same time, batik engages with a world view that, partially resulting from its dependency on flowing wax as a medium of communication, has inherently more dynamism when it comes to the human form, thus creating a 'participatory' concept of seeing which requires greater audience engagement than is true in *chiaroscuro* art.

The required fluidity of active scanning and seeing across a visual field composition is not based on any fixed vanishing points (as in perspective's law and logic) but is centered upon 'making meaning' by reading into the depicted abstract motifs that permeate the batik tradition. It is this very flexibility in motif design that has made batik highly adaptable and its visual language continuously learning from and reflective of changing social and cultural influences over time.

It is the unique artistic heritage and techniques of batik that this research adapted, via technology to create a contemporary, experiential work of art that borrows from both Asia and Europe. The conclusions, which were later invited for consideration of use in a Catholic grotto in rural Malaysia due to its perceived 'pilgrimage tourist potential', embodies the multi-cultural openness to outside influences prevalent in Southeast Asia in general and Malaysia in particular. The participative nature of reading along the axis of a two-dimensional visual field-plane into the art forms could be seen in not only batik's expression but also figurative stone-based carvings such as at the temple of Borobudur near Yogyakarta. This is a further example of how research into Southeast Asian art has been instrumental in revealing a paradigm shift towards understanding expression and communication via iconography or symbolic motifs through visual-patterning for compositional effect rather than the use of perspectives common in ‘realistic’ western art.

The hand-painted visual design created for this research study demonstrated the potential of digital printing technology to transpose hand drawn effects onto a wide variety of material surfaces without losing its essential craft characteristics. The fluidity of movement and enhanced flexibility offered by digital scanning and printing has opened up possibilities of formation, material presentation and expanding and conflating the exploration of material and visual expression especially with regards to the size and scale of hand-crafted art, which were previously greatly restrained by the manual tools of the artists’ craft. The resultant hybrid art combining the handmade and the machine aesthetic invites future creative researchers to stretch the possibilities of presentation of visual narratives via configured material-objects to further the exploration of scanned painting as a projection of visual material onto architectural space and settings. Rather than a surrender to the mass-advertising covering large surfaces of modern buildings in the twenty-first century, this alternative approach alludes to the spirit of the constructivist movement’s early twentieth century material thinking, where form, material, architecture and aesthetic are necessarily and inter-dependently linked.

To communicate an essentially Asian expression, moreover, the “*Tree of Life and Grace*” adopted the use of symbolic colour codes and a schematized layout towards the depiction of figurative elements. In the resulting schema, an ‘ascension’ is shown as a progressive journeying sequence rather than a singular event that is more typical in Western stained glass. By studying the visual thinking (Arnheim 1969) embodied in batik, this visual research points to how multi-cultural and open to other influences Southeast Asian audiences are. The resultant composition merges human and plant motifs into a dynamic ensemble so that, rather than just a placement of static symbols and objects, it references Southeast Asian heritage such as the sequential narratives of the Borobudur wall carvings and batik’s fluid visual field to require of the audience active participation in the viewing process to understand the progressive unfolding of the art (Fig. 9.2a, b).

9.7.3 Adapting an Asian Visual Concept to a Tourist Narrative

In Daichendt 2012, the artist-scholar Daichendt, premised that art is a type of inquiry, reflection, interpretation, commentary, and thinking process that has transformed the way we understand the world and ourselves. By examining the materiality and cross-cultural influences affecting the production of batik as well as stained glass in contemporary Malaysia, this chapter shows that the artistic fluidity inherent in contemporary batik, when fused with contrasting Eastern as well as Western influences creates a new, improvised narrative unique to Southeast Asia. This tones down the artistic exaggeration common in batik whilst at the same time invigorating the often static, formal and symmetrical appearance of especially colonial-era stained glass.

The visual narrative contained in technologically-rich, yet craft-inspired art is therefore a rich resource for national self-expression amongst peoples struggling with conflicted views of heritage and history. This chapter is but a small example of the opportunities that exist to recover some of the traditional art-forms that are the authentic lingua franca of Southeast Asia. It shows how, by enhancing traditional techniques and re-establishing dormant visual dialogues with the traditional cultures of the region, new products can be created which break the cycle of tourist dependency threatening to downgrade the status of Southeast Asia's craftspeople to that of producers of merely decorative and non-functional 'kitsch'. It also shows how technology can help to break down visual barriers that have often pigeon-holed the distinctive cultures of different communities in plural countries like Malaysia, where it is hoped that domestic tourism in particular can then build bridges of understanding and appreciation of especially the built heritage of other communities.

This visual research into the merger of batik and stained glass narratives via new technology points to the adaptability of Asian artistic traditions. By performing reflective visual analysis on batik art forms as well as Hindu-Buddhist temple reliefs, this research identified a rich and integrated knowledge of mixed mode cultural art evidenced in the development of symbolic and material thinking and an appreciation of material history as vital to the ability of Asian art to retain its sense of place within the context of an increasingly globalized and technologically-focused world where the fleeting tourist gaze and tourist dollar increasingly dictates what survives and what is produced as 'traditional' craft.

9.8 Chapter Conclusion and Impact of the Study

Writing in a monograph focusing on 'young contemporary Malaysian Art', Annuar (1999) argued that the issue of 'greatness' in art is often dependent on the notions of art 'historicity', suggesting that the element of time is a very crucial factor in legitimizing greatness. To her, visionary artists (and art appreciators) are therefore tasked to take into consideration the past, the present as well as the future in any attempt to achieve such greatness. Creating contemporary Asian art forms by enhancing traditional craft techniques is therefore something that addresses the future as much as the past. By studying the integration of traditional Asian art with modern technology, this study adds further layers of understanding towards material thinking outside of the western-centric model.

It identifies the prime importance of materiality in the conveyance of any artistic message in products seeking to avoid the label of tourist kitsch. It suggests that, in comparison to craft objects which can be re-created (without discernable loss of quality) by means of partial or sometimes total machine-manufacture, hand-drawn art pieces, in the true sense of the word, will always be distinguishable from one piece to another, even if their production is assisted by the very latest of technologies. It reinforces the argument that semi mass-production methods, such as the regularization of sizes or the use of identical colours, or indeed the standardization of subject matter (based on the idea that 'practice makes perfect') are amongst the pitfalls affecting the production of art-as-tourist-souvenir today, especially in developing Southeast Asia (Campbell 2015).

Whereas the earlier studies by Littrel (1990), Cohen (1993) and Causey (2003) linked the erosion of cultural significance of craft objects to souvenirization, this chapter shows how traditional techniques can instead be adapted to produce one-off works of art that can act as 'markers of place' transcending religious and cultural norms which, whilst intriguing, are often barriers between communities in an increasingly plural, globalized world. This is of particular importance in the realm of cultural tourism, because so much of the tangible heritage that cultural tourists travel the world to see and experience depends on the sustainability of art and craft industries which are paradoxically threatened by the very prosperity that tourism is meant to bring to heritage-rich parts of the world.

By showing how even contemporary knowledge-workers can be engaged in the art and craft sphere, this chapter argues that rather than being the guilty herald of souvenirization, heritage tourism can, by increasing the demand for authentically-perceived tangible objects, in fact encourage the adoption of appropriate technologies to replicate and enhance craft techniques whose futures would otherwise be threatened by the extinction of the eco-system of apprenticed labour that has for generations supported their production.

By using technology to elevate traditional craft back to the status of 'works of art' which many once held before the era of mass-tourism created an insatiable demand for souvenirs, this study shows that opportunities exist for informally-trained artisans across developing Asia to re-claim the non-souvenir market for art and craft. This will ultimately help safeguard the authenticity of the production process as integral to the creation of contemporary Asian art, ensuring that for cultural as well as heritage tourism, the future can be as equally interesting, varied and authentic as the past.

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Chun Wei Choy has established himself as one the most interesting and exciting mixed media artists working in Malaysia today. His multi-layered collages draw constant inspiration from his environment; from the repetitive facades of suburban Malaysia, to the vast abundance of the countryside. Chun Wei is an artist whose predilections and ideals of art are based predominantly on design language. His immersion in graphic design studies provides design-oriented conceptual readings and contextual imagination into his chosen practice in fine art. This confluence of design and contemporary art-making is germane to an exciting development of his journey, clearly distinguishing Chun Wei from his contemporaries. Currently He is also lecturing and tutoring Fundamental Drawing and 2 Dimensional Design at Taylors College-Foundation modules and also pursuing postgraduate (PhD) studies on Art-based research (through art practice) at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM).

Chapter 10
'What Do I Get?' Punk Objects as Meaningful and Valuable Souvenirs

Kok Leong Yuen and Paolo Mura

Abstract Despite social scientists' increasing interest on souvenirs in tourism, little has been written on the role and meanings of souvenirs within specific subcultures, such as punk subcultures. This chapter focuses on the exploration of punk objects as potential souvenirs in relation to "punk tourism" by investigating the meanings attached to subcultural artefacts as opposed to mass produced products. As part of an ethnographic fieldwork on punk tourism that the two authors have been conducting in Malaysia since 2016, in this chapter we focus on the role and meanings of punk souvenirs within the Malaysian punk scene. As the empirical material presented in this chapter shows, a DIY produced punk product has the advantage of channelling more than one value. While the value of souvenirs lies in their propensity to act as "mnemonic devices" related to a place visited, subcultural products like those produced by punks have the potential to fulfil additional values. In an age where authenticity and claims of appropriation of culture are placed under scrutiny, a punk object holds the potential of being a meaningful and valuable souvenir.

Keywords Punk · Punk tourism · Punk souvenirs · Malaysia

10.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the exploration of punk objects as potential souvenirs in relation to "punk tourism" (Mura and Yuen 2019) by investigating the meanings attached to subcultural artefacts as opposed to mass produced products. Despite social scientists' increasing interest on souvenirs in tourism (Cave et al. 2013; Cohen 2000; Gordon 1986), little has been written on the role and meanings of souvenirs

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within specific subcultures, such as punk subcultures. As part of an ethnographic fieldwork on punk tourism that the two authors have been conducting in Malaysia since 2016 (see Mura and Yuen 2019), in this chapter we focus on the role and meanings of punk souvenirs within the Malaysian punk scene. More specifically, this work draws upon part of the empirical material co-constructed through observations and in-depth interviews with record shop owners, distro operators, punks, and other actors of the punk scene in Malaysia with the intent to cast light on punk souvenirs. It is also hoped that in the process of exploring the potential of subcultural souvenirs, the quality of a more meaningful and valuable souvenir could be unravelled.

This chapter is guided by an interpretivist paradigm, which ontologically acknowledges the multiplicity and fluidity of social realities and epistemologically contemplates the existence of subjective and different ways of knowing (Denzin and Lincoln 2018). Methodologically, the empirical material underpinning this chapter was co-produced through various sources and qualitative methods during a fieldwork conducted in Malaysia by the two authors since 2016. As scholars who acknowledge and value the role of reflexivity in the construction and representation of knowledge, we believe in the importance of "situating ourselves" in the written text we are producing.

The first author of this work, Yuen, is a Malaysian scholar who has been actively involved in the local punk scene in Malaysia since he was a teenager. Besides participating in many punk related events and gigs organized by other members of the Malaysian punk community over several years, he has played a leading role in the production of punk zines and punk events in Malaysia. He has also completed a master's degree in anthropology focusing on punk identities and ideologies. Yuen's personal and professional involvement in the Malaysian punk scene, alongside his extensive social network/capital among other members of the punk community, allows him to have an "insider's" perspective on the scene. The second author of this chapter, Paolo, an Italian scholar who was based in Malaysia for almost 10 years, has conducted fieldwork on Malaysian punk since 2016. Although he prefers to label himself as an "outsider", he has been involved in the scene by participating in several punk events and gigs organized in Malaysia. The fieldwork he conducted since 2016 allowed him to obtain a basic understanding of Malaysian punk through empathy and first-hand experience. Overall, we believe that the two authors' insider and outsider roles play a crucial role in providing a balance between emic and etic perspectives.

10.2 Literature Review

10.2.1 Punk and Countercultural Goods

The term "punk" identifies a complex array of heterogenous subcultures, which despite being different in terms of musical preferences (e.g. hardcore, straightedge, anarchopunk) and socio-cultural practices (e.g. see Xiao 2016, on Chinese punk; Císař and Koubek 2012, on Czech punk and Moore 2007, on punk in the USA), share common worldviews and beliefs (e.g. DIY values, mutual aid, opposition to "selling out", rejection of any form of racism, support of human rights, among others). As a subculture that symbolizes opposition to "the mainstream" (including mainstream commodities), punk rejects what "mass culture" and its related corporate/capitalist values offer and produces its own commodities.

Authors like Frank (1997) and Heath and Potter (2006) have sparked heated debates concerning the mainstream nature of countercultural goods. Heath and Potter (2006), for example, have emphasized that countercultures produce objects and forms of consumption that despite being labelled as "alternative", do not transcend capitalist values. Rather, they contend that the sense of distinction these objects convey to the masses may also encourage more consumptive patterns. However, punk subcultures produce and circulate commodities that are different from the objects manufactured by capitalist systems as they are driven by DIY (Do It Yourself) ethics and values – self-produced, cheaply sold and traded through personal distribution networks. Importantly, it is through the processes and ideologies underpinning their production and circulation that punk objects are regarded as meaningful by those purchasing/owning them.

10.2.2 Souvenirs

The study of souvenirs is not new to social scientists. Indeed, the body of knowledge concerning souvenirs and their meanings within tourist and non-tourist experiences has progressively expanded in the last 20 years (Hitchcock and Teague 2000; Litirell et al. 1994; Morgan and Pritchard 2005). As such, definitions of souvenirs in the literature abound. In broad terms, Cohen (2000, p. 548) defines souvenirs as "material objects which serve as reminders of people, places, events or experiences of significance in a person's biography". In other words, souvenirs are regarded as "mnemonic devices" (Lasusa 2007; p. 275) that act as bridges between individuals' experiences and personal biographies/memories (Beard 1992). Cave et al. (2013, p. 36–37) point out that the word "souvenir" may refer to disparate categories of objects, which may include "touristic articles, mementos that are not acquired to serve as a reminder of a trip but that which begins fulfilling such a function at a later time, and articles that are not touristic in nature and that are acquired before, during or after a trip". Therefore, any object may potentially become a souvenir "even if it was not originally acquired during travel and was not intended to serve this purpose from the outset" (Collins-Kreiner and Zins 2011; p. 25).

More specific definitions, which have tried to classify souvenirs based on their characteristics, uses and attached meanings, have also appeared in the literature. In this respect, one of the first attempts to categorise tourist souvenirs, developed by Gordon (1986), refers to five different typologies. These are pictorial images (e.g. postcards, photographs, illustrated books, etc.), pieces-of-the-rock (i.e. items gathered from the natural environment), symbolic shorthand (i.e. out of scale items that stand for the destination; e.g. an Empire State Building from New York), markers (i.e. objects with no reference to any specific situation or event, but with inscriptions that locate them in space and time; e.g. a mug marked with Cayman Islands), and local products (e.g. olive oil from Greece, vodka from Russia, a Mexican tortilla press, a French beret, etc.). Likewise, Decrop and Masset (2011) conceive four types of souvenirs, namely the symbolic souvenir (i.e. objects described as typical, emblematic, and unique; e.g. a key ring with an Eiffel tower or lavender from Provence), the hedonistic souvenir (i.e. items related to pleasure, happiness, and affective contentment such as food items), the utilitarian souvenir (i.e. souvenirs bought for their functional purpose; e.g. plates and pots), and the souvenir as a gift (i.e. objects purchased for relatives or friends).

Drawing upon Marx (1976) and Baudrillard (1981), Paraskeivaidis and Andriotis (2015) discuss the different values that souvenirs may assume, namely use-value (the value based on their functionality), exchange-value (the value if compared/exchanged with other commodities) and sign-value (the value based on the prestige and status they symbolise). Moreover, they also emphasise the spiritual-value of some souvenirs (the value based on their perceived metaphysical, magical, religious or sacred powers). Importantly, the fluidity of the values that souvenirs may have needs to be emphasized as "the value of the tripper object is determined by its context" (Lasusa 2007; p. 276). Furthermore, discussions concerning objects' values cannot transcend the subjective and flexible meanings attached to commodities (Love and Sheldon 1998). In this respect, Decrop and Masset (2014) point out that souvenirs need to be conceived as objects charged with subjective and non-fixed meanings, which can be cultural (public) and/or personal (private).

Notar (2006) also notes how souvenirs' values are shaped by the narratives accompanying purchasing and exchanging experiences. More specifically, she contends that souvenirs are often characterised by "authenticating narratives and performances" (Notar 2006; p. 79), which are part of an "economy of storytelling" (Hutnyk 2004; p. 161) in which the narrative value often overrides their use and exchange values. Based on this line of thought, which contemplates the idea that objects assume value and meanings through words and communication, any commodity should be conceived as "a thoroughly socialized thing" (Appadurai 1986; p. 6).

Authenticating narratives are not only important during seller-tourist exchanges but also during the time tourists return home and give the souvenirs to others as gifts. In this respect Notar (2006; p. 79) emphasizes the importance of these narratives to shape perceptions of authenticity of the souvenirs purchased/given as presents. Indeed, although commodification and authenticity are often discussed in the tourism literature as antithetical concepts (mainly based on the idea that global commodifying trends tend to produce inauthentic local artefacts) (see MacCannell 1976), they act as intertwined forces as "commodification does not "de-authenticate" but rather produces a desire to authenticate". A more recent review by Swanson and Timothy (2012) concluded that authenticity is "in the eye of the beholder" as it is subjective and relies on the individual's connection to the object. In an attempt to overcome global/local dichotomies, Cave et al. (2013; p. 4) conceive souvenirs as "glocal tourism transactions", namely as objects whose production and consumption are shaped by both global (universal) and local (contextual) political and socio-cultural forces. According to this line of thought, which allows us to question the argument that globalising trends tend to homogenise local cultures, global and local trends should be conceived as dialogical forces in the production and consumption of souvenirs (Cave et al. 2013).

As other forms of tourist consumption, purchasing/displaying at home/giving as gifts souvenirs are all practices that contribute to self-identity formation and transformation (Decrop and Masset 2014; Morgan and Pritchard 2005). Indeed, "souvenir collecting is, in fact, meaningful as a tool for the construction of the (post)modern identity—that it can, in fact, tell us something about ourselves and our world" (Lasusa, p. 287). The role of souvenirs as agents of identity (re)construction may occur at different times/spaces, including the times/spaces in which souvenirs are purchased (mostly in public spaces during the holiday experience) and times/spaces in which souvenirs are displayed at home. Importantly, the decision to display souvenirs at home and the specific domestic spaces in which souvenirs are located provide important information concerning personal identities' construction, transformation, and projection to others (Morgan and Pritchard 2005). As such "souvenirs, in spite of their artificiality, remain important as pieces of cultural capital and serve to increase one's social status" (Lasusa 2007; p. 282). Lengthier definition of souvenirs had already been discussed by Swanson & Timothy (2012, p. 490–491), and following the authors, we limit our discussion to items that are purchased or collected intentionally to be souvenirs or markers of experience.

Moreover, consumers use these objects to symbolize their belongingness to a group of travellers or to a specific (tourist or non-tourist) sub-culture. Through the acquisition of such souvenirs, tourists tend to resemble or to get closer to other tourists (Decrop and Masset 2014, p. 28). In the following paragraph, we explore the nexus between souvenirs and a specific music subculture, namely the punk subculture.

10.3 Exploring the Nexus Between Souvenirs, Music and Punk

Bijsterveld and van Dijck (2009; p. 11) argue that "it is not merely through words that people either consciously or involuntarily recall past events and emotions, but also through sound and music". More specifically, they employ the term "sound souvenirs" to identify forms of music, such as cassettes and albums, that may function as reminders of tourist and non-tourist experiences. Sound souvenirs are part of a wider universe of objects that constitute the "materiality of music". In general, musical paraphernalia include a broad range of different material articles, such as vinyl records, cassette tapes, CDs, DVDs, t-shirts, stickers, keychains, books, magazines (e.g. fanzines, punkzines) and other forms of merchandise sold in music shops and at concerts. While some of these objects may not be produced for tourist consumption, they may be purchased by travellers as souvenirs during a tourist experience or become souvenirs after the tourists return home. Indeed, as Sonnichsen (2017; p. 244) points out, "in order to categorize music as a comprehensive souvenir of travel and tourism, one must consider the subjective intentions of the consumers rather than the manufacturers of the products".

