

# **Public Sculpture in Malaysia: A Case Study of Putrajaya**

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A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirement of  
Birmingham City University for the degree of  
**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

February 2009



Birmingham Institute of Art and Design  
Birmingham City University

## **Abstract**

Public art in Malaysia is an emerging discipline whose practice exists as informal rules of thumb rather than as codified standards. Aside from the famous *Tugu Negara* (National Monument), today, public art in Malaysia has a phantom quality because it lacks clear definition. This study examines the definition and vocabulary of public art in Malaysian context and develops coherent critical and theoretical framework in the development of public art practices.

This is the first study of its kind. The thesis describes the historical development of public art in Malaysia from the 'Eurocentric' era, to post - May 1969 which instigated an acute consciousness and crisis of identity, right up to recent attempts at furthering the 'indigenous', or 'national', character of modern Malaysian art. This is crucial in explaining how public art has been perceived as an aspect of cultural integration and diversity and to construct new identities, based on cultural and social realities that are peculiar to Malaysia. The thesis examines and evaluates the issue in public art, and on the many different policies adopted in the Malaysian public art practices. Based from field work in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya, a compilation of public artwork (sculpture) has been mapped to help understand diverse public art typology and the context in which the public art is being presented. The study takes a qualitative case study approach, analysing policy documentation, historical and cultural documents, interviewing artists, architects, academicians, local authority officers and governmental organisations.

In conclusion, this research has identified the correct description for public art definition in Malaysia where it is different from the western narratives as the main contribution of this thesis. While the western narratives context celebrates figurative form; Malaysian public art is non-figurative and is based upon a decorative tradition. This thesis has also contributed a clear chronology process of complex public art planning and commissioning process base upon the analysis of the 'Malaysian' documents and making comparison between present process used by the local authority offices, Ministry of Unity Art, Culture and Heritage Malaysia, and the National Art Gallery Malaysia. Finally, this thesis provides a sample of electronic database (see **Appendix 4**), first of its kind, as a methodological way for future researchers interested in the development of a successful public art programmes in Malaysia, as well in development for the Malaysian public art policy that will set standard and coherent objectives for public art practices.



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## Acknowledgement

The journey of this research has been arduous but not without its rewards. The process of gathering information on public art practice has been difficult because, although public art has been employed before the country's independence in 1957, little is known about its development. This is due to the limited academic writing and documentations on public art development in Malaysia. Since I started this research, I have come to realise the impact of public art employment have on a pluralistic society like Malaysia. Public art is used as a tool to help with the social integration process and act as a device to bridge cultural divide among Malaysian people. I have also recognised the importance of a public art database and commissioning guidelines without which, public art will lose its appeal and credibility within the visual art practice. Along the journey I have met people who were inspired to see Malaysian public art practice take a bigger role in the Malaysian art scene. It made me realised that public art in Malaysia does have a following but many shy away from its development due to the lack of understanding of the practice and reliable writing on public art.

First, I would like to thank my Director of Studies, Prof Nick Stanley for his continuous support in the PhD and always there to listen and to give advice. I would also like to thank my second supervisor Prof John Butler for showing me different ways to approach a research problem and the need to be persistent to accomplish any goal. Both supervisors have equally helped me complete the writing of this dissertation as well as the challenging research that lies behind it. A special thanks goes to Prof. Najib Dawa, former Dean to the School of Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia who is responsible for the post-graduate scholarship and has been a friend and mentor.

I am always indebted to both my parents HJ Mustafa and HJH Rokiah for their moral support and encouragement, and for making me belief that nothing is impossible. Thank you for the constant advice and word cannot describe their sacrifices throughout the journey of this PhD. The completion of this PhD is a gift to them.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to my best friend, David Chin for the long discussions and new resources in public art, Tan Poo Huat for his help with the electronic database and Max Osman, for his advice with this thesis. I would also like to thank all

fellow researchers, for guidance and recommendations on the topic. To those who have participated in this research, thank you for giving me the insight into the practice and sharing their advice and concerns.

Finally, my special thanks to the Malaysian Government, Universiti Sains Malaysia and Ministry of Higher Education for the entrusting me with a scholarship which enabled me to pursue the research in Public Art development. Hopefully this research will help with the understanding of public art in Malaysia and in return encourage artists, students, private developers, private organisation and governmental bodies to support its growth and ensuring its future.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATION

A.P.S	Angkatan Pelukis Semenanjung (Peninsular Malaysia Artists Troop).
ASAS	Asas-asas Kebudayaan Kebangsaan (National Cultural Foundation).
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations.
CFZ	Cyberjaya Flagship Zone.
CUCMS	Cyberjaya University College of Medical Sciences.
DBKL	Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur ( Kuala Lumpur City Council).
D.U. D	Detailed Urban Design.
F.M.S.	United Malaysian Artists.
ICT	Information Communication Technology.
ISA	Internal Security Act.
KeKKWA	Ministry of Unity, Culture, Arts and Heritage.
KLCC	Kuala Lumpur City Centre.
LUCT	LIMKOKWING University of Creative Technology.
MARA	Majlis Amanah Rakyat.
MDC	Malaysian Design Council.
MHLG	Ministry of Housing and Local Government.
MMU	Multimedia University.
MSC	Multimedia Super Corridor.
NAG	National Art Gallery.
N.C.P.	National Cultural Policy.
NDP	National Development Program.
NEP	National Economic Planning.
N.O.C	National Operations Council
PAM	Persatuan Arkitek Malaysia.
PiCC	Putrajaya International Convention Centre.
PJC	Putrajaya Corporation.
PJH	Putrajaya Holdings.
Sdn. Bhd.	Sendirian Berhad. (Private Limited)
SME	Small Medium Enterprise.
SMK	Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan ( National High School).
V.O.C.	Vereernidge Oost-Indische Companie ( Dutch East India Company).
W.A.G.	Wednesday Art Group.



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# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction and Statement of Research Background**

## Chapter One

### Introduction and Statement of the Research Background

#### 1.1 Introduction

*"I couldn't understand this public sculpture" (sic.)*

Schoppert (2007)

Public art is not simply art placed outside. When considering public art, emphasis is often placed on the word 'art' with very little consideration paid to the 'public' context. According to Sharp, Pollock and Paddison, 2005, in this respect, public art is 'no different from art in general, where matters of taste and preference become paramount'. Public art has received a mixed reception both by the public and the authorities. The result of this is confusion over its multi-faceted role and aspects of the practice. In Malaysia this confusion is exacerbated by the fact that public art itself is a new term in the Malaysian art scene. It is sometimes seen as a manifestation based on political and cultural aspirations that intersect with city's beautification efforts which celebrate perfection based on wished for imagery.

Although Malaysia is relatively young in the development of the visual arts within the Southeast Asia region, it aspires to be an art and cultural tourism<sup>1</sup> capital. Anil Netto (2005) a political and social journalist for Asia Times journal, states that Malaysia made RM30 billion from tourism in 2004, up from RM21.3 billion in 2003, and RM25.8 billion in 2002. According to the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board economic report 2007/2008, tourism (cultural tourism) accounts for nine percent of Malaysian economy. This increase indicates Malaysia's economic focus and growth in cultural tourism. Cultural tourism generally focuses on traditional communities who have diverse



customs, unique forms of art and distinct social practices, which distinguish it from other types/forms of culture. Composed primarily of Malays, Chinese and Indians, Malaysian culture is best described as cosmopolitan and forms a diverse and vibrant society that is unique. Nowhere else in the world can one find three major races, and various smaller indigenous tribes actually actively sharing in one other's cultural richness. Cultural tourism in Malaysia showcases the traditions of the three major races and indigenous cultural communities (i.e. festivals, rituals), and their values and lifestyle. This cultural richness is being promoted through the diversity of its art and culture which is displayed and consumed, by developing venues for arts and cultural events. According to the Malaysian Tourism Board (2007) during the launch of a cultural tourism event in Australia:

‘...this promotion is one of Tourism Malaysia’s efforts to create higher consumer and trade awareness on the diverse attractions in Malaysia, particularly its art and culture especially during Visit Malaysia Year 2007’.

Malaysian Tourism Board (2007: 2)

The Malaysian National Art Gallery in collaboration with the Ministry of Unity Culture, Arts and Heritage has also encouraged and initiated discussions and debates on the development of visual culture by emphasising the importance of visual art in the search for a ‘Malaysian’ national identity. Public art has been adopted in major cities like *Kuala Lumpur* (Capital city), *Penang* (Northern Malaysia), *Kuching* (Eastern Malaysia), *Johor Baharu* (Southern Malaysia) and *the Federal Territory of Putrajaya* (Administrative city) as a part of the promotion and support to enhance this vision. In the news report by the Malaysian STAR newspaper (2006):

‘ The Ninth Malaysian Plan’<sup>2</sup> allocated the sum of RM442.4 million for the promotion of culture, art and heritage programmes, with 63 percent used for preservation and conservation of cultural heritage and the balance for implementing various arts and culture programmes at state and district levels in Malaysia’

(The STAR, 2006)

A large number of organisations in the public and private sectors in Malaysia have been encouraged to promote public art work in the cities to play a key role in enhancing or strengthening a place or local identity. But whilst public art is employed to adorn urban areas, there is also confusion and questions about its definition and role. An interview participant ACJ1 (2006) states

‘I see a lot of public art in the United States and in the European cities. But in Malaysia, somehow public art has not been thought of carefully’.

ACJ1 (2006: 3)

McCarthy (2005: 2) states that consequences of place branding can lead to homogeneity and the erosion of distinctiveness if the term ‘public’ is applied as a part of a serial replication of local elements rather than sensitive adaptation to context. Whatever critical dialogue that may have emerged, the complicated relationship and the complexity behind the regional characteristics<sup>3</sup> and behind Malaysian multifaceted identities which are constantly shifting according to time and place in the region, is also a contributing factor towards the already ‘inescapable’ confusion.

Selwood (1995: 6) states that ‘public art is notoriously ill-defined’. Miles (1997: 4) even considers that the very term ‘public art’ is, from a UK perspective, something of an oxymoron. The mosaic inspiration of numerous styles and influences in art development in the Malaysia’s art development history is making the pinpointing of a specific definition difficult. Shin (1999) suggests:

‘...the concept of public art has changed continuously since it emerged and that the definition of public art needs constant reviewing’.

Shin (1999: 5)

The initial problem that I was confronted with has been to create a definition of public art in Malaysia. According to Selwood (1992: 6) ‘this is in itself has been contested within the art world’. Interview participant GAV1 (2007) states

‘There was a problem of definition, even within the trained arts community. In Malaysia it is such that artists, academics, and cultural commentators don’t have a role in deciding what public art should be. All of these powers lie within the local councils, and the local councils don’t consult the artist’

GAV1 (2007: 4)

While Denett (2004) states:

‘The phrase ‘public art’ is generally accepted as a catch-all term that encompasses the making or placing of art in non-gallery settings’.

Denett (2004: 2)

Generally, public art is defined as art work commonly exposed in the public domain and is a term that refers to works of art created using diverse form of media in built or natural environment. In Malaysia, public art being a relatively new term, hence the importance of having a dedicated definition for public art in Malaysia takes a

secondary role. Artists and organisations that help to instigate the purpose and value for public art have generated individual definitions and a role for public art. It is difficult to detect any trend or styles let alone give a specific definition to public art. To help give a clearer understanding of role, purpose and meaning in public art, this research attempts to create a historical and theoretical context to place public art in the development of visual art in Malaysia.

The history of public art development in Malaysia is chequered. Before Malaysia became an independent country in 1957, the only form of public art were the monuments erected in the image of British founders and sited in public squares, as the symbol of British rule, particularly celebrating their Imperial control. Other visible forms of public sculpture are found in places of worships like temples or monasteries. A clearer development of public art could only be identified during the post-independence era. It was only then that an urgent need for national identity emerged and for artworks that reflect aspects of the country's diverse spatial and socio-cultural beliefs.

The need for changes also reflects the broader shift in visual art development in Malaysia. It influences the conception of public art as primarily an object of commemoration or to enforce the will of authoritarian power, to a progressive form of art that has greater inclusion of. This change involves collaborative participations between artists, art institution and the member of the public, which addresses the relationship between art practices and the production of identities. It also assists in challenging the ideological establishment of art and creates a balance between socio-economic relations and public art programmes today.



**Figure 1.1a** The National Monument Malaysia (left) and  
**Figure 1.1 b** *Iwojima* Monument in the United States (right)

In 1963 the ‘National Monument’<sup>4</sup> (see **Figure 1.1a**) was the first of many public art interventions in Malaysia funded by the United States government and was built mirroring the *Iwojima* monument in the United States. At that time, Malaysia was faced with the threat of communist resurgence; an overspill from the Vietnam War. Malaysia is one of the few countries in Southeast Asia to receive monetary support from the United States in an effort to combat the spread of communism in the region. This monument is a testament to changes in the development of public art in Malaysia which saw the use of public art as a tool for nationalist reformation. In the 1970’s saw a sudden flood of public sculptures and murals in the country.

In the 1970’s the use of public art to encourage the notion of solidarity is important in an effort to heal the emotional damage between races in Malaysia after the race riots of the 13<sup>th</sup> May 1969. To ensure that the darkest incident in Malaysian history would never happen again, a liberal approach based on cultural diversity was employed. Public art is one of the many tools used to achieve this healing process. In 1971, the

National Cultural Policy was formulated to enrich the national identity, strengthen cultural understanding among the ethnic groups and inculcate consciousness and appreciation of arts and culture among the people (Malaysian Laws and Policy on Culture, 2004).

But as quickly as the development of public art saw a positive increase in early 1970's, and in early 1980's, by the end of 1980's public art had to take two steps back due the worldwide economic crisis. It lay dormant and many public art developments were shelved. The attention of the country turned into getting through the crisis. In the mid 1990's, there was a revitalised interest in the use of public art again and this time it was employed to enliven public spaces in the cities. Public artwork sprung up in cities like Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya and evidence suggests that public art in Malaysia has been steadily growing since mid 1990's. This has been based on a growing awareness of the functions of public art in the country. Interview participant GAV1 (2007) states

‘...growing numbers in public arts that have started to come up in new townships. In order to be an award winning township for example, one must have all these things (public art) and full fill the criteria’

GAV1 (2007: 7)

Naturally, with the growth of public artworks in Malaysia, questions were raised about its contribution to future of public art in the country. This burgeoning question has been asked by many local artists and art enthusiasts. Increasingly, there have been many attempts to define and understand the role of many sculptures in Malaysia and a

persuasive argument about the politicisation of public art. Without any guidance, misconceptions and confused thoughts on public art's values and purpose occur.

In Malaysia there are many organisations that support the development of public art in Malaysia. A public art project usually involves a wide range of individuals and organisations. This collaboration greatly affects the nature and the outcome of the public art project. The process of commissioning public art project in Malaysia is unique with regards to the lack of formulated guidelines and transparent commissioning procedures; and this can sometimes be awkward and frustrating to individual artists, developers, private owners and commissioners alike.

To map the development of public art in Malaysia it would be helpful to look into the model that is being adopted in the western countries. Public art in western countries like the United Kingdom and the United States took a quantum leap in the early 1970's with the notion of 'site-specific' art: work designed for a particular place, taking into account the site's physical surroundings as well as other environmental or social factors. Kwon (2006) states:

Emerging out of the lessons of minimalism, site-specific art was initially based in a phenomenological or experiential understanding of the site, defined primarily as an agglomeration of the actual physical attributes of a particular location, with architecture serving as a foil for the art work in many instances.

Kwon (2006: 3)

In Malaysia, public art has yet to achieve a common standard both in its contribution and its regulatory development. It is sometimes seen as an after-thought. Darke (2004) states:



‘Today’s public art overall is less concrete, less substantial. It is not necessarily designed to be ‘site specific’ but it is always somehow taking the cultural factors seriously’

Darke (2004: 2)

As interview participant ACR3 (2006) states:

‘...when a new development of township in Malaysia is completed, nobody will think about public art until someone proposes or a private owner wanted to have public sculpture. If you want your artwork to be publicly displayed to the public and the idea accepted by the local authority; artists, architect and designers have to conform to cultural aspect of the people and always consider the Islamic sentiment’

ACR3 (2006: 5)

For the most part, public art in Malaysia has gone through many trials and errors from the complexity of Malaysian bureaucracy, to the benefits of public artwork. Probably the greatest problem is the lack of critical writing and archiving of public art records. As Malaysia is trying to reflect and re-invent itself as a technologically advanced, urbanised and liberal Muslim society, perhaps it sometimes fails to reflect the importance of public art in its infrastructure and architecture.

## **1.2 Impetus for the Research**

There have been many motivations for this research. It started innocently when I was lecturing at LIMKOKWING University of Creative Technology in Cyberjaya, Malaysia. On a field trip to the Federal Territory of Putrajaya with my final year Interior Architecture students, the group came across a public sculpture in a court yard of the Palace of Justice. Whilst admiring the stone work by Ramlan Abdullah, (a reputable Malaysian public artists) a group of visitors walking by the sculpture were



laughing and jokingly commented on the waste of tax payer's *Ringgit* for the piece of 'assembled' marble stone. The comment sparked a question as to how many other similar public artworks received the same unfortunate remarks. Interest grew when I came across public sculptures in the capital city Kuala Lumpur and in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya. Some were newly constructed whilst others were hidden in an inconspicuous location. Such examples of public art (sculptures) are the 1963 National Monuments located near the Parliament building, the 1988 'ASEANA Park' in the Lake Garden in Kuala Lumpur and the newest addition to the list, the 2007 Millennium Monument in Putrajaya.

Public art in Malaysia has always had a 'phantom role'<sup>5</sup>. Unless public sculpture is being erected and located in major roundabouts, the public will walk past it and take no notice. From this observation, I extended my research to look for academic papers and intellectual discussions on the development, roles and purpose of public art in Malaysia and the result was disappointing. In relation to all the public art work I have seen, there have been very few academic papers on the history and development of public art in Malaysia.

While speaking to artists, architects and friends, I realised there is a burgeoning interest in public art, but there have never been any serious attempts to research, document and write on public art in Malaysia. Surprisingly, whilst conducting research on public art, I came across a few documents from the late 1970's (National Art Policy and PAM urban Planning policy) and Malaysia Law and Policy on Culture (2004) that interestingly indicates a foundation for visual art and public art historical

development. Inspired by the interest of many local artists I have met throughout my journey in understanding public art in Malaysia, I decided to conduct in-depth academic research into the development of public art in Malaysia, with the hope of pioneering further research and practical development in Malaysia.

### **1.2.1 Motivation Factors**

The first motivational factor for conducting this research derived from the notion that Malaysia lacks an historical understanding and intellectual direction in public art development. There is almost no research on public art, be it academic papers or intellectual discourse. There has been much interest in the subject but few have been willing to explore experiment and research aspects of history, policies and current development of public art within the Malaysian context. Since starting this research, there has been some interest from local art organisations and the Malaysian National Art Gallery, but not sufficient to spark further development. What activities there are appear scarce and fragmented. As a result, public art in Malaysia is still inspired by contemporary developments comparable to Western modern art, under the same dominating Western aesthetic paradigm.

This research aims to be the catalyst and provide a proper documentation and a foundation for further experimentation and exploration of public art within the local context not only in Malaysia but also in many other modern societies. It is also hoped that this research can encourage future researchers and public art enthusiasts in Malaysia to explore the historical development of public art.

The second motivational factor in this research is based on my personal interest in the development of a public art typology in Malaysia, especially looking at the Federal Territory of Putrajaya as a case study. With a background in architecture and Visual Communication, I have always been intrigued by the usage of imagery and visuals to communicate specific encoded messages to the public audience, whilst looking at the mechanisms used to control and regulate the style and typology of public art. The experience of recording the typology of public art (sculptures, mural, landscapes) in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya and Kuala Lumpur have given me some clarity and opened up further interests into how public art is being perceived and accepted, and how public art practices address the relationship between nature and the built environment, and the local socio-cultural background of a new technologically advanced, urbanised, liberal Muslim society.

This study help to identify and build a comprehensive database of public art in Putrajaya that could be used for reference for future researchers. This research has given an indicative framework when looking for an authentic characteristic of Malaysian public art. It also offers a theoretical model for analysing and typifying public sculpture that I hope will be of use internationally.

The final motivational factor is based upon the succession and development of the National Development Program (NDP) introduced in 1991 which succeeded the National Economic Planning (NEP), launched in 1971 and ended in 1990. The NDP programmes have helped to reduce the social disparity between the Chinese minority and the ‘Bumiputra’<sup>6</sup> majority by giving them the opportunity to further their tertiary

education in art by providing them with academic scholarships. The purpose of this program is also to bridge the gap between the few art elitists<sup>7</sup> in Malaysia who are mostly Chinese. As beneficiaries of the NDP/ NEP academic scholarship programme I feel that it is important to investigate the success story of the NDP/NEP programmes, and how it has helped to train artists, hence influenced the style and typology of public art in Malaysia. The NDP is often used as a yardstick to measure the development of policies which is instrumental in the development of a socio-cultural and economic stability.

The NDP is also known as the economic planning programme which clearly encourages the creation of a national identity through all forms of cultural and visual art manifestations. Its philosophy is to develop a Malaysian nation that is knowledgeable and possesses a balance of both external and internal competencies (Malaysian Laws and Policy on Culture, 2004: 10). There has been substantial funding for the development of art centers and an upgrade of the national educational curriculum that include the introduction of a higher level visual art education in schools and higher learning institutions to encourage visual literacy. My research aims to uncover the usage of the NDP as instrument for developing a public art policy with the sole interest to help local authorities, artists, architects, urban planners and enthusiasts in the promotion of public art in Malaysia.

### **1.3 Aims and Scope of Research**

#### **1.3.1 AIM 1:               An Understanding of Complex Decision Making Involved in Planning and Producing Public Sculpture in Putrajaya**

The first aim of this research is to understand the complex decision making process involved in planning and producing public sculpture in Putrajaya. The investigation gives an insight into the different type of initiatives, policies and enactments used in the development of public art in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya. This study provides a broader conceptual framework for the development of public sculpture particularly in terms of its spatial planning. This study also looks at public art practices in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya. It also helps to identify the individuals, organisations and government bodies that were involved in the planning and production of public sculptures. In turn this helps to understand the increasing partnership between the public and private sector commissions, issues on bureaucracy and the expansion of arts policy as well as the involvement of artists, architects and planners in many areas. This aim also reveals the significance of public sculpture in Malaysia and how it has developed into an important tool in enhancing or strengthening a place or developing a local identity.

#### **1.3.2 AIM 2:               Identify the Forces That Define and Generate Malaysian Public Art**

The second aim of the research is to identify and evaluate the many different forces which help define and generate Malaysian public art. Identifying those forces that define public art in the local context helps to explain the current public art practices and public sculptures typology. This research explains how cultural policy influences the generation of public art in Malaysia, create an understanding of how public art is

being perceived and accepted; and explains how visual art practices address the relationship between nature, the built environment and social, cultural and economic benefits.

### **1.3.3 AIM 3: Identify Contemporary Visual Art Practices In Malaysia in the Arena of Public Art**

The third aim of this research is to assess the role of contemporary visual art practices in Malaysia especially in the arena of public art. This research provides useful understanding of the diversity of visual art practices and provides information, suggestions and guidelines on the individuality and differences of styles, media, subject matter, and aesthetic qualities which is necessary in generating the artwork. The findings are offered as benchmarks for artists, organizations and for the development of public art programmes as well as to facilitate further studies in this field.

### **1.3.4 AIM 4: To Undertake the First Cataloguing of Key Public Sculptures in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya**

The fourth aim of this research has been to catalogue, document, identify and map key public sculptures in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya. I provide a database for classifying all manners of visual activities that can be found in Putrajaya. This database serves as a record and provides suggestions and recommendations to the modelling of future cataloguing of key public sculptures in Malaysia.

### **1.3.5 AIM 5                      To Create a Robust Model of Public Art That Has Broad International Relevance in Post-Colonial Settings**

The final aim of this research is to create a robust model of public art that has broad international relevance in Post-Colonial settings. It helps to understand the issues and context in which public art is adopted to enhance the identity making in post colonial cities. This model could be used as a template for practitioners and researchers who are interested in art in post-colonial settings.

## **1.4        Research Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research methods are designed to help researchers understand people and the social and cultural contexts within which they live. Myers (1997: 2) quoting Kaplan and Maxwell (1994) argues that the goal of understanding a phenomenon from the point of view of the participants and its particular social and institutional context is largely lost when textual data are quantified. Bell (1993: 6) states that ‘qualitative research enables researchers to seek insight rather than statistical analysis’ whilst Mason (2002) emphasized:

‘Qualitative research enables researchers to explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences and imaginings of our research participants, the way that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationship work, and the significance of the meaning that they generate.’

Mason (2002: 1)

It was considered appropriate to use the qualitative method and descriptive approach for this research in order to obtain relevant information about the development of

public art in Malaysia. This is because to date, there have been very few local researchers studying public art in Malaysia. It is therefore understandable that there is very little relevant literature on public art to support this thesis directly. This research mainly depends on primary resource materials and employs three phases: literature review, mapping current provision (interviews and document analysis) and case studies.

In order to obtain relevant information, I have examined and made a causal comparative review between the Western documents and the current 'Malaysian' documents (enactment, policies and samples of commission briefs). This helps to compare the likeness and difference among phenomena to determine if certain factors or circumstances tend to accompany certain events, conditions, or processes and examined in their social and historical context.

I have also conducted qualitative ethnographic style interviews with the four categories of group: academicians, professionals, authorities and organisations (refer to **figure 1.3**). This has contributed significant knowledge on public art. Even though there are specific question used as template during the interview, an open ended question was structured to fit the individual interviewed. It differs from traditional structured questioning in several important ways. First, although the questionnaires may have some initial guiding questions or core concepts to ask about, there is no formal structured protocol. This allow for flexibility which enables the interview participant to answer questions according to their specific knowledge and involvement. This also allows researchers to better access the respondents' true feelings on an issue. Second, I was free to move the conversation in any direction of



interest that may come up. Consequently, open ended questioning is particularly useful for exploring a topic broadly.

The interview started with questions relating to their personal background and their involvement with visual art in general before being drawn into more specific questions on public art. This not only helps break the ice, but also helps build trust between the researcher and the interview participant. Once the connection between the researcher and interview is established, the questionnaire focused on specific topic like their involvement within the context of public art for example.

To further help with this research, I analysed case-study images of public sculptures in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya, Kuala Lumpur and Cyberjaya, cultivating a visual geography of place, providing framework for public art typology in Malaysia. This helps probes in depth into an individual situation with the intent of diagnosing a particular condition and give further clarity in public art development. Finally I analysed existing theoretical framework in public art which largely been written by Western scholars. I have sought to consider the arguments concerning the role and importance of public art which is relevant to the Malaysian context

#### **1.4.1 Phase 1 - Literature Review**

The first phase helped to establish a theoretical framework for the significant value, role and importance of public art in Malaysia. Bell (1993) states:

‘A literature review may help to devise a theoretical or analytical framework as a basis for the analysis and interpretation of data’.

Bell (1993: 33)

All researchers collect many facts, but then must organise and classify them into a coherent pattern. The literature search involves the review of previous local and global discourse and theories related to contemporary visual arts in Malaysia and Western countries. Literature specifically on public art found within a Malaysian context is seldom available; therefore it is important to disseminate the data and information based on the visual art theoretical framework from western visual art practices and theory.

I also consider the ideological and political literature, and debates about cultural and art policy, which contribute towards development of public art policy as well as other materials that relate to contemporary visual art practices in Malaysia particularly in the arena of public art. Literature review permeates the research and supports the clarification of issues for the case studies.

#### **1.4.2 Phase 2 - Mapping Current Provision**

My first fieldwork in Malaysia in 2006 took the form of a series of surveys and interviews, and a thorough investigation into the current provision of visual art practices. A survey of Putrajaya and the location of public sculptures helped to focus this research. I have followed Bell (1993: 10) who states that 'the aim of survey is to obtain information which can be analysed and from which patterns can be extracted and comparison made'. It was also emphasised by Robson (1993) stating that:

'It is a common method for the collection of standardised information from a specific population.'

Robson (1993: 49)

I intended to obtain an overall description of the current state of implementation of contemporary visual art practices in Malaysia. A pilot interview was conducted in 2006 to help understand issues on public art in Malaysia and generate a scope for the research. This interview was important to help uncover unseen problems and issues.

As stated by Bell (1993):

‘...the interview can yield rich materials and can often put flesh on the bones of questionnaire responses.’

Bell (1993: 91)

Therefore, this phase helped to identify the boundaries of the research areas and location of public art and the collected data is used to give a clear description of the style and approach of public art practices, and of the organizations involved with the decision making.

### **1.4.3 Data Collection and Recording**

Twenty eight research participants from different background and involvement with the development and public art practice were interviewed. The interviews were carried out using a semi-structured interview approach and open-ended questions.

The interviews were tape recorded and subsequently transcribed. In order to attain pertinent and appropriate information and greater access to the real context of public art this approach enables the interviewer to get a more valid response from the participant’s perspective with some guidance of questions by the interviewer. As

Burns (2000) emphasised:

Rather than having a specific, an interview schedule or none at all, an interview guide may developed for some parts of the study in

which, without fixed wording or fixed ordering of questions, a direction is given to the interview so that the content focuses on the crucial issues of the study.

Burns (2000: 424)

Using standardised open-ended questions has a number of advantages. As stated by Fink (1995) that 'the responses to open-ended questions can be very useful, often yielding quotable material' whilst Waddington (2000) states:

'...open-ended questions allow respondents to include more information, including feelings, attitudes and understanding of the subject.'

Waddington (2000)

This allows researchers to better access the respondents' true feelings on an issue. The fieldwork also involved the compilation and categorisation of documentary materials including national and local enactments, historical documents, academic journals and writings, policies and other related materials. This also involved making a collection of literature and debates about ideological, social and political engagement underpinning public art and contemporary visual art development and related areas of art and design.

#### **1.4.4 Analysis**

The transcribed data is used to provide a foundation for inductive analysis. Each of the twenty eight transcriptions from different participants- academicians, artists, architects, governmental officials and public organizations was examined thoroughly and analysed to identify significant themes or issues. This approach is also applied to the documents and literature, with the same purpose, to identify key issues, such as the approach to the public art practice and development. Each theme or issue that

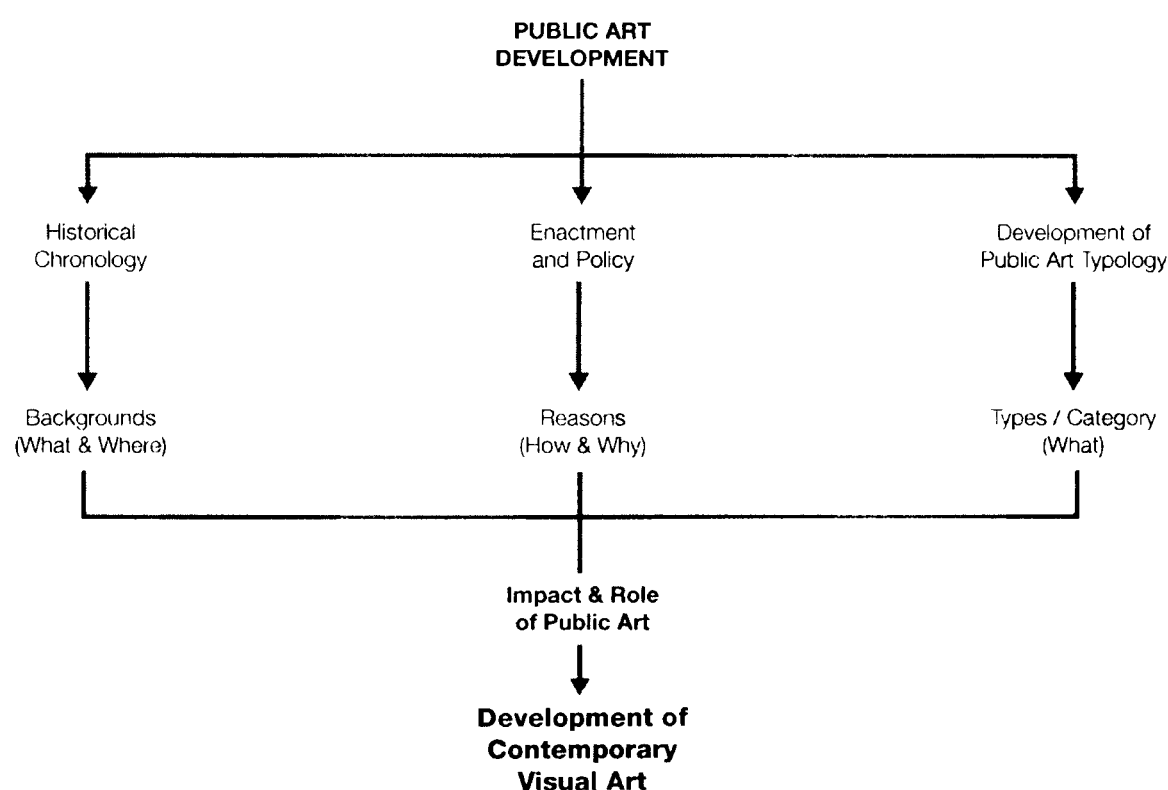
emerged was given a 'designated category' such as 'historical chronology', 'influence and development of public art typology', 'enactment and policy' and other related categories. Those major themes were divided into three categories:

1. Development of visual art practices especially in the arena of public arts,
2. Policies and enactments,
3. Impact and role of public art.

It is relevant to note that all the themes revolved around fundamental of questions of 'what, where, how and why'. The first theme which was the development of public art, discussed the chronology of the development of visual art which eventually led to the development of a typology of public art in Malaysia. This theme reflected the direct correlation between the country's historical developments of visual art timeline to the recent notion of public art in Malaysia. The second theme is the enactment and policies which help form, control, regulate and influence the diverse array of public art practices in the country. This theme is crucial to the study because it reflects the importance of regulatory devices that were used to control the process of public art practices. The third theme is the impact and the role of public art that directly and indirectly shaped the multiple aspect of public art in Malaysia. The first two themes revolved around an understanding of the evolution of public art and its development whilst the third theme was used to enable the mapping of the impact and value of public art in Malaysia.

These themes also relates to the rationale for providing public art which derives from a numbers of factors, such as social and economic factors or cultural benefits. The interviewees were interviewed on the related themes regarding their roles and

involvement in public art practices as well as their contribution towards the development of visual art within the local context. The data gathered from each transcription was cross-referenced and analysed to exemplify the themes. These were later categorised as major themes of public art practice in Malaysia. A number of major themes dominated the analysis in respect of policies and enactments and their role in modeling provision of public art practice. These themes enabled the researcher to identify relevant issues in public art practices for the case-study phase of data collection. (see **figure 1.2** )



**Figure 1.2: Research Themes**

### 1.5 Phase 3 – Case Study

For this phase, a case study of public art in Putrajaya was taken during the first field work trip in 2006. The purpose of choosing case study methodology in this qualitative research was because this method is described as the detailed examination of a single example of a class of phenomena. Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner (1984) states:

‘A case study cannot provide reliable information about the broader class, but it may be useful in the preliminary stages of an investigation since it provides hypotheses which may be tested systematically with a larger number of cases.’

Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner (1984: 34)

Yin (1984: 23) defines a case study being ‘an empirical inquiry that investigates contemporary phenomenon within real-life context, when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.’ He further explains:

Case study methodology, by investigating phenomena in their real life context, can be a very important tool in opening the “black box” of how interventions and program effectiveness are linked.

(Yin 1994: 1)

It is also emphasised by George and Benett (2005: 5), that case study methods involves a ‘detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalisable to other events’. By using a case study approach, a researcher is able to focus and concentrate in depth on the chosen subject.

### **1.5.1 Case Study Selection**

Case studies are an integral part of this research. The main purpose of the case study was to understand the significance and fundamental conditions of public art practices that are currently being practiced in Malaysia. The Federal Territory of Putrajaya, as the new administrative city for Malaysia was selected as the main contributor for this case study. Kuala Lumpur (the capital city of Malaysia) and Cyberjaya (Multimedia Super Corridor development city next to the Putrajaya development) also make a secondary

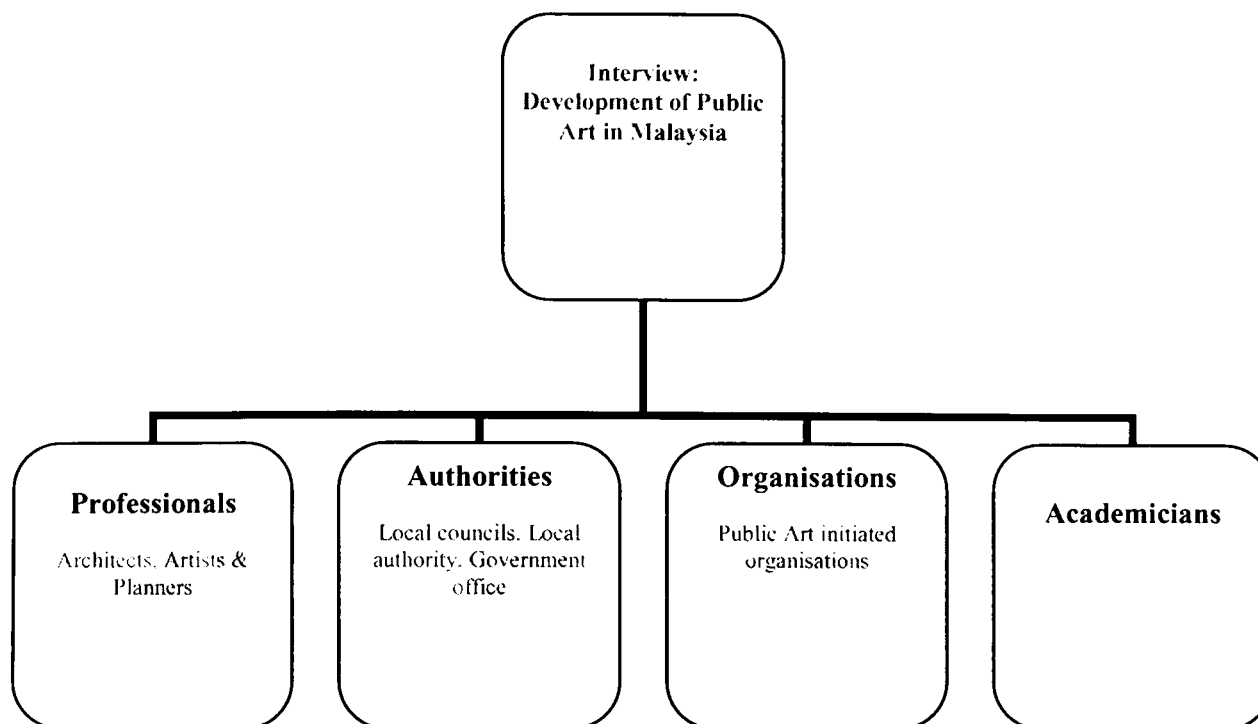
contribution towards this study. The main reason for including Kuala Lumpur and Cyberjaya in the research was to enable greater comparison to be made to the approach of public arts practices, standards of policies and enactment employed and to provide a focus on the public art typology in each location. Therefore there were three main factors to choose these locations for the case studies.

Firstly, these locations have the best examples of work due to its status as administrative, academic and economic capitals of the country. Given that two of the aims of this research were to assess the role of contemporary visual art practices in Malaysia; especially in the arena of public art; and to identify and evaluate the many different forces that define and generate Malaysian public art, I decided to focus on these important locations which have significant representation of visual art samples and practices in the country. Secondly, the Federal Territory of Putrajaya is a new city project development initiated at the height of economic achievement in Malaysia. A lot of new policy, design and planning approaches were employed then. It is appropriate and relevant to methodologically examine and evaluate the new approaches in policies and enactment employed, a shift in ideology and investigating the attitudes of public bodies that remits includes responsibility for public art.

Thirdly, there has not been any previous comprehensive documentation of public art in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya. This was an opportunity to record and document a database of public art work in a new city development. This database was designed to contribute towards an understanding of the typology of public arts and activities encompassing every spectrum of public art practices in Malaysia.



### 1.5.2 Interview (Professionals, Authorities and Organisations)



**Figure 1.3:** Interview categories

In this research, four dedicated category representing professionals, authorities, organisations and academicians were involved with in-depth interviews. They were all interviewed individually at different times. Each category was also sub-divided into groups. For example architect, artists and planners falls under the category of professionals; in the local authorities category – local councils, local authority and governmental departments were grouped together; in organisations category- public art initiated organisations and finally the academicians. These groups were chosen based on their experience, involvement and significant contributions towards the development of visual art and especially public art in Malaysia. The key questions posed were concerned with their personal background, their involvement and experiences in public art development and public art practices.

There were six interviewees in the professional group who were interviewed for their direct role and experience in the designing, managing and implementations of public sculpture work in and around Malaysia. They provide a consensus among the practitioners about what public art standards might be. The significant reason to include the authorities in the study was because as administrators of the public art projects or commissions, they provided guidelines and codified standards of practice. There are five interviewees in this group, and they were posed with several questions relating to their involvement with the commissioning processes and implementation of policies and enactment, the nature of local authority policies in promoting public art and the monitoring of suitable public artworks for the local social, political and cultural context and consumption. Organisational bodies that had direct and indirect involvement with the development of public art were also included in the interviews. Five interviewees from this group provide (impartial) observations on the public art practices in the country and views on recent development of contemporary visual art practices in Malaysia.

The criterion for the selection of these organisations was based on their significant understanding of the bureaucracy, public art funding and critical writings on Malaysian public art practice. The final group of interviewees were academicians. Five interviewees from this group provide significant information and critical writings on the historical chronology of visual art development which leads to an understanding of development of public art in Malaysia. Their thoughts and views on the definitions and vocabularies help to address the multifaceted aspects of public art. The questions posed were centred on their specialised area of practice.

### **1.5.3 Ethical Issues**

The ethical issue in qualitative research is described as a "painful" one because 'the process of qualitative research does not conform neatly to the norms that have been established in the policies of many ethical review committees' (Hoonard, 2002: 1).

There are a number of key phrases that describe the system of ethical protection that the contemporary social science research establishment has created to try to protect better the rights of their research participants. The main issues raised here are those of ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, using forms of consent, and, preventing harm and risk. Some of these issues are quite difficult to implement because of the nature of the social research being conducted. This therefore suggests that researchers must be aware of ethical consideration involved in "voluntary and non voluntary participation" as emphasised in Social Research Centre website (2006) as the 'principle of voluntary participation requires that people not be coerced into participating in research'.

Ethical standards also require that researchers do not put participants in a situation where they might be at risk of harm as a result of their participation. Harm can be defined as both physical and psychological. It is important to note that before any interviews were undertaken, the researcher explained briefly the purpose and scope of the research to each individual participant. All the information from the case studies is strictly confidential and only serves the purpose of the research. As the conversation between interviewer and interviewee may include personal information, the researcher informed individual participants or organisations that they would be ensured anonymity of the sources of their data and also has the responsibility for keeping all information confidential. All the interviews conducted during both phases were carried out using audio tape recorder. This is to enable the researcher to conduct the

conversation in a natural way and engages the interviewee in a non-confrontational manner. Besides using an audio tape recorder, a digital camera was used to record all the public sculptures in the designated locations and other related materials that were important to use for this research. All this were also regulated under the same principle of confidentiality and remain concealed and were only intended for the purpose of this research only.

#### **1.5.4 Analysis**

Analysing case study evidence is especially difficult hence every case study must employ a clear and structured analytical strategy. Yin (2003: 111) outlines three strategies for general use. The first is relying on theoretical propositions- that led to the case study which reflects a set of research objectives, reviews of literature and propositions or new hypothesis, and then later to analyse the evidence based on those prepositions. The second strategy is thinking about rival explanations- where it involves pattern matching where there are variables involved. The final strategy is developing case description- where the predicted patterns must be defined prior to data collection. To help formulate an analytic result this research employs the first and third strategies. This is where the research objectives, review of literature and the predicted patterns were identified prior to data collection particularly during the first phase of mapping current provision. Therefore, in this research, each case was examined and analysed thoroughly. A chronology of visual art development of the country was mapped out and analysed from various perspective and an examination of public art development identified. An analysis of various forms of public art typology were collected where each public sculpture documented was analysed and set against the socio-spatial concept which explains the influence of the locality (zoning of

activities) on the public artwork to people's connections to the locality. The elements found in public sculptural design were interpreted through observation and identification of inherent characteristic representation based on symbolic theories.

In addition to the investigation of plans, policies and strategies, transcripts from interviews with general practitioners, and academicians were also analysed based on their education backgrounds, roles and involvement in the development of public art within the local context. Professional practitioner's engagement in the field of public art were also analysed in terms of their direct involvement in public art development and their contribution towards the development of public art practices. Their opinions and ideas made a significant contribution to understanding and improving public art development and practices. The findings of the case studies were then compared and cross referenced to provide explanations and findings that could inform recommendations for better public art development and public art practices in Malaysia.

For the purpose of code of ethics, not all participants from the four categories involved in this study will be identified by their real name; instead their anonymity was kept by creating a system of coding. Even though some participants insisted that their names be mentioned in this research, others preferred to remain anonymous. For this reason I have coded them according to the initial alphabet of the group they belong to, followed by the initials of their first name or organisation and finally by a single digit number. Take for example, the Putrajaya Corporation Berhad. They belonged to the authorities group and the first letter of the code begins with the letter

A, followed by the initial first name/organisation which is P and the number 1 (AP1).

The Professional practitioners are coded as PJ1, PR2 and so on.

Finally, the issue of public art returns us the question of audience context and the function of art. For most of the part, contemporary art in Malaysia is very much conceived and executed and executed within the existing conventions of gallery-specific art.

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Cultural tourism is the subset of tourism concerned with a country or region's culture, especially its arts (which usually mean the visual arts - comprising fine art, decorative art, and crafts).

<sup>2</sup> Ninth Malaysian Plan abbreviated as '9MP', is a comprehensive blueprint of the national budget from the year 2006 to 2010 to all economic sectors in Malaysia. It was chaired by the Malaysian Prime Minister on 31 March 2006

<sup>3</sup> The South East Asia region

<sup>4</sup> Commissioned to an Austrian sculptor, Felix de Weldon in 1963, who also designed Washington's Iwo Jima Monument, the Malaysian national monument was a huge tall bronze figure of soldiers standing and supporting their fallen comrades.

<sup>5</sup> 'Phantom role': a term that is used to describe artwork with the risk of being forgotten because it fails to communicate with the majority of the population. It sits beneath the radar of the social conditions of art's production and consumption.

<sup>6</sup> 'Bumiputra' literally translated as "Son of the Earth" described the Malay ethnic group as the founder of the country.

<sup>7</sup> Art elitist is groups of society of art aficionados, artists with a history of awards, and famous collectors.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Re-Framing Public Art in Malaysia**



## **2. Reframing Public Art in Malaysia**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The diverse range of visual art in Malaysia today encompasses the culmination of years of intermingling of different cultures. Malaysia is characterised by cultural and ethnic diversity- its population comprising of the Malays, Chinese, Indians, *orang asli*<sup>8</sup> (aborigines) and numerous indigenous people of West Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak). This chapter begins by presenting literature on the chronological and characteristic development of visual arts in Malaysia and reviews the historical influences of art within the Malaysian socio-cultural setting. It also reviews the chronology of event that leads to the development of modern visual art in Malaysia today. To do this, this chapter explores in detail, the social history, geographical elements, and issues of cultural and religious beliefs of Malaysians. The findings of the chronology of events are then set against the artwork, the community where it is being presented, the motivations behind its construction and interests of the various art styles.

The chapter also analyses the transformation of art from the traditional settings to the modern settings. This helps the understanding and interpretation of the art typology in Malaysia which is often focus on the unique and varied confluence of factors that come together, in a particular time and place. Sabapathy (2005) an artist and director of SingaporeArt.Com, an online visual database website stated that ‘the development of modern art in Malaysia corresponds to three relatively distinct areas of "visioning" and "ideating" modern Malaysian art’. In his article ‘Vision and Idea – Re-looking Modern Malaysian Art’, Sabapathy (1994) explains the developments are correlated chronologically. He stated that:

1. The first clue to understanding the typology of Malaysian art is characterised by attempts at emulation of Western art, sometimes total, but more often modified in content and form; but always based upon the western notion of "Art". In the 50's and through out 60's the dominating mode/style was abstraction - formalistic and generally de-emphasising accessible content. In a significant way, this can be construed as an acknowledgement of an international *avant-garde*, dictated by American Abstract Expressionism. Modern Malaysian art is understood to be one that should be comparable to the modern art of the West, under the same dominating Western aesthetic paradigm.
2. The second type of artistic vision and idea gives further consideration to the question of "Malaysianness". The anxiety of 'Identity' seems evident. Though its development is still trailingy inspired by contemporary developments in Western Art, the works begin to be visibly infused by formal and iconographic signs of localness and indigenusness. The period during which this concern came to the fore was post - May 13, 1969, and post - National Cultural Congress of 1971. Post - May 1969 instigated an acute consciousness and crisis of identity, to some, it signalled the irreparable loss or fracturing of identity; for the majority, it pointed to the urgent need to construct new identities, based on cultural and social realities that were peculiar to Malaysia.
3. The last category, which generally corresponds with the decade of the 80's and the present 90's, reveals a plurality of serious attempts at furthering the 'indigenous', or 'national', character of modern Malaysian art. Figuring in a major way in this attempts are Islam, ethnicity and culture, and the unself-conscious co-option of post-modernist posturing of Western Art.

Sabapathy (1994: 2)

Sabapathy's evaluation helps to construct a framework for a discourse on the development of visual art unique to Malaysia. His notion of Malaysian art history not

only helps to trace the development of public art but also re-frames the connection between Malaysian socio-culture traditions to its artistic aspiration.

## 2.2 Sources of Public art in Malaysia

The early inhabitants of Malaysia being preoccupied with survival in a tropical environment, understandably were more concerned with creating functional and practical objects to those that are aesthetically pleasing. Archaeological excavations provide evidence of this- crude pottery item, tools and grave decorations. These primitive crafts and art forms gradually developed over thousands of years, until the artisan mastered the production of sophisticated art form. According to Syed Ahmad Jamal (2007) former director to the Malaysia National Art Gallery:

‘Among the significant early examples of artistic creation in Malaysia are the roughly hewn stones and rocks known as *Menhirs* or megaliths and cave paintings...these simple object later developed aesthetically to exhibit higher levels of artistic attainment with the addition of engraving and carving’

Syed Ahmad Jamal (2007:6)

Syed Ahmad Jamal establishes that the art development in Malaysia begins with the ancient indigenous art. The earliest examples of indigenous art have been found in Malaysia dated from the Mesolithic era (c.40, 000-2500 BCE) and the Neolithic era (c.2800-599 BCE). For example the *menhirs* or megalith (see **figure 2.1**) found in Negeri Sembilan and Malacca two states located in south of Peninsular Malaysia. According to an article in the *Badan Warisan* magazine, the late Tan Sri Mubin Sheppard, former Director of the Malaysian National Museum and one of the founding members of *Badan Warisan*<sup>9</sup> identify:

-

‘...a detailed account of the Tampin site (Negeri Sembilan), Sheppard observed that the megaliths were of varying height and were arranged in pairs in lines aligned East and West, with approximately one metre distance between the rows which stood on a raised manmade mound. Often called ‘batu hidup’, literally meaning “living stone”, the significance and function of these megaliths still remains an area of debate’.

Buletin Warisan November-December Issue (2005:9)



**Figure 2.1a:** Menhirs or Megaliths found in the state of Malacca (left) and

**Figure 2.1b** Pengkalan Kempas, in the state of Negeri Sembilan: example of early art artifacts

It was believed to trace its origin between two hundred BCE to one thousand BCE and it is the first example of sculpture used in the Malay archipelago (Malaysia-Indonesia-Borneo triangle) by ancient culture to record an event and used the *menhirs* as a reminder of their culture.

Even though originally most people in the Malay archipelagos were animists, based upon other artefacts found, it was concluded that Malaysia’s artistic evolution has to a large extent been driven by foreign influences<sup>10</sup>. This is based on the evidence of historical development of the inhabitants of Malaysia, which began around the first

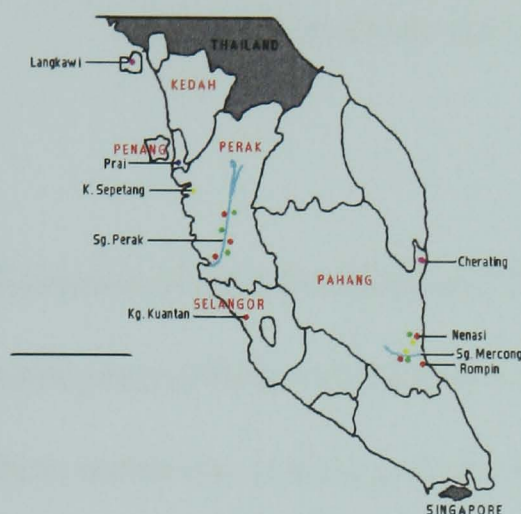
century BCE with the establishment of regular trading contacts with the world beyond Southeast Asia, specifically China and the sub-continent of India.

Although Chinese contacts started as early as, if not predating those of Indian civilisation, it was the Hindu and Buddhist elements of Indian culture which made a major impact on the region. These include the artistic development of early Malay Archipelago civilisation and their socio-cultural practice. The earliest record of Buddhist and Hindu influences in Malaysia was recorded dating back from the fifth century reaching its height of influences during the *Srivijaya Empire*<sup>11</sup> in Indonesia (c.680-1025 CE) in the northern states of Peninsular Malaysia- the states of Perak and Kedah. Over a period of a thousand years these influences gradually left their marks in the art, language, literature and social custom.

During this Hindu- Buddhist period there was a tremendous growth in East-West trade. For the greater part of this time, the inhabitants of the Malay archipelagos were subjected to the sway of either Javanese or Sumatran power which carries with them the influence of Hinduism. At the end of the Srivijaya Empire in Java, the Hindu Chola kingdom of South India (1025-1100 CE) conquered the Srivajaya civilisation in Java and expanded their power to the last stronghold of the Srivajaya Empire in the Malaysia Peninsula- the state of Kedah, which was also believed to leave strong impression on Malay art, literature and language. The influences brought in various art forms particularly in weaving, metalwork and woodcarving.



The most tangible evidence of the Hindu-Buddhist period in Malaysian history is now to be found in the temple sites of Lembah Bujang and Kuala Merbok in state of Kedah, north of Peninsular Malaysia. (see **figure 2.2**)



**Figure 2.2** Peninsular Malaysia: Kedah is the northern most state and the oldest state in Malaysia

The expansion of Buddhism and Hinduism were also brought to the Malaysian peninsula and Southeast Asian archipelago by the ancient Buddhist *Kingdom of Langkasuka* in Pattani, Thailand (circa second to fourteenth centuries CE). The trade relations the Tamil merchants had with the ports of Malaya led to the emergence of Indianised kingdoms like *Kadaram* (Old Kedah) and *Langkasukam*<sup>12</sup>. Known in many languages as *Lang-ya-shiu* in Chinese, *Lunghasuka* in Arabic and *Lengakasuka* in Javanese. According to Eddin Khoo (2003), art historian and co-writer of “Spirit of Wood: The Art of Malay Woodcarving” states:

‘... a written testimony of the city state’s existence, meanwhile is to be found in the Liang-Shu, a seventh century Chinese historical annal: ‘The Kingdom of Lang-ya-hsiu’ is situated in the Southern Seas’

Eddin Khoo (2003:155)



The *Kingdom of Langkasuka* at the beginning adopted Buddhism and was inhabited mostly by *chi-mo* (Khmer) peoples who were then ruled by Hindu kings. Eddin Khoo (2003) states:

‘Of religion and cultural characteristic, little is known apart from the general consensus that *Langkasuka* adopted the Indian model’<sup>13</sup>

Eddin Khoo (2003:159)

Evidence of both Buddhist and Hindu influences in the region were based upon the stone inscriptions with Sanskrit Buddhist texts and Hindu-Buddhist sculptures made from terracotta, bronze and stone found in the *Kinta Valley* in the state of Perak, the *Bujang Valley* in the state of Kedah and *Santubong*, a small district in Sarawak. (see **figure 2.3**)



**Figure 2.3a** Malaysian terracotta tablet depicting Buddhist icons, shrines and an inscription commemorating maritime contact with India (left) and

**Figure 2.3b** Ganesha sculpture- Hindu god found in Lembah Bujang, Kedah (right)

The Buddhist and Hindu religions influenced the artistic aspiration but were soon displaced by Islam in the fifteen century. The earliest evidence of an Islamic stone tablet was found in the east coast of peninsular Malaysia in the state of Terengganu (**figure 2.4**).



**Figure 2.4** The Terengganu stone tablet found in 1902 original inscribed in 1303

The inscriptions are in Arabic - Malay believed to be written on the 22nd February 1303. Among the inscriptions on the stone are the ten Islamic laws and their punishments. According to Yatim (2005:1), professor of Islamic Art at the Academy of Malay Studies, Universiti Malaya:

‘...the content of the inscription are of a great historical significance for the coming of Islam in the Malay Peninsula’.

Yatim (2005:1)

With the discovery of this stone, historians felt that Islam has reached Terengganu before the 14th century. The inscribed stone also proved that an Islamic government existed in Terengganu long before port city of Malacca was founded in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

But the establishment of the influences of Islam on art development in Malaysia was only visible during the Malacca establishment as an international trading port city.

This began with *Parameswara* the first King of Malacca- an exiled Hindu prince of the *Srivijaya* civilisation who converted and embraced Islam in 1409. Islam was introduced by the Arab missionaries and traders to the port city of Malacca in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Upon embracing Islam, Prince Parameswara took the name of *Megat*



*Iskandar Shah* (Harris 1990), opening the way for a gradual grafting of Islamic beliefs and practices onto a Hindu-style court system inherited from its Srivijayan roots.

Throughout the 15th century, Malacca enjoyed great importance as a trade center where Indian, Arab, Chinese and other merchants bought and sold goods throughout the larger region. Malacca's system of governance served as a model for 'subsequent Malay kingdoms and became the basis of what was later termed 'traditional Malay culture and statecraft' (Andaya & Andaya 1984:37). This then led the spread of Islam all over the Peninsular Malaysia and influences upon most art development until present time. According to Syed Ahmad Jamal (2007):

‘...over the course of the century, Islam began to have tremendous influence on various Malay visual art forms, particularly stone and wood carvings, metalwork, fabric and pottery.’

Syed Ahmad Jamal (2007:10)

### **2.2.1 Hindu Influences in Malaysian Art**

Hindu art is so intimately associated with its religion and philosophy. Blurton (1992) states:

‘For many Hindus, their art are primarily devotional, encouraging them to acknowledge the presence of a god or gods’

Blurton (1992:9)

This is based upon examples of artefacts found in the ancient civilisation of *Lembah Bujang* (Bujang Valley) in Kedah- the oldest state in Malaysia. According to the Lembah Bujang Archaeological Museum (2008):

‘Lembah Bujang also the focal point of Hindu/Buddha propagation in Southeast Asia during the 3rd to the 12th century, which proved of the existence of Buddhism with Pala Mahayana influences from

southern India. This faith was brought and practiced by Hindu/Buddhist Indian traders who came trading at Lembah Bujang'

Lembah Bujang Archaeological Museum (2008)

Much Hindu art was influenced by the *Puranas*, sacred writings concerning ancient history and legend produced from the 4th century AD. In the major shrines, great halls are decorated with paintings and sculptures representing scenes from the *Puranas* and the chief Hindu gods. Icons of deities include *Shiva* (the creator), *Vishnu* (the preserver), and *Mahadevi* (the consort of Shiva), whose manifestations include *Kali*, goddess of death and destruction, and the gentle *Parvati*. Because Hinduism originated from the Indian civilisation, the ideology of the art is also reflected on Indian influences. According to Dr. Coomaraswamy (1927) art historian and curator of Boston museum:

'Indian art is essentially religious. The conscious aim of Indian art is the intimation of Divinity. But the Infinite and Unconditioned cannot be expressed in finite terms; and art, unable to portray Divinity unconditioned, and unwilling to be limited by the limitation of humanity, is in India dedicated to the representation of Gods, who to finite man represent comprehensible aspects of an infinite whole'

Dr. Coomaraswamy (1927)

Dr Coomaraswamy's statement describes Hindu mysticism has its philosophic system and art in Hinduism pervades every facet of Indian life. The artistic elements of the Hindu art found were also based upon the celebration and immortalisation the beauty of human bodies in bronze and stone for more than 5,000 years (see **figure 2.5**). These artworks are commonly found in temples.



**Figure 2.5** Example of sculptures found in temples that celebrate immortalisation of beauty based upon Hindu deities. Hindu temple in Kuala Lumpur (right)

There is a strong connection between the Indian community in Malaysia and Hindu influences in art. Example of artefacts unearthed were pottery, scripture tablets and braziers for religious and matrimonial ceremonies. Because of the long influence of Hinduism on Malay culture, some of its influence is still found in elements of the Malay royal court ceremonies, in the performance art- traditional dance and some are found in architectural wood carvings which reflect the motifs of Hindu art style. But very few visual art forms of Hindu art prevail in present modern visual art development in Malaysia since the introduction of Islam. The only prominent use of Hindu art is found in Indian temples, shrines and in private collections.

### 2.2.2 Buddhist Influences in Malaysian Art

Buddhist art originated on the Indian subcontinent following the historical life of Gautama Buddha, sixth to fifth century BCE, and thereafter evolved by contact with other cultures as it spread throughout Asia and the world. Early Buddhist art followed the Indian *Aniconic*<sup>14</sup> tradition, which avoids direct representation of the human figure



(see **figure 2.6** left). Around the 1st century CE an *Iconic*<sup>15</sup> period emerged lasting to this day which represents the Buddha in human form (see **figure 2.6** right). Buddhist art flourished and even influenced the development of Hindu art, until Buddhism nearly disappeared in India around the 10th century due in part to the vigorous expansion of Islam alongside Hinduism.



**Figure 2.6a** Sculpture from *Aniconic* phase (left) and

**Figure 2.6b** *Iconic* phase sculpture (right)

During the 1st century CE, the trade on the overland Silk Road tended to be restricted by the rise of the Parthian empire in the Middle East. This demanded the revival of the sea connections between the Mediterranean Sea and China, with India as the intermediary of choice. From that time, through trade connections, commercial settlements, and even political interventions, India started to strongly influence Southeast Asian countries. Trade routes linked India with southern Burma, central and southern Siam, lower Cambodia and southern Vietnam. Between the 1st and 8th centuries, several kingdoms competed for influence in the region (particularly the Cambodian Funan then the Burmese Mon kingdoms<sup>16</sup>) contributing various artistic

characteristics, mainly derived from the Indian Gupta style<sup>17</sup>. Combined with a pervading Hindu influence, Buddhist images, votive tablets and Sanskrit inscriptions are found throughout the area.

From the 9th to the 13th centuries, Southeast Asia had very powerful empires and became extremely active in Buddhist architectural and artistic creation. The *Srivijaya* Empire to the south and the Khmer Empire<sup>18</sup> to the north expanded not only its political power but also the Buddhist art influences. According to an article in the *Southeast Asian Archaeology* (2007):

‘Srivijaya was considered to be one of the major centres of learning for the Buddhist world. Srivijaya’s prominent role in the Buddhist world can be found in several inscriptions around Asia: an inscription in Nalanda dated 850-860 AD described how a temple was built in Nalanda at the request of a king of Srivijaya’.