Importantly, sense of place may also play an important role in shaping tourists' music consumption practices and perceptions of valuable souvenirs. Although music (MP3, CDs, Vinyl records, etc.) and its related merchandise (t-shirts, stickers, etc.) can also be purchased online in the home environment, specific places function as significant markers for a specific music genre, scene, or influential band (Sonnichsen 2017). For example, a punk t-shirt purchased at New York's CBGB (a former music club now closed considered as one of the birthplaces of punk) before its closure in 2006 may be perceived as a souvenir of a higher value than the same t-shirt purchased online. Likewise, the Beatles' merchandise may assume high meanings for travellers if purchased in Liverpool.

Although empirical research concerning punk tourism/tourists is still relatively scarce, recent studies indicate the existence of punk-related tourist consumption patterns, which also include purchasing and exchanging punk objects. By referring to the hardcore music scene in Washington, DC, Sonnichsen (2017; p. 244), for example, points out that "when music collectors go on vacation, they will often spend money in a well-known or well-regarded local music store". Similarly, Mura and Yuen's (2019) ethnographic work on the Malaysian punk scene highlights forms of punk tourism and related purchasing practices.

10.4 Methodology

The conception of this paper is a result of the long-term participation in, and observation of, the Malaysian punk scene by both authors. Besides the long-term involvement of both authors as participant/observer and insider/outsider in the scene, there are additional sources employed to co-construct the empirical material this chapter is based on. The first is represented by two public forums organized in conjunction with "Record Store Day 2018" in Kuala Lumpur, which were moderated by the first author (Yuen). The two forums, entitled "Local Record Store, DIY Production & Distro" and "Analog Music Appreciation" respectively, were held on the 10th and 11th November 2018 to explore the production, distribution and meanings attached to subcultural artefacts. The forum panellists consisted of record shop owners, distro operators and individual punks (which include one punk activist and punk music archiver) with years of involvement in the scene. Over the forum that span for 2 h each, panellists discussed the present punk market in terms of the various physical formats in which music is purchased and consumed, and personal music collection habits.

The second empirical source informing this chapter is represented by four qualitative, in-depth interviews conducted with store operators in the Klang Valley selling punk merchandise, namely *Tandang Store, Teenagehead Records, Rumah Api Shop* *and Tajam Records*. While the first two stores focus on physical music format, the latter two sell various punk clothing items ranging from t-shirts, hoodies and caps to other paraphernalia, such as patches and badge buttons. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants in various dates from November 2018 to February 2019. The interviews were conducted to explore in detail the meanings attached to punk products in relation to their DIY production and retailing ethics, which as we will discuss below, contributes to the value creation of the objects. The focus on the meanings aimed to understand the various values that punk products assume, including the potential they may have as souvenirs for both domestic and international visitors in Malaysia.

Data from the two sources were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) based on pre-determined conceptual values assumed by souvenirs, namely *use value*, *exchange value* and *sign value* (Paraskeivaidis and Andriotis 2015). The past ethnographic study conducted by the two authors is essential in the interpretation of meanings and values attached by members of the subculture towards their own cultural production. This qualitative study intends to capture both the apparent *use value* and *exchange valu*e expressed in explicit monetary pricing of punk objects while at the same time attempting to explore the subjective nature of *sign value*.

10.5 Presenting the Empirical Material

10.5.1 The Multiple Meanings of Punk Objects

The interpretation of the empirical material unveils that the value and "authenticity" of punk objects mainly hinges upon the meanings that punks (as both producers and consumers) attach to the objects. The collection of DIY releases, amassed for years by some of the punk scene participants, serves as a testament of the materiality of the subculture, which transcends the performative-based music aspect. Personal collections (vinyl, CDs, cassettes, instruments, gadgets) assume several meanings. One of the most important ones concerns the need to reinstate – to oneself and to others – a sense of belonging to the subculture. As such, punk products act as signifiers of self-identity. Bands' t-shirts and patches worn carry logos, symbols and names that can be only recognised and deciphered by other members of the subculture, namely other punks. Thus, punk identity is mutually affirming, as only a punk could recognize and legitimise another punk from his/her outfit choices.

This also helps to reaffirm the "authentic" value of the punk products as only other members of the subculture have the right to determine what is "authentic" and what is not. The recent appropriation of some punk items/style by hip hop artists, K-pop band members and couture runways globally has also caught the attention of local punks, who have tended to ridicule these items and label them as "fake" or "non authentic". The most striking recent example is a runway jacket that adorned

Malaysian crust punk band Apparatus patch, albeit with a missing "s" (read *Apparatu*). Although this object has the "form" of a punk patch, the lack of authenticity lies in the absence of "content", namely the lack of association of the clothing accessory with the punk world.

Based on the participants' viewpoints, punk objects are also seen as a manifestation of opposition to "mainstream" consumerism. More specifically, "punk production" diverges from what is perceived as "mainstream" based on certain characteristics, such as the limited production of items (e.g. limited copies of music albums and merchandise), an indifference (or little emphasis) to monetary profit and creative freedom. As such, punk products embody a form of opposition against corporate-driven, profit-oriented products offered by the international "Big Three" record labels (Universal, Sony and Warner). It is important to emphasise that similar forms of opposition have been increasingly visible beyond the punk global microcosm due to the proliferation of small, independent labels in various music scenes beyond the punk frontier. In this respect, punk opposition represents only one of the several forms of resistance to capitalism emerging in the global music scene. Increasingly, this attitude of supporting small labels, concurrently with the rejection of mass-produced corporate products, has been the current trend in the consumer market, with punk being one of the earliest harbingers. The ubiquitous artisanal coffee shops, ateliers producing furniture and ceramics, and farm-to-table initiatives that sprout among the hip urban enclaves within Kuala Lumpur all serve as examples of this current trend.

On a more extreme end, the DIY production is perceived by the local members of the subculture as a political act. Indeed, the ability to produce and consume goods outside of the mass production system is seen as a liberating and empowering way to express contribution and participation in political decisions and ideas. This pattern of production, based on DIY ethos, has provided the punk subculture a model for creativity and freedom since the 1970s. It involves not only the production of music but also a wide range of creative artefacts, which include visual art objects (e.g. videos, documentaries, movies), printed zines and wardrobe accessories. One of the interviewees, a punk filmmaker actively involved in the scene, recounts how the punk DIY spirit prompted him to produce his own documentary of an historical event in Malaysia:

> One of the contributions of punk is to democratize music as a medium from being in the hands of corporate business major labels to the hands of youth. You can start your own band and you can start your own music. F*** all these major labels and f*** all these industries. That continue to inspire me till today in the things I do. I was inspired by the spirit in (making my) "10 Tahun Sebelum Merdeka" (documentary) about the history of boycott in Malaysia… You don't have to go to film schools to make film, just like you don't have to know to play music properly to start a band.
>
> (Recorded during the *Analog Music Appreciation Forum,* translated and edited for clarity).

The ultimate reproduction of music and the subsequent establishment of independent record labels are perceived as an active retaliation against major labels. The tangible manifestation of the political act is encapsulated in the physical copy of the music record produced. In other words, a punk record is a symbolic embodiment of the perceived victory in the production system as it does not need the involvement of corporate record labels. Thus, many interviewees conceive the process of production of a punk product as a signifier of "authenticity". Moreover, the meaning attached to the DIY physical music format production contributes to the escalation of the product's perceived value within the subculture's distribution system. As such, a DIY label released music is generally regarded by the members of the subculture as an object with a higher symbolic value than that of a mass-produced release.

Similar values and ways of thinking underpin the production of non-music punk merchandises. The political meaning of punk objects and the need to produce/consume objects that fight capitalist circles is also reiterated by other pivotal members of the scene. The producer, shop owner and operator of the shop at *Rumah Api* reiterated the political intention behind operating his merchandise "distro" during an interview:

> I am selective of the quality to look for something better and more durable for the distro. Distro goes against those who worship brands like Levi's, Topshop or Topman, that crushes them with local products. Cheap, accessible but with good quality. That is the intention of this distro (Joey, translated and edited for clarity).

The opinion of the interviewee understandably does not represent other producers and sellers. However, the response opens up a range of alternative motives for punk producers compared to non-punk producers (whose production is solely driven by profit). The punk marketplace is controlled by its social proximity and suspicion towards overtly profiteering ventures. All the entrepreneurs working within the subculture are not free to price their items as they like without criticism from other members. The subculture provides a form of "gatekeeping control" to maintain not only the authenticity of the goods but also other aspects, such as quality, price control, and the form and content of the products. Personnel from *Tandang Store* pointed out that they refused to carry products that reflect ideologies that are not aligned with their values and those of the subculture. However, despite much social control within the scene, the value of punk products does not decrease but rather often increases due to the limitations imposed on the objects by the members of the subculture.

10.5.2 Values of Punk Objects

As discussed in the section above, according to its members the meaning of punk objects accentuates the sign value (Paraskeivaidis and Andriotis 2015) of the products produced. In a way similar to other commodities in the market, punk products also hold both use and exchange values. Some of the discussions emerging during the fieldwork were centred about the "exchange value" of punk objects. Ideally, as objects produced without substantial investments, the artefacts and merchandise produced within punk circles should be sold at a relatively cheap price. However, surprisingly some of the participants pointed out that this may not be always the case. For example, the 7-inch vinyl entitled “My Friend” by *The Bollocks*, released in 1996 by *Tian An Men Records*, is now priced as high as 70 euro in discogs.com. Likewise, *Carburetor Dung*’s “Songs for Friends”, one of the seminal records of the Malaysian punk scene, is sold online for RM500 at Carousell.com. In this respect, the “exchange value” of punk commodities is often affected by speculative market forces, especially for music and merchandise produced by famous Malaysian pioneering bands like *Carburetor Dung* and *The Bollocks*.

One of the reasons behind this status quo lies in the transformation of punk artefacts from mere objects to collector’s items over time. Much like collectible trading cards or rare action figures, punk music releases are collectibles that hold the potential for exchange value’s increments. The small number of punk products manufactured contributes to the rarity and the increased exchange value of the commodities. Furthermore, the difficulty of finding the products outside of the community makes these products exclusive and prestigious, even in the case of recent releases. For example, the release of *Killeur Calculateur*’s “Book of Flags” vinyl, sold out within months from its circulation, contributed to enhance its perceived high value. The vinyl also acquired additional value when the band declared that no more than the limited 300 copies of their 12-inch vinyl will be released. Similarly, personnel from a Singaporean band recently exposed and criticised online an individual in Malaysia who they claimed to be a reseller, buying their band t-shirt to be sold at substantially higher price later. Despite the several and divergent opinions expressed by the members of the subculture, most agreed that the practice was not appropriate for items circulating in the independent music scene, with one commenter suggesting that these trends should not occur in the scene.

10.6 To Commoditise or Not? Issues of Punk Products as Souvenirs

One of the different topics discussed during the interviews with the participants focussed on the idea of punk objects as souvenirs. As already pointed out by Mura and Yuen (2019), punk generates different patterns of mobility (e.g. bands touring; members of the Malaysian punk scene travelling to attend punk festivals and events in Malaysia and overseas; foreign travellers attending gigs in Malaysia while backpacking, among others), including tourist mobilities. Importantly, purchasing punk objects as souvenirs is common for the punks involved in all these different forms of mobility and/or tourism. Importantly, these souvenirs are not necessarily acquired as reminders of the travelling experience. Rather, they are purchased by punk travellers as a way of supporting the local scene that they have visited. One of the interviewees, for example, explained how his decision to buy a CD while visiting Bali was determined by the idea of supporting local bands in their struggle for land reclamation:

> I went to Bali, I pick up *Ugly Bastard*, so that CD is all about Bali, about the struggle to defend their land from reclamation (Tolak Reklamasi Benoa). The CD is actually dedicated to that struggle. Even if you are not into punk, if you pick up that CD, you read all the lyrics, you read all the articles, it could be interesting. So it could be something souvenir. Because souvenir when you take it back to your friends, they haven't been to this place but from music they could understand what's going on in this place (Dee Dee, Malaysian, Tandang Store, edited for clarity).

As this excerpt from the interviews emphasises, since punk is a politically aware genre and punk objects (e.g. music, t-shirts) often denounce the struggles that local communities have to face, when they are purchased and brought home as souvenirs, they become carriers of political messages. The political dimension that punk souvenirs acquire contribute to the narrative of a "sincerer" form of production. Unlike the production of other souvenirs, which are intended to be sold for touristic consumption, punk products are marketed with the main intention of spreading music, ideologies and political ideas for subcultural consumption. Considering punks' aversion to be labelled as "tourists" (see Mura and Yuen 2019), punk travellers purchase punk objects more as a way to support local communities or local political causes rather than as a trip reminder.

However, the extent to which punk souvenirs equally and actively are able to evade market forces is a subject of debate. Indeed, often the production of punk souvenirs, even if not for tourist consumption but only for exchange within the members of the subculture, contributes directly to the commoditization of punk products. For example, the production of the dubbed "official" *Rumah Api* T-shirt and *Rumah Api* skateboard raises issues concerning the application of DIY ethos as both the products bear the inscription denoting copyright (circled C), which is at odds with punk practices in production. Other forms of merchandise produced in the past and that use slogans, logos or other forms of punk symbolism, with the circled A (anarchism), E (equality) or X (straightedge), are used to adorn wall clocks, watches, patches, and badge buttons. Several participants contended that these objects were produced for monetary intentions. The bootleg reproduction of foreign bands' merchandise also occurs in Malaysia, although it is not a widespread practice due to the unpopularity of using a band's artwork for one's profit. Consistently, the observations conducted during the fieldwork in the local punk scene do suggest that buyers usually prefer to purchase merchandise directly from the bands themselves as this act is perceived as more "authentic".

The potential for punk souvenirs points to the possibility and challenges of purposive creation of souvenir-worthy subcultural products. It is in this notion that a paradox lies: there could not be an intended production of goods aiming to be unintended souvenirs. The authenticity of punk products lies in its lack of intention of being a mass-produced commodity as an intended mass production would nullify its perceived value. The limited releases of punk musical format in Malaysia, usually reproduced at the minimum permissible quantity set by businesses, makes it even rarer.

This case study shows a "processual creation of meanings" that is hard to replicate outside of a subcultural context, which might work against the market forces or commercial interests. However, even with the dwindling interest towards manufactured souvenirs – hats, caps or other clothing branded with destinations, hotels or attractions – the role of a souvenir as gift, memory or evidence of travel (Wilkins 2010) remained to be fulfilled by local products. Swanson and Timothy (2012, p. 495) discuss the inevitable "threat" of tourism-led commoditization of material culture to fulfil market forces as it brings forth the changed intention of production (from utilitarian article to tourist art), a loss of cultural meaning (diminished under mass production), exploitative intentions (produced by people without cultural connection and with little understanding of the artefacts), a loss of authenticity (use of non-indigenous materials and techniques) and a stereotypical and inaccurate portrayal of places.

10.7 Conclusion: Punk Objects as More Meaningful and Valuable Souvenirs

Subcultural products, with their peculiarities and degree of resistance towards mass commercialization, appear to be viable alternatives for a more fulfilling touristic experience. In the present age, where many of the traditional ethnic goods and paraphernalia exist only in the form of a souvenir and exist in an imaginary past that is revered but not lived, subcultural goods could possibly be the remedy. The performative aspect of the subculture, which is reiterated regularly through gigs and other related activities, contributes to shape places more than traditions portrayed in museums and "staged" cultural villages do. Perhaps subcultural souvenirs would appear to be better reminders of a travel experience than any manufactured goods sold at gift shops.

However, some principles and values should be followed to assure that punk touristic souvenir production does not become "mainstream". Firstly, a mechanism of cultural gatekeeping of production is necessary to provide some extent of control and balance. While the production of punk articles is not controlled by any party, gatekeepers may refuse to sell any of the products deemed to be not reflecting or against the punk values. Secondly, the guiding principles of production – non-exploitative, locally based, backed by empowering ethos – might safeguard some exploitative practices and respect the nuances of local culture. Thirdly, the revenue of sales of punk products should be seen as a result of, instead the primary motive, of creative production. The production of various punk projects, such as gigs, records and publications of zines, are usually seen as financially risky endeavours. Despite this, they are actively and constantly pursued by several members of the punk subculture.

Despite the confrontational façade of punk, there is no actual opposition from the punk scene towards marketing to the masses, a point that challenges Thompson's

(2004) argument concerning the "shame of exchangeability". In fact, the goal of the scene is to become attractive to more individuals in an effort to be as inclusive as possible. One of the clear indications of this intention is represented by the various music titles sold by independent record stores, which span from decidedly underground releases to more "mainstream" (albeit under-the-radar mainstream) releases produced by small music labels, which include hip hop, reggae, jazz, world music and rock (especially those carrying political messages). On the level of consumers, the functional aspect of the product, i.e. the consumable music and clothing, justifies the purchase of punk products as compared to contently hollow reproductions of non-functional local objects.

As the empirical material presented in this chapter shows, a DIY produced punk product has the advantage of channelling more than one value. While the value of souvenirs lies in their propensity to act as "mnemonic devices" related to a place visited, subcultural products like those produced by punks have the potential to fulfil additional values. In an age where authenticity and claims of appropriation of culture are placed under scrutiny, a punk object holds the potential of being a valuable souvenir. Punk products appear to exhibit the potential of some utilitarian-based products as fulfilling as souvenirs with both use-value and exchange-value. As discussed above, a punk object also contains powerful narratives and hold the potential to increase its value, which further justifies its purchase. The social surroundings in which punk objects are produced provide the gatekeeping quality and content control that are non-existent outside of the subculture.

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Part IV

Contemporary Asian Art and Multisensorial Tourist Experiences

Chapter 11
Digital Art and Virtual Tourism Mobility: A Critical Discussion

Rokhshad Tavakoli and Sarah N. R. Wijesinghe

Abstract Traditionally, art tourism involves tourists whose mobilities were determined by their motivation to see and enjoy art, often consumed within confined spaces such as exhibition halls, galleries, museums, etc. However, with the digitalisation of art and space, and evolving visitor demands, mobility patterns have significantly changed for both the artist and the admirer of art. Digitisation (conversion of physical into virtual content), digitalisation (processing of digitized content), and now virtual art, have transferred the traditional physical art space to that of a virtual space. In this process, art-based mobilities that were previously determined by space, time, money, or location barriers have been redefined, showcasing significant implications for travel and tourism. This issue is especially applicable in the context of Asia, where travel restrictions bind many in the neo-colonial political era. Consumption of art is no longer defined by a traditional perception of 'elite spaces,' and exclusivity, but breaks boundaries previously defined by the inside-outside dichotomy. In the virtual space, one can cross all boundaries previously defined by politics, including national, ethnic, or class boundaries. Thus, in this chapter, we discuss the implications of the digital art technology in democratizing consumption and engagement patterns of artists and art consumers. Taking an Asian perspective, we discuss how the implementation of digital art technology, may enhance the visibility, engagement, and access to Asian art consumers, challenging traditional boundaries, and dominant dichotomies.

Keywords Digital art · Virtual art · Art tourism · Virtual tourism · Democracy · Mobility

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11.1 Introduction

Art tourism is a term, which covers tourists who travel specifically to see art, as well as those who, as part of holidays, trips or tours, , sometimes visit locations which display art (Franklin 2018). People have travelled to see artworks since time immemorial. This movement of people is precipitated by the relative locational constraints of art. Art is often displayed where it was created, or collected together with other exhibits for display in a museum where, unless it is loaned to another gallery, it remains until it is removed. In the latter instance, these collections tend to bring together works of art along with similar themes and display them in galleries located in major population centres (Barush 2016). Evidence of art tourism dates back at least as far as 1244 BC, in the form of ‘tourist graffiti’ discovered in ancient Egyptian tombs, demonstrating that they were open to the public (Yoyotte 1960, cited in Franklin 2018). In addition, Plato’s Laws mention organized art tourism in Greece in the fifth century AD, the purpose of which was to inspire people to form an appreciation of the arts and encourage further progress and development (Franklin 2018). The increasing ease of travel to foreign places over the centuries meant that artists were creating works influenced by their cultural experiences overseas, which would then be exhibited in their own countries, leading to art consumers developing a taste for the exotic.

These works, documenting fresh, unfamiliar worlds and exhibiting new styles, techniques, and approaches, challenged and inspired artists and art consumers alike. Still, the problem remained that in order to see interesting, absorbing new works of art, consumers would have to travel to the locations where the artworks were housed. Nevertheless, tourists were drawn to these places. The so-called Bilbao Effect describes the impact of the 1997 opening of the Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, which swiftly began drawing one million visitors every year. Of these visitors, 88% were tourists from abroad (Franklin 2016). Previously, Bilbao had no particular history of tourism on such a large scale. The Bilbao Effect led to other cities seeing scope for regeneration and investing in state-of-the-art galleries in order to attract tourists from around the world. Sometimes, the success of these ventures comes as a result of organic growth from grass root art scenes, while in other places it comes as a direct consequence of the Bilbao Effect-inspired policy-making (Franklin 2018).

In traditional terms, art which is confined to specific areas such as exhibition halls, museums, and art galleries, determines the movement of people. However, with the digitalisation of art and space, and evolving visitor demands, mobility patterns have significantly changed for both the artist and the admirer of art. Digitisation (conversion of physical into virtual content), digitalisation (processing of digitized content), and now virtual art, have transferred the traditional physical art space to that of a virtual space. Enhuber (2015) proclaimed that in the last decade or so, the digitisation and digitalisation of art have revolutionized postmodern life.

In this process, art-based mobilities or art tourism that were previously determined by space, time, money, or location barriers have been redefined, to showcase significant implications for travel and tourism. This issue is especially true in the context of Asia, where travel restrictions bind many in the neo-colonial political era.

Consumption of art is no longer defined by the traditional perception of 'elite spaces', nor as exclusive for some, but breaks boundaries previously defined by the inside-outside dichotomy. In the virtual space, one can cross all boundaries previously defined by politics, including national, ethnic, or class boundaries. It has thus been argued by a few researchers that digitalisation and digitisation of art have the capacity to democratize art spaces (Polacci 2015; Enhuber 2015).

In this chapter, taking an Asian perspective, we discuss how the implementation of digital art technology may enhance the visibility, engagement, and access for Asian art consumers to challenge traditional boundaries and dominant dichotomies. More specifically, the chapter analyzes the extent digital art spaces hold in altering traditional power structures of art spaces and lead the path to democratic art consumption patterns. The critical implications and limitations of digital art projects are brought forward to analyze their broader applications for art-based mobilities and subsequently, for the travel and tourism industry. Indeed, in the process of digitalisation and digitisation of art, art-based mobilities that were previously determined by space, time, money, or location barriers have been redefined, to showcase major implications for travel and tourism.

The current book chapter contributes to tourism knowledge in a few ways. First, the role of digital art as contemporary art in tourism is discussed. Second, it theorizes how digitisation and digitalisation of art influence the mobility of Asian art consumers. Lastly, it explains how the political implications of the digital art project development may improve the art tourism experience on a broader scale.

11.2 The Digital Age: A History

From the time personal computers first gained widespread traction in the 1980s, the impact of computing technology and the internet has been felt in almost every area of human life (Enhuber 2015). Over the last twenty years, global societies have undergone a cultural transformation brought about by the emergence of digital communication platforms, which offer methods of production, distribution, and reception, which would not have been technically possible in previous eras (Latonero and Sinnreich 2014). Digitisation, the process of converting text, images, or sound into digital forms, has permeated most sectors and has had a particularly significant impact on the creative industries. Art is among those areas within the creative sector which have found a home online.

11.2.1 Digitalisation of Art

A distinction should be made between the terms 'digitisation' and 'digitalisation,' although the two are closely related. As mentioned above, 'digitisation' refers to the conversion of analogue information into digital form so that it can be stored, processed and transmitted across networks using digital circuits (Business Dictionary 2013, quoted in Enhuber 2015). ‘Digitalisation,’ on the other hand, refers to the use of this digitized content to improve business processes. In the context of art, this means that content is converted into digital data (digitisation), and those data are then used in a virtual reality, which differs from the original art space (Enhuber 2015).

The digitalisation of art has been a slower process than that of other areas within the creative industries. Unlike other sectors, such as the music industry with its platforms for downloading and streaming songs, the art market has somewhat resisted the move into the digital world. Among the reasons for this are the fact that buyers of art feel a need to see and experience work before making a purchase, and wish to interact with experts, dealers, or the actual artist. As a result, online art spaces are seen as an alternative to, rather than a potential replacement for physical galleries (Van der Schaaf 2017). Nevertheless, digital and virtual art is a developing field, which is starting to take a hold on the art market.

11.2.2 Digital and Virtual Art

The history of digital art stretches back a long way. As far back as the 1970s, artists were experimenting with computers, creating what was then called ‘computer art.’ Digital technology allowed instant creation and manipulation of colours and textures and proved of interest to painters, photographers, sculptors, and others (Paul 2002). Digital art covers a wide range of different practices but primarily refers to any art, which is accessible online. Often, it is clear that the art has been created digitally, but equally, it can sometimes be difficult to tell whether an artwork is digital or analogue. Virtual art gives professional artists a chance to make their work accessible to a global audience but also opens up the field to amateur artists to display user-generated content.

As well as contributing a new space for exhibiting artwork, the digital medium also offers different, distinguishing characteristics from traditional art. For example, digital art allows interactivity, which goes beyond what is possible in the analogue world, allowing consumers to navigate, assemble, or even contribute to artwork, leading to an enhanced experience. It can be dynamic, changing in real-time, in accordance with the data flow. There exists the possibility of a collaborative element, where multi-user input comes together to create a single piece of art. In addition, it can be customized to a single user’s needs, unlike traditional art exhibitions where the choice of the consumer is generally limited to the collection put together by the curator (Paul 2002).

The origins of virtual art can be traced to the 1990s, during the time when the internet was emerging, and artists began to develop an understanding of the new technology. Among the first pieces of art which utilized virtual reality was *The Tunnel under the Atlantic,* an installation created in 1995 by Maurice Benayoun. This experimental tele virtual installation allowed users from different sides of the

Atlantic to interact in a virtual space of their creation. Linking the Contemporary Art Museum in Montreal with the Pompidou Centre in Paris, participants travelled through a tunnel, which enabled them to converse with their peers on the other side of the tube. They could also ‘meet’ each other in virtual reality. Another virtual artwork was created in the same year by Char Davies, a Canadian artist who devised an immersive piece called *Osmose*. Using a head-mounted display, users were transported to virtual spaces based on natural phenomena such as forest, clouds, and ponds. Immersion was enhanced by using real-time motion tracking, as well as state-of-the-art 3D graphics and interactive sound. As a result of the nature-inspired settings, users found *Osmose* to be an extremely calming and occasionally, a very intense experience.

Since those early beginnings, virtual art has developed in line with advancing technology. By 2016, entire sections of art programs were devoted to virtual reality art. For example, NEW INC’s annual show contained a section called *Virtualities,* the sole purpose of which was to showcase virtual art. The scope of the artworks contained in *Virtualities* was vast, showing that evolving technology combined with more refined knowledge and experience can open up new horizons for virtual art-makers. Examples of exhibits include a virtual junkyard created by Charles Sianty, which consisted of footage of car accidents taken from YouTube and constructed into an explorable virtual world that users can walk around. While the concept of artists playing on people’s interest in tragedy is nothing new, virtual reality takes people closer to the action and adds a new dimension of morbidity.

11.3 Art, Space, and Consumption: Understanding Traditional and Contemporary Digital Art Spaces

Traditionally, the consumption of art or art spaces was signified by a crucial link between the works of art and the viewer, with each in their respective positions in the communicative exchange. Polacci (2015) explained this interaction as the “relationship between that which is seen and the viewer” (p. 73). The exchange or viewpoint, in this context of the traditional space, is controlled by a communicative measure that defines the position that the viewer must take. The traditional art space is based on pedagogical relationships with visitors where the “chronological progression of artworks and styles are presented in strict correlation with a succession of adjoining galleries that guide visitors along a linear path of discoveries and knowledge” (Polacci 2015, p. 74). For instance, the grand narratives of a museum are predetermined by its layout, which guides the tour aspect. The visitor follows the museum’s directions, complete with barriers that set a proper distance between the public and the artworks. Zunsunegui (2003) argues that we can view this set of art spaces as a ‘panopticon.’ A panopticon, as Bentham puts forward, is a type of institution where obtaining power over minds is the central objective. In this sense, traditional art spaces present an illusion of total accessibility to art. However, observation, as in the case of the panopticon, “ensures domination and subjugation due to an asymmetry between the observer and that which is observed, the first having complete control over the second" (Ibid. p. 81). In the traditional context, the viewer takes the role of a passive recipient or observer.

However, in recent years, especially with the digital wave, art spaces, and works of art have come to enhance the experience and consumption as a consequence of digitisation and digitalisation. This has led to heightened experiences in democratization, education, and socialization within the arts (Enhuber 2015). The viewer or the consumer of art is no longer a passive recipient but is allowed to engage in a co-creation by adding value, meaning, and experience to its completion. Indeed, postmodern art spaces or, more specifically, digitized and digitalized art spaces address visitors who are capable of choosing their layout. There is no predetermined direction. The digitisation and digitalisation of art and art spaces have enabled consumers to become active participants, hence leading to a behavioral change as cultural contributors (Boorsma 2006). Thus, art institutions now "serve as platforms that connect to different users who act as content creators, distributors, consumers, critics, and collaborators and provide opportunities for diverse visitor co-produced experiences" (Simon 2013, cited in Enhuber 2015, p. 128).

The 'Google Art Project' (GAP) is one such initiative in the digitalisation of art collections and museums. The project was launched in 2011 with collections from 17 museums put online. As of 2012, agreements were signed with 151 museums in 40 countries. The technology itself uses Google *street view,* which enables visitors to tour museum galleries virtually, and *microscopic view,* which allows viewers to examine the paintings in close detail with high definition technology. The street view encompasses a subjective camera through which the viewers can see the paintings, while also plunging them into the atmosphere and the architecture of the museum. Unlike digital archives, the GAP enables users to immerse themselves in digital art spaces virtually. The microscopic view "stimulates the role of an art expert who examines each brushstroke to, ideally, appraise the painting" (Polacci 2015, p. 80). As the close-up view alters how we contemplate the work of art, the technology fundamentally reformulates our relation between body and perception, especially our aesthetic perception of art. It allows viewers to see more than what a traditional art setting allows (Figs. 11.1 and 11.2).

'Tate Insight' is another example of a digital art space. However, unlike GAP, 'Tate Insight' is based on the digitizing of artworks accessible via an online platform. According to the project description, it was designed to "open new paths into the Tate collection through a comprehensive database of indexed images accessible through the Tate website" (Tate 2019, para 1). There are over 79,577 artworks from the collection that are available online (Fig. 11.3).

Virtualization technologies have also further advanced art spaces and the consumption of art, especially in the sense that both the viewer and the artist can now access and edit them. That has enabled a higher level of immersion and psychological impact, as viewers submerge themselves into the artwork in a 3D environment (Russett 2009). Virtual art represents not only an immersive opportunity but also a platform to interact with images by inserting ourselves into them (Popper 2006; Grau 2003). Programs such as 'Google Tilt' have profoundly changed the way art is produced. By using HTC Vive goggles, virtual paint, and a small electrical

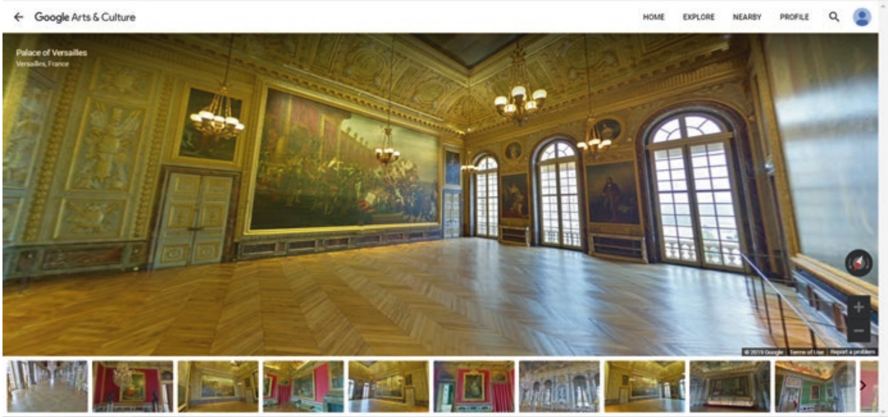

Fig. 11.1 GAP street view

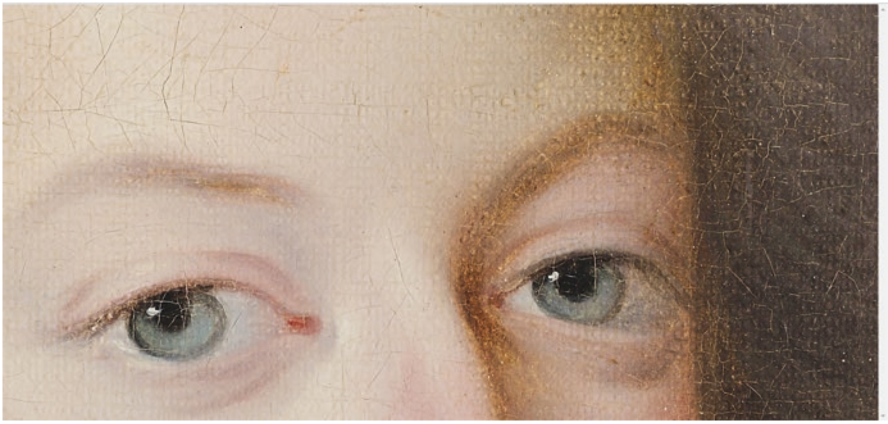

Fig. 11.2 GAP microscopic view

controller as a brush, artists are able to produce various works. Platforms such as 'Ikonospace' also allow the general public (artists to be more specific) to create their art exhibitions in virtual reality, changing the power dynamics that existed in conventional art spaces (Figs. 11.4 and 11.5).

These digital technologies have revolutionized the way art is consumed. They allow a larger scale of visitor market to individually and comprehensively engage digitally and virtually with art, hence enriching the art consumers' total experience through technological advances. Indeed, as opposed to offline art, presented in conventional settings where art is to be viewed and not touched, the digital spaces offer consumers an interactive experience that is available to a wider public. Moreover, the storytelling aspect of art spaces is opened for greater understanding and interpretation. However, the more considerable implications of digital art spaces are not only a matter of the changing consumption patterns but also present a more extensive change of political movements as discussed below.

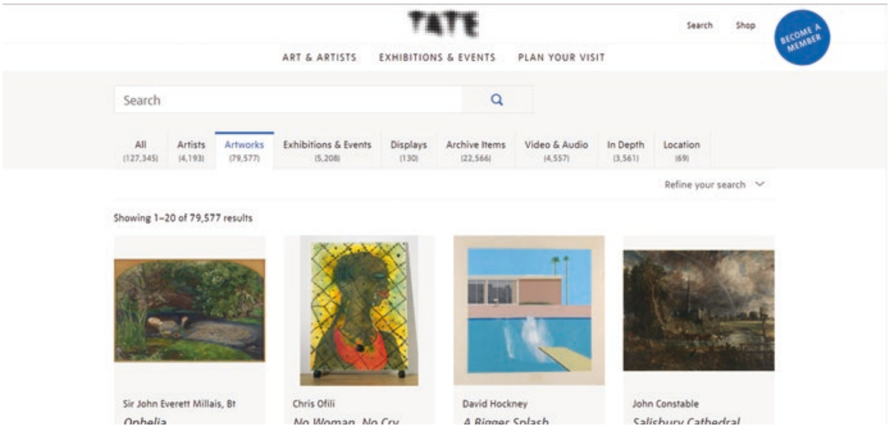
TATE
Search
Shop
BECOME A MEMBER
ART & ARTISTS
EXHIBITIONS & EVENTS
PLAN YOUR VISIT
Search
All (127,345)
Artists (4,193)
Artworks (79,577)
Exhibitions & Events (5,208)
Displays (130)
Archive Items (22,566)
Video & Audio (4,557)
In Depth (3,561)
Location (69)
Refine your search
Showing 1–20 of 79,577 results
Sir John Everett Millais, Bt
Chris Ofili
David Hockney
John Constable

Fig. 11.3 Tate collection online

Dynamic brushes
Tilt Brush
by Google
0:07 / 0:45

Fig. 11.4 Google Tilt

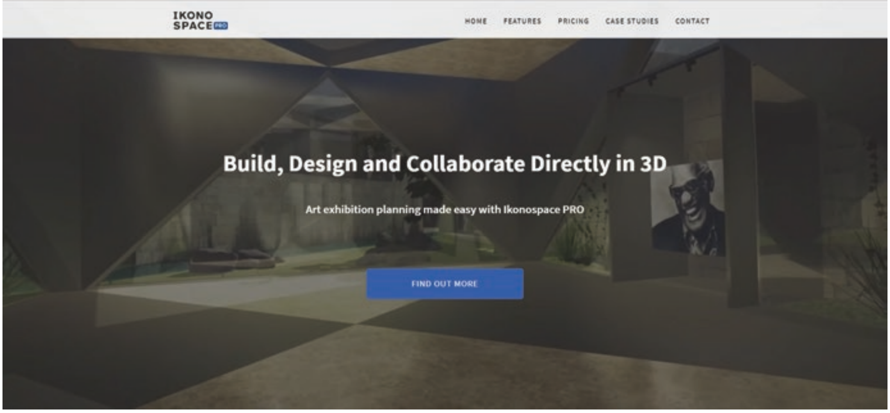
IKONO SPACE PRO
HOME
FEATURES
PRICING
CASE STUDIES
CONTACT
Build, Design and Collaborate Directly in 3D
Art exhibition planning made easy with Ikonospace PRO
FIND OUT MORE

Fig. 11.5 Ikonospace

11.4 Power and Politics of Art Mobilities: Democracy Through the Digital Arts?

Tourism in general, although not often highlighted in mainstream literature as political, is indeed a "practice for the privileged- the practice of using the 'other,' the 'weaker' and the 'poorer'" (Cywiński 2015, p. 22). Since the 1980s, authors such as Church and Coles (2007), Hall (1994, 2003, 2004), Hall and Tucker (2004), Mathieson and Wall (1982), Matthews (1978) and Richter (1989), have done a great deal of analysis to present the politically charged agendas of tourism in its development, management, representation and consumption. These relations are often both colonial and neo-colonial (Bandyopadhyay 2011). Intrinsically, "tourism is just as much a setting for the play and movement of ideologies as it is for the latitude of tourists or the movement of travelers" (Hollinshead and Suleman 2017, p. 965).

Thus, tourism cannot merely be articulated as the "act of travelers journeying to places of interest situated at some distance from their home locales" (Ibid. p. 964). These mobilities of people are also subjected to borders defined by politics and power that determine who gets to travel where and the narratives and representations they consume. Global politics in its organization of power also determine the economic abilities of the international traveler, who are subsumed in scales of privilege and marginalization depending on their nationalities and locations (i.e. an American traveler spending US dollars in Thailand has much more spending power than a Thai traveler in the United States on a general scale). For instance, foreign policy discourses have a significant effect on "when, who and for what reason people are able to freely travel across international borders" (Hannam et al. 2014). As a result, talking about 'social fluidification' might refer, at best, to a small section of the population and varying degrees of freedom (Kangasluoma et al. 2006). Tourism is highly governed and intertwined with global geopolitics that influences the movement of people, thereby showing high imbalances or social inequality in the so-called 'autonomy/freedom' of tourism (Bianchi 2007; Cohen and Cohen 2014).

However, although mobilities (physical movement) in traditional tourism are bound by political, economic and most importantly physical borders, technological advancements are now enabling people to "live geographically independent lifestyles, thus allowing more and more individuals to be free to live where they want and travel as much as they want" (Hannam et al. 2014, p. 178). The physical movement of people is hence freed from geographical constraints, and this phenomenon is now challenging previously existing ideas of restricted physical mobility (Ong and du Cross 2012). Global enthusiasts envisage these processes as producing a new epoch, a golden age of cosmopolitan borderlessness that would offer tremendous new opportunities, especially to overcome the limitations and restrictions that societies and especially nation-states have exercised on the freedom of corporations and individuals to treat the world as their home (Kangasluoma et al. 2006).