*Southeast Asian Archaeology* (2007)

It plays a particularly important role in the artistic expression of Southeast Asia including Malaysia from that time. In Malaysia the influence of Buddhism in visual art are found in paintings, sculptures and potteries. Since the establishment of Islam in the Southeast Asian region, like Hindu art, Buddhist art forms are restricted in temples and in the compound of private collectors.

### **2.2.3 Islamic Influences in Malaysian Art**

The introduction of Islamic religion and religious practice to Southeast Asia is still somewhat of a debate. European historians have argued that it came through trading contacts with India, whereas some Southeast Asian Muslim scholars claim it was

brought to the region directly from Arabia in the Middle East. Other scholars claim that Muslim Chinese who were engaged in trade introduced it. Reid (1993) professor of history at the University of California states:

‘Muslim influence in Southeast Asia is at least six centuries old, or was present by 1400 A.D. Some argue for origins to at least 1100 A.D. in the earliest areas of Islamic influence, such as in Aceh, northern Sumatra in Indonesia.’

Reid (1993: 151)

The Hindu-Buddhist period of Malaysian history ended with the penetration of Islam into the area. The successful spread of Islam in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines owed much to the introduction of the Quran and other Islamic books of references. Animistic beliefs, or those indigenous to Southeast Asia prior to the impact of Hindu or Theravada Buddhist beliefs, were also slowly replaced. Brought primarily by Indian and Arab traders, there is evidence of the presence of the new religion in the region as early as the thirteenth century. After 1400, Islam became a major influence with the conversion of the Malay-Hindu rulers<sup>19</sup> of Malacca to Islam. From Malacca, Islam spread to other parts of the Malay Peninsula and to the Malay states in Sumatra and along the trade routes throughout the Indonesian archipelago. Once established as the religion of the Malays, Islam profoundly affected Malay society and the Malay way of life.

The arrival of Islam in the Malay Peninsula also led to a shift of design emphasis from that of the earlier Hindu and Buddhist forms and motifs. Farish Noor (2003) wrote:

‘With the consolidation of Islam, there emerged the growing belief that through a comprehension of the working of nature, human being could have better understanding of themselves. Rejecting the humanism and animism of the earlier pagan age, Malay-Muslim artists from the fourteen century onwards began to focus their attention beyond the human form to the external world of nature’

Farish Noor (2003: 16)

The marks of Islamic art in Southeast Asia are subtly embedded in expressions of the artistic heritage. Southeast Asia is, in fact, is noted for its strong cultural foundation where Islamic influences were overlaid on the indigenous culture without diminishing it. In Malaysia, the influences of Islam in Malay art are the combinations of style from the Malay archipelagos (Sumatra, Java, Aceh, and the Islamic Kingdom of Pattani- south of Thailand), during the colonial period- Mughals<sup>20</sup> and Moorish Islamic styles<sup>21</sup> from India, Arabic influences from the Middle East.

The cultures that brought Islam to Southeast Asia made changes to religious life without denting the old concept of divine kingship nor did they affect all the art created by the regions recently converted. For example the mosques that were built to replace temples as places of worship usually looked very much as the temples had. Until the colonial era in the nineteenth century, the region’s mosques- built on stilts and with square, stupa-like roofs- were quite different from what is now considered “Islamic architecture.”

As the Islamic influences are global, so is the diversity of Islamic art style. The uniqueness of Islamic art derives in large part from its longstanding rejection of

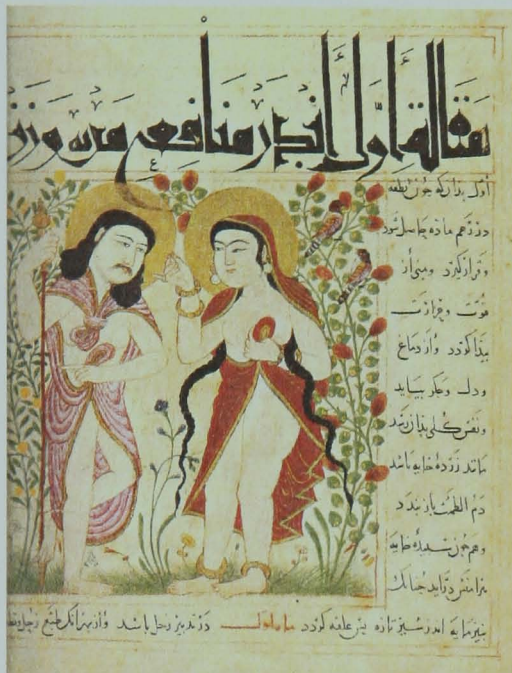
depictions of humans and animals in religious art. Instead of portraits or stories from the Qur'an, mosques and manuscripts are adorned with flourishes of Arabic calligraphy, delicate tile work, layers of gold, intricate floral decorations and geometrical pattern. Attitudes towards figurative art have varied somewhat throughout the course of Islamic history and across different Islamic cultures.

According to Titus Buckhart (2001) in his book *Sacred Art in East and West*, the Quran, the Islamic holy book, does not explicitly prohibit the depiction of human figures; it merely condemns idolatry. There are variations between religious schools and marked differences between different branches of Islam. *Aniconism* is common among fundamentalist Sunni sects such as *Salafis* and *Wahhabis*<sup>22</sup> (which are also often iconoclastic), and less prevalent among liberal movements in Islam. *Shi'a* and mystical orders also have less stringent views on *aniconism*. On the individual level, whether or not specific Muslims believe in *aniconism* may depend on how much credence is given to *hadith* (gospel) and how liberal or strict they are in personal practice. During its early days, *aniconism* in Islam was intended as a measure against idolatry, particularly against the statues worshipped by pagans. Animals and humans appear sporadically throughout the centuries, and there are many surviving examples of beautiful figurative art from the Islamic world, most of which come from the late medieval period in Iran.

In Iran, the Islamic art form has a unique character. Against the common absence of representational imagery in most Islamic art form, Iranian Islamic art uses the iconographic pictorial form. These depict events in the life of Muhammad, the prophets, scenes of Paradise and Hell, battles of Iranian kings, everyday life, and



other human subjects (see **figure 2.7**). This Islamic art style is known as ‘representational art’. It is a form of art in cultures found in Iran-India- where the incorporation human forms in art is acceptable. But after the Iranian revolution in 1979, all form of Islamic ‘representational art’ was forbidden.



**Figure 2.7a** Example of medieval Islamic art from Iran (left) and  
**Figure 2.7b** Example of medieval Islamic art from India (right)

In Malaysia, art adopted a ‘non- representational Islamic art’. This because the Islamic influences in Malaysia was brought from different school of thoughts- the Arabic Peninsula where figurative and human form is disapproved. The following hadith or gospel presents Prophet Muhammad condemning pictures:

Narrated Aisha: (a wife of the Prophet) “I bought a cushion having on it pictures (of animals). When Allah's Apostle saw it, he stood at the door and did not enter. I noticed the sign of disapproval on his face and said, "O Allah's Apostle! I repent to Allah and His Apostle. What sin have I committed?" Allah's Apostle said. "What is this cushion?" I said, "I have bought it for you so that you may sit on it and recline on it." Allah's Apostle said, "The makers of these pictures will be punished on

the Day of Resurrection, and it will be said to them, 'Give life to what you have created (i.e., these pictures).' "The Prophet added, "The Angels of (Mercy) do not enter a house in which there are pictures (of animals)."

Sahih Bukhari 3:34:318 and Sahih Bukhari 7:62:110

The hadith or gospel Sahih Bukhari specifically identified issue pertaining to figurative form which is prohibited in Islamic art. The images of deities that filled the Malay Archipelago were soon replaced by a new aesthetic: the word of God. Figural imagery, whether of people or animals, disappeared almost entirely to a far greater extent than in many other Islamic societies. The Malay Muslim took the words from the book of faith seriously. According to the book of faith:

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God. "

Second Commandment (Exodus 20:4-5)

"Those who paint pictures would be punished on the Day of Resurrection and it would be said to them: Breathe soul into what you have created."

(Hadith, *Sahih Muslim* vol.3, no. 5268)

Hence most of Islamic art in the Islamic world does not favour the figurative subject as an art form. Today, figurative art is widely rejected in Islamic world and in Malaysia; figurative art is considered offensive.

### 2.2.3.1 Malay Islamic Design Principles and Motifs

Apart from Islamic influence in Malaysia art, the Malay cultural practices and the local environment have also provided content for the art. Much of Malaysia was covered with forests. The Malay culture and art has always looked at the nature and its surrounding for artistic inspiration. The progression of Malay art is closely reflecting the cultural practices and traditional way of life. A lot of the art work was represented in the form of wood carvings used as an embellishment or ornamental decoration in houses and boats- which is believed to also protect the homes and livelihood from evil and the elements. Nasir and Talib (2007) Malay master woodcraft artists' state:

The forms and motifs of Malay art in woodcarving have always been associated with the Malay way of life and illustrative of their culture...Many of the traditional motifs had symbolic meanings and formed part of an extensive repertoire of design reflecting their heritage.

Nasir and Talib (2007: 228)

Before the coming of Islam, Malay visual art was influence by animism, Buddhism and Hinduism. As stated in the Asian Centre research study, 'the Malays have an animistic and Hindu heritage, strong influences of both being still evident in many of the traditional beliefs, customs and rituals, as well as in manifestations of artistic expression' (<http://www.theasiancentre.com/> accessed 08/07/2008). Pre-Islamic motifs and elements were commonly found in the Malay art motifs like bird, snakes, monkeys and tigers. These motifs were gradually eliminated when the Malay embraced Islam. They brought a new impetus to the art form- in particular the use of abstract design and motifs based on the cosmos, plant life and calligraphy (see **figure 2.8**). As Islam forbids excess and promotes moderation and humility, these principles



are applied equally to the Malay Islamic art forms. Zakaria Ali (2007) Malaysian a painter states:

‘Originally, decoration and splendour was not the main objective, but artists and architects have added their own creativity and interpretation of artwork to glorify Allah. Symbols are used to balance the negative and positive, to evoke tranquillity and to give praise to Allah’

Zakaria Ali (2007:14)



**Figure 2.8** The use of plant life and calligraphy as art motifs

The use of human and animal forms, unless stylised or abstract is generally forbidden, as this may lead to idolatry. The Malay Islamic art sees the marriage of local cultural and artistic skills within the Islamic teachings which have always stayed away from the imagery and pictorial representation when possible. Muslim Malay artisan begins to adopt the fusion of the Malay-Islamic art style in many of its work. Despite this, some images of God’s creatures persisted in cultural expressions such as in the Malay circumcision ceremonies. A depiction of such Hindu– Buddhist deities as *Garuda* was used. These could be as large as the six-metre-high (twenty feet) palanquins in the shape of a bird known as the *Burung Petala Indra*<sup>23</sup> (see **figure 2.9**) that carried

newly circumcised princes through the crowded streets of Kota Bharu, state of Kelantan on the east coast of Malaysia until the 1930's.



**Figure 2.9** *Burung Petala Indra* or *Garuda*- Hindu-Buddhist influence in Malaysia  
Islamic cultural practice

The bird is one of the few living creatures that turn up regularly in Malay Islamic art. Its most surprising manifestation is on calligraphic batik cloths. Resembling a dove, this representation is composed of letters from Quranic verses or from pseudo-calligraphy intended to resemble holy words. The bird has none of the fearsome aspects of *Garuda*. It looks well-fed and friendly, a symbol of good fortune. This is exactly the role that birds generally play in Islam, although they are seldom depicted as charmingly as in the Malay world. They also appear in the Qur'an. In one reference (Chapter 3, Verse 49), the annunciation to Mary includes the future words of the Prophet Jesus:

"I have come to you,  
With a Sign from your Lord,  
In that I make for you  
Out of clay as it were  
The figure of a bird,  
And breathe into it,



And it becomes a bird  
By God's leave."

Quran (Chapter 3, Verse 49)

In early Malaysia, Islamic art forms were traditionally used in wide variety of items both functional and decorative. As an example the application of Islamic art was seen in architecture – in designs of mosques, *madrassah* (religious school) and in the design of the *surah* (pages from the Quran). (see **figure 2.10**). The local artisan soon began to draw inspiration from the local environment and culture, creating a distinct Malay style of Islamic art. Traces of 'aniconic' motifs were still detectable in the Malay traditional architecture and in the applied art up until the pre-colonial period. It was only until as recent as in the late 1980s sees the expansion usage of Islamic ornamental embellishment and artistic values in the design of a city, sculptures and paintings.



**Figure 2.10** The *Surah* or verses- pages from the Quran. The design uses floral and geometric pattern commonly found in Islamic art

In more recent times there has been a wider search for Malay Islamic meaning. The first is based upon an upsurge in the appreciation of Malay identity, fostered by the National Cultural Congress of 1971. It was an attempt by Malay intellectuals and

artists to re-discover their roots, traditional and cultural form and aesthetic sensibilities. These new development alongside the growing global Islamist movement from the success of the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran (Zakaria, 2007:120), is the second category which re-questioned the materialistic underpinning of a secularist, Western derived modernism. The Malay-Islamic impulses in the arts are vital to the new idea of 'national culture'<sup>24</sup> of the Malaysian.

#### **2.2.4 Other Influences**

There are several other influences in Malaysian visual art development. Besides the major influence of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, other influences in the Malaysian art the styles are from the Chinese immigrants during the maritime trade between Chinese Empire with the Malacca Malay civilisation. There is also a legacy the colonisation of Malacca- first by the Portuguese, then by the Dutch and finally the British. All these influences brought some form of their culture and art style which was assimilated within the Malay culture in the Peninsula.

During the pre-colonial era, Chinese traders and merchant as early as the Ming Dynasty period (1368-1644 CE) settled in the Southeast Asia region from the fourteenth century Malacca and intermarried with the local. Although they considered themselves Chinese, their descendents are known as 'Peranakan' or Straits Chinese. They adopted customs from the Malay culture which resulted in a number of hybrid art style. A Malaysian art historian and collector of Peranakan artefacts, Bong (2007) states:



‘The Peranakan are essentially a long settled Chinese-based group with strong links to the Malay world’

Bong (2007:32)

While Kah Chun, Sanusi Hasan, N.Noordin (1995: 2), academician from Malaysia Science university (USM) states:

The most significant influence introduced by the Chinese traders was their art and architecture. The art influences of the Chinese led to a style called Straits Eclectic that instigated (sic) from the 15<sup>th</sup> century to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

Kah Chun, S.Hasan, N.Noordin (1995: 2)

The legacy that resulted from this assimilation of cultures can be seen in the crafted wood carvings, jewellery, metal work and porcelain. (see **figure 2.11**). The Peranakan art styles uses feminine Chinese icons like the phoenix and peonies in the decorative art as symbol of female and yin elements.



**Figure 2.11** Straits Chinese belt buckle or Pending introduced by the *Peranakan* Chinese now use by the Malay as part of ceremonial costume

The success of Malacca as a trade port city on the ancient East-West spice route soon attracted the attention of European empires. With the demand of the spice trade in Europe, and sanction from the landing rights in the Arab ports, European powers saw



the need to open a trade route to India and the Far East. Led by the Portuguese in 1511, Malacca was captured and this was the beginning of many colonialisations by European empires, a legacy that lasted into the twentieth century.

They brought Christianity to the Malay Peninsula but within over a period of time- until the late nineteenth century the Portuguese influence was largely confined to the Eurasian community of the Portuguese settlement in Malacca. The Portuguese introduced new materials like glazed tiles which enabled new art forms to be developed in Malaysia. The Portuguese influence is most visible in the city of Malacca's architecture.

By the early seventeenth century the Dutch, spearheaded by the Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (VOC) 1602 - 1874), overshadowed the Portuguese as the major European presence in the region<sup>25</sup>. The Dutch took over the Portuguese monopoly of the trade in the Malay Archipelago by 1641. The Dutch have some influence in Malaysia arts and crafts with the introduction of different materials such as gold and crystal which sometimes replaced existing local materials. The waning influence of Dutch financial and military power – combined with the disorder wrought by the murder of Sultan Mahmud, the last Sultan of the Malacca-Johor Empire – aided the British in becoming a major presence in 1824 in the region. By mid eighteenth century, the British had come to dominate trade in India, Southeast Asia and China (Andaya and Andaya 1984). Their presence was to have a profound effect on the peoples of the Malay Peninsula.



**Figure 2.12** Remains of a European style water fountain on Dutch Square in Malacca, Malaysia.

The British colonisation of the Malay Peninsula is the longest colonisation by a European power in Malaysia history. By late eighteenth century, the Malay world was arbitrarily divided into British and Dutch spheres of influence by the Anglo-Dutch treaty of 1824. Under the treaty's agreement, the Dutch evacuated Melaka and renounced all interest in Malaya, while the British recognised Dutch rule over the rest of the East Indies. Penang, Melaka and Singapore were united as the Straits Settlements, ruled by a British Governor in Singapore.

In 1874 the British took the first steps towards bringing the peninsula States under their direct supervision when they imposed the *Pangkor Treaty*<sup>26</sup> on the rulers of Perak and made similar arrangements imposed upon the ruler of the state of Selangor. From their new bases of Pulau Pinang (1786), Singapore (1819) and Melaka (1824), which became known collectively as the Straits Settlements, their influence and power spread into the Malay Peninsula, and the process of political integration of the Malay States of the Peninsula into a modern nation-state began. Thus the borders of modern Malaysia were formed, in complete disregard of ethnic and linguistic factors,

by the colonial power. By 1910 the pattern of British rule in the Malay lands was established. The Straits Settlements were a Crown Colony, ruled by a governor under the supervision of the Colonial Office in London.

The British colonisation is important in Malaysian modern art development.

According to Piyadasa (2007), Malaysian artist and art historian:

‘Colonialisation under the British, introduced secularisation which fostered new individualised, self expressive art making approaches, different from earlier traditional symbolic artistic endeavours’

Piyadasa (2007:105)

The emergence of new multi- racial, urbanised towns during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries accelerated socio-cultural transformations that subsequently introduced modern ideas in the visual arts in Malaysia. Western style paintings were introduced by the British in the nineteenth century, but this type of artistic activity among the locals only began during the early twentieth century. The reason for the slow acceptance of new style in art in the nineteenth century British colony was the Malay-Islamic fears and suspicions of Western education and cultural forms, the lack of exposure of non- Malay immigrants to the Western artistic ideas and non-encouragement of artistic development by the British. But slowly, in the twentieth century there was a paradigm shift from these attitudes. This was partly due to the education received by Malay Muslims in the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States of America.

### **2.3 A Chronology of Public Art Development in Malaysia**

Malaysia has an age-old cultural and historical traditions and its artistic development is complex. Cultures have been meeting and mixing in Malaysia since the beginning of its history. Malaysian political historian Noor (2004) states:

‘For centuries the country had been home to a variety of different ethnic, cultural and religious communities.’

Noor (2004: 1)

He also later states:

‘Within the Malay archipelago itself the movement of peoples – and the languages, cultures, modes of dress, behaviour and living they brought along – had been the norm for more than two thousand years’.

Noor (2004: 1)

Noor’s statements reflect the diversity of the Malaysian socio-cultural make up. During the relatively brief history of public art in Malaysia, its development is traceable to the consequence of historical, social and economic factors. The diversity of the public art practices in Malaysia is a reflection of its cultural traditions, based upon its pluralistic society and exposure to external influences over the centuries. During the pre-independence era, there have been very limited developments in public art practice. This is due to the visual art developments which favours paintings- based upon samples of artwork and the emergence of Malaysian local art group like the United Malaysian Artists (F.M.S) in the 1929 and the Penang Impressionist group in the 1930. The only form of three dimensional objects found in public spaces is the sculptures found in places of worship. A few colonial sculptures were also found in British governmental offices and places where the British

expatriate socialised. The history of modern forms of public art in Malaysia only began in a meaningful way just after independence.

The search for a national identity after the post-independence Malaysia was controlled by chain of events that happen in the newly independent nation that ultimately influenced its artistic development. The race riot in 1969 led to the introduction National Economic Planning (NEP) and the National Cultural Congress of 1971 which evidently influence Malaysia visual art and ultimately influence public art development.

The final chronology in Malaysia public art development sees the search for a Malaysian artistic identity. Influenced by the development of the global Islamic resurgence started in Iran (late 1970s) and supported by the surging spirit of the Malay nationalism, public art took a re-cast in Malaysia. By virtue of the fact that the Traditional Malay art is rooted in the Quran, a proper appreciation of its iconography, morphological and philosophical were employed. This with the development of the country's socio-economic development helps contribute to a hybrid of public art creation in Malaysia.

### **2.3.1 Pre-Independence Development of Modern Visual Art in Malaysia**

British involvement in Malaya had various influences on the local culture including its art and architecture. The emergence of a modern art tradition during pre-independence Malaysia has been attributed to the Westernisation, the British educational system and immigration. Piyadasa (2007) states:

‘A modern Malaysian art tradition emerged from modernisation processes set in motion at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through British Colonisation’

Piyadasa (2007:105)

During the pre independence period, a lot of visual art work in Malaysia was in the form of paintings; and an introduction of Western style education to Malaya allowed for a new approach to the understanding of the nature and the environment. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, colonial artists have captured the beauty of local flora, fauna and tropical landscapes- originally used as a visual record of the geographical record of Malaya.

The style of painting is organised as its composition of the picture were the reminiscent of the great tradition of British landscape paintings pioneered by Constable, Turner, Reynolds and other Victorian painters. Mulyadi Mahmood (2007), a Malaysian artist states:

‘The British contribution to Malaysian art can be traced to the presence of British traveller artists and their naturalistic documentations of beauty of all local landscape, rendered through their scenic topographical view of the place’.

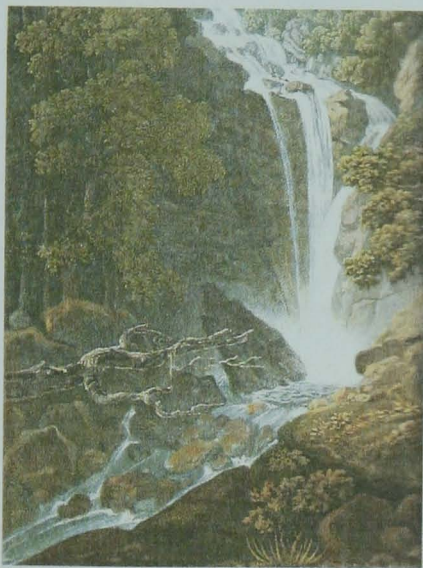
Mulyadi Mahmood (2007: 106)

Based on an essential rational and investigative depiction of the reality, artistic interpretations of the pre independence period differed from earlier symbolic and religious- centred views. The British introduction of the stylistic art was derived from the European Renaissance. This new artistic paradigm allowed for analytical study of the real world and led to the emergence of Naturalism in Western art. By the early 1920s, water colour and oil painting techniques were adopted to portray the Malaysian



scenery. Stylistically, colonial influences in Malaysia in water colour and oil paintings influenced the beginning of Modern Malaysian art movement.

Beginning with the Naturalistic (see **figure 2. 13**) idyllic modes of representation, Malaysian artists later became exposed to the modernist tendencies of the School of Paris introduced by the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts<sup>27</sup> in Singapore- where the teachers were trained abroad and where they were exposed to Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Fauvism and Cubism.



**Figure 2.13** An example of an early oil painting from Penang Island north Malaysia  
*View of the Cascade, Prince's of Wales Island 1818 by William Daniell*

Apart from colonisation, during the pre independence era, education, socio-political developments and immigration of labourers from China and India were an important factors that influenced the development of modern visual art in Malaysia. The arrival of artists from mainland China during the 1930s and 1950s enriched the stylistic experimentations. The Chinese immigrant community was proud of its cultural tradition and promoted art education and Chinese artistic development in the country. The formation of *Nanyang Academy of Fine Art* in Singapore in 1938 is the first art academy in what was then British Malaya.

Singapore was once a part of British Malaya until it became an independent republic in 1965 and was an important art centre in the early development of modern Malaysia art. This is due to its geographical location at the nexus of trading routes during the colonial period; Singapore was an intellectual centre of the region (Harper, 2001:6-13).

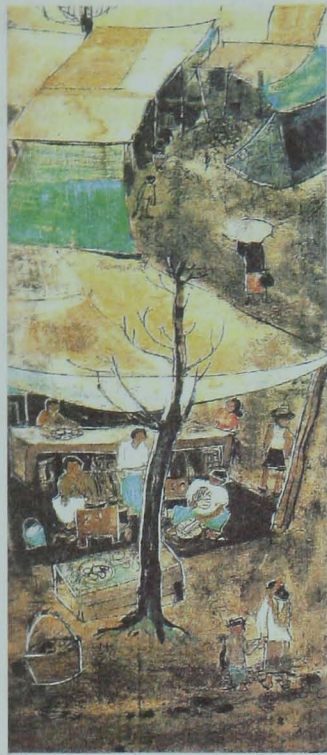
An influx of artists came to Singapore the factors such as its geographical location and multi cultural melting pot status. In particular should be noted contributed to the Chinese influx of intellectuals and artist into Malaya during the 1930s and in the immediate post world war two. According to Mahmmod and Piyadasa (2007):

‘Wealthy Chinese merchants proud of Chinese art and culture work with a group of Chinese intellectual led by *Lim Hak Tai*, started the *Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts*- staffed by artist who had studied modernist art in Paris or in the port city of China. Modelled on the Beaux Art academies of Europe, the academy offered a course in painting and sculpture’

Mahmmod and Piyadasa (2007: 108)

Given their Western and Eastern artistic orientations, *Nanyang* artist would paint in the Chinese and Western style as well as producing experimental work that attempted a synthesis of both artistic traditions. Their Western approach was derived from the various idioms of the School of Paris mixed with forms exist in Chinese paintings. The Nanyang artists’ attempt to produce syncretic art work was marked by a clever invention of Southeast Asian figure type as well as the use of pictorial format derived from traditional Chinese paintings (see **figure 2.14**). The ‘Nanyang School’ modernist artists not only introduced a new sophistication in the search for artistic directions but they also preserved and appropriated their own Chinese artistic tradition at the same time in ways that were innovative.





**Figure 2.14** *Roadside Stall (1962)*- artist Jehan Chan

The growth of a modern art tradition in Malaysia during the pre-independence era is also marked by the emergence of local art groups since the pre war era which provided the impetus for artist from a multi-racial society and background to work and exhibit together. It is an important catalyst in the visual art development- the existence of this groups allowed local artist to come together and participate in artistic activities and compare their knowledge of different styles.

The first art group to be formed in the country was the United Artists, Malaysia (F.M.S) founded in Kuala Lumpur in 1929 (Piyadasa 2007:110). It was made up of Chinese artists whose aims included the preservation of Chinese culture and art, the study of foreign art and the publication of materials related to fine arts. Activities included classes in Chinese calligraphy, ink brush painting and Western oil painting techniques. Other pre war artists group that highly influenced the direction of modern art movement in Malaysia are the Penang Impressionist group founded in 1930, Penang Chinese Art Club in 1936 and Wednesday Art group (WAG) in 1952. The Penang Impressionist

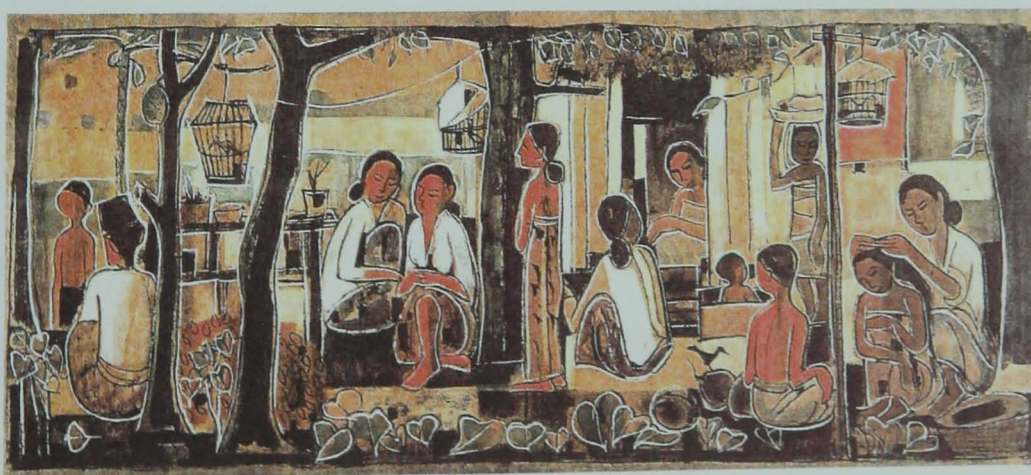


group was founded by colonial resident wives who were responsible for water colour landscape style on the island. According to Piyadasa (2007):

The formation of Wednesday Art group in Kuala Lumpur by Peter Harris an English expatriate and English art educationist was notable for its multi racial membership. Its members were encouraged to find individual approaches to art'

(Piyadasa 2007:110).

The WAG was an influential art group before and after the Malaysian independence, with various degrees of modernist's experimentation. From the formation of many artists group the most noted was the Angkatan Pelukis Semenanjung (APS) formed in 1956 composed of mostly Malay Muslim artists. The group was founded by Mohamad Hoessein Enas, from Java Island. His work is influenced by the 'Beautiful Indies' art movement in Indonesia, and Hossein Enas served as a teacher of the group and introduced a Naturalistic style. The artists from the APS group produced idealised portraits and landscapes that celebrated for the most part the rural Malay world and its inhabitant. (see **figure 2.15**).



**Figure 2.15** *Tropical Life* (1959). The work depict the rural Malay scene- artist Cheong Soo Pieng

## **2.3.2 Pre-Independence Public Art Development (1945-1957)**

### **2.3.2.1 The 'Eurocentric' Era**

In pre-independence Malaysia, there are records of Malaysia using public art to reinforce a city's identity. Public art was employed to beautify the compound of many British administrative buildings and was also used to beautify Mosques to please the Malay Islamic rulers. According to interview participant ACJ1 (2007):

'...in 1910 to 1920's we had the 'City Beautiful movement', where it was first imported from Chicago, and in Malaysia, it (art) was adapted in areas like Masjid Jamek (Mosque located in Kuala Lumpur city center), Masjid Ubudiah (Mosque located in the northern state of Perlis) and Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad (located in Kuala Lumpur's city centre) which were build during that period.'

ACJ1 (2007: 2)

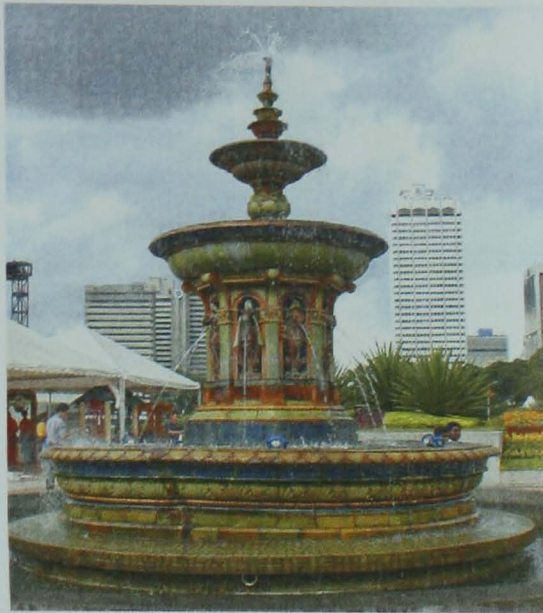
The movement was conceived by leading proponent of the movement, Daniel Burnham, and linked the efforts to Progressivism<sup>28</sup>. A reformation of 'the landscape', he suggested, [would] complement the burgeoning reforms in other areas of society. While other reformers concentrated on improving sanitary conditions or opening missions like Jane Addams' Hull House in Chicago, the City Beautiful leaders (upper-middle class, white and male) believed the emphasis should be on creating a beautiful city, which would in turn inspire its inhabitants to moral and civic virtue. The premise of the movement was the idea that beauty could be an effective social control device. Wilson (1994: 75) states that City Beautiful advocates sought to improve their city through beautification, which would have a number of effects:

1. Social ills would be swept away, as the beauty of the city would inspire civic loyalty and moral rectitude in the impoverished;
2. American cities would be brought to cultural parity with their European competitors through the use of the European Beaux-Arts<sup>29</sup> idiom; and
3. A more inviting city centre might not bring the upper classes back to live, but certainly to work and spend money in the urban areas.

Based on this movement, the British uses public art to help create a colonial administrative city and art was employed to enhance the local environmental conditions and also strengthen pride in the city. Even though the term public art was not popular until the 1980s, the 'City Beautiful' movement in 1920s and 1930s Malaysia is the pioneering example of art in public spaces to encourage a secure and inspiring city. This includes the use public monuments displayed in the course of the pre-independence Malaysia.

Most of the public art in Malaysia at the time of this movement were not only located in religious buildings but also in government offices buildings and squares. The first example of this style in Malaysia and the oldest surviving examples of public art in Malaysia- the water fountain sculpture built by the British in front of the Royal Selangor Club in Kuala Lumpur, where the expatriate community socialised with the local ruling elite between 1890 and 1957 (see to **Figure 2.16**).





**Figure 2.16a** Dataran Merdeka Fountain (1885) Kuala Lumpur (left) and  
**Figure 2.16b** Statue of Sir Francis Light (right) in Penang Island, North of Malaysia-  
 example of colonial sculpture

Other form of public sculpture can be found in Strait Settlement administrative city like the state of Penang where a number of colonial sculptures were located.

Surviving examples are the statue of Sir Francis Light sculpture, and Sir Stanford Raffles sculptures in Singapore (see **figure 2.17**) and the sculpture of the white Rajah of Borneo, Sir James Brooke in Sarawak. But from the 1950s onwards a range of new public art emerged in the urban environment. The examples of public art/ sculptures were very distinctive and revealed an astute aesthetic characteristic that is very 'Eurocentric'.





**Figure 2.17** Sir Stanford Raffles- founder of Singapore (then a part of Malaya)

James Elkins (1995)<sup>30</sup> emphasises the Eurocentric focus of the discipline and its narrow conception of what it is that constitutes 'art' are based upon form of artwork made in accord with the Western concept of art. Therefore non-Western images or subjects neither those which were made outside of the Western concept of art, are seen as in defiance, ignorance, or indifference to the idea of art, and were made in the absence of humanist ideas of artistic value.

Malaysia under colonisation has seen monuments erected to legitimise and perpetuate the political power structures of the British; and they contributed to the imposition of colonial hegemony. Sculptural objects and structures placed in public space have provided sites of ideological contention which have extended far beyond controversies about aesthetics. Public art during the colonial Malaysia and before the pre-independence was 'Western Eurocentric' in its emphasis. It is elitist, ethnically and racially essentialist, politically conservative, and naive about the non-Western

cultural practice. These sculptures that were employed during this period were copied from sculptures found in the western world which was not only used as a tool commemorates the achievement of the colonial founders but it was also employed to remind the subjugated people under its control of their presence.

The employment of Western-Eurocentric content, some consider, is the colonial Europeans believed in the inherent superiority of the 'White -Race' over the non-whites. This discrimination is based on class, colour and religion and without regard to individual and their community's particular merits. This ideology helped legitimise subjugation and the dismantling of the traditional societies of indigenous people all over the colonised world. The 'Eurocentric' sculptural monument largely commemorates political and military figures of the 19<sup>th</sup> century are symptomatic of the imposed monumentalism of a Victorian ideal. Sharp (2005) wrote:

This reflects the authoritian imposition of a colonial city generated public art that celebrates imperial control.

Sharp (2005:1002)

### **2.3.3 Post-Independence Development of Modern Visual Art in Malaysia**

#### **2.3.3.1 Post-Independence Development**

While the development of modern visual art during the pre-independence period was influenced by factors brought by the colonialisaton of the country; there are many events surrounding the development of modern visual art in post-independence Malaysia. Historical and political factors and art education now influenced the development of visual art in post-Independence Malaysia. Events like the independence from the British, the 13 May 1969 race riot incident which led to the

introduction of the National Economic Planning (NEP)<sup>31</sup> and finally with the modernisation of Malaysia in the economic and technology development became a catalyst for art development towards the end of the twentieth century Malaysia.

There was Malaysian modern art resurgence in the years following the Independence. The spirit of the newly independent nation seemed to inject interest in the visual arts together with the support given by the first Prime Minister. Unlike the preceding decades of the 1940s and 1950s, the search for identity started to gain momentum and became more urgent, and decidedly intense in the Post-Independence period of the 1970s and 1980s. Historically, apart from the surging spirit of Malay nationalism, the driving force behind the rejuvenating search for a Malaysian identity is attributed to the two cultural event- the National Cultural Congress of 1971 and the global Islamic resurgence of the 1980s.

Official and political support for art, beginning with the establishment of the Malayan Arts Council in 1952 and culminated in the establishment of the National Art Gallery in 1958, just one year after independence was declared. The British colonial government in Malaya was largely disinterested in the advancement of arts in the country. As stated by Y.JLeng and Piyadasa (2007):

Unlike British India where the introduction of Western art values and the establishment of Western art academies was view as an integral part of the imperial British policy of culturally indoctrinating the mind of Indian intelligentsia, the British in the Malay Peninsula did not view Western type art as vital to their overall plans for governance'

Y.JLeng and Piyadasa (2007: 130)



However in 1952, a group of expatriate and local advocates that included *Mubin Sheppard* <sup>32</sup>, a government official who worked in the Malaya Civil service, Peter Harris <sup>33</sup> - the Art Superintendent in the education department, local artist- Zainal Abidin, PG Lim and a few more recognised the need to preserve local arts and crafts; and activities that will stimulate and encourage Malayan artist.

This led to the formation of the Malayan Art Council in 1952, a non profit organisation whose aims were to promote the development of art and culture of the visual art (among others), to protect local art and crafts, as well as to uplift the standard of art and art appreciation in the Malaya. The Council initiated the idea of establishing a national art gallery to house the work of local artist and an art school for the training artists and craftsmen. The concept of a national art gallery was approved by the first Prime Minister in 1957. The objectives of the National Art Gallery, besides housing and maintaining permanent collection of works by Malaysian artists, was also to exhibit work by local and foreign artist, sponsoring exhibitions and competitions and projecting the country's artistic image overseas through the organisation of travelling exhibitions and participation in international events.

The Ministry of Education has played an important role in the advancement of art during the early post independence era. The main force of art activities during post independence in Malaysia began with art teachers in the Ministry of Education, who were later sent overseas for further education and thus were introduced to the

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international art movements such as Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Cubism, Fauvism, Surrealism, Expressionism, Constructivism, abstract art and further evolution in Modernism and Post Modernism.

By the late 1950's there were increasing number of Malaysian with a western education, and Malaysian artists who pursued artistic studies in art colleges abroad were exposed to Western international avant-garde art impulses. The emotive-expressive Abstract Expressionist idiom was also introduced in the late 1950s. Other artists linked to the abstractionist influences included the New Scene group in the late 1960s and introduced the non emotive 'hard-edged' Constructivist ideas and later, Conceptual art tendencies. During the post independence art movement, education has become the forefront of the development of modern visual art movement in Malaysia. The tendency for early Malayan artists to go to England, Europe and the United States for formal art education in the post-Independence has witnessed more individualised approaches in the search for artistic direction. The visual art development of a post-Independence were systematically promoted in an increase demand for skilled artists and designers with the advent of modernisation and industrialisation process of the country. In the 1960s, newly returned, Western trained artists introduced abstractionist approaches in creativity.

Artists and art teacher who had returned from training abroad become the vanguard of art in the country; some of them being prominent artist as well as art educators contributing greatly to the advancement of art and art education in Malaysia. The Specialist Teacher's Training Institute established in 1960 provided professional training for teachers, thus greatly improving the standard of art teaching in schools.

The School of Art and Design of MARA Institute of Technology established in 1967 provided professional courses for art and design at a diploma level. According to Y.JLeng and Piyadasa (2007):

The establishment of MARA school of Art and Design at the MARA Institute of Technology was a part of a national scheme to provide higher learning education for the indigenous people in an attempt to rectify the economic inequalities among the populace.

Y.JLeng and Piyadasa (2007:131)

From beginning the institution was envisaged to produce art graduates that are needed to fulfill the demand for skilled workforce needed for the new industrialisation development being set for the future.

Complex questions pertaining to the cultural and national identity had surfaced in the mid 1970s, in the wake of the 13 May 1969 inter-racial riots and then the National Cultural Congress in 1971. 13 May 1969 had a significant effect as it shattered the outward appearance of harmony within the newly independent Malaysia. From beneath the placid appearance of national unity suddenly emerged previously suppressed disaccord and tension over perceived economic and political inequality, deep rooted racial insecurities and distrust. Art play an important role in developing good contact and close relationship between people of different cultures. Chalmers (1996) describes art as a:

‘...powerful, pervasive force that helps to shape our attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviours.’

Chalmers (1996: 34)

From the early 1970s the most important art movement was the issues based art that directly addresses and re-question political events. The question of identity raised by the National Cultural Congress gave rise to the uniqueness of Malay art, regional identity, the 'Malaysian-ness' of Malaysian art and other probings into the inner dimension of art, against the background of a developing nation with a multi ethnic pluralistic society. Crouch (1996) states that in 1971, the government sponsored National Cultural Congress adopted three principles to define the national culture:

1. National culture must be based on the indigenous culture of the region
2. Suitable elements from other culture can be accepted as part of the national culture
3. Islam is an important component in molding the national culture

Crouch (1996:166)

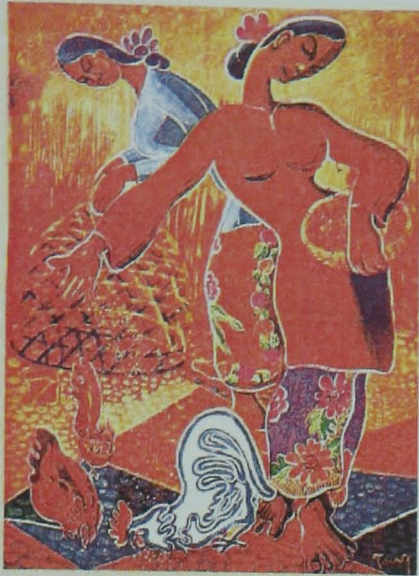
A re- questioning of the dependence on Western Humanistic ideas and self expressive values were initiated by the exhibition "Towards a Mystical Reality" in 1974. The emergence of regional-centered sentiments and the need to define ideas pertaining to a 'national identity' witnessed attempts by some Malay artist to project Malay-Islamic values during the 1980s. The introduction of post-modernist elements from the late 1980s to the present time by the younger generation of figurative artists has marked a new creative approach. It has dealt with sociological issues, politic, race, ethnic marginalisation and gender issues.

#### **2.3.3.2 Modernism to Post Modernism**

"Modernism" is often associated with progress achieved in the area of the arts. It has been described as "a comprehensive term for an international tendency, arising in the poetry, fiction, drama, music, painting, architecture, and other arts of the West in the last years of the nineteenth century and subsequently affecting the character of

twentieth century art”<sup>34</sup>. Nevertheless, it depicts a period of reform. Postmodernism describes movements which both arise from, and react against or reject, trends in modernism. One compact definition is that postmodernism rejects modernism's grand narratives of artistic direction, eradicating the boundaries between high and low forms of art, and disrupting genre's conventions with collision, collage, and fragmentation. Post-modern art holds that all stances are unstable and insincere, and therefore irony, parody, and humour are the only positions that cannot be overturned by critique or revision.

Modern Malaysian artists have borrowed from Southeast Asia's past artistic traditions in the need to project a sense of regional identity and of cultural continuity. Whereas some Malaysian artists had turned to traditional influences and techniques in their attempts to define artistic identity, other artists were exposed to the international avant-garde art context. The first example of work was manifested in the effort of Malaysian artist Chuan Thean Teng, when he uses the *batik*<sup>35</sup> technique on cloth to produce an easel type painting. (see **figure 2.18**). During the early 1950s, he began producing paintings that incorporated this region's traditional batik technique with modern expressionistic figurative influences and bright colour schemes derived from the west. The effort by Chuan Thean Teng, trigger the interest of many Malaysian artists to use a more abstract symbolic approach, employing actual printing block, complex printing and dyeing process and decorative textured effects commonly found in batik paintings.



**Figure 2.18** *Feeding Time* (c.1951) Batik Painting by Chuah Thean Teng

Another artist that employs a stylistic style reflecting an authentic sense of cultural continuity in Malaysia modern art is painter Nik Zainal. He drew his influences from the *Ramayana*<sup>36</sup> mythical stories of the Wayang Kulit (shadow puppet) tradition of Kelantan. These artists successfully forge the traditional artistic tradition with the western ideals without losing the cultural identity of the region.

The development of art in Malaysia sees the move from an emotive abstract art idiom – a romantic underpinnings highlighting ideas of artistic uniqueness, a creative subconsciousness and its emphasis on organic forms and shapes derived from the tropical landscape to abstract Neo-Constructivist tendencies which challenged the emotive-expressionist approach of Abstract Expressionism. Piyadasa (2007) states:

Neo-Constructivist advocates an alternative aesthetics founded on investigative and non emotive orientation. The idea that art can be scientifically programmed and mathematically structured allowed for new perceptual attitudes to emerge.

Piyadasa (2007:112)

The subsequent emergence of Minimalist Art and Conceptual Art developments in 1970s Malaysia was attributed to the artists in this group like Redza Piyadasa (renowned artist, art scholar, author and academician) and Choong Kam Kow (president of Malaysia Institute of Art). The precise, geometric approach in these works reflects affinities with modern architecture and modern packaging design. Since the early 1990's the abstractionist ideal has made a comeback and it has been largely adopted by the Malay-Islamic artists in their attempt to produce contemporary Islamic work. The assumption, among the Muslim artists is that Islam does not encourage figurative character artwork.

Inspired of local socio-political influences and global Islamist movements from the late 1970s, prompted the search for non-secular values and the need to define the Malaysian nationalistic identity within the visual art context. These factors contributed to an attempt as early as the beginning of 1980s by some contemporary Malay artists to draw from their Islamic heritage and produce art works that consciously mirror the Islamic influences. The contemporary Islamic impulses of the late 1970s until present time were notably linked to the Malay artist of the MARA School of Art and Design and their varied experimentation into modern approaches to Islamic art. One manifestation of the Malay-Islamic revival since the late 1970s and the ensuing change in focus by Malay artists was an interest in the use and depiction of Arabic calligraphy. According to painter Zakaria Ali (2007) quoted from the word of Sidi Gazalba- a Islamic scholar in his book *Pandangan Islam tentang Kesenian Islam* (Islam Looks at Art):

‘...that art incorporating calligraphy was indeed permitted because it conveyed the beauty and helped believers to do good and fight evil. Such liberal views provided the more hesitant Muslim artist to

recourse against the prevailing orthodoxy of many *ulama* or religious scholars concerning the making of images'

*Zakaria Ali (2007: 121)*

The first calligraphy exhibition in 1975 organised by Professor Di Raja (Royal Scholastic Advisor to the Malaysian Monarchy) Ungku Aziz and curated by Syed Ahmad Jamal (former director of the Malaysian National Art Gallery) which showcased Arabic scripts (Tuluth, Kufi, Naskh, Farsi, Rika'ah and Tugra scripts) help to foster interest in calligraphy and give the Malaysian public a perspective into the Islamic art. Modern artists saw in the Arabic calligraphy a whole world of expressive forms, one that was plastic and limitless. They managed to change the perception and use of the art from being perceived only as form of conservative religious statement of man-god relationship and re-articulated it into a larger holistic term, namely fashioning the scripts in numbers of ways to generate interest in the general public.

#### **2.3.3.3 Sculpture and Installation Art**

The emergence of modern sculpture and installation art in Malaysia began since after independence. Prior to independence of Malaysia from the British, very few sculptures were used as objects of art that expresses a form of sensory experience and emotion<sup>37</sup>. Few of the pre-independence sculptures still exist to provide an example of public art typology found in Malaysia (see **figure 2.19**).

Much of this changed in the 1950s, and certainly in the 1960s, when Malaysia embraced modern art. According to art historian Laura Fan (2007):

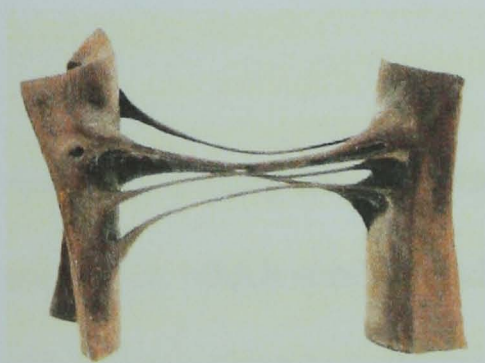


Modern sculpture devoted to the expression of an idea, a specific aesthetic or for formal concerns, without specific spiritual or religious connotation, is largely the product of the twentieth century Malaysia.

Laura Fan (2007:114)

Even though there has been a surge of modern sculpture development, never has been any large production of life-like figurative nudes in Malaysia as there has been in Europe, in emulation of the Classical period. What emerged was a three dimensional practice that is rooted from the Malaysian natural surrounding and the cultural practices of the Malaysian people.

In the 1960s and 1970s, sculptures were use to champion social issues in the country. For example Syed Ahmad Jamal 'The Link' (see **figure 2.19**). The work, a welded metal sculpture is a metaphor about the delicate relationship between entities or persons which denotes the relationship between the newly form government with is colonial predecessor and the politics of its people.



**Figure 2.19** Syed Ahmad Jamal "The Link"

Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, visual art became less prominent during the recession. Malaysia was also deeply affected by this global phenomenon. The strains of the global economic collapse have significantly reduced much of the art development in the country. At the same time, small group of artists brought together

modernism and minimalism together. Artists started to experiment with materials from junkyards- wire, glass and all forms of steel. The series exudes a powerful tension and dramatic energy. The sculptures symbolises the burgeoning concern over the impact of the economy in the country.

By mid 1990s, the world economic recovered and the Malaysian economy improved. With fast urban development and prosperity, visual art development took flight once again. Sculptures were seen as the best medium and tools to communicate to the Malaysian public about government's success restoring the country's economy. Laura Fan (2007) states:

Artists like associate professor Ramlan Abdullah spearheaded the new development in sculpture and exerted a profound influence on the sculpture development of this era. His sculptures often commissioned as public artwork in major cities in Malaysia, demonstrate unique expressiveness of the industrialisation Malaysia have undergone in the recent decade (sic)

Laura Fan (2007: 115)

Artists like Terry Law and Raja Shariman have used sculptures to engage with form and space, which sees the inclusion of the physical environment as part of an important context in sculpture design. Unlike the development of sculptures, installation art in Malaysia is a product of post-independence Malaysia. Installation art in Malaysia emerged in the 1970s and has subsequently played a major role in the nation's art history when it witnessed a fervent debate about the direction of art. Heightened national identity and race relation issues, ushered in the thought provoking and sometime confrontational work of art. Installation art work in Malaysia

looked at the human condition in the modernity, urbanisation and environmental degradation. Laura Fan (2007) wrote:

‘Installation art- with its inclusion of mundane objects and physical spaces, proved to be an effective means to communicate issues relating to the liberty of thoughts’.

Laura Fan (2007:16)

The origin of this form of art making can be traced to the European avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century and to the American art movement of the 1960s. Fundamentally, installation art is shaped by ideas and expressed through objects in space and seek to bridge the gap between art and the viewer through the use of unconventional materials, scale and space- thus bringing the viewer to look closer at the issues being projected.

A key figure in the new artistic development in Malaysia was Redza Piyadasa. With educational background from the United Kingdom and United States, he set about introducing the art style through a series of thought provoking exhibitions introduced in the early 1970s in Kuala Lumpur. The exhibitions titled ‘New Scene’ (1969) and ‘Experimenting 70s’ (1970) and ‘Dokumentasi’ (1972) focused his art into questioning the current events in 1970s Malaysia and the expectation of conventional visual art practices. His art work marked the emergence of conceptual art in Malaysia. Piyadasa proved that thought provoking installation art forced the public audience to question the conventional visual art practice in the country.

From the late 1970s, installation art has had its place in both established and alternative art venues in Malaysia. The former director of the Malaysian National Art Gallery, sought to inject new thinking and fresh ideas into the visual art scene

organised thematic exhibitions- such as 'A Man and His World' (1973) urging Malaysian artists to use installation art as a medium to engage their concerns of the world rapid development at the expense of the environment to the public viewers.

Throughout the 1980s many young artists were encouraged to experiment with installation art by using all forms of material and adopting clear conceptual thinking. As a result, this era produced some of the recent prominent artists in the Southeast Asian region coming from Malaysia like Tan Chin Kuan and Zulkifli Yusoff. Both artists have led the next generation of artists that is sensitive to issue based art. In 2003, Zulkifli was invited to display his work at the fiftieth Venice Biennale. From the 1990s until the present time, a number of the installation artists have emerged in the Malaysian visual art scene. They have lend their reputations to provide a platform for the development of art which incorporates issue based art rather than focusing on art for art's sake.

The development of three dimensional art and installation art has provided movement and change in Malaysian rigid visual art practice and this ideal was the foundation for public art development in Malaysia. By increasingly pushing the boundaries of art conventions, artist have used different media and introduced the use of visual art outside the gallery and into the public domain.

#### **2.3.4 Post Independence Public Art Development (1957 – 1980)**

##### **2.3.4.1 May 13, 1969 Racial Incident**

Major development of public art in Malaysia begins after the independence of Malaysia. Issues pertaining to the emotional anxieties of the newly independent people and uncertainty of the economic development inter-twined with the optimism

of ruling the country successfully have led to the chain of event that cataclysmically influenced a lot of present time socio-cultural and political development in Malaysia. It has also influenced the direction and the development of visual art practices in Malaysia. The May 13 Incident is a term for the Sino-Malay race riots in Kuala Lumpur (then part of the state of Selangor), Malaysia, which began on May 13, 1969. These riots continued for a substantial period of time, leading the government to declare a state of national emergency and suspend Parliament until 1971.

Politics in Malaysia at the time were mainly Malay-based, with an emphasis on special privileges for the Malays and other indigenous Malaysians, grouped together collectively with the Malays under the title of "bumiputra". During that time there were an outburst of Malay passion for Ketuanan Melayu<sup>38</sup>, which in the opinion of some Malays, had not gone far enough in the act of enshrining Malay as the national language. Heated arguments about the nature of Malay privileges, with the mostly Chinese opposition mounting a "Malaysian Malaysia"<sup>39</sup> campaign had contributed to the separation of Singapore on 9 August 1965, and inflamed dissatisfaction on both sides. The causes of the rioting can be analysed to have the same root as the 1964 riots in Singapore, which caused the racial sentiments before the 1969 general election. The incident of the 13 May 1969 racial incident became the starting point for the Malaysian government to use the culture and arts as an anchor to forged a united social achievement of a multi-racial Malaysia.

The introduction of the NEP was a direct result of the incident. Public art in post-13 May was developed based upon the fervent debate about the direction of art- heighten

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by the national identity and race relation issues. Public art was used to encourage sharing of ideas and express emotion through the use of sculpture in a space. This exercise is used to bridge the gap between the races and social background thus bringing the Malaysian people closer to unity. All forms of art were seen as 'a useful' the tool in encouraging the unification of the three major races in Malaysia.

#### **2.3.4.2 National Economic Planning (NEP)**

During British colonial rule, Malays were given certain privileges over their non-Malay counterparts, such as quotas for public scholarships and employment in the civil service. When the Federation of Malaya (West Malaysia) declared independence in 1957, its Constitution contained a provision called Article 153 that provided special rights for the Malays. The Reid Commission<sup>40</sup>, which had drafted the Constitution, stated that: "...in due course the present preferences should be reduced and should ultimately cease". When Malaya merged with Singapore, Sabah, and Sarawak in 1963 to form the Federation of Malaysia, the new Constitution retained Article 153, and the definition of Bumiputra was expanded to include all the indigenous tribes of Sabah and Sarawak in East Malaysia. Due to increasingly strained relations between the federal and state governments, and a dispute over the special rights of Malays, Singapore separated from the Federation in 1965.

The Reid Commission specified that the intent of Article 153 was to address the imbalance between the Chinese and Malays in terms of economic equity. In the period following Malaysian independence, however, the Bumiputra share of the economy did not substantially increase; as late as 1970, it was estimated that Bumiputras held only

2.4% of the economy, with the rest in Chinese and foreign hands. Friction between the Malay and Chinese communities grew, reaching its peak in 1969 during the May 13 race riots.

The government formed a National Operations Council (NOC), led by Tun Abdul Razak. The implementation of the NEP was one of the NOC's first decisions, and the plan had the stated goal of 'eventually eradicating poverty...irrespective of race' through a 'rapidly expanding economy', which would reduce the non-Malay share of the economy in relative terms, while increasing it in absolute terms. The net 'losses' of the non-Malays would go to the Malays, who held just 1.5% of the economy at the time of the May 13 riots. The NEP had the stated goal of poverty eradication and economic restructuring so as to eliminate the identification of ethnicity with economic function.

Apart from bridging the economic gap between the races in the wake of the 13 of May incident, the NEP also was a subscriber to the importance of cultural diversity. This is achievable by employing art as a tool in recognising the multi-culturalism of the Malaysian society. The NEP contributed towards the advancement of art and art education in Malaysia. This has beneficially affected the development of public art in Malaysia. NEP contributions included the establishment of an art school, MARA Institute of Technology, and Specialist Teacher's Training Institute- an institution that later produced prominent Malaysia public artists like Ramlan Abdullah and Datuk Syed Ahmad Jamal; and helped support a Malaysian school of thoughts. Many of Malaysian public artists today have benefited from the NEP program and this has help

ensuring the continuity of Malaysian artistic traditions and preserving cultural heritage.

#### **2.3.4.3 National Cultural Congress 1971**

Officially known as the National Cultural Policy of 1971, the NCP was called into being by the Riots of 1969. Looking at the cause of that ensued after the riots, Malaysian first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman believed that the absence of a singular national identity amongst a multi ethnic population was in part responsible for the violence. The National Cultural Congress was held from August 1971 at University Malaya, jointly organised by the Cultural Division of the Ministry and the Malay Studies Department of University Malaya. Artists, academicians and intellectuals presented a total of fifty-two seminar papers exploring the concept of national, from art to architecture, film to music, theatre to language. The papers were published two years later by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports as *Asas-Asas Kebudayaan Kebangsaan (ASAS) or National Cultural Foundation* (Rowland, 2004: 1).

While all fifty-two seminar papers were included in ASAS, the sum total of the NCP was reduced to three principles. The first states that National Culture would be based on that of the indigenous inhabitants of the region. The second asserts that elements from other cultures, which were suitable and reasonable, might be incorporated into the national culture. Finally, the third principle affirmed that Islam would be a crucial component of the National Culture. The first principle was based on the rationale that the country's culture should reflect the culture of the indigenous communities, which was interpreted as the Malay-Polynesian culture of the region. Indeed, it was a civilisation with a unique ethos shaped by centuries of contact with a variety of



cultures both Eastern and Western. Its adaptability to, and absorption of other cultural and religious influences made it, therefore, an appropriate culture for a multiethnic state. The second principle made provisions for the acceptance of non-indigenous cultures, in recognition of the multi-ethnic make-up of the country. The pre-eminence of Islam in the third principle in turn, was supported by its six hundred year presence in the region, and its position as the official religion, as enshrined in the Constitution.

Prior to 1969, the State was largely absent from the arena of arts and culture. For example, no provisions were made for culture and the arts in the Federal Constitution. Concepts of national culture, where they did appear, tended to be more inclusive. At a seminar entitled “The Cultural Problems of Malaysia in the Context of South East Asia” held in 1967, the Deputy Prime Minister spoke of an inclusive form of national culture, achieved through consensus amongst a multicultural polity. Given the notions of group identity embedded in expressions of culture, the battle over the nature of ‘national’ culture was particularly uncompromising with each ethno-political group asserting its culture and language as distinct markers of identity.

The significant wind of change in the 1990s was the repositioning of culture within the context of the nation’s drive towards industrialised nation status by 2020.

Rowland (2004) states:

Vision 2020 was promoted as the new blueprint for national identity. Announced in 1991, it consists of nine policy challenges, addressing social, economic and nationalist objectives. It envisioned a nation “made of one ‘Bangsa Malaysia’,” in which “Malaysians of all colour

and creed are free to practice and profess their customs, cultures and religious beliefs and yet feel that they belong to one nation.”

Rowland (2004:1)

Rowland’s statement does not mean that a perfect multiculturalism had been achieved simply through the new ideal as encapsulated in Vision 2020. Minority groups had fewer grounds to press for more equitable policies, and conversely, their expressions of culture became less susceptible to attacks of being un-Malaysian. Public confrontation between competing political and ethnic interests was minimised.

At the same time, the Malaysian government began to develop the tourism industry, and by 1996, it had become the second largest source of foreign exchange in the country. The combination of culture and arts with tourism was an ideological reconfiguring of culture and art practices. If before, culture and art were used by the State to produce the officially prescribed “Malaysian”, it was now a commodity. The multicultural nature of Malaysian became an area to be cultivated as a “Malaysia Truly Asia” – which was for external use and not merely an area of contestation over national identity.

The resurgence of Islam began to influence the reading of the NCP principle, which gave Islam the veto power over national culture in the 1970s. At first, it was expressions of culture and art at the center of the NCP, which were subjected to the religious litmus test. The widening Islamic revivalist influence and its entry into the political and social mainstream soon brought heightened moral vigilance from Islam into forms of art and culture at the margins of the national. The impact of this influence clearly carves a distinct identity, where artists were encouraged to only use certain colours, and to eschew sculpture and figurative art, in the name of religion.

## **2.3.5 Contemporary Malaysian Public Art (1980-2007)**

### **2.3.5.1 Malaysian Contemporary Artistic Identity**

Drawing from the Malaysian cultural tradition and the advocacy of Malaysian national identity, public art from the 1980s to the present time has been creatively influenced by the social narratives and the nationalistic ideals. Contemporary Malaysian public art is based on three main influences. The first influence is the search of an Islamic identity in contemporary Malaysian art. The processes of the Islamisation of the Malay Archipelago brought about a cultural revolution that transformed the cultural and artistic characteristic. The revival of Islam and the presence of Muslim Malay artists radically affected the flow, direction and development of contemporary public art in Malaysia. The principles of Islam have provided a concrete framework of references, which encourages many artists with the impulse to be creative, innovative, to creatively explore new ideas, themes and forms: de-synthesising from the secular Western modernism introduced earlier in the Malaysian art.

Public art with an Islamic identity focuses on the idealism and aspiration that is reflective of the Quran and Hadith (gospel) which provided a model for artistic content and form. According to the Quran, a proper appreciation of its iconographical and philosophical dimensions necessitates a brief exposition of the Quranic Vision of Reality particularly concerning the tripartite metaphysical-ontological relationship between God, Man and the Universe. In retrospective the commitment to restore Islam as the central dominating force in art are attested by the approaches, attitude and selected theme or subject matter of the Malaysian artist. Therefore the Malaysian approach to public art was employed base upon the ethos of epistemology and axiological orientation grounded from the Islamic principles.

The second influence is the Malay traditional artistic practice and ethos. The impetus for the development of a national culture was provided by the National Congress on Culture. The key elements of the traditional Malay art style are based upon the reference they make to nature. Nature provided the foundation for constructing ontology and rules of behaviour. The ethic-spiritual nature of Malay concept of beauty is clearly evidenced in the various attributes such as “lembut” (gentle, pliable), “halus” (refine, subtle), “seimbang” (balance, harmony), “teratur” (orderliness, decorum) and “berguna” (beneficial, functional, hospitality), all reflect the perception of an ideal value orientation in Malay society which constitute in the concept of ‘Adab’ (manners, courteous) (Malaysian National Art Gallery, 1992:23). It is this ideal value of ‘Adab’ that determines the essence of Malay identity and personality and which are mirrored in various forms of the creative expression and modes of behaviour. The need to reflect this in the art form lead to the appreciation and re-discovery of the Malay roots, the traditional cultural art form and aesthetic sensibilities.