Indeed, the emergence of cyberspaces (digital destinations) has uniquely reconfigured the concept of space itself, where "virtual spaces are configured based on human interest rather than physical proximity" (Hannam et al. 2014, p. 178).

Authors like Guttentag (2010), Plunkett (2011) and Tavakoli and Mura (2017, 2015) argue that virtual or digital tourism mobilities have the potential to alter the way people travel or substitute physical travel fundamentally. Indeed, destinations such as Tuscany, Hong Kong, and Dubai, have started to develop their Augmented Reality (AR) applications, and Trip Advisor provides a feature that allows visitors to indulge in a virtual walkthrough of their selected destination with the help of Google street view technology (Linaza et al. 2012). Although there are debates available for both sides in terms of the advantages and the disadvantages of digital tourism mobilities, in the following paragraphs we attempt to critically understand the implications of the 'digital' avenue in challenging hegemonic political structures in tourism mobilities. As such, considering its relation to 'digital art', we ask the question: what potential do digital art spaces hold as a democratizing movement in allowing the autonomy of travel for Asian travelers (as well as artists).

If we are to introduce the landscape of contemporary arts briefly, only a few decades ago, it involved a space that was predominantly, if not exclusively, composed of work produced by western or westernized artists. Indeed, all cultural institutions that brought about the production, creation, and international diffusion of contemporary art were in the hands of western or westernized managers (Clarke 2002). Asian art in Western museum collections were often the works of western orientalists who provided an image of Asian culture as 'other' to that of the West. Clarke (2002) puts forward a compelling argument that, although the 'postmodern' era has created the mainstream aura of artistic progress where old boundaries are crumbling, "Asian art may still largely be recuperated within a Western-centered vision" (p. 238). Rather than forcing a reorganization of the system of beliefs, Asian contemporary art may still be placed as a further "temporary novelty for Western palates or viewed as comforting evidence that the non-Western world is becoming more like the west, is learning to speak its (artistic) language" (Ibid. p. 238). He presents an example in the form of the works of Wang Guangyi (cultural revolution-era iconography) which are observed as making fun of communism while submitting to a capitalist world-view in a way that is already comprehensible/compatible to those who advocate its values. Presenting further imbalances, Clarke (2002) further argues that, despite vastly increased possibilities for travel and the massive high-speed flows of information between cultures in our electronic age, the asymmetry of knowledge which prevailed in the 1920s and 1930s still exists: it is the Asian contemporary artist who knows what his or her American counterpart is doing and not the other way around.

However, the current situation of the contemporary art landscape shows a change of geography that has gone from being exclusive and centralized to omnivorously all-embracing. The rising number of fairs, round-tables, and exhibitions that are materializing show a harmonious coexistence across cultures, with more art from Africa, Asia, and Latin America entering the orbit. The digital art spaces intensify the ability of so-called 'peripheral' art and the consumers of art to cross previously defined borders. Some articulate this new phenomenon as 'digital democracy,' which can be defined as "the pursuit and practice of democracy in whatever view using digital media" (Van Dijk 2012). Although the term is used more particularly in the political context (political activities/communication), on the broader understanding it also represents a movement that is applicable in many contexts, such as 'the digital arts' and its ability to democratize its spaces (both production and consumption) across geographical locations previously identified as the 'periphery'.

The 'Google Art Project', for instance, notes that one of the most important goals of the project is to help democratize art by giving access to the world's greatest art collections to anyone wishing to see them. Not only does the project enable visitors to see collections of art that are often locked away with high entrance fees, but it also gives visitors the ability to cross the physical boundary that is placed in traditional settings to obtain an intimate perception of the artist's work. It fundamentally changes the way we consume and understand art. With reference to the constraints stipulated by national, political, economic, ethnic, and class boundaries, digital art spaces shake the traditional perception of 'elite spaces,' and open the consumption of art to the so-called 'less fortunate' in tourism mobility. This also extends to pedagogical mobility within traditional art spaces that are predominantly constituted by power. As Zunsunegui (2003) discusses, we can say that the traditional museum from the humanistic and illuministic concepts of knowledge reflect a pedagogical organization of knowledge that is seen in its spatial layout, and it is precisely this spatial arrangement that expresses the asymmetrical relationship of power between museum and visitor. The postmodern museum or digital art spaces, in particular, stipulate 'freedom of choice' in the direction and understanding of art.

Indeed, in the observed objectives of the majority of digitisation and digitalisation of art projects undertaken across the world, the need to make art accessible for a wider public remains the core. Enhuber (2015) articulates this as a digital revolution that allows fast and relatively cheap access to and distribution of artworks, which reveals that digitalisation presents a democratizing effect within the arts. Although Virtual Reality requires particular technology for access, digitized art content is the knowledge that is accessible to everyone with a data processing device. This has, in turn, broadened the boundaries of what is considered art and culture (Enhuber 2015). On the broader understanding, this means that previously existing obstacles in the representation of culture via the arts in Asia and the consumption of art for the Asian consumer are equally broadened with opportunity, with the elimination of limitations of consumption in time, space, and money. The locale of art no longer stipulates the consumption patterns of art.

However, as much as digital art spaces present themselves as a powerful tool in democratizing consumption patterns and artistic mobility, they equally present challenges against the ideology of democracy. For instance, Polacci (2015) argues that, although GAP presents an ideology of the democratization of art, it lacks the pedagogical terms and objectives of art and art spaces. It, therefore, fails to meet a cognitive need, as it does not provide sufficient background information to build a well-structured tour; hence, losing the essential narrative often presented in an art space. Unless the visitor is exceptionally knowledgeable about space and content, digital content also does not allow the viewer to relate to or contemplate the artworks, leading to a lack of full understanding of the subjects portrayed (Polacci 2015). Representations of art (entangled in particular discourses) also carry implicit and explicit implications for the narratives art is able to distribute, especially as the way it is seen, experienced and understood in digital spaces cannot be uniformed but remains open to the consumer. Digitalisation also makes artwork reproducible, thus raising concerns over the ideas of authenticity and uniqueness as it shrinks the gap between the work of art and the viewer. It represents a lack of richness, association, and affordances. The inability to experience the real art space is consequently seen as a negative aspect of digitisation. As Lugton (2011) notes, “A grand work of art deserves to be viewed in a space that is suitably un-distracting, rather than being framed by my desk and other debris of domesticity” (para. 6).

Furthermore, Enhuber (2015) reveals that studies of the internet performance of art organizations on the website ‘Alexa’ found that half of its online visitors were tracked in the UK, while the remaining 50% were scattered around Europe and the globe. Only a minority (2.5%) of visitors were found to be from outside of the geopolitical ‘Western’ region. This raises the question of whether opening access to art via digital platforms automatically implies consumption by all. Thus, although there exists the potential for digital art spaces to democratize traditional tourism mobilities for ‘peripheral’ art lovers, it also presents challenges in its utilization and pedagogical aspects.

11.5 The Way Forward: A Critical Discussion

Digitisation has created a shift from the physical world to the virtual. As a result, displays of artwork have been opened up to a potentially infinite audience. From the perspective of art tourism, this means that people no longer have to physically visit galleries in order to view, experience, or consume art. G. Wayne Clough, former Secretary of the Smithsonian Institute, argues that the digitalisation of art increases democratization, education, and socialization (Enhuber 2015). Democratization means that the increased accessibility opens up the availability of art to those who otherwise, might never have experienced it. Education is linked to this; the easier it is to access art, the more likely it is that a consumer will be stimulated to learn more about it. The Google Art Project, for example, gives users the opportunity to consume and learn about art collections in museums around the world (Van der Schaaf 2017). Tools like this enable a new form of art tourism, where people no longer have to travel to particular museums in order to enjoy specific collections. Digitisation of educational material also means that it is easier to access.

With regard to education, this does not merely mean learning about art history, artists or techniques, but also learning new skills, which have been made possible by advances in technology. Added to this, many artists embrace new technology and use it to explore new areas. The exhibition *Techno Maori: Maori art in the digital age,* for example, showcased how modern art can reflect tradition while also making use of new technology. While conscious of the fact that we live in a globalized and electronic age, the exhibition also considered how faithful young Maori artists are to traditional art, and how they play with it, extend it or, in some cases ignore it (Turner 2005).

Socialization refers to the way in which interactivity and communication have been altered and enhanced by new media, particularly social media. Social media engagement means people can instantly share their favourite works with like-minded individuals and, by extension, can seek out new art by engaging with recommendations from trusted online acquaintances. From a practical point of view, digital technology can also assist art tourists who visit physical galleries, whether the art is digital or analogue. For example, mobile technology using live online updates can inform a visitor to an art gallery of the size of crowds at given spaces and given times, therefore avoiding "art kettling" (Mac An Airchinnigh et al. 2015).

While the wider spread of art and the ease of accessibility facilitated by digital technology is welcomed by many, for artists it creates various problems. Firstly, there is the issue of piracy. Art stored in digital form is easily replicated and can be shared instantly around the world. Although the sharing of art creates further exposure for an artist, helping to put his/her art in front of people who were previously unaware of it, it also leads to loss of income for the artist. From an ethical standpoint, this raises serious questions. The Digital Rights Management (DRM) software can be used to counteract this illegal activity to an extent, by inhibiting the use of the file except by those who have permission from the content provider (Koroglu and Tingoy 2011). However, while this can be useful for audio or video files, it is almost impossible to stop an image from being copied, manipulated, or otherwise appropriated. The ease of digital manipulation also brings with it concerns about authenticity. Resources can be posted online by anybody, and therefore, it is important to establish the trustworthiness of digital content (Zorich 2012). There have been cases where artwork has been put up for sale online, on sites such as eBay, which have resulted in investigations of fraudulent activity (Van der Schaaf 2017).

As well as nominative authenticity, there is also the question of expressive authenticity, as put forward by the art philosopher Denis Dutton. The cultural theorist Walter Benjamin argues that in the pre-digital age, any reproduction of an artwork devalues it by destroying its 'aura.' He believes that the original work exists within its own context, and must be viewed independently of a copy (Van der Schaaf 2017). While these criticisms are made of photography and printing, the same argument can be applied to digital art. There remains a school of thought which believes a work of art should be viewed in a place with no distractions, free from clutter, and that art viewed in cyberspace lacks the richness of the physical artefact (Enhuber 2015). Cultural heritage and customs must also be considered when establishing authenticity. For example, an art piece which stems from ancient traditions, has been passed down through generations and is specific to a certain place or people, loses much of its significance if viewed and experienced virtually, from a country in a different part of the world. While it may still be of interest, the motivation to view it in the first place often comes as the result of tourists wanting to know more about the places they are exploring. These are referred to as the traditional art spaces.

One factor to be conscious of when moving forward with digital art is the impermanence of digital data. As the Web regenerates and advances, digital data such as web pages disappear, affecting related links, images, and QR tag encodings. This may potentially lead to the loss of digital art works orthe loss of access to them (Mac An Airchinnigh et al. 2015).

11.6 Conclusion

Digital and virtual art have conspired to change the art world in many ways, offering new methods of creating, consuming, and sharing work. Perhaps the most significant change they have precipitated is the breaking down of barriers in terms of accessibility. Where previously art consumption was an exclusive activity dictated by considerations of finance, space, time and location, virtual museums open up art to a potentially global audience, unhindered by the need to travel or spend large sums of money. As a result, there are many implications for the tourism and travel sector, as people no longer necessarily have to physically visit museums and galleries in order to view exhibits. This plays an important role in the contemporary day where sustainability has become a central issue. Furthermore, virtual spaces act as valuable platforms when traditional modes of tourism are challenged, such as during global pandemics.

Traditionally, the movement of people in art spaces has been determined by those in charge of the museums, art galleries, or exhibition halls. The digitalisation of art, allied with changing consumer requirements, has altered this dynamic, changing mobility pattern for both the artist and art admirer. Virtual visitors can experience the atmosphere of a museum, walking around a faithful recreation of the physical space, enjoying everything from the ambience to the architecture. However, they do not have to stick to a predetermined direction of travel, experience exhibitions in a particular order or receive information given to them at specific times in the process. Therefore, there is a greater degree of freedom.

Added to this, digital art also offers more opportunities for interactivity. Users can collaborate on artworks, making changes, and adding their creative input. The ease of manipulation which interactivity offers has its downside too. The copying of digital art is almost entirely impossible to stop or police, and therefore, artists face the prospect of having their work stolen. Also, adjudging the authenticity of art becomes more complicated, as anyone can post something online anonymously. Authenticity is also an issue in terms of the experience of the art viewer or purchaser. While consuming art virtually can be just as satisfying, and in some cases can offer an enhanced experience, there is a feeling among some art scholars that something is lost when viewing an artwork outside of the real art space.

In terms of travel and tourism, the digitalisation of art has had a democratizing effect. The political and economic restraints, which affect tourism mobilities and art tourism are to some extent negated by the lack of travel requirement and the lower cost of digital art. This is particularly significant for Asian artists and art consumers, where travel restrictions, and the disparity of spending power between many Asian countries and the Western world, have traditionally led to a lower level of engagement with art. With no requirements for visas or expensive travel costs, Asian artists can exhibit their work to the world to raise the profile of non-Western art. Similarly, the field is broadened for Asian art consumers, who can easily and cheaply access art from which they were previously excluded.

The digital era, in general, has fundamentally changed the consumption of information. Owing to the limitless options, the twenty-first century consumer is argued to characteristically have a short attention span. Marketers have since had to significantly change their strategies to grab and retain the attention of the digital consumer. Similarly, consumers of digital art may generally lack the attention required to deeply engage with and understand the expression of art, especially as the environment within which digital art exhibits would be consumed (i.e., individual smartphones, laptops, TVs, etc.) may not provide the necessary context to induce meaningful understanding. Establishments and artists involved in the digitalisation and production of digital art may also be required to continually develop, to keep the consumer always entertained, as revenue would depend heavily on the interest and participation of consumers. This may, in turn, narrow our experience of art.

This research has evoked many questions in need of further investigation from both the perspective of artists and art consumers in general and particularly those in Asia. More empirical studies may be needed to explore how digitisation and digitalisation influence the artists' perspectives on the production and presentation of their work, on one hand. On the other hand, studies may focus on how digitisation and digitalisation may enhance consumers' experience of art. Further research might also help us to understand what are the issues related to the design of virtual spaces for presenting art works and how these spaces may increase the interaction between artists and consumers.

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Chapter 12
Contemporary Malaysian Pâtisserie: Tales of Asian Creativity Confined by Western Traditions

Kai-Sean Lee

Abstract What qualifies as "refined," "creative," and "extraordinary" in the culinary domain has long been subjugated by Old World inflections. Despite a growing respect and openness for Eastern cuisines especially those of Asia, on the international stage, the field of culinary arts still obliges to the standards, likings, and preferences of Old World traditions. This chapter follows the stories of some of the world's most renowned and respected Asian pastry chefs—The Malaysian World Pastry Team, the champions of the 2019 World Pastry Cup. Using the theoretical concepts of *ideological distortions* and *self-Orientalism*, this chapter narrates the oppressions that the Malaysian Pastry Team faced when creating and competing at the World Pastry Cup, a domain ruled and governed by Old World traditions. Moreover, this chapter specifically situates Asian pâtisserie in the broader spectrum of contemporary art, starting off with a fruitful discussion entitled "*is pastry art?*" This is then followed by the highlight of the chapter, featuring three tales of creativity that narrates the creative philosophies and considerations during the Malaysian chefs' creative process.

Keywords Culinary creativity · Artistic creativity · Chefs · Self-orientalism · Ideological distortions · Pastry arts

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This book chapter is dedicated to the many representatives of the Malaysian Pastry Team, especially to the late Chef Kong Yik Hong. May your soul rest in peace. Thank you for all your sacrifice and contributions to Malaysian pâtisserie. Your creative legacy lives on.

The 27th of January 2019 marks a historic day for Malaysian pâtisserie (the field of professional pastry arts). The Malaysian national anthem—*Negaraku*—was played in Lyon, France, as the Malaysian pastry team was crowned champions of the *Coupe Du Monde de la Pâtisserie* (The World Pastry Cup). It was the first time I have ever heard my national anthem played in a country other than my own. "They've done it!" I screamed, watching the whole event unfold in my graduate student apartment in Oklahoma, America. Three brilliant individuals whom I have had the pleasure of both meeting and working with have reached the absolute pinnacle of one of gastronomy's most prestigious international competitions. How did they do it? How could a country with almost no credentials and history associated with contemporary pâtisserie achieve such honor and eminence? Using the context of international culinary competitions (i.e., the World Pastry Cup), this chapter explores this discourse, alongside some greater issues lingering in the conversations of Asian artistic expressions and tourism.

Divided into seven sections, I start off with first, a brief background of the context of the World Pastry Cup, followed by a discourse that situates chefs as culinary tourism ambassadors. Second, a fruitful discussion questioning: "*is pastry art*?" is provided, advocating why pastry chefs are worthy bearers of the 'artist' title. Third, an overview of the 'Asian and Western divide' is discussed, introducing the theoretical concepts of ideological distortions and self-Orientalism. The fourth section details the research methods of the overall chapter. Fifth, I offer three 'tales of Asian creativity,' showcasing the artistic philosophies and considerations during the creative experience of Malaysian pâtisserie art. For dessert, I provide a critique discussing the creative controversies and power struggles that the World Champions faced as an Asian nation subjugated by Western ideologies and traditions. Last but not least, implications for culinary tourism are discussed.

12.1 The World Pastry Cup and Chefs as Culinary Tourism Ambassadors

Inaugurated in 1989, The World Pastry Cup is a biennial competition that welcomes twenty-one teams representing their nations with their respective culinary identities. Each nation goes through rigorous qualifying stages within their respective geographical regions prior to the main event, which includes fifty national selection trials and four major continental events. The core basis of the competition embraces pastry chefs as worthy title bearers as both artists and creators, celebrating the profession in extravagant fashion. The competition mandates each participating team to produce three 'artistic creations' made from sugar, chocolate, and hydric ice (see Fig. 12.1 for an example of a sugar artistic creation), accompanied by a buffet presentation that encompasses three modern tasting desserts for a panel of international

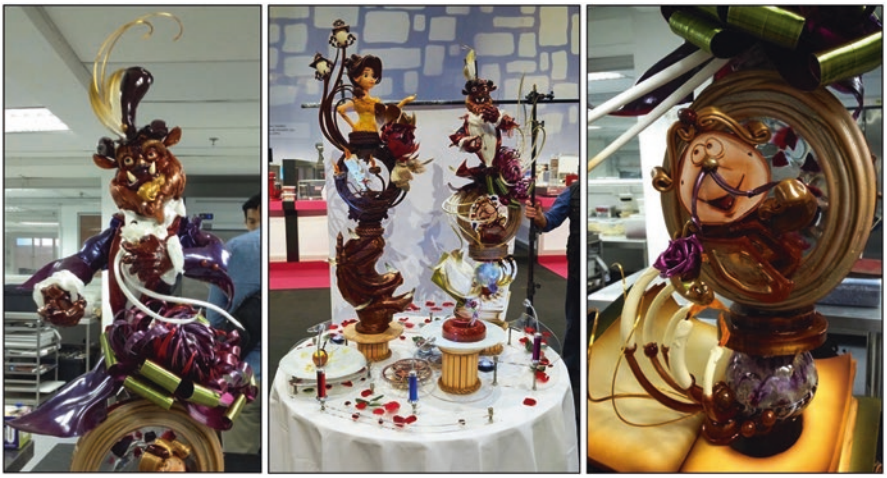


Fig. 12.1 Beauty and the Beast

judges. Ultimately, the competition represents a platform that brings out the chefs' artistic talents on a grand scale, as artistic elegance, creative appeal, and originality account for a whopping forty percent of the total judging criteria (Coupe du Monde Pâtisserie 2016, p. 9). Qualifying for this mega culinary event reflects a hallmark for many professionals within the field, as it allows competing chefs to carry their national identities onto a global stage, promoting their nation's culinary image through their performances.