The final influence of the contemporary public art in Malaysia is marked by the emergence of Conceptual art in Malaysia. Conceptual art in Malaysia sought to confront and examine the urbanisation and environmental conditions with the inclusion of the impact of physical conditioning of a space where the art is sited. For example the work by public artists Chin Wan Kee- “Fragility” (2004) and K.Thangarajoo “Pulse of Independence”(2006) both produces sculptures that is shaped by present central issues surrounding the socio-cultural and political issues in Malaysia.



**Figure 2.20** Contemporary Public artwork which influenced by current issues in the country. K.Thangarajoo (2006) ‘ Pulse of Independence’

The work focuses on validating varied points of view, critiquing institutional discourse and ideology and provides a different way of looking at issues- challenging the narratives dealing with official versions of Malaysian history, issues of ethnicity, identity and socio-political development.

## **2.4 Development of Public Art Practice in Malaysia**

Innovative collaboration and independent initiatives in the late 1980's paved the way for a large, diverse array of artists to move out of the studio and into much larger arena. Taking their cue from these development young Malaysian artists who emerged at the end of the 80's and in the beginning of the decade broke clear from the bounds of convention, separating and compartmentalising mediums, materials and processes. Public art in 1980s Malaysia finally had a viable chance. According to interview participant ACR3 (2006), a public artist and academician from Malaysian University of Technology stated:

‘A lot of recent developments in public art are as a result of the encouragement and the support that was given to the artist to take their art to the people by the leadership of the country’.

ACR3 (2006: 6)

ACR3 concluded that public art is accepted because more Malaysians are being educated in the fundamental aspect art development and art were re-introduced as a commodity in helping to protect and sustain Malaysia's cultural practice. Interview participant ARCH1 and the founder of 'Rimbun Dahan', an organisation that support local artists and sculptors, supported this notion. He states:

‘...now more than ever, a large number of Malaysian have realised that art in general has become a commodity which protects the nationhood and at the same time builds the county's civilisation’

(ARCH1 2006: 5)

In the early 1990s, there was tremendous interest among Malaysian artists in the development of public art. This is reflected in the growth of public artworks, populating and embellishing the Malaysian urban landscape, in major cities like Penang (north of Peninsula Malaysia), Johor Baharu (southern most state in the Peninsula Malaysia) and from Kuala Lumpur to the Federal Territory of Putrajaya. In a new city like the Federal Territory of Putrajaya alone for example, there are almost forty commissioned public artwork within the radius of fifteen kilometres (KWP Putrajaya Report 2005: 5). This exciting development is an encouraging sign as public art takes a bigger role in conceptualising art as means towards social and economic change. This important development was encouraged by the Ministry of Heritage Art and Culture Malaysia. The government body sends Malaysian policy makers abroad to look at examples of public art in the Western world. The Scottish Arts Council (1993) report states:

‘...the arts are an essential element in the national life, contributing to spiritual, social and economic vitality and are legitimate activities for public investment’.

The Scottish Arts Council (1993: 10)



The Ministry of Heritage Art and Culture Malaysia adopted a similar policy and looked at examples and possibilities for the role of art in the reformation of socio-economic development in Malaysian. The Ministry stated that cultures, arts and heritage are the intertwining anchors of a civilisation that underscores every facet of a nation's existence and it need to be promoted, popularised and practised. (Culture, Art and Heritage Report 2004: 8). This statement readily supports the development of all form of artistic activity in Malaysia and this includes public art. Almost all local authorities in Malaysia have a public art programme or similar programme like community art projects for example. The use of public art is not only encouraged and but also being implemented within the cluster of the metropolitan squares in urban areas and used to adorn small towns and villages. Interview participant POLV2 (2006), landscape architect from the Kuala Lumpur City Council reports that:

‘... the Kuala Lumpur City Council offices was gaining the encouragement and support from the federal government and private contributors in forging collaboration and encourage public artwork to be built within the city public spaces’.

POLV2 (2006: 3)

POLV2 observed public art in Malaysia is also given large amount of encouragement due to the government vision to use public art as a tool to create common shared values and strengthen Malaysian multi-cultural diversity. This support Boys (2005) in his keynote speech in the ‘Benefits of Public Art’ symposium, states that:

‘...it is an investment in improving the public realm, and it is public art as purposeful “found space for instrumental action” that tie the relationship between art, architecture and society’.

Boys (2005)



The growth in public artwork projects is also attributed to the substantial sums of money allocated to the development of art and culture in the recent National Development Planning (NDP) (which replaces NEP- National Economic Planning in 1990). The National Development Policy does not only emphasis the importance of visual arts role, sculpture and other genres of art, but also promotes the provision of arts and culture infrastructure in all states by ensuring training facilities in schools and institutions of higher learning (Culture, Arts and Heritage Report 2004). The effect of NEP has resulted in an increased trained Bumiputra artist.

Prior to the NEP, most professionals in the visual art practice were from Nanyang School of Fine Art and most of them were Chinese (from the Mainland of China). Hence the NEP helps to bridge the gap of art elitism in the Malaysian artistic world between two different schools of thoughts and background. The NEP also saw the establishment of the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage was akin to fulfilling the primary need of an artistic and cultured Malaysian. Whilst the NEP helped established the foundation for visual art practices, the NDP promotes and develop contemporary visual art practices with the inclusion of public art as a separate field of activity.

But although public art gained some positive momentum, recent development shows it took a re-butt. Interview participant ACJ1 (2006), urban planner and academician argue:

‘Public art does not have a long tradition in the Malaysian art scene; if it is not seen as economically viable without commercial value, it will not be popular for very long’.

ACJ1 (2006:4)

Evidence suggests that public art has been steadily growing since the mid 1980's and saw its peak in the late 90's. These growths were tied with urban re-generation at the highest point of Malaysian economic growth from 1990 - 1998. Madden (1998) states that the growth or the decline of public art closely reflects to the economic developments of the country and the economic benefits of art. Art in Malaysia is officially accepted as long as it is functional, benefits the public and advocates activities that will significantly develop the country's economic growth.

But interview participant POLV2 (2006: 6) believes that public art used in a beautification programme to attract tourists will encourage better economic growth. The beautification programme it will also 'create a sense of ownership' of the public spaces and can be 'a driver to social renewal'. He later stated that:

'...without that priority, money will not be spent on any type of public artwork especially in the city of Kuala Lumpur'.

POLV2 (2006: 4)

Both ACJ1 and POLV2's statements clearly denote their concerns as there are still a lot of critical issues surrounding the development of public art in Malaysia. To help understand how public art is being used as a mechanism for artistic development, building the socio-economy and work as a tool in the search of a national identity, it is important to first investigate and unravelled the definition of public art in a Malaysian context and use it as a point of reference for a discourse in public art development.

## **2.5. Defining Public Art**

Aside from the famous Tugu Negara or the National Monument (see **figure 2.21a, b**), Dewan Bahasa and Pustaka (Malaysia Institute of Language and Literature) mural

(see **figure 2.22a**) and the Malaysian National Museum mural, (see **figure 2.22b**) most Malaysian only idea of art for the common folk were the odd roadside sculptures seen on their daily journey from and to their homes. No one has taken any serious notice at any of the public sculptures at the parks, in a plaza of a public building or have the desire to admire the public artworks in and around the cities in Malaysia.



**Figure 2.21a** The National Monument 1 and,



**Figure 2.21b** National Monument 2: Cenotaph (right)



**Figure 2.22a** The famous 1960s style mural of the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka building



**Figure 2.22b** The Malaysia National Museum mural

There are still a number of debatable issues surrounding public art in Malaysia. Today public art in Malaysia has phantom quality- even if one comes across public art in the park, it seems to remain in the background, unassuming and blending into the environment. Shunmugam (2005) a public art enthusiast from kakiseni.com- a non governmental artist's association states:

‘Public art is an oxymoron in the Klang Valley where many simply drive past or walk by large art pieces, oblivious to the works, appearance, artist, aim or cost . Christened by many other names like ‘round-a-bouts art’ and ‘Roadside sculpture’ overall, public art in the eyes of Malaysian public is less concrete and less substantial. They are often pieces of sculpture that have the same meaning wherever they are and are not site specific in any profound sense’.

Shunmugam (2005: 2)

YJin Leng (2005) artist-educator wrote:

“Nowadays, public art here (in Malaysia) is mostly used to decorate a public space. So, looking at a public artwork has become more of a voyeuristic rather than a spiritual experience”

YJin Leng (2005:1)

Both Shunmugam and YJin Leng believed that public art in Malaysia has failed to reach its audience. This is due to the fact that majority of the public art commissioned in Malaysia has been removed from its local context and does not reflect and meet the need of the local artistic traditions. The inconsistency and the ambiguity of the public artwork in Malaysian public spaces have lost the profound respect and admiration of its viewers. Hence the presence of these public artworks have been duly acknowledged but not fully appreciated.

There are other possible scenarios why public artwork in Malaysia receives such critique from the local artistic community. Since the late 1970s, some Malaysian artists who have been exposed to the Western avant-garde tendencies, have disregarded and move away from the traditional history and cultural identity of pluralistic Malaysia. This adaptation of Western ideals in many of the commissioned public artworks has displaced the Malaysian context as a subject matter in the design of the artwork. Shunmugam (2005) pointed out that public art in pre-colonial and pre-capitalist South-East Asia, such as the Angkor Watt sculptures in Cambodia, reflected a culture that had a far higher regard for spirituality and community, compared to the modern emphasis on individualism. It was the disregard of the spiritual belief and community cultural practices which is not included in the modern Malaysia practice.

Interview participant ARCH1 (2006) states:

‘Public art loses its place because the artwork does not respond to the public and site demands’.

ARCH1 (2006: 2)

ARCH1 addresses the concern over the relationship between the art work and the context in which it is presented. Removing the artistic context from the local socio-cultural background means that the work will have the tendency to be ignored. The impact of this action will also influence the decision of the public audience and because public art is literally art for the public, removing the public art from its socio-cultural context does beg the question of what will the public gain from the art work.

It is common knowledge that today’s Malaysian public art is a largely state-sponsored initiative and is rarely supported by public subscription. Major funding comes from

the government in the form of the local council and some from the Art Council and a few are supported by private funding. Interview participant ACR3 (2006) states:

‘...because these people (private corporations, public organisation and government office) think they have the power and right to decide and choose, it boils down to what they want and how the public artwork should look, hence taking the public out of the equation’.

ACR3 (2006: 4)

The decision to prescribe which public artwork is best for the public, has obscured public art future development in Malaysia. It seems clear that the autonomy of the bureaucracy to decide the content of the artwork deemed unsuitable from its public, strictly controlled its practice and compromised its attributes. However, government officials argue that much of the public art programme has been consistently motivated by a desire to produce artwork that supports the social benefits of the Malaysian public. This is a basic direction of the federal policies towards the dispersal of public artwork as a working tool towards achieving a national social objective. Therefore the context in which public artwork is being produced is believed by the bureaucracy to advocate towards general prosperity which will give socio-economic and political benefit to the country and its public.

As public art is a relatively new discipline in Malaysia, it lacks a clear definition. As a post-colonial country, Malaysia is used to borrowing most of its artistic impulses and definitions from the Western world. In re-framing the definition of public art in the Malaysian context today, this research has looked into the definitions and terminology of public art used in the West as an impetus for further discussions. This is then put into the context of Malaysian understanding of public art.



Vivien Lovell (1998:1), founder of Public Art Commissions Agency (PACA) stated, “Public art eludes definition”. A question of what public art is and be is crucial and in need of careful defined. Denett (2004) stated:

‘The phrase ‘public art’ is generally accepted as that catch-all term that encompasses the making or placing of art in non gallery settings. Such work is situated in many public spaces in the city and is contextualised by the local social, cultural and political issues and comes with significant probable benefits like the development of national identity, simulating social interaction, encouraging healthier lifestyle, reducing vandalism and crime rate, nurturing grass root culture and expanding and awareness of local culture’.

Denett (2004:2)

An historical approach developed by James M Goode (1973) divides public art into a few recognisable elements. What constitutes as public art includes: “statues, equestrian statues, relief panels, aluminium and bronze doors, fountain, architectural sculpture, pediments and abstract sculptures”. While Boys (2005) states that public art is more that categorisation of physical attributes or recognisable elements. His belief is that public art is for the expression of social meaning and about shared values in society.

Becker (2004:1) concluded that today, public art is almost anything and everything artist can think up, a broad spectrum of activities encompassing almost every aspect of our lives. It could not only belong to and initiated by different artistic practices but also to be based upon where it is sited, either the outside of different spaces or the convention of a gallery and museums. In many sense Becker’s description of public art depends on the decision of where it began and where it is found and what it is

being used for. Both Goode and Becker offer several definitions of public art that have been employed since 1967 in the attempt to arrive at a consensus and a clearly delimited field of activity. While Becker's and Goode's interpretation of public art is based upon the context where their observation were made- in Europe and North America, Shin (1999) an Australian architect and researcher stated that:

‘...besides the ornamental role, public art is re-interpreted as an urban landmark and urban memory in relation to urban design’.

Shin (1999: 8)

Shin's argument was based upon the relatively brief history of public art, which the term ‘public’ has been interpreted as denoting a physical location with the assumption it bears a relationship with a place. As quoted in Harding and Buchler 1997, artist Jeff Kelly states:

“ At some moment in the late 1970s, we crossed an important threshold; we moved beyond sites into places...One might say that while site represents the constituent physical properties of a place- its mass, space, light, duration, location and material processes. A place represents the practical the vernacular, psychological, social, cultural, ceremonial, ethic, economic, political and historical dimension of a site”

(Harding and Buchler 1997:6)

It is important in this research to look at the different contexts in which public art were being presented. Shin's analysis support the view that public art might, despite its mutable and cumulative definitions, take into account work that improves the environment, acts as place marketing, adding to land values and expressive place-making. The definition of public art in the Western world is not dissimilar to the one used in Malaysia today. But apart from some commonalities of Western definitions of

public art, Malaysia's public art has also evolved around the local cultural and artistic aspiration. In Malaysia, this includes issues like religious and cultural practices of the Malaysians, the influence of Malaysian history and development of visual art and finally the economic progression of the country. Agreeing with the notion of public art set by the rest of the world; Malaysia simply examines and adopted the definitions and terminology which suits its socio-cultural and political context.

Apart from religious and cultural practices of the Malaysians, there have also been many discussions surrounding the purpose of public art which in some way influence the definition for public art in Malaysia. Raven (1993) states that 'public art isn't a hero on a horse anymore'. Raven's statement demonstrated that public art has come along way and its function carries profound impact. It no longer sits idle in a square and performs a mundane role- as a monument to beauty. Public art according to Raven's observation has a broader purpose and in Malaysia has taken many forms. Since independence, public art has evolved from the monument to commemorate the colonial masters to become a tool of place-making, and engages with the issues surrounding the country's development.

Miles (1989) states:

“There are four major arguments for public art: It gives a sense of place; it engages the people who use the place; it gives model of imaginative work; it assists in urban regeneration”.

Miles (1989)

Miles and Raven clearly identifies the significant changes in today's value of public art. Today public art have a contemporary value and no longer functions as a traditional monument to commemorate greatness.

The other reason for the readily acceptance of contemporary genre public art is also due the cultural and religious belief in Malaysia. Following a deep preoccupation with the religious themes in the 1980's, Malaysia's artists have continued to innovate with form producing some radical works in sculpture, installation art as well as conventional painting, creating a contemporary arts environment that is filled with positive tension. The history of representation of contemporary Asian art is relatively new in particular with the relationships between traditional practices and new ideas and ways of working. According to the Malaysian Culture, Arts and Heritage Report (2004), Malaysia is unlike countries in Southeast Asia, namely Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. A contemporary art tradition settled and developed in Malaysia somewhat late. Because of this, most of the public art and practice in Malaysia was only fully established in the late 1980's. Before that it started as an imitation of Western realist art; it developed into a formidable abstract expressionist impulse in the 1960's. By the 1970's, Malaysian artists were beginning to explore and infuse their work with indigenous materials and themes.

Contemporary practice deals with two very different cultural traditions and represents clear contestation and conflict in the implementation of ideals in many of the works.

Interview participant GAP4 (2005: 1) in his article 'Public art in Singapore' concluded that:

‘...the problem with public art practices in Southeast Asia is caused by the clashes between two (Western versus Eastern) different ideals, of views and perceptions in which art is being embodied’.

GAP4 (2005: 1)

Interview participant ACR3 (2006) states that most sculptors in Malaysia are mostly Muslim Malays who tend to move away from the western concept of sculptures. ACR3 noted that even though the revelation of employing Islamic visual ideal in public art is relatively a recent development but it is taken seriously. The earlier Western school of thoughts and concept in art are met with disdain. Sabapathy (2005) stated that the development of modern art in Malaysia demonstrates not only the mutability (and durability) of visions in "Art" but also changes in ideas and visions in the social, economic and political life. He explains that the Islamic considerations of many artists clearly mirror the ideological "Islamisation" pervading the social, economic and political life of the country. As ideology goes, institutional power of propagation reflects efficaciously to the artistic expressions.

Because Islam is the key consideration for many Malaysian artists when visioning their ideas for public art, the artwork must abide by certain codes of cultural conduct.

Interview participant POL2 (2006) states:

‘...public art object should not offend the public. Censorship on nudity and gender base as a subject for sculptures are just not accepted and is an example of understanding the cultural sensitivity in local censorship’

POL2 (2006:8)

POL2 highlighted that art rendition without formal control and identifiable moral guide will offend people as nudity and gender based sculpture is not a part of the Asian culture and norms. Hence generally, contemporary public artwork form with reasonable weave of local context is likely favourably to be received and will be keenly embraced and practiced.

The question of censorship is an extremely complex issue especially concerning the allowed style of public artwork in Malaysia. There were some arguments by the non Muslim artists that liberal democracies are supposed to favour freedom of information, speech and expression. However the regulative censorship in Malaysia sees that certain issues are justifiably enforced within the ethical framework of moral and religious agreement- in particular to protect majority belief in a the diverse Malaysian community.

Jensen (1991: 28) suggests that ‘regulative censorship is deliberately prohibitive and is supported by threats and punishment but the form of punishment is subjective’. This is because it is use as a deterrent from future attempts to emulate and reproduce artwork that is not suitable for the public. In Malaysia, artists who cross the censorship regulation will find themselves losing the support of the local council and art council and in the worst possible scenario, of losing future opportunity to participate in future commission.

### **2.5.1 Public Art Identity in Malaysia**

Public art by its nature concerns not only aesthetics, or situated in public space but it is contextualised by social, cultural and political issues. In Malaysia, public art, both defines and is mediated by its spatial location, and as such is part of a social dynamic in which it belongs to. Given the multi-racial, cultural and religious background of Malaysia, the quest for identity has led many Malaysian art practitioners to adopt many different interpretations and approaches. This is because Malaysia’s public art identity is traceable to its elements of ethnicity, regionalism and spirituality of the local culture. This influence was pertinent not only to space within the localised



environment, but also to whole constructed identities such as towns and cities and the process of Islamisation of Malaysia has revolutionised the cultural practice of the country and permeated into its artistic development. Islam became the civilising force which exerted decisive influence on the socio-political and socio-cultural aspects of the predominantly Malay Malaysian.

Apart from this, the search for a Malaysian public art identity is based upon its colonial past and international influence, adopted in the early stage of its art development. While Modernism has had some influences in the making of identity in Malaysian art, modern art movements such as realism, expressionism and impressionism for example found support among many Muslim Malay artists. In this respect the involvement of Malaysian artists with modernist ideals leads to a sense of inner conflict for these artists. Lamya Faruqi (1985) from the *Islamabad National Hira Council* writing about Islam and Art explains:

‘A similar rejection of Traditional Malay values is evidenced in the work of Malay artists of the “Modernist Period”

Lamya Faruqi (1985)

Instead of using abstract and non-representative motifs of calligraphy, geometrical shapes and stylised plants, some Malaysian artist found delight in adopting the Western figurative forms in some artwork. But for a country with such international influences, Malaysia has very little in the way of contemporary or modern public art, and until very recently public art did not feature prominently in its development programmes. Public art practices in Malaysia have undergone significant shifts over the past two decades. While there were a few other examples, including the occasional contemporary mural, nonetheless in Malaysia there was ‘a marked absence

of meaningful and relevant public art and sculpture'. These changes are as described by Kwon (1997) when she suggests three paradigms that are schematically distinguished in public art practices:

1. 'Art in public places': typically a modernist abstract sculpture placed outdoors to 'decorate' or 'enrich' urban spaces, especially plaza areas fronting federal buildings or corporate office ground.
2. 'Art as public spaces' : less object oriented and more site conscious art that sought greater integration between art, architecture and the landscape through collaboration between artist and architects, landscape architects, city planners and the government administrators (local council) in the designing of urban development (and regeneration) such as parks, plazas, promenades and neighbourhoods.
3. 'Art in the public interest': often temporary city based programs focusing on social issues rather than built environment which strives toward the development of politically conscious community events.

Kwon (1997:11)

Kwon's argued that public art has undergone many stages but the most significant ones are how public art has its goal desire to engage with its audience and to create spaces- virtual or imagined within which people can identify themselves. Kwon's observation also indicated that the institutional framing of public art not only distinguishes its value but also generates particular expectations and narratives within culturally specific condition. Appleton (2004) states that only with the development of bourgeois democratic society that we encounter the recognisable 'public art' – which embodies the will, conscious ideals of the people. This has been the catalyst of modern public art and in Malaysia; this shift in public art practices has help to support its present identity.

There is still some confusion over the multi-faceted role and function of public art in Malaysia. For the most part, public art has gone through many trial and errors from the complexity of Malaysian bureaucracy, to a beneficiary of a public artwork. The greatest problem is the lack of critical writing and intelligent media coverage.

Centralised information about Malaysian's public art database is also patchy. There is almost no existing database on public art except for a few surveys on the type, date and sculptor for permanent public sculptures across the country published by private and independent public art enthusiasts like Nusantara.com. Yet this information is crucial for a discourse about public art. So far the most predominant characteristic of public art in Malaysia is the Islamic-Malay artistic flavour- which is provided by the "Malaysia-ness of Malaysian" driving force behind Malaysian artistic creativity.

## **2.6 Chapter Summary**

Piyadasa (1986) wrote a series of articles in *The Malaysian Business Times* about the beginnings of public art in the region:

"Public art shouldn't be some construction just to fill a space but something that gives the nation a sense of pride, history, and celebrates cultural heroes. There is always a heroic quality about public art because it mirrors what the nation is and sums up society's collective memory – something we all need,"

Piyadasa (1986)

Piyadasa's statement clearly suggests the complex question pertaining to the role public art plays in Malaysia at present time and examines the history of the use of public art within diverse contemporary societies in Malaysia. Historically public art in Malaysia has been fostered by the chain of events that have transformed the Malaysian artistic development, the urban landscape and enhanced the aesthetic

experience in projecting an image of the city's cultural richness. This includes an agreement that public art promotes community identity, civic pride and creativity, thus playing an important part in the creation of liveable cities. But there is still lively debate about whether most public art new or old- achieves these goals.

It is accepted that public art in Malaysia took a quantum leap in the early 1970s with the introduction of the National Culture Congress after the post-independence event of the racial unrest in 1969. Artists from different background began to consider the context of their work- social issue based subject and use it as a point for expression. Work in the field resembled a living laboratory, with mixing and matching ideas. A country like Malaysia with shared sense of community, history, religion and nationality, in such social context, claims that public art can contribute to, if not create a community cohesion.

For most part, public artist in Malaysia have learned to adopt with the many social-political event through trial and error. While educational institution in Malaysia have only in the past few years begun to address the multi-faceted of public art. The lack of educational opportunities and limited support for emerging public practice are perhaps the two greatest problem speeding the growth and development of public art in Malaysia

## Notes

<sup>8</sup> The *Orang Asli* is the indigenous minority peoples of Peninsular Malaysia. The name is a Malay term which transliterates as 'original peoples' or 'first peoples.' It is a collective term introduced by anthropologists and administrators for the 18 sub-ethnic groups generally classified for official purposes under Negrito, Senoi and Proto-Malay. (The Orang Asli of Peninsular Malaysia, Nicholas Colin, 1997: 1)

<sup>9</sup> Badan Warisan Malaysia has played a distinctive role in the promotion of the preservation and conservation of Malaysia's built heritage since our formation in 1983 as a Non-Government Organisation, concerned with the conservation and preservation of Malaysia's built heritage. [www.badanwarisan.org.my accessed 22/04/2008]

<sup>10</sup> The Malays have an animistic and Hindu heritage, strong influences of both being still evident in many of the traditional beliefs, customs and rituals, as well as in manifestations of artistic expression. (<http://www.theasiancentre.com/> assessed 08/07/2008)

<sup>11</sup> Srivijaya or Sriwijaya was an ancient Malay kingdom on the island of Sumatra in Indonesia which influenced much of the Malay Archipelago. Munoz, Paul Michel (2006: 171): *Kingdoms of the Indonesian Archipelago and the Malay Peninsula*. Didier Millet Singapore publishing

<sup>12</sup> International Tamil Language Foundation (2000:877). *The Handbook of Tamil Culture and Heritage*. Chicago: International Tamil Language Foundation

<sup>13</sup> In describing the Indian model, it gives a glimpse of the *Langkasuka* intimate political connection with India. Eddin Khoo, Farish Noor (2003:159) 'Kingdom of Langkasuka' accerpt from "The Spirit of Wood" Periplus

<sup>14</sup> Aniconic avoid anthropomorphic representations of the Buddha in human form

<sup>15</sup> Iconic phase suggested that the concept of the "man-god". This expression of the Buddha as a both a man and a god became the iconographic canon for subsequent Buddhist art.

<sup>16</sup> The Mon converted to Theravada Buddhism at a very early point in their history. Unlike other ethnic groups in the region, they seem to have adopted Theravada orthodoxy before coming into contact with Mahayana tendencies, and it is generally believed that the Mon provided the link of transmission conversion from Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism to Theravada Buddhism- D.G.E. HALL, 'BURMA' University of Rangoon, Burma. Third edition (1960: 35)

<sup>17</sup> The time of the Gupta Empire is referred to as Golden Age of India. The traditional Buddha iconography from the Gupta Empire includes the following: sting-fold style drapery; thicker garments; elongated, idealized bodies; "lotus" eyes; thick, "bee stung" lips; scooped, smooth eyebrows; snail shell curls; and distant, meditative gazes. Also, during the Gupta Empire, metal work and various sculptures were made-

Dr. James C. Harle (1974) *Gupta Sculpture (Indian Sculpture of the Fourth to the Sixth Centuries A.D.)* Oxford University Press

<sup>18</sup> The Khmer empire was the largest Empire of South East Asia based in what is now Cambodia. The empire's official religions included Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism, until Theravada Buddhism prevailed after its introduction from Sri Lanka in the 13th century. Michael Freeman, Claude Jacques (2006): *Ancient Angkor*, Asia Books

<sup>19</sup> Parameswara (1344 – 1414) was a Palembang prince of Hindu descent from Srivijaya that founded Malacca around 1402. In the year 1409 he married Malik ul Salih of Pasai's princess, and became a Muslim adopting the Persian title *Shah* and styled himself as Sultan Iskandar Shah- Zain, Sabri (2007) "A History of the Malay Peninsula." Parameswara. [<http://www.sabrizain.org/malaya/parames.htm>- accessed on August 2, 2007].

<sup>19</sup> The Mughal Empire was one of the greatest dynasties of India, spanning over three hundred years from 1526 to 1877 AD. The Mughals were Muslims and they exposed their many subjects to Islamic values and culture. Mughal art is a unique amalgamation of native Indian art with Iranian and European influences- Malaysia Islamic Museum (2002)

<sup>20</sup> Moorish art and architecture, developed in the Maghreb: North Africa and Spain. In Moorish sculpture, stone and wood carvings were used mainly as architectural ornament. K. A. C. Creswell, *A Bibliography of the Architecture, Arts and Crafts of Islam* (1961).

<sup>21</sup> The primary doctrine of Wahhabism is Tawhid, or the uniqueness and unity of God. The terms "Wahhabism" and "Salafism" are often used interchangeably, but Wahhabism has also been called "a particular orientation within Salafism," John L. Esposito (2002: 50) *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam* Oxford University Press US

<sup>22</sup> One of the most astonishing products of Malay visual art was the carved *garuda*-like birds used in the manner of a chariot on important royal occasions. This sacred *garuda* bird, called *Jatayu* or *Jentayu*, appears in one of the two great Hindu epics of India, the *Ramayana*- Farish Noor Eddin Khoo (2003:116) *Spirit of Wood*. Periplus

<sup>23</sup> The National Culture Congress proposed an alternative formulation of culture that included the need to view all ethnic group on the basis of equality and the need to express common cultural values through multiethnic forum- Vidhu Varma (2002:75) *Malaysia: State and Civil Society in Transition* Lynne Rienner Publishers

<sup>24</sup> A group of Dutch merchants decided to circumvent the Portuguese monopoly and in 1613, the Dutch expelled the Portuguese from their *Solor* fort, but were expelled again in 1636 following a re-occupation of the site. VOC trading posts were established in Malacca (Melaka, Malaysia) in 1641. Ricklefs, M.C. (1991:28). *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c.1300, 2nd Edition*. London: MacMillan



<sup>25</sup> The *Pangkor treaty* of 1874 was a treaty signed between the Sir Andrew Clarke on behalf of the British and Raja Abdullah of Perak. The treaty is significant in the Malay states history because it signalled the British official involvement in the Malay states' policies.

<sup>26</sup> Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, (NAFA) is the first art institution in Malaya, which comprised Peninsular Malaysia, and East Malaysia, (Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore before the latter seceded in 1965).

<sup>27</sup> After the 13 May racial riots of 1969, the controversial New Economic Policy—intended to increase proportionately the share of the economic pie of the *bumiputras* ("indigenous people", which includes the majority Malays, but not always the indigenous population) as compared to other ethnic groups. It was launched by Prime Minister Abdul Razak. Malaysia has since maintained a delicate ethno-political balance, with a system of government that has attempted to combine overall economic development with political and economic policies that promote equitable participation of all races. (Jomo Kwame Sundaram 2004. *The New Economic Policy and Inter-ethnic Relations in Malaysia*. UNRISD)

<sup>28</sup> The late Tan Sri Mubin Sheppard is a British expatriate who had a distinguished career serving both the Colonial and the Malaysian government. He was founder of the National Archives, the National Museum and the Muslim Welfare Organization of Malaysia. Badan Warisan Malaysia Heritage Trust, accessed October 11, 2006

<sup>29</sup> The art scene gained momentum through activities of figures such as Peter Harris (b. 1923). In 1951, Peter Harris became Superintendent of Art Education, which saw him being instrumental in the creation of Malaya's first national type primary school art syllabus. In 1952 Peter Harris also started the Wednesday Art Group in Kuala Lumpur and the Penang Art Teachers' Group respectively – these groups were an important nexus of artistic practice and activity through the 50s and 60s.

<sup>30</sup> A Bullock, O Stallybrass, and S Tombley (eds), *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought* (2nd Edn 1988: 539).

<sup>31</sup> Batik is an Indonesian and Malay word and refers to a generic wax-resist dyeing technique used on textile. The word originates from Javanese word "*amba*", meaning "to write" and the Javanese word for dot or point, "*titik*". Malaysian crafts accessed June 2008

<sup>32</sup> Described by English scholars as a Malay literary work of "a Hindu prose narration" with Islamic adjustments. The *Rāmāyana* is an ancient Sanskrit epic attributed to the Hindu sage *Valmiki* and an important part of the Hindu culture. The epic probably reached Malaysia by Javanese traders who brought their shadow play, *Wayang Kulit*. Many changes developed in the Malay version Ramayana and those changes depended upon the local traditions and politics. The Ramayana in Malaysia is used more for entertainment and social education rather than for spiritual or religious purposes. P.L Amin Sweeny *The Ramayana and the Malay Shadow Play*. Vol.37. No.2 (1974:507)

<sup>33</sup> The emotion involving in art is not an emotion in the ordinary meaning of the term. It is experienced more as a “sense” or a “feel”, but it has two characteristics pertaining to emotions: it is automatically immediate and it has an intense profoundly personal (yet undefined) value meaning to the individual experiencing it. Rand quoted by Torres and Kamhi (2000:43)

<sup>34</sup> Progressivism is a political movement that represents the advancement of worker rights and social justice.

<sup>35</sup> The Beaux-Arts style, named for the famous Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, which instructed artists and architects in the necessity of order, dignity, and harmony in their work.

<sup>36</sup> James Elkins, "Art History and Images that are not Art", Arts Bulletin, December 1995, vol. LXXVII, 4,553.

<sup>37</sup> A Malay term for Malay supremacy or Malay dominance - after the National Language Act of 1967

<sup>38</sup> The DAP promoted the concept of a "Malaysian Malaysia", which would deprive the Malays of their special rights under the Constitution of Malaysia

<sup>39</sup> "Preparing for a Program", Time Magazine, 1969: 1

<sup>40</sup> The Constitution was drafted on the basis of a report from the Reid Commission. The commission, which had been formed to lay the groundwork for a Constitution in the run-up to Malaysia's pending independence, released the report in 1957 as the Report of the Federation of Malaya Constitutional Commission 1957 or The Reid Commission Report. (Adam, Ramlah binti, Samuri, Abdul Hakim bin & Fadzil, Muslimin, 2004). *Sejarah Tingkatan 3*. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka

## **Chapter 3**

### **Mapping Current Provision of Public Art Development in Malaysia: Issues with Public Art**

### **3.1 Introduction: Issues with Public art in Malaysia**

This chapter examines and analyses the planning and policies adopted in the development of public art in Malaysia. This is achieved by analysing and examining the Malaysian Laws and Policy on Art and Culture (2006), the National Art Gallery Policy (1958), Local Government Act 171 (2005) and the National Heritage Act 645(2006) - which help the understanding of traceable and non-traceable elements that influenced the Malaysian public art practice. These policies address public art funding, siting and reception of public artwork; promotion and the production of public art and the professional development of public art practices. This chapter also looks at public art policy and the local authority planning system- in response to the growing amount of public art provided via the planning system in Malaysian cities. This study considers how these two areas of work relate to each other.

Finally the literature review in this chapter presents the theory and practice of public art in Malaysia. This is important because it helps to explain the views and perception of public art practices- from issues pertaining to censorship and regulations, the purpose of public art in urban development and regeneration and finally with issues like site-specificity and public art patronage. The findings help to establish the social attitude and of visual approaches which are being employed to help shape public art development in Malaysia. They also help to explain the different methods involved in public art planning, topics and themes which affect the quality of public artwork in the public realm.

### 3.2 The Role of Public Art in Malaysia

The role and concept of public art in Malaysia has changed continuously since it emerged in the late 1970s. Events that took place after independence have significantly influenced the purpose of public art. The development of public art has created a richer appreciation for the value it represents. Presently public art rarely commemorates heroes or events, nor does it symbolise accomplishments and goals. It now appears to function as a community symbol or as a tool for place-making- often its purpose is commercial as well as cultural and aesthetically enhancing its settings. This is often achieved with the employment of a wide variety of images, forms and elements, including materials and techniques, from everyday life, notably popular culture. This has help with the transformation of a setting and appreciation for the artwork. According to Harvest (2004), Executive Director, Arts Council England:

‘Public art has an important role to play in transforming the public realm and contributing to the urban renaissance. The arts are animators – they can inspire and revitalise. Public art, taking art beyond the gallery space and into public spaces, can be an effective way of changing the way people feel about their environment.’

(Harvest 2004: 1)

Harvest presented the notion of public art which he believes leads to a diverse array of activities and purpose that goes beyond purely aesthetic merits. It also helps to build a pattern which helps to enhance people’s experiences of the environment. Shin (1999) stated:

‘Public art is expected to contribute visually and experientially to the quality of life of those who experience it as an element in their daily environment’

Shin (1999:12)

Shin also observed that the public art's role is to instigate a broader potential relationship between the artwork, its setting and the social environment. Shin wrote that artwork placed in public places is the main ingredient of the urban environment and it is the three-dimensional object most closely related to architecture which helps to enhance the spatial experiences of the public. Echoed by broad range of settings, public art animates and provide the public spaces with a desired identity. Miles (1997) wrote:

‘An image of a city... is in part determined by the personal associations the image may conjure, and in part by the viewpoint from which the city is seen... detailing or materials of a building, or a glimpse of a familiar landmark, might suggest a particular place, the image gives little idea of the city as a whole’

Miles (1997:20)

Miles suggests that public art helps people to identify with a place and gives identity to a setting. In Kuala Lumpur for example, public art is used as part of urban ornamentation which plays a crucial role in making the image of city and enlivens the environment. The use of local crafts and fauna for example, helps differentiate and assert a Malaysian identity and helps with the stylistic approach that is unique to the country. Strong visual images borrowed for public art help facilitate a memorable structure and give the city its identity. Miles (1997) states:

‘Because public art acts in the public realm, its critique necessarily extends to a series of overlapping issues, such as the diversity of urban publics and cultures, the functions and gendering of public space, the operation of powers...these issues are as relevant to architecture, urban design and urban planning’

Miles (1997: 1-2)



Miles demonstrates the diversity of public art's roles which necessitate the expression of art in urban space. This disposition and construction of public art helps to transform spaces into places. For any meaningful understanding of public art as an expression of culture and intellectual achievement, it must be viewed in the complex matrix in which it is conceived, commissioned, built and finally received. In Malaysia, public art sometimes is seen as an after-thought. Interview participant ACJ1 (2006) states:

‘...when a new development of township in Malaysia is completed, nobody will think about public art until someone proposes or a private owner wanted to have public sculpture’.

ACJ1 (2006:4)

However, whilst recognising the important role of public art in Malaysia, there have been issues with the utilisation of public art in Malaysian cities and township: issues like the lack of funding and of understanding with the benefits of public art caused the insecurities for the use of public art. According to interview participant ACR3 (2006):

‘The development of public art in Malaysia is still very encouraging. The only problem is with the bureaucracy of local authority. Because they are not well appointed (sic) with the importance of public art in the development of the country, public art was encouraged but its use was not fully endorsed’

ACR3 (2006:1)

This creates a minor set back for public art. But even though ACR's statement highlighted the issue pertaining to the utilisation of public art, the current scope of its role in Malaysia has far exceeded expectations. This has been demonstrated through the country's policy initiatives with the new urban landscape (the Federal Territory of

Putrajaya for example) playing a crucial role in the transformation of Malaysian cities from an industrial to a service-based urban economy. These cities' new urban landscapes are not simply an expression of broader economic and socio-cultural changes, but it also plays an active role in shaping the external and internal image of the cities. Public art is also used to promote the cultural identity of the city, through the use of a diverse range of art forms and design applications.

### **3.2.1 Public Art as Place Making**

An important purpose of public art is to make a city more memorable by giving identity and structure to its public realm (Moughtin et al., 1995:103). According to Gustin (1993) from PUBLICART Los Angeles:

‘... place making is using design talents to bring focus, importance and cohesion to public spaces; to develop images and provide experiences which reflect the historical and cultural essence of a community. It transforms spaces, giving them context and relevance, making them places of community interest and pride’.

Gustin (1993: 1)

In order to understand the creation of identity it helps to look at how people's attachment to particular places requires understanding of their traditional knowledge, cultural practice, forms of communication, and conventions for remembering the past. According to Tomlinson (1999):

‘...before the era of globalisation, there existed local, autonomous, distinct and well-defined, robust and culturally sustaining connections between geographical place and cultural experience. These connections constituted one's – and one's community's ‘cultural identity’. This identity was something people simply ‘had’ as an undisturbed existential

possession, an inheritance, a benefit of traditional long dwelling, of continuity with the past. Identity, then, like language, was not just a description of cultural belonging; it was a sort of collective treasure of local communities’.

Tomlinson (1999: 269)

Tomlinson presented public art which he believes represents the origin or shared characteristics of a person or a community, or with an ideal. Gillian Rose (1995) expresses the same point:

“One way in which identity is connected to a particular place is by feeling that you belong to that place. It’s a place in which you feel comfortable, or at home, because part of how you define yourself is symbolised by certain qualities of that place”

Rose (1995:87-118)

However, there is no inherent identity to places: this is constructed by human behaviour in reaction to places. Daily practices of living and formalised rituals, commemorations, and preservation impart meaning to place and develop identities with places. Monuments, streets, neighbourhoods, buildings, and parks are all material things, but they also evoke specific kinds of meanings and serve as spatial coordinates of identity (Lynch 1972). Humans create “place-images” that become central to daily life and social practice. Material places and their representation are always ideological statements and constitute what Schein refers to as “discourse materialised”<sup>41</sup> (Schein 1997:660). Zukin states:

By the 1990s, it is understood that making a place for the art in the city goes along with establishing a place identity for the city as a whole. No matter how restricted the definition of the art that is

implied, or how few artists are included, or how little the benefits extend to other social group outside certain segments of the middle class, the visibility and viability of a city's symbolic economy plays an important role in the creation of place.

(Zukin 1996:45)

Malaysia has always been looking for an identity which promotes the way of life of its people and situates its socio-political consciousness. This 'imagined identity'<sup>42</sup> – of a socially perfect setting is believed to help encourage social unity and political stability after fifty years of independence. The effort to create a perfect identity is also being reflected with the employment of visual art to help enhance the Malaysian 'cultural identity experience'<sup>43</sup> - often used as a currency for socio-spatial resources, marking of symbolic boundaries and the generation of frontier effects. The search for a Malaysian identity became paramount that so many organisations were involved with its development. Government bodies like the Ministry of Heritage Arts and Culture, Malaysian National Art Gallery, local council and local authorities and even non- governmental associations lend a helping hand to encourage the identity development. Hence the issue of identity demands to be taken seriously. As Paul Gilroy in his article, 'Diaspora and the Detours of Identity' claims:

'We live in a world where identity matters. It matters both as a concept, theoretically, and as a contested fact of contemporary political life. The word itself has acquired a huge contemporary resonance, inside and outside the academic world'

Paul Gilroy (1971:301)

Gilroy supports the notion that identity has been the key issue in the broad processes of political and cultural practice in any nation. Whilst the use of identity in public art has symbolic tradition in which the adornment of the city focuses in an effort of place-making. It is a powerful tool for the declaration of the socio-political and cultural representative of cultural tradition in a country like Malaysia. As put by Benhabib (2000):

Culture is the context within which we need to situate the self, for it is only by the virtue of interpretations orientations and values provided by culture that we can formulate our identities, say ‘who we are’, and ‘where we are coming from’

Benhabib (2000:18)

Public art provides the opportunity to enhance the uniqueness of identity and contemporary image of country like Malaysia. It is done by expressing local identity and distinctiveness; improving and animating public space, enhancing the local economy and developing community spirits and pride.

As a post-colonial country, Malaysia’s quest for a distinct identity has been clearly evident. Malaysia is on the threshold of an exploratory enthusiasm to exert a distinct identity, which becomes the driving force behind the search for recognition by an independent nation. This search is prompted by the need to overcome Western avant-garde artistic ideal that had pervaded in Malaysian Contemporary Art by the late 1970. This also includes replacing the influences posed by the economic and political prowess of the West to a developing nation like Malaysia. Public art is employed to amplify the setting and use as a recipe for a successful exercise in revealing distinctive Malaysian traits to the world.

### 3.2.2 Public art as Social Interventionism

After its independence from Britain in 1957, Malaysia was plagued by issues of social anxiety driven by political-economic factors- with three major ethnic groups looking for their place in the newly independent nation. This situation created a platform to address the role, position, and responsibility of public art and examine the ways public art has engaged with, and socially transformed institutional structures, and challenged social narratives and context.

Public art as social intervention has been identified by Nina Felshin, Mary Jane Jacob and Suzanne Lacy among others, as a complex form of artistic practice. There are works, objects or actions that are emblematic of the social problem or make a political statement. They aim to make a lasting impact on the lives of the individuals involved, to offer productive service to the social network, or contribute to remedying social problems. As Suzanne Lacy (1992) states:

‘...visual art today is becoming...(1) open to community building through art, (2) social representation, and (3) new artists roles in shaping the public agenda’(sic)

Lacy (1992:2)

Miles (1997:164) notes that the value of the new genre public art is, then, in its ability to initiate a continuing process of social criticism and to engage and define the publics on issues. While Kwon has identified new genre art as an ‘artwork in the public interest’. Kwon states:

‘According to Raven, art in the public interest is neither a heroic statue of a man on a horse, or a large- scale abstract sculptures. It is activist and communication in spirit and its mode of expression

encompasses in the variety of traditional media. More importantly ...art in the public interest forged a direct connection with social issues’.

Kwon (1998:3)

While much of the nation after the independence was orientated and controlled by the need to develop into an industrial spirit, Malaysia’s breakthrough of new social expressions came in the 1970’s after the 1969 racial incident. Prompted by this event, the use of public art as social intervention was asserted in both the works and statements made by artists. Its main purpose is simple- to eradicate all ill feelings and create a tool to foster ease of social dialogue, cutting across racial stereotypes between Malaysian. Artists like Redza Piyadasa, Nadiah Bamadhaj, Chin Wan Kee and Yee I-Lann mark a new role for the Malaysian art scene- commenting on socio-political issues, and nurturing a casual tone for positive criticism previously rarely attempted by Malaysian artists (see **figure 3.1**).



**Figure 3.1** ‘To Be or Not To Be’ (2004)

Using public art as a tool for social intervention encourages a great deal of provocative discussion about the social function of art as well as some inspiring examples of what can happen when artists seriously work for social change.



According to a review of Suzanne Lacy's 'Mapping the Terrain', Eleanor Heartney (1995:1) states that Lacy linked the emergence of 'new genre' public art to the thread that runs through to the '70s-style media interventions and activism, to feminist art and to the type of current work that focuses on identity politics and other political issues. Since the September 11 event that unfolded in the United States, public art in Malaysia has been used to express concern over world events that have a direct impact on aspect of socio-political practice. In an article at Kakiseni.com- Malaysian arts portal, B.Y (2003) a Malaysian art writer and gallery owner states:

‘In 2001, important issues like rootedness, (sic) and racial classification inspired many artists to “go to the land” both for inspiration and for actual material, with poignant and provocative results. The current selection is generally anti-Western imperialist in tone. A number of artists cast an angry or despairing look at global political dynamics post 9-11, often using the language of publicity media.’

B.Y (2003:1)

B.Y's comment corresponds to the swathe of current world events and global crises that provide context for public art. Public art was in this instance used to generate awareness of the social ill and anxiety which affect Malaysians' socio-political standing in general. In August 2007 public art in Malaysia was used to celebrate fifty years of independence, offering discussion of issues ranging from the economic development, struggles for social change and national unity (among many others). This was used to challenge and develop social awareness in the effort of nation building among Malaysian youth. This exercise is similar to the notion supported by Sandle (2000) as he wrote:

‘Such a project is concerned not only with urban aesthetics but the role of public art in social facilitation, creating shared spaces and images to encourage social discourse and community well being’

Sandle (2000:8)

Sandle highlighted the significant importance of the role of public art within the socio-economic geography and broader course of ideological and cultural issues. He later concluded that cities and their spaces are construct that are both defined by the socio-cultural identities, and within such roles of public art can be paramount (Sandle 2000:12).

### **3.2.3 Public Art as Publicity**

In ‘Public art as Publicity’, Kwon (2002:1) discussed art historian Frazer Ward’s ‘modes of communication’ (publicity) over the ‘site of communication’ (public sphere), encouraging a shift of thinking about the function of art as a form of publicity<sup>44</sup>. To understand how public art is being employed as a tool for publicity enforced by the power of authorities, it is crucial to look at Raymond Williams’s (1961) essay "Communications and Community". He proposes four modes of communicative practices which have an evolutionary development - from authoritarian, to paternalistic, to commercial, and to the democratic.

For this research two of the four categories of the systems of communication or modes of publicity (authoritarian and paternalistic) were highlighted to help understand

the ways in which public art practices in the Malaysia have developed in the past three decades. Kwon (2002) states:

According to Williams, in an authoritarian system of communication a ruling group controls the society of the ruled, and all institutions of communication are in its control. It represses and excludes those ideas that threaten its authority. No individual or group is allowed to create its own communication system. It is a system in which there is only one way of seeing the world, with one set of rigid values, and these are imposed by a few over many.

Kwon (et al, 2002:1)

Williams (1961: 22 )<sup>45</sup> characterises an authoritarian mode of communication as a form of ultimate autonomy visually and physically, and it functions as a testimony to a specific form of opinion set by the authority<sup>46</sup>. This form of system dictates the context of the artwork, and it performs as signature to a prescribed style. Public art in this mode is imposed on the public sphere, and the context of the artwork is controlled by enforcing the ideology set by the artists or the state. The Authoritarian concept implies that the artwork asserts its autonomy visually and physically, and it is controlled by its content, judged by a series of complex legal relationships often intertwined with a series of administrative, political and funding considerations. In Malaysia, this category predominantly controls public art creation, often dictating the context and form of the artwork. Interview participant ACR3 (2006) states:

The whole idea about the implementation of public art goes back to the people (agencies, organisations or state) who financed the commissioning. In a way they dictate the whole situation- from the commissioning process, type of artwork and location)...because they

think they hold the power to decide and choose, it finally boils down to them what they want'

ACR3 (2006:2)

The next form of communication is known as the paternalistic mode of communication . It is an authoritarian form of communication with a conscience – it claims to have the benefit of the society in mind. According to Kwon (2002):

Claiming a benevolent attitude of giving guidance, education, and improvement to the ruled, the ruling group regards its majority of subjects as if they are children who do not know what is best for them. The minority that is in power is driven by a sense of responsibility and duty to do good, to provide "public service," to the majority that is seen in some sense as backward and lacking. Interestingly, the underlying presumption is that the ruling group's superiority will eventually disappear when others "grow up" to be like the adults.

Kwon (et al, 2002:2)

The Paternalistic form of communication is more exposed and vulnerable than the authoritarian system but problematic nonetheless in terms of localisation of power and control (Williams 1961). Essentially Williams suggests that paternalistic forms of communication operate upon artists and architects, as well as the sponsoring government agency. Assuming that they know what is best and what is good for the public - such efforts accommodated corporate interests keen on real estate development, too. Artists are recruited, in other words, to provide amenities that would increase the property value of certain buildings and zones of gentrification.

This mode of presentation is commonly practiced where public art is employed based upon the presumption that the authority (architect, artist and government agency) is driven by a sense of responsibility to provide the best possible purpose for the public. Its panels and committees of selected experts decide the fate of public art commissions, with the purpose of bringing the "best" accomplishments in art to a general public (Kwon, 2002). Kwon later states:

The public would benefit from the presence of great art in the spaces of everyday life, and that the government, with the aid of art experts, can function to provide such educational and elevating experiences to its people.

Kwon (et al, 2002:2)

These two modes of communication have significantly influenced public art and form the background of all public artwork in the public spheres in Malaysia. Public art as publicity has not only been exploited to represent the artists intentions and trademarks, but it has also been employed to advertise authoritarian rules and their ideology. The ruling authority in Malaysia has employed the production of public art to publicise and paint a picture of their success in stimulating the country's growth and popularity to secure further support for their agenda.

### **3.3 Public Art Policies and Planning**

Malaysia at the present time does not have a dedicated public art policy unlike the neighbouring countries like Singapore and Thailand. The closest to a public art policy are the collections of few different enactment and policies which are used as guidelines. This 'policy' is supported by additional documentations borrowed from public art programmes and policies from international jurisdictions- like Singapore.

the United Kingdom and the United States. The agglomeration of these documents resulted into a public art consultative directive and a well informed guideline.

The Malaysian Law and Policy on Art and Culture 2007 and three enactments (Act 168, Act 511 and NAG Act 1959) are currently being used as references when employing public art in public spaces. These documents helps monitor and provides the framework for the creation and provision of art in publicly accessible spaces around Malaysian cities. These documents collectively recommends the Malaysian cities authorities to actively pursue a programme of the placement of art in public spaces which includes public buildings such as the City Hall, to parks, walkways, and public transportation areas like ‘Light Rail Transit System’ stations, bus/coach depots and train stations. For example the Local Government Act 171 document recommends for the placement of art in “private spaces which are publicly accessible”, where the private sector wishes to participate. The act recommends:

This will include “...artwork which is accessible to the public and has aesthetic qualities. The artwork can be permanent, semi-permanent, functional, temporary, and includes all forms of art”.

(Act 171:64)

This is done in order to encourage the involvement of the private sector and to maximise the ways and sites where public art can be experienced. At the same time it does not mean the imposition of public art into privately owned spaces

### 3.3.1 Malaysia Laws and Policy on Art and Culture

The purpose of the Malaysian Laws and Policy on Art and Culture is to work as legal foundations to ensure a comprehensive art and cultural legislation. This policy are derived upon a number of acts and regulations like the ‘Antiquities Act 1976 (Act 168), National Art Gallery Act (1959), National Archive Act 1996 (Act 44, revised 1971 as Act A85, revised 1993 Act 511), Tourist Development Corporation of Malaysia Act 1972 (Act 1972) and Theatres and Places of Public (Federal Territory) Act 1988 (act 182) among many others. First, the general directive of the Malaysian policy on art and culture is to ‘recognise and initiate cultural and art programmes that are instrumental to improve the quality of life and to promote national integration’. (Laws and Policy on Art and Culture, 2007:3).

The Laws and Policy on Art and Culture, 2007 also identifies:

‘...the role of art and culture in development of the country- “as to ensure the liberal approach to the rich and diverse cultural traditions and build a progressive society that shall be oriented to modern science and technology”

Laws and Policy on Art and Culture (2007:4)

This suggests that any form of artwork must first consider its content to suit the diversity of Malaysian ethnic, cultural and religious background. The Malaysian Law and Policy on Art and Culture also provide a rationale for the overlapping policy objectives in the employment of art and culture, and used as a template for urban regeneration. As Malaysia envisioned itself in attaining the status of a ‘fully developed nation’ by the year 2020, and the emphasis of this policy is for Malaysia to be fully developed in all dimensions. The Laws and Policy on Art and Culture also states:



‘...the thrust of this vision is to “develop an information-rich society, imbued with the science and technology of art and culture”.

Laws and Policy on Art and Culture (2007:4)

Art can be used to help generate a ‘socially rich and cultured’ Malaysian. In return, the artwork that is employed is believed to provide Malaysian citizen with an aesthetically excellent infrastructure and helps energise the economy. The positive impact of this policy is not only to ‘fulfil the goal to build a culturally united Malaysian nation’, creating a psychologically liberated, secure and developed Malaysian society but also a fair and equitable distribution of wealth within the nation.

The policy places the responsibility of the development of art and culture in Malaysia onto the cultural division of the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism (now the Ministry of Heritage Arts and Culture) - which will plan, monitor and coordinate all art and cultural activities and projects at the federal and state level, to ensure the consistency with the ideal of the National Cultural Policy. (Laws and Policy on Art and Culture, 2007:4). In the policy it states:

‘The Ministry is given the responsibility to plan art and cultural infrastructure and facilities for the artists and performing groups to cater to the local public as well as tourists and strengthen art and cultural understanding and bi-literal cooperation with foreign countries’

(Laws and Policy on Art and Culture, 2007:4).

This statement highlighted the function of the cultural and art offices to establish organise and manage all form of art and cultural development programmes.

maintaining an ‘inculcating appreciation and love of culture through art and to assist the government in the promotion and development of culture and the arts.

Under this policy, the Ministry of Heritage Arts and Culture act as a custodian to the Malaysian National Art Gallery. The National Art Gallery (NAG) was established under the National Art Gallery Act, 1959. The National Art Gallery act as the initiator and educator for the development of the arts in Malaysia and is ‘responsible for collecting Malaysian artworks, organising exhibitions, supporting art programmes locally and abroad, including public art siting in public places, organising seminars, symposiums, colloquiums and promoting the learning and developments of visual art among member of the society’. (Laws and Policy on Art and Culture, 2007:7). The NAG was also given the mandate to act as a centre for research on Malaysian arts.

The policy also provides the guidelines for financing art and cultural activities. All levels of authorities (federal, state, municipalities and institutions) who are involved with the promotion of art and culture, will be allocated a certain portion of its ‘National Development Plan’ budget in encouraging Malaysians to ‘create works of arts and to instil greater aesthetic values especially to the appreciation and preservation of arts, culture and heritage’ (Laws and Policy on Art and Culture, 2007:10). For example in 1996, to ensure the enrichment of art and culture, the Malaysian Federal government has allocated a sum of RM73.71 million Ringgit for the development and promotion of arts and culture in country.

The government, through the Ministry of Heritage Arts and Culture, provides financial aid to art and cultural organisations at the federal, state and district level.

The Ministry of Heritage Arts and Culture collaborates with institutes of higher learning, private companies and public agencies, enabling art and cultural organisations to implement projects of high quality status, creating a network for communication and instilling cooperation between these organisations and agencies. The Malaysian government expenditure on art and culture as a percentage of total expenditure in 1996 for example can be seen in the following table:

Year	Total government Expenditure in RM	Expenditure on arts and culture	Share (%)
1980	20,724,348,256	47,732,806	0.23%
1985	29,191,096,194	58,860,149	0.20%
1990	33,405,637,300	137,284,450	0.41%
1995	48,797,932,300	554,721,130	1.14%
1996	55,467,290,400	316,329,000	0.57%

**Figure 3.2** Source: Malaysia National Budget Plan for 1980,1985,1990,1995 and 1996. (Laws and Policy on Art and Culture, 2007:11).

In the policy, it is also stated that the Malaysian government encourages the private and public sector to contribute towards the enriching the arts and reviving the national heritage. To spur this development the government has provided tax deduction initiatives and the tax deduction will be given when:

1. Cash contributions to the trust account under the Ministry of Heritage, Arts and Culture to sponsor cultural performance and art in public spaces which is recognised as national culture;
2. Expenditure for the establishment of a 'in-house' cultural and performing groups, visual art groups whose activities are in line with the National Cultural Policy;
3. Cash contributions to the trust account under the Department of Museum and Antiquities and the National Archives for the purpose of financing research

and implementing specific activities related to the conservation of the national heritage.

(Laws and Policy on Art and Culture, 2007:11).

In addition to this, the government provides financial assistance to the arts and culture organisations/ bodies, apart from advises, guidance and other form of facilities. For example in 1996, a sum of RM480, 000 were spent to carry out arts and cultural activities for the public by the NGO art and cultural agencies.

The Malaysian Laws and Policy on Arts and Culture has helped to provide guidelines and underline the continuous effort by the Malaysian federal government in encouraging and developing arts and cultural activities. This policy oversees and is responsible for the overall policy setting in the absence of a dedicated Public Art Policy. In balancing these roles, the policy plays a pivotal part in enabling the development of economic, environmental, social and leisure interests of residents, businesses and visitors. This is because achieving equilibrium in these three areas will ensure in the health of the natural and built environment.

### **3.3.2 National Art Gallery Policy (1959)**

The National Art Gallery policy was clearly articulated to provide guidelines for art policy in Malaysia. In 1959, the first policy was produced, it was revised 1971 (but no formal changes were made) and finally in 1994, minor changes was made to articulate some points as to identify the role that the gallery should play in the absence of a clear-cut policy.

This policy is also employed to explain the scope and function of NAG and to provide the framework for the role of the artists and the content of the artwork in accordance to the National Culture Policy. Working in parallel to the Law and Policy in Arts and Culture, the NAG Policy (1959:3) explains the provision in which the NAG:

1. To serve three broad categories which is the Nation, The Southeast Asian region, the public and the artists
2. Aim at creating a healthy climate for the preservation of the nation's art and crafts as well as one which is conducive to exploration and experimentation by artists of the present and the future.
3. The NAG should liaise with other cultural bodies in the country to establish integrated programmes for promoting cultural participation by the public.
4. The NAG is the nation's trustee for presenting Malaysian art and artists abroad.

The National Art Gallery policy functions as legal advice to all form of art activities and programmes which includes the use of art outside the traditional gallery format.

The formulation of the policy was based upon the consideration of:

1. While an art gallery is principally concern with art exhibitions, the scope of a National Art Gallery in a developing country like Malaysia should extend beyond that role. It should give foremost consideration to the pedagogic function of bridging the gap between the artist and the public.
2. Malaysia is fast becoming urbanised with the accompanying danger that old values may become irrelevant, new ones not well understood and the emerging cultural consciousness merely superficial and imitative. In this context, the National Art Gallery has clearly recognisable function to initiate, and insist upon, the most vital, pertinent, original and highest level of art
3. Whilst it may be true that the absence of inhibiting influences from the past result in a fervour of creative expressions, there is a danger in Malaysia today

that a haphazard search for 'National Identity' can also result in self-conscious artificiality which some may take advantage of for its own sake. Hackneyed cliché should not therefore be mistaken for the incipient characteristics of contemporary culture.

National Art Gallery Policy (1959:2)

This consideration in the art policy signifies the role of the National Art Gallery in maintaining the function of art in line with the Malaysian National Identity. This policy also helps to explain the role of NAG in educating and bridging the gap for the understanding of art and create a healthy climate for the development of 'high standard' artistic products.

Finally the other main role of this policy is the pedagogic function. This role is based upon the gap that exists between the artists, the artwork and the public is far greater than that which exists in the Western world. Hence the NAG policy is used to help educate Malaysia with the value of art and bridge the gap between the artwork, the artist and the public. Bridging the gap was developed by providing a centre for research and documentation where the 'propagation and cross-fertilisation of creative ideas pertaining to visual art can be evident to the public' (National Art gallery Policy, 1959:4)

The NAG also emphasises the education of the Malaysian public as part of the policy through properly structures activities involving art history and art appreciation. In the policy, NAG is also responsible for providing a sound reference library complete with publications of art journals and occasional monographs incorporating professional thoughts both on current and traditional art practice so that a greater number of people

can be more fully involved in art. This is seen as an incentive where the NAG organise lectures and discussions on professional matters relating to arts and encourages higher learning institutions to contribute original intellectual art knowledge pertaining to the visual arts.

### **3.3.3 Local Government ACT 171 (1976)**

The rate of urbanisation tends to correlate significantly with economic growth.

According to Elena Irwin(2005):

‘Economic growth and urbanisation are inextricably linked. Economic growth often implies the conversion of rural land to urban uses as regional economies transition from an agrarian-based economy to an urban economy based on industry and service.’

Irwin (2005:1)

One inevitable consequence of this structural change and the consequent rapid economic growth, that has averaged an impressive eight per cent per annum in the past decade, has been the increasing urbanisation of the country. In fact, in 1980 the population living in urban areas was thirty five per cent but this figure has risen to fifty five per cent in 1995 (Malaysia 1996: 154). The impact of rapid growth and urbanisation is naturally reflected in the number of people living in local authority areas. According to a study made by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government in 1988, sixty eight per cent of the population in Malaysia live in local authority areas and make demands upon urban services (MHLG 1988). As noted by Davey (1993):

"The role of urban government in managing urban growth cannot be taken for granted in the context of today's debate".

Davey (1993: 12)



The enlargement of urban areas also means an increase in the problems, needs and complexities relating to urban governance. To help the local authorities to control and assist with any form of decision making Local Government ACT171 was introduced in 1976. The Local Government Act 171 is responsible for public health and sanitation, waste removal and management, town planning, environmental protection and building control, social and economic development and general maintenance functions of urban infrastructure. Within this act, it stated the general directive on the local authority power to make by-laws (section 101 of act 171) to:

1. Monitor and regulate “the layout and construct any or open space the property of the local authority by any architectural scheme or ornamentation including the erection of statues, fountain or other structures<sup>47..</sup>
2. To establish, erect and maintain public monuments and memorials and to make and receive grants of money towards the establishment or maintenance thereof

(Local Government Act171: 64).