Chefs who qualify for such prestigious competitions are no longer bounded by the simple representation of mere preparers of meals and nourishment, but are also influential figures who transpire culinary chauvinism and nationalism (Ferguson 2010). Recent studies have asserted that chefs are monumental icons whose efforts could energize or rejuvenate a destination's overall culinary scene (Abidin et al. 2017). Some have even labeled chefs as destination "culinary ambassadors," referring to them as icons that could influence tourists' overall visit experience (Chen et al. 2016, p. 157). Regardless whether they are situated in the flourishing fine-dining restaurant scene in Paris or New York City, or ingrained in the colorful street food sector of South East Asia, these humble culinary craftsmen are essential individuals who hold the key to the floodgates of memorabilia for visiting tourists. Yet, they remain secluded from scholastic attention. On this note, I stand alongside these works, advocating that chefs are beyond mere culinarians, but also eclectic talents who are capable of advancing a destination's culinary scene as well as its creative community.

But what makes these humble craftsmen such influential figures in the grand scheme of tourism? Recent scholars have argued that it is rooted in their unique creative capacities and artistic drive (Leschziner 2015; Page 2017; Zhang and Yu 2018). It is this branch of literature that puts forth an argument that shines the limelight on chefs as creative individuals capable of sparking culinary tourism development, identical to how local street artists establish and embellish a city's 'street aesthetics' with their artwork (Hansen and Flynn 2016; Tribe 2008). On this note, chefs' individual creative capacities have increasingly become the center of attention in recent scholarship (Horng and Hu 2008; Lee et al. 2019; Page 2017; Stierand and Dörfler 2012). However, none of these studies (which are published in English) focused on how Eastern chefs articulate their creative expressions, leaving the looming question of: "*what are the forces that drive Asian chefs' creative expressions*?" or more inquisitively, "*what are the forces that suppress or dictate Asian chefs' creative expressions*?" unanswered.

In brief, while existing studies bring to light the illusive outcomes of chefs' creativity and artistic expressions, however they also forgo the context in which their creativity transpires from. Hence, this book chapter aims to fill in this gap, by examining the creative and artistic considerations that the Malaysian World Pastry Team displays in their creative expressions.

12.2 Is Pastry Art?

Before we dive into the conversation of contemporary Asian pâtisserie, one essential discourse must first be settled, which is the question whether pastry making could ever be recognized as art. This discourse would spark polarized viewpoints among professional culinarians, and it is in this section's best interest to address this conundrum. To elucidate, I present an excerpt drawn from an old interview with Chef Amanda Jane Simcoe, a cuisine chef who specializes in the contemporary utilization of artisan cheeses in the emerging vibrant culinary scene of Oklahoma City.

Chef Amanda: *I hate pastry. I couldn't stand staying in a pastry kitchen.*
Kai-Sean: *Why is that?*
Chef Amanda: *Why? Because it is a science. You must follow rules.*
You have to measure.
You have to think about every single ingredient you put in a recipe.
It was all about chemistry.
You can't throw things into a pan and taste it as you go.
You cannot let your palate guide you.
You are always calculating and working with formulas.
It is where the left brainers belong, and I am all right brain.
I prefer being in the arts of cooking. Not the science.
You know?
Kai-Sean: *Chef… I am a pastry chef.*
Chef Amanda: …………

Ending in undesired silence, Chef Amanda does however, have her merits. Pastry is often characterized as a science, despite being situated in the field of culinary 'arts.' Across numerous interviews and conversations with chefs, I have witnessed many chefs taking a similar stance. Comments like: “pastry is not my thing”, “there are too many rules in pastry” and “I don’t have the patience for pastry” resonate from those conversations, leading many to question whether there is a great divide between cuisine and pâtisserie. However, an issue of credibility to these claims remains, which can be attributed to the fundamental values of culinary arts. Does not all foodmaking, regardless cuisine or pastry, operate on the similar grounds of science? Do they not both share the similar goal of turning the inedible edible? Do they not both apply culinary knowledge and scientific reasoning to food, turning the indigestible into the consumable and palatable? Despite these core principles remaining the same, there are still considerable debates among those within the profession, advocating that pastry belongs to the comforts of left-brainers, whilst cuisine remains in the realm of the right.

So why does the great divide remain? Perhaps the most prominent reason would be how the role of intuition guides a cuisine chef’s creative process. This is evident in the works of Stierand and Dörfler (2015) when investigating the creative process of European Michelin Star chefs. They assert that it is a chef’s prolonged engagement in the field of gastronomy that enables him/her to intuitively uncover hidden flavors “during moments of serendipitous idea generations” (p. 181). This intuitive process allows cuisine chefs to follow their own subjective train of thoughts, pursue inner feelings based on personal hunches, forgo systematic reasoning, and instead “evaluate ideas on the basis of their personal manifesto” (p. 182). Lee and Blum (2017) phenomenologically label this process as a chef’s intuitive way of “cooking inside their heads,” referring to how cuisine chefs imagine the taste and the mouthfeel of a dish before the actualization of the dish itself. It is for reasons like these, that cuisine is oftentimes referenced as an artistic process rather than a carefully calculated phenomenon of science. Take Smart-Grosvenor’s (1992) reflective piece for example:

> …when I cook, I never measure or weigh anything. I cook by vibration. I can tell by the look and smell of it… some of the recipes that people gave me list the amounts, but for my part, I just do it by vibration. Different strokes for different folks. Do your thing your way. (p. 294)

As portrayed, the role of intuition soundly reverberates in cuisine chefs in a myriad of ways. They take forms in different explanations, such as the instinctive mental process of “letting your palate guide you” (as Chef Amanda describes), “cooking inside my head” (Lee and Blum 2017), or via the “vibrations” during the act of cooking (Smart-Grosvenor 1992). These claims position cuisine chefs and their culinary creative processes as an embodied artistic experience, resembling closely to what I best describe as ‘cooking like you are dancing.’

On the other hand, Labensky, Martel, and Van Damme (2009), in their famed textbook entitled *On Cooking*: *A Textbook of Culinary Fundamentals,* delineate that pastry making requires a distinct mindset, where one is subjected to peculiar pastry ingredients, ‘accurate measurements,’ and ‘formulas’ (p. 926). Dominque Ansel, the renowned pastry chef who created the Cronut®, adds greater depth to this distinction, as he paid tribute to the elements of time, precision, and even humidity as ‘ingredients’ to pastry creations (Ansel 2014). All of these elements frame pâtisserie within a stricter set of rules, causing various scholars of gastronomy to recognize that the career routes of pastry chefs are profoundly more difficult as compared to those of other cookery categories (Ferguson and Zukin 1998*;* Leschziner 2015*)*. To this end, it appears that Chef Amanda may be right. Pastry is for the left-brainers. Or is she?

But who is to say that pastry is not worthy of intuitive fluidity and artistry? Pierre Hermê, one of the most revolutionary creators in the field of pâtisserie once noted that his inspirations are rooted to his intuitive subconsciousness. His is widely known as the chef 'who could hear recipes in his head,' and 'see ideas in blank spaces.' In his famed book—*Macaron*—he describes that "my work is a kind of architecture of taste and sensations, and my main aim is the pleasure of the person who tastes it" (Hermé 2011, p. 7). Hermé mentions little about the science behind pastry in his creative process, but rather he focuses more about the poetics and philosophy behind his artistic creations. In addition, the eminent Marie-Antoine Carême's once declared: "*The Fine Arts are five in number: painting, music, poetry, sculpture, and architecture—whereof the principal branch is confectionery*." Carême's declaration that pâtisserie (or as quoted, "confectionery") is a principal of the fine arts has long been backed by culinarians across time. Krondl (2011) for one, when describing pâtisserie, compares the domain to the likes of decorative arts fitting for jewelry stores or fine cabinetry, whilst its symphonic composition bears close semblance to those of a "virtuoso musical performance, perfectly crafted but also impermanent and fleeting" (p. 5). Furthermore, Caracostea (in Hermé 2015) adds that pastry is simply a distinct manifestation of design, and that the craft of a pastry chef is parallel to the likes of sensorial artists, which carries no less prestige when compared to those of architects, poets, or musicians. Addressing this issue, Lee et al. (2019) offer perhaps the most considerate of perspectives, asserting that the creative work of pâtisserie calls for both 'the scientist' and 'the artist' within, where 'the artist' is informed by scientific rationalism, while the 'scientist' is driven by one's innate desire to create. In short, Lee et al. (2019) assert that both the science and art are inseparable in pâtisserie, united insofar that "one cannot live without the other" (p. 7).

The viewpoints of pastry chefs as artistic figures is not a subject of new, instead it could be traced back to age-old traditions commissioned by European royalties in the fourteenth century. Back then, some of Europe's renowned pastry chefs and confectioners were not only known for dessert preparations at the end of royal feasts, but also for crafting edible sculptures and showpieces made from edible ingredients, most notably from sugar (Adams 2011; Kirsch 2004; Woloson 2002). These monumental artistries reflect a chef's exclusive standing and craftsmanship, separating them from ordinary cooks (Woloson 2002). These works suggest that pastry chefs have historically been seen as privileged craftsmen, who would flood the rich with sugar works and tasteful delights at the end of royal feasts.

Bringing this argument to an end, this monograph positions pâtisserie as a prestigious form of art. Therefore, pastry chefs should not be limited to the constrained view as craftsmen of science, but should rather be viewed as worthy title bearers as expressionistic artists.

12.3 Asians Versus the West: Ideological Distortions and Self-Orientalism

Why Asians Are Less Creative Than Westerners—a provocative book carefully pieced together by Aik Kwang Ng (2001) struck the bestseller list in Singapore. Ng's book hit the sweet spot in one of creativity literature's most heavily debated, yet deeply misunderstood problem that rifts Eastern and Western societies apart. The question whether Asians are significantly different in creative capacities have been heavily investigated across different contexts, prominently in business, management, and psychological domains (Morris and Leung 2010). Nonetheless, while Ng's book may have created some uneasiness amongst Asian readers, while uplifting the esteem of Westerners (Rudowicz and Ng 2003), it does however, raise several perspectives as to why such stereotypes exist. Even in the field of artistic expressions, Westerners tend to view Asian artistry as mere imitations and reproductions of the West, unworthy to be branded as novel or revolutionary (Morris and Leung 2010). Nonetheless, recent analysis have proven otherwise, suggesting that previous research proved nothing but a conspiracy that Asians are less creative than the West (e.g., Xie and Paik 2019). Morris and Leung's (2010, p. 315) statement asserts it best, stating that

> … there is nothing imitative about the avant-garde designs of Japanese New Wave architects or the frame-breaking cinematic techniques of Hong Kong directors such as John Woo and Wong Kar-wai, the Korean development of massive multiplayer online games, not to mention the outrageous work of contemporary Chinese performance artists such as Zhu Yu, Zhang Huan, and Cai Guo-Qiang and the edgy design trends they have inspired… A serious look at Eastern and Western artistic contributions makes plain the need for a more dynamic account of cultural influence that can explain the prevailing cultural tendencies as well as the conditions that suspend or reverse them.

This Asian/Western discourse is also prominent in international culinary competitions. Take the *Bocuse d'Or* for example (a biennial culinary championship), only two Asian representatives have ever stepped on the podium—Chef Noriyuki Hamada of Japan in 2013 and Chef William Wai of Singapore in 1989—both winning bronze prizes. Similarly, in the World Pastry Cup, only two Asian countries—Japan (with 2 golds, 7 silvers, and 1 bronze) and most recently Malaysia (with 1 gold) has ever reached the podium—while the rest of the West continues to dominate the remaining ranks (37 total golds, silvers and bronzes) with France alone, winning a total of 8 golds and 1 silver. These skewed results are perhaps explained best by Ferguson (2010), stating that international culinary competitions remain "a noticeably French inflection… Should we expect otherwise? French culinary techniques and base preparations continue to play a big role in the training of chefs around the world" (p. 106). In similar light, Wood et al. (2015) investigated the New Zealand Junior Pastry Team's experience at the 2013 Junior Pastry World Cup in Italy, and found that these issues are attributed to the Eurocentric taste preferences that favor those of European nations, as unfamiliar flavor profiles and artistic portrayals of non-Euro entities may inopportunely be perceived as overly exotic or unrefined. This implies that the legacies of Western nations' (especially those of the Old World) have left a hefty imprint on the global perception of taste.

The domination of Western and Eurocentric taste preferences forms a distortion that inevitably governs and dictates non-Western chefs' expressions of creativity. Pâtisserie is not excluded from this issue, as it remains a European (mostly French) dominant field of artistic expression. It instills a subconscious belief that beauty is not in the eye of the beholder, but rather constructed and subjugated by the West. To further explicate this, the theoretical frameworks of *ideological distortions* and *self-Orientalism* are used as the theoretical basis for interpreting the Malaysian Pastry Team's creative endeavors in the World Pastry Cup.

12.3.1 Ideological Distortions and Self-Orientalism

Ideology, in Storey's (2018) interpretation, is the creation of a shadowing distortion, one that is created by a dominant group to intentionally distort or conceal the public opinions of the powerless, resulting in a 'false consciousness' that dictates the powerless' view of reality. This train of thought, is one of the fundamental core beliefs of classical Marxism, which Marx and Engels (2009) describe as a cultural phenomenon in which a dominant class rules prevailingly "as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas," and thus paving a false consciousness that governs the ideas and perceptions of reality (p. 9).

Orientalism is a form of ideological distortion. First coined by Edward Said (1985), Orientalism is best described as a Western conception of the 'Orient' (the East), pertaining mainly to Asia and the Middle East. According to Said, Orientalism is a European creation, used to depict the bond between Europe and the East, more specifically in the way the East "has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (p. 1-2). In other words, Orientalism can be seen as a distorted reality, one in which the West has exercised its power over the Orient (Storey 2018). This puts forward the idea that the culture of the West is "rational, developed, humane, superior" while the Orient is contrastingly "aberrant, undeveloped, inferior" (Said 1985, p. 300). In short, Orientalism's fundamental premise asserts that the Orient is a construction originating from the Western gaze, in which Western values and practices are considered the norm, while the East represents the *Other*.

Self-Orientalism on the other hand, is essentially a reconfiguration and extension of Said's original conceptualization of Orientalism. It proposes that Orientalism is not just simply a Western creation, "but rather that the Orient itself participates in its construction, reinforcement and circulation" (Yan and Santos 2009, p. 297). In other words, self-Orientalism recognizes that the Orient is not a passive member in the relationship with the West, but is rather an active participant in its own social construction (Dirlik 1996). This interpretation takes on a hegemonic view on Orientalism, referring to a condition in which a domineering class exercises the ruling of society through 'intellectual and moral leadership' (Gramsci 2009, p. 75).

In line with this, self-Orientalism can be seen as a negotiated accord, where the Orient, seeks to capitalize on the Western gaze in a consensual, yet self-benefiting fashion (Dirlik 1996).

In short, the key theoretical argument presented here, is that while Said's original conception claims that Orientalism is a Western ideological distortion that accentuates the Othering of the East, self-Orientalism on the other hand, acknowledges that the East is not only aware of this process, but is also using Orientalism in a reflexive discourse to evoke self-empowerment. While the theory has been utilized considerably in tourism studies to evaluate the self-Orientalism phenomenon (e.g., Pan et al. 2017; Shim et al. 2015; Yan and Santos 2009), this book chapter offers an extension of this discourse, by understanding how a specialized group of culinary tourism ambassadors, portray their nation's pâtisserie identity on one of gastronomy's most prestigious culinary competitions—the World Pastry Cup.

12.4 Notes From a Researcher's Journey

This study draws empirical evidence from personal research notes, interview transcripts, material artifacts, and a plethora of creative narratives from my professional escapades with the Malaysian Pastry Team (Lee 2018). A total of sixteen possible participants were identified, nine of which agreed to partake in this study, which collectively represented Malaysia at the World Pastry Cup from 2007 to 2019. This inquiry have persisted for three years and is still continuing, in which constant contact with each participant was kept through text, emails, professional encounters, and further interviews (both virtually and in person). Following Dörfler and Stierand's (2019) criteria of "investigating the extraordinary," these individuals were selectively chosen for this investigation as they represent an elite group of professionals who not only have never been studied before, but also because they reflect prime subjects of extraordinary creative capacities.

12.5 Tales of Asian Creativity

In the remainder of this book chapter, I present three tales of creativity as experienced by my sample of extraordinary Malaysian pastry artists. In particular, I flesh out the inspirations and thought processes that go into their creations, and the ways they are innately subjugated by the tastes and preferential structures of Western traditions, which dictates their creative fluidity in the expression of what is perceived as 'Asian arts.' Each tale revolves around two types of creations that carry resonant meanings in their roles as chefs: *desserts* and *showpieces*. Both these creations fuel a pastry chef's innate desire to create. Yet, they are two distinct outcomes that fulfill different creative yearnings and require different creative considerations.

Desserts are by definition, the core purpose and soul of a pastry chef. To the Malaysian pastry extraordinaires, desserts embody the "rightful spirit of chefs," resembling "a chef's ultimate weapon." The creative process of desserts involves the conscious ability to synthesize a network of attributes that includes, but is not limited to, taste, temperature, moisture levels, viscosity, texture combinations, flavor combinations, and aromatic infusions; all parceled together by an overarching story given by the creator. It is the ability to meet a balanced point between these multilevel complexities that results in a "harmonious composition," which separates the "extraordinaire" pastry chefs from the ordinary (Lee et al. 2019).

Showpieces on the other hand, are ornamental and monumental centerpieces made from food ingredients, most notably from chocolate and sugar. However, the functionality of showpieces draws much controversy, as they solely serve to please the eye through display and are not meant to be eaten. On this note, many chefs admittedly claim that showpieces are excessively lavish items, which simply serve as vehicles that fuel a pastry chef's creative narcissism. Yet, it is an essential medium that resonates in their career world, connecting them closely to the personification of an artist (see Fig. 12.1 for an example of a sugar showpiece). Chef Loi Ming Ai, champion of the 2019 World Pastry Cup, expresses that showpieces despite their notoriety, represent the analogy of "returning home," resembling a sanctuary for chefs to return to, rest, and express. In Chef Loi's own words:

> I will always return to it (referring to showpieces)… It's like after a long day at work, or a long spree of travel, I would then return back to working and playing with it… Just like returning home. It's like a reunion with your family. Whenever I open the front doors of home, I feel welcomed… If you remove showpieces away from my job, I would probably not continue in this profession, because you basically have just taken my home away.

Having explained the two essential artforms that the Malaysian pastry artists engage in, the remaining subsections present three creative stories, followed by a critical reflection of their thought processes that showcases the ideological distortions and self-Orientalism inflicted by Western mentalities and traditions.

12.5.1 Tale One: 'The Drizzle'—Illuminating the Curse of the 'Enchanted Flower'

The "*Enchanted Flower*" derives from the 2015 World Pastry Cup, in which the Malaysian Pastry Team was ranked fourth in the world. This team involved four outstanding artists, Chefs Tan Wei Loon, Otto Tay, Lawrence Bobo, and Team Manager Jess Chiam. Together, they attempted to bring a Disney classic to life—*Beauty and the Beast*. The team reanimated the fictional characters of *Bell, The Beast, Cogsworth,* and *Lumière*, while incorporating various supporting aesthetic elements from the folklore, such as a storybook from *The Beast's* library, *The Beast's* castle, and of course, the enchanted rose that cursed the castle (see Fig. 12.1). The entire creative journey was built on extensive research on the Disney movie elements, chasing down the essence of a story to ultimately retell it to an audience through the medium of pastry.

One of the most notable experience from this story is Chef Wei Loon's discovery of a new glazing technique—'*The Drizzle*'—for his *entremet*, in which he describes at that point of time, as the "best creation of my life." An *entremet* is a modernistic, multi-layered mousse dessert with different textured components, often finished with a mirroring glaze. The glaze is the first point of interaction that a consumer has upon setting eyes on an *entremet*. It is the glaze's shine, color, and equally weighted distribution that aesthetically encapsulates the dessert as whole, resembling an invitation for consumers to slice through the dessert. Understanding this concept, Wei Loon's *entremet* was named the *Enchanted Flower,* with the folklore's story taking precedence. He labels his new glazing technique as '*The Drizzle,*' which has an elegant charm and a captivating striation shine (see Fig. 12.2). The technique was born by half accident, as it came to life ever so perfectly when several unplanned circumstances occurred at the right time and place. Chef Wei Loon narrates:

> I would say I was lucky to create the glaze because it was an accident… I've tried many ways to make the effect happen… Fortunately, I was using a doughnut-shaped mold. It had to be a doughnut shape with curved edges… If I was using a flat-surfaced mold, 'The Drizzle' would never have been born… Also, I was inspired by an old sugar casting technique, where we flush in a contrasting color into a jug filled with another color… So I flushed one colored glaze into another in a jug, and glazed my cake… I couldn't remember exactly how 'The Drizzle' appeared. Maybe it was because the pastry room was too cold that I started to shiver… and then it 'drizzled' and formed naturally… Because of the curves on the doughnut, it flowed and the distance between the two contrasting colors rendered a natural uniform pattern… all because my wrist was just going left to right in a shivering body motion.

Despite its accidental origins, the aesthetic qualities of *The Drizzle* were not only praised by the judges of the World Pastry Cup in 2015, but also by the entire pastry community worldwide. Many, since then, have replicated *The Drizzle*, giving Wei Loon the utmost of pride and satisfaction, as he claims that it is an honor to have people adopting something that he discovered. Digging deeper into the conversation, I learned that Wei Loon's pride in the creation of *The Drizzle* is due to its technicalities and artistic qualities, as he analogizes the breakthrough to the likes of "finding a new way to paint on a canvas."

Hidden in this tale lies the underlying subjugation of Western influences, specifically from the World Pastry Cup's host nation—France. *Beauty and the Beast* is a classic fairy tale authored originally by French novelist Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve, under the initial named *La Belle et la Bête* in 1740. The *Enchanted Flower* reflects a reanimation the *Cursed Rose* from the French novel, representing nothing but a western conception that holds no connection to Malaysia or the Orient. It showcases Disney's globalized presence and domineering power in the East, as the Western folkwore was used as a vessel to communicate an Asian's creation of *The Drizzle*. Chef Wei Loon himself recognizes this, as he explained that he needed to showcase *The Drizzle* in a manner that is recognizable to the rest of the world, especially the powerhouses of the West. By attaching a Western element to his creation, he achieved the aforementioned, simulating the Orientalization of his creative self.

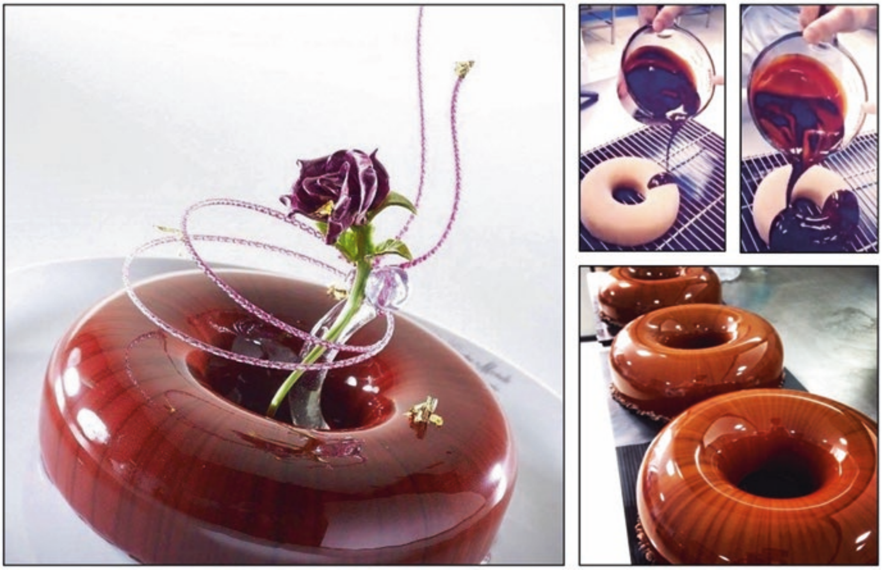


Fig. 12.2 ‘The Drizzle’ and the Enchanted Flower

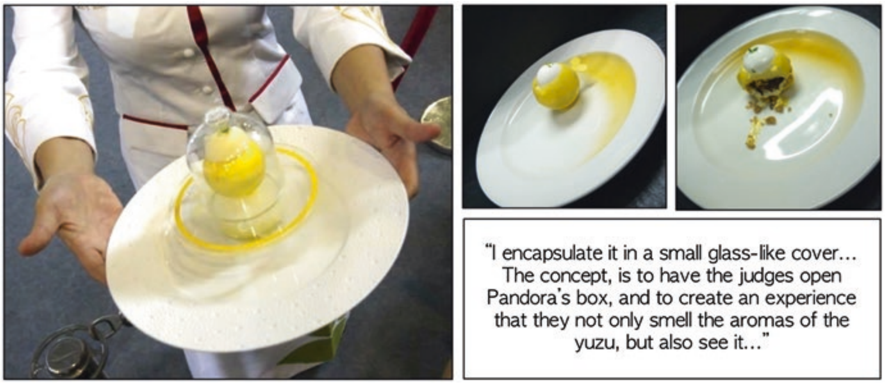
12.5.2 Tale Two: Pandora’s Box

Pandora’s Box is another Western folklore (Greek), resembling a mythical story of a parcel that is never meant to be opened. According to the folklore, opening *Pandora’s Box* would unleash unspeakable evil upon mankind. But of course, *Pandora’s* curiosity would soon get the better of her, for she opened the box, cursing all of humanity. *Pandora’s Box* is the perfect representation of mankind’s curiosity that mirrors the theory of Schrödinger’s cat, depicting that one would never know the true content within the box unless one opens it.

World Pastry Champion Chef Otto Tay’s rendition of *Pandora’s Box* was rather different from its mythological origins, for he (thankfully) had no intentions to unleash unspeakable evil. Instead, he played on the emotions and curiosity behind an enclosed dessert, teasing and enticing his consumers with a sealed cover. His creation had an innate story, aimed to fascinate through an “emotional and experiential touch.” Otto explained that it was his intention to “play with one’s senses” and to “tickle one’s emotion,” as he narrates:

> The entire idea is that I have a plate with shaved dry ice at the bottom, and I will pour some hot yuzu puree onto the dry ice, activating a mist… I encapsulate it in a small glass-like cover… The concept is to have the judges open Pandora’s Box, and to create an experience that they not only smell the aromas of the yuzu, but also see it (see Fig. 12.3).

Apart from the story attached to *Pandora’s Box*, Otto never lost sight on the importance of flavor. He remained persistent to showcase Malaysian native ingredients to the world, as he experimented with Malaysian *Banana Emas*, attempting to capture its perfect texture, temperature, taste, aromas, and appeal. He paid close attention to



"I encapsulate it in a small glass-like cover… The concept, is to have the judges open Pandora's box, and to create an experience that they not only smell the aromas of the yuzu, but also see it…"

Fig. 12.3 Pandora's Box

all the "wow factors" from past winners of the World Pastry Cup, benchmarking his creation to those who won the title of 'best plated dessert.' He recognizes that on each plate, there is a "main actor," and those surrounding the main actor should "support and enhance," without stealing the limelight from the "star" of the dish. Using *Pandora's Box* as an exemplar of these principles, he had the following to say,

> …We were very happy that we won the title for best plated dessert of Asia! We used our own Malaysian Banana Emas. Then yuzu, because Japan won the best plated dessert in the world using that ingredient… we were curious about how Japan utilized it… we wanted to learn from the best… and I still remember the first time I tried it, it was like a hybrid flavor profile of mandarin, passion fruit, lime and lemon… it was so refreshing. And that's why we wanted to use it to support and enhance our Banana Emas, it was never meant to be used as the main character, otherwise we would have lost our identity as Malaysians. We still used our bananas as our main actor.

Pandora's Box reflects a dessert that showcases a harmonious representation of "main actors" and "supporting enhancers." It embodies the spirit of nationalism owed to Malaysian native ingredients, thoughtfully combined with supporting flavors of other nations. More uniquely, it possesses a story that interacts with its consumers, packaged in an extravagant fashion. The importance of Malaysian flavors is highlighted in this creative tale. However, just like the tale of the *Enchanted Flower*, it is encapsulated both literally and figuratively by a Western story. The Greek mythical representation of *Pandora's Box* was intentionally applied to invite curiosity and attention, designed and dramatized purposefully by Chef Otto's creative desires. Yet, similar to our previous tale, it remains inflicted by a formidable Western force, a force the Asian creator is aware of, yet submits to.

12.5.3 Tale Three: Ratatouille and La Senteur

In 2017, the Malaysian Team reanimated yet another Disney animated film—*Ratatouille*—a Parisian culinary story revolving around a rat named Remy with big ambitions of becoming a chef. The film's storyline had a heartwarming narrative, which climaxed using the ideologies of a French comfort food. In short, Remy was able to capture the heart of a highly influential restaurant critic, by preparing one of France's most humble dishes—*ratatouille* (a stew of fruit vegetables). Attuned to this concept, Chefs Lim Chin Kheng, Chong Ko Wai (A.K.A. Breadpitt), Yap Kean Chuan, and Tan Wei Loon, tapped into the many symbols and fantasies of the Disney film, actualizing it on the world stage.

The showpiece clearly captured the essence of the movie (see Fig. 12.4), but it was the plated dessert—*La Senteur*—that stole the limelight at the World Pastry Cup. French for 'the scent,' *La Senteur* was a remake of Pierre Hermé's revolutionary macaron flavor—the *Ispahan*. To the eyes of many, the *Ispahan* resembled a "flawless" French concoction constructed based off on lychee, rose and raspberry notes discovered over two decades ago (see Hermé 2011, pp. 71–72). Using the *Ispahan* as an inspiration, Chef Chin Kheng embraced the risk of reanimating a flavor that is near and dear to many Western traditionalists. Committed to the task, he began by first gaining a deeper appreciation to what makes the *Ispahan* flavor "flawless," from which he deduced right down to its elegant "perfume" attributed to its harmonious composition of lychee, rose, and raspberry fragrances. Knowing that he had to personalize it, he began deconstructing the components of the *Ispahan* into smaller puzzle pieces, and then reconstructing them intricately through different elements. His finalized version revealed a new concoction that respected the traditions of the French, yet embodied his own innovative touch. The final dessert contained elements of raspberry sorbet, almond biscuit sponge, lychee granita, lychee jelly, rose parfait, and a cheeky addition of Malaysian kalamansi limes.

In addition, Chef Chin Kheng understood that a storytelling element was required for *La Senteur*. Learning from his past predecessors, he set his mind on creating an emotional bridge that connects the flavors of *Ispahan* to the hearts of his consumers. Through much devotion, experimentation, and constructive feedback, he fixated upon the idea of a "gift opening experience." He crafted a *Present Box* by dehydrating a meringue with lychee and kalamansi lime flavors, forming a streaked cylindrical shell that invites consumers to tear it open, only to be introduced to the vibrant layers of his rendition of the *Ispahan* (see Fig. 12.5). The entire process involved much imagination and experimentation, alongside numerous critiques and reflections within himself and with his teammates. In essence, he made sure that his ideas were filtered with constructive criticisms from professionals around him, while ensuring that justice was done to the original work of Pierre Hermé.

However, he did not stop there, as his aim was to bring the *Ispahan* to a new level. He turned to a Dutch lychee liqueur to ignite and intensify the fragrance of the *Ispahan*. Hence, the name *La Senteur* came to life. His obsession with adding alcohol into traditional desserts is highly noteworthy in his creative process, as he claims

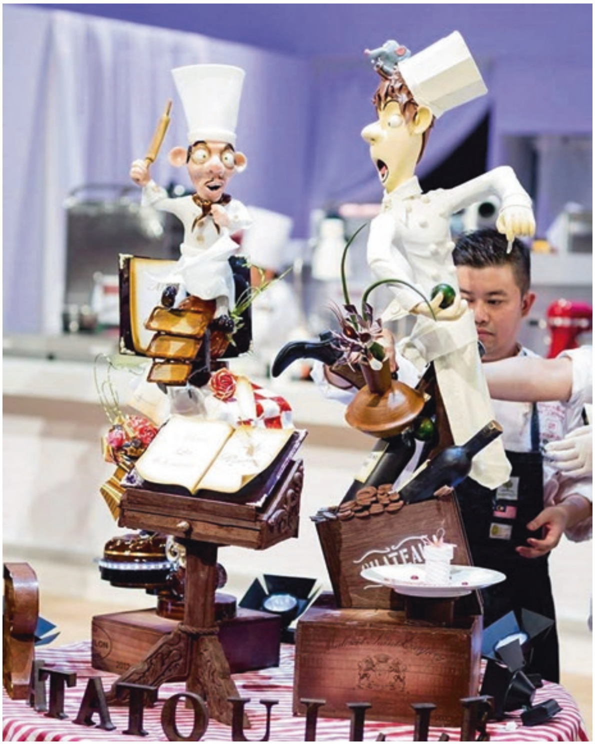


Fig. 12.4 Ratatouille and Chef Lim Chin Kheng

that "alcohol is just a magical ingredient that does wonders," and every time he uses it, a whole new "flavor note erupts… It's just full of surprises." Using lychee liquor as his "poison of choice," he achieved what he dreamed of, which is to take an idolized recipe to a new level through his own personal touch. Today, *La Senteur* serves as a hallmark for Malaysia's pastry chefs, a benchmark for others to follow, as it was recognized as one of the best plated desserts to have ever been presented at the World Pastry Cup in 2017.

Despite being a true hallmark for Malaysia's pastry journey, the creative story of *La Senteur* however, fails to showcase any Malaysian traits except for the nationality of the creator. Not even the ingredients used were true representations of Malaysia, as raspberries cannot grow in the nation's tropical climate, while lychees and roses are not Malaysian staples, but rather staples of the neighboring country, Thailand. Even the "magical ingredient" of lychee liqueur is a product of the Netherlands. The only 'Malaysian' aspect of this dish is the creator's small addition of kalamansi lime. The creator argued that he was aware of the lack of national representation, but rationalized that it was part of the "rules of the game," as he did not want to bear the risk of presenting flavors that might be too unfamiliar or bizarre to the West and the rest of the world.

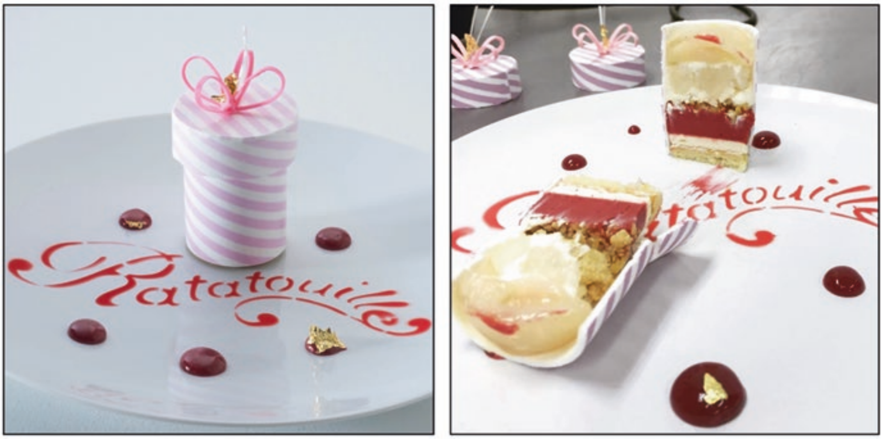


Fig. 12.5 La Senteur

12.6 Subjugated by Old World Traditions?

Up to this point, I have situated pâtisserie within the ranks of the arts, introduced the Asian and Western divide, and showcased three exemplary creative stories from the Malaysian Pastry Team's collective journey in the World Pastry Cup. In this final section, I analyze the key forces that drive each creative story's creations and the underlying philosophies, with the aim of painting a clearer image of what occurs inside the minds of some of Malaysia's finest artists and producers of contemporary pâtisserie. It is here that I present the lingering question: "Has Malaysian pâtisserie truly evolved, or has it dissolved into the dominion of Western beliefs and traditions?"

The three tales of creativity, clearly portray that pâtisserie in the eyes of exceptional Malaysian artists are highly theatrical works of art. Their stories oftentimes revolve around a central theme inspired by the many folklores and story lines of Western popular culture. To reiterate, the discovery of *The Drizzle* was brought to life using the *Cursed Rose* from *Beauty and the Beast*. The flavors of Malaysia's *Banana Emas* was encased using the symbolism of *Pandora's Box* borrowed from Greek mythology. And the birth of *La Senteur* was a reanimated recipe of French pastry revolutionist, Pierre Hermé, and brought to life using the French influenced film of *Ratatouille*. All three stories carry noticeable representations of European cultures, despite originating from both the hands and minds of Malaysian creators. Reading critically between the lines, one could then see the European infiltration of their creative drives. *Beauty and the Beast* was a classic French fairy tale originally named *La Belle et la Bête*; *Pandora's Box* was derived from the epic poetry of the *Iliad* written by the Greek poet, Homer; and *Ratatouille* echoed the reflection of Parisian restaurant culture. The reason behind each theme selection was rather simple, which was to portray a familiar image that would appear recognizable to the many judges on the international stage, fearing that the folklore and stories of their own national and cultural origins might fail to do so. While culinary competitions, especially one as well-respected as the World Pastry Cup, represent prestigious platforms that allow nations to showcase their national identities and values (Ferguson 2010; Wood et al. 2015), this essay has also shown that the platform remains a celebration of European superiority in taste and cultures, at least for those who wish to reach the podium.

Are desserts named '*La Senteur*' and '*Pandora's Box'* true reflections of Asian arts and culture? Are the ingredients of raspberries, lychees, and rose reflective of Malaysian staples? Are the themes of *Ratatouille*, and *Beauty and the Beast* accurate representations of Asian media and cultures? Clearly, they are not, but rather strategic decisions to win the hearts of the more dominant and prevailing forces of the West. Even the national flavor profiles were strategically selected, so that they are not overly-exotic flavors that may horrify those of Eurocentric tongues (i.e., the use of *Banana Emas* in *Pandora's Box*). Not to mention, these flavor profiles are still supported with the more 'refined' and familiar flavors that are appreciated by the masses (e.g., the use of yuzu in *Pandora's Box*, a Japanese staple which has long been accepted as a refined ingredient). Chef Chin Kheng, creator of *La Senteur* himself admittedly adds: "It's a shame. Malaysia has a lot of wonderful flavors. But I don't think we would ever see them out there in Coupe du Monde (World Pastry Cup)… It is too big of a risk to take."

The many representatives of the Malaysian Pastry Team are well awared of the Old World European ideologies that they must be in compliance with in order to remain competitive in the competition. They have accepted the Old World tastes as "the rules of the game," which showcases that the World Pastry Cup echoes the social conceptualization of ideological distortions and self-Orientalism. The competition remains an avenue that promotes and upholds the ideas and preferences of a dominant ideology—the West. In this case, the Malaysian team has knowingly accepted the distorted 'false consciousness' that is bestowed upon them. The self-Orientalism in their creative considerations is clearly present, as the Malaysian World Pastry chefs are not only aware, but have also accepted that they are indeed 'in need of the West' (Said 1985). This prompts them to engage in an active negotiating process when developing their pâtisserie creations, weighing the values of the West against the values of their own nationality (Dirlik 1996; Yan and Santos 2009). This has ironically allowed them to stand today as champions of the world. It is through this strategy and mode of expression, that has dissolved Malaysian pâtisserie into the dominion of the West.

12.7 Conclusion

This book chapter has illustrated the rich details, stories, and meanings associated with the artistic expressions of these culinary ambassadors. It sheds light on why a chef's creative capacity has increasingly become an alluring spectacle for consumers and culinary tourists alike (Chen et al. 2016). The chefs investigated in this manuscript are not only regarded as eminent artists in the field of pâtisserie, but are also influential figures who can channel culinary chauvinism and nationalism through their works of art (Ferguson 2010). Past studies have showed that chefs (especially those of this book chapter's stature) are part of a creative ecosystem that can energize or rejuvenate a destination's overall culinary scene (Abidin et al. 2017; Chen et al. 2016; Zhang and Yu 2018). Therefore, tourism bodies, businesses, as well as supporting businesses should strongly consider elucidating these elite chefs' creative considerations as communicative marketing tools to promote local culinary cultures. In this final section, using Yan and Santos' (2009) analytical study as an example, I detail the schematic potential that self-Orientalism has on Malaysian pâtisserie and tourism.