In this provision, the local councils have the rights of control, monitor and regulate over the content and type of public artwork, and the siting of such structures. This act also stipulates that before any public artwork is to be commissioned, either the local, district or municipal authority must be consulted to guarantee the content and context of the public artwork is within the high ethical standards in accordance to the Malaysian cultural norm.

Under the Local Government Act (1976:31) every local authority is given the power to provide general guidelines for funding by the state authority which includes the employment of public artworks. The local authority under their discretion are

mandated to either support or to refuse funding or request of funding as a result of the implementation of local government reform, in which local authorities shall see fit if the implementation of such work is justifiable according to the socio-economic needs.

In view of the emergence of new issues as well as old ones such as urban congestion, urban poverty, environmental degradations and social ills coupled with increasing demands for recreational and leisure facilities of a growing middle class and a more affluent section of society, this act help local authority to review the distribution and source of finance for future urbanisation project.

#### **3.3.4 National Heritage ACT 645 (2005)**

The National Heritage Act 2005 is an Act to provide for the conservation and preservation of National Heritage, natural heritage, tangible<sup>48</sup> and intangible cultural heritage, underwater cultural heritage, treasure trove and related matters. It received Royal Assent on 30 December 2005 and was published in the Gazette on 31 December 2005. The National Heritage Act 2005 came into effect on 1 March 2006. This act helps to assist the art authorities to protect and preserve all form of artwork that is seen to be a valuable asset to the countries cultural and artistic development/practice.

The act also state the policy in relation to conservation and preservation of heritage are subject to subsection (2) which states that ‘In this Act, references to the State Authority’’ in relation to the: Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, the Federal Territory of Labuan and the Federal Territory of Putrajaya shall be construed as references to

the Minister responsible for the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, the Federal Territory of Labuan and the Federal Territory of Putrajaya'. (National Heritage Act 2005:102)

Under the protection of this act the type of public artwork that would be preserved are based upon and in accordance to: In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires:

- "Building" means a building or groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science
- "monument" means architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;

(National Heritage Act 2005:97)

In this act, it is also stated that any form of artwork that has a "historical object" value- artefact or other form of object to which religious, traditional, artistic or historic interest is attached to and this includes: *(b)* work of art such as a carving, sculpture, painting, architecture, textile, musical instrument, weapon and any other handicraft will be preserved and protected (National Heritage Act 2005:97). This section of the act helps to identify the role of the government in assisting the preservation, rehabilitation and conservation of public artwork or all forms of artwork in public places. The act provides a guideline for halting further deterioration, decay or state of dilapidation and providing structural safety and well being.

### 3.3.5 Perbadanan Putrajaya ACT 1995 (ACT 536)

The analysis of the Perbadanan Putrajaya ACT 1995 is crucial. This document is different from other enactments used in the Federal Territories because of the uniqueness of the Putrajaya development. Even though the development of the Federal Territory of Putrajaya is a part of/under the jurisdiction of the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, the responsibility of maintaining, developing and enforcing regulations and enactments, is appointed under the responsibility of the Putrajaya Corporation. This is because Putrajaya was developed in an area originally known as *Prang Besar* in the state of Selangor. According to KWP report (2006):

‘The Federal government negotiated with the state on the prospect of another Federal Territory and in the mid-1990s, the Federal government paid a substantial amount of money to Selangor for approximately 11 320 acres (46 km<sup>2</sup>) of land. As a result of this land purchase, Selangor now completely surrounds two Federal Territories within its borders, namely Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya.’

KWP (2006:10)

Putrajaya Corporation was appointed by the Malaysian cabinet and given the mandate of a local authority due to this unique condition of its development and location. The Federal Territory of Putrajaya uses the ‘Perbadanan’ Putrajaya ACT 1995 (ACT 536) gazetted by the Federal government as formal guidelines and are referred to as a written law document. In the act, (part II, section 4):

‘The ‘Perbadanan’ function is to perform all functions of a local government in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya- core purpose is to plan, manage and develop the federal administrative capital in an effective and efficient manner.’

Putrajaya Act 536 (2004:12)

The 'Perbadanan' is to perform all functions of a local government in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya and uses the Act as its main written law document. But the Perbadanan is also allowed to use and employ other policies and enactments issued by the Federal government as stated in part II section 19 of the act:

'In making regulations under this Part, the 'Perbadanan' may, with the approval of the Minister, adopt with such modifications any regulations, rules, policies, circulars and directives enacted or issued by the Federal Government.'

Putrajaya Act 536 (2004:13)

The allowance to use other Federal Government documents as a supplement is due the fact that the Putrajaya Corporation (acting as the local authority) is a new entity and as a new body of authority, the existing documentation is still incomplete and is subject to further revisions and would benefit from using and employing existing Federal Government policies and enactments. At present, PJC is known to use two such documents, the Malaysia Laws and Policy on Art and Culture and the Local Government ACT 171 (1976), for the employment of public art (including street furniture and ornamentations) and are used as guidelines when commissioning artwork.

The Perbadanan Putrajaya Act 536: *Am, Act A1168* (2004:7) Part 1; establishes that the Perbadanan (or PJC) has the authority to:

- (a) to perform all functions of a local government in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya;
- (b) to promote, stimulate, facilitate and undertake economic and social development in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya;

- (c) to promote, stimulate, facilitate and undertake commercial development, infrastructure development as well as residential development in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya

Paragraphs (b) and (c) stipulate that the objectives of PJC are to encourage and promote all forms of development, which consist of all form of infrastructures, including using public art to stimulate economic growth and social development. This objective is also supported by part II of the enactment, which stipulates:

- (b) to carry on all activities, particularly activities which are commercial in nature, the carrying on whereof appears to it to be requisite, advantageous or convenient for or in connection with the performance of its function;
- (c) to initiate preliminary studies of possible development and re-development areas and make preliminary plans outlining development or re-development activities and preliminary surveys to determine if the undertaking and carrying out development or re-development projects are feasible

According to part II, PJC is given the mandate to necessarily use all forms of advantageous activities to ensure the built environment in and around the Federal Territory of Putrajaya to be socially conducive and economically stable. Paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section of the Act allows PJC, as the local authority, to use the employment of secondary infrastructure (like public art) to encourage tourism and the commercialisation of Putrajaya as a tourist destination. This includes the use of monetary funding from the Federal Government to pay for expenses, costs or the expenditure for the employment of a secondary infrastructure as stipulated in Section IV (Finance) of the Act, which states:

- 1) there is hereby established, for the purpose of this Act, a fund to be administered and controlled by the Perbadanan (PJC) to “pay any other expenses, costs or expenditure for purchasing, acquiring land and erecting buildings or all form of infrastructures to include service and works undertaken in any public place, park, walk, recreation ground to include the employment of sculptures, street furniture, mural, etc.”

Putrajaya Act 536 (2004:21-22)

In general, the Putrajaya Act 1995 (Act 536) encourages the employment of public art as a tool to enhance the built environment in Putrajaya thus creating a safe, aesthetically pleasing and sustainable environment as well as encouraging economic development. The combination of the Putrajaya Act and other related policies and enactments from the Federal Government helps form guidelines for public art employment in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya. The Putrajaya Act 536 is an important document because it highlights the efforts of PJH and PJC to create a positive built environment and employ public art to enhance the value of Putrajaya.

### **3.4 Theory and Practice of Public Art in Malaysia**

Public art represents what is now becoming diverse in forms and style. It metaphorically connects private and public, personal and political, the individual and the community and most notably, public art projects link the past and present. Governmental agencies and art organisations have accepted an alternative role in policing the artwork, frequently changing its function and providing the blueprint for practice. In the theory and practice of public art it is important to understand the fundamental framework for the artwork that helps shape and control the artists, the



communities and the constituencies; and context which frequently conditions its development.

In Malaysia, public art has been used as a tool to create stability. The practice and theory of public art employed for this purpose are based upon relevant socio-cultural beliefs and norm of the Southeast Asian region. Critics, artists, curators and art administrator working with government officials, collaborated on a suitable model for public art practice in Malaysia. This model covers issues like the establishment of art, censorship of artwork, public art programming and arts funding. According to Richard Seymour and Cynthia Webster (2005) in their paper ‘Public art as New Product Development’:

‘...public art should consider both the context of the art’s placement, such as the architectural surroundings, environmental features and the area’s daily function and significance, as well as the broad appeal of the art work itself which tends, in current art professional thinking, towards the modern rather than monumental.’

Seymour and Webster (2005:1)

The control over the practice of public art has helped to shape the development of public art in Malaysia and as a result the artistic practice based on this module has embraced a ‘progressive’ art culture. While a number of Malaysians believe that the controlling of public art, its context and impact to the audience is very important especially for a ethnically diverse country like Malaysia, others have campaigned for a more liberal freedom of speech and expression. In a country where the cultural norm, religious belief and political control play an important role in day to day life, this conflict forces the artists and designers to move away from their own concepts of design ‘practice’ and ‘...consider not only the conditions in which we create, but also

the living conditions, knowledge, and goals of those for whom we create' (Leinbach 2002:9)

### **3.4.1 Ethical Values**

In a predominantly Muslim country like Malaysia, there are many question about a general ethical framework within which moral agreement exists. This issue is important in a tri-polar society of Malay Muslim, Buddhist Chinese and Hindu Indian in Malaysia, which sometime saw conflicts with its legal principles where Islamic principles are dominant. Restrictions especially in relation to the public life of the majority caused apprehension with respect to moral regulation. Issues of 'political correctness'<sup>49</sup> like nudity, race, ethnicity, gender, religion and copyright have become prominent concerns for art being employed in the public sphere. This is because public art differs from privately displayed artwork by its high visibility and accessibility to larger, more varied audiences. Whereas art in a gallery needs to be proactively sought out, people often involuntarily encounter public art during every day activities, such as commuting to work, visiting the park, or having lunch in a plaza.

Public art, by virtue of existing in public spaces, is subject to government monitoring and regulations. Public spaces are legally identified as traditional public forums, which mean that any form of artwork in those areas attracts more attention and criticism compared to other types of public places, such as inside public buildings. According to DBKL (2006) authority:

‘...public art in public spaces are accessible and susceptible to public criticism...the artwork must consider sensitive issues

especially when it relates to religion, ethnic and cultural beliefs. DBKL along side other government agency will monitor these artwork to ensure the artwork does not offend or no parties are offended' (sic)

DBKL (2006:5)

The enforcement of the regulation is employed to strike a balance between the individual right of freedom of expression and maintenance of public welfare and harmony tailored to meet a substantial government interest. The Government codify and regulate censorship, by ensuring all artwork must comply to strict code and enactment provided in the local authority and these regulations are created in the interests of the Malaysian public which may include public safety, historical preservation, and promotion of tourism.

Malaysian government agencies (Ministry of Heritage Art and Culture, National Art Gallery among many others) govern Malaysia's public art programme. The Malaysian Laws and Policy on Art and Culture (2006) has called for a ban on art that fails to:

‘...demonstrate a proper respect for public morals, or conduct or that includes material that is political, sexual or religious in nature’.

The Malaysian Laws and Policy on Art and Culture (2006: 8)

The Malaysian authorities' belief that the best approach to censorship and regulation of work in the public domain may be employed to facilitate the communication and collaboration between community members and artists before a public space is used for artistic expression. Hence censorship should be considered as provisional rather than fixed; plural rather than singular; time and site-specific rather than universal.

### 3.4.1.1 Regulative and Constitutive Censorship

Malaysia is a country that embraces Islam and belongs to a region where eastern cultural standards represent particular moral beliefs. According to Larsen (1996):

Islam is the official religion (sic)...virtually all Malaysian Malay are Muslim and Islam provides an identity, accompanied by guidelines for behaviour’.

Larsen (1996:1)

Malaysian artistic development has been submitted to a complex set of questions which is raised by an examination of the relationship between art and morality.

According to interview participant GAV1 (2007) states:

‘...art should be focused or centred on Islamic values and the Malay Nusantara, Malay Archipelago that includes Indonesia, Filipino, and Balinese etc... in terms of public art, the style of the sculpture, the motives used have to be rooted to local imagery... public artwork be relevant to the Malaysia’ (sic)

GAV1 (2007:6)

This relationship is set by empirical considerations about the effect that works of art have on the community. One obviously controversial case is the use of inappropriate contexts for art against the socio-cultural belief for the majority of Malaysians.

According to GAV1 (2007):

‘.... art having to focused or reflect on Islamic values might have caused detriment to the development of public art in Malaysia...especially with the Arabsation of Islam in Malaysia, Muslims here felt that it was not allowed to do artwork showing human beings or animals.’

GAV1 (2007:6)

Some would argue that the artistic merits of a work are independent of any attitudes or actions but certainly, every religion and every totalitarian ideology has believed in

the power of art to influence human's actions. Censorship is an issue which has been present throughout recorded history. From the beginning, it has been used by individuals and groups to prevent and control the creation, access and dissemination of ideas and information. It has taken many different forms and occurred for many different reasons- from suppression of communicative material which are harmful or sensitive, as determined by a censor or to the act of removing unsuitable artistic materials on the grounds that it is obscene, vulgar, and/or highly objectionable.

Censorship might help control undesired elements from reaching the public, but at the same time it is arguable that censorship might cost more than the control of harmful materials. In "Art, Censorship and Courage", David Rhodes (2006) cited Justice Stewart states:

"Censorship reflects society's lack of confidence in itself. It is a hallmark of an authoritarian regime"(sic).

Rhodes (2006:1)

While McGuigan (1996) states:

'The question of censorship is an extremely deceptive one and a good deal more complex than is usually appreciated'

McGuigan (1996:154)

Rhodes and McGuigan believe that censorship and regulations are concerned with constructing normalities based on moral grounds set by an authoritarian body that is often hypocritical and rarely transparent. McGuigan later added:

'...it is a mode of conduct and expression that are sanctioned by the communities' (sic).

McGuigan (et al, 1996:155)

Malaysia has some of the strictest censorship laws in the world, under the authority of the Home Ministry. Censorship in Malaysia has grown from a concern over social stability after the 1969 racial riots and the concern over complex often much too liberal ideas that threatens the socio-cultural and political stability of the country when Malaysian are exposed to new progressive ideas. The Censorship Board in Malaysia states:

‘In order for us to instil good morals and values in our people...so as not to offend the country's population, restriction must be prescribed’

Malaysia Laws and Policy on Art and Culture (2006: 10).

At the same time, Malaysian artists and designers are worried that the application of regulations, (even though these have only been enforced on a few forms of artistic development- printing press and performing art), would cause the erosion of civil liberties and impact on the growth of all forms of public expression and the arts: from film-making to visual arts and literature. Jansen (1998) distinguishes the two types of censorial activity: regulative and the constitutive or existential censorship. The one most familiar is regulative censorship- a form of censorship that exclusively regulates immediate communicational and cultural control. It also refers to exercise of power summoned up to defend an orthodox system of belief. R. Kathleenmolz (1990) states:

‘...regulative censorship, aims at the suppression of values unfavourable to the safeguard of such orthodoxies as religion, the protection of the state, or personal morality and purity’.

Kathleenmolz (1990: 18-35)

Regulative censorship is deliberately prohibitive and official. Its purpose is to expunge unacceptable ideas which might conflict against passionate religious and

government authority's belief. Throughout history of censorship, these authorities have decided the fate on values of expression- where seemingly unfavourable to the expression of 'controlled identity' is suppressed. As a result, all form of art expression professing alleged obscenity, or immorality is liable to be banned and is supported by threats and punishment. This is employed to maintain control for unorthodox ideas. "Regulative censorships," Jansen notes 'can be amended or revolutionised in ways that raise or lower body counts, numbers of books banned or citizens ghettoed or gulaged' (Jansen, 1988: 8).

In Malaysia, the Internal Securities Act (ISA) legitimises regulative censorship to ensure racial and cultural stability. ISA prescribes regulative censorship in controlling undesired form of communication or information that might jeopardise the cultural norm of Malaysian public and protects its citizens against the degradation of an established moral code. Regulative censorship is referred to exercise of power which is summoned in defence of socio-cultural norms; constitutive or, existential censorship and it is far more pervasive. McGuigan (1996) states:

‘...constitutive censorship is so fundamental, functioning through particular regulative techniques. Constituent or constitutive censorship is a more diffuse concept. It refers to how human communities establish rules of discourse in order to function socially.’

McGuigan (et al, 1996:156)

Constituent or constitutive censorship is believed to be the result of years of regulative censorship, where people were routinely told what is acceptable.

McGuigan (1996) states:



‘...we censor ourselves routinely without knowing how or why...regulative modes of censorship touch upon the deep mechanisms of constituent censorship’

McGuigan (1996:156)

This form of self censorship may become a greater concern in facing growing pressures to be creative, innovative, and to be adaptive. The ‘self-censorship’ may have broad implications for creative performance in many facets of today's organisations.

Constitutive censorship is featured in all forms of systems of language, liberty and social control or practice and it is essential to take into account its varied political, social, economic and psychological context (Hutchinson and Petersen, 1999: xii).

Elite interests, whether those in control of the state, the market, or increasingly, those in which the interests of the state and the market are allied, exhibit a form of monopolistic domination in which the access to some forms of knowledge and information is either subverted or denied.

In a NAG article (1992:26) “The Post-Independent Period and The Recovery of Islamic Identity”, NAG states that the global Islamic Revivalism in the 1980 became the most crucial historically significant event, which has provided a concrete framework for Malaysian art. Growing Islamicisation among the Malay population, together with active censorship, affects many aspects of cultural life. Meanwhile, the Internal Securities Act 1960, authorises the imprisonment of anyone considered a threat to the government without trial for two years, is still in force<sup>50</sup>. This includes

any form of controversial art form that intentionally provokes existing social and political harmony.

In Malaysia, censorship is being employed to protect and control the harmonious balance that Malaysia has enjoyed. This authoritarian concept of censorship has forced artists, who wish to make political art to work in an environment of considerable constraint. Malaysia's censorship and regulation in visual art practice operates in what McGuigan (et al 1996:155) has called 'issues of communicational and cultural control'.

Censorship may actually help the artistic cause especially when it impinges on the safety and rights of others. The Malaysian Internal Security Act for example states that some control over freedom of expression is an important tool to curb explosive form of dangerous and destructible controversies that might disrupt the social harmony. Censorship is also important when some forms of modern art sometime pushes the boundaries of what is acceptable and contain content that is dangerously offensive, and in which the government has valid reasons for censorship.

The Malaysian government believes that it needs to send an important message about what society deems acceptable. The role of the state in this instance is to set a social standard. Even though some might argue that the possibility for complete control is extensive, regulative censorship remains in tension with policies of personal freedom.

### **3.4.1.2 Issues of Religion and Morality**

Even though the majority of Malaysians are Muslim, other races and religious beliefs complete the Malaysian modern pluralistic social structure. The official religion of Malaysia is Islam and the National Cultural Congress 1971 states:

‘Impetus for the development of a national culture was provided by the National Congress on Culture held in 1971. The Congress resolved that the basis of a national culture was the indigenous culture as well as elements of other cultures which could be woven into the national culture. Research was carried out into various aspects of culture, including history and tradition, as a method of understanding the various racial traits so that their best features could be woven into the fabric of a national culture’.

Malaysian 4th Economic Development Programme Chapter 24 (1971)

There has been much discussion over religion and morality in relation to art practices in the public sphere. Issue of religion and morality in a diverse social structure like Malaysia have been at the forefront of numerous contestations especially with art development and practice. There has been constant questioning on the direction of art practices in Malaysia based upon the issues of artistic coercion imposed on non-Muslim Malaysians.

This sometimes has resulted in one dominating religion that may shun the works of another when adherents believe that the content is not appropriate to their faith. But Dr Wan Azhar (2007) from the Malaysian Institute of Islamic Understanding believes that:

‘...the inclusion of other values from other traditions is not just a courtesy. It is a necessity. These values, however, must not be

theological in nature, but rather ethical and moral. There can never be any parallelism in the theology of various world religions. Indeed, it is this theological element which shapes one's worldview`.

Azhar (2007:1)

Azhar's clearly suggests that artistic values based on morality do not solely refer to theological elements of the religion, but also focused upon ethical and moral values, based on the cultural teachings for Malaysians in general. The content of most artworks must abide by a Malaysian moral code that must (sub-consciously) follow the ethic and spirit of Islam as the country's official religion. As noted by the National Art Gallery (1992):

The extent to which the spirit of Islam has infused their collective consciousness is evidenced by the following themes that dominate the content of their art'

National Art Gallery (1992:27)

In the case of visual art in the public sphere, there is always a question of its power to influence emotions. It is justifiable that art is the combination of pleasure (aesthetic) and instruction (message, information), but it may offer other complex accounts of experiences. Taking this into the social sphere, art became a doctrine and agent for social and political consciousness, operating in subtle ways to impose certain ideologies that hold the viewer captive. According to Paul Swales (1992) states:

'The visual arts...operating in the public domain comes into a world circumscribed by rules, regulations, economics, attitudes, and legislation... and where politics voice has a sway'

Swales (1992:63)

The re-evaluation and re-questioning of religious restriction and morality in the development of art practice in Malaysia is still on-going. Malaysian artists are confronted with a number of complex problems. The first and foremost is how to reconcile the forces of morality and Islamic identity in a pluralistic modern Malaysian society. Secondly, it is natural for artists to have the impulse to be creative, innovative and to explore new ideas. This drive to discover new concepts and ideas compels the artists to go outside and experiment beyond the moral codes. The experimental ideas sometimes clash with the cultural norms and as a result the artwork is regulated and censored. It is the controlling of these creative ideas which is believed to constrain Malaysian artist from achieving high culture<sup>51</sup>.

#### **3.4.1.3 Effect and Benefits of Censorship**

In modern times, the term censorship has been understood primarily to mean government silencing of writers, news organisations and artists<sup>52</sup>. Many people, both in the government agencies and in the private sector argue that some form of censorship can be good and actually help stability and the economy to flourish. But the challenges to freedom of expression from the political right<sup>53</sup>, including religious fundamentalist organisations, have been long-standing and persistent in Malaysian visual art practices. The infrequency of censorship from the left has been attributed to the liberal's intolerance for intolerance, an attitude that has ironically produced a new strain of censorship: political correctness.

There have always been concerns over the auditing and controlling of current forms of visual art practice. The sense of tradition, social practice and religious order in conservative Malaysia make it even more challenging for art practitioners to suggest new ideas that breach conventional norms. In regulating censorship, the Malaysian government have taken significant measures in protecting its citizens and sometimes in this attempt, the government have had to make some unpopular choices. Numbers of Malaysian artists are questioning government decisions in determining what is 'harmful' and what is not. There is a question of where is the line drawn and how the issue of censorship can be taken into a positive light. Since the government remains the most formidable censor, stamping out all form deemed indecency, relating to the arts, the broadcast media, and even the Internet. Expression that is not seen as part of the Malaysian values has been successfully banned through extralegal, bureaucratic action by the Ministry of Unity, Culture, art and Heritage (KeKWWA) and through the enforcement of the Internal Security Act (ISA) by the Home Ministry. The regulation of the visual art and media was accomplished by a systematic regulative policies and control, coordinated within artistic agencies in the effort to safeguard the social structure and inter-racial harmony (Malaysia Cultural Policy 2007:18). In the end, the Malaysian government believes that not all censorship is bad for a free society, and is not always a threat to personal liberty.

Apart from censorship regulated by the states, much of the censorship in Malaysia is implicit or based on self-censorship. Self-censorship was the result of fear in offending the Malaysian public, and causing offence to the government censorship body. In return this guarantees the artwork is sellable and commissionable. Uncertainty about what motivates the public reaction with the content of the artwork

leads to the Malaysia artist to "read between the lines", editing their expressions. This interactive process affects the quality and extent of public artwork when planning on sensitive issues. A principal conclusion is that genuine moral discourse on difficult social issues can become impossible when the risks of upsetting the public audience are too great. Malaysian artists have learned to be careful not to transgress the cultural norm.

### **3.4.2 Public Art in Urban Development**

A number of economically developing countries like Malaysia have recently faced transition from a development model based industrial economy to a post-industrial one. The artistic and cultural elements play an unprecedented role in creating and/or regenerating the economic, social and built environments. Art in urban development according to Dr Antoni Remesar (2003):

‘...as a social practice whose object is the creation of meaning in the cityscape by means of the activations of object/ actions with a marked aesthetic component... The function of both public art and urban design is a symbolic function...the object of public art and urban design is to produce meaning for territorial area, its purpose is to co-produce the sense of place together with these other urban practices that form the morphology of public space’.

Remesar (2003:2)

Ramesar’s statement raises two important points. First is the role of the creator- in this instance, artists, designers, governmental agencies and corporate bodies that help to produce and decide the aesthetic outcomes and employment of the art in the public spaces. According to Miwon Kwon (1997):

‘...less object-oriented and more site-conscious art that sought greater integration between art, architecture, and the landscape through artists' collaboration with members of the urban managerial



class (such as architects, landscape architects, city planners, urban designers, and city administrators), in the designing of permanent urban (re)development projects such as parks, plazas, buildings, promenades, neighbourhoods’.

Kwon (et al 1997:95-109)

These creators help unleash the aesthetic processes in the urban environment- by creating an identity, generating forms of economic growth and encouraging enrichment in public spaces. Second is the role of the public in the development of social practice of public art. This role according to Miwon Kwon<sup>54</sup> (1997):

‘...focusing on social issues rather than the built environment that involve collaborations with marginalised social groups (rather than design professionals), such as the homeless, battered women, urban youths, AIDS patients, prisoners, and which strives toward the development of politically-conscious community events or programs’.

Kwon (et al 1997: 95-109)

In these instances, Kwon recognises that ‘public art reflects broader shifts in advanced art practices’, with the emphasis changed from the ‘aesthetic concerns to social issues, from the conception of an art work primarily as an object to ephemeral processes or events’. As recently as 1997, the scope of public art projects in Malaysia has extended beyond merely placing artworks in public spaces to encompass all aspects of urban development. Emphasis has shifted to the participation of artists in overall project planning, and the process of managing artworks.

Here, public art is employed as a catalyst to support healthy social development- as it acts as the moderator connecting the public with the issues via public spaces. This is achieved through using the content of the artwork as tool to create awareness, and providing safe and positive environment towards better cultural facilities. SAC (1993:10) states that ‘It could be argued that some of today’s social problems are linked to the public’s relationship with their environments...an improvement will encourage the location of new businesses and thus improve local economies’.

According to Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto and Mami Kataoka (2007) from Urban Development Department of the NLI Research Institute Japan:

“The arts and culture will also play an important role in urban development projects of the twenty first century. Three components of the arts and culture are relevant to urban development:

1. Cultural facilities (hardware): A growing number of large-scale urban development projects contain cultural facilities.
2. Artworks and cultural events (software): There has been an increase in "public art" (art works placed in public spaces)
3. Arts organisations and artists (humanware): More arts organisations and "artist in residence" programs are being supported to help boost the image of cities”.

Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto and Mami Kataoka (2007)

Thus the impact of the arts and culture on cities can be divided into an "artistic impact" derived from these three components and an "economic impact" on the local economy. To make the arts a viable component of urban development strategy in the twenty first century, the following conditions must be met: clear-cut goals and objectives must be defined, economic impact must not be considered as the final goal, a long term view must be taken for both urban development and the nurturing of the arts and culture, the creativity and flexibility inherent in the arts must be introduced.

### 3.4.2.1 Public Art and Urban Regeneration

In her article 'Art for Social Space: Public Sculpture and Urban Regeneration in Post-War Britain',<sup>55</sup> Gillian Whiteley (2007:1) states

'...the phrase 'urban regeneration' embodies various assumptions - it gives primacy to the perpetuation and development of urban, as opposed to rural, lifestyles and it presupposes that cities are in a state of de-generation'.

While according to Malcolm Miles (1997):

'There are differences between 'urban development' and 'urban regeneration'...Developments means building presented as in the public good (creating jobs); it is lent state support in the form of subsidies, tax breaks, visual art expertise from subsidised sources... and it sometimes involves 'signature' architecture or at least an impressive and futuristic skyline...Regeneration means creating sustainable economies, and it includes the mean of sociation- a sustainable sense of neighbourhood...One of the roles assigned to visual art is to give the impression of the difference, whilst in actuality having a negligible input to the local economy'

Miles (1997:112)

Whiteley and Miles's statements help explain the meaning and purpose for urban regeneration- as a mechanism in assisting with the re-structuring of urban areas often in the interest of general profit and public art is one of many tools employed for this process. Hall T Roberstson (2001) states:

'Public art has been increasingly advocated on the basis of a series of supposed contributions to urban regeneration since the 1980s. A wide range of advocates have claimed that public art can help develop senses of identity, develop senses of place, contribute to civic identity,

address community needs, tackle social exclusion, possess educational value and promote social change’.

Roberstson (2001:22)

Roberstson acknowledge that public art commissions can inspire the promotion of innovation and quality and it help promote a town or city as a place where art and culture are prominent and integral to the quality of life and enhances the quality of environment. The use of public art in regeneration is to help create and sustain urban competitiveness and revitalisation through the enhancement of local socio-cultural distinctiveness and encourages civic pride. Mach and Jenkinson (2001) states:

‘...making a public art work is 'not just a physical thing, it's a convoluted, socio-political process. Regeneration through art really works, but we will need to look at it in twenty years time to judge it. The true regeneration is the regeneration of local people's hearts and minds’.

Mach and Jenkinson (2001: 37)

Public art helps bringing people and place together through the enhancement of cultural experiences. This strategy is being employed at the heart of the regeneration. Public art has become a form of cultural tourism<sup>56</sup>. According to Myerscough (1988):

‘The arts act as prime magnet drawing people to particular regions and localities...By adding drawing power and economic vitality of their immediate localities, art attractions and events contribute to the quality of inner-city life and to the appreciation of property values. In this they are potent force for environmental improvement as well as tool for regional and urban development.’

Myerscough (1988:76)

This similar emphasis was experienced in the United Kingdom in the 1980's.

According to Whiteley (2001):

‘Since the 1980s, a number of local authorities have adopted some form of ‘percent for art’ scheme, whereby all new buildings incorporate a quota of artwork. Major new public artworks have attracted visitors and have become part of the tourist and heritage industry’.

Whiteley (2001:286)

The Malaysian authorities became keen to show what their cities have to offer. In 1997, 1999 and recently in 2007 under the “Visit Malaysia Year”<sup>57</sup> project, it has adopted an imaginative and grounded visual art program which incorporated an effort to improve the confidence of the city based on the promotion of distinctive places and experiences. The programme is using public art to promote the country's cultural values and experiences and according to the Malaysia Tourism Board (2007) it was based on:

- Promoting a heightened awareness of the city's physical and social heritage
- Providing a sense of orientation
- Creating a sense of vibrancy
- Promoting the perceived feeling of comfort and security
- Creating a sense of surprise and engagement
- Developing a sense of discovery through the city

Malaysia Tourism Board (2007:1)

Apart from the use of art to help re-generate interests with Malaysia's socio-cultural practices, successful public artwork resonates with the site and context, creates an opportunity for the range of people using the site to engage with and meets the needs of the communities. All this effort can contribute towards urban regeneration and

benefit the city's architecture by infusing them with local character and strengthening its image. In the context of public art practice, it provides a way to bring together 'people and place'. In terms of added value, it brings benefit to the community, financially and improvement to the environment. Interview participant GAV1 states:

'...public art can connect the people of all creed and culture, and at the same time encourages the pride of the place amongst them, and this is the real value of public art (sic). The positive effect is that it will make the country socially stable. This stability will be an economic beacon, inviting tourist to visit and enjoy the culture and artistic richness of the country'.

GAV1 (2007:8)

So creating a distinctive and creative urban environment via public art does not only help to enhance the settings but it also re-generates a sustainable economy.

### 3.4.3 Site-Specificity

Another issue in public art is site-specificity. Miwon Kwon (2004) who coined the term 'site-specificity' explains that

'...site-specificity art was initially based in a phenomenological or experiential understanding of the site, defined primarily as an agglomeration of the actual physical attribute of a particular location (the size, scale, texture, and dimension of walls, ceilings, rooms; existing lighting conditions, topographical features, traffic patterns, seasonal characteristic of climate, etc) with architecture serving as a foil for the artwork in many instances'

(Kwon et al 2004:3).

While Gillian McIver (2003) co-founder of the *Luna Nera* group of site-specific artists' states:

‘The history of site-responsive art is complex and is linked to the development of installation art, land art and the evolution of the idea of “public art”. But one of the main aspects is the movement out of the gallery and museum into other sites for the purpose of exhibiting art’.

McIver (2003:1)

The capital of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur for example is divided into two types of development. The first part of the development is known as the old city. It was developed since pre-independence time which witnessed a ‘Euro-centric’ design. Sculptures in this time uses traditional concept and are not site specific. This is because public art was used as a political reminder and to instil the idea of a higher culture dominance of the British Empire. But in the latter part of the twentieth century, the city of Kuala Lumpur was re-generated to make way for flourishing modernisation and image re-development. Some artists began to establish and re-site their art works in public spaces. The artworks are now more related towards the socially based issues and in response to the site. Although few things unite these artists in terms of similarity of works, most share a desire to explore the relationship of the idea of public space and local interaction. This notion is similar to Kwon’s observation as she wrote:

‘...the site of art is again re-defined, often extending beyond familiar art contexts to more “public” realms’.

Kwon (et al 2004:3)

Some of these artists have also chosen, for different reasons, to interact directly with the locality - its history, topography and discourses, by siting their work in public



places. There were a number of completely different reasons for this development.

According to McIver (2003):

‘...for some artists, it was a reaction to the sterility of “white space” galleries. While another reason for this is working outside of the gallery represented an opportunity to address audiences outside of the accepted “art scene,” particularly deprived and marginalised social groups’.

McIver (et al 2003:1)

Mc Iver believes that there are artists who reacted to the opportunity to work in unusually-textured, atmospheric, culturally-loaded spaces where traces of “what went before” and “what is happening now” could be played out as part of the art work.

In Malaysia, some site-specific art came out of very political agendas. In the Federal Territory of Putrajaya for example, since its launch in 1997, the design of the new city can be seen as a response to specific economic, social and political conditions. The blueprint for its design (along with other developments is art) reflected the socio-political conditions in Malaysia at that time. According to KWP Report (2007), ‘Putrajaya development is the aspiration and vision of the Government to reflect the socio-political stability achieved by social unity’. Kwon (2004) states:

‘...site-specificity as the cultural mediation of broader social, economic, and political processes that organise urban life and urban space’.

Kwon (2004:3)

Kwon’s support the idea that some site specific art are based upon an agenda that solely contest the concept of art for aesthetic, as she pointed out site specificity are

seen as response towards ‘complicating the site of art as not only a physical arena but one constituted through social, economic and political processes’. In site-specificity, the artist and the artwork makes a direct response to the issues of space and time, taking the particular interest with the traditional purpose of art. Apart from all of this, site-specific art are making art that is relevant to the community.

The by-product of site-specific art is the ‘site-responsive art’, which is one form that is integrated into immediate concerns of the locality and community, but is very much about the development of an art practice. According to Mc Iver (2003):

‘Site-responsive art is deeply implicated in the problem of “everyday life” as a locus for, and possibly subject for, art. The artist and the art work are making a direct response to the issues of space and time, taking the particular and extrapolating from it the universal - which is traditionally seen as the purpose of art’.

Mc Iver (et al 2003:2)

In this way, according to Mc Iver (2003),

‘...site-responsive art can be seen as an effort to sought and make a relationship between art and life: bringing images of “life” that spiritual universal quality, which the critics felt properly belonged to “uplifting “ subjects such as religion, classical antiquity of history’.

Mc Iver (et al 2003:2)

Many artists in Malaysia continue to practice and develop site-responsive practice intentionally as a specific art form.

#### **3.4.4 Patronage of Public Art**

According to Hamilton, Forsyth and De Jongh (2001: 289), 'The principal obstacles to public art are funding and motivation'. The patronage of public art has always been connected to the development of a country. Since the beginning of the 1970's funding for art have been a precarious, securing funding for any public art project is decidedly based upon the economy and the political standing of a country. As pointed out by Hamilton, Forsyth and De Jongh (2001):

'Local authorities experience increasing financial pressure. Thus other statutory provisions e.g. health, education and social welfare, many which have escalating costs have tended to relegate arts.'

Hamilton, Forsyth and De Jongh (2001:289)

Hamilton, Forsyth and De Jongh saw a conflict of interest between the official bodies and the inclusion of art at the expense of the financial and wealth distribution. Across Malaysia for the past thirty years, municipalities, counties, states, public and private establishment have taken it upon themselves in the spirit of development and civic responsibility to become the sponsors of publicly funded visual art. But public art in Malaysia in the recent year have been competing for financial support with the scrutiny of bureaucratic funding control, and the absence of the country's economic prowess. Interview participant ACJ1 (2006) states:

'...the planning for Malaysian town and cities were traditionally developed for economic reason... the provisions for the arts in the cities are always overshadowed by the economic consideration'.

ACJ1 (2006:1)

Andrew Sinclair (1990) in his book 'The Need to Give: The Patron and the Arts' states:

'In an age of increasing automation bringing more leisure to more people than ever before, both young and old will increasingly need the stimulus and refreshment that the arts can bring. If one side of life is highly mechanised, another side must provide for diversity, adventure, opportunities both to appreciate and to participate in a wide range of individual pursuits. An enlightened Government has a duty to respond to these needs'.

Sinclair (1990:152)

Sinclair has identified the need for public art and argued that it is the duty of the government to envision the impact of art within the development of a country. If the public art funding is restricted, limited and the support for its inclusion is given half-heartedly, the results are merely mediocre, blending in with the landscape un-noticed. This will result in the fate of public artwork and its patronage in Malaysia to fade into the background.

#### **3.4.4.1 Public Art Funding**

Securing adequate funding is important for any public art project to succeed. Aside from donations from private individuals and corporations, there are a number of approaches through which visual art gets financial support. In Malaysia, most public art is funded by the state but there are a number of other sources of funding which help the development of public art in public spaces. These can be broken into three types of funding: public/private sector funding, developer participation; and local funding sources. According to interview participant ACR3 (2007):

‘...in the mid 1970’s Malaysia used to have the two percent art funding mechanism attached to public capital improvement projects at the local and state level’

ACR3 (2007:3)

A decade after that, during the 1980’s economic recession, such mechanisms in Malaysia slowly disappeared. The federal government refused to fund everything except for SME business (Small, Medium Enterprises) that would help to re-generate the economic growth. Since the state and local governments had no previous experience in art patronage, no further actions were taken to remedy this. According to interview participant GAT2 (2006):

‘We do not have a budget for the aesthetic. In Malaysia I guess if the work does not generate any sort of profit property it does not have major importance for development. They are not looking at public art beyond its function as a landmark that will distinguish a place’.

GAT2 (2006:1)

Corporate sources were almost non-existent as they believe there is little use for art. But by the mid 1990’s, public art saw a revitalised interest when architectural modernism (as part of the adornment of buildings) and artistic movement re-emerged when the country’s economy regained its strengths.

At the height of the economic success in the mid 1990’s, public and private sector collaborations gave public art the opportunities to be employed as part of ongoing, existing local programmes. The collaboration between public and private sectors provided exhibits in publicly accessible places, including municipal, state, and federal buildings and helped create work in green spaces, along paths and at nodes, anchoring spaces for rest, recreation, play, and gathering. The re-modelling of ‘Dataran

Merdeka' or 'Independence Square' at the heart of Kuala Lumpur has been recognised as an 'innovative intervention' of cultural regeneration.

The increase of public art mixed funding is also encouraging. According to Lord Redcliffe Maud (1976):

'We must look to local elected councils at district and county level to become the chief of art patrons of the long term future, developing a comprehensive service as part of the main fabric of local development'.

Maud (1976:25)

In Malaysia, while the public and private sector funding were gaining its momentum, private developers was also beginning to realise that commissioning works of art for their projects has financial benefits. The first developers to realise this was Sunway Group Malaysia<sup>58</sup>, EMKAY<sup>59</sup> Malaysia Sdn Bhd. and KLCC Corporation. According to EMKAY (2005) and Sunway Group Malaysia (2006) believe that the installation of public art can:

- Improve working and living environments;
- Create a unique look or landmark feature for the project;
- Demonstrate a larger civic commitment; and
- Translate into higher rents and a more desirable working and living location.

EMKAY (2005) and Sunway Group Malaysia (2006)

Soon, more developers were involved in similar kinds of project. Even though public art was slowly being employed as part of new development strategies, this form of funding is an unreliable source. This is because the developer can choose not to

initiate such funding. State and municipal authorities can advise the developers and even though some developers welcomed the idea, other are still hesitant.

Public art is also funded by local funding sources- state and city office initiated their own public art programme by raising fund through federal initiatives which encourages further investment, tourism and employment. According to interview participant GAJ1 (2007), a Malaysian public artist:

‘...arts supporters believe that because the arts are essential to a vibrant and educated and moral culture, they must be supported by government’.

GAJ1 (2007: 2)

The “Visit Malaysia Year” tourism project for example, has provided budgets for the beautification and up-grading of cities, towns and residential grounds. This has helped public art to be employed as part of small scale re-generation to create a sense of place, a safe and clean environment and to promote local tourism. Large scale events and festivals also help to pay for art. For example, large amount of cash can be dedicated to public art during the event.

### **3.5 Chapter Summary**

Traditionally, public art has meant art in public places. The term, public art, may spawn images of abstract sculptures in the park, a bronze monument in memorial to fallen heroes, or a decorative relief on the façade of a building. But the role of public art entails so much more than just those images. While traditional works like these represent the foundation of public art, the role of contemporary public art has grown to encompass a wide range of innovative concepts, projects and programs. It covers all aspect of involvement as they draw on the inspiration of the site and its context.

colours and history as well as involving the community. Public art in Malaysia have been used as a tool to create awareness in encouraging unity amongst a socially diverse community. As Malaysia has become home to many diverse peoples, the purpose of public art is to define an approach which honours the local heritage by promoting harmony, respect and a sharing of knowledge across cultures and communities through the arts. As stated by Suzanne Lacy (1994) in 'Mapping the Terrain- New Genre Public Art':

‘The art world struggles with multi-culturalism and it’s implications for different audiences and approaches of making art’

Lacy (1994:2)

In a fast developing nation like Malaysia, monuments and decoration goes along with a broad spectrum of unique projects and programs. In many cases, the role of public art represents as a tool to create an awareness of Malaysia’s tangible and intangible heritages among the public, and such promotion of activities meant bringing the arts closer to the public, whatever they may be. As Lacy (1994) pointed out:

‘...To take a position with respect to the public agenda, the artist must act in collaboration with people, and with and understanding of the social systems and institution’.

Lacy (1994:6)

In recent development of public art, artists are included early in the design process or as part of the design team, and community leaders in an effort to include and educate the public throughout the development of these projects. The Malaysian government at the same time helps monitor this development to ensure certain issues pertaining to censorship and the protection of the existing unity among the diverse Malaysian socio-cultural backgrounds. Sensitive content has been carefully removed as not to



offend the majority of Malaysia's conservative community and the same time the not to infringe in the rights and suffocate the freedom of artistic expression.

The development of public art practices in Malaysia has gone through much trial and error. But a significant effort by the Federal government has shown the seriousness of public art function to help the socio-cultural, economic and urban development of the country. Public art is being employed to support the growth and demands in tourism- a strategy to re-generate and enhance the local identity; which in return this action helps boost the local economy. These and other new strategies, also becomes a unique source of learning. It draws together artists, theorists, curators and arts administrators whose work engages with issues relevant to social and cultural life, including policy.

Public Art in Malaysia until this time has not been covered by a dedicated Public Art Policy. There have previously been a number of permanent and temporary works commissioned either as part of public buildings or installed in public space, but until this time there has been no official policy for the creation or inclusion of works of public art. The introductions of the several policies discussed above were to support the development of public art practice in the absence of a dedicated public art policy. The employment of these policies were also intended to act as a guide in the creation of a collection of Public Art which not only improves the quality, design and perception of public space, but also celebrates and fosters heritage and cultural diversity by creating landmarks to act as natural gathering places and focus for local pride.

## Notes

- <sup>41</sup> Schein presents a conceptual framework for interpreting cultural landscapes in the United States, as a tangible, visible entity that is both reflective and constitutive of society, culture, and identity. Cultural landscapes must be understood in their geographical contexts and interrogated to define the role the landscape plays in social and cultural reproduction. Richard H. Schein (1997: 660-680). "*A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting an American Scene*," in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 87 No. 4
- <sup>42</sup> The forming of identity is fundamentally a situated process; perceptions of self, identity and memory are inextricably linked with our sense of belonging in a spatial setting. Katherine S Willis (2007) MEDIACITY project, Bauhaus University of Weimar, Germany
- <sup>43</sup> A market-driven, 'branded' homogenisation of cultural experience- John Tomlinson (2003:269) *Globalisation and Cultural Identity*
- <sup>44</sup> Frazer Ward, "The haunted Museum: Institutional Critique and Publicity," in October 1973 (Summer 1995): 71-89
- <sup>45</sup> Raymond Williams, "Communications and Community" (1961), in Robin Gable, ed., *Resources of Hope* (London: Verso, 1989), 19-31.
- <sup>46</sup> The authority in this instance could be described as a governing elitist in the field of art or a politically influential body that views favoured over the rest.
- <sup>47</sup> According to By-Laws 2002 pursuant to section 103 of Act 171, under the interpretation context "structure" means any form of structure and street furniture or any extension or any other erection of whatever material in public spaces or local authority property. Local Authority Act 171 (1976:183)
- <sup>48</sup> "Tangible heritage" includes area, monument and buildings (National Heritage Act 2005:101)
- <sup>49</sup> Political correctness refers to the concept that one should avoid expressing ideas that marginalise, offend, or insult others, usually on the bases of race, religion, sex, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and the like. The term became prominent in response to widespread concerns about discrimination and other forms of social injustice, and restraints on speech and expression deemed inconsistent with these concerns became popular. (NCAC- National Coalition Against Censorship [http://www.ncac.org/action\\_issues/Political\\_Correctness.cfm](http://www.ncac.org/action_issues/Political_Correctness.cfm) accessed 16/07/2008)
- <sup>50</sup> Johnathan, Kent (2007). "Malaysia's censorship strangles growth", BBC. Accessed on 16/07/2008.
- <sup>51</sup> Gina Fairley (2007). *Focus on Malaysia: Censorship, Ethnic Separation and Islamicisation make the Artists Life Edgy* The Art Newspaper (Issue 182)

<sup>52</sup> High culture is a term, now used in a number of different ways in academic discourse, whose most common meaning is the set of cultural products, mainly in the arts, held in the highest esteem by a culture, or denoting the culture of ruling social groups. T. S. Eliot's *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948) was an influential work which saw high culture and popular culture as necessary parts of a complete culture- Bakhtin, M. M. (1981) *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin and London: University of Texas Press

<sup>53</sup> In politics, right-wing, the political right, and the 'Right' are terms often defined as politics that seeks to uphold or return to traditional authorities and/or the liberties of a civil society and the preservation of the domestic culture, usually in the face of external forces for change.

<sup>54</sup> The essay was originally published with the title "For Hamburg: Public Art and Urban Identities" in the exhibition catalogue *Public Art is Everywhere* (Hamburg, Germany: Kunstverein Hamburg and Kulturbehörde Hamburg, 1997, 95-109), organised by artist Christian Philipp Muller.

<sup>55</sup> Gillian Whiteley (2007) 'Art For Social Space: Public Sculpture and Urban Regeneration in Post-War Britain'-  
[<http://vads.ahds.ac.uk/learning/designingbritain/html/regeneration.html> accessed on the 22/07/2008]

<sup>56</sup> Cultural tourism is the subset of tourism concerned with a country or region's culture, especially its arts. The World Tourism Organisation's effectively defining cultural tourism as the movements of persons for essentially cultural motivations, which they suggest includes study tours, performing arts, cultural tours, travel to festivals, visits to historic sites and monuments, folklore and pilgrimages (WTO, 1985). Cited by Professor Alan Clarke (2002:1) in his paper 'The Cultural Tourism Dynamic' Nottingham University

<sup>57</sup> The Visit Malaysia Year 2007 campaign is a marketing and promotion prelude to the actual Visit Malaysia Year 2007 which coincides with Malaysia's 50th year of independence. A major effort by the Ministry of Tourism to aggressively develop and market Malaysia as the preferred international tourist destination, it also aims to increase foreign tourist arrivals to the country. Ministry of Tourism Malaysia- [[www.tourism.gov.my/](http://www.tourism.gov.my/) accessed 21/07/2008]

<sup>58</sup> Established as a small tin mining company, the Sunway Group has grown to be one of Malaysia's best-known and most well-diversified conglomerates. Its core businesses are: Construction, Property Development and Investment; Building Materials; Trading and Manufacturing; Higher Education; Healthcare; Leisure, Entertainment and Hospitality; and Information Technology.  
[<http://www.sunway.com.my> accessed 24/07/2008]

<sup>59</sup> EMKAY Malaysia is the first successful 'Bumiputra' conglomerate which work closely with the Federal government. EMKAY then branched out and took on more

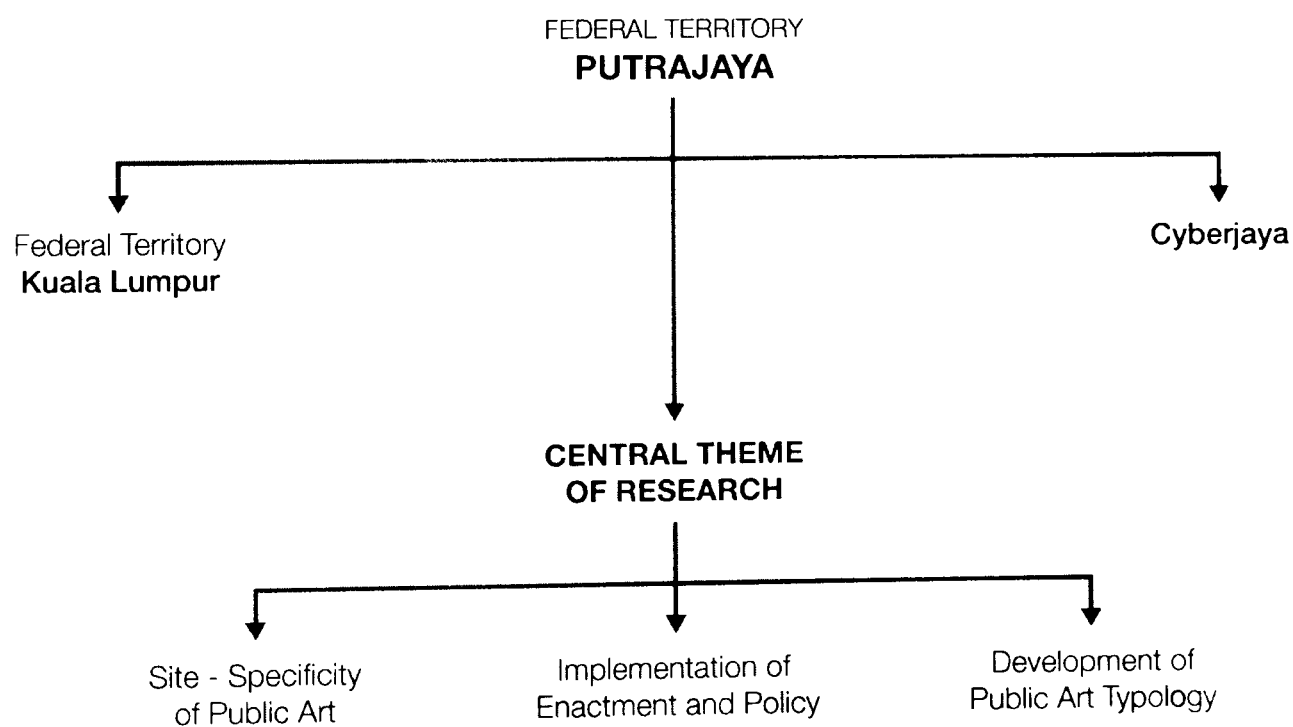
property development projects, locally and also internationally – residential and commercial property management, infrastructure work, building and maintenance of public amenities, as well as supporting the tourism industry with hotels and public attractions. [<http://www.emkay.com.my> accessed 24/07/2008]

## **Chapter Four**

### **Public Sculpture in Malaysia: A Case Study of Putrajaya**

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the first and second phase of the data collection: a case study started in August 2006 conducted in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya. The first phase of was conducted to identify the scope of the research. During the first phase data collection, two other locations were also investigated to provide a comparative example of public artwork typology; these were the Federal Territory Kuala Lumpur and Cyberjaya. The main purpose for the visits was to provide public art database and a detailed account of public art practices; and their underlying attributes. The central themes identified are: the site specificity of public art; the implementation of enactment and policies and the development of public art typology in Putrajaya. (See **Figure 4.1: central themes**)



**Figure 4.1** Central themes for research

The main reason for the selection of the Federal Territory of Putrajaya as the main case study and to include Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and Cyberjaya as comparators is because these three locations best represents the growth of interests in

public art practices in Malaysia. These locations also provided the case study samples of different style in public art development, as they represent three major activities surrounding the development of the country which are administrative, economic and academic. The development of public art in these locations also comes at different times and stages of the country's evolution, first with the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur as the capital city and the economic centre for Malaysia. It has a long history of visual art development in the country since its inception in 1957. Next is the Federal Territory of Putrajaya - the new administrative capital for Malaysia and finally Cyberjaya as a 'multi super corridor' hub for the country.

The main case study area- the Federal Territory of Putrajaya project was inaugurated as a national project in 1995, and materialised in 1996 during the height of economic growth in Malaysia. The Federal Territory of Putrajaya project was divided into two phases. The first phase was completed in 1999 and consists of the administrative boulevard (Precinct 1 to Precinct 5) and the rest of the phases were constructed subsequently. Phase one comprises the development of government office buildings, public amenities, infrastructure, residential area, commercial area and parks which began in November 1996 and was completed in the year 2000.

The Federal territory of Putrajaya was declared the premier administrative centre for the federal government (KWP Strategic Plan, 2005: 11) by the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohammed in 1999, whilst Cyberjaya was designated as a satellite city and the hub for higher learning institutions. Then in February 2001, the Putrajaya development was officially declared a Federal Territory (KWP Strategic Plan, 2005: 9). Hence the different stages of the development of these locations help

to generate a significant understanding of different emphasis in public art development and practices.

This chapter also focuses on the development of a typology of public art in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya. This was achieved by photographing and documenting the public sculptures found in and around the Federal Territory of Putrajaya. In total there were twenty eight public sculptures documented from different locations. The public sculptures were then divided into two categories. The first category is dedicated as the ‘Attributed’ public sculptures whilst the second category is the ‘Non-Attributed’ public sculptures. As stated by Selwood (1996: 6) ‘Public art is notoriously ill defined’. The difficulty to clearly define what public art is (as opposed to the overlapping discipline in the practice); and to assist with the research, categorisation of the public sculptures is necessary to help with the documentation and mapping the current provision of public art typology and practices.

## **4.2. ‘Attributed’ Sculpture and ‘Non -Attributed’ Sculptures**

### **4.2.1 ‘Attributed’ Sculpture**

Selwood (1995: 6) stated that public art is regarded as synonymous with ‘sculpture in the open air’. The characteristics imply public art is permanent, static and object based (Selwood 1995: 7). However Pally (2006) suggests:

Public art, broadly defined, encompasses artwork placed in a public context -- on the street, in a park, on the exterior of a building, within the common spaces of a public building and so on.

Pally (2006: 1)

There has been apparent confusion over the jurisdiction in which ‘public art’ belongs; and it is difficult to determine the nature and characteristics of public art. To help



define the many interpretation of public art in Malaysia, it is essential for this research to use the categorisation of the public sculptures in Putrajaya to provide inherent physical attributes of public art, and a phenomenological and experiential understanding of the site/location. According to the art business website, "Attributed" is being defined as 'of a particular work of art that spatial arrangement is as distinct from its substance, have an inherent characteristic and can be easily be distinguished' (sic) [www.artbusiness.com, 2007].

For this research, 'Attributed' sculpture is characterised by work of particular value. These values determined the function of the sculptures and how it answers to the cultural and social history background of the place, of the people and local issues. By compiling a good inventory of information, and understanding the mechanisms<sup>60</sup>, the work produced are more specific, and self-determined. Attributed sculptures could also be explained by analysing appropriation of different modes of issues it reflect like the art context and current art practices.

For example the Millennium monument commissioned to TR Hamzah and Yeang architect associate, stands today as a groundbreaking masterpiece in Putrajaya – it demonstrated powerful and expressive place making. Just like Anthony Gromley's 'Angel of the North' the 'Attributed public art' answers to local relevancy as a site specific work and symbolic to the national identity and a stimulus of creative confidence for the city.

#### 4.2.2 'Non-Attributed' Sculpture

According to Kimball (2000) in his article on 'What Art Is: The Aesthetic Theory of Ayn Rand';

"...like many important things in life, art cannot usefully be defined- the identity of art is a subject that admits to a fair amount of exactness".

Kimball (2001: 1)

Believing that "art is not susceptible to the sort of definition [we] seek," Kimball (2001) concludes that

"...persuasive critical judgments about [it] rely not upon possession of the correct 'formal definition' . . . but upon the exercise of taste".

Kimball (2001: 1)

Some of the public art documented is seen to hold dual functions. It does not only present itself as common everyday functional objects like street furniture or way finding signage for example (see **Figure 4.2**), but it also as a source material for remarkably inventive works of art. In contrast to 'Attributed' sculpture, 'Non-Attributed' sculpture is a non-traditional artwork. It is different concept by which the avant-garde attempts to appropriate art. 'Non-Attributed' sculpture is the marriage between art and ordinary imagery. As stated by James Elkins (1995) editor of Art Bulletin, discussing the notion of Non-Attributed art as:

'... an art form with which its images principally intended to convey functionality and information- it is the visual images that are not obviously either artworks or (religious) artifacts'.

James Elkins (1995)

Non-attributed sculpture itself is a non-conformative artwork. It is a translation of a agglomeration that is all at once cultural, artistic and functional, thus defying specific characterisation. In so doing, Kimball shifts attention from the physical and objective nature of art to the question of 'taste' in art - that is, base upon the perceiver's subjective response. Torres and Kamhi (2000) states:

The emotion involved in art is not an emotion in the ordinary meaning of the term. It is an experienced more as a "sense" or a "feel" but it has two characteristics pertaining to emotions: it is automatically immediate and it has an intense, profoundly personal (yet undefined) value-meaning to the individual experiencing it.

Torres and Kamhi (2000:43)

Some of the recorded and photographed sculptures during the field work have overlapping art categorisation and does not carry inherent characteristics of a specific spatial arrangement of a public art, but still it was used as a mechanism to enhance the visual impact of spaces in the urban environment, parks and green areas through the installation of aesthetically inspiring work. In this research, non-attributed sculpture would help to make a significant distinction between the different categories in public art typology. Hence these documented 'sculptures' were grouped under the non-'attributed' sculpture category.



**Figure 4.2** Signage and an artwork at Alamanda Shopping Complex Precinct 1

This chapter also explores the issue of ‘site-specificity’, in particular when public art intersect with the process of ‘urban restructuring’. Miles (1997) stated the term:

‘Site specific’ is also used, both for art made for installation in a given site, and art which is the design of the site itself, although in some cases... a work is made in a small edition and sited in more than one place.

Miles (1997: 5)

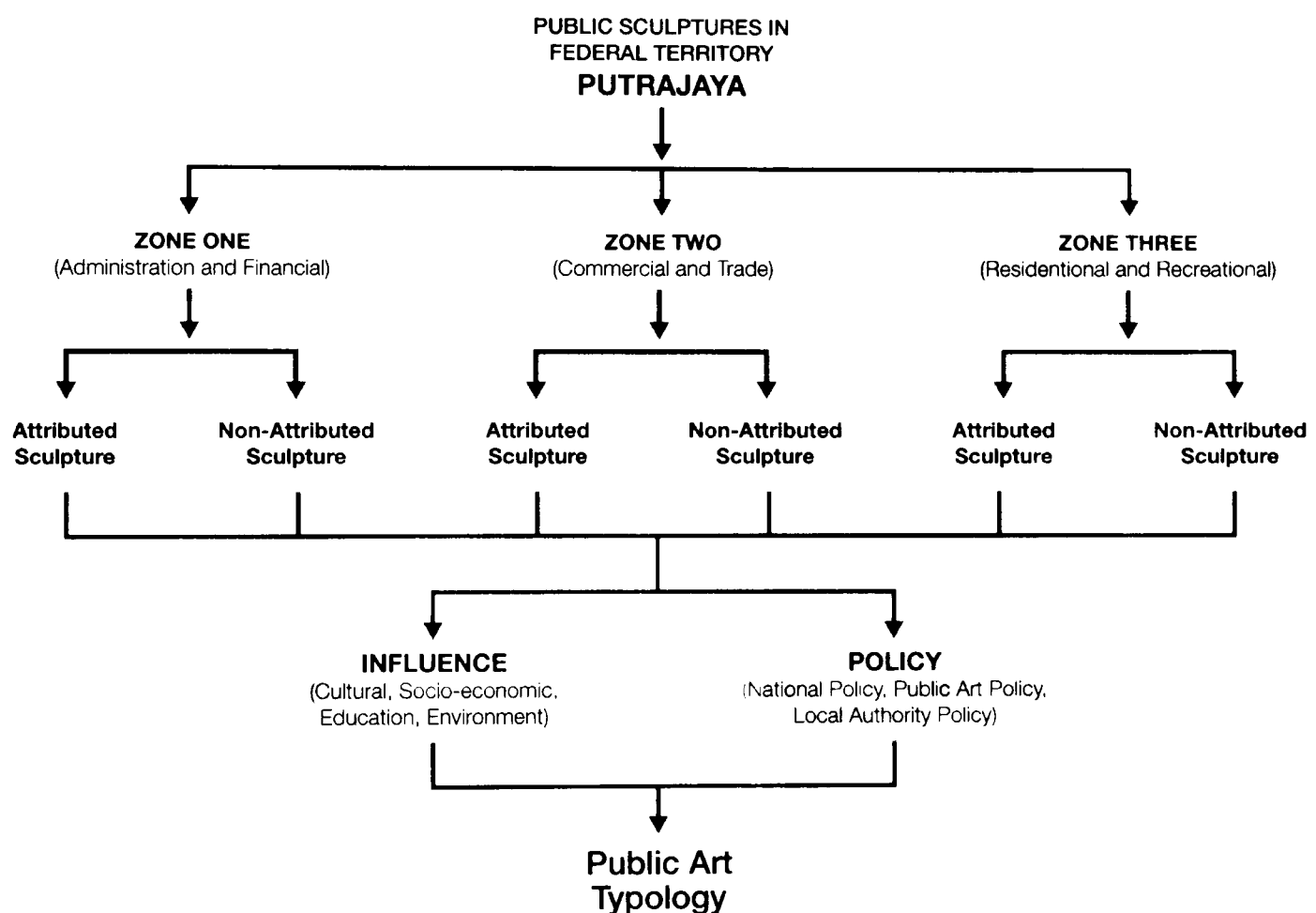
Kwon (2004: 1) critically questions the term ‘site-specificity’ - as the relationship between the art work and its site; and attempts to forge an alternative formulation for the term. This chapter reassess and investigates the diverse notion and range of site-specificity. This can be achieved by analysing the samples of public sculptures in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya and setting it against the locations where the art work was sited. Because of the size of the Federal Territory of Putrajaya (twenty Precincts in total), the area was divided into three different zones according to areas of activities. This very important because by dividing these areas into the three zones, it will help to identify issues of ‘the relationship of the public sculptures to the built environment’. It will also helps with the understanding of the influences of site specificity have on the typology of public art. As Kwon (2004) stated:

‘...site specific art was initially based in a phenomenological and experiential understanding of the site, defined primarily as an agglomeration of the actual physical attributes of a particular location...with the architecture as a foil for the artwork in many instances...which together frame and sustain art’s ideology system’

Kwon (2004:3)

The first zone is reserved for administrative and financial activities. Precinct 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and Precinct 14 (diplomatic enclave) were categorised in this group. The second

zone is for retail and commercial activities. ALAMANDA Mall and SOUQ Plaza in Precinct 1 is the main retail and commercial area in Putrajaya. The final zone is residential and recreational area. Precincts 6 to 20 were grouped in this category. The character of each precinct is shaped by its location and activities. These categories were prioritised based upon the significant of development of public art to each site. (see **Figure 4.3: Chart**)



**Figure 4.3:** Categories of Zoning

The study of categorising and zoning of the area was intended to examine the relationship between the public art work and the site. In this case study, the ‘site’ does not only imply a geographical location or architectural setting but also a network of social relations, a community and artist’s vision of the artwork. It looks at the implications of the site on the artistic, architectural, social and political approaches in the genre of public artwork presented. This chapter questions the key aspects of recent

art-site relationships and collaborations with policies and enactment adopted by the local authority. Even though Putrajaya is a part of the Federal Territory; it adopt and uses different enactment and policies to the one used by the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur.

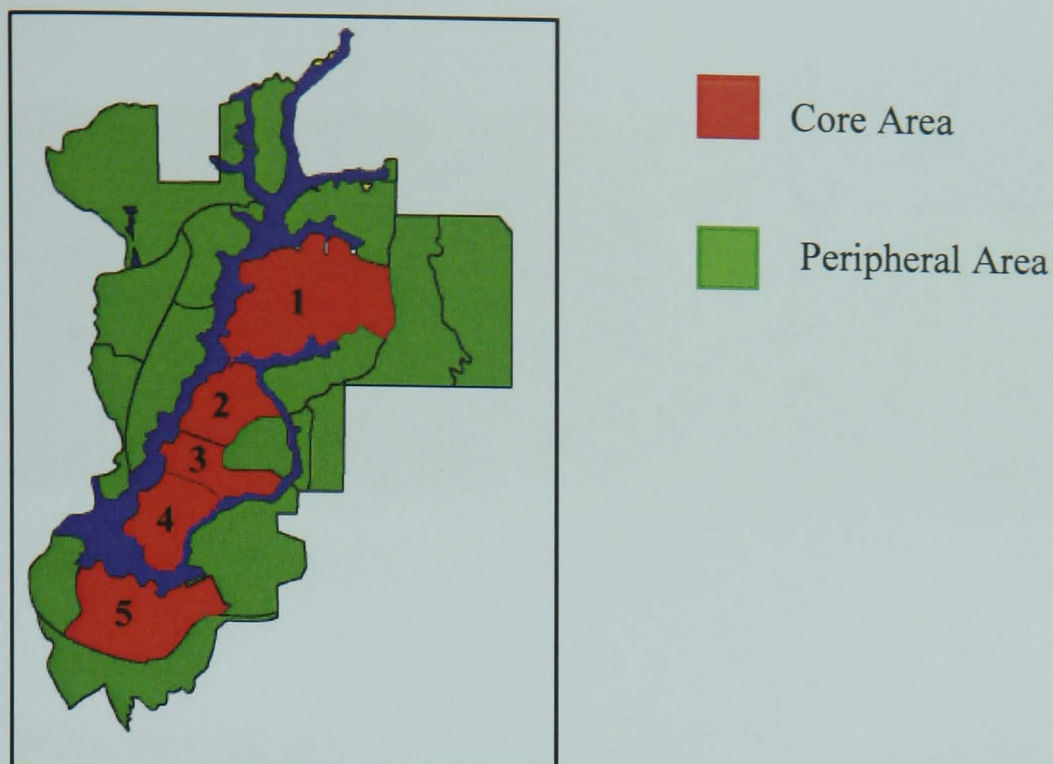
### **4.3 Public Art Analysis: A Case study of Putrajaya**

#### **4.3.1 The Establishment of Putrajaya**

The vision to have a new Federal Government Administrative Centre to replace the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur emerged in the late 1980s, during Malaysia's fourth Prime Minister's tenure, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohammed. The Federal Territory of Putrajaya is located forty kilometres south of the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, and it sits on a 4,581 hectare site. The city is a part of an ambitious scheme- a projected administrative and business zone replete with high technology facilities. Moving the national administrative machinery from the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur to the Federal Territory of Putrajaya is in line with the Government's policy to provide a more balanced development in the country. This move also helps to provide relief from the overcrowding and congestion of the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, which is Malaysia's largest city. However, the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur still serves as Malaysia's national and legislative capital.

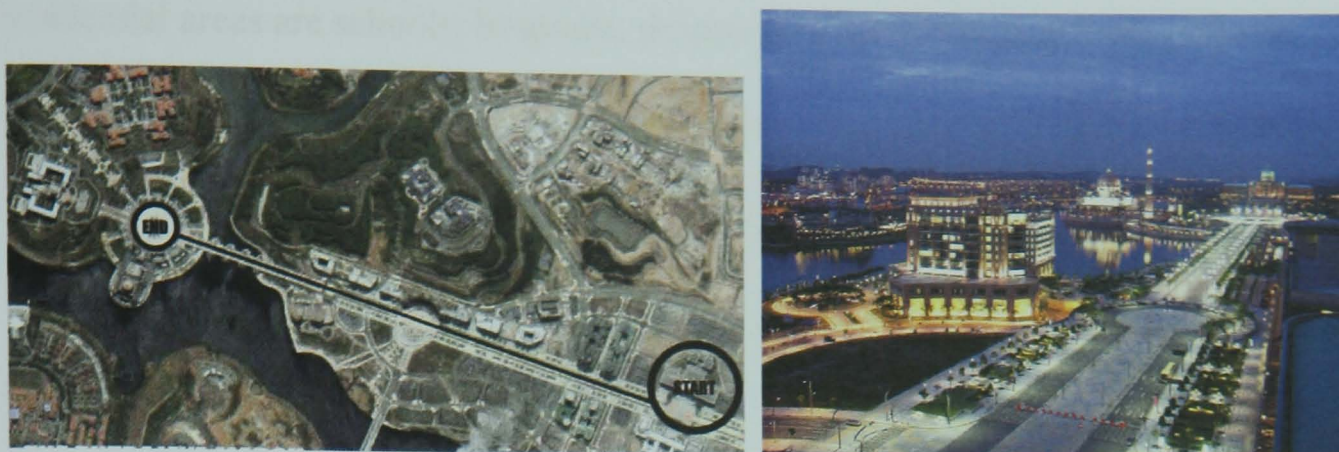
The Federal Territory of Putrajaya is a vital catalyst as a model city and as the nerve centre of the nation. The prime areas in Putrajaya City are divided into precincts and consist of government offices, as well as commercial, residential and recreational areas. Putrajaya is divided into two major areas - Core Area and the Peripheral Area, separated by a large lake. (see **Figure 4.4**)





**Figure 4.4** Putrajaya Core Area

The Core Area of Putrajaya, is divided into five precincts (namely the Government Precinct, Commercial Precinct, Civic & Cultural Precinct, Mixed Development Precinct, and Sports & Recreational Precinct) linked by a distinctive 4.2 kilometres long boulevard. The boulevard forms the spine of the Core Area and stretches across the central island linking it with the rest of the city. The boulevard is the main venue for national celebrations, festive and cultural events (see **figure 4.5**). The precincts are identified by their predominant activities. This core area establishes the overall identity of the Federal of Territory Putrajaya. While all precincts are equally important in the overall scheme of Federal Territory Putrajaya, the Government Precinct is spatially prominent, consistent with its role as the administration centre for the Federal Government.



**Figure 4.5** Core area- Putrajaya Boulevard

Unlike the Core areas, the Peripheral Areas comprise mainly Malay Reserve lands, other private land holdings and the New IT City of Cyberjaya. Putrajaya's peripheral area comprises fifteen precincts of various sizes. Twelve of the fifteen precincts are up the residential neighbourhoods. The planning and design of the Federal Territory of Putrajaya's residential areas is intended to foster a sense of identity through the neighbourhood focal points, landscaping and the treatment of the public realm.

According to the KWP Strategic plan report (2005: 23) that 'the city is well planned and efficient, equipped with high quality and efficient infrastructure'. Residents living in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya were offered a new experience where nature and technology will work in harmony for the benefit of the community. The KWP Strategic Plan report (2005) states

'...that it is the vision of the government to move the country towards technology-driven economy and at the same time to strike a balance between economic and social development'.

The KWP Strategic Plan report (2005: 23)

Most precincts have community and neighbourhood centres, parks, places of worship and many other state-of-the-art public amenities. Among the facilities provided in the



residential areas are schools, hospitals, shopping centres, mosques, multipurpose halls, learning centres and neighbourhood parks. The Federal Territory of Putrajaya is conceived and planned for and by Malaysians. It incorporates Malay and Islamic architecture as well as contemporary elements. Although Malaysia population is made of multi-ethnically diverse groups of Malay, Chinese, Indian, and Eurasian, the architecture in Putrajaya is said to be predominantly influenced by a mix of Malay and Middle Eastern Islamic style.



**Figure 4.6** Map of the Precincts in Putrajaya: Courtesy of Putrajaya Corporation

### **4.3.2 Mapping of Public Sculpture in Putrajaya**

Field work was conducted in July 2006 until early September 2007 in Federal Territory Putrajaya and the documentation of public sculpture was systematically organised based on the zoning of areas of activities in Putrajaya. The public sculptures were photographed and then later categorised and grouped according to the designated zone. The next stage of the database collection was to cross-reference the documented sculptures. This was done in terms of:

1. Time and date of construction,
2. Process of commissioning,
3. Parties involved in the planning and development of the sculptures and
4. Rationale behind the design of the sculptures

Each sculpture was photographed and documented in terms of style, size and orientation of the public artwork.

### **4.3.3 Zoning of Activity**

The Federal Territory of Putrajaya geographic location contributes to a wide variety of topographical forms and landscape with a significant amount of land devoted to urban developments of varying scale. To enable a discourse on site specificity, zoning is employed to help explore the diverse activities in the public spaces and to understand how these activities can influence the development of public art. Zoning is a structural mechanism for developing a strategic overview for the incorporation of art in the environment. Zoning also helps this research to find the function of public spaces and their inherent characteristic. According to Sorrell (2006):

‘...public space was overlooked by many as the ‘gaps between buildings’. But actual fact, public places/spaces is open location/areas where a diverse range of influences meet, a dynamic



place created by the ongoing social relationships and negotiations that happen between people and built environment, coming together and engaging in an 'arena'.

Sorrell (2006: 7)

Gaventa (2006) states:

'...many designers have spoken of their desire to design spaces that are site-specific, with a flavour of the region or country in which they are located'.

Gaventa (2006: 14)

Zoning based on local socio-economic activities has also been used as an effective way of documenting and mapping current provision of visual art and practices. It helps to assess how public art is linked to local identity and activities. This process also reflects the contemporary trend in identifying distinct social and spatial areas within cities (Bell & Jayne, 2004). Sheikh (2006) states:

'...we have to think of the public sphere as fragmented, as consisting of a number of spaces and/or formations that sometimes connect, sometimes close off, and that are in conflictual (sic) and contradictory relations to each other. There not only exist public spheres (and ideals here-of), but also counter-publics. If we can, then, only talk about the public sphere in plural, and in terms of relationality and negation, it becomes crucial to understand, situate and reconfigure art's spaces – institutions – as 'public spheres'.

Sheikh (2006: 1)

Such designation helps to identify broader issues such as the relationship between art and socio-cultural issues within the built environment. According to Harrison and Burgess (1988), 'it is a method employed in the exploration of meanings and values people attach to landscapes, nature and places'.

Because of the size of the case study area- twenty precincts in total, the public spaces/places where the public sculptures were located was related to the designated zones. A systematic mapping of area according to the zoning system of activities helped to determine the type of public art found in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya. Comparing the style of public sculptures in these public places and synchronising it against the local activities in the area helped to identify and evaluate emerging patterns the built environment has on a public art typology. This will allow for an analysis of issues arising from the case studies in terms of public art and competing priorities of linkage with identity and typology.

#### **4.4 Zone One: Administrative and Financial Area**

The first zone provides Putrajaya with its structure and establishes its overall identity. Precincts 1, 2,3,4,5 and 14 are in this zone. Precinct 1 is known as the ‘Government Precinct’, it is spatially prominent, consistent with its role as the administration centre for the Federal Government. Most of the Federal Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies are located here. Precinct 2 incorporates commercial and government buildings, parks, open spaces and residential areas. Precinct 3 was developed to house Ministries and institutions related to the development of the arts and culture. Precinct 4 was developed as the main commercial and business district of Putrajaya but various components in the ‘Commercial Precinct’ were yet to be developed. Precinct 5 is developed for convention and recreation purposes. Precinct 5 is the second largest and the fifth and final precinct in the Core Area.

The main character of this precinct is largely established by the dominance of sports and recreational buildings as well as educational buildings. The Sports & Recreational

Precinct is located at the southern most side of the Core Island and act as the end of the Boulevard. Finally Precinct 14 was developed as the centre for diplomatic and international relation. Housing an enclave of diplomatic offices and residences, this precinct sits in the peripheral area.

#### **4.4.1           Attributed Sculpture in Administrative and Financial Area (Zone One)**

Sixteen attributed public sculptures were identified in this zone with the highest concentration of public artwork to be found in Precinct 1 and Precinct 2. There are a total of eight attributed sculptures in the two precincts alone within the radius of less than two kilometres. Most current themes that are emerging from the sculptures located in this area are political and represent the indoctrination by the ruling government. This theme is found throughout a number of major administrative cities for example in Brasilia, Brazil and in Canberra Australia. American artist Judith Baca (2007) states that:

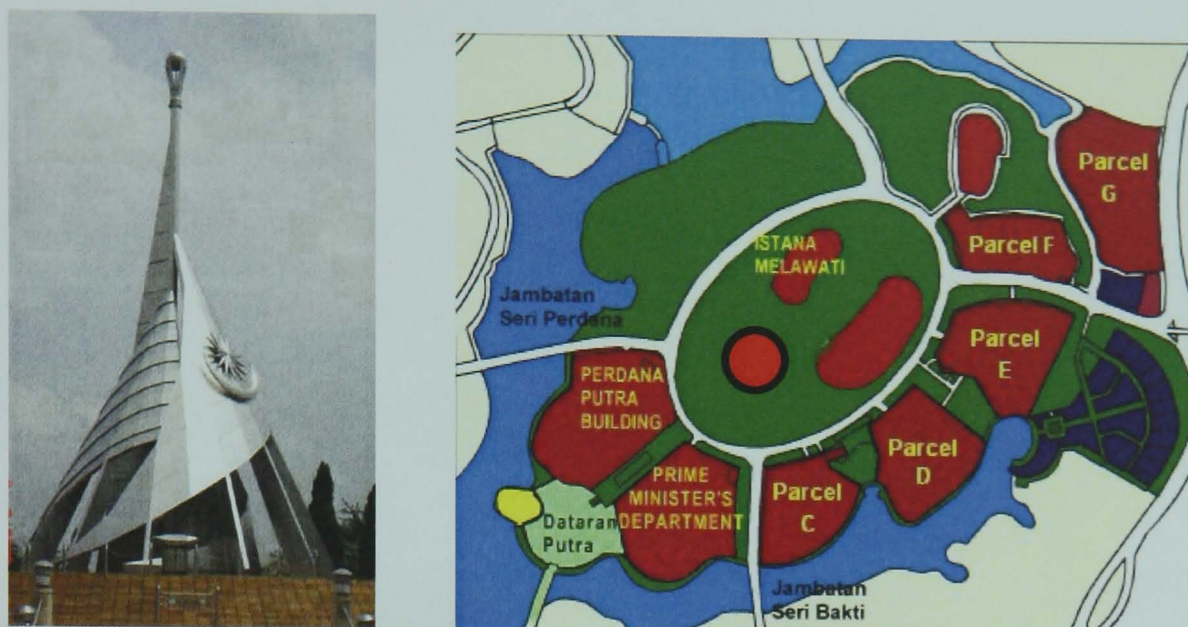
'...public art has been meant to accomplish one thing-to put us in awe of the power of our government or the power of corporate sponsorship'

(Baca, 2007)

Baca's arguments support the theme used in public art sited in strategic locations as an effort by the ruling government to subtly enforce their political belief and ideal to the public.

#### 4.4.1.1 Zone One Precinct 1

##### Sculpture 1: 'Mercu Tanda' Sculpture



**Figure 4.7** Mercu Tanda sculpture, Melawati Hill

The Federal Territory of Putrajaya project was a part of the government leader's vision to make Malaysia an industrious and fully developed country by the year 2020. The Government Precinct (Precinct 1) is a dedicated area for Federal Government administration offices, including that of the Prime Minister's Office Complex. The Prime Minister's Office Complex is located at the head of the 'Dataran Putra' (see **figure 4.7**) thereby establishing a spatial and symbolic presence at the most important node within the Government Precinct and Putrajaya as a whole. All other government and government-related facilities are distributed around this node. In summary, the Government Precinct, as part of the Core Area of Putrajaya, is the primary government-use area in Putrajaya.

**Figure 4.7** is a sculpture located in a park on Bukit Melawati (Melawati Hill) next to Melawati Palace overlooking the whole of the Federal Territory of Putrajaya development. The sculpture is known as the *Mercu Tanda* sculpture. It was



commissioned from Mr. Hijjas Kasturi, Principal architect of Hijjas Kasturi Architect Associates, a famous local architect. It was commissioned by the Federal Government in 1995 as an inaugural monument for the new administrative city. The design of the sculpture was based on the combination of the Malaysian flag wrapped around five pillars and shaped to resemble the *Tengkolok* or *Tanjak* - a ceremonial royal headgear (crown) for the Malaysian Sultanate [see **Figure 4.8 (a) and (b)**]. This symbolises the country's Constitutional Monarchy and celebrates the country's old age cultural tradition.



**Figure 4.8a.** Tengkolok (Malay Headgear)

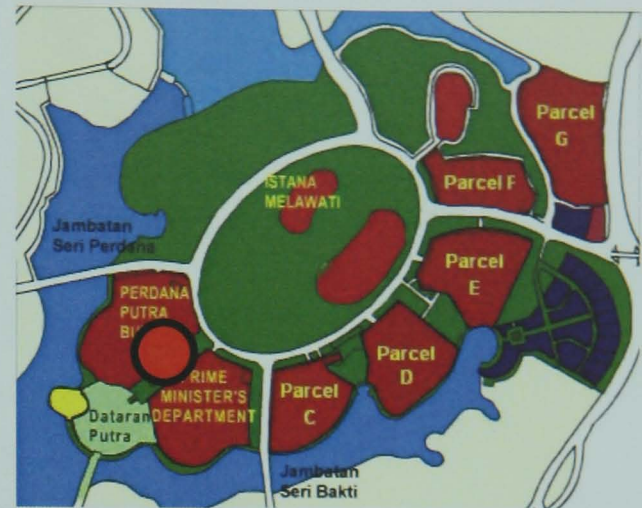


**4.8b.** Tengkolok Di Raja (Royal Headgear)

At the base are five pillars which symbolises the five pillars of Islam. This references the country's strong religious belief. The headgear /crown symbolises the monarch as the head of state whilst the crescent and star that adorn the flag and crown again symbolises the country's religious belief. Finally the fourteen edge stars represent the fourteen states in Malaysia. The sculpture metaphorically and literally uses the socio-cultural context of the local belief and practices. Essentially, the sculpture corresponds to the depiction of local subject matter and was derived from the local and regional environment which seems to imply "Malaysian-ness".



## Sculpture 2: The 'Sirih Junjung' Sculpture



**Figure 4.9** 'Tepak Sirih'/ 'Sirih Junjung' sculpture, Laman Putra

This sculpture is located in 'Laman Putra' - a small cultural plaza/square in between the 'Perdana Putra' complex- which houses the Prime Minister's office and official residence, and the Prime Minister's Department (see **figure 4.9**- map). The sculpture was completed in 2002 – as indicated on a plaque but the artist is unidentified. It was speculated that the conceptual idea behind this sculpture was initiated by Putrajaya Holdings, the developer responsible for the Putrajaya development. The design was adapted from the Malay *Tepak Sirih* or *Sirih Junjung*, a traditional betel leaf tier tray used in traditional Malay weddings or Malay traditional official ceremony with the Sultans (King), and 'Head village' or a Chieftain. A complete *Tepak sirih* or *Sirih Junjung* is an elaborate formation of betel leaves in trays that marks a ceremonial welcome for dignitaries and perhaps one of the most important uses of *sirih* is in the betel leaf tree (*pokok sirih*) presented by the bride to her groom.





**Figure 4.10a.** 'Sirih Junjung' design



**4.10b.** 'Sirih Junjung' in Royal Coronation

The *Tepak Sireh* or *Sirih Junjung* is a cultural artefact synonymous with Malay tribal cultural practice and was often use as an offering or gift before the beginning of negotiation, or formal ceremonies or a social gathering. It represents the law of ceremony which follows certain codes and protocols based upon strict adherence to cultural law and represents a traditional virtues cherished by all Malaysians.

Standing at 2.5 meters tall, the public sculpture was constructed from bronze, with close attention toward detailed floral carvings in each tier. A water element was incorporated as part of the sculpture design and at the base of the sculpture is a small pond with marbles carved in the shape of an Islamic geometrical symbol of a plant. The *Sirih Junjung* sculpture was based on the essence of the Malay culture which symbolises the tradition of offering. In the Malay tradition, the act of giving and receiving of *sirih junjung* ornated with ingredients like spices and flower has a substantial significance for both the giver as well as the receiver. Furthermore, the offering of a *sirih* quid set (*Sirih Junjung*) carries a welcoming message to the receiver, and the giver symbolically presents himself humbly before the receiver. The



sculpture also represents the offering of the uniqueness of Malaysian hospitality to foreign tourists and dignitaries.

### Sculpture 3: Perdana Boulevard Sculpture



**Figure 4.11** Perdana Boulevard monument

**Figure 4.11** is a sculpture located in 'Dataran Perdana' (Perdana Plaza). It was built in 2000 and is sited at the entrance of the government Boulevard. Hence it is identified as the *Dataran Perdana* or the Perdana Boulevard sculpture. It stands majestically as one of the major landmarks in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya. The sculpture is also located in front of the Prime Minister's palatial office and Putrajaya Mosque and it sits on an axis with the boulevard continuing via the horizon, ending at the Putrajaya Convention Centre in Precinct 5. Like the *Sireh Junjung* sculpture, the artist is unidentified. The sculpture is made of fourteen pillars surrounding thirteen smaller flag poles with flags representing fourteen states in Malaysia. The inner ring of this sculpture stands a twenty metres flagpole with the Malaysian flag at the centre. At the base of the central flag, a water fountain with fourteen spouts was incorporated as part of the design.



Each of the outer fourteen pillars represents the different states in Malaysia. On top of each pillar is a 'tentacle bloom' which imitates the Malaysian national bloom – the *Bunga Raya* (Hibiscus). *Bunga Raya* literally means "large flower" in the Malay language. It is a very common ornamental plant grown in Malaysia, and found throughout the tropics and subtropics with its large and colourful flowers. The species *hibiscus rosa-sinensis* was chosen as the national flower of Malaysia because of its abundance in Malaysia's households and its five petals can be used to symbolise Rukunegara (the five principles of nationhood).



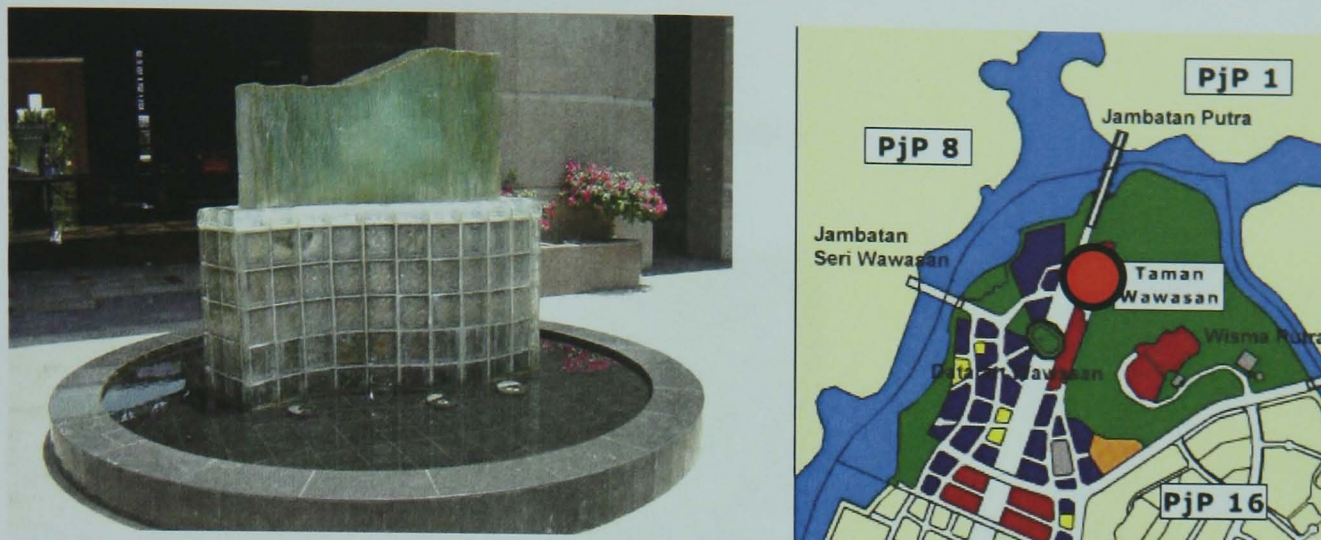
**Figure 4.12** The Malaysian Bunga Raya: often used to symbolise the five principles of nationhood

The design of this sculpture adheres scrupulously to the particular conception of a civic monument used as a commemoration to mark the strength of a united Malaysia. As ideology goes, this sculpture represents institutional power of propagation which efficaciously expresses the social, economic and political stability of the country.



#### 4.4.1.2 Zone One Precinct 2

##### Sculpture 4: The Glass Sculpture



**Figure 4.13** PJH Glass sculpture 1

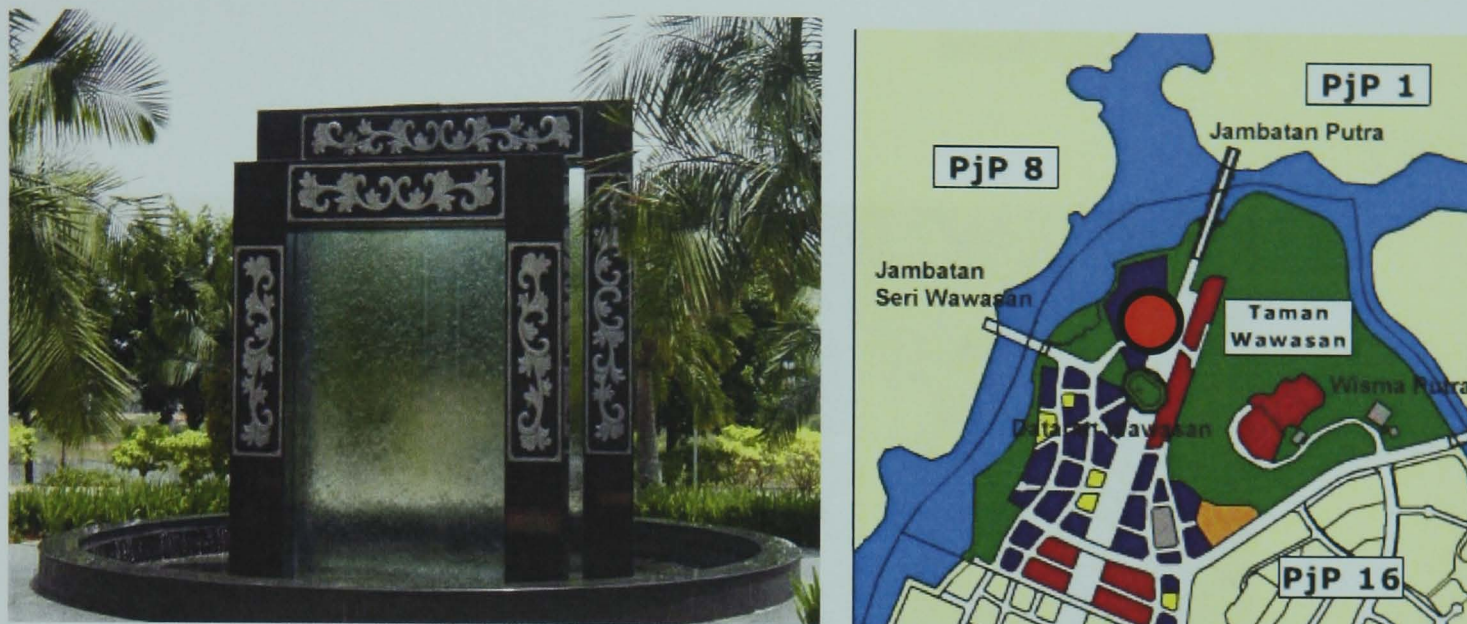
The Mixed Development Precinct (Precinct 2) is the first precinct on the Boulevard axis. It is close to the Putra Plaza, Putra Mosque, *Wawasan* Park and the lake edge as and is the first precinct on the island. This portion of the boulevard that runs through this precinct is reserved for official parades. The Glass sculpture (see **Figure 4.13**) is one of three public sculptures located in this area and was completed in 2004. It is sited on the main entrance of the Putrajaya Holdings head office and the main contractor and developer for the Putrajaya development. There was no indication on who designed the sculpture.

The sculpture was constructed using cut glass as its main feature and glass block as the base foundation for the sculpture. The cut glass is arranged to form an abstract shape, while each piece of the cut glass is etched with partial image of the organisation's logo. When the glass pieces were put together, the arrangements form a complete corporate logo of the company. Like many other samples of public sculpture in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya, this sculpture was placed in a pool of water as



part of the design element. This sculpture does not only attempt to serve as an artwork that enlivens the area but it also works as corporate signage for the building.

#### **Sculpture 5: Water Feature Sculpture**



**Figure 4.14** PJH sculpture 2

Placed adjacent to the glass sculpture, this second public sculpture is sited on the left side of the Putrajaya Holding building close to the edge of the Putrajaya Lake. Dominating the landscape, the sculpture stands about 3.5 metres tall and is the tallest sculpture in the compound of the PJH building. The sculpture surface is visibly infused with iconic graphic representation of the indigenous floral patterns found in wood carvings in traditional Malay crafts and architecture. The pattern on the sculpture carries a significant importance as it introduces the beauty of Malaysian arts and crafts. According to Ismail Said (2002) a senior lecturer from the Faculty of Architecture, Malaysia University of Technology in his article ‘Visual Composition of Malay Woodcarving in Vernacular Houses in Peninsular Malaysia’ on the Malaysian Technology Journal:



Woodcarving is a part of the architecture of a traditional Malay house or mosque in Peninsular Malaysia. It is among the prominent craft done by Malays depicting their keenness for beauty and skilful observation toward the natural surrounding and its elements. Without the woodcarving the architecture is not complete; it is the part of the language of Malay architecture.

Ismail Said (2002: 1)

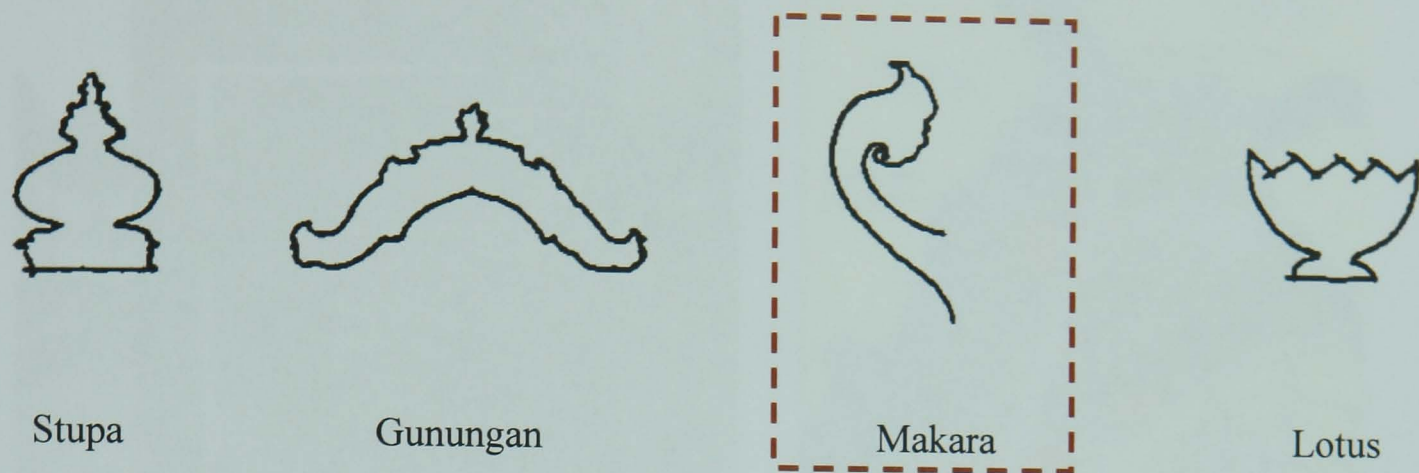


**Figure 4.15** Malay Traditional Carving Patterns

Ismail Said observed that flora motifs and symmetrical layout dominated the Malay carving pattern indicating certain values that governed its design. The PJH sculpture uses these motifs which derived through thoughtful observation towards the living surroundings. On both surfaces of the sculpture's outer panel, patterns of floral motifs are visible. Flowers and leaves are 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. Motifs representing flowers such as the frangipani, lotus and jasmine are used. This floral motif is known as the *Awan Larat*. The *Awan Larat* forms are that basic form of Hinduism motifs that were derived



through thoughtful observation by the craftsmen towards their living surroundings (see **Figure 4.16**).



**Figure 4.16** Hinduism Motifs- the ‘Makara’ is prominently used in PJH sculpture

The skeletal design of the sculpture is the clean geometrical shape of two upright rectangles of different heights and sizes covered with a black marble finish.

According to Ismail Said (2002):

The square and rectangle are the common layouts for many components particularly door leaf, ventilation panel and wall panel.

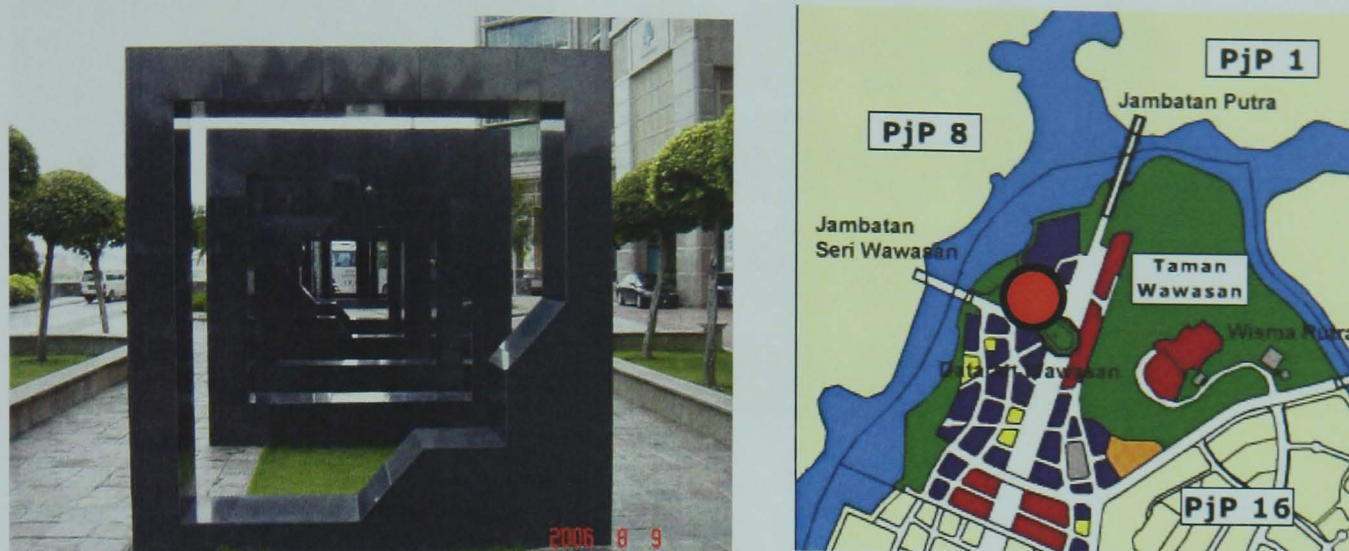
They are easier to carve on since the outline is straight

Ismail Said (2002: 3)

Within the inner rim of the rectangles sits a tempered glass panel. This glass panel allows the water to flow down smoothly creating a cooling effect and amplifies its connection with the surrounding environment. At the base of the sculpture is a pool of water, a prominent feature in most public art in Putrajaya. Completed in 2004, there is no known information on the artist who created the artwork.



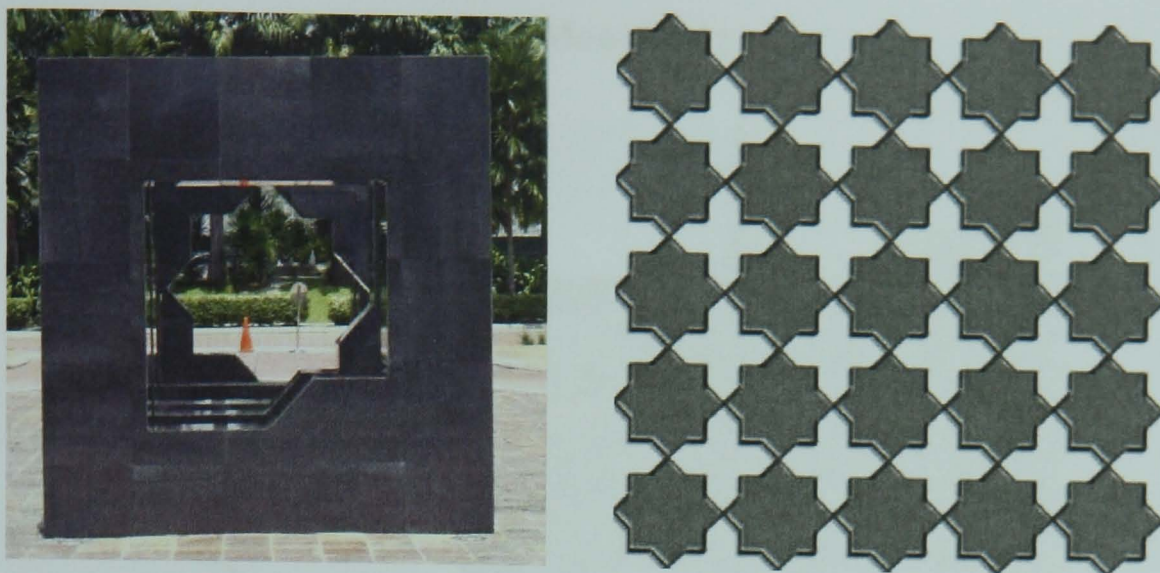
## Sculpture 6: Islamic Geometrical Sculpture



**Figure 4.17** PJH sculpture 3

This public sculpture is the third artwork found within the Putrajaya Holdings building compound. Commissioned in 2004, there are no records of the artist who designed this sculpture but based on similarly designed sculptures around the area, it is speculated that the design was developed by the Putrajaya Corporation (PJC). Inspired by the Islamic geometrical pattern, the sculpture is sited in front of the ‘Water Feature’ sculpture (refer to **figure 4.14**) and is visible as soon as one approaches the building. There is a series of five squares with different geometrical shapes, aligned together in one straight line. When viewed from few different angles – especially if one is standing in front of the sculpture, the series of squares will form an Islamic geometrical pattern commonly found in Islamic art and architecture (see **figure 4.18**). The emphasis of the sculpture is on Islamic art.





**Figure 4.18** Islamic Geometrical Patterns

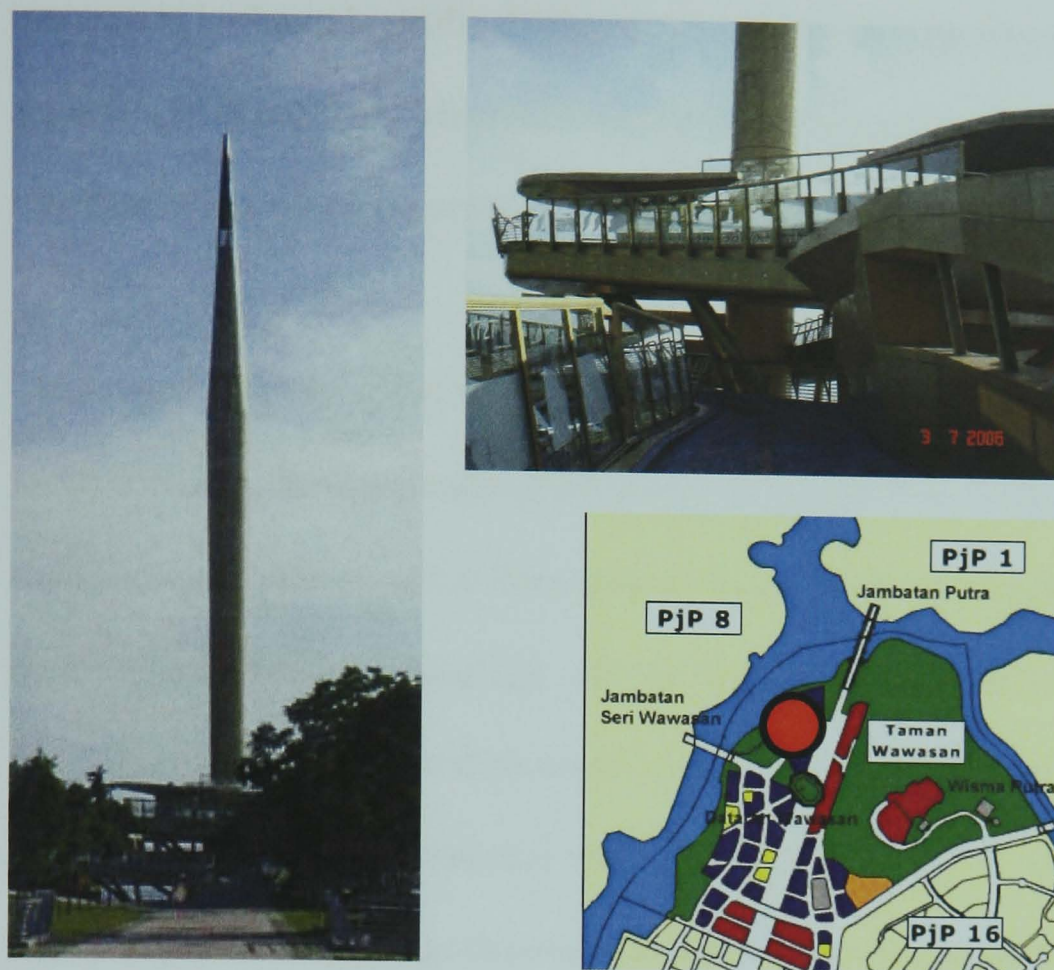
In Islamic art, infinitely repeating patterns represent the unchanging laws of God. These patterns are very complex and require high level mathematics to complete. The series of five squares also carry the analogy of an Islamic belief which is the five pillar of faith, which are:

1. to pronounce the creed that there is only one god- Allah and Muhammad is his prophet
2. to perform prayers five times a day
3. to observe fasting in the month of 'Ramadhan'
4. to give alms to the poor and needy
5. to make, during a lifetime, at least one pilgrimage to the city of Mecca

The sculpture carries a symbolic interpretation of the Islamic cultural views of art. This statement directly applies to the art style practiced in the Islamic world. Not only does its art reflect its cultural values, but even more importantly, the way in which its adherents, the Muslims, view the spiritual realm, the universe, and life. Of all three sculptures found in the compound of Putrajaya building; this is the only one that does not include water as a feature. The sculpture uses black marble tile finish which was chosen for its durability and easy maintenance.



## Sculpture 7: The Millennium Monument



**Figure 4.19** Millennium monument

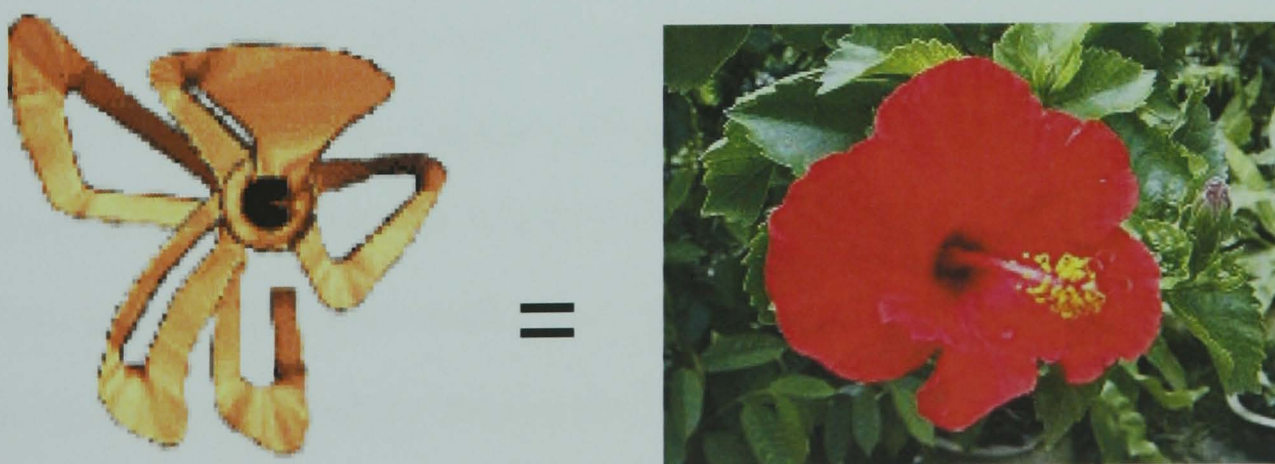
The Millennium monument is one of few highly publicised public sculptures and was featured as the main monument in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya. Located by the edge of Putrajaya Lake, the monument is accessible from the government boulevard and it stands as a landmark to the new city. A number of architects and artists were invited to compete in its design in an open competition held in conjunction of the new millennium celebration in the year 2000. TR Hamzah and Yeang architect associates won the competition and commissioned to design and build the monument.

Completed in 2005, the Millennium monument design was influenced by a number of ideas. Firstly it is an iconic structure. The designers were asked to use conceptual symbols that can represent and demonstrate Malaysia as a united country. One of the main architectural concepts adopted for this sculpture draws inspiration from Malaysia's *Bunga Raya* national flower and each of the flower's five petals were



symbolically used to design the viewing deck. At sixty eight meters in height, the monument is chronologically divided into several different time frames, segmented accordingly to represent Malaysian history. Each segmented time frame also illustrates the important events in the nation's history.

The rationale for using the National flower as a design concept is because metaphorically, the five petals of the *Bunga Raya* symbolises the country's *Rukunegara* – Malaysia Five Principles of Nationhood. The *Rukunegara* is a philosophy and national ideology - the de facto Malaysian pledge of allegiance. It was instituted by royal proclamation on *Merdeka* Day (National Independence Day) in 1970, in reaction to a serious race riot which occurred in 1969. Immediately thereafter, the Malaysian government sought ways to foster unity among Malaysians. One of the methods to encourage unity is the introduction of *Rukunegara* as inscribed on the pole at the centre of the monument. Looking at the monument from the plan view, the ramp which is also the viewing platform was designed to look like the petals of the hibiscus flower. (see **figure 4.20**)



**Figure 4.20** Millennium Monument Floor Plan was based on the 'Bunga Raya'



The next main element of the sculpture is the central pole. Engraved on the pole are the words from the country's five 'Principles of Nationhood' and embellished with Islamic geometrical patterns. At the top of this pole, are a beacon/ beam of light that shines up to the sky at night.

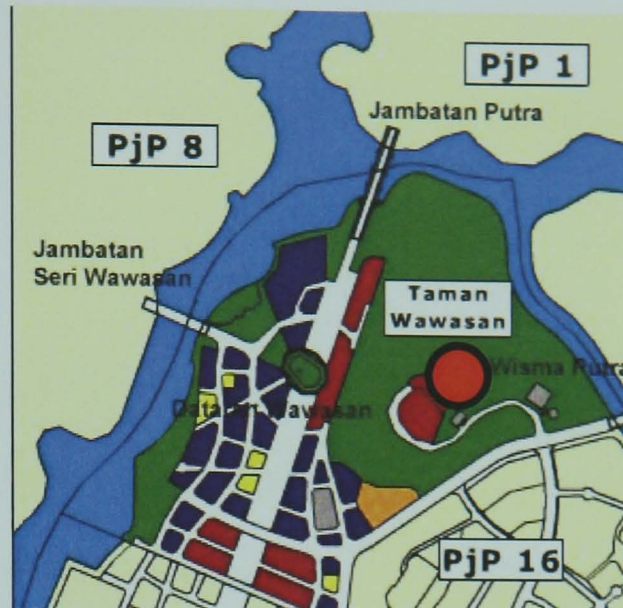


**Figure 4.21** Malaysia chronological timeline narratives: photo courtesy of CK Chan (2007)

Along the ramp (which is the main structure for this monument) is a visual narrative. This narrative is of the chronological timeline and series of events from the beginning of the Malay Peninsular from 1457 to the independence of Malaysia in 1957 (see **figure 4.21**). There are series of 142 etched glass panels displayed along the ramps leading to the Monument's highest viewing decks which highlight the nation's historical milestones from 1457 to the present time. Each panel represents series of events leading to the peak which portrays the country's 'Vision 2020' which predicts that Malaysia will be a fully industrialised country in 2020.

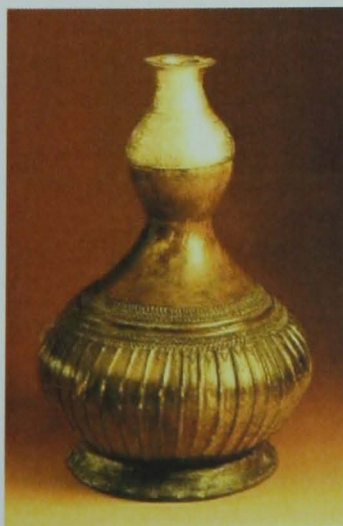


## Sculpture 8: The *Labu* Sculpture



**Figure 4.22** Ministry of Foreign Affairs sculpture 1

This sculpture is located in the compound of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Wisma Putra) and it was completed in 2003. The main element of this sculpture is the *Labu Sayong* (water pots). One of the three sculptures found in this site, the design of the *Labu* sculpture was based on the Malay arts and craft artefact. The *Labu Sayong* is found in many traditional Malay households to store fresh drinking water. Its usage is wide spread in *kampungs* (villages) because clean water sources from rivers and water-wells are usually located distance away from the residential areas for hygienic reasons. (see **figure 4.23**)



**Figure 4.23** Variety of the 'Labu' (Water Pots/ container)

*Labu* means vessel or pitcher while *Sayong* is a name of a small village near a river in the royal town of Kuala Kangsar (north of Peninsular Malaysia). This unique low-fired burnished black pitcher is shaped like a bottle gourd (a kind of vegetable) and serves as a water container.

The sculpture consists of five water pots sits on a square concrete base raised at different heights and generous spills of water jetting out of the mouths. The use of *Labu Sayong* as sculpture symbolises the values of patience, industry and resilience, based upon the long careful process it took to produce this beautiful artefact- all of which are much desired characteristics of a Malaysian. It also represents the variety of local arts and crafts skills and it also reflects the strength and richness of the country's multi-ethnic diversity. Bernard Leach, famous and distinguished English potter, wrote about the creation of pottery states:

“...the pot is the man you wrote on many occasions. Not only is the vessel described in bodily terms; neck, shoulder, belly and foot, but the concept extends to other qualities of mankind – strength, fragility, quietness. At their finest, your pots had all these qualities, transcending the humble material of clay, glaze and pigment to take another meaning to open up new worlds and suggest wider horizons, creating objects which have lives of their own.”

(Ceramic Review, 1997)

He referred to the fundamental elements of life in pots as its inner harmony, nobility, purity, strength, breadth and generosity, or even exquisiteness and charm. Fauziah Kendut (2006), a senior lecturer from the Kuala Lumpur Specialist Teacher's Training Institute states:

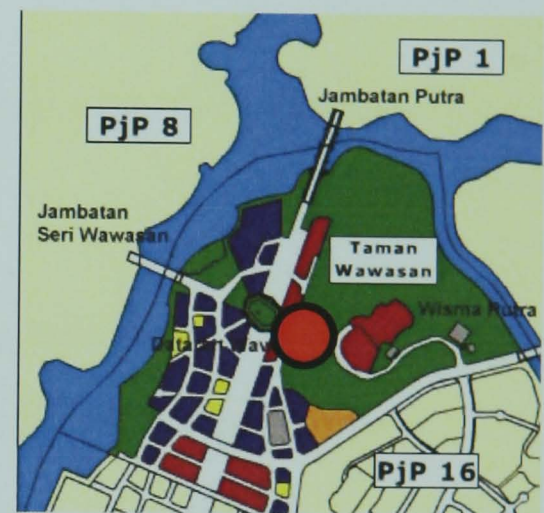


The creative and artistic process of making traditional craft can develop a more intrinsic understanding of the Malay culture and traditions. It also infuses values such as patience, tolerance, industry, meticulousness, diligence, resilience and perseverance.

Fauziah Kendut (2006: 15)

The 'Labu' sculpture was designed by an unidentified contractor as a gift to the Ministry.

### **Sculpture 9:           The *Bunga Raya* Sculpture**



**Figure 4.24**   Ministry of Foreign Affairs sculpture 2

This sculpture is also sited in the compound of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Wisma Putra). The Ministry handles the country's international relations and issues associated with foreign affairs; hence it is important for the Ministry to have sculptures that displays local identity in the form of the local arts and crafts or in the form of floras and faunas. Being a multi-cultural and multi-lingual country, Malaysia has a diverse ethnic population. It possesses great social and cultural complexity. As the ministry is at the forefront for international relation, and entertained many foreign dignitaries and visitors, it is also responsible for the local culture and identity. This is achievable by show-casing local art and crafts in the form of these sculptures. Located



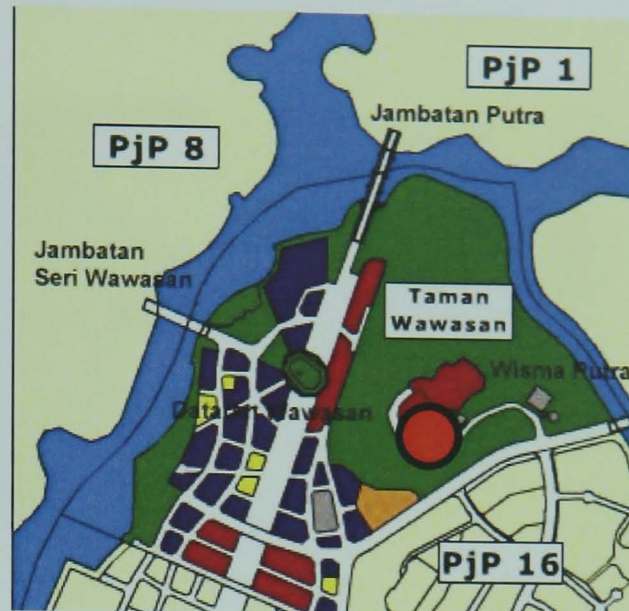
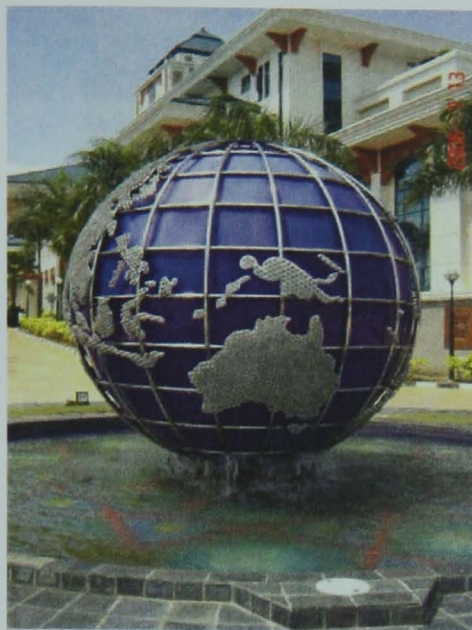
at the VIP entrance, the *Bunga Raya* (hibiscus flower) sculpture design were adopted directly from the national flower, clustered together to form the sculpture.



**Figure 4.25** Example of the 'Rukun Negara' and 'Bunga Raya' poster by the Ministry of Information Malaysia

Repetition of the flower form was used on the pedestal and again on the top of the sculpture where a much larger cluster of the *Bunga Raya* was design to dominate the sculpture. A water fountain was included as a part of its design. There are five smaller sculptures circling the main sculpture. Five is a favoured number in many of the sculptures found in Putrajaya. Apart from the five petals in the national flower used to represents the 'Five Principles of the Nationhood', it is also used to represent the five pillar of Islamic faith. The sculpture was completed in 2003 by an unidentified artist.

## Sculpture 10: The Globe sculpture



**Figure 4.26** Ministry of Foreign Affairs sculpture 3

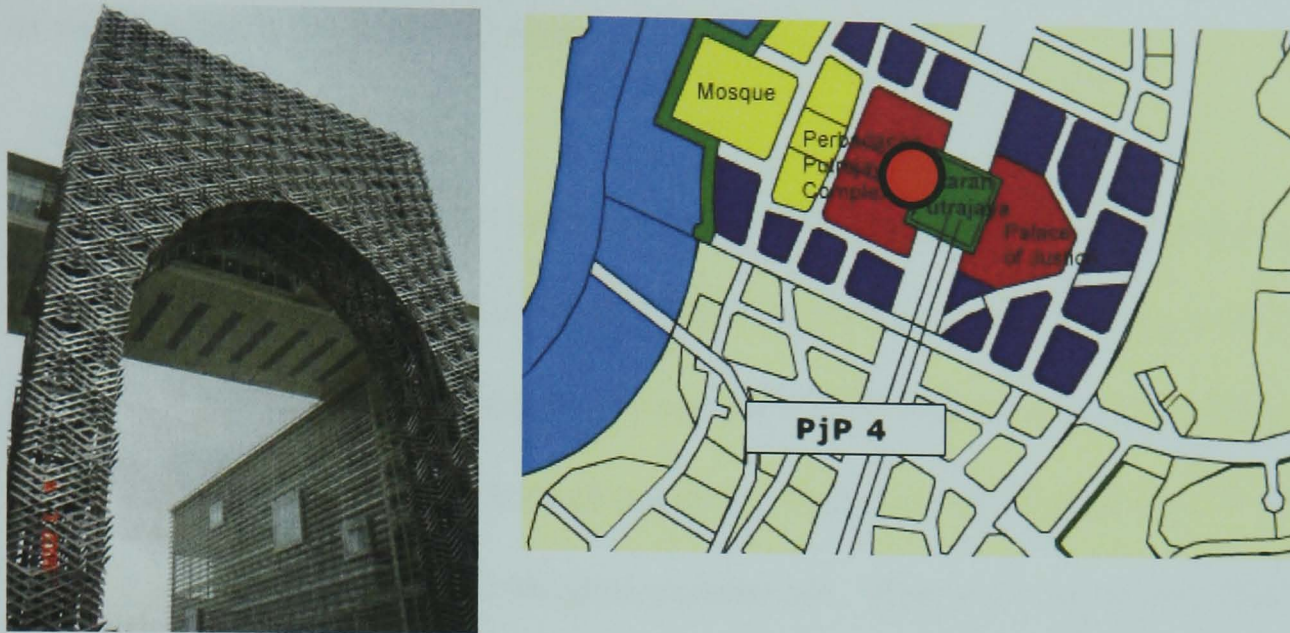
The Globe sculpture is sited on the main entrance to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs complex. The sculpture was commissioned in 2003 and it was awarded to local artist Tan Sri Lim Kok Wing, who is also the principal of LIMKOKWING University in Cyberjaya.

The globe's design was based upon a symbolic meaning – the sphere or globe as a shape is an ancient and universal symbol that represents unity, completeness, infinity and wholeness. The Globe sculpture is also interpreted visually as a symbol of the global community and the various segments of international relationships. Like other sculptures in the area, this sculpture represents the ministry's various businesses and involvement with international relation. Embedded in each continent and country on the sculpture are tiny light bulbs lit during the night. The Globe sculpture sits on a pool of water.



#### 4.4.1.3 Zone One Precinct 3

##### Sculpture 11: The 'PJC Gateway Arch' Sculpture



**Figure 4.27** PJC Gateway sculpture

Precinct 3 is also known as the Civic & Government Precinct which is located midway along the Boulevard and bridges, and is being developed to house Ministries and institutions related to the development of the arts and culture. The *PJC Gateway Arch* sculpture is one of the biggest and tallest free-standing sculptures in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya after the Millennium monument. Standing more than fifty metres in height, the sculpture is sandwiched between two Putrajaya Corporation buildings which is located in this precinct. Putrajaya Corporation is an organisation appointed by the Federal Government to act as the local authority to help to enforce enactment and policy which helps control and maintain the Federal Territory of Putrajaya.

At the top of the sculpture is an executive lounge for VIP guests of the Putrajaya Corporation. The arch sculpture was completed in 2002; commissioned to Hajeedar and Associates who also designs the PJC building. The sculpture design was



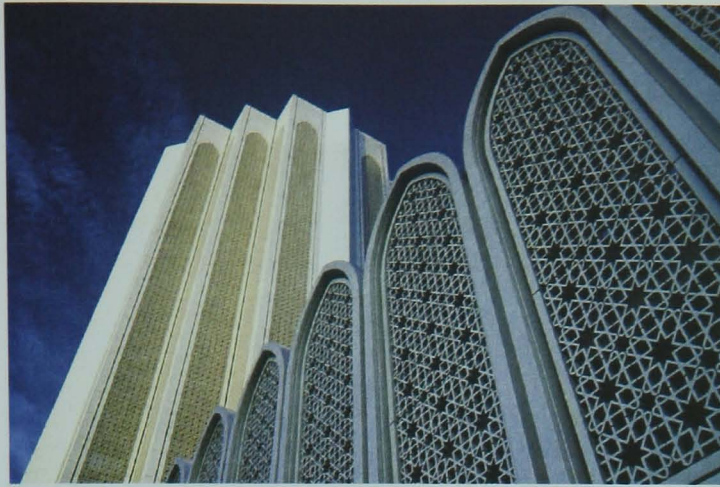
fabricated from an Islamic doorway arch- a popular architecture design element found in mosques in Malaysia. It was believe that the arch represents the entrance to a place of worship and a doorway to calmness.

The use of the Islamic arch as a concept for this sculpture originated from the original design for Mosques. Islam flourished in Malaysia in the fifteenth century under the guidance of the Malay sultanate. But it was the British colonisation in Malaysia that brought two main styles which stand out today. These are the colonial period mosques - with Moorish influences and Moghul architecture. Malaysia's Islamic symbols reflect the expanse of designs and influences of British and Malay engineers and architects. The *Jamek* Mosque in Kuala Lumpur (see **figure 4.28**), built in 1909, was an example of colonial Islamic architecture. The PJC archway is heavily influenced by Islamic architecture with its references to these models (see **figure 4.29**). Its design facilitated the dissemination of Islamic teachings and activities.