12.7.1 Implications for Culinary Tourism

For the most part of this book chapter, the idea of self-Orientalism has been put forward as a hegemonic and discourteous conception that suppresses Asian values over those of the West. Nonetheless, it does however, have its positive horizons as well. Consider Yan and Santos' (2009) analytical work on China's 2003 tourism promotional video—"*CHINA FOREVER*". The promotional video captured the essence of China by playing to the Western gaze through the self gaze of self-Orientalism. In brief, the promotional video aimed to lessen the fear that many non-Asian tourists might have when considering a visit to China. This was achieved through a carefully constructed video that deliberately portrayed China as a soothing, "timeless, unchangeable… mythical, [and] perennial" destination of the East, possessing a twist with upbeat and modern representations that signify strong developmentalism (Yan and Santos 2009). This in turn, conjointly represented a strategy that both evoked a romanticized "fantasy of China's past, as well as a response to China's pursuit of modernity… ultimately, providing an essentialized picture of Chinese culture" (p. 310).

Learning from this exemplary case, restaurant associations, tourism ministries, place-making authorities, and even agricultural stakeholders, could all utilize these extraordinary chefs' self-Orientalism stories to their advantage and craft new promotional materials that best showcase the nation's pâtisserie arts. For example, native ingredients and their agricultural roots could all be rebranded to draw in tourism development. Malaysia truly carries an abundance of local delicacies that have not been well-recognized or well-respected by other countries. These items, such as Malaysian *Banana Emas, kalamansi limes*, and even the locally grown *cacao trees* and *liberica coffee cherries* all deserve greater attention in the larger spectrum of culinary arts, and thus deserve the continual efforts of tourism bodies to attract foreign attention. In addition, the stereotypically aversive flavors of Malaysia (e.g., *chempedak, pandan,* and *mung bean)* could all be repackaged and promoted in creative ways for the Western gaze by borrowing of Western representations.

Suggestively, these extraordinary culinary ambassadors could be utilized to lend a badge of credibility to the rest of the world to promote and minimize these aversions through thoughtful self-Orientalization.

All in all, this book chapter has helped fill in a gap by sounding the silent voice that professional chefs innately possess in their voyage of showcasing their respective food narratives and identities. Having won the World Pastry Cup in 2019, many countries, especially serious competitors from the West, would definitely be studying the strategies, techniques, and ingredients used by Malaysia in their recent triumph. Hence, it "seems rather clear that neither the East nor the West can claim the moral high ground in dealing with each other" (Ng 2001, p. 206).

12.7.2 Final Words

Although Malaysia has touched gold, one must still question whether it is truly an expression of Malaysian arts. Living in the moment, I am, and always will be ecstatic with the result, as I remain a proud Malaysian pastry chef who has had the utmost of honor working alongside the 2019 champions. However, I am still waiting patiently for the day that my childhood memories of *gula melaka*, *herbal grass jellies*, and *cendol* are displayed on the world stage, reanimated using the rich and varied symbolism of Chinese, Indian, and Bumiputra arts and folklore. As a New World entity, we have already achieved the unimaginable. Now that our voices have been heard, the bell cannot be unrung. This is the perfect time to change the world's perception of Asian cultural arts and values. Let this book chapter be a conversation starter to the many Malaysian and Asian artists who seek to make a noticeable impact on the global conversation of food and taste. We have achieved the unthinkable and it is time to take it further! May this essay be a fruitful beginning to a long and productive dialogue on Asian contemporary pâtisserie in practice, theory, and creativity.

Acknowledgement I express my extreme gratitude to the many representatives of Malaysian World Pastry Team, featuring chefs Wei Loon Tan, Otto Tay, Lawrence Bobo, Chong Ko Wai (Breadpitt), Loi Ming Ai, Lim Chin Kheng, Lau Hwei Min, Yap Kean Chuan, and Jess Chiam. Thank you for all your insights during this research journey, as well as all that you have done for our country's pâtisserie scene. *Malaysia Boleh!*

Disclaimer All names and images included in this book chapter were approved with signed consent from respective owners.

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Chapter 13
Multisensory restaurants, Art and Tourism – Case study on Ultraviolet by Paul Pairet

Anne-Claire Yemsi-Paillissé

Abstract The article aims to study a new generation of restaurants: the multisensory restaurants, currently offered by half a dozen of high-end gastronomic establishments throughout the world. These establishments offer a fixed menu dinner in which the five senses of the guests are stimulated thanks to a complex technical, technological and theatrical layout. The focus will be held on the pioneer restaurant Ultraviolet owned by Chef Paul Pairet, and opened in 2012 in Shanghai, China. This exploratory research work will focus on two areas. First, possible parallels can be drawn between the multisensory restaurants proposals and some current social practices, such as the related tourism activities. Ultraviolet's proposals are offering a sensible way of travel through both Asian and European *terroirs*, thanks to an immersive gastronomic experiment in virtual reality. Then, some of Ultraviolet's proposals can be considered not only as products for consumption, but also as artistic productions. As these immersive proposals favour the interaction and the stimulation of the guests' minds, they are also 'food for thought' that convey an artistic thinking and message. The innovative restaurant in Shanghai appears as a multisensory establishment that offers a new kind of gastronomic, touristic and aesthetic travel experience.

Keywords Multisensory restaurant · High-end cooking · Shanghai · Virtual tourism · Gastrotourism

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13.1 Introduction

Gastronomy has an increasingly significant role in current tourism development strategies. In Asia, Singapore recently started its process of requesting UNESCO World Heritage Status for its traditional "hawker food". Since 2013, Asia's 50 Best ranking delivers an annual snapshot of the opinions and experiences from worldwide experts on contemporary Asian high-end cooking. Asia's 50 Best is thus becoming a key contributor to the tourism branding strategies of Asian countries, regions and cities today. A recent international YouGov survey (www.yougov.co.uk/topics/food/articles-reports/2019/03/12) found that Chinese and Japanese food respectively occupy the second and the third places in the most popular cuisines worldwide. Such examples indicate the growing place of gastronomy in Asia.

This article aims to study a new generation of restaurants – the multisensory restaurants, which currently amount to half a dozen of high-end gastronomic establishments throughout the world – that offer a fixed menu dinner, in which the five senses of the guests are stimulated, thanks to a complex technical, technological and theatrical lay-out. Among the six multisensory restaurants opened today in the world, half of them are located in Asia, specifically in Japan and in China. The study will focus on one of the first establishments of this genre: Ultraviolet, which was opened in 2012 in Shanghai, China by Chef Paul Pairet.

The major innovation proposed by the multisensory restaurants relies on enhancing gastronomic experiences through virtual reality. The virtual immersion – based on the broadcasting of sounds, images and scents that accompany high-end dishes and wines – invites the guests to a sensory journey comparable to the experiments proposed by some virtual tourism products. However, in a multisensory dining experience, the immersive dimensions are balanced out – and often overcome – by the genuine and concrete dimensions of the food and wines that are served. Hence, the experience goes further than a mere virtual, mental and intellectual journey.

As it plunges the guests into an aestheticized trip through several *terroirs* and food cultures across the world, this study will answer the following question: "How is Ultraviolet proposing a kind of aestheticized gastro-tourism experiment in virtual reality?" This paper proposes an exploratory approach on an innovative gastronomic trend, with the following two assumptions: first of all, possible parallels can be drawn between the multisensory restaurant experience and contemporary social experiences such as virtual tourism and luxury gastro-tourism. Then, as the multisensory restaurants are generating an innovative and creative gastronomic language, the dishes may convey a form of aesthetic thinking. We thus shall wonder if some of these restaurants' proposals could be considered not only as products for consumption, but also as artistic productions.

This article first presents the long-term history of the dinner-and-a-show concepts and attempts to define a multisensory restaurant, by using Paul Pairet's Ultraviolet as an example. Then, the study determines the gastro-tourism features of Ultraviolet's proposals, particularly when the experience quotes and recreates Asian or European food heritages, *terroirs* and food habits. Eventually, the paper also attempts to emphasize the artistic features of such proposals, studying the meaningful resonance between the sounds, images, scents and tastes of some sequences, as they convey a particular way of viewing the world through an unseen expression format.

13.1.1 Defining the Multisensory Restaurant

13.1.1.1 Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Tendencies

Dinner-and-show Formats and Twentieth Century Culinary Revolutions

The multisensory restaurant concept of offering a dinner that stimulates all the senses of the guests, thanks to sophisticated means, is neither a new nor an unseen phenomenon within the history of chefs and cooking. For centuries, some chefs have been attempting to offer more than a classic dinner to their royal, noble or bourgeois guests. As sophistication and fineness of food and service are used as a way of social distinction (Warde and Martens 2000), the quest of the spectacular, with the help of multi-sensoriality, has long ago been one of the main purposes of high-end food practices. Some famous cooks – legendary or historic – have proposed dinner-and-show formats. In Early China, Yiya who was considered a very creative mind was known for offering unseen dishes to the Duke. The legend says Yiya even cooked his own son to impress his audience (Anderson 2014).

In Europe, well-known medieval banquets actually offered a show and a dinner, with musical entertainment, and with visual and highly impressive dishes. (Bouas and Vivas 2008). Later, Antonin Carême, the famous pastry cook of the powerful, conceived desserts so sophisticated that they looked like architectural works. In August of 1671, the famous cook François Vatel worked as Superintendent of the Great Count in the Chantilly castle. He organized an extraordinary banquet to honor King Louis XIV with the alternation of live shows, leisure activities and meals, that lasted for several days (Michel 1999). Furthermore, in relation to the 18th and 19th centuries, the French historian Jean-Paul Aron designated the luxury dinners as "dinner shows", where everything, from the table's design to the arrangement of lights and guests and even the composition of menus disclosed a sophisticated dramaturgy (Aron 1988). The multisensory restaurants can find a part of their historical antecedents in these luxury dinner and show examples.

TWENTY-FIRST century developed societies are becoming more and more "experience societies": the consumers not only have access to useful and functional goods, but also to "experiential products that deliver individualized experiences in unseen environments; therefore, creating long lasting memories in their minds" (Pine and Gilmore 1999 p. 12). "Experiential dining", which is quite a strong trend within the current gastronomic industry and within contemporary leisure practices, has part of its origins in the ancient banquets, dinner-and-show and other *café-theatre* concepts. These options have in fact evolved – with the help of contemporary digital technologies – into several types of multisensory food experiences that aim to satisfy as many senses as possible within a unique dinner.

Thematic Dining Establishments and Multisensory Experiments

In spite of this consistent legacy, today's offerings aim at stimulating the entirety of the guests' senses, but this stimulation has to be as simultaneous and immersive as possible, and achieved by a specific technological set up. Offers from multisensory restaurants have been, and are, diverse. Some thematic dining experiences are taking advantage of the "eatertainment" trend – that aims at feeding and entertaining the guests at the same time, with "a mashup of high-quality food, beverage, and entertainment – a one-stop shop where experience-seeking consumers can go for premium meals, fun activities, and the chance to connect socially with friends and family"(Avant 2017 p. 1). Recently, these concepts have been relying more on fun and entertainment than on gastronomy and high-end cooking. For example, some places offer performance dinners – the Supper Clubs, first founded in Amsterdam, where the guests lounge in beds in a clubby, lively eatery, bar and performance space. There is also the interactive work, "Degustación de Titus Andronicus" by the Fura dels Baus theatre group, or the more gastronomic-focused Heart in Ibiza held by the Cirque du Soleil and the two avant-garde cooks, Albert and Ferran Adrià. Other concepts are reproducing a determined cinematographic aesthetics – the Twin peaks Double R Dinner inspired by David Lynch's famous television series. "The Grand Expedition" by Gingerline, an eatertainment concept inspired by the escape game practices, plunges guests into "a 180-min multi-media experience including elaborate set design, dance, story-telling, interactivity and immersive performance (www.thegrandexpedition.co.uk).

Additionally, there are more experimental and research projects focused on multi-sensoriality, such as the multisensory food lab Sony Multiroom Audio System, which consists of the observation and study of the links between sounds, music and food intake thanks to high-tech sound devices. Lastly, the pop-up experiment *El Somni* ("The Dream") imagined by the Roca Brothers and the videoartist Fran Aleu in 2013, took the form of "an opera in twelve dishes, a banquet in twelve acts" (El Somni 2014 p. 15).

The Multisensory Restaurants

For such an innovative and little-studied topic, the multisensory restaurants stand out as one peculiar pattern within the contemporary multisensory tendencies. These commercial establishments led by professional cooks – often collaborating with other business partners – propose to contextualize food by organising food intake into different virtual and highly multisensory environments, with the assistance of a combination of techniques and technologies.

These places serve the most advanced multisensory dinners existing in the current food market. Their purpose is to stimulate all the five senses – sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch – often simultaneously. These restaurants, located in different cities around the world, are all built upon a stable and recurrent technological and spatial set up. They can only receive a few guests each day – between 8 to 12 seats, during a unique – generally evening – service.

The basic set-up of the dining space is typically the same, with 3 distinct places. First, the "dining room" in itself includes a rectangular white table and chairs installed in the middle of a white room equipped with technological devices. From the control room, one is able to watch the guests and to broadcast the sounds, images and smells. The kitchen may have an easy and quick access to the dining room. The price of these dinners starts from 300 Euros up to 1600 Euros per guest.

Some of the most exemplary models of this type of restaurants are located in China and Japan. In Japan, Moonflower Sagaya Ginza restaurant, associated with Team Lab, serves dishes made with seasonal ingredients, while appreciating an interactive digital art installation, featuring trees and flowers as they change from season to season. In China, the city of Shanghai offers two multisensory restaurants: Ultraviolet by Paul Pairet and the more recently opened (November 2018) Liangshe Night Banquet. In Europe, Ibiza (Spain) is home to the seasonal restaurant Sublimotion by Paco Roncero, while London (England) hosts The Gastrophysics Chef's Table.

13.1.1.2 Ultraviolet by Paul Pairet

The Initial Idea

The restaurant Ultraviolet by Paul Pairet opened in May 2012 in Shanghai, China, with the support of the VOL group. Ultraviolet is the first multisensory restaurant that has been conceived, developed and opened. Chef Paul Pairet began the development of his idea in 1996[1]: a ten-guest single-table multisensory restaurant. Chef Pairet's idea was born from his desire to "cook at his best", offering a fixed menu to a *table d'hôte* model, thus controlling and optimizing the quality of cooking "in ways that the majority of traditional restaurants cannot" (Times 2013). This proficiency in cooking and service allows Ultraviolet to play on the atmospheres that offer the guests an unprecedented and multisensory tasting environment for each dish served. Pairet's project matured over several years, while he was cooking in high-end restaurants all over the world. In 2010, Pairet was invited as a speaker at Omnivore, a French festival of innovative cooking. His presentation of his Ultraviolet's strawberry/truffle/foie gras/soy sauce *trompe-l'œil* cigarette – accompanied by a small bowl of red cabbage ashes – caught the attention of several food critics and journalists.

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[1] Born and trained in France, Paul Pairet, travelled the world – Paris, Hong Kong, Sydney, Jakarta, Istanbul before opening in Shanghai Jade 36 of the Shangri-La Hotel. While he was working in Sydney, Paul Pairet had the first idea of a 12-guest single table he would have called ironically "The Last Supper", as a reference to the famous biblical dinner.

Ultraviolet appears to be the Patient Zero: the first in the series of current single-table multisensory commercial restaurants. Multi-awarded by press and professional food critic,[2] Paul Pairet and his team serve avant-garde dishes dressed-up by lights, sounds, music, and/or scents to provide context for the dish's taste. The changing environments are generated by complex virtual reality lay-outs: a purpose-built room specifically equipped with dry scent projectors, stage and UV lighting, 360 degree wall projections, table projectors, beam speakers and a multichannel speaker system.

"Gastrophysics" and "Psychotaste" as Core Pillars

This kind of gastronomic experience was founded on the "psychotaste" that Pairet defines as "everything about the taste but the taste. It is the expectation and the memory, the before and the after, the mind over the palate. It is all the factors that influence our perception of taste" (Ultraviolet's Brochure 2015). This concept is close to the "gastrophysics" studies (Spence 2017). It is also the object of scientific research.

The "Very sea Sea Scallop" sequence (Fig. 13.1) in Ultraviolet UVC's menu is a good illustration of the "gastrophysics" concept. All the elements of this sequence – the sea urchin and seaweed dish, accompanied by cold meringue, the powerful white wine, the sounds of the waves, the projected images of the ocean, and the marine and iodine smell diffusion – converge to plunge the guests into the ocean. As Pawaskar and Goel (2014) described, humans are a lot more likely to remember an experience by its smell rather than by its sound, sight or touch. This is mostly due to the fact that our nose is the only organ with a direct connection to the brain (Giordimaina 2008). The marine smell diffusion thus does not only make more real the plunge into the seawater, it also intensifies the tasting experience of seafood, that becomes unforgettable.

With the example of the sea urchin sequence, we can assert that this restaurant (whose name will be abbreviated as UV from now on) has become the epitome of what we call the multisensory restaurant, and the study will focus on its offers.

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[2] Ultraviolet has received 3 Michelin Stars from the Michelin Guide Shanghai since 2017. It is on the list of the World's Greatest Places ranking by TIME Magazine 2018. The restaurant has also been on the list of The World's 50 Best Restaurants since 2015, and on Asia's 50 Best Restaurants list since 2013. Paul Pairet was named Restaurateur of the Year, 2018 by Les Grandes Tables du Monde.

Fig. 13.1 “Very Sea Sea Scallop” (UVC). (Photo: Scott Wright of Limelight Studio)

13.1.2 The Multisensory Restaurant, Virtual Reality Tourism and Gastrotourism

13.1.2.1 Dining at Ultraviolet as a Touristic Experience

The Metaphor of the Journey

A journalist from “Le Point”, a French weekly news and political magazine – described the UV experience as a gastronomic trip: “Ultraviolet is much more than a restaurant. It is a gustatory journey magnified by digital technologies” (Danancher 2013 p. 121). The metaphor of the journey, of the travel of the senses, is very frequent in critics’ and guests’ comments about UV (UV Press portfolio 2016).

The “travel” experience consists of entering an unseen world, discovering something unknown and at the same time, being able to make use of criticism and consideration. The multisensory restaurants are not only offering a metaphoric and idealistic gastronomic journey, they also present a new kind of travel, and thus, an innovative tourism experience. Far beyond general common features such as the links which both tourism and multisensory restaurants share with luxury (Barrère et al. 2014), as well as their shared definitional leisure purposes, the study will now focus on the common features of the multisensory restaurants and the tourism activity.

Tourism: A Dynamic Concept

According to some authors’ points of views, we could be currently witnessing a “touristic revolution” in which some major breakthroughs can be observed, such as: “the transition from Western tourism to a truly global period, and the development of more personalized practices breaking with standardized forms, emergence of new actors” (Violier 2016 p. 25). Besides, the digital technologies are the main technical means used by individuals and societies – the social forces in this renewal of the forms of tourism (Violier 2016).

Tourism is deeply affected by the boom of new digital technologies: virtual reality is transforming not only human experiences, but also the proper definition of the concept of tourism and the tourism practices. Nowadays, the applications of virtual reality to tourism are varied, and are developing quickly; they can affect many aspects of the tourism business (Guttentag 2010). In promoting destinations, for example, virtual reality is heavily used and thus opens new paths for the consumer, who can roam the globe and have access to a recreated past or to very restricted areas.

Is "*phygital* tourism" (Neuburger et al. 2018) – that brings together digital and physical experiences – a possible future for touristic practices? To some journalists, the neural pathways of our minds wandering are the same pathways as when the live experience is in situ. Virtual tourism would propose that "increasingly a mash-up of physical and virtual worlds", could – clearly be an alternative to "real life tourism" (Schaffer et al. 2018 p. 1).

From "Holidaying at Home" to "Holidaying at the Restaurant"

Virtual tourism is able to offer the tourist an immersive virtual travel – which of course cannot be the equivalent to real concrete travelling. Instead, it is a new kind of "holidaying at home" (Schaffer et al. 2018). The multisensory restaurants propose a form of "holidaying at the restaurant", or to go with the metaphor, a "*phygital* gastronomy", with the help of new technologies and psychotaste principles. In UVC's menu, the guests travel through several natural environments from the first act, "The Sea" to the second act, "The Land". Throughout these two acts, a huge diversity of natural elements, landscapes and ecosystems are recreated: the green islands of New Zealand and the natives' campfires – "Abalone Primitive" sequence – the submarine wildlife of the ocean floors – "Very Sea Sea Scallop" –, the coastal wild life – "Carabineros" –, the meadows and their verdant grass – "Pasturage" –, the forests' undergrowth "Mushroooommssss". This experiential trend surely responds to the humans' yearning for mobility and to their strong desire for being able to travel quickly, without constraints from one place to another. The guests of the multisensory restaurants are enjoying a kind of ubiquity and are thus able, for 2–3 h, to transcend the boundaries of human perception and physical capabilities.