**Figure 4.28** Masjid Jamek examples of Moghul and Moorish influences





**Figure 4.29** Dayabumi Complex Kuala Lumpur- an example of Moghul Islamic arches in buildings

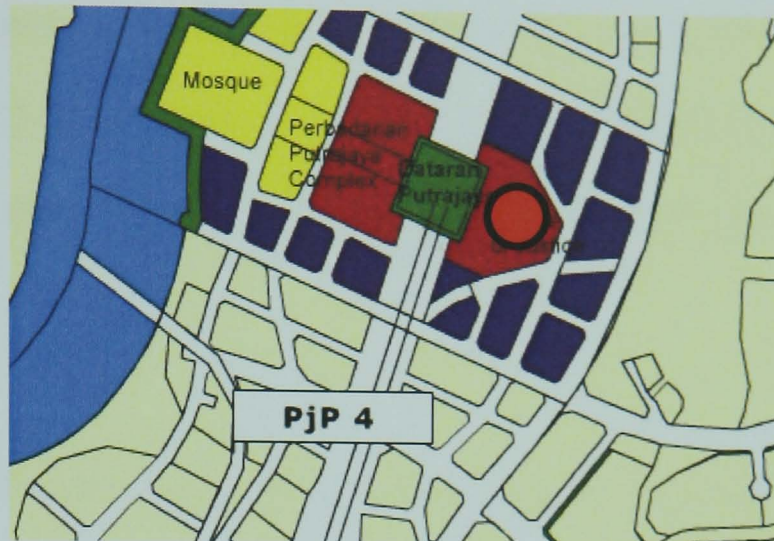
The arch element from the sculpture was also supposed to frame a view of a new ‘Grand’ mosque which is at moment is under construction, located behind the PJC building and sits in axis to the sculpture (see **figure 4.30**).



**Figure 4.30** The PJC sculpture framing Putrajaya’s Palace of Justice



## Sculpture 12: Palace of Justice 'Stone' Sculpture



**Figure 4.31** Palace of Justice sculpture

The Stone sculpture is a work by Associate Professor Ramlan Abdullah – a reputable Malaysian public artist and academician. The sculpture is located on the main entrance lobby inside the Palace of Justice court house building in Precinct 3.

Completed in 2003, the *Stone* sculpture was carved from white marbles stone from local quarries. The sculpture's design was based on the core function of the Palace of Justice – which houses the high court (Malaysian Court of Appeal and Federal Court), and the 'Syariah' Islamic court which was moved to the Federal Territory of Putrajaya from the *Sultan Abdul Samad* building in Kuala Lumpur in the early 2000. In Malaysia, the judiciary system employs the English Common law as well as both Islamic law and 'adat' or tribal law, particularly matters of personal status.

The final development of the sculpture conceptual design includes the Islamic views of justice and peace. The basics of Islam are usually told about the 'Five Pillars' of the religion. These relate to faith and to practice, but at a deeper level it might be said that there are two great pillars which support the whole edifice. These are peace and

justice. They are clearly connected since there can be no enduring peace without justice. The very word Islam comes from the same verbal root as *salam* meaning “peace”. The artist looked at famous quotes by Malaysian local heroes on justice and peace and uses the metaphor of balance in life and the importance of knowing between wrong and right. This aspect of justice is based upon the rights and duties of the individual person.

The sculpture is made of three different segments. The base (first segment) and the plinth (second segment) are designed to be coarse. This is to represent basic human instinct that is prone to unruliness if it is not contained and controlled which leads to chaos. The third stone is a finely carved and polished marble stone which represent the important balance of judgement. On the surface of the third stone inscribed an Arabic calligraphy- a *Quranic* verse which is translated as:

“Allah the all merciful and most forgiving, the most just, will give unto thee and show the right path, for those who seek the truth; act in the light of truth and behold, God enjoins justice and good actions and generosity to our fellows....Be just! That is closest to God consciousness”.



#### 4.4.1.4 Zone One Precinct 4

##### Sculpture 13: 'Perdana Leadership' sculpture



**Figure 4.32** Perdana Leadership sculpture

The Perdana Leadership sculpture is located inside the Perdana Leadership Foundation building on Precinct 4. The foundation houses the office of Tun Dr Mahathir, former Malaysian Prime Minister which also includes a gallery that archives the achievements and historical background of past Prime Ministers. Precinct 4 will be fully developed by 2010 as the main commercial and business district in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya. Various components in the 'Commercial Precinct' establish the character of this precinct which includes the Boulevard, which runs through the precinct linking the east and the west commercial zones. Other dominant components are the *Dataran Rakyat* and *Dataran Gemilang* which provide visual and physical foci for residents and visitors.

The sculpture was commissioned in 2005 from Raja Azhar, a reputable Malaysian local artist. Inspired by local materials, the sculpture uses three different materials, glass, polished aluminium and *cengal* wood. The design was influenced by the



development of local expressionist artwork and the sculpture was commissioned to reflect upon the achievement of the past and present leaders in the country. The sculpture also represents the legacy of nation building by the individual leader.



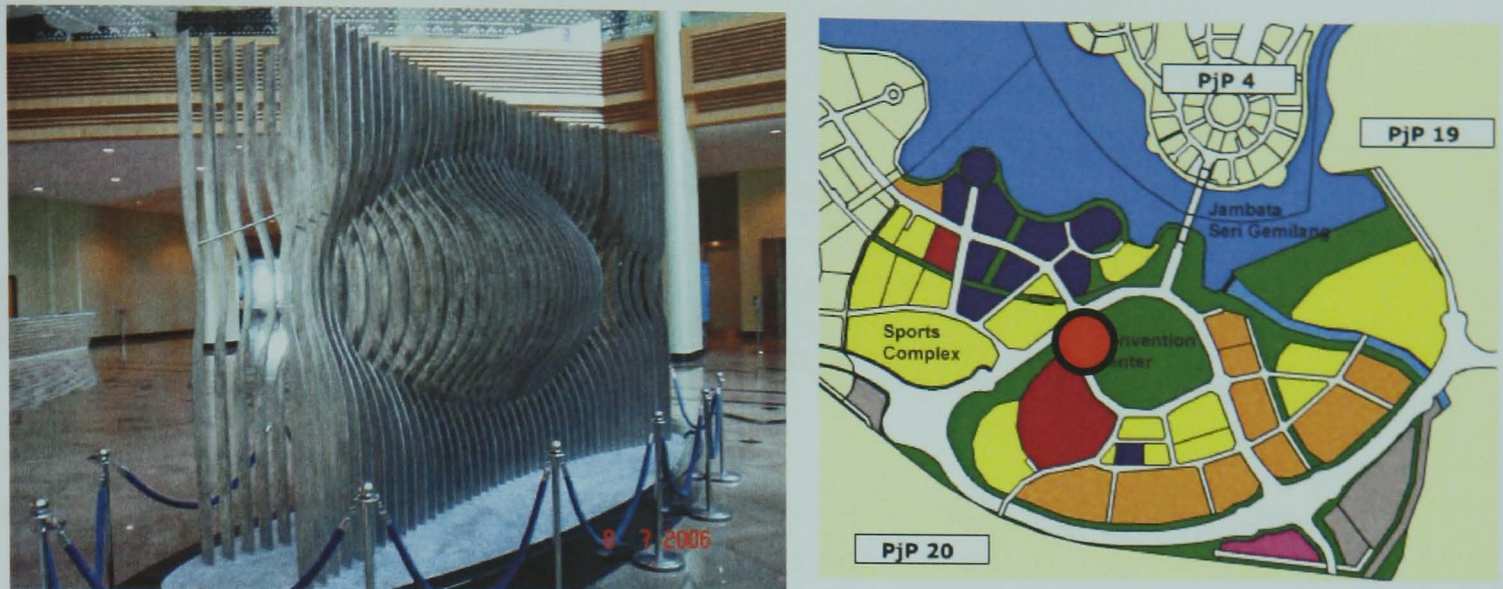
**Figure 4.33** The sculpture fish tail (left); the base plaque represents the fourteen Malaysian flag stripes

The sculpture is made of five *cengal* wood rods extending up wards to denote progress and finished with a 'fish tail' aluminium top. Engraved on the aluminium top are the names of the past four prime ministers and one are of the present prime minister Dato'Seri Abdullah Badawi. On the front base of the sculpture sits an aluminium plate etched with the Malaysian stripes with an inscribed signature of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohammad, founder of the Yayasan Perdana organisation. The sculpture will be extended when a Prime Minister step down in the future, his legacy will be added as a piece of the sculpture to remember his/her contribution towards the country's growth.



#### 4.4.1.5 Zone One Precinct 5

##### Sculpture 14: PiCC Steel sculpture



**Figure 4.34** Putrajaya International Convention Centre sculpture

Precinct 5 is being developed for convention and recreation purposes. Located at the southern-end of Putrajaya, across the lake and beyond the Boulevard, the Sports and Recreational precinct, Precinct 5 is the second largest and the fifth and final precinct in the Core Area. The sculpture is fabricated using steel, and designed by an architect and public artist, Muthalib Musa. It was completed in 2003. The PiCC sculpture is sited at the main concourse of the Putrajaya Convention Center.

The Putrajaya Convention Center is the premier venue for international meetings, conferences and exhibition. It also hosts corporate functions and social events and an internationally recognised convention centre. The conceptual design of the Putrajaya International Convention Centre is adopted from the combination of the Malaysian traditional kite designs known as *Wau* and *Pending* (belt buckle).





**Figure 4.35** The Putrajaya International Convention Centre: Design concept base on the Malaysian 'Wau' (top picture) and 'Pending' (bottom picture)

The Steel sculpture was a gift to the Putrajaya Convention Centre by a reputable architect and benefactor of the *Rimbun Dahan*, Mr Hijjas Kasturi. The *Rimbun Dahan* is an artist's colony village set up to encourage the development of visual art in Malaysia. It also has a residency programme for emerging Malaysian artists and an annual salon exhibition. Mr Hijjas Kasturi was also given the commission to design and supervise the construction of the Putrajaya Convention Center. The artist, Musa Muthalib was then in residency at the *Rimbun Dahan* and was hand-picked by Mr Hijjas Kasturi himself to design the sculpture. The design concept is based on one element of the Putrajaya Convention Center architectural concept, a traditional Malay cultural artefact called *Pending*. *Pending* or traditional belt buckle is commonly used by Malay women when wearing the traditional *Kebaya* dress or a sarong and it was used widely until the late 1970's.





**Figure 4.36** *Pending* or Ornamented Belt Buckle (left); The Royal *Pending* (right)

But the *Pending* was also widely used by men as a large, intricately ornamented belt buckle worn around the *samping*, a skirt-like cloth worn by men, to complement their *baju melayu*, the traditional attire for men. Traditionally, *Pending* was mainly worn by men on official occasions. They were typically made of silver, which was not indigenous to Malaysia, and their size was an indicator of rank. In addition to serving as personal adornment, the jewellery on the *Pending* generally is rich with symbolism and serves as an effective medium for displays of wealth and status.



**Figure 4.37** Ornamented Belt Buckle from East Coast of Malaysia

The usage of *Pending* as a conceptual design establishes a very important feature and symbolises a display of wealth and status. Using a series of steel plate to form the belt buckle, the sculpture was created to form a visual illusion when viewed from an angle of forty five degree. Looking the sculpture from the side, viewers will only see series of lines. Looking at an angle of forty five degree, viewers will also see the 'eye' of the

buckle which when combined from the second half/ side of the sculpture will form a oblong sphere (see **figure 4.34**).

#### **4.4.2 Non- Attributed sculpture in Administration and Financial Area (Zone One)**

There are five non-attributed public sculptures found in this zone. The sculptures are mostly located in the administration and financial area – in compounds and entrances of the government offices. Precinct 2, 3 and 4 is categorised in this zone. A lot of the sculptures located in this zone use basic geometrical shapes and designs, and are used frequently in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya. This identity is apparent in both attributed and non-attributed sculptures. To understand the reason behind repeated usage of geometrical shape in sculpture design especially in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya, it is important to look at the value that geometrical shapes hold in design.

Geometric shape is the basic form commonly employed in architecture and art. It is used worldwide and represents different roles. It can be use to represent precision and technology- one of the many design metaphors employed in public art in Putrajaya. Geometrical shapes are popular because Malaysia sees itself as a technologically advanced country. By employing sculptures that is conceptually designed to imply efficiency and precision, it reflects the ability of the country to use modern technology.

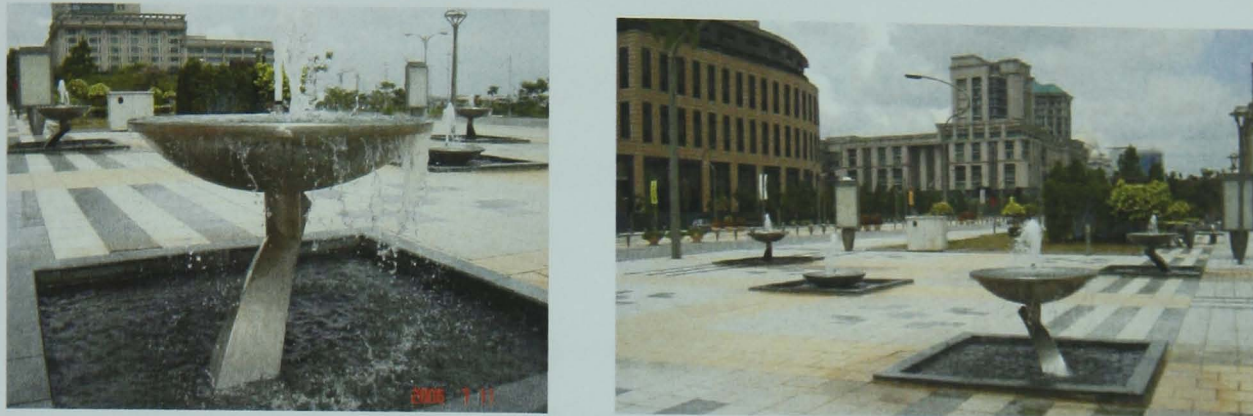
Geometric shape is also a common and important element in Islamic art and architecture. A lot of the Islamic art and architecture employed in Putrajaya uses



geometrical patterns. It symbolises the Islamic principles of *Tawhid* (the unity of all things) and *Mizan* (order and balance), which are the laws of creation in Islam.

#### 4.4.2.1 Zone One: Precinct 2

##### Non- Attributed Sculpture 15: Five Water Fountain



**Figure 4.38** Ministry of Finance Water Fountain

The water fountain is located on the government boulevard in Precinct 2 is sited opposite of the Ministry of Finance building. It was completed in 2000 but there is no record of the artist responsible and the work is presumably designed by the contractor responsible for the designing the Ministry of Finance building. The non-attributed sculpture comprises five small water fountains, composed to form a symmetrical and equally balanced design. The symmetrical design is also reflected on each individual fountain. Each fountain sits on a square base water pool. Four of the five water fountain sits on an outer rim to form a perfect square, while the fifth fountain was located in the middle and acts an anchor to tie the whole design together (see **figure 4.38**). Each of the four water fountains are designed in the form of a fire torch and use metal as a composite base material. The central fountain is designed to form a water basin. When lit at night the water fountains resemble a fire torches found in stadiums.



This non-attributed sculpture uses the concept of symmetry to symbolically represent balance and equality – which is also metaphorically used in Islamic art. Symmetry plays a part in most Islamic patterns and this concept expresses the logic and order inherent in Islamic vision of the universe. There may be a single line of reflective symmetry, usually from the top to the bottom, or there may be three or four lines of symmetry. Sometimes reflective symmetry and the two kinds of movement are found in the same design. Symmetry and repetition give unity to the more complex designs.

#### **4.4.2.2      Zone One: Precinct 3**

##### **Non- Attributed Sculpture 16: Ministry of Local Industry and Commodity fountain**

##### **Non- Attributed Sculpture 16 A: Main Entrance fountain**



**Figure 4.39**    Ministry of Local Industry and Commodity Fountain (1)

This fountain is located at the main entrance of the Ministry of Local Industry and Commodity. The Ministry's main portfolio is to support local small and medium size industries- an effort by the government to ensure equal division and distribution of the country's wealth and create an economic balance among the three major ethnic groups- the Malays, Chinese and Indians. The Ministry functions to:

1. Bring people from all sectors of the economy together, instead of pitting them against each other in divisive class struggles.

2. Increase accessibility to economic participation for as many people as possible to help address legitimate "first step" needs so as many people as possible can be made ready to move on to higher levels of personal advancement.
3. Encourage fair and equitable distribution of the wealth produced among all those who participate in producing it to reflect their contributions to such production.

The non-attributed sculpture located in this site uses geometrical shapes similar to the sculptures found in this area. Like many of the fountain in this area, this non-attributed sculpture use of geometric concept metaphorically represent stimulus in economic efficiency and rapid economic growth which also visually represent balance and equality.

Geometrical symbolism and economy often intersect and enrich each other. They have an infinite number of applications. Some of these are visually adopted in explaining economy as simple and understandable diagrams. The fountain comprises of three components- the main element is a vertical triangular plain column (see **figure 4.39**). The base of the column is smaller in size when compared to the top half of the sculpture. This creates a visual illusion – as if the sculptural element is floating. From the top of the column a jet of water propels out to the second component of the fountain - a rectangular pool with ten smaller rectangles to allow water to descend into the third pool. On the fountain is second component, rest three square flag poles which are adorned with Islamic geometrical patterns. The material finishes for the sculpture is a heavy-duty black tile.

The water fountain also works as a visual relief to break the overwhelmingly ‘formal’ physical image of the area. It also acts as a cooling mechanism for the surrounding



sites. This happens when the water from the fountain escapes to form a mixture of invigorating spray from the cascading water every time there is a breeze.

**Non-Attributed Sculpture 17: Court yard**



**Figure 4.40** Ministry of Local Industry and Commodity Fountain (2)

The second water fountain is located in the courtyard of the Ministry of Local Industry and Commodity building. The non-attributed sculpture is designed to fit the size of the courtyard and comprises two retaining walls with a horizontal 'aqueduct' that sits on the first wall. At the base of each wall are pools to collect water cascading down from each of the retaining walls. The design of this fountain is modern yet it reflects the design used in a traditional Islamic landscape. The lush gardens where these fountains are located are created by man-made inspirations of an earthly paradise. According to Duranni (2001) a landscape architect, the Quran states:

"(For those who believe and do good), God has prepared Gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein forever: that is the Supreme Felicity"

Quran (9:100)

The inspiration for Islamic garden design lies in the Islamic belief and vision of Heaven, or Paradise. In several verses of the Quran, Muslims are given a glimpse of the rewards to come for the faithful in the 'Hereafter' - after the day of judgement. In the Quran it says that believers will be rewarded with the splendours and bountiful beauty of paradise. This is described as gardens in heaven - which is also described as containing gushing fountains and flowing springs, fruit trees, and couches to recline in under the cool shade of trees. According to Kirk Johnson (1999):

The characteristic Islamic garden, with its division of a garden into four parts, was inspired by Persian gardens and reinforced by the Prophet Muhammad's descriptions of paradise.

Kirk Johnson (1999: 2)

Prophet Muhammad had also described paradise as a place of plenteous shade; in comparison to the desert climate of Arabian Peninsula. In a hot and dry country like in the Middle East, shade is much more highly valued than bright flower-beds. Both because of their connection with paradise and their practical value in hot climates, Islamic gardens are usually gardens of water and shade and they are usually geometrically structured. These ideals were later adopted in various parts of the Islamic world. The water fountain in the Ministry's courtyard helps to provide a visual relief and functions as resting area for visitors.



**Non- Attributed Sculpture 18:      Immigration Office**

**Non- Attributed Sculpture 18 A:    Main Entrance**



**Figure 4.41**    Immigration Office fountain (1)

The fountain located in front of the Immigration Office mirrors the fountain found in front of the Ministry of Local Industry and Commodity. The two non-attributed sculptures from each side of the building form an invisible symmetrical axis.

The design of the non-attributed sculpture mirrors the one in Ministry of Local Industry and Commodity and is based on the architectural principle of symmetry. The principle of symmetry is commonly used in architecture and urban planning when a building or a space lacks a specific reference point. Because both buildings are equally hidden from the main boulevard, the symmetrical design was used to create a long horizontal axis that governs its visual perspective. The two fountain designs adopted the architectural principle of Bilateral symmetry. The Bilateral symmetry principle work based upon the unification of architecture element within two separate compounds. In this case, the fountain's facade is division of two equal halves-opposite to one another. In the second half of the design, the axis of symmetry divide



the facade into two equal parts each with its own independent characteristic. When viewed from bird's eye point of view, the two similar but not identically designed sculptures help create a singular form.

**Non- Attributed Sculpture 19:            Courtyard**



**Figure 4.42** Immigration Office fountain (2)

The fountain is located in the courtyard of the Immigration Office. The concept of an Islamic garden is repeated here. The non-attributed sculpture is made of a rectangular arch, which also acts as aqueduct carrying water across from one end of the arch to the other. At the end of the arch facing away from the wall, there is a water pool with four raised sides. This geometrically shaped pool sits on a bigger rectangular pool of water. The significance of these four angles is reflected on Prophet Muhammad's description of heaven. Prophet Muhammad described Paradise as being watered by four rivers; and traditional Islamic gardens are usually divided by four canals or channels of water, often with a pool or fountain at their juncture.

Under the fountain's arch is a ramp which leads down to the entrance of the building's eastern concourse. The arch symbolises a gateway which welcomes believers to the garden of paradise. A similar gateway concept was also used by the



PJC Gateway arch in Precinct 3 and another sculpture in the courtyard of the Ministry of Local Industry and Commodity (see **Figure 4.40**). Water features are prominent in most of the sculptures in Putrajaya. Water signifies purity in Islam - the act of ablution before performing a prayer itself represents cleansing of the soul before prayers. In a tropical country like Malaysia, water is important because it is used help give a visual illusion of a lustrous and refreshing landscape. The water features also helps to cool the surrounding environments.

#### **4.4.2.3      Zone One Precinct 4**

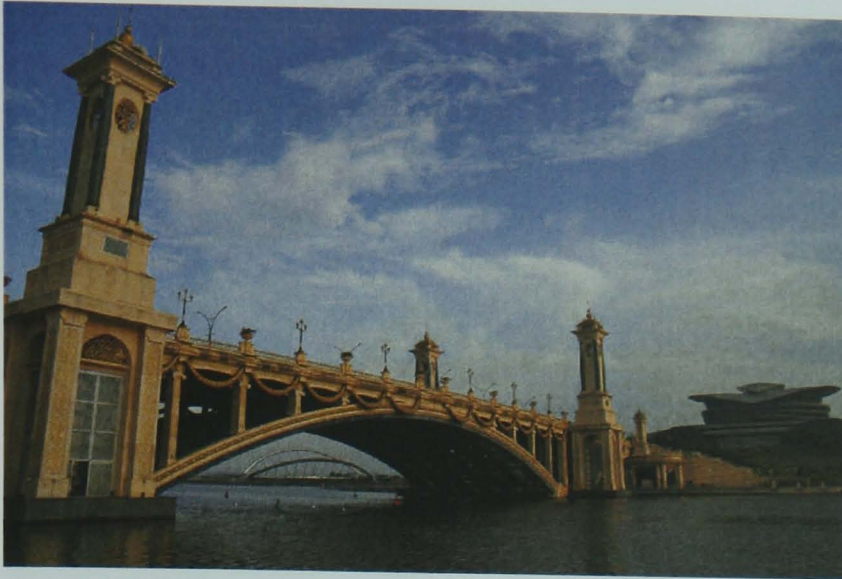
##### **Non- Attributed Sculpture 20: The ‘Seri Gemilang’ Bridge**



**Figure 4.43**    Seri Gemilang Bridge

The Seri Gemilang Bridge is one of five bridges found in Putrajaya. Each of the five bridges connects the peripheral to the core area. According to Putrajaya Corporation who acts as the Putrajaya City Council, the bridge is known as a ‘Ceremonial Bridge’ which connects the ‘Heritage Square’ on Precinct 4 with Putrajaya Convention Centre in Precinct 5. This is because the Seri Gemilang Bridge represents the success of Malaysia’s cultural assimilation.





**Figure 4.44** Ceremonial Bridge- *Seri Gemilang Bridge*

As a country that is multi ethnically diverse, racial unity among its people is taken seriously. This bridge serves as a reminder of the importance of unity and of working together to ensure the success of the country.

This bridge is heavily ornamented with floral carvings found in Malay architecture and crafts. This ornate bridge is decorated with balustrades on the sides and ornamental lamp posts along the central divide. The ornate carvings originated from Malay traditional woodcarvings, which are used in many of its architecture and art. Woodcarving is part and parcel of vernacular Malay architecture and traditional craft in Peninsular Malaysia and Southern Thailand. Most depictions are manifestation of physical beauty into abstract forms (see **figure 4.45**). It uses motifs of flora, calligraphy, geometry, fauna and cosmic features (both cosmic and faunal motifs are remnants of the pre-Islamic cultural tradition). The carvings are prominently featured on the bridge. Other elements are the four towers with a small Islamic dome which resembles a mosque minaret. This clearly represents the Islamic influence with many of the structures found in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya.





**Figure 4.45** Motifs of flora, calligraphy, and geometry

The bridge was given the name *Seri Gemilang* base on the literal translation of the meaning of the word. ‘Seri’ means equal or balance. It could also mean glow, while ‘Gemilang’ is defined as accomplishment. Putting the two words together ‘Seri Gemilang’ is literally means “Equal Accomplishment”. This is reflects the effort by the Malaysian government to instil equality in all form of socio-political and economic development in the country and to foster unity among its multi ethnic people. The construction and idea behind the design of the bridge was commissioned in 1999 from PJS International Sdn. Bhd, a design consultant company based in Kuala Lumpur.

#### **4.5 Zone Two: Commercial and Retail Area**

This zone is characterised by retail and commercial activities. *Alamanda* Shopping Mall and SOUQ Plaza in Precinct 1 was identified as the only commercial area in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya.



#### 4.5.1 Attributed sculptures in Zone Two (Commercial and Retail Area)

There is only one sculpture found in this zone which is located at the SOUQ plaza within the Putrajaya mosque complex in Precinct 1. Zone Two is classified for activities relating to small and medium size business premises like shopping malls, open market area, a thematic market area and holds events for families and visitors. The public sculpture found at the plaza was employed to provide a therapeutic function after a long day of sight seeing and shopping.

##### 4.5.1.1 Zone Two Precinct 1

##### Sculpture 21: SOUQ Geometrical Sculpture



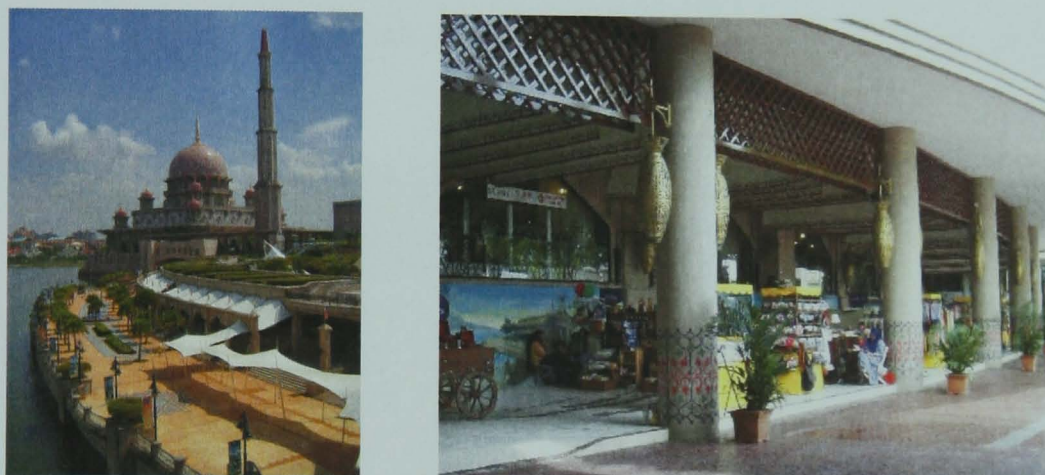
**Figure 4.46** *SOUQ* Plaza sculpture

This sculpture is located at the *SOUQ* plaza at the lower level of the Putrajaya mosque complex. *SOUQ* is an Arabic translation for market plaza or commercial quarters where stalls, shop lots and eatery areas. For many Middle Eastern countries the *SOUQ* is an important architectural identity which reflects the life style of its people. In the Federal Territory of Putrajaya, the *SOUQ* plaza replicates the Middle Eastern market place and uses this design element to strengthen Malaysia's Islamic identity.



The *SOUQ* plaza uses rich and highly patterned materials, murals and artwork to capture the style of a Middle Eastern market bazaar. The *SOUQ* was also built to provide and cater to the shopping needs of the locals. It is also being utilised as a visitor's centre for tourists.

The *SOUQ* plaza sculpture is sited at an open courtyard of the plaza, close to the food court area. The sculpture is also a water fountain which provides aesthetic relief to the area and works as a cooling mechanism. This is achieved when mist from the water feature sprays every time there is a wind breeze which happen quite often.



**Figure 4.47** *SOUQ* Plaza, the Federal Territory of Putrajaya

The *SOUQ* plaza sculpture is made of three geometrically shaped masses the tallest of which stands at seven metres high. All three blocks are designed in the shape of an Islamic arch – similar to the PJC Gateway Arch sculpture (see **figure 4.27**). The sculpture uses the Islamic arches as its main feature in response to the plaza which is also fused with designs and ornaments found in Islamic architecture. This helps to heighten the impression of a Middle Eastern market. The base of the sculpture is concrete and finished with black marble tiles. The finish for the sculpture was chosen specifically for its durability. The sculpture sits on a rectangular pool of water. At the



center of each arch, a curtain of water pours down back to the pool. The sculpture was completed in 2004.

#### 4.5.2 Non-Attributed Sculpture in Zone Two

There are only two non-attributed sculpture located in this zone. One is sited at the Alamanda shopping complex in Precinct 1 and the other is the *SOUQ* water fountain located at the central concourse of the plaza next to the *SOUQ* Geometrical sculpture.

##### 4.5.2.1 Zone Two, Precinct 1

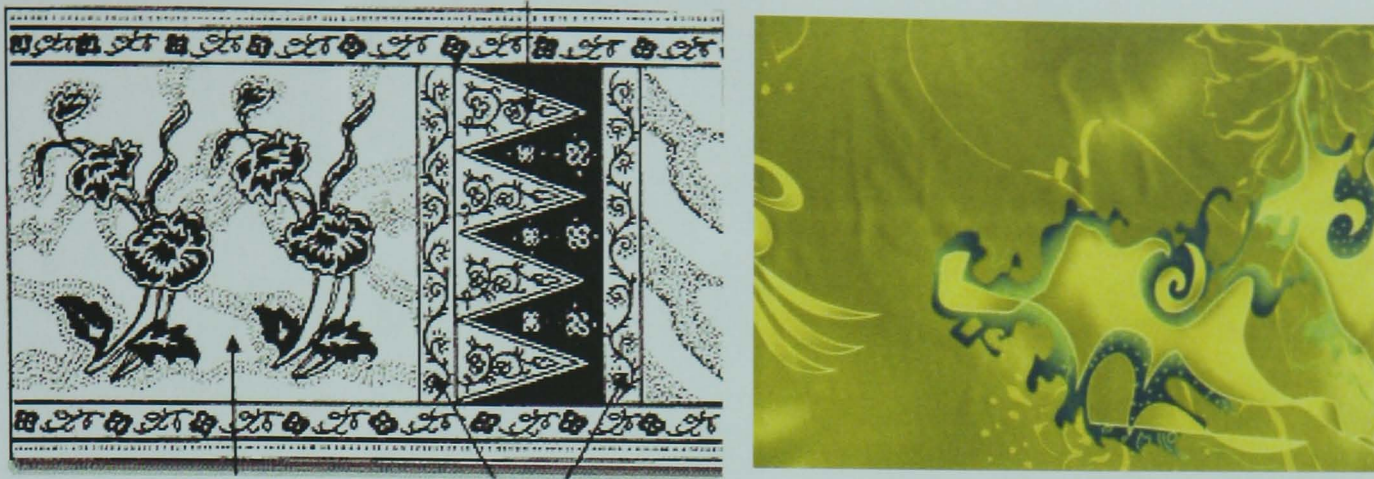
##### Non- Attributed Sculpture 22: 'Alamanda' Signage



**Figure 4.48** *Alamanda* Signage

The signage is located on the east side entrance of the *Alamanda* shopping complex in Precinct 1. It was completed and given a public inauguration in 2004. The *Alamanda* complex is the main shopping centre for the whole of Putrajaya and is located close to the government boulevard. This non-attributed sculpture consists of eight blue acrylic board columns with abstract floral pattern on both sides of the signage. The abstract floral pattern was based on hand drawn modern *batik* design motifs – an art technique used in the local fabric industry and popular within the South East Asia region.

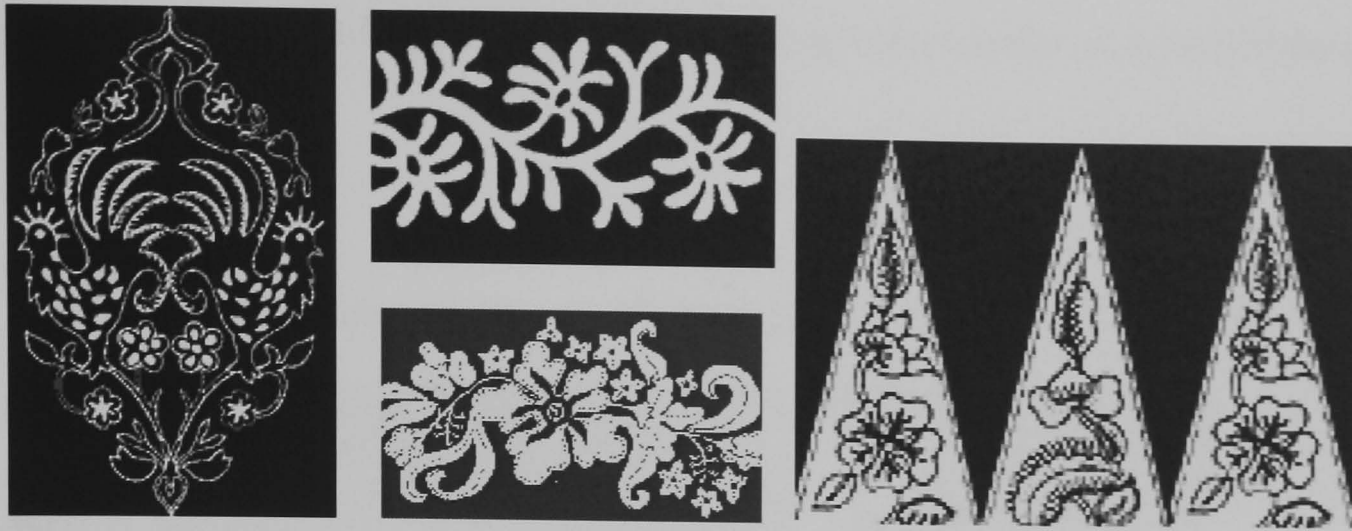




**Figure 4.49** Two example of Batik design: printed (left) and hand drawn (right)

*Batik* is a word from Javanese origin "ambatik". 'Amba' literally means 'to write' and 'titik' for dots. "Ambatik" becomes *batik* in Malay, which means a textile with small dotted patterns. *Batik* also defines as 'a textile decorated and processed traditionally as sarongs by ethnic groups in Indonesia and Malaysia'. There are two categories of batik motifs. They are:

1. Organic symbolisms motifs --Examples are motifs of banana flower as a symbol of purity and fertility, *Garudas* or phoenix, the auspicious religious symbols. The same principle applies to all mythical animals such as lions, snakes, *Nagas* and temples. Then there are the natural phenomena such as rocks, the Taoist symbols of the creative force of nature, its strength, endurance and majesty. Clouds, when placed together with rocks are to symbolise the union of the earth and sky suggestive of procreative powers, according to Javanese mythology.



**Figure 4.50a** Batik organic pattern (left) and  
**Figure 4.50b** Geometric pattern (far right)

2. Geometric symbolisms - The commonest pattern, the elongated lying triangles at the ends of sarongs symbolised life force. Diagonally aligned Malay daggers forming diamonds called *Garis Miring* (see **figure 4.50** right) are considered auspicious and naturally were once reserved for royalty. Other geometric patterns are:
  - a. Squares, rectangles crosses or *Ceplok*
  - b. and *Kawung* Weaving or *Limar* motifs

The pattern on the signage is also a part of the corporate image of the parent company- the *KLCC* Corporation. The materials used for this sculpture are commonly found in signage design. Each board contains text, which together spell the name of the complex.

The signage design reflects local art and fashion styles. The usage of such design elements is suitable for this sculpture because it help reflect the role of the *Alamanda* shopping complex, where there are shops selling Malaysian arts and crafts item. This signage is categorised as a non-attributed sculpture because its main function as a signage but it also help introduce Malaysian traditional crafts. The sculpture is



adorned with art motifs and improves the image and enhances the visual landscape of complex ground.

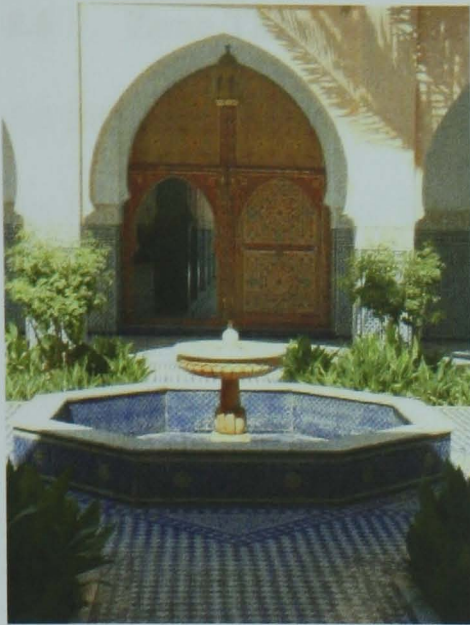
**Non- Attributed Sculpture 23**

**‘SOUQ’ *Çahar-Bagh* Water Fountain**



**Figure 4.51** *SOUQ* Plaza Fountain

The *SOUQ* water fountain is placed at the central concourse of the plaza next to the *SOUQ* Geometrical sculpture. It was completed in 2004 (see **figure 4.38**). This non-attributed sculpture borrowed its design concept from an Islamic garden. It uses white marbles finishes with colourful mosaic with repetitive geometrical flowers around the base of the main feature. On each of the four sides of the feature are water spouts falling back to the square base pool. The underlying theme of the Islamic garden as concept is adopted from the *Çahar-bagh* or four-fold garden.



**Figure 4.52** Example of Islamic courtyard from the Middle East

The classic *Chahar-bagh* design concept is constructed around a central pool or water fountain, with four streams flowing from it. This symbolically represents the four main elements of life- based upon the experience of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) describing his miraculous journey to heaven. The Prophet mentions four rivers: flowing with wine, milk, honey and water hence the number four has an inherent symbolism reflecting the natural world. The symbolism of an Islamic garden represents a universal themes that of the understanding of nature and the universe. The design concept from the *Chahar-bagh* is developed in gardens all over the Islamic world.

#### **4.6 Zone Three: Residential and Recreational Area**

An estimated 76,000 government and 60,000 private sector employees will work in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya by 2010. The need to ensure Putrajaya would stay continuously vibrant and be developed as planned a structure plan was conceived to guide development within Putrajaya and its immediate surrounding. The Structure Plan provides for a population of some 570,000 people, of which 330,000 people will live within Putrajaya and the remaining 240,000 in the surrounding areas (KWP Strategic Plan, 2005). The planning and design of Putrajaya's residential areas is intended to foster a sense of identity through neighbourhood focal points, landscaping and the treatment of the public realm. Among the facilities provided in the residential areas are schools, hospitals, shopping centres, mosques, multipurpose halls, learning centres and neighbourhood parks. A total of 67,000 homes of varying ranges, sizes, types and densities have been planned for all income sectors within Putrajaya's fourteen main residential neighbourhoods. Twelve of the fifteen precincts make up the residential and recreational area and Precinct 6 to 20 were grouped in this category.

##### **4.6.1 Attributed sculptures in Zone Three (Residential and Recreational Area)**

There are five sculptures found and identified in this zone. This zone is classified as residential and recreational area which includes parks; schools complexes, recreational area (jogging track and family areas) and homes. These activities were grouped into this zone. This is because most Federal Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies were re-located in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya from Kuala Lumpur; these areas were dedicated for residential needs, catering to the families of the government employees.



The public sculptures within this zone were employed to help promote the neighbourhood's identity. It is also used to help enhance the physical environment and provide amenity for diverse groups of citizens. It acts as a catalyst in making public spaces active and useful, for example, with the lighting of a public place at night to provide safety and a foci point for arts-related and economic activities. Hence the emphasis for employing public art is not only to rejuvenate the place but it is also helps the people who use the facilities – as improvement schemes for the enrichment of public life.

#### **4.6.1.1          Zone Three: Precinct 13**

##### **Sculpture 24: Putrajaya Botanical Garden 'Sun- Dial' sculpture**



**Figure 4.53** Putrajaya Botanical Garden sculpture

The 'Sun-dial' sculpture is located at Putrajaya Botanical garden in Precinct 13. The sculpture is an example of a public art outside the administration and financial area in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya. The man-made tropical botanical garden was completed in 2000 and the area was gazetted by the Federal Government as a

protected green area for the development of a tropical garden which currently houses more than seven hundred species of plants from over ninety countries of the world. The Botanical garden is divided into five different themes and they are known as the Explorer's Trail, Palm Hill, Floral Gardens, Sun Garden and the Lakeside.

The Sun-dial sculpture is located at the Sun Garden and its name implies a collection of plants that grow well in the bright sun. Designed by Mr Naihiro Kashino, a Japanese landscape architect based in Kuala Lumpur, the Sun-dial sculpture was commissioned and completed in 2004. The sculpture resembles an Egyptian obelisk, standing at ten metres tall from the base to the top of the pinnacle. On each side of the four corners of the sculpture is a copper plate with instruction of how to use the sun-dial sculpture.

The sculpture is sited at the centre of the Botanical garden and near a small hill. Connected to the base of the sculpture is a white-washed path leading to the base of the hill and on each side of the path (left and right), leading away from the sculpture, the architect has planted different types of plants. The landscape design was based on the type of plants found in different timeline in Malaysia and this signifies the historical journey and timeline in Malaysia's history.





**Figure 4.54** Putrajaya Botanical Garden Sundial sculpture

Part of the Botanical Garden Sun-dial sculpture design element is similar to the one found in the administration and financial zone. Both designs uses geometrical shapes as its base design and it was designed to be site specific. The Sun-Dial sculpture allows for the public to understand how the Equinox come about and how to tell time using the ancient tool.

### **Sculpture 25: Putrajaya Wetland Sculpture**



**Figure 4.55** Putrajaya Wetland sculpture

The Putrajaya Wetland was the brain child of Tun Dr Mahathir and the Putrajaya Wetland cells and its structural components functions as purifier to the river water

system in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya. In his paper titled The PUTRAJAYA Wetland Project, IR. Khor Chai Huat (2002), an environmental engineer states:

The wetland project has a set of defined goals. They are:

- to create a self-sustaining and balanced lake ecosystem;
- to ensure the lake's water quality complies with standard set by 'Perbadanan Putrajaya' and suitable for body contact recreational activities;
- to construct a wetland ecosystem that is unique to this part of the world;
- to develop a natural habitat for conservation of indigenous wetland flora and fauna;
- to establish an environment suitable for public education and scientific research on wetlands;
- to develop an aesthetically pleasing environment that enhances quality of life in Putrajaya and makes the city an attractive destination for domestic and international tourism.

Khor Chai Huat (2002:1)

They are also important in maintaining the broader functional capacity and objectives of the wetlands, which include providing a habitat for local fauna, primarily mammals, water birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish and invertebrates; hydrological modification- by providing a flood detention area and reducing peak discharges and flow velocities and recreation (the wetlands are used for both passive and active recreation, and as a parkland for aesthetic and recreational use).

The sculpture was commissioned from Malik Lip landscape architect in 2004 and is an example of public sculpture outside the core zone. It is located at the entrance of the wetland park. Its design is straightforward and responds to the function of the park as a sanctuary for wetland birds and animals. The main element of the sculpture is a



few life-sized local water birds known as *Bangau* (Egret) perched on a tree trunk. The sculpture looks almost life like so that people could easily mistake it for the real thing. Even though there are common cultural restrictions on using real form or shape of human and animals on artwork in Malaysia, this sculpture is site-specific thus allowances were made to allow this sculpture to be used.

#### 4.6.1.2 Zone Three: Precinct 16

##### Sculpture 26: Bell Tower sculpture



**Figure 4.56** Precinct 16 School sculpture (1)

The Bell Tower sculpture is located at the entrance of SMK Precinct 16 (2) high school. The SMK (National High School) Precinct 16 was initially designed to house an international school dedicated to expatriate families working in and around the Federal Territory of Putrajaya. The plan for an international school was later cancelled when there was low intake of international students. Precinct 16 is located at the northern core area precinct of Putrajaya and it is most centralised precinct. Precinct 16's main components are residential buildings, complemented by various public amenities which include a school complex, a library, a market and a community hall and information center.



The Bell Tower sculpture was built and completed in 2005 by an unidentified artist but the idea behind the sculpture was presumably initiated by the Ministry of Education in Putrajaya. The sculpture is six metres tall. The main elements of the sculpture are the two wide base concrete columns standing at ten degree angles which meet at the top to make a triangular shape. The two concrete columns are supported by a single steel column between the concrete columns. Covering the steel column is a series of steel honeycomb plates and at the pinnacle of the tower are two smaller elements- a steel bell and a steel arrow on the opposite side of the steel bell (see **figure 4.56**).

The Bell Tower sculpture signifies the objective of education and the importance of achieving a highest goal possible via education. This is reflected in the Ministry of Education manifesto. The manifesto belief that education is the tool needed to position one's potentials to maximum use. In a paper titled 'Benefit, Monitoring & Evaluation System: A Case Study of Malaysian Technical Education System' Deraman, Yaakub, Fahmy, Jemain (2002) states:

Education can be defined as 'the knowledge or skill obtained or developed by a learning process'

Deraman, Yaakub, Fahmy, Jemain (2002:1)

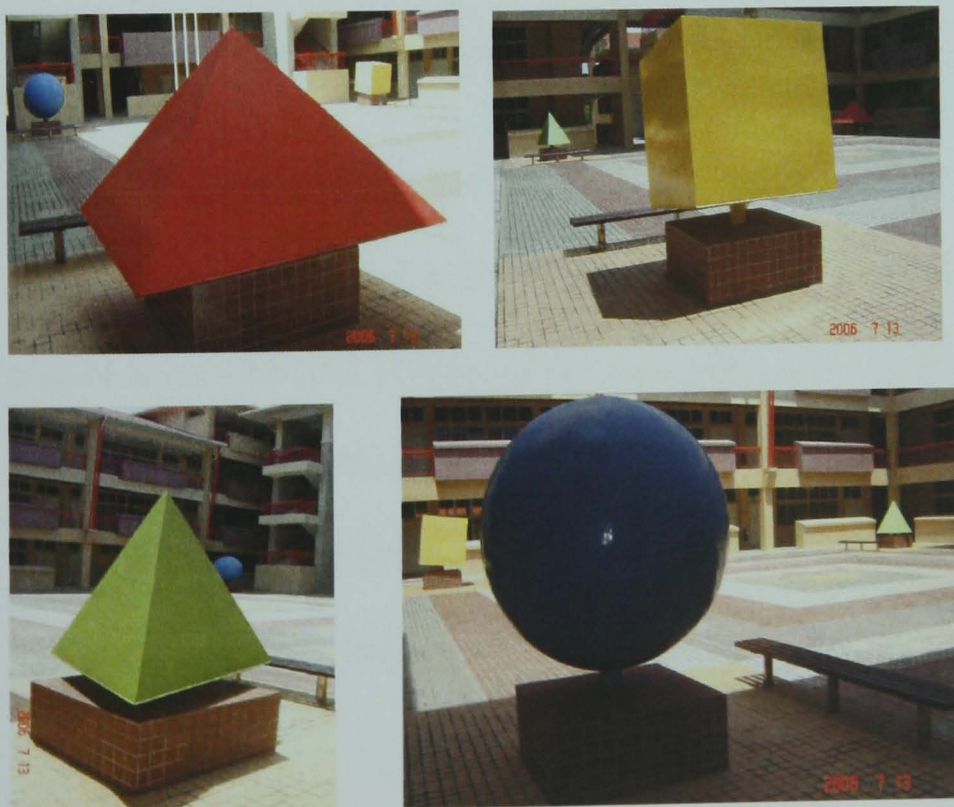
Deraman, Yaakub, Fahmy, Jemain believes that the training of a human mind is not complete without education. Education makes a person a thinker. It tells a person how to think and help make decision. Education will also enable a person to acquaint himself or herself with past history and receive all necessary information regarding the present.

The sculpture uses concrete and the steel columns to metaphorically signify education as the foundation and a strong element that translates into the power of knowledge which works as a catalyst and purposeful for future endeavour. As Malaysia is an Islamic country; the notion of education takes paramount importance. Besides the secular curriculum, the education system in countries like Malaysia includes religious studies. In Malaysia it is common to have the integration of secular modular system were inter weaved with holistic-religious studies. The system works in Malaysia because the government belief that Islam attaches such great importance to knowledge and education. As stated by a famous Islamic scholar Maulana Wahihudin Khan (2007):

‘When the Qur'an began to be revealed, the first word of its first verse was 'Iqra' that is, read. Education is thus the starting point of every human activity’

[<http://www.alrisala.org>, 2007]

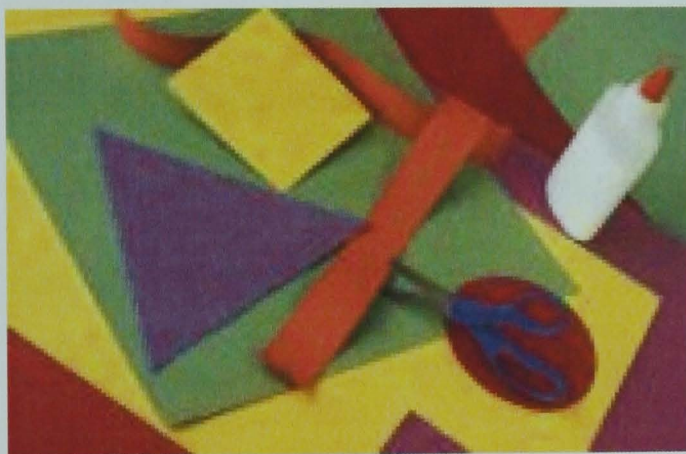
### **Sculpture 27: 3 Dimensional Geometrical Shape sculpture**



**Figure 4.57** Precinct 16 School sculpture (2)



Geometrical shapes have been used to represent a number of important meanings. They are extremely important for many people. Nearly everyone used them every day, doing the simplest of tasks. For example the use of a red octagon in road signs, usually means stop. A starburst shape used in labels is commonly used to gain attention and identify something that is new or improved. In education, geometrical shapes have specific meanings. In early education for example, shapes and colours are used as a tool to introduce basic reasoning skills, promotes creative thinking and memory mapping. It also helps to develop logical and deductive reasoning powers – this is important more broadly to academic success and effective problem solving skills.



**Figure 4.58** Colours and shapes in early education

Sited in the first court yard of SMK Precinct 16 (2) school complex, the three dimensional geometrical sculpture comprises of a set of four geometrical shapes and placed across the four corners of the courtyard. Each sculpture sits on a square base finished with terracotta tiles. The courtyard where the sculpture is located is used by the students for a small assembly session in the morning and during lunch break. The courtyard is surrounded on all four sides by class rooms.

The sculpture employs basic geometrical shape design and it is painted using primary colours - blue, yellow red and green. In this instance these geometrical shapes and colours symbolically represents:

- Organise, connect, separate style of learning
- Symbolise an idea development
- Create movement from one form to another
- Convey a mood or emotion
- Provide emphasis in learning
- Provide a framework for learning

Bertin (1983)

While geometrical shape is used to represent as ‘system in learning’, colour is considered one of the most useful and powerful learning tools. People respond to different colours in different ways, and these responses take place on a subconscious, emotional level. In Southeast Asian culture, different colour symbolises specific meaning. For example:

1. Red - Happiness, marriage, prosperity
2. Yellow- Royalty, Loyalty
3. Green- Eternity, Family, Harmony, Health, Peace, Posterity
4. Blue- Self-cultivation, Wealth

Bertin (1983)

The combination of shape and colour elements are employed as basic component in education and it reflects the process of acquiring knowledge (see **figure 4.58**). As an academic institution, the school encourage its students to acquire the ability to express and explore. All these elements provide structure for creative thinking. Hence the sculpture is being used to ideologically represent the importance and value of learning.



**Sculpture 28:           Globe sculpture**

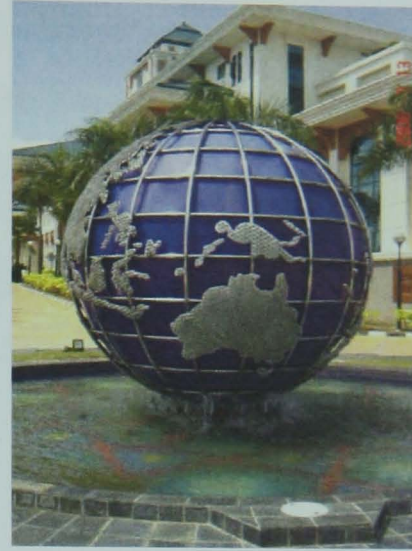


**Figure 4.59**   Precinct 16 School sculpture (3)

The Globe sculpture is located at the second and smaller courtyard of the SMK Precinct 16 (2) school complex. The Globe sculpture is design to symbolise the school status as an international school. A similar sculpture was found in *LIMKOKWING* University compound (in Cyberjaya- a neighbouring development to Putrajaya) and at the Ministry of Foreign Affair in Precinct 2 where in both occasion these institution have association with international visitors. (see **figure 4.26** and **figure 4.47**)

The use of globes as sculptural design seemed to be popular in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya. During the field work conducted in 2006-2007, four globe sculptures were found in Putrajaya. Two of such sculptures were found in zone one (administration and finance area) and the other two in Zone Three and Cyberjaya respectively (see **figure 4.60**)





**Figure 4.60** Globe sculpture at *LIMKOKWING* University (left) and another globe sculpture in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (right)

These globes represent a role that reflects the Federal Territory of Putrajaya as the administrative capital for Malaysia and are portraying itself as a sophisticated and internationally acclaimed city – historically, philosophically, culturally and politically.

The Globe sculpture was constructed using aluminium wire frame as the skeletal form the longitude and latitude lines for the globe, and finished with steel plates in the shapes of major continents and island. The globe sits on a concrete base while the floor of the courtyard is covered with swirling pattern design intermitted between coarse black stone and finely plastered light grey concrete. The swirling design creates the concentric pattern and features a "self-centering" function that enables the eye to draw to the center of courtyard towards the globe (see **figure 4.59**).



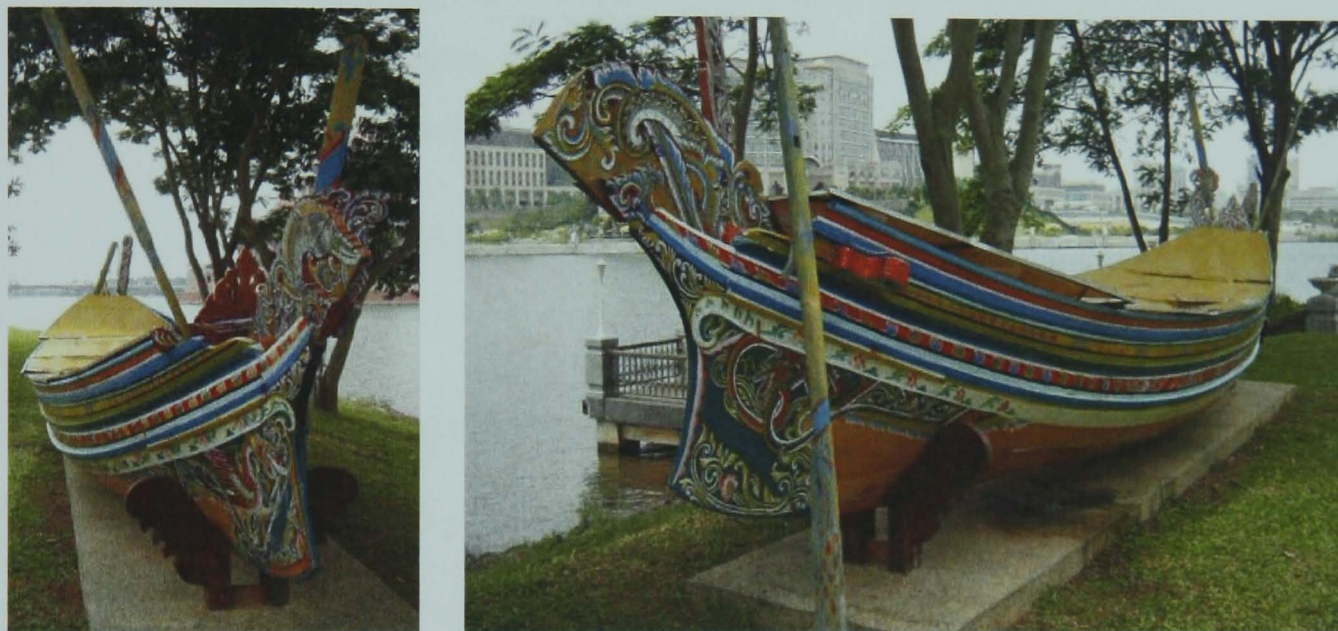
#### 4.6.2 Non-Attributed Sculpture in Zone Three

There is only one non-attributed sculpture (see **figure 4.61**) located in Zone Three.

The *Sampan Panjang* is sited behind the Sultan of Selangor Palace in Precinct 8 and it is also facing the Putrajaya Lake. The Palace ground is connected to a recreational park and a public pathway used by locals.

##### 4.6.2.1 Zone Three Precinct 8

##### Non- Attributed Sculpture 29: The ‘Sampan Panjang’(Long Boat)



**Figure 4.61** Putrajaya Royal Selangor Palace *Sampan Panjang*

The final non-attributed sculpture is located at the new Royal Selangor Palace in Precinct 8 in Putrajaya. The *Sampan Panjang* sculpture is sited behind the palace ground and it is facing the Putrajaya Lake. The Palace ground is connected to a recreational park and a public pathway used by locals. The sculpture sits between the palace ground and the lake.

The *Sampan Panjang* is from the family of *Sampan* generally made of at least three planks or pine boards, which gave it its Chinese name, *sanpan* (*san* means ‘three’, *pan* means ‘board’). *Sampan* is also the official English and Malay word meaning

‘small boat’ which is usually about eight feet long or less; the large versions are about twenty to twenty-three feet long, and the even larger thirty feet long *sampans*, are used as cargo carriers or trading vessels. The history of usage of *sampan* dates back to the old Malay Sultanate era (earliest recorded data was in the 17th century), and traced its origin from China. According to Vernon, Cornelious and Takahama (2000) from the National Library Singapore:

‘The earliest of these types of boats came from China. In travel writings from the west in the 17th Century, much is written about the Chinese sampan. The word and name is applied by Europeans to any small boat of Chinese pattern in the China seas’.

Vernon, Cornelious and Takahama (2000: 1)

The *Sampan* is used by royalty and dignitaries as a mode of transportation to ferry them from one place to another and is also used by fisherman to catch fish around the coastal areas of Malaysia. *Sampan* is also the Malay translation of ‘boat’, an integral part of its culture as it represents the livelihood of many Malays living in the coastal area like Terengganu and Kelantan states in the East Coast and some part in the West coast states in Malaysia like Perak, Selangor, Malacca and Johor Bahru. The ownership of a *sampan* also represents social status of the owner. The bigger and more intricately designed *sampan*, the higher social status its owner has in the society.





**Figure 4.62** The *Sampan* is still being use to ferry tourists in Putrajaya (left); carvings of 'the Bangau' commonly found in fishing boat in the East Coast (right)

The *Sampan* found behind the palace was a gift from the people of Kelantan, a state in the East Coast of Malaysia as a present to Sultan of Selangor, ruler of the Selangor state, a neighbouring state to the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur in the commemoration of the King's Birthday. It is an example of the boat commonly found in the coastal area of East Malaysia. The intricate design of the *Sampan* sculpture was influenced by the neighbouring Siamese art style commonly adopted in the coastal state of Terengganu and Kelantan and the northern states of Perlis and Kedah. The *Sampan* is placed on the palace ground to symbolise the rule of the Malay Sultanate and the grandeur of the Malay artistic skills.



## 4.7 Mapping of Public Sculpture in Cyberjaya and the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur

This chapter also considers public sculpture found in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and Cyberjaya. The purpose of this is to provide this research with comparative examples of public art in Malaysia. The samples from these two areas also helps provide examples of public art in matters of style, site specificity as well as the bureaucracies within public art practice and development.

### 4.7.1 Public Sculpture in Cyberjaya

#### Sculpture 30: LIMKOKWING University sculptures



**Figure 4.63** Two sculptures in LIMKOKWING University. The Phoenix sculpture Artist: Nizam Ambia (1999) (left) and Globe sculpture (right)

In an effort to enhance the newly launched Malaysia Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC-Malaysia) in 1997, the Malaysian Government put forward a plan to build a new Information Communication Technology (ICT) city. Thus, Cyberjaya was developed as a vital ingredient to the country's policy and ideals of looking towards ICT as an engine of growth for the future economy. The Cyberjaya Flagship Zone (CFZ) is a self-contained intelligent city with an outstanding IT infrastructure, low-density urban enterprise, as well as state-of-the-art commercial, residential, enterprise



and institutional developments. It is also the chosen location for the nation's most prestigious schools and institutions such as LIMKOKWING University of Creative Technology (LUCT), Multimedia University (MMU) and Cyberjaya University College of Medical Sciences (CUCMS).

During field work conducted in 2006, two sculptures were found in LIMKOKWING University, Cyberjaya. Both sculptures were located at the university main courtyard, which houses the MDC (Malaysian Design Centre) building. The two sculptures were designed by members of teaching staff from the Faculty of Architecture and Built Environment in 1999. The Phoenix sculpture, designed by Nizam Ambia, architect, is the only example of sculpture using animals as subject in the Cyberjaya and the Federal Territory of Putrajaya. This is because LIMKOKWING University is a privately funded university. Since the sculptures sit in the private compound, they were saved from criticism from the more conservative Muslim public.



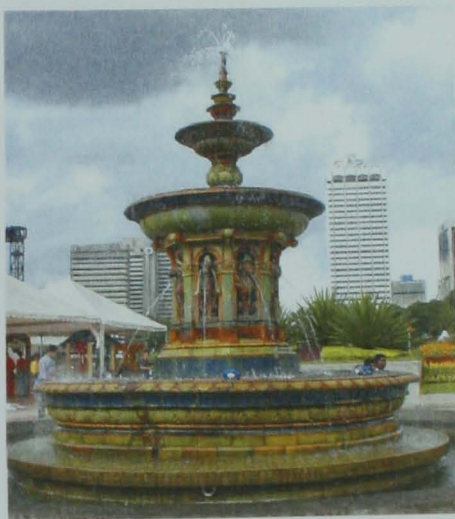
**Figure 4.64** LIMKOKWING University Corporate Identity is reflected in the Phoenix sculpture.

The Phoenix sculpture was used to symbolise immortality and resurrection. The LIMKOKWING University is the newest and biggest campus in Cyberjaya and the sculptures symbolises the changes or 'resurrection' from the old campus to a newer

and better building. The Phoenix bird was also use as a literal visual translation of the founder's name Prof. Tan Sri Lim Kok WING. Adopting the 'WING' from his name, he uses this as a visual symbol in a branding exercise for the university. The other sculpture in LIMKOKWING University is the Globe sculpture, which sits next to the Phoenix sculpture, and like many other globe sculpture found in this area, the sculpture was used to portray the global connections LIMKOKWING University has with international collegiate partner universities.

#### **4.7.2 Public Sculpture in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur**

The Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur has had a long history in the development of visual art and the use of public art to adorn the city which in record since before its independence in 1957. (see **Figure 4.65**). Because of this, the public art typology and style differs very much to the one found in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya. The revolution of art development in Kuala Lumpur was formed on years of conditioning of accepted frameworks, ideas, assumptions and vocabularies.



**Figure 4.65** Dataran Merdeka Fountain Kuala Lumpur built in 1885 by the British



**Sculpture 31: Malaysia National Art Gallery sculptures**



**Sculpture 31A**



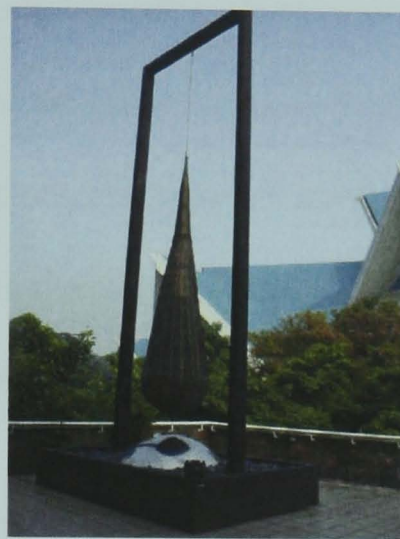
**Sculpture 31B**



**Sculpture 31C**



**Sculpture 31D**



**Sculpture 31E**



**Sculpture 31F**

**Figure 4.66** Malaysian National Art Gallery sculptures

**List of Figures:**

<b>Sculpture 31A:</b>	'Waves' Artist not listed
<b>Sculpture 31B:</b>	'To Be or Not To Be' Artist- Not Listed (2004)
<b>Sculpture 31C:</b>	'Pulse of Independence' Artist- K.Thangarajoo (2006)
<b>Sculpture 31D:</b>	Title not listed- Ramlan Abdullah (2002)
<b>Sculpture 31E:</b>	'Pendulum' Artist- Aznan Omar (2000)
<b>Sculpture 31F:</b>	Faizal Ramli (2000)

The sculptures located in the National Art Gallery ground are an example of collection of public artwork framed by its location in a cultural institution or a social setting of an art space. These sculptures are examples of six permanent sculptures



commissioned by the Ministry of Heritage, Arts and Culture encouraging local artist from all ethnic backgrounds to take part in generating interest in Malaysian art.

The sculptures in the National Art Gallery Malaysia are different from the one found in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya because they are not controlled or confined by Islamic influences. Their design is based on socio-political issues in the country and the subject inevitably touches the country's history, culture and multi-ethnic population. Even though these sculptures are not controlled by the Islamic influences in art and being in a public space, the design is controlled by the basic moral code of art interpretation in an Islamic country and stayed away from figurative objects, both of animals and the human figure.

#### **Sculpture 32: The ASEAN Sculpture Garden Kuala Lumpur**



**Figure 4.67** Ring of Friendship sculptures- Han Sar Por (Singapore 1988)





**Sculpture 32 A**



**Sculpture 32 B**



**Sculpture 32C**



**Sculpture 32D**



**Sculpture 32E**

**Figure 4.68** Sculptures by Southeast Asia artists

### List of Figure

<b>Sculpture 32A:</b>	Jerusalino V.Arous (Philippines 1988)
<b>Sculpture 32B:</b>	Itthi Kongkakul (Thailand 1988)
<b>Sculpture 32C:</b>	Datuk Syed Ahmad Jamal (Malaysia 1988)
<b>Sculpture 32D:</b>	Artist not listed (Brunei 1988)
<b>Sculpture 32E:</b>	Dolorosa Sianag (Indonesia 1988)

The ASEAN Sculpture Garden is located in the 'Lake Garden' park in central Kuala Lumpur and it is a series of collection made using materials commonly found in the

region. ASEAN Sculpture Garden has a collection of sculptures by some of the prominent artists in the ASEAN region. These sculptures were used as a symbol of ASEAN unity and cooperation. ASEAN is the acronym for the Association of South East Asian Nations. ASEAN was established on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1967 in Bangkok by the five original member countries, namely, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Brunei Darussalam joined in 1984, Vietnam in 1995, Lao PDR and Myanmar in 1997, and finally Cambodia in 1999. The ASEAN Declaration states that the aims and purposes of the Association are:

- To accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region
- To promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries in the region and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter.

The ASEAN sculptures showcased different type of public art from six different countries in Southeast Asia and the influence of the art style is very distinct. Even though the three of the sculptures in the garden are work from artists from countries where Islam is the official religion like Malaysia, but honouring the religious belief of the host country, the sculptures avoided using any figurative content. This is the spirit of ASEAN, where mutual respect for its member's religious and cultural beliefs is taken seriously. The sculptures use abstract geometrical form to visually interpret the socio and political issue within the region and represent fundamental principles of ASEAN member's relations with one another. They are:

1. Mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and



2. National identity of all nations; the right of every State to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion; non-interference in the internal affairs of one another; settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful manner; renunciation of the threat or use of force; and effective cooperation among ASEAN members.

**Sculpture 33: The Lake Garden, Kuala Lumpur sculptures**



**Sculpture 33A**



**Sculpture 33B**



**Sculpture 33C**

**Figure 4.69** Sculptures at the Lake Garden

**List of Figure**

**Sculpture 33A:** 'Labu Sayong' DBKL City Council (2000)

**Sculpture 33B:** The National Monument 2 (Felix de Weldon 1966)

**Sculpture 33C:** The National Monument 1: Cenotaph (British Government 1964)

The brainchild of Alfred Venning, the British State Treasurer in the 1880s, this is Malaysia's first botanical garden. Taman Tasik Perdana, or better known as the Lake Gardens, it is the oldest and most popular park in Kuala Lumpur. It lies just on the edge of the city and used to be where the British elite built their fine homes in colonial times. Nestled deep in the city centre near Jalan Parlimen the Lake Gardens



offers locals and visitors a wide range of facilities such as playgrounds, jogging tracks, exercise stations and rowing boats while other attractions within the park include a bird park, a butterfly park, and flower gardens.

The National monuments was built in the mid 1960's to commemorate fallen heroes during the Japanese occupation and the communist resurgence before Independence in 1957. These monuments were funded by the British and American government. While the *Labu Sayong* sculpture was design and constructed by the Kuala Lumpur Local Council (DBKL) in 2000.

#### **Sculpture 34: Taman Wawasan (Wawasan Park), Kuala Lumpur**



**Sculpture 34A**



**Sculpture 34B**



**Sculpture 34C**

**Figure 4.70** Public Bank Taman Wawasan Sculptures

#### **List of Figure**

- |                       |                                  |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>Sculpture 34A:</b> | 'Vision 2020' Lee Kian Seng 1993 |
| <b>Sculpture 34B:</b> | 'Unity' Raja Shariman 1993       |
| <b>Sculpture 34C:</b> | Title Unknown Zakaria Awang 1993 |



The sculptures located in *Taman Wawasan* or Wawasan Park outside of the Public Bank Malaysia Berhad. The bank is a Malaysian owned bank and Public Bank is currently the second biggest domestic bank in Malaysia. It focuses on retail customers and small to medium sized enterprises. The bank was founded in 1966 by Tan Sri Teh Hong Piow, the then general manager of Malayan Banking.

Public Bank is one of two major banks that support the development of visual art in Malaysia. Commissioned from three Malaysian artists, the sculptures are sited in a small area outside the bank main entrance and the area was launched as *Taman Wawasan*. The name *Wawasan* literally translated as 'Vision' was adopted to show the support for former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir's idea of 'Vision 2020'. In 'Vision 2020' - the ultimate objective for Malaysia to be a fully developed country by the year 2020 joining the rank of first world country like the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Japan.

The sculptures represent the country's effort to turn Malaysia into a nation that is fully developed along all the dimensions: economically, politically, socially, spiritually, psychologically and culturally. In return it is hoped to develop national unity and social cohesion. This positive notion is reflected in terms of national pride and confidence.

### Sculpture 35: Dayabumi Complex sculptures



**Sculpture 35A**



**Sculpture 35B**



**Sculpture 35C**

**Figure 4.71** Dayabumi Complex Sculptures

#### List of Figure

- Sculpture 35A:** The Globe Sculpture (Hijjas Kasturi 1984)  
**Sculpture 35B:** Islamic Onion Dome Fountain (DBKL City Council)  
**Sculpture 35C:** The Flying 'Wau' or Kite (DBKL City Council)

*Kompleks Dayabumi* was for a long time the most significant Kuala Lumpur architectural landmark. Its design allows the building to fit in well with the rest of the Moorish and Byzantine ambience around it, such as the *Sultan Abdul Samad* building a little further down the road. With two underground floors and thirty six floors above ground, the first steel-frame skyscraper in Malaysia was opened in 1984 by Dr.



Mahathir, then Prime Minister of Malaysia. Currently, there is a shopping arcade in the complex, which also houses offices and the General Post Office.



**Figure 4.72** *Wau Bulan* is also being use for Malaysian Airlines identity (left) and the ‘Onion’ dome design commonly found in Moorish architecture (far right)

The sculptures conceptually combined the traditional Malaysian cultural icon the *Wau Bulan* or Kite and the Islamic Onion dome design popular in Mosque design in Malaysia. The sculpture was design and built by the DBKL City Hall to ornate the public space in front of the *Dayabumi* complex. The complex is located next to the *Sultan Abdul Samad* building and old Moorish architecture built by the British to hold the High and Civil court house. The building is very popular with foreign tourists. Hence the design of the sculpture is being employed not to only adorn the space but also promote the richness that the local crafts have to offer.



### **Sculpture 36: Kuala Lumpur Twin Tower Park Sculpture**



**Sculpture 36A**



**Sculpture 36B**



**Sculpture 36C**



**Sculpture 36D**

**Figure 4.73** KLCC Park Sculptures (top); Petronas Twin Tower sculpture (below)

#### **List of Figure**

**Sculpture 36A:** Kinetic 1 (Latif Mohidin 1998)

**Sculpture 36B:** Kinetic 2 (Latiff Mohidin 1998)

**Sculpture 36C:** 'DNA' Petronas Revolving sculpture 1 (1997)

**Sculpture 36D:** 'Nucleus' Petronas Revolving sculpture 2 (1997)

A twenty-hectare urban sanctuary of tropical landscaping in the Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) Twin Tower Park is conceptualised by the world famous Brazilian landscape artist, the late Roberto Burle Marx. He employs aspects of natural gardening and the perennial efforts to recreate the illusion of nature in urban parks and suburban subdivisions and his philosophy is reflected in the design of the KLCC Park which transforms the natural topography into an art form.



The park is unique in its theme and concept. This area is accentuated with specially designed water features and works of art to create an urban garden. Its special features include a fountain pool, a two-acre children's playground, a wading pool, patterned footpaths, sculptures, murals, shelters, benches and a jogging track set among carefully chosen trees and shrubs native to Malaysia. The sculptures found in the KLCC Park are commissioned to Malaysian artist Latiff Mohidin in 1998. Titled 'Kinetic' the sculpture is an example of art abstraction of figurative shapes. 'Kinetic 1' and 'Kinetic 2' by Latiff Mohidin are examples of biomorphic abstraction similar the works of Jackson Pollock from the Abstract Expressionist school of New York in the 1950s.

Two further sculptures were sited outside the main entrance to the *PETRONAS-KLCC* Twin Tower. *PETRONAS* is a Malaysian owned oil and gas company that was founded on 1974. Wholly owned by the Government, the corporation is vested with the entire oil and gas resources in Malaysia and is entrusted with the responsibility of developing and adding value to these resources. Named 'DNA' and 'Nucleus', the sculptures represents the imprint of human existence. This is translated into the importance of growth and development of the country's economy and guaranteeing the people's well being. Malaysia being inspired to join the developed country status, is working hard to ensure that the technology and economic growth is uninterrupted.

### **Sculpture 37: National Archive Sculpture, Kuala Lumpur**



**Sculpture 37A**



**Sculpture 37B**



**Sculpture 37C**



**Sculpture 37D**

**Figure 4.74** *Keris* component sculptures: National Archive Compound

#### **List of Figure**

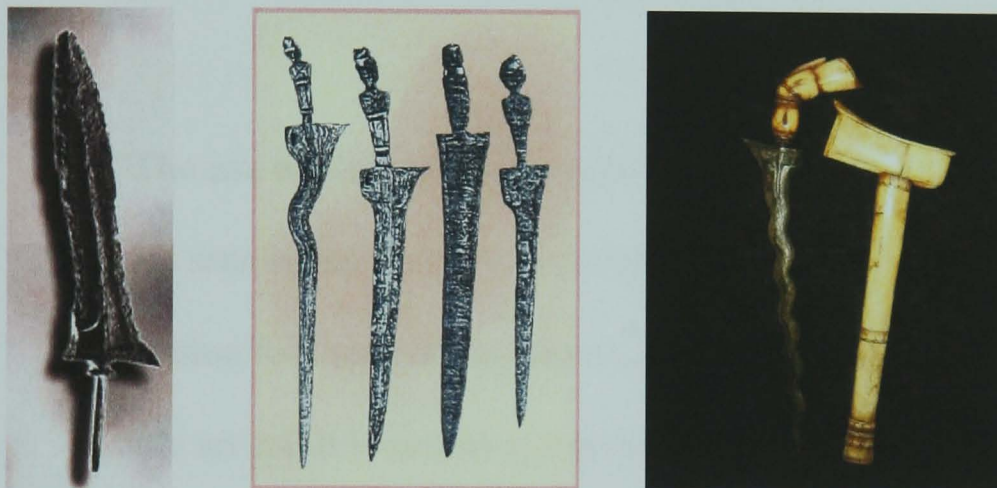
<b>Sculpture 37A:</b>	'Bunga' or Flower
<b>Sculpture 37B:</b>	Lok Keris or Malay Dagger
<b>Sculpture 37C:</b>	Hulu Keris or Dagger Hilt
<b>Sculpture 36D:</b>	Keris Sheath

Located in Jalan Duta, the *Arkib Negara* or National Archives of Malaysia is a national depository of Malaysia's antiquity, historical records, and documents. Formerly known as the Public Records Office, it was re-named as the National Archives in 1963. The archives also include 25,000 still images that portray the social and economic life of Malaysia. The sculpture is site-specific and the design is



symbolically adopted from the function of the National Archives as the national depository for Malaysia's historical record.

The sculptures design was borrowed from the traditional Malay dagger or *Keris*. Historically, the *Keris* were originally for Malay self-defence and martial arts. In addition to its function as a weapon, spiritually, a *Keris* is also one of the accessories to traditional dress. In the Malaysian royal courts, the *Keris* are still used as a symbol of status and sovereignty. It is also used as part of the royal regalia during coronation ceremony for a King.



**Figure 4.75** *Keris* or Malay dagger is a symbol of the Malay identity

Other functions of the *Keris*, in the ancient Malay Kingdom are: as a ceremonial object; as a mark of family ties or dynastic ties; as an attribute to certain post; as a symbol of certain power or authority and as a representation of the *Keris* owner. In the days of the monarchy, a king's envoy is only valid if he brings one of his *Keris*. Made from copper, the sculptures are sited in the National archives courtyard and each represents a different part and component of the *Keris*. In modern Malaysia, the *Keris* now have become a symbol for royal sovereignty and a prized artefact collected by enthusiast.

## 4.8 Chapter Summary

The analysis of public sculptures in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya, Cyberjaya and the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur has contributed a significant insight into the public art practices in Malaysia. A recognisable difference has been identified between the public art in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya and those found in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya and Cyberjaya. The Federal Territory of Putrajaya as a model city was built with a specific vision, adopted a policy based upon the reflection of the religious belief of the majority, the vision of the ruling political party of an ideal city and manifesto of a successful and developed city. The reoccurring concepts observed in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya are:

- **The use of Geometrical shape**

This is seen in many of the sculptures found in Putrajaya and has been used as the foundation for many of the artworks. Geometrical shapes are very popular in Islamic art and it is said to symbolically represent the infiniteness in god's existence. The Muslim belief in the only one god and god is infinite- the only creator of all being. Throughout history Islamic art in religious contexts has traditionally involved the creation of complex geometric designs which are said to create the impression of unending repetition and is believed to be associated with the infinite nature of God. The absence of figural imagery is typical of art associated with religious buildings and artefacts. The circles for example, and its centre, are the point at which all Islamic geometric patterns begin. The circle symbolically represents one God, eternity, without beginning and without end. The Islamic geometrical pattern is based on this concept and it is being used in many Islamic worlds.



The geometrical shape is also used to represents balance, describing mathematical precision as the foundation of basic art form. Malaysian Malay Muslim artists have developed geometric patterns to a degree of complexity and sophistication to exemplify the Islamic interest in repetition, symmetry and continuous generation of pattern. The integration of geometry with optical effects acts as the balancing of positive and negative areas, and the skilful use of colour and tone.

- **Islamic influences**

Much of the artwork base in the Federal Territory is seen to exhibit Islamic influences. The SOUQ sculpture, the PJC sculpture and few other prominent sculptures are based on Islamic art and architectural design. The Islamic influences were one of the many movements that swept Malaysia in the 1970. From the late 1970s onward Malaysia was engulfed by the wave of political Islamic influence by the Iranian revolution of 1979 and Pakistan's re-invention of itself as an Islamic state the same year. The rise of political Islam in Malaysia further contributed to the Malaysian identity along religious-cultural lines. New, more conservative and vocal Islamist groups began to call for the 'Islamisation' of Malaysian society and with that the rejection of the country's pre-Islamic past.

Before the Islamic influences in art development in the Malaysia, many art forms and sculptures uses the Malay Archipelago itself as a subject for art- movement of its peoples, diversity of languages, religious beliefs, cultures, modes of dress, behaviour and living.

- **Malaysia Arts and Crafts object**

In Malaysia, the development of tourism is one of the major economic contributions towards the country's income. Apart from looking at developing and modernising the country via the use of economy and technology, Malaysia also believes that the holistic growth of its people is equally important if the country is ever going to succeed. This is achievable by preserving the richness of the local culture and by re-introducing local arts and crafts. This is hoped to generate interest in appreciation of local arts and crafts among Malaysian especially with the younger generations. The promotion of local arts and crafts in sculpture is also being used to introduce the diversity and richness of Malaysia people to both regional and international tourists. PJC or Putrajaya Corporation, which act as the local council for the Federal Territory of Putrajaya for example have been promoting, constructing and building sculptures base on the local crafts, floras and artefacts.



**Figure 4.76**      Sculptures that uses literal adaptation of local arts and crafts and the floras or faunas exclusively found in Malaysia

The use of the Malaysian arts and crafts as a subject for art helps to promote a 'Malaysianised' art style which is unique to the country.

- **Water features**

Being close to the equator, Malaysia enjoys a hot temperature and high humidity with green and lush vegetation all year round. Sometimes the weather can be very hot and water elements are an important tool to help reduce the heat and create soothing sounds and continuously shifting patterns through its transparent motion- a visual illusion of a refreshing environment. The use of water features in most of the sculptures found in the Federal Territory Putrajaya, the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and Cyberjaya is also based on the Islamic influences in landscape and architecture. Water and light are of paramount importance to Islamic architectural decoration as they generate additional layers of patterns and just as with surface decoration and they aesthetically transform space.

The public art in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya is not only being used to beautify and enliven the public spaces but it is also used to communicate messages that Malaysia is a stable and culturally diverse country. Public art is being employed to portray the city as a fully developed Islamic city, technologically, and economically. As Malaysia is an Islamic country, the Federal Territory of Putrajaya is the best example of a city inspired by an ideal of its leader and the people, whilst in Cyberjaya, the public art were mostly located in private compounds like the LIMKOKWING University. Although the use of figurative art is not encouraged in a dominantly Islamic society, sometimes allowance are made as long as the art work does not contradict the local religious and cultural beliefs and it is not offensive.

The public sculptures found in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur are different from the one found in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya because it has gone through

different art influences and development from pre independence to the present time.

Public art in Kuala Lumpur shows the variety of typology, simply because it is not directly controlled by one specific influence. The sculptures found in Kuala Lumpur also display a more ethnically diverse content. In Kuala Lumpur, the Islamic influences in public art are not prevalent because its influence is not exclusive and art is still being use as an expression of the local art and cultural practice.



## Notes

<sup>60</sup> Pervasive public art blurs the line between fine art, pop culture, street art, street furniture, installation, monuments and architecture.

<sup>61</sup> Traditional artwork that uses the “psychological mechanism” which produces emotional response towards the work of art- Toress and Kamhi (2000: 43)

## **Chapter 5**

### **Public Art Typology and Planning: In-depth Findings**

## **5.1 Introduction**

Mapping and analysing public sculpture in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya is important in understanding how public art communicates and responds to the built environment and how this, in turn provides the built environment with an identity. This chapter will develop and provide the crucial framework for understanding the development of a public art typology and provide evidence of public art implementation and its relationship with the geographical and locational settings of the Federal Territory of Putrajaya.

This chapter also discusses the fieldwork interviews to gain detailed information on the participants' knowledge and involvement with public art and provide a wealth of information relating to their contributions, experience and interest. It also looks at the development of public art and the employment of policies in the country. The analysis of the interviews will employ the different disciplines involved in public art practice and amplify an understanding of the design processes, applications, methods and contexts in public art.

The analysis of documentation relating to the development of the Federal Territory of Putrajaya, the policies and enactments used by the local authority will help to explain the guidelines used in the employment and implementation of public art in public places as a tool for creating a desired identity. Finally this chapter will look at the public art commissioning process used by the state and federal governmental agencies alongside their private sector partners. The process enables this research to develop an understanding of issues pertaining to funding and the selection of public art in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya.

## **5.2 Chronological Analysis: The Federal Territory of Putrajaya**

### **5.1.1 Location and Setting Analysis**

The Federal Territory of Putrajaya is Kuala Lumpur's alter ego, a city developed to represent an exercise in national celebration. It has a grand axis, monumental building arrangements, an ornamental lake and ecological displays. According to the Director of the City Planning Unit of Putrajaya Corporation, Jebasingam Isace John (2005) states:

‘The creation of a new Federal Government Administrative Centre at Putrajaya marks a new chapter in the development history of modern Malaysia’.

Isace John (2005:1)

The city planners have been quick to take the cue by making “quality urban living” the basic objective for planning in Putrajaya. However, a more in-depth examination of Putrajaya development reveals ambiguities and tensions: between legislature and bureaucracy; between national integrity and global ambition; between rival views of nature and in its adopted imagery or styling; between actual and wished-for origins, and a vision of a radically different future. The development of a well-organised city is a utopian ideal as Jameson (2005) notes:

‘We have come laboriously to the conclusion that all ostensible Utopian content was ideological, and that the proper function of its themes lay in critical negativity, that is their function to demystify their opposite numbers. The examination of the anti-Utopia, then, of the fear of Utopia, has led us to identify a fundamental source in the very form of utopia itself, in the formal necessity of Utopian closure’.

Jameson (2005: 211)



Whereas Michel Foucault (1984) posits not an anti-utopia but heterotopias - spaces of real world, chaotic, contradiction-laden, spaces within spaces - and few cities are more heterotopian than Kuala Lumpur. According to Ross King (2007):

‘Kuala Lumpur, one of the great multi-cultural cities of the world - Chinese and Malay and Indian, (sic) variously super-imposed, intersecting, jumbled up, forever transgressive of any purist vision, brilliant and exciting.

King (2007:117)

In contrast to the development of Kuala Lumpur, the geography and location of the Federal Territory of Putrajaya is somewhat of a traditional notion of a utopian city - a space of order, harmony and perfection. Putrajaya, eschewing complexity and ambiguity, is a dream of the space of a new form of a nation. In achieving the ‘utopian ideal’, the planners of Putrajaya in 1993 adopted a concept termed as Intelligent Garden City. According to a KWP Malaysia's Putrajaya is the first Intelligent Garden City with a sophisticated information network based on multimedia technologies report (2007:5), ‘Putrajaya will become a vital developmental catalyst due to the role it will assume as a model city - as the nerve centre of the nation and an ideal place in which to live, work, conduct business and engage in sports and recreational activities’.

Putrajaya is a planned city being built according to a series of comprehensive policies and guidelines for land use. The Garden City concept is created with the guidance of three simple ideologies: ‘Man and his Creator; Man and man; and Man and nature’.

(Lilian T.Y.C.1, Ho C.S. and Ismail S.2002: 2).The layout of Putrajaya is constructed with three different features - a formal axis punctuated with nodal features; structuring of the Core Area into identifiable precincts; and variety of informal and formal

activity areas. This includes thirty eight percent of the land earmarked as green areas, the reforestation and enhancement of the natural landscape; promoting local flora as a Malaysian landscape identity; and creating a network of open spaces. The design of Putrajaya has also adopted an urban form that is designed to suit topography, local climate and cultural norms; the creation of an interesting cityscape; the optimisation of scenic panoramic views and spatial experiences; and finally the incorporation of intelligent buildings and infrastructural features. As Isace John (2005) pointed:

‘In line with the Garden City concept, a large proportion of the city area is designated as parks and open space ranging from metropolitan parks to local neighbourhood playgrounds. Reinforcing these provisions are urban features such as landmarks, squares, plazas and bridges that form part of the cityscape, providing a wide range of spatial experiences that further enhance the spatial quality of the city’.

Isace John (2005:4)

According to Vale (1992) and Dovey (1999, 2001), ‘Cities inevitably convey messages about the societies that produced them and are in turn reproduced by them, in their image, as it were. This is even more so in the case of capital cities’. Building a new city is a monumental task requiring the input of various groups of people with diverse disciplines. Guided by the Garden City concept and aiming to achieve a strong image for the city, effort towards ‘good urban design and landscape planning is achieved through the use of the Detailed Urban Design guidelines’ (DUD) (Isace John, 2005:5).

The DUD is prepared at the precinct level. It outlines the general character and ambience of each particular development plot but at the same time, tying its design to

the surrounding development parcels and the precinct as a whole. By this, the DUD promotes an urban fabric and language through the composition of its many elements, combining them to reflect a unique sense of place and character. The DUD achieves this by focusing on elemental guiding principles such as urban structure, urban form and urban character. Parameters like details of land use, building placement and typology, horizontal and vertical controls of building, provision for pedestrian linkages, open space coverage and streetscape control feature highly in this guideline. It is aimed towards an urban form that projects visual unity and coherence, affording a distinctive image for the city and a quality spatial experience for citizens and visitors alike.

The DUD has been used to create identifiable urban spaces and corridors such as the Putrajaya Boulevard and the Dataran Putrajaya where the National Day Merdeka Parade is held. The Boulevard is a 4.2 km long 100m wide thoroughfare running from the north to the south of the Core Island forming the central spine of the city and provides the setting for the main commercial and civic area. The design parameters for the buildings, along and in proximity to it, are guided by the DUD so that they contribute to a cohesive spatial composition and experience.

As an extension to the effort of creating an image and character for the city, the Putrajaya Lighting Master Plan has also been formulated to establish the visual and practical architectural lighting criteria to ensure the night-time ambience of Putrajaya is attractive and appropriate of a city of its status and function. Putrajaya at first reading is a city that is inevitably a pinnacle of Malaysian political programming. Its unique 'ceremonial' space and the symbolism of the architecture of Putrajaya have

drawn upon diverse influences resulting in buildings that are uniquely 'Malaysian-Islamic' in character and universal in outlook (Mohd Ali 2006:97). As the new administration centre of Malaysia, Putrajaya symbolises the Malaysian national identity in architecture. According to Ali, while Malay and Islamic design idioms dominate the architecture of Putrajaya, it also incorporates classical and contemporary elements that reflect the universal outlook of the Malaysian psyche.

The city design also reinforces the distancing of the executive and bureaucracy from the legislature, which is a profoundly political action. This is based on the master plan of Putrajaya where the palatial grandeur of the Prime Minister's Office (see **figure 5.1 A**), spearheads the city overlooking the boulevard and all the buildings alongside the axis. (see **figure 5.1 B**). The placing of the Prime Minister's Office at the pinnacle of the ceremonial space of the city officially referred to as an administrative centre rather than capital.



**Figure 5.1A:** Prime Minister's Office





**Figure 5.1 B:** Aerial view of the axis boulevard

The grandeur is then extended to the boulevard and the waterfront (see **figure 5.2**), which is comparable to and speaks the same architectural language as most administrative cities like Canberra, Washington D.C., Brasilia and Versailles.

According to interview participant ARCH1 (2006):

The Putrajaya Boulevard represents the continuum of Malaysia's history since Merdeka. Commencing at Dataran Putra (Putra Plaza), it links the aspirations and objectives involved in building a visionary nation. The Dataran shows the linear progression from the past to the present, and to Malaysia's future.

ARCH1 (2006:1)



**Figure 5.2a** View of Putrajaya Boulevard





**Figure 5.2b** View of Putrajaya Boulevard

The Dataran or Plazas serve as boundaries or as connections between areas of the city and are the 'gateways' that stand symbolically as ceremonial axes framed by the buildings. The skyline of buildings and architectural features along the entire length of the boulevard are formed and punctuated in terms of the various heights of the buildings and the massing at each Dataran. The boulevard itself is an uninterrupted single entity and forms a coherent formal ceremonial setting, which includes sculptures, shelters and lighted lanterns. Characterising the design scheme was an almost relentless formality of major, minor and radiating axes, and symmetrical federal and governmental building complexes. The design heightens the sense of order, and 'manifest a symbolic expression of the executive arm of the government and the bureaucracy'. (King 2005: 125)

Political practices can be seen, in large measure, as surface expressions of a deeper cultural substratum - beliefs, values and practices more broadly. The above points are reasonably non-controversial observations of political messages, conveyed in the design of the city. Further analysis of Putrajaya, reveals its settings also represents a

‘Cultural Programme’. This is because the design of Putrajaya that raises profound questions of identity and self-redefinition. King (2007) states:

‘Issues of identify and self imagery emerge in the matter of the city’s imagery - style, but also subjects of that style’.

King (2007: 132)

The imagery of Putrajaya is not unexpected, as its domes, coloured tiles and polished stones, and its axial pieces are found in the formalities of major mosque designs in Malaysian cities like Kuala Lumpur and Shah Alam - the state capital of Selangor for example. However, while it may not be unexpected, it is certainly surprising when viewed in any historical context.

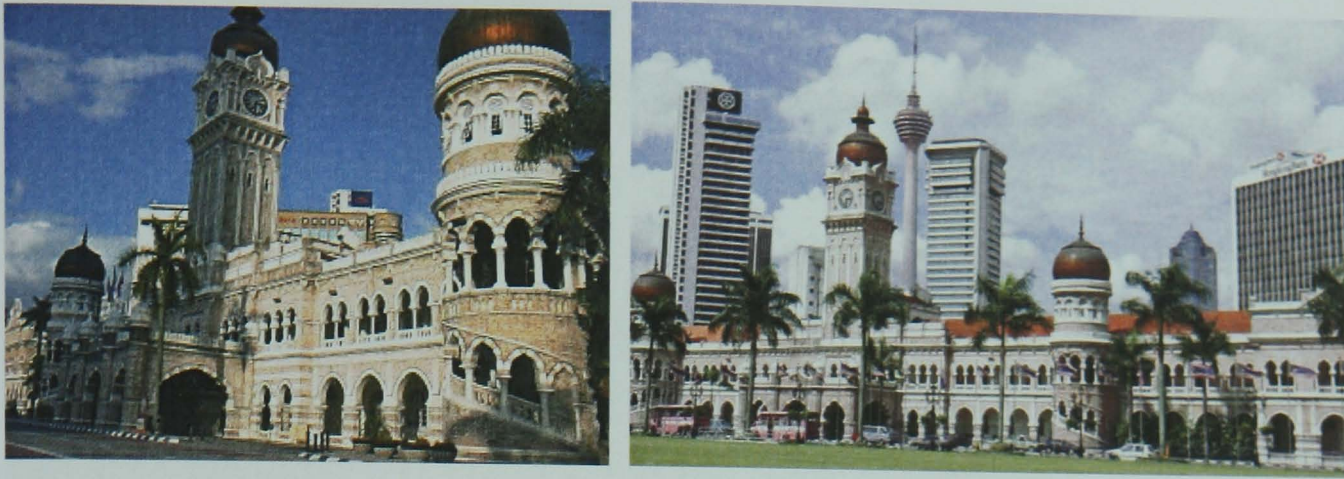
At one level, the design of Putrajaya is simply at the end of a long line of formalist, domed, arched and arcaded architecture adopted notably for mosques. At another level, the design has crossed over its original intention to include the design of offices, shopping malls, resort hotels and public art/ landscapes. The line of design can certainly be traced to the Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad, built in 1897 (see **figure 5.3**) to house an earlier Malayan administration of the Federated Malays States.

According to King (2005):

‘It is clear that the building is styled in the British Raj design, and so the line of descent can be readily be traced to Victorian England-India and its representation of an earlier Mogul Islamic tradition’ (sic).

King (2005:132)



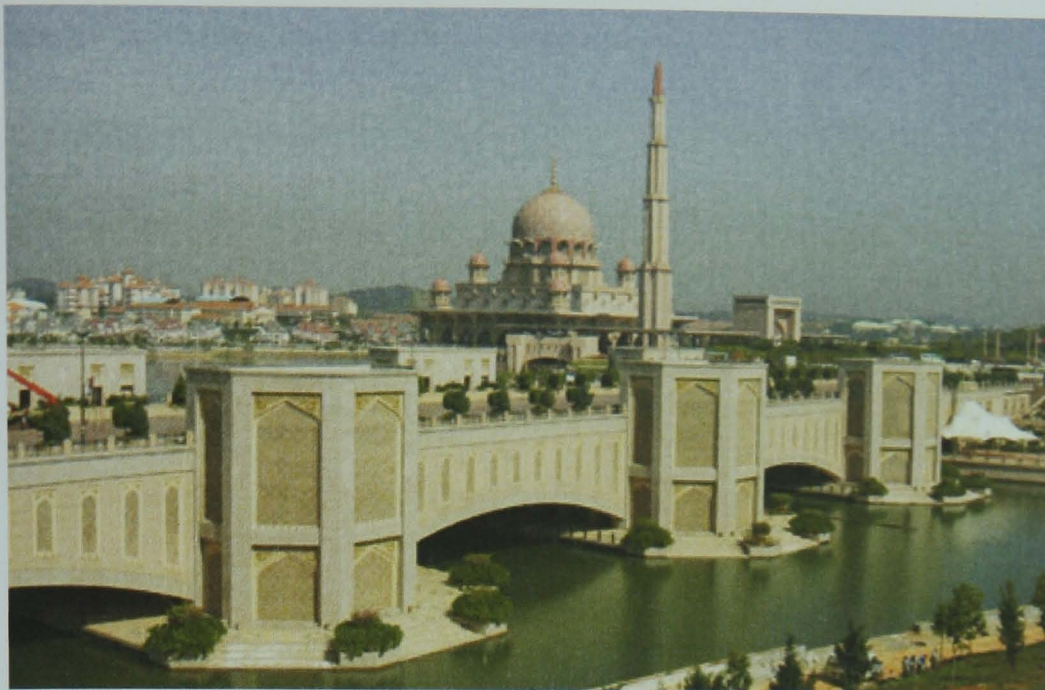


**Figure 5.3** Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad

Such colonial lineage is now scarcely acceptable politically, so with the master plan design of Putrajaya, there has been a transformation of the tradition. The design was stripped of its lineage complexity of the colonial Mogul and Moorish architecture. Instead a geometric simplification, both in its form (domes, arcades, etc.) and its surface treatments is flatter, simply geometric and a modern concept was adopted.

The Middle Eastern referencing is explicit and intentional. Putra Mosque and the Palace of Justice, for example, are certainly the most finely elaborate buildings in the city; claiming their source from the “Islamic Persian Safavid period” (Kervin 2006:1). While the bridges are fanciful and use high-technology engineering, the most important bridge of all is ‘Putra Bridge’ which is ‘designed and constructed in accordance with Islamic architectural principles to resembles the Khaju Bridge in Isfahan, Iran’ (Castor, 2003: 91, PjH 2005) (see **figure 5.4**)





**Figure 5.4** Putra Bridge, Putrajaya

It is the reference to the Middle East that is significantly visible, as all the decisions about its design were taken by the former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir. It is quite certain that the turn to Middle Eastern Islamic tradition is a desire to have a modern city but not design based on a Western template. There are other dimensions to the identification with the Middle East. It is the global revival of the Islamic world. Although Malaysia is indeed modern and sometimes ambivalently sympathetic to the West, Malaysia sees itself decidedly as a modern Islamic economic power bloc to stand against Europe, America and Australia. King (2005) states:

‘While Malaysia might be the richest state in the region (excluding minuscule Singapore and Brunei), it is also relatively small, so to have leverage through its own region (via ASEAN), and through a more globalist pan-Islamic bloc, will give it the international status to which it feels entitled. So the imaging of Putrajaya fits a grander agenda’

King (2005:133)

Apart from political and cultural representation, Putrajaya also represents the 're-making of Malaysia'. While Malaysia experienced a history of racial tension, the separation of functions and of spheres, Malay political hegemony but Chinese economic dominance; and quality of spatial qualities that are significantly shared by the three major ethnic groups, the diversity is not replicated in Putrajaya. Putrajaya is a civil service town and the civil servant is overwhelmingly Malay and Muslim. On one level, Putrajaya is part of an ongoing endeavour to re-establish Malay and Islamic pride and self-respect.

While Putrajaya, in a sense, is trying to escape from the diversity of the city, it is notable that the imported 'style' is not that of the *Kampungs* (Malay village), *Masjids* (mosques) and *Istanas* (Palaces) of the Malay tradition. Rather it is of an 'imagined' source. Putrajaya is both in way, colonised by images and styles essentially Middle-Eastern and the colonising of a Malay reassertion against 'an urbanism and urbanity that is essentially and simultaneously Chinese-Malaysian and cosmopolitan.' (King 2005:136)

### **5.2.2 Public Art in Putrajaya: Questions of Value**

'Public art, whether abstract or figurative, asserts moral claims to public space, claims concerning the history, identity, and possible future of the surrounding area'. (Weber 2003:7). Public art design plays a key role in all forms of development, generating a sense of regional identity and pride. Successful public art is work that resonates with the site and context, creates an opportunity for the range of people using the site to engage with and in terms of added values it brings benefits to both the community and the environment.

First, the employment of public art in Putrajaya by the developer (PJH) and the local authority (PJC) is seen to contribute towards critical evaluation of art in public and social space values. According to Penny Balkin Bach (1992:1)

"Public art can express civic values, enhance the environment, transform a landscape, heighten our awareness, or question our assumptions. Placed in a public site, this art is therefore for everyone, a form of collective community expression."

Bach (1992:1)

The ability of public art to meet the needs of social objectives for an inclusive society also largely depends on the quality of the built environment. In public places, there are many forms of art that enhance the space and give it character. In the case of Putrajaya, public art helps break the rigidity of building complexes and the formal outlook of its urban-scape. In general it improves the physical environment to benefit the residents and visitors. It also helps to humanise public spaces and create meaningful places where people feel comfortable and relaxed. According to interview participant POA1:

‘The purpose of public sculpture in Putrajaya is to create a focal point for people to come and appreciate this artwork set against the development of Putrajaya...or its function is to address the purpose of the space...for example the sculpture located at the main entrance signify the formality of the business...It is also there to mark the city development’

POA1 (2006:4)

Besides adding to people's appreciation of a particular place as well as aiding orientation, public art of all kinds can be found in almost any city either representing a



historic figure or expressing a style, thought or culture. According to interview participant POA1:

‘...for example the Millennium monument by Ken Yeang,  
(sic)...Generally it is there to create interest, to create the right  
atmosphere. The sculpture here (sic) is use to educate the public on the  
history of the country’

POA1 (2006:4)

Whilst interview participant POL2 states: ‘Murals are found on the sides of buildings, sometimes advertising a product or event, or expressing something of cultural, historical, or visual importance. Other forms of public art like fountains celebrate the reflections and coolness of water and add white noise, drowning out the sounds of traffic’ (interview participant POL2 2006: 3). In Malaysia, water element is part of the public art which is important in a hot and humid climate like Malaysia’s. This encourages ‘liveability’ in the community, which in turn promotes the quality of life. (see **figure 5.5**)



**Figure 5.5** Sculptures and Water Fountain in Malawati Hill, Putrajaya



The employment of public art in Putrajaya has also helped create a safer environment. With public art, the areas are better managed, well lit, streets are wider (to accommodate visitors and residents) - all this encourages visitors and the local community to use the streets at night, increasing natural surveillance. As a result fear of crime is lessened. It also helps decrease vandalism and increase community pride and concern for the local environment, which allow its communities to directly influence the identity of the area, encouraging greater ownership of a development or scheme. On a larger scale, public art in Putrajaya provides a community focus where the artwork in the public spaces creates a potential venue for social events. These events can provide interactions and encourage cross-community and cross-cultural ties. It can also have a very positive effect on the urban environment, drawing the community together - bringing financial, social and environmental benefits, and broadening the cultural nature, character and identity of the area. According to interview participants ACJ1:

‘In Putrajaya, the residential developments were developed on the *Kampung* concept where no fences were allowed thus creating a village environment...it will provide and encourage interactions between the neighbours’

ACJ1 (2006:4)

While good urban design and architecture affirm social values and bring coherence and order to the built environment for the benefit of the public; commissioned sculptures and integrated artworks located throughout the City, in parks, along roadways, in public buildings and in other public places help enhance urban spaces and create a sense of place. According to Sucher (1995):

‘The urban environment can become personalised with art by demonstrating a particular style, activity, or culture. Art creates a sense of place, it reflects social theory about the place, and displays a style that is attributed to the space. Art is often used in public places to give it character, to make a space interesting, or to simply beautify it. People remember a place because of the artwork that exists in the space - the art acts as a symbol of the place’.

Sucher (1995)

Secondly, the employment of public art in Putrajaya is a prime example of a direct response to its settings and a reflection of a Malaysia’s political and cultural programme, which presents a typical celebration of ornamental display intertwined with a series of administrative and political considerations. As mentioned above, Putrajaya development was inspired by the idea of re-making Malaysia into a modern Islamic economic power. As stated by interview participant ACJ1:

‘...religion plays a big role in the decision making especially with the local authority when they want to put public art. Firstly because they use public money, where the majority of the public is Malay Muslim and they are accountable when using this funding’

ACJ1 (2006:5)

Public art is employed to display between actual and wished for identity, a vision of an ideal urban space. Public art and monuments were incorporated into Putrajaya’s built environment where appropriate to further enhance, establish and create a unique identity legitimising the political and cultural atmosphere. According to Pearson (1982):

Public art is now related to cultural identity... it became 'directly political in the broader sense, since [state involvement] is wrapped up in values, decisions, attitudes and assumptions concerning people's live'

Pearson (1982: 80)

The issue of cultural and political values both defines and is mediated by its spatial location, and as such is part of a social dynamic in which 'the processes through which a person defines him / herself in a society are not restricted to making distinctions between oneself and significant others, but extends with no less importance to objects and things, and the very spaces and places in which they are found.' (Proshansky, Fabian & Kaminoff :1983).

To help understand this, it is important to look at the distribution of public art in Putrajaya. Almost eighteen public sculptures were located and found within a radius of two kilometres from the central core zone (Precinct 1-5), which is also the administrative and financial district. Most public artwork in the administrative and financial areas carries a style to coincide with the visual language of Putrajaya's built environment. It is claimed to be Malaysian (reminiscent of Malay vernacular architecture) and an adaptation of Middle Eastern Islamic principles. Because of the Malay-Islamic style, spatial representation (the architecture and built environment) has explicitly used peculiar form of abstract geometry (an anti-anthropomorphic tradition in Islamic decorations); which also physically influenced the public art attributes in these areas. While the usage of geometrical form helps enforce an Islamic identity, Malay carvings and Malay art style is used to help enforce the Malay cultural tradition. (refer to **Figure 4.11, 4.12 and 4.15**)

Residential, recreational and trade areas have very little public art, which is often attributed to the value of the space (or rather the lack of). According to Mohd Ali (2005)

‘The “Peripheral Precincts” plan are base on the neighbourhood planning concept to accommodate a mixture of residential areas, local commercial activities and public amenities and it does have sculptures which symbolically commemorate Putrajaya’s ‘Garden City’ design concept.

Mohd Ali (2005:98)

Mohd Ali has suggested that public art in the “Peripheral Precincts” does not hold the same values as the one in the “Core Areas”. If the public art in the ‘Core Areas’ are site-specific and politically and culturally motivated; the only purpose of public art in the peripheral areas is to enhance the aesthetic values of the settings. Hence the designs in the peripheral areas are more liberal and utilise a more modern approach (refer to **Figure 4.34** and **4.36**).

Public art within the core areas, illustrating political and cultural values, are site-specific - symbolic of the political history of Malaysia. This is because the public realm was perceived by the ruling politicians or dictated by how they thought of the city, by way of its public space and objects. According to King:

‘...the use of public art in Putrajaya is to help enforce a political and cultural imagery and it is the surface expression of a deeper cultural layer conveyed in the design of the city’

(King 2007:132).

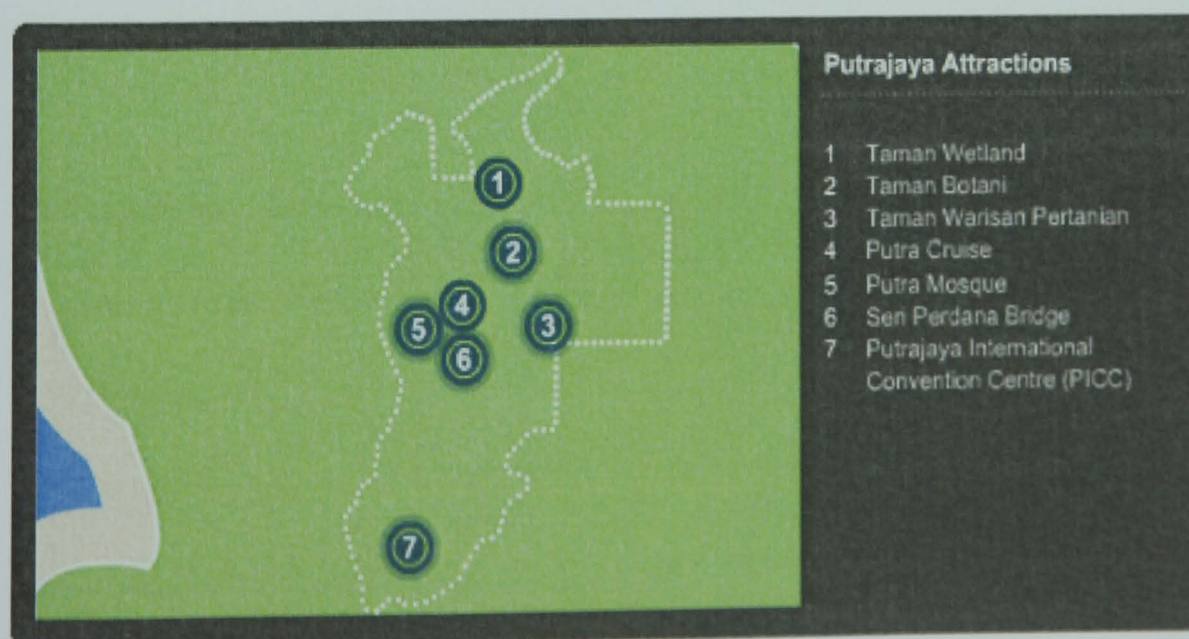
The impact of public art goes beyond value of social and identity. Public art in Putrajaya also contributes towards economic benefits. According to Madden (1998):



‘The phrase the “economic benefits of the arts” has gained currency in arts sectors around the world, largely as a result of a new economic rationalism in public policy’.

Madden (1998:3)

As with all areas of public policy, arts and cultural policies have come under the scrutiny of economics. Putrajaya has created a high quality public environment, which has significant impact on the economic life of the urban centre to attract investment. The presence of good parks, squares, public art and public spaces becomes a vital business and marketing tool - investors are attracted to locations that offer well designed, well managed public places and these in turn attract customers, employees and services. Public art is also used for tourism in Putrajaya. For example the *Mercutanda* monument (refer to **figure 4.5**), *Perdana Boulevard* sculpture (refer to **figure 4.9**) and *Millennium* monument in Precinct 2 (refer to **figure 4.16**) are examples of public art used to attract visitors to visit Putrajaya. There are seven main dedicated attractions for tourism. (see **figure 5.6**)



**Figure 5.6** Putrajaya Attractions: (Courtesy of Putrajaya Corporation)

Tourism in Putrajaya offers visitors an introduction into Malaysian cultural constructs where the mode of representation is instrumental in determining the progress of integration. According to the Tourism Board Malaysia (2007):

‘...to market Malaysia as a destination of excellence and to make the tourist industry as a major contributor towards the socio-economic development of the nation.’ (sic)

Tourism Board Malaysia (2007)

While, according to Putrajaya Corporation (PJC), a good public landscape offers very clear benefits to the local economy in terms of stimulating increased house prices, since house buyers are willing to pay to be near green space. Apart from that, PJC (2006) states:

‘The employment of public art will amplify the aesthetic value of the public spaces (sic) and encourages families and visitors to use such facilities’.

PJC (2006:4)

PJC believes that the employment of public art can only mean a good quality public place and positive environments; which will attract more people to the area.

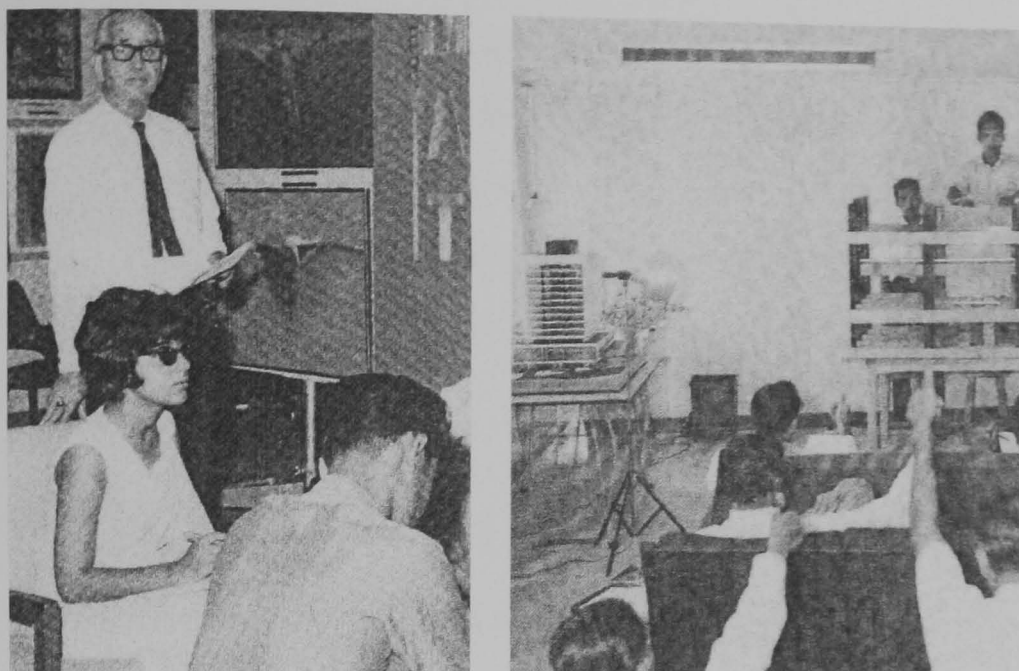
But public art values are an easy target for criticism. While the benefits of public art to the community (streetscape, street furniture, a painting or a sculpture) are not the kind that shows up on the balance sheet or lead to tax rebates or goes well beyond cash registers and tax revenue, it has value, both in economic and social terms. Where there is art, there is a visible difference of an active cultural community – people engaging with the environment, growth of social interactions between different

cultural background, celebration of the built environment, increase in the use of open spaces and reduced vandalism by encouraging a sense of pride and ownership.

Public art in Putrajaya was not developed under any dedicated public art policy but by inclusion of enactments and policies, which stipulate the importance of public art for the guaranteed growth of the city. The traditional reasoning is that the arts produce cultural benefits that spill over onto the general public and help to educate the public with the value of the arts. It may also culturally enrich the community and bring external prestige to their community, encourage greater cultural tolerance and diversity when the majority of the groups/community are exposed to other cultures and taste through the arts.

### **5.3 Public Art Commissioning Process in Malaysia**

The process of commissioning public art in Malaysia is an arbitrary one. While there have been a regular commissioning processes in the country, there has not been much documentation of it. Scarce evidence of the commissioning process can be found, except photographs of the process organised by the Malaysian National Art Gallery in collaboration with the Malaysian Association of Architects (PAM) in the early 1970s (see **figure 5.7**).



**Figure 5.7** Public sculpture design competition in early 1970s shows example of public art commissioning procedures: photo courtesy of NAG

Today most commissioning processes are usually left to the decision of the financier or the owner of the development, depending on the size of each project. According to interview participant ACJ1; 'There are no proper mechanisms used to include public art in new development as we see in the Western countries'. Usually it is privately funded' (ACJ1 2006:6). Whilst interview participant POA1 states:

'...the public sculpture commissions are usually initiated by the private owner or by the end user. For example, in the case of the Ministry of Foreign Office; there were some design proposal but was rejected by the ministry which later commissioned and appointed their own designer'

POA1 (2006:5)

The lack of commissioning procedures is rooted in a few notable factors. The most significant one is the absence of a dedicated public art policy. According to interview participant ARCH1 (2006):



‘We don’t have a dedicated public art policy; while as for the commissioning procedures; there is an unwritten law saying what we should do and don’t... mostly are verbal instruction passed from one organisation to another’ (sic)

ARCH1 (2006:10-11)

Without a dedicated policy, there is no control over public art projects and their commissioning process. This results in the lack of an appropriate system for choosing artworks or artists. In Western countries like the United Kingdom, the commissioning process benefits from policy documents which provide guidelines for commissioning procedures. The lack of a commissioning policy for public artwork might obscure the decision process which has caused concern among public artists in Malaysia.

Interview participant GAT2 states:

‘...most of the time, the developers who appointed the architects do not know who to commission for public artwork nor have separate budget for artwork. Thus more than likely the public artwork was commissioned to the architect. Alternatively, in commissioning of public artwork; the artist was appointed to propose the design concept and the architects will make it happen’

GAT2 (2006:5)

While according to interview participant ACR3;

‘...there have been countless public art design proposal presented; but because these people (private corporations and governmental organisations) think they have the authority to decide and choose, it finally boils down to who and what they want. This is the standard practice in Malaysia’

(ACR3 2006:2)

The issue of the lack of a public art policy in Malaysia is not a new one. Artists and policy makers, especially private organisations that encourage the employment of public art in Malaysia, have asked for a specific policy to be drawn up. Although the commissioning process is based on loose documents used as basic guidelines, it is far from adequate. This is because the existing documents do not cover all areas in public art commission such as competition, standardising building requirements and other issues. Interview participants ACR3 states:

‘I recall that the NAG, will always inform us of certain guidelines...and mostly are verbal instructions’

ACR3 (2006:9)

The absence of a dedicated policy is believed to be due to the lack of documentation and archived accounts of public art projects. This has halted any effort to provide a comprehensive policy, which covers the employment of public art and the commissioning process for public art. As stated by interview participant ACJ1:

‘The problem is there is no agencies responsible in archiving and documenting urban planning, city and township related projects. We do not have guidelines on public art per say. The Town and regional Planning office have guidelines on landscape and façade of the building (sic) but for public art they do not have any policy. It is up to the whims and fancies of the local authorities’

ACJ1 (2006:3)

Documentation and archival evidence of public art projects, commissioning procedures and detailed accounts of planning guidelines are crucial as they help provide policy makers with samples when drawing a policy that includes guidance in relation to public art commissions and the legal and practical issues involved in their successful execution and management.

The other issue with the public art commissioning process in Malaysia is the jurisdiction of a governing body over public art projects. According to interview participants ACJ1:

‘I know in Malaysia is that when a corporation wants to support the arts, they do not go to speak to the local authority. Instead they will engage the help of the NAG for example’

ACJ1 (2006:6)

Even though local authorities and the NAG sometimes work together on public art projects, they have a difference of opinions on art and often have conflicting procedures. Interview participant GAR6 states:

‘Let’s take a look at the ceramic pot sculpture for example near Lake Garden in Kuala Lumpur city. It is not sculpture done by the artist. (sic) It is constructed by the City Hall (authority). There is no mention of an artist, let alone any artistic value. It’s just craft work’

GAR6 (2006:5)

Most local authorities design and construct public sculptures and claim the artistic merit for the art. This is done without prior commissioning, selection or procedure because local authorities see that it is within their jurisdiction to decide, choose, design and build public artwork. On the other hand, private corporations, sometimes with the help of NAG who commission artists for public art, will conduct their own commissioning process either through open competition, selective competition or a close tender project. However, as the locations of public art are mostly under the control of a local authority, conflicts arise. The lack of a clear jurisdiction over public art projects often causes public art commissions to be dealt with on a project-by-project basis. Apart from this, the NAG has limited jurisdiction over the

commissioning process in the country. This conflict has sometimes caused potential financiers to shy away from employing public art in their development. Without a proper monitoring mechanism, there is a lack of transparency with the commissioning process and the approval for projects could be based on preferences of one group over the other. Interview participant GAN5 states:

‘... primarily with the relations to the National Art Gallery, they have very little influence in the development of contemporary Malaysian art and over its commissioning process.’ (sic)

GAN5 (2007:4)

### **5.3.1 Public Art Commission in Putrajaya**

Being a new city development, the Putrajaya project has benefited from the example of the public art commissioning process in Kuala Lumpur; which includes the conflicts and problems faced by the local authority and the project financier. For the Putrajaya development, the Putrajaya developer (PJH) and local authority (PJC) have pursued a planning process which includes the use of public art to embellish and enrich the physical quality of its built environment. Interview participant POA1 (2006) states:

‘Putrajaya development has achieved its objective of being a sustainable development. It does promote and encouraged more green area (and inclusion of art in the public places), creating guidelines to open space area, and most of the time the local by laws are bigger than any other local authority has created’

POA1 (2006:3)

There are many commissioned public artworks in Putrajaya because the mission of the Putrajaya Corporation is to vitalise the Federal Territory of Putrajaya by integrating art and culture into community life. This is to support the region’s cultural



assets and to showcase Putrajaya as a cultural destination. Interview participants ACJ1 states:

‘Even though there are very few public artworks as compared to the size of its development, Putrajaya is probably one of the new cities that give more emphasis towards public art’

ACJ1 (2006:6)

The Authority (PJH and PJC) has initiated and implemented a substantial public art programme since the formation of Putrajaya in 1999. The Authority recognises that the successful integration of art into public spaces, including streets, squares, buildings, and parks, fosters a better quality of life and a stronger sense of identity in the locality in which it occurs. PJH in collaboration with the Federal Government gave Malaysia National Art Gallery (NAG) the authority for making recommendations pertaining to arts and culture funding to the local authority (PJC). The NAG is responsible for giving advice to the local authority on projects and programmes designed to promote public art throughout the neighbourhoods by recommending public art in selected key areas and encouraging the private sector to include opportunities for cultural and artistic expression in their private development.

The Putrajaya D.U.D (Detailed Urban Design) programme sets out the intent, design process, commissioning procedures and the overall administration of primary infrastructure and secondary infrastructure (public art) in a redevelopment area.

According to interview participant POA1:

‘That Detailed Urban Design is basically the main law for any construction or new development. Because it identifies for given site what is the allowable height, open space, the massing up (sic)

of the location of the recommended public access, the recommended pedestrian access or lobby of a building. So it has a lot of design input that constraints designer. This law was design by the town planners to control the planning of Putrajaya. It looks into issues surrounding outlook of Putrajaya, its skyline, and the masses that make its design.'

POA1 (2006:3)

Accordingly, PJH and the Federal Government has set aside two percent of the construction costs of all buildings, hard and soft landscaping, and other appropriate public works funding, for the implementation of art in public places. PJH also seeks a similar contribution/funding from state or local government agencies undertaking public works within a development area.

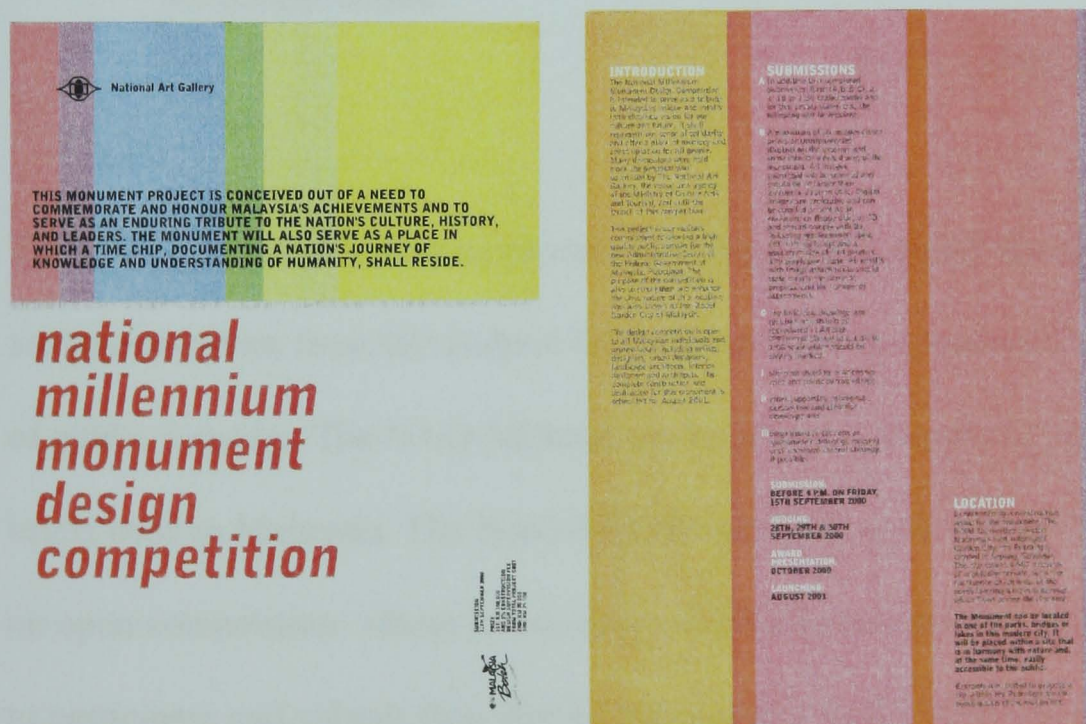
In summary, the purpose of including public art within the development areas in Putrajaya is to contribute towards positive social growth, developing a cultural identity and ensuring the economic value of each precinct. It is also being employed to engage the public in a way that contributes to their understanding of the spaces and places they inhabit; to inject places with definable qualities; to create artworks in public spaces that are site-specific and integrated into built and natural forms and places; to reflect the character of each precinct and open space by recording past and present histories, culture and ideas; and to expand public awareness of contemporary art practices outside of galleries.