One other basic principle of tourism activity is physical movement. How can a restaurant – where the guests usually remain seated most of the time – reproduce or, at least, evoke such a principle? At UV, what is offered is a journey, an itinerary through the city of Shanghai first, and then, through the restaurant's spaces. Every evening, the guests gather at Mr.&Mrs. Bund's restaurant located on Shanghai's Bund, the city's most touristic and iconic district. Once the first appetizer is eaten, the driver takes all the customers to the dinner place, whose precise location remains confidential. After what could be considered a small city tour, the guests enter quite a dark place, closed by a heavy dark door. They are then plunged into the elevator simulation that makes them lose their bearings. The movement is also planned

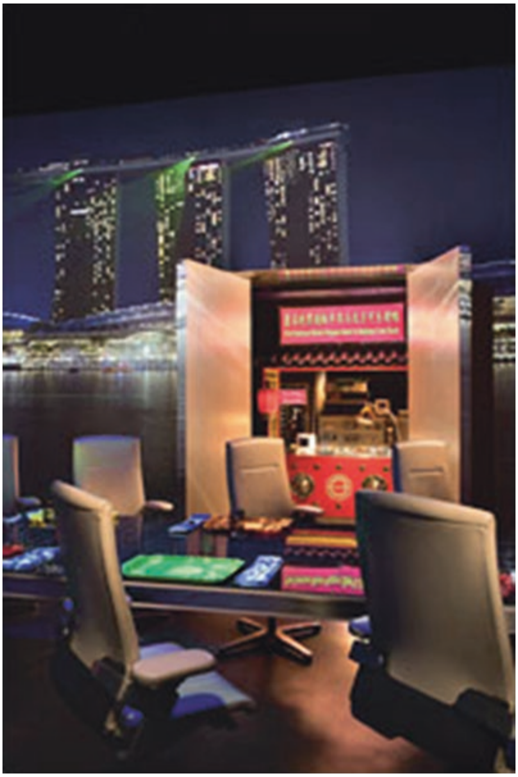

Fig. 13.2 "Black Pepper Beef – Hawker stall – Singapore" (UVC). (Photo: Scott Wright of Limelight Studio)

within the very progress of the menu. The intermission is in the "Garden" – where the guests are invited into a small room, in which a very old dead tree is lying. In the "Black Pepper Beef" sequence (Fig. 13.2), all the guests stand up to go and pick up a plastic tray at a funny stall just installed behind a partition wall of the restaurant's room. Even the furniture is not as motionless as it seems: the guests are in fact seated on rotating armchairs and the whole restaurant is made of movable doors and walls. At UV, the apparently closed space reveals itself as complex; the table is far from being the only space unit of the evening.

13.1.2.2 Gastrotourism at Ultraviolet

Contemporary Forms of Gastrotourism

As the "holidaying at the restaurant" experience is not only a virtual trip, it is also a gastronomic dinner – multisensory restaurants' menus are generally composed of 15 to more than 22 dishes. Such experiences have common features with the gastrotourism activities. From various authors' points of view, tourism and gastronomy are strongly linked as tourism "built up himself on the progressive implementation of new gustative and culinary discoveries" (Csergo 2008 p. 11). However, the appearance of what the specialists call "gastrotourism" has its origins in the eighteenth-twentieth centuries, when "the food component of the journey is gaining autonomy regarding the other activities" (Csergo 2008 p. 12).

Gastrotourism has become nowadays a strong industry linked to the logic of desire, the importance of heritage and the experiential and memory dimensions (Barrère et al. 2014). In addition to today's multiple forms of gastrotourism – from the consumption of highly typical products during the journey, to the visits of farms, of agro-food factories, or the attendance of gastronomic routes – a new relationship has been established lately between tourism and gastronomy, through the offer of the Grand Restaurants. This demand for luxury, increasing since the 1990s, is becoming an international phenomenon (Barrère et al. 2014). In this "new era of gastrotourism" (Csergo 2008 p. 15), the chefs and their creative cooking reputations give new resources that are built up and valued as touristic attractions.

The multisensory restaurants' offers could be considered as a part of this new type of luxury gastrotourism. UV restaurant, is first and foremost a gastronomic restaurant. The virtual and spectacular features are dominated by food and cooking, as genuine epicentres of the experience. The broadcast images, sounds and flavors are willingly made to be peripheral: what the guests see, hear and smell can be compared to landscapes or backdrops, conceived to accompany and magnify the gastronomic and tasting experience. The strength, texture, presence in the palate of the dishes have always been conceived as fundamental elements in each sequence. The multi-sensoriality is finally always serving food and taste. "Let's make it clear (…) Ultraviolet is a restaurant, definitely not Moulin Rouge nor Fantasia. (…) The food always leads" (UV brochure "More"). UV is definitely more gastronomic than spectacular.

Recreating Food Cultures and Heritages

The gastro-tourist experience is defined as a "vector of discovery of oneself, of the place, of the other" (Bessière et al. 2016 p. 12). Through the meaningful act of incorporating food (Rozin 1997), as "To incorporate food is, in both real and imaginary terms, to incorporate all or some of its properties: we become what we eat" (Fischler 1988), the guests go through moments of emotion and pleasure which lead them to question their inner selves and their relationship to food. Going to UV is also a physical challenge that modifies the guests who incorporate, in approximately 3 h, quite a big quantity of high food 20 dishes and between 700–820 grams of food per guest, and great beverages - cider, champagne, red and white wines, as well as Chinese tea, rhum and saké.

Ultraviolet rotates currently with three menus: "UVA", "UVB" and "UVC" and 3 upgraded variants of these menus "UVA+", "UVB+" and "UVC+". Each offer proposes the discovery of several food cultures and places in only one single dinner. "Tourism and gastronomy are both funded on the consumption of heritage" (Barrère et al. 2014 p.13)**.** UV's menus are built on the idea of sensorial journeys with products, dishes, table manners borrowed from multiple food heritages. The offer oscillates between Asian, French and world fusion cuisine always proposed in an avant-garde way. The menus evoke the vast and diverse Asian food heritage. The already quoted "Black pepper beef sequence" in UVC evokes the strong Asian food habit of "eating out" street food. The "Cucumber Lollipop" is the chef's interpretation of the *Gado Gado*, a traditional Indonesian salad, used as a refresher and a cleanser. The "Thai fruit yoghurt" refers to the Thai style of combining sweet and sour flavors.

Then, some menus include typically Chinese products or cooking techniques, coming from one of the 8 most famous regional Chinese methods of cooking, that define the authenticity of Chinese food (Théry 2015). "No shark fin soup" in UVA evokes a precious luxury product: the shark fin. In UVC, the "Beijing cola duck" refers to a heritage dish and a complex cooking technique. The "Candle in the wind" dish is a strong reference to Chinese flavors: sesame, ginger and spinach.

The names of some dishes for example the "Sashimi steak frites" or the "Royco Deluxe", actually a re-mastered coco noodle soup, clearly refers to fusion cuisine and thus to a dynamic and syncretic understanding of Asian heritage. The Asian dishes proposed by Paul Pairet are avant-garde dishes that, most of the time, marry three culinary heritages and cultures: French cooking, the chef's signature and Asian food habits and cooking. As a social construct, food heritage and –food tradition are no longer fixed and stable: "Heritage is constructed, constantly reconfigured. It is a social concept that evolves, and changes with time" (Bessière 2013 p. 7).

UV is materializing with its cooking the dynamic and multicultural heritage of today's Shanghai city.

Between Globalized Food and Genuine Asian or European *Terroirs*

One of the major features of the gastrotourism activities is their strong link with a determined origin, an identified *terroir*. In gastrotourism, the naturalness of the products acquires a major role, as it responds to the consumer's needs for identification, emphasized by many authors of the socio-anthropology of food: the food must be identified before being incorporated (Poulain 2002), and then "… through incorporation, the eater brings into himself not only the characteristics associated with the physical territory but also with its symbolic dimensions. In the imaginary, this incorporation integrates the 'tourist-eater' to the local society" (Bessière et al. 2016 p. 34).

UV is a kind of de-"territorialized restaurant" built on a variety of food cultures and heritages. The restaurant proposals could thus be a reflection of Shanghai: attractive, dynamic, urban, sophisticated, open to the world and also definitely Chinese. In such a complex environment, UV is falling back on a sort of a "globalized *terroir*", halfway between Europe and Asia, traditions and modernity.

Otherwise, the complexity and sophistication of some dishes and preparations always alternate with the simplicity of products served in an almost raw and natural

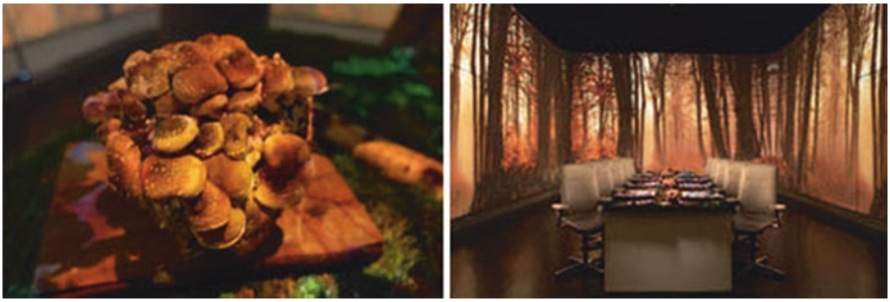

Fig. 13.3 "Mushroooommsss" (UVC). (Photo: Scott Wright of Limelight Studio)

state, thus directly evoking determined *terroirs* and landscapes and often cooked with prosaic instruments in front of the guests. The "Abalone primitive" dish is a rare seafood cooked very simply by the fire, as if the guests were in New Zealand's meadows; the "Mushrrroooommmmsss" sequence consists of serving raw fresh mushrooms, still on their piece of tree wood, quickly roasted in front of the guests with a blowtorch, and finally cut and served with olive oil and lemon drops. This sequence, as it is plunges the guests into an old forest with images, sounds and fragrances, could also be interpreted as a gastro-tourist journey (Fig. 13.3).

13.1.3 The Artistic Features of the Multisensory Restaurant

13.1.3.1 Twentieth Century's Practices: Between art and Arts and Craft

When trying to analyze the multisensory restaurants offer, one of the main questions is determining if these proposals are merely serial arts and craft products for consumption, or genuine artistic productions with a message to deliver in their own aesthetic language. In other words, are these creations and gastronomic universes profitable products for consumption, or artistic products? To consider the relationship between the immersive restaurants and the concept of art, the polemic existing for centuries regarding the artistic or non-artistic nature of high-end cooking cannot be avoided. The same goes to the evolution of the artistic practices and discourses that began in the twentieth century. Indeed, as it is rooted on a human basic need for survival, the activity of the cook, which generates ephemeral productions partly oriented to satisfy "low appetites", has frequently been under classified, if not totally rejected by the ancient and modern – and in some aspects, also contemporary (Csergo and Desbuissons 2018) – thinking. If compared to Kant's traditional eighteenth century's categories, the more creative multisensory restaurant productions could only be classified into the "agreeable arts", distinct from the highest "fine art and beautiful" category (Clintberg 2013 p. 27). But since the early twentieth century, various phenomena contributed to changes of the image and discourse regarding the cook's activities and productions, such as the success of the *nouvelle cuisine,* that permitted some cooks to reach the status of recognized authors, and even, of artists**.** The twentieth century's avant-gardes questioned the official artistic processes of institutionalization and broadened the classical definition of the art. At last, the chefs and critics discourse since the 1990's showed more than ever in the culinary art's history, the porosity of the limits between art and cooking (Champion 2010). The Catalan chef, F. Adrià the first cook invited as an artist to an international art exhibition, Kassel, 2007 – who held the famous establishment ElBulli - is now recognized worldwide as a "commercial restaurant and artist's restaurant" (Clintberg 2013 p. 203). It now seems possible to be both commercial and artistic at the same time.

Even if classical "official arts" – painting, sculpture, dance – are not massively involved in UV's productions, numerous sequences of UV's menus deliver a strong message in an innovative and creative language. As Pairet asserted in an interview in Shanghai in December 2018, UV serves "simple, figurative and investigative *avant-garde* cooking". Paul Pairet vindicates the simplicity of almost all the dishes he creates, that are always the result of one idea, as well as the flavors and products he uses, generally quite popular and well known. However, UV's culinary signature is, in some of the aspects, quite close to the gastronomic current of "techno-emotional cuisine" which "pays attention to the 5 senses and not just to the taste and smell", and aim to "creating emotion in the diner with the use of new concepts, techniques and technologies" (Arenos 2011 p. 11).

13.1.3.2 Virtual Reality and Aesthetic Thinking in UV

The Virtual Reality Experience: Immersion and Interaction

At last, due to the use of digital technologies and the peculiar virtual reality plunge UV proposes, the whole menus seem to be built upon alternating moments of diving into contexts, while other moments are a more distanced reflexion proposed to the guests, particularly while letting the audience interfere or intervene in the menu itself. According to Pimentel and Texeira, virtual reality is precisely built on such an alternating between immersion and interaction of the user: "In general, the term virtual reality refers to an immersive, interactive experience " (Pimentel and Texeira 1993 p. 43).

On the one hand, there is at UV a strong will to plunge the guests into immersive experiences, that is to say, into parallel worlds. As soon as they go through the restaurant's heavy entrance door, the guests are guided into a dark cubical room that suddenly seems to be moving due to loud and swinging music as well as images projected on the four walls all around. This first virtual device plunges the guests in a quite old-fashioned service lift, going down, again and again. Quite an unexpected way of entering a high-end restaurant's dining room. Of course, all along the dinner, the complement of scents, sounds and images aim at sustaining this multisensory immersion with the purpose of serving the dish within the most relevant context and ambience. UV's technological layout is made of a semi-immersive device (Ryan 1991): large and flat 360-degree projections on screens and tables.

On the other hand, Pairet aims not only to immerse the guests into a virtual world, but also to submerge them in external stimuli. Despite an apparent lack of freedom for the guests, due to the apparent "ultra control" by the restaurant's team fixed menu, fixed times, fixed pauses – the immersion cannot be realized without a constant stimulation of the guests' minds and senses, to allow a critical overview to emerge, to allow the guests to take a step back and think about what they are experiencing.

Indeed, as Ryan writes, "while immersion looks through the signs toward the reference world, interactivity exploits the materiality of the medium… you cannot see the worlds and the signs at the same time" (Ryan 1991). UV evidences this awareness that the objects perceived during the immersion sequences are only objects of perception. The signs and their meanings thus disappear for a while during the immersive moments; then, the critical consciousness – can disappear too. The dining experience is thus built on a transversal game of in and out, an alternating of immersion and interaction, of virtual and real experience.

Sixth Sense and Aesthetic Thinking

Some sequences are planned to be moments of reflection. For example, the dish "Think" of the menu UVC is a small tea cup, accompanied by a small teapot. It is subtitled: "A Real Cup of Tea". When the guests hold the teapot to pour some tea into the cup, they realize that only some powder (made of orange and lapsang-souchong tea) comes out. The guests hold the cup and feel it is frozen, and then realize they need to eat it before it is totally melted in their hands. The dish, entitled "Think fast this is not a pipe" is a clear reference to Magritte's 1929 painting "The treachery of images", representing a very realistic pipe and the baffling title *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* ("This is not a pipe"). This occidental and masculine practice of smoking the pipe is here transposed into an Asian practice: tea consumption is part of Chinese gastronomic heritage, strongly linked both to the daily popular individual practices and to more social and even spiritual rituals. This dish could be interpreted as an edible *vanitas*, reminding the deceiving dimension of the signs, the ephemeral character of food, and maybe the vanity of luxury.

UV seems to worship signs, significance and thought. On this aspect, P. Pairet's productions are close to one of the "techno-emotional" cooking principles: the food experiences would not only stimulate the five senses, they would also aim at stimulating another necessary "sense", the sixth sense according to F. Adrià: the thoughts of the guests (Weber-Lambedière 2010). The experience eventually generates substance, conveying a form of aesthetic thinking (Fig. 13.4).

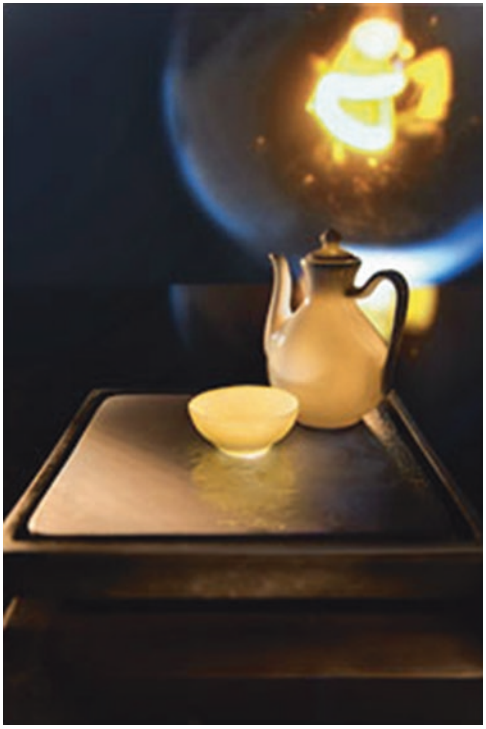

Fig. 13.4 "Think – Lapsang Souchong – A Real Cup of Tea" (UVC). (Photo: Scott Wright of Limelight Studio)

13.2 Conclusion

The article aims to give a stable definition of the multisensory restaurant concept and to determine the touristic and artistic features of their productions. Among the seven multisensory restaurants currently opened around the world, three of them are located in Asia. In Shanghai, Ultraviolet by Paul Pairet has since 2012 been part of the megalopolis' vibrant touristic and gastronomic portfolio and this peculiar restaurant appears as the Patient Zero of the multisensory establishment pattern. Ultraviolet offers 10–12 guests, seated around a single table, a fixed high-end cooking menu. The whole experience is conceived not only to stimulate the five senses of the guests, but also addresses their minds and emotional intelligence, thanks to a complex technical, technological and theatrical lay-out.

In such a context, the present study raised two questions. The first one was about the possible parallel that could be drawn between the experience of dining at a multisensory restaurant and the current gastrotourism or virtual reality tourism experiences. It appeared that Ultraviolet offers a new kind of gastronomic and touristic journey, thanks to a thoroughly built concatenation of high-end cooking dishes and immersive sequences that plunge the guests into various landscapes and genuine *terroirs*. A particular in-and-out game between virtual immersion, tasting and socialization, enables the guests to live a virtual experience, plunging them into changing contexts and environments. Neither the social and physical dimensions of food - 22 gastronomic dishes and a large palette of products, flavors, aromas, textures, forms and colors - nor the signification of cooking – through the reflexive approach of the chef and his team - are disappearing. Such gastronomic experiences could be announcing the future of a high-end cooking, looking for answers to an increasing demand for more experiential, immersive and digitalized offerings by increasingly wealthy gastro-tourists searching for new and unusual, yet still authentic experiences.

The second question tackled the artistic dimensions of the multisensory restaurant's proposals. Ultraviolet is not only serving food for leisure and pleasure, it is also proposing an artistic gesture and aesthetic productions. The first multisensory restaurant's techniques and technologies aim to serve food for thought, questioning thanks to an unseen language, the act of feeding oneself, and the plastic nature of food. In this sense, UV proposals could be considered as products for consumption, as well as artistic productions. Thereby, such a restaurant could be paving the way to a new culinary aesthetics and genre.

The multisensory establishments make use of the richness of the *terroirs*, the potentialities of virtual reality and digital technologies, the peculiar forms of contemporary aesthetics and the globalization processes. In that sense, the multisensory restaurants are not only a valuable part of a wider gastro-tourist offer, but are also undoubtedly a representation of one of the contemporary Asian directions in terms of innovative cooking.

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