### 5.3.2 Public Art Commissioning Document

With the scarcity of documentation on commissioning process in Malaysia, there is very little evidence of a public art project brief. The Putrajaya ‘National Millennium’ monument design project brief is an example of a public art commission brief (see **figure 5.8**) used in the country. In 2000, the Malaysian National Art Gallery under the directive of the Federal Government organised the ‘Millennium Monument design competition’, which was conceived out of a need to commemorate and honour Malaysia’s achievements. According to the NAG-Millennium brief (2000):

‘The monument project serves as an enduring tribute to the nation’s culture, history, and leaders. The monument will also serve as a place in which a time chip, documenting a nation’s journey of knowledge and understanding of humanity, shall reside’

National Art Gallery (2000:1)



**Figure 5.8** The National Millennium monuments brief

During the competition, the NAG played a consultative role to the commissioning board that included the developer of the project (PJH), the local authority (PJC) and

the government. It should be pointed out that only key national projects, such as the National Millennium monument in Putrajaya, are subject to such thorough commissioning procedures and that usually use a well written brief. This is because public art in Putrajaya is developed and promoted under the collaboration between the Federal Government and Putrajaya Holding (PJH) and benefits from being commissioned as a Federal Government initiated project and as a new city development project. According to interview participant POA1 (2006):

We (PJH) were given the mandate to finance the project, layout the planning, preparing the site for construction, laying out the foundations, starting with construction of all the buildings and supporting the implanting the infrastructure. Putrajaya Corporation (PJC) was created to enforce and to legalise the law... PJH focus is to complete and construct government buildings; government quarters and we are also the agent for the local authority to provide the infrastructure.

POA1 (2006:2)

Therefore, the commissioning process is transparent because funding for these sculptures comes from the Federal Government and so is exposed to a greater degree of public scrutiny. The NAG-Millennium brief is an example of one of two type of briefs used in Malaysia. The NAG-Millennium brief is an 'Open Brief' which is based on open competition; where Malaysian individuals and professionals are encouraged to participate and submit their design proposals. Usually such briefs are used for National level projects, where the community participation is important and public opinion carries some weight.



The Millennium monument brief is an important document because it contains specific requirements, judging criteria and monetary reward, which outline the basis for the project. The brief not only provides a concise commissioning requirement but it also provides general characteristics and values for public art in Malaysia. Hence the archiving of such document is crucial in identifying the importance of public art in the country and could provide a framework for future briefs and policy-making. Generally, in most open project briefs in Malaysia, public art commissions are intended to be permanent, while some smaller numbers are commissioned on the understanding that they will be temporary or ephemeral. Very few ephemeral public artwork commissions or installations use any written briefs and in most cases projects are tendered and commissioned under verbal instructions and contracts. The selection of an artist is based on recommendations by fellow artists or through the project financiers approaching the NAG for advice and for an artist database.

The other type of commissioning brief used in Malaysia is known as the *Selective or Closed* brief. Not a lot is known of this brief because the nature of the brief itself is highly confidential and secretive. Selective or Closed commissioning briefs work on the basis that the project financiers have decided on a selection of potential artists or designers to carry out the design and the style of public sculpture they are keen on.

Interview participant ACR3 states:

‘...these people (project financier) are the decision maker...In a way they dictate the whole situation (commissioning process, type of work, location)...they have the power to decide and choose’

ACR3 (2006:2)

The brief usually contains the project requirement and project tender procedures.

Although a Selective or Closed commission project is by invitation only and is open to a select few, most of the project is usually awarded to either the project architect or artists recommended by the project architect. According to interview participant GAJ7:

‘A lot of the commissioning will be awarded to the architect who is in the first place, develop and construct the new development. The owner of the development will usually appoint the project architect to decide for them how the public sculpture would look like and who it would be commissioned to (sic)... I got my public artwork commission through recommendation of the project architect.’

GAJ7 (2006:7)

In some Selective commissions, the project brief are not written but conducted via verbal briefing. This usually happens in exceptional circumstances. Interview participant ACR3 states:

‘...they (client or project financier) will give a brief which could be an extensive and detail project brief, while other time it is verbal briefing (sic)

ACR3 (2006: 5)

The Selective commission are very popular in Malaysia because the project financier or the client is not liable to share financial expenditure nor are they required to be transparent with the commissioning selection. There are also other reasons why selective commission is popular especially when:

- Where no proposal were submitted or no proposal were submitted that conform to the essential requirements of the project or the project financier are

not satisfied the conditions for participation, in this case a direct contact with a artist/designer of choice may be made

- An absence of open competition for technical reasons
- Where a certain style of desired artwork can only be designed by a particular artist and no reasonable alternative or substitute artists with similar capability exist.

In the selective or closed commission, once an artist or designer is selected, negotiations begin on the role of the artists in the project, the agreed fees which include design and build or supervisory/consultant base fees and other contractual obligations. Once an artist is selected, the next stage of the public art commission will develop arbitrarily. In open invitation commissions, the construction and building of public art depends on the profile of the winner. If the design competition is won by a publicly renowned individual, the standard practice is to award the winner with an agreed monetary reward, followed by five percent of the total project cost. The winner's role in this category is to help supervise the project during the construction period.

Winners from organisations like architecture firms or established artists are awarded with same monetary reward but instead of just the supervisory role, the winner in this category has the choice to appoint their own construction team and manage the project to completion within the agreed dateline and they receive the total design and build profit. According to interview participant GAT2, in some cases, the process of any commissioning of public artwork depends on the role of the artist.

‘...the process of commissioning of public artwork is that the artist will propose the design and concept and the architect or interior designers will make it happen’ (sic)

(GAT2 2006:5)

The public art commissioning in Malaysia is not well documented. Even though serious effort has been taken by organisation like the Malaysia National Art Gallery and some private organisations to organise competitions and regulate a generic rules for commissioning procedures, these effort are hampered by the lack of cooperation between Malaysian authorities, artists and project financiers. The absence of a comprehensive template for a brief is also making it difficult for systematic commissioning procedures in the country.

#### **5.4 Chapter Summary**

The analysis of Putrajaya has revealed the influence of public art in enforcing and strengthening the identity of the city. Putrajaya as the new administrative capital of Malaysia has seen the need to be distinctively outstanding in both its characteristics and development. This is because Malaysia is in the position to set an example for other Islamic countries and it sees itself as championing a successful and modern Islamic Malay state. Instead of adopting Malay vernacular architecture in its design, Putrajaya uses an Islamic architecture style mimicking that in the Middle East which enforces Malaysian resolve to move away from their colonial past and asserting themselves as a powerful Islamic bloc outside the Middle Eastern belt.

The employment of public art does not only strengthen Putrajaya design resolution but it also helps capitalise on the benefits of providing the inhabitants with a conducive and safe environment. By introducing the D.U.D programme and using the Putrajaya Act 1995 (Act 536), PJH and PJC is encouraging public art to be seen as the main element in the Putrajaya development, the designs of which were based upon the 'Garden in the City' concept. According to interview participant POA1:



‘The Detailed Urban Design (D.U.D) is basically the main law for any construction or new development (in Putrajaya)...it is used as the main guidelines for the development and planning for Putrajaya. So it has design input for designers’ (sic)

POA1 (2006:3)

The Act helps provide guidelines for both the Putrajaya local authority and private organisations with systematic and structured rules when employing public art in any new development.

The issues of public art jurisdiction and the commissioning process have been plaguing the Malaysian art scene for a long time. Without co-operation and understanding between the local authorities, NAG, Federal government and private organisations, the problems with public art commission will continue. Even though there has been growth in public art commissioning in Malaysia, the lack of comprehensive documentation on public art and the absent of a dedicated policy, including the lack of a commissioning protocol, cannot alleviate existing problems. The result has been an arbitrary commissioning process with a lack of transparency within the project financial process and distribution of public art projects among Malaysian artists. This has caused concern over the accountability of public art commissions.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Pubic Art in Malaysia: Conclusions and Proposition**

## 6.1 Introduction

The final chapter not only brings together the points made in previous chapters but also summarises the key findings where analysis of public art in Malaysia demonstrates its value in relation to cultural and social development. According to Cox (1998) 'Public art in the post-modern era has begun to consciously take on social and political roles'. In the early part of the Malaysian independence, public art has taken many roles from enforcing the colonial ideology while at the same time, assisting with beautification of the city. But the reason for the growth in interest in public art in the last decade has been ascribed to number of different sources. This research concludes that the revitalised interest in the use of public artworks is not restricted only as a tool to animate public places; but has employed as a 'instrument for cultural integration, assisting social diversity and helping with the making of a national identity' Schoppert (2005), Bajunid (2004), Anderson (1999), Shin (1999), Hartwell (1994, 1995, 2003) and Tepper (1999). As identified in the Malaysian Laws and Policy on Art and Culture, 2007:

'...to create works of arts that instil greater aesthetic values especially to the appreciation and preservation of arts, culture and heritage'

(Laws and Policy on Art and Culture, 2007:10)

Overall thesis has focused on the development of public art in Malaysia. This is broken into three major aspects. Firstly, I have discussed the different forces that help define and generate Malaysian public art. Here, I have described the historical development of public art in Malaysia which was successfully traced back to the pre independence era, post independence and right up to recent time (2007). This includes: the impact of NCC (National Cultural Congress 1971), the implementation of NDP (National Development Program) and later NEP (New Economic Policy); and

influences in Malaysian art. Secondly, I provided a detailed description of the current public art practice in Malaysia and its underlying philosophies and objectives. A number of important and relevant issues were raised and discussed: issues of censorship, public art jurisdiction, and the making of a Malaysian identity. Finally, I provided a detailed description of a database of artefacts to generate a typology work which help informs a model of material culture in Malaysia.

The conclusion is in two sections. In the first section, I summarise the main arguments of the research into the development and current influences on public art practice in Malaysia. In the second section, I put forward the argument concerning the purpose of public art in Malaysia. These provide platform for judgement and contribute towards an improved practice of public art practice in Malaysia.

## **6.2 Reflection of Public Art In Malaysia**

Malaysian art cannot be separated from Malaysian history. It is interesting to note that art and history of Malaysia have been greatly influenced by the external influences of the Hindu kingdoms, the advent of Islam in the 15th century, interference of European colonial power and the establishment of the multiracial Federation of Malaya in 1957. The development of the transitional periods in Malaysian art can be best understood from the various historical phases. In chapter 2 and 3, I have carefully examined documents relating to the development of art and its complex role which span from the beginning of the Malay Peninsula to the current public art practice in Malaysia. A number of fundamental findings emerged from this study which are:

- Influences of Malaysian cultural and religious practice on art



- Pre independence art development and post-colonial influences
- Definition and role of public art in Malaysia

Historically, Malaysian art development sees the influence of three different cultural and religious practices: of the Malay, Chinese and Indian which have permeated into the art practices and provided the basis for public art development in the country.

Before the country's independence, the use for public art (in the form of public sculptures) was mostly found in places of worships. This is based on the artefacts found in and around the country such as the 'Iconic' and 'Aniconic' Buddhist sculptures (see **figure 2.3**), *Batu Bersurat* (see **figure 2.4**) and sculpture relief in Indian temples (see **figure 2.5**). This research has concludes that before Islam, Malay visual art was influence by animism, Buddhism and Hinduism. The Asian Centre research study states that the Malays have an animistic and Hindu heritage, strong influences of both being still evident in many of the traditional beliefs, customs and rituals, as well as in manifestations of artistic expression.

But since the coming of Islam to the Malay Peninsula in fifteenth century, gradually the cultural and artistic practices were influenced by the Islamic code of conduct.

Farish Noor (2003) wrote:

‘With the consolidation of Islam, there emerged the growing belief that through a comprehension of the working of nature, human being could have better understanding of themselves. Rejecting the humanism and animism of the earlier pagan age, Malay-Muslim artists from the fourteen century onwards began to focus their attention beyond the human form to the external world of nature’

Farish Noor (2003: 16)

At beginning, the marks of Islamic art are subtly embedded in the Malay artistic heritage and Islamic influences were overlaid on the indigenous culture without totally diminishing it. But as Islamic influences became more domineering, the Islamic influences in art (derive in large part from its longstanding rejection of depictions of humans and animals in art) became dominant. Instead of images of human or animals; the mosques, manuscripts and all form of sculptures are adorned with flourishes of Arabic calligraphy, intricate floral decorations and geometrical pattern. This later became the prominent features in most public art in Malaysia.

While public sculptures in the places of worship have some influence towards the development of public art in Malaysia; sculptures found in squares and plazas by the colonialist masters have greater influences in Malaysia modern art development. These influences inversely transferred a colonialist model, (as colonialism still lends an incredible amount of influence on the culture of the colonised long after achieving independence) and often ignoring the reality of the population. Like all colonised countries, culture during colonisation is a slavish reproduction of the coloniser's own culture.

A prime example would be British India where the upper classes strove to be more British than the British and in Malaysia the art development in the early decades of the twentieth century was highly influenced by European art. The colonisation of art in Malaysia is often based on the generation of an 'imagined community' through projection onto subjected country where each colony is shaped by the colonial master's tabula rasa which now persist in contemporary Malaysia. Art during this period often legitimise and perpetuate the imposition of colonial hegemony.

Sabapathy (2005) states that the development of modern art in Malaysia corresponds

to three relatively distinct areas of "visioning" and "ideating" modern Malaysian art, one of which:

The first clue to understanding the typology of Malaysian art is characterised by attempts at emulation of Western art, sometimes total, but more often modified in content and form; but always based upon the western notion of "Art". Modern Malaysian art is understood to be one that should be comparable to the modern art of the West, under the same dominating Western aesthetic paradigm.

Sabapathy (2005: 2)

Sabapathy's evaluation helps identify the genealogy of public art and also re-framed the connection between Malaysian artistic aspirations during the colonial period- where the internalisation of colonial values were introduced. This is because one hundred and sixty years of British occupation in Malaysia has brought about major changes in the local art and architectural scenes, particularly in many parts of the British settlements including major cities, plantation estates and military areas. The art and architecture style portray distinctive design characteristics which are similar to their contemporary designs in England (see **figure 2.18**). The examples of public art/ sculptures were very distinctive and revealed an astute aesthetic characteristic that is very 'Eurocentric' (see **figure 2.16**). Aesthetically, British colonial art and architecture influences in Malaysia are also essentially a hybrid, with Mughals and Moorish influences from British India. This was also accomplished with due respect to the Islamic faith of the local Malays, particularly the Malay Sultans. These influences can be seen in many buildings in the heart of Kuala Lumpur city such as the Sultan Abdul Samad Building built in 1897, and Masjid Jamek Mosque (see **figure 4.28**). According to King (2005):

‘It is clear that the building is styled in the British Raj design, and so the line of descent can be readily be traced to Victorian England-India and its representation of an earlier Mogul Islamic tradition’ (sic).

King (2005:132)

While the post-colonial era saw the new Malaysia creating utopian models which were formed from an uneasy co-existence relation of colonial design and a ‘Malaysian’ art style. Sabapathy (2005) states:

The second type of artistic vision and idea (post colonial era) gives further consideration to the question of "Malaysianness". The anxiety of 'Identity' seems evident. Though its development is still trailingly inspired by contemporary developments in Western Art, the works begin to be visibly infused by formal and iconographic signs of localness and indigenusness. The period during which this concern came to the fore was post - May 13, 1969, and post - National Cultural Congress of 1971. Post - May 1969 instigated an acute consciousness and crisis of identity, to some, it signalled the irreparable loss or fracturing of identity; for the majority, it pointed to the urgent need to construct new identities, based on cultural and social realities that were peculiar to Malaysia.

Sabapathy (2005: 2)

The art styles adopted by artists during the post-colonial period spawned a debate over the relationship of the East and West. The introduction of the National Culture Congress 1971 (NCC) after the racial unrest event in 1969, has probed the use of art in the search for a Malaysian identity which gave rise to the uniqueness of the ‘Malaysian-ness’ of Malaysian art. Anything modern was equated with



Westernisation and colonialism, while traditional styles symbolised the search for a national identity. The post-modern era has succeeded in the creation of many art works that are a blend of many sources but is still deeply personal and rooted in local concerns.

Artists with international training began to consider the context of their work- using social issue based subjects as a point for expression while locally trained artists strongly pursued the use of Islamic principles in their work. Work in the field resembled a living laboratory, with mixing and matching between the two schools of thoughts which offer some form of artistic prescriptions to a pluralistic society and a cultural diverse country like Malaysia. Public art is now use as a tool for community cohesion.

The role of public art entails so much more than just art in public places. In Malaysia it has grown to encompass a wide range of innovative concepts, projects and programs. It covers all aspect of involvement as they draw on the inspiration of the site and its context, colours and history as well as involving the community. As Malaysia has become home to many diverse peoples, the purpose of public art is to define an approach which honours the local heritage by promoting harmony, respect and a sharing of knowledge across cultures and communities through the arts. Public art has been employed as a tool to create awareness and encourage unity amongst a socially diverse community. In many cases, the role of public artwork encompasses the promotion of activities bringing the arts as Malaysia's tangible and intangible heritages closer to the public. It also promotes the understanding of local culture and values. A promotion of local culture and values help give better understanding with the issue of national identity, which is still a major concern for many Southeast Asian

nations. The effect of colonialism has left an undeniable mark on the local culture especially in Malaysia. As Sabapathy (2005) states:

The role of art (public art), which generally corresponds with the decades of the 80's and 90's, reveals a plurality of serious attempts at furthering the 'indigenous', or 'national', character of modern Malaysian art. Figuring in a major way in this attempts are Islam, ethnicity and culture, and the unself-conscious co-option of post-modernist posturing of Western Art.

Sabapathy (2005: 2)

To help assert the national identity in art, the Malaysian government enforced a strict censorship and ethical values that reflects the Southeast Asian culture. This is done for the protection of existing cultural practice as an option to colonial Western ideals, which are no longer deemed suitable. This censorship is also employed to ensure continued stability among the diverse Malaysian socio-cultural background.

Public art, by virtue of existing in public spaces, is subject to government monitoring and regulations. As an Islamic country, sensitive content were carefully removed as not to offend the majority of Malaysia's conservative community and the same time trying not to infringe in the rights and suffocate the freedom of artistic expression.

The introduction of enactments like 'Antiquities Act 1976 (Act 168), National Art Gallery Act (1959), National Archive Act 1996 (Act 44, revised 1971 as Act A85, revised 1993 Act 511) and Laws and Policy on Art and Culture, 2007 as guidelines guarantees that all artwork will have conform to some form of control. The

Censorship Board in Malaysia states:

"In order for us to instil good morals and values in our people...so as not to offend the country's population, restriction must be prescribed"

(Malaysia Laws and Policy on Art and Culture, 2006: 10)

While the prescriptions of censorship can help monitor liberal ideas that threatens Malaysian socio-cultural and political stability; the mishandling of censorship and regulations based on moral grounds set by an authoritarian body can also lead to suppression of communicative material and dissemination of ideas and information. In this research, some interviewees' finds that censorship has to be dealt with sensibly rather than a blanket of prescribed rules over current art movement which might stifle maturity amongst Malaysian artists. It is also believed that this form of authoritarian regulative and constitutive censorship can cause a repressive liberality especially in the matters relating to funding.

In chapter 4 and 5 sees the development of public art practices in Malaysia and significant effort by the Federal government in employing public art as a tool to help with the socio-cultural, economic and urban development. It also helps strengthen a Malaysian identity. The analysis of public sculptures in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya, Cyberjaya and the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur has contributed a significant insight into the public art practices in Malaysia. The mapping of public sculpture in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya is important to provide the crucial framework for understanding the development of public art practice. It provides evidence of public art commissioning process and its relationship with the geographical and locational settings. A recognisable pattern was identified. As a model city, public art in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya was built with a specific

vision, adopted a policy based upon the reflection of the religious belief of the majority which is Islam, the vision of an ideal city and manifesto of a successful and developed city. Public art in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya is also employed to support the growth and demands in tourism- a strategy to re-generate and enhance the local identity; in return this action help boost the local economy.

The documented and mapping of public sculptures in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya provided the research with a documentary practice which is valuable to future researchers. It also provided a database of artefacts which generates a typology for material culture in Malaysia. Based on the zoning system used in this thesis, I was able to make general deductions about what type of public art is being used and how much public art appears in the respective zones. By using a theoretical model by Miwon Kwon the case-study has provided clarity over issues of site-specificity of public art. Site-specificity has helped the Federal Territory of Putrajaya as a model city to successfully frame a Malay-Islamic model. The reoccurring use of Islamic geometrical patterns and Malay arts and crafts component in public artwork helped intensify this identity. The public art responds to the built environment which is a Malay-Islamic model and how this, in turn provides Putrajaya with a desired identity. As Kwon (2004) states:

‘...site specific art was initially based in a phenomenological and experiential understanding of the site, defined primarily as an agglomeration of the actual physical attributes of a particular location...with the architecture as a foil for the artwork in many instances...which together frame and sustain art’s ideology system’

Kwon (2004:3)



In a way, this effort presented Malaysia's attempt in substituting one form of utopian image for another, replacing the Western colonial style and inserting a design of a well develop city, which is predominantly influenced by a mix of Malay and Middle Eastern Islamic style. This is because such colonial lineage in art is now scarcely acceptable politically. It is also quite certain that the turn to Middle Eastern Islamic tradition is a desire to have a modern city but not design based on a Western template. Even though Malaysia is modern and sometimes ambivalently sympathetic to the West, decidedly Malaysia sees itself as a modern Islamic economic power bloc to stand against Europe, America and Australia.

But a more in-depth examination of Putrajaya development also reveals ambiguities and tensions in the adopted imagery or styling; between the wished-for origins, and a vision of a radically different future. This is because the city's design also reinforces the distancing of the executive and bureaucracy from the legislature, which is a profoundly political action. This is believed to heighten the sense of order, and according to King (2005: 125), 'it manifests a symbolic expression of the executive arm of the government and the bureaucracy'. While some Malaysian minority groups feels that the Federal Territory of Putrajaya development is a 'Cultural Programme' which was inspired by the idea of re-making Malaysia into a modern Islamic economic power. As stated by interview participant ACJ1:

'...religion plays a big role in the decision making especially with the local authority when they want to put public art. Firstly because they use public money, where the majority of the public is Malay Muslim and they are accountable when using this funding'

ACJ1 (2006:5)

As a result the Federal Territory of Putrajaya is not a perfect reflection of 'an all Malaysian' city after all, where other minority cultural practices were not incorporated into its design and development.

Public Art in Malaysia until this time has not been covered by a dedicated Public Art Policy. Without a dedicated policy, common issues like ambiguous public art jurisdiction have been plaguing the Malaysian art scene for a long time. Without co-operation and understanding between the local authorities, NAG, Federal Government and private organisations, this confusion over ownership of public art practice will continue. The lack of comprehensive documentation on public art and the absent of a dedicated policy, including the lack of a commissioning protocol, resulted in arbitrary commissioning process. With a lack of transparency, it will affect the project financial process and distribution of public art projects among Malaysian artists.

This thesis suggests an introduction of public art policy guidelines (see **Appendix 3**) as a framework for a public art policy. This guideline will be used as a generic guideline to all public art project and commissioning process until a more detailed policy could be drawn in the near future. This guideline can also be use as a temporary measure when appointing jurisdiction to organisation and individuals over public art practice. A more cultural diverse public art policy must be created not to only improve the quality, design and perception of public space, but also celebrates and fosters heritage and cultural diversity by creating landmarks to act as natural gathering places and focus for local pride. This policy will also help provide guidelines for both the Malaysian local authority and private organisations with systematic and structured rules when employing public art in any new development.

In conclusion, the use of public art in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya shows Malaysia's approach to identity making which is favourable to a modern Islamic country like Malaysia and provides clues over an aggressive attempt at changing the past. The employment of public art now is even more now important to illustrate the political and cultural values of the new Malaysia which is ready for the future challenges, and which is also symbolic of the political history of Malaysia while at the same time, create a distinct cultural experience.

### **6.3 The Database Collection and Archiving of Public Art**

This research has provided the template for a visual archiving of public artwork in the Federal Territory of Putrajaya, Cyberjaya and the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur (see **attached CD in Appendix 4**). The archives and database allows the investigation of the aims and implications of public art installation through the eyes of the artists, public art organisations and the local authorities. The collected data can include information on the material, size, and the environment of the installed art objects, as well as photographs of each object. This enables users of this database like local government officials who are engaged in the planning of public art and, for researcher who is interest with the development of public art.

The database from the archive can provide accurate information when a preservation work is needed. It is also crucial to collect and archive all activities containing the commissioning process, brief, all related policy and enactment, design and construction process of public art, issues and problems before during and after commissioning of public art, and a comprehensive recording and document of public art in Malaysia. This ensures a good quality and comprehensive research materials

and data for future attempts at the development of public art. This process also enables future policy or enactment to be drawn and revised accordingly. The database collection helps future artist and public art enthusiast to have good source of references.

The data collection and archiving of public art (public sculptures) in Malaysia is important as it lends an insight into the economic, social and cultural development in the country. This database can help artists, policy makers and researchers in the field to gauge the significant changes in contemporary visual art development in the country. It also helps to identify significant issues and problem related to art in the public spaces and provides artists, policy makers and researchers on ways of overcoming those predicaments.

#### **6.4 The Future of Public Art Practice in Malaysia**

According to interview participant ACR3 (2006):

‘The development of public art in Malaysia is still very encouraging. The only problem is with the bureaucracy of local authority. Because they are not well appointed (sic) with the importance of public art in the development of the country, public art was encouraged but its use was not fully endorsed’

ACR3 (2006:1)

An issue with bureaucracy is a minor setback for the future of public art in Malaysia. But even though ACR3’s statement highlighted the issue pertaining to the utilisation of public art, the current scope of its role in Malaysia has far exceeded expectations. From commemorating important events in the country’s history or representing the local culture, public art in Malaysia today has made a profound contribution to public



life, adding extraordinary elements to the cityscape and improving public spaces. Public Art facilitates a greater understanding of cultural identities, creates a distinctive sense of place, and assists social and cultural development to improve the quality of life in the community. It has been the goal of public art to respond to the country's diverse communities and much of the artwork has been created in active response to the character and history of the particular culture. Most artworks in public spaces have actively tried to engage creative and proactive responses to initiate a dialogue, encouraging varying degrees of both positive and negative criticism.

The development of public art in Malaysia has grown exponentially. This is based upon the increasing inclusion of public art in new cities development in the country. In the last decade, it has been 're-imaged' and employed to attract investment and act as a catalyst for economic rejuvenation. This has been demonstrated through the country's policy initiatives with the new urban landscape (the Federal Territory of Putrajaya for example) playing a crucial role in the transformation of Malaysian cities from an industrial to a service-based urban economy. These cities' new urban landscapes are not simply an expression of broader economic and socio-cultural changes, but it also plays an active role in shaping the external and internal image of the cities. City councils and the federal government have promoted contemporary public art that enhance the built and natural environments and adds value to the city's urban character. Public art is also used to promote the cultural identity of the city, through the use of a diverse range of art forms and design applications.

It is important for Malaysia to have a dedicated public art policy. This is because a good public art policy is a key strategy in the management of the city's collection of public art works, and the commissioning of new art works. This strategy also provides

a clear policy and guidelines for the commissioning, creation, placement, maintenance and promotion of the country's art work collection located in public places. The policy will guide and form the criteria for the assessment of all public art commissioned by or proposed to the council, as well as management and promotion of the existing collection.

Since the research began, there has been renewed interest with public art in Malaysia. When I was presenting a paper in Kuala Lumpur in May 2008, my effort in understanding the process for public art development and the importance of public art database has grabbed the attention of The Malaysian Research for Excellence, a government research organisation, who offered me a research grant to conduct a study on the use for public art in Malaysian township. I was also approached by students and artists who are attracted to pursue a research on public art. This positive development shows that public art are now recognise to have a bigger role within the visual art practice. This development ensures public art's future in Malaysia. It is also a clear indication public art in Malaysia have a strong following especially among visual artists that have been for many years using the public domain as canvas to express issues concerning the development of socio-political and cultural issues in the country.

This research is hoped to encourage other researchers, artists and public art enthusiasts to write and conduct studies on different areas in public art. This will allow for more comprehensive writings on public art which was previously limited. The need for reliable sources in public art is apparent This limitation was one of the many problems I faced when researching for sources on public art documentations in

Malaysia. The lack of strong and reliable documents or academic writings inhibits many researchers from developing a study on public art in Malaysia. It is hope that this thesis will be the catalyst in encouraging more researchers to explore different areas in this research.

Apart from academic writing on public art, other form of sources like visual database on public art will tremendously help shape a healthy development of public art in Malaysia. Like many Western countries where visual database is established a major form of source, a visual mapping of public art in Malaysia will provide artists, student and visitors to have better access and understanding of public. The coding and zoning of areas, samples for public art typology in the visual database also provide future researcher or enthusiasts with a clue with the use and purpose for the employment of public art.

The Malaysian Government have always shown interest in improving and supporting the development of high quality design in the built environment of Malaysian cities. This commitment is reflected in the Government effort in welcoming proposals for new artworks from private and the non-government sector and is in the process of developing information to assist in both the commissioning process and understanding what Government approvals may be required to proceed with a proposal. This enthusiastic effort the Malaysian government is only hampered by the lack of guidelines and policy in public art. This resulted in the confusion over the public art commissioning process and it is exacerbated by confusion with the jurisdiction of the practice. A dedicated public art policy should be drawn as soon as possible to help Malaysian government bodies with their attempts. This will also assist the practice

and organisations involved in public art in a more structured role, planning and commissioning of public art. The Malaysian Government with art organisation and other interest parties will have to sit down together and plan for a generic public art policy for as start and could later develop a more specific public art policy according to the needs of the local authorities within the thirteen states in Malaysia. In the Malaysian public art policy, it should highlight the benefits and rationale for providing public art such as wider economic benefits from the provision of cultural and artistic facilities. The employment of cultural strategies in urban regeneration will encourage private sectors to see the benefit for investing in public art and get a beneficial return for their investments. It is hope that the guidelines provided by the research could help in that process.

Finally as conclusion, this thesis contribution to new knowledge is providing public art in Malaysia with a definition that is uniquely reflective of its diverse background socially, culturally and politically. Public art in Malaysia is decorative but yet it provides rich examples of its cultural and artistic lineage. As identified in the Malaysian Laws and Policy on Art and Culture, 2007:

‘...to create works of arts that instil greater aesthetic values especially to the appreciation and preservation of arts, culture and heritage’  
(Laws and Policy on Art and Culture, 2007:10)

Even though five decades after independence and throughout its journey it has been inhibited by colonial influences, public art in Malaysia in a way has reverted to its cultural roots. Alongside the Malay and other minority ethnic culture, Islam has also helped create a distinctive art style that is uniquely Malaysian. In the search for the Malaysian identity, the concept of ‘adab’ (meaning manners which also include order,



gentle, balance and respect) which has been the core of the Malay culture is etched into the arts- has become the protocol for visual art development in the country. Public art adorning the streets and landscape in the Malaysian cities has created a modern yet a progressive art that respects the Southeast Asian cultural norm, the way of life of its people and at the same time positively assert concerns over contemporary issues domestically and internationally.

By providing a definition for public art, this thesis has also uncovered and provided a framework in which the public art practice works in Malaysia. Public art is employed to create an active response to the character and history of a particular culture and location, expressed through physical planning and cultural policy. It has become a currency for introducing Malaysia to the world, but most importantly it facilitates a greater understanding of cultural identities among Malaysians, creates a distinctive sense of place, and assists social and cultural development to improve the quality of life in the community.

Public art in Malaysia has a long way to go before it reaches the maturity achieved in the West. It is now prescribed as a remedy to social, cultural and political correctness without much engagement through public participation due to the production process and through bureaucratic pressures. Therefore how public art is installed, and (within these processes) participation is included, raises complex questions of the extent to which such processes are/should be democratic, together with issues in the relative roles of artists and communities. What is certain that these changes will give greater emphasis to the need of critical assessment of its basic premise and that participative art practice and policy can benefit the local social good.

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### **Interview Participant Group**

Interview Participant GAC3 16 July 2006 (Artist Group)

Interview Participant ACM2 18 July 2006 (Academician Group)

Interview Participant ACJ1 7 August 2006 (Academician Group)

Interview Participant POA1 14 August 2006 (Public Office Group)

Interview Participant ACR3 23 August 2006 (Academician Group)

Interview Participant ARCH1 24 August 2006 (Architect/Planner Group)

Interview Participant POLV2 30 August 2006 (Public Office Group)

Interview Participant GAT2 6 September 2006 (Artist Group)

Interview Participant GAR6 7 September 2006 (Artist Group)

Interview Participant ARCA2 8 September 2006 (Public Office Group)

Interview Participant GAJ7 10 September 2006 (Artist Group)

Interview Participant ACRM3 11 September 2006 (Architect/Planner Group)

Interview Participant GAV1 18 July 2007 (Artist Group)

Interview Participant ACM2 20 July 2007 (Academician Group)

Interview Participant GAP4 28 July 2007 (Artist Group)

Interview Participant GAN5 30 July 2007 (Artist group)

**APPENDIX 1: SAMPLES OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

**APPENDIX 2: THE MALAYSIAN DOCUMENTS**

**APPENDIX 3: GUIDELINES TO A PUBLIC ART POLICY**

**APPENDIX 4: PUTRAJAYA PUBLIC ART ELECTRONIC  
DATABASE CD**

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **EXAMPLES OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

## Interview Transcription

7<sup>th</sup> August 06: Academician ACJ1

**Q: Could you please share with me your background and experiences**

My name is Dr Jamalunlaili Abdullah. I am the coordinator of the Town and Regional Planning department for the faculty of Architecture, Town and Regional Planning, MARA University of Technology in Shah Alam. I joined UiTM after I've completed my PhD from Cornell University in 1997.

**Q. What is personal opinion on the urban/planning development of Putrajaya?**

I think it is a bold move. It is good that we can show that we are capable to create our own cities. It is an example where we started from the very scratch and then coming up with our own ideas of what we think a city should, because the town and cities traditionally were developed for economic reason. For example cities like Ipoh, Penang and Kuala Lumpur were developed because of the development of tin mining industries. Mc Gee was stating that Malaysia cities are basically theatre of capitalism. It is through the economic activities development over the years. There are some planning parts of the cities but it was always overshadowed by the economic consideration. Putrajaya is in away to show that we have the right and planning of Malaysia has been around in 400 years. The first city planner, Charles Reid was in Malaysia 90 years ago. But what you have in Putrajaya the number one man, the Prime Minister became the number one town planner and he has his own vision of what Malaysian city should be. So basically starting from scratch in less than 10 years we are able to come out with a city that we can be proud of especially in terms of design. In a way the physical element of that was really considered carefully. We have a nice big boulevard, landscape and with the design we all can be proud of.

**Q. As a professional in your field, were you ever invited or involved in any policy making?**



I was involved more of a preparation of the guidelines. I was the chief consultant for guidelines for accessibility for the disable in urban areas in Malaysia which have been adopted by the government. Other than that I was involved in other project, at the local level as well as in the committee that oversee the preparation of the national physical plan, giving professional advice. It was three years ago. The National Physical Plan that was adopted by the government is a strategy that states the broad class of strategies for physical development of Peninsular Malaysia until the year 2020. This mean the government can decide which areas to be developed and which areas that needs to be preserved. It is used as a guideline for any planning at present, it has been adopted but it has not been gazetted yet. But whenever the consultant or government agencies when we do the state structure plan, or the local issue plan, or the special area plan, they need to refer to the National Physical Plan. It is a kind of an umbrella plan for the development of Peninsular Malaysia.

**Q. Do you know which agencies are responsible in archiving and documenting urban planning, city and township and related to public art policy?**

I don't think I know any. It is usually under the jurisdiction of the local authority. For example in Sepang Jaya, there were controversies over the millennium park. It costs millions of ringgit but was placed in an inappropriate location. Another example is in Sungai Petani (North of Malaysia), where the town have too many public arts in the form of clock tower and all of them are not working. Before there was also public art in the form of palm tree with lightings, it look nice at night but it was an eye sore during the day and after a while they all broke down and wasted a lot of public fund. So we do not have any specific agency that collects and documents the public artwork or its policy. It is all up to the discretion of the local authorities. So if the local authorities want to put public art in the form of clock tower like in Sungai Petani, then they will put it there. But we do not have any say in what they can or cannot put in the city. We don't have guidelines on public art per say. They (Town and Regional Planning office) have guidelines on the landscape and the façade of the building, but for public art they do not have any policy. It is up to the whims and fancies of the local authority. Sometimes it also depends on the

entrepreneurs or private contributors who will submit to the local authority to have the public artwork installed. The local authority does have a very small budget for public artwork. Public art is usually put under an infrastructure budget so they can use some of these funding for the public arts.

**Q. What is your opinion on the importance of Public art in Putrajaya?**

Putrajaya is basically the new administrative capital. Foreign tourists and dignitaries and even the local people will come and visit and appreciate the city. So the use of public art in Putrajaya is important to show the city is beautiful. Because if you look at the history of planning in 1910 to 1920's we had the '**city beautiful movement**', where it was first imported from Chicago, and in Malaysia, it was adapted in areas like Masjid Jamek (located in Kuala Lumpur city center), Masjid Ubudiah (located in the northern state of Kedah) and Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad (located in Kuala Lumpur city center) which were build during that period. But when we have the economic boom, we started moving out of the city beautiful movement and into the '**city efficient movement**'; where we started building highways and flyovers. We want the city to be more efficient and carry as much traffic as possible. So we forget about the city being beautiful and other aesthetic elements. So with the inception of Putrajaya, the government is trying to have the same efficiency element by building nice infrastructures, and at the same time incorporating the aesthetic element as well.

When you ask the public, people would say that that Putrajaya has a lot more aesthetic quality than any previously designed township in Malaysia and this is good. You can see nicely design architecture, and the use of artistically styled street furniture which different precincts/ locations adapted different art style. Some uses modern design whilst some adapt to a more traditional design. The usage street furniture as public art has enhanced the beauty of Putrajaya.

This is important when you want the city to be beautiful. Beautiful does not only mean it is because of the buildings, but also to include the use street furniture and landscape, and Putrajaya has successfully used and blend these entire elements very well.

**Q. Looking at present public artwork in Malaysia Township, does Malaysia have a “Malaysian identity” in its visual art form?**

I think we do. The question is how effective it is and what is the Malaysian identity. One thing if it is practical, people will pay attention to it. One example is GUTHRIE new development of the ‘Night Alam’. It uses the concept of a ‘kampung style’ where they connect one cluster of houses to another cluster of houses by using the pathway or walkway that we often do see in ‘kampung’ (rural village) area. That is one way of doing and creating that Malaysian identity. So in planning, we try to create that kampong element in its design. In term traditional element, in term of the design of the houses, I do not know whether it has been effective. One thing in Putrajaya, what they do is that, they would not allow houses to have a fence. This will create the feeling of being in a ‘kampung’ environment. So in a way it will provide interaction between the neighbours. Then there is a concerning issue of security as well. So in certain area some of the visual element might work whereas in others it does not. Another is in Putrajaya; it is very true in terms of the economic cost. If one of the artistically designed streets light is broken then it will be very difficult for them (the local authority) to create a replacement.

**Q. Based upon your personal opinion, what is Public Art in Malaysia?**

I see a lot of public art in the United States and in the European cities. But in Malaysia, somehow public art has not been thought of carefully. Eventhough I am in the planning profession, when we do the planning of the cities, we only ended concentrating on the buildings, the street planning and the landscape. But in terms of the art it is an after thought. So when a development is completed nobody will think about public art until someone proposes or a private owner wanted to have public sculpture and ask the local

authority for approval. If they (local authority) like it will go as plan otherwise the idea will be scrapped. At the end of the day, the public art is represented in the form of the fake palm tree which is bad in taste.

**Q. What do you think is the controlling factors that depict the style of public artwork in Malaysia?**

I believe it is because of religion and it plays a big role in the decision making especially of the local authority when they want to put the public art. Firstly because they use the public's money, where majority of the public is Malay Muslim and they are accountable when using these funding. Those who make the decision are also mostly Malay Muslim and they represent the political party UMNO (United Malay National Organisation). So UMNO has to be careful. If they do something, offending the majority Malay Muslim, then the opposition party could use it as a political weapon to accuse them of being an un-Islamic. So I think that is one reason.

Even if you look at private development of Sunway city, when they constructed the 'Sunway Pyramid Sphinx' and wanted to include an image of a Pharaoh head, and as the developer is Chinese; they do not have any problem with the original ideas. But the local authority was afraid it will draw heavy criticism from the local public hence the final design is changed into using a face of a lion head instead. Even using the image of a lion's head, some people still accused and turn their anger toward the local authority for approving the project. So even that is a problem.

If you want your artwork to be publicly displayed to the public and the idea accepted by the local authority, artists, architect and designers have to conform to whims and fancies of the people and the Islamic sentiment. If you are creating the artwork for individual or private collection and placed inside a house then you have more leeway.

**Q. In the United Kingdom, 'Per cent for art' policy is usually used to ensure the inclusion of public artwork in the new development/ regeneration of a city. Do we have similar mechanism in Malaysia?**

We do not have a specific mechanism for public art in Malaysian township or new cities. I think our public art in Malaysia tend to be under the umbrella of the Ministry of Art and Culture, and they do have the budget for the inclusion of artwork in public spaces. Other than that I have not heard such mechanism. The one I know in Malaysia is that when corporation wants to support the arts, they do not go to speak to the local authority. Instead they will engage the help of the National Art gallery for example. They would provide fund for these organisation to acquire artwork form local artists and have exhibition. But not like a proper mechanism used to include public art in new development as we see in the western countries. So I haven't seen in our local development of township or cities where public art is considered important. Usually it is privately funded. Even so it will not include in the development of the city.

**Q. Why do you think there are limited numbers of public art in Putrajaya?**

For one thing, we do not have the proper legislation. The two legislations that everybody uses in Malaysia are, for every new development of a new township, 30% of the development must be allocated for low cost residential and 10% for open space. Basically the developer will provide the 10% open space area without any inclusion of public artwork because they were not ask to and it was never mentioned in any of the legislation. If they do want to include the public artwork, it will be under their own initiative.

Eventhough there are very few public artworks in Putrajaya as compared to the size of its development, Putrajaya is probably one of the new city that give more emphasis towards public art. But still it is not as many as one would like it to have. For one thing there is no specific law for the developers to include public artwork. Secondly, developers would not want to spend money for something that is not required of them. It is not going to provide



any economic return to them. Thirdly, are our values and mentalities. To us (Malaysian) if you want to beautify the city, you turn your focus towards landscape. Probably it is also because of the Malay mentality. In the rural village area where the Malays are mostly from, in the public spaces that they have, they would be any public artwork as we understand it. At most there will be an arch to indicate the entrance of the village. So when one put a public art even in those area developed by the government for tourist attraction, one example in Kuala Lumpur 'Petaling Street' (China Town) or 'Masjid India', the only so called close interpretation of public art would be the significantly land marked arches. It is not our mentality that in urban areas we should have public art for the people. Unlike the western mentality, to us the art is still only within the purview of your own private compound. When the art is out there, it is depicted or represented in the form of nature elements like the trees and the landscape. So maybe the problem is the interpretation of the public art itself. So we have less public art now than before.

Sculpture art is not in the vocabulary of the local planners in Malaysia. Public art was never an emphasis. It is only about façade and architecture, about the height of the building and maybe the style of architecture and the built environment. So because of these reasons that is why Putrajaya where the planning has been properly thought of, public art was never emphasise as an important part in its planning. Those site where you see some public art, sometimes more likely than not are not meant for public art. It was never consciously to have a public art.

We (Malaysian) are also thinking more about the practicality of such construction (public artwork). For example the water feature in KLCC- the water fountain, it was built for recreational and entertainment and by accident it created a public art piece. Probably, we (Malaysian) think that we are not as well established and rich as compared to the western countries, so why waste good money on public art that people do not understand. If you want to put something that can be considered public art, it has to have other practical purpose or usage too. Like the wading pool with the whale sculpture. The pool can be enjoyed by the kids and the sculpture by the rest of the public. So is a playground, you

can have public sculpture that probably could be used by the families who is using the park. Otherwise it will be considered as a waste of the taxpayer money.

If you ask the private developer to include public art in their development, they would question how this contribution gives the monetary or economic return to them. Because it was never in our culture to have public art.

## **Interview Transcription**

**23<sup>rd</sup> August 06:     Public Art Artist/ Academician ACR3**

**Q: Could you please share with me your background and experiences**

Thank you for coming. My name is Ramlan Abdullah. I am a lecturer with UiTM (MARA University of Technology) Shah Alam, in the department of fine art and have been teaching for about 15 years in UiTM and now I am on leave, pursuing my PhD, which half way through my research. I have this studio for the last 10 years, where I have been working and producing a lot of public sculpture in the country and also abroad. I have work abroad, in Japan, the Philippines, Australia and in Klang Valley and one indoor work in Putrajaya. I was trained in ITM and graduated in 1982 and work as National Museum as an assistant curator for about 4 years. Then I went abroad to America and get my master's from Pratt Institute New York. Since then I have been teaching and last year I was offered the opportunity to pursue my PhD. So I have completed about a year and a half of work for my PhD.

**Q. What is your personal experiences in the development visual art / practices in Malaysia?**

Development is quite good actually in the terms of public sculpture itself. And also public art itself. The only problem is our bureaucracy and our leadership in the country. A lot of development I feel personally, is that our leader is not very well verse or not very aware of the importance of public art and public sculpture. That is the only problem that I think. It is the about art education from the leadership of the country. Then I think the public will have the accessibility in terms of knowing what are public sculpture, public art and art as a whole. That is my personal experience, confronting the leaders who know a little bit of art but not enough to understand the importance and the significance of art in supporting the development of art as a whole. Then it will go down to the masses. A lot of the masses are being educated in art. I think we have enough people to support art in the country. The corporate, the professionals, the architect and things like that. But

then when it comes to endorsement, goes back to the leader. When the leader does not have the experience and knowledge of art, it becomes diluted. The whole situation. It's watered down. This is what we receive from the public. What get now in terms of the manifestation of the leadership, in terms of their concern in their knowledge of arts. I mean when we talk about knowledge, we are talking about the importance of art. How, why, what are the art that will be contributed towards the public. Towards the development of ? Like a lot of Malaysian are demanding how to be excellent in their life. Excellence in whatever they are doing. They talk about the quality of life, the quality of their job, their family. They should also embody this kind of knowledge as part and parcel of the whole development when art embody into that situation it will solve a lot ?. I think that is Malaysian now. They are likely to talk about this. I mean as I look at it, it is a shame. People are not fully supporting or materialising the art. It's all word with few actions. This my personal experience throughout 14 years of my practice in public art.

**Q. What is your personal opinion on the agenda behind the commissioning of public sculpture?**

I think is very political. As far as the money concern, the budgeting of the whole idea goes back to the people who are spending the money. Ranging from the private corporation to the government office, all these people are the decision maker. Whether there are money to be spent and how to raise money for such project. In a way they dictate the whole situation (commissioning, type of work, location) and always restricting artist from fully experimenting and producing their idea. They must have been countless of public art design proposal presented. But because these people (private corporations, public organisation and government office) think they have the power to decide and choose, it finally boils down to what they want and the artist were ask to compromise on their work. This is standard practice in Malaysia. This is the way that we do things but like I said when we understand art more than we would not dictate what can or cannot be produce. I always give an example like in those days when pre historic people start drawing paintings on the cave wall, they did because they need to see and record the idea and their imagination they have on the event that took place. So allowing the artist

freedom to paint on the wall like a couple of thousands of years ago, it is the same situation like now but again because of the definite leader is there, not like those day, which everybody was the leader or no one is, so it was not rigid like now. So this the situation at the moment where the development is being restrictively controlled.

**Q. When commissioned with public art work, do you include/ take the public ideas to be incorporated as a part your work?**

I do not know with other artists, but when ever I am commissioned, I get the public involvement. Through out many experiences I realised that the work is not for me but it is produced for the public. So the response and the reaction from the public are very important. So I conducted a few very simple survey and interview whoever who are concern/ affected by the project and knowing their reaction. Sometimes they (the public) even proposed and suggest certain things that I incorporated in my work. For example in Johor (Southern most state in the Peninsular Malaysia) where I have one of my public artwork, which is located very close to the causeway (to Singapore). I recorded my findings through informal conversation. I visited the location a few times and talk to people on the street and the owner of several stall and shops surrounding the location. I talked to and listen to what they have to say and how this work will affect their lives. I think it is important to do this. Of course I couldn't talk to everyone. I randomly pick my potential audience and had an informal conversation. It's not like conducting a specific survey with sets of questionnaires.

I did meet a few taxi drivers, businessman who frequently passes through the area. In fact those old timers who have been there for a long time (for the last 50 years). They give feedback to the work I was working on. To them (the old timer), they see it as a new development, something that is significant to the new development. They understand these artwork are not for them to utilise but rather than to appreciate the work on spiritually level as supposed to a bus stop or a water fountain. They know it s the benefit of the younger generation. They believe that this needed to put the place in the map hence being visited and appreciated by the younger generations. So that is what I usually discover. If you just do the design solely based on the drawing board you will not



discover the significant impact of your work. So I do some positioning, I called that positioning. Sometimes I will visit the place during the night time and stay at the location. I watch and observed the activities around the location rather than be satisfied by taking photograph of the site. I develop a lot interaction with the local public.

I cannot speak for the other artists. I seldom have friends. In Malaysia, the only people that I am close to is two of my professors and they have been commissioned with several public sculpture, although not as much as me. They did take similar route (gauging the public responses before and during the commission). I remember one of my professors doing one of the projects in Kuala Lumpur, that is all that I can recall. I believe other artists do not have the consciousness. There are not many public sculptors in the country that actively produced (by commission) public sculpture. What we have a lot of installation work that seem to be the popular route to take by the artists in the country. Because public sculpture sometimes you have to be engaged with certain corporate body and can be quite restrictive. Maybe this is why most artists seem to avoid these projects and this is why I think it doesn't seem to take off very well.

**Q. Taking from the examples of your work in Putrajaya, what was the inspiration behind the work?**

That one is a very fast job. I was called in. I was actually doing something else for them (Putrajaya Holding – principal developer of Putrajaya), I was heading and coordinating a painting project to be presented as a gift to the previous prime minister (Tun Dr Mahathir Mohammed). So the thought at first they wanted to 'document' the whole of Putrajaya in the form of series of paintings. So I was the one who was given the mandate to oversee and coordinate the project. We produced 30 paintings. At the same time they (Putrajaya Holdings), were about to launch the Palace of Justice (main court house building). So they wanted a sculpture. I work on to scale model and did very little field research in the form of site visits and conducted a background research on the core function of the Palace of Justice. I used the internet to search on famous quotes used by famous local heroes on justice and I went ahead with the sculpture. I was inspired also by my previous

work. I always used granite and marble. I was very interested in using those materials based on the stone workshop experienced from the Philippines. I think it is the time to produce one more, a small indoor sculpture. The thing is, that they wanted to launch desperately as they think this the right time to launch the Palace of Justice. In order for the launch to be successful, they need something tangible. So I was telling them that I couldn't create, design and build a big sculpture due to the time constraints. They only gave me one month's notice to meet the dateline. Without a any concept to work on, they ask me to meet the dateline. So I went back and within two weeks I came out and presented the concept, the next ten days for the construction. It was a rushed job. I don't think they wanted a large sculpture. So I proposed them the existing size, because it will be easier to construct. They discussion was between me and the executive officer of Putrajaya holding, so it was very quick for us to reach to the final decision and got the approval to go ahead. Of course I wasn't told that the sculpture would be position the present location (based on the launching location). So the sculpture wasn't site specific. When I was commissioned, they did take me to the proposed location. If I knew it from the beginning, I would have design a hanging piece. Something lighter and communicate with the space. I wasn't given the luxury. Then again this is how we do thing in Malaysia. No proper planning, always informal.

**Q. Could you please explain the process of commissioning?**

The process is very simple. First I will submit my credentials. This can come in many forms. Sometimes I will submit cd's containing my work and sometimes I will compile the work using Microsoft PowerPoint. I always present my work verbally and visually. First I will show them my CV and the work that I have done. Then they will give a brief. It could be an extensive and detail project brief, others are verbal briefing. So I will take note and go back and start sketching my ideas. The most important thing is to know the clients background and their core business/interest. Besides that what they want especially what the man on the top (executive directors etc). I always identified these people during the presentation and process. It is very important that you know what they want.

In the first presentation I always make sure that I have the drawing and also a scale model so that they can see the three dimensional value of the work. Sometimes drawing alone is not enough because they cannot imagine by just looking at the drawing alone. Some people cannot visualise and get the idea. That is why those days, artist impression is very important. So I do a lot of adobe Photoshop artist impression. But recently I prefer to work with scale model of the concept. So I will submit sets of drawing and models to panels and they in return find it easy to understand and pleasing to look at. Normally after you presented the proposal, you will be asked to do some amendments and finally resubmit again for the second appraisal. Finally if they are happy with the idea, they will commission me the project and give me a down payment deposit to start with the project. I will usually request in my invoice that I need at least 20 to 30 percent deposits to start off the project. So far this has been a good practice. Once I started the project, I will engage the help of artist/art apprentice based on project basis, in term of fabrication and construction. Final stage will be to install the sculpture. Putrajaya sculpture is a small and simple project, so I only use two helpers and spent 10 days to complete the work.

**Q. Who are the people/ panel of people who makes the decision in the commissioning of a project?**

It depends on the project and who is paying for the commissioning. Sometimes it is the chairman of the organisation or corporation. Sometimes it is the board of directors. There are also resident architects and engineers and a few people from the art department, if they have one. I usually engage with the corporate department and more likely than not they have their own designers. We communicate quite well with them.

**Q. How about the Ministry of Heritage Culture and Art. Are they involved in the decision making too?**

So far, I have never had the opportunity to work with them, who they are and as far as I am know, the National Art Gallery is under their umbrella. They will appoint people from the National Art Gallery, like the director general to oversee any similar kind of project. I have been working with the National Art gallery and their appointed officers (in the panel). They are there to support with the project without any direct involvement.

**Q. What is your opinion on the development of public art style in the Federal territory of Putrajaya?**

That is a good question in terms of the development of public sculpture. I always see this as giant replicas. Giant replicas sculptures are created by people, who are without the knowledge in design. Who does not know the value of conceptual idea. Who doesn't now how see art in many different perspectives and also seeing it as an easy solution to create a large scale object. That is what giant replica is all about and also the people who are involved in creating it are not that particular and not a true enthusiast in looking at new things and the development of new environments. That is what I feel. To me it is not healthy in term of intellectual development, in term of also the development of public art. These giant replicas do not represent anything significant. It might be nice to look at for a while. This will not reflect our nation knowledge and experience. Instead we get people retaliate by critising the awkwardness of these so called sculptures and at some point it became a laughing stock. The public will joke about it and lost its intellectual discourse and potential that could evoke critical thinking and appreciation of the artwork.

**Q. Malaysia is a modern country and is susceptible to new ideas and is open to new design and art style. What do you think is the controlling factors that depict the style of public artwork in Malaysia?**

I think with Malaysia, a lot of the sculptors which are mostly Malays were trained not in paintings but sculpture. When it comes to the sculpture, the Malays who are Muslims intend to move away from the western platform of visualising sculptures, slowly from their (western) syllabus in the 60's and early 70's to early 80's. Then we tend to study figurative as a subject matter in sculptor. We do figure modelling, full figure then it's the modern sculpture. A much bigger influence of Islam in our lives since the collapse of modern Iran civilisation plays an important role. That was the nurturing of Islamic influence in the art in Malaysia which was taken place in the early 80's. We start to look into these matters seriously. We started asking who we are and our responsibilities as a

Muslim. Afterward we see the changes with the syllabus in the art school. In UiTM (MARA University of Technology) for example, an institution that offers a major in sculpture. Other university was offering a minor or a subject in sculpture, not a major like what UiTM was offering. So because there are so few school of art in Malaysia that offers sculpture as a major, the importance of development of public sculpture in the Malaysian takes a secondary role. A lot us (from school of arts) started to look for alternative approaches to the existing western approaches to public sculpture. We realised that the approaches to public sculpture is not relevant and suitable to an Islamic country anymore. We look and turn to nature. There was an issues of right and wrong and we decided we should find alternative. There is where geometric and organic form developed in public sculptures in Malaysia. It's a new style of working for fine art. In UiTM, we adapted the idea and syllabus from the United Kingdom and United States but we gave it an Islamic and Malaysian twist.

That is why in the late 60's to throughout the 70's we use a lot of figurative paintings and sculptures. It was in the mid 80's we start to change as we saw that geometrical form and nature form can be studied. An in depth study to reveal its secret. It was the renaissance that uses 'man-centric' was the issue. When we talk about our religion (Islam) we have to dissuade our focus in any form of our activities towards the manifestation of the one god and in which I believe, renaissance 'man-centric' contradict this. The concentration of art form should not only glorify the study of human figure but instead to look at the manifestation of greatness of god by looking at the secret of nature as evidence. As we go long we get more literature, books and information translated and transmitted. If you look at the development now, not many people in Malaysia would like to do figurative sculpture anymore. We are now trying to unlock the secret that nature and other forms created by god have to offer. That is the most important thing. I guess it affected the Malays artist more as supposed to the artist community in general. I guess these artists (who share the Islamic approach as opposed to using figure as object) find this fresh approach is more interesting and enriching as they can experiment with different subject matter as compared to depend on one subject matter (figurative).



So that is what I discovered throughout my experience practising public sculpture. The work becomes more interesting because of the alternative.

**Q. Do we have a standardised public art policy used as guidelines in Malaysia?**

What I can recall that National Art Gallery, will always inform us a certain guidelines. As in the art depiction case, they (National Art Gallery) will not accept any nudity in paintings or sculpture, figurative or otherwise. That's the only instruction that I have heard. Maybe they have it in the written form (policy documents). That one main restriction in Malaysia (and most artists will know this) is to avoid eroticism in any form of artwork. That's only constraint that I know of. National Art Gallery is a centre in this country that has big influences to many artists. They are the one who will have the final say or develop the art development.

**Q. As a professional in your field, were you ever invited/ involved in the policy making?**

Not recently but when I just came back from the United States, I was called to participate in with a panel of artists and officials organised by then the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. They called me to sit in a discussion group to discuss about art policy. But since then nothing happen. I even produced a paper about the ways of commissioning, approaching (maintenance) and development public sculpture in the city. It is called the City sculpture of Kuala Lumpur. I submitted to the Ministry, since then nothing physically happen. That was the almost the norm, where everyone is waiting for someone with authority to take the first step and make the first move. That was the first and the last time I sit as an advisory panel. Other than I am usually called to jury and judge competition. So there some initiatives towards a discussion for a policy but that it stays that way.

**Q. In the United Kingdom, 'Per cent for art' policy is usually used to ensure the inclusion of public artwork in the new development/ regeneration of a city. Do we have similar mechanism in Malaysia?**

When I was in UiTM in 1978, I have heard of what was called the two percent law. They called two percent law. That means every building and infrastructure built in environment the developer or owner must allocate two percent for art for that particular area. That is what I have heard. There was a symposium and meeting by the architect and urban planners. They decided to make the policy. But there are no words afterwards whether they implemented it. If you check with PAM (Malaysian Association of Architects), maybe they have the documents in their archive; and also with the National Art Gallery. We talked about the two percent law since 30 years ago. It is important to develop this policy as the city develops and we need direction. They tagged and call Kuala Lumpur as the 'Garden City'. It is a concept of the garden in the city. So what happen to the art when you talk about garden? They are as much a part of each other. What about hardscape and softscape when you talk about landscape? I think artist and especially sculptor must be apart of these development. When we look at Putrajaya, I did not hear anything about developing art for the public. But somehow they have developed a few public artworks. But again what are their directions and with what policy do they adapt or use, to direct and govern these developments.

There is no clear cut documentation or guidelines as far as professional artist is concern. Because without the guidelines, there are questions on the validity of the artwork, what is the concept, why the artwork was chosen and what does it mean? But as you see Putrajaya developed because of cronyism, where the commissioning and work were done within the circle, it was not transparent. I say this because professional artists like us is always wondering, and some of us weren't even invited or even aware of the art development because it wasn't publicised, and it was not properly gazetted. This is a new development where there are plenty of public location/sites. They are importing the competition to come in (architecture firms/landscape architects). That is why you see not many people who go to visit Putrajaya, because they simply do not understand

Putrajaya's development idea. Why do we push this as an idea? We need to reflect and look at the planning before developing Putrajaya.

Like my work in Putrajaya. Nobody knows about my work. It is hard to say it is a public artwork. It is located in the court house building, so you only get those people who have to attend court hearings, possible criminals and their families to look at the work. How about the general public? There is nothing written about the work, its significant value besides during the launch of the court house building, I was highlighted as an important artist but not much about my work.

**Q. Why is water element a prominent feature on public sculptures in Malaysia?**

I have only one work (public sculpture) that uses water element as a feature. I need a reflective surface for my sculpture. The initial proposal was to not to use water but the board of directors from the National Art Gallery like the idea of incorporating water as part of the sculpture. Many people in Malaysia have this fascination with water; because I guess water has its own quality. Malaysia being a tropical country with its hot and humid temperature, the need for water is incredible. I see a lot of people love water element and features in almost everything. But I discovered that using water as a concept or as part of a design has not been utilised and used in the correct context. They just use water as a secondary element in the design for example sprouting water fountain, and so forth. If you go to Kuching (Sarawak, East Malaysia) water front, you will see one of my works. It is the first in Malaysia at that time using musical sound synchronised with the water jetted out to the air. It was launched in 1994. The idea was then being used in other parts of Malaysia, for example at the Mines Recreational Park in Kuala Lumpur. But it was not a permanent artwork like the one in Kuching water front. Maybe the idea was picked up by the architect that architect in Putrajaya.

**Q. Who does the public sculpture work commissioned to and how does the process of commissioning work?**

Usually if you talk about this, the architect will get the first bite at this. Because I think the architect is greedy. There are two things. They (the architects, the urban planners) want to do everything. Secondly, maybe they do not know or appreciate the role of other team players like sculptors; artist and even poets in any development project. So this is the thing that is lacking until today. When there is a mega project, or a new development of the city and likewise, the official forget that there should be artist, sculptors and designer invited as part as the team working alongside the architects and urban planners and engineers. Because at the end of each project you will need the creative team members to create campaign, advertising, to promote and launch the completed project. As normal practice in Malaysia, only when the project has been completed will the developer look for the creative people. When it comes to fitting the artistic work like sculpture, they will realise soon after the many arising problems. Then only will they start looking for and try appointing the artist; where as they should have done it from the very beginning. The result is sometimes catastrophic.

For example if we look at the Putrajaya Holding buildings. The architect who designs the building made an attempt to produce a public sculpture (geometrical flower/ arabis) fail at choosing the right finishing material for the sculpture. They know how to work the construction but made an uninformed choice with the finishing. They know about the material and its physical form but they do not have the understanding of the materials character. It is an attempt to harmonise and extend the sculpture and reflect it to the building but it was unsuccessful. But as sculptors and artist we understand the material character only too well. Art can complement or contradict the built environment.

Another example at the same building is the cut glass. It was very rigid and very hard. No doubt they are trying to harmonise the build environment but art can also use these element to create and interesting contrast without spoiling its value and at the very same time get whatever message across.

**Q. In your opinion, what could be done to strengthen the development of public art in Malaysia?**

I think we have to do, and have to have a lot of dialogues between the officials, organisations and the artists. I hardly hear any discourse on art recently ever since the new millennium which has been six years already. I have never seen or hear any big discussion on art in the built environment. I think this is very important. The ministry is always talking about national heritage. I think we should also talk about the future of art. Because the future of heritage is art. So don't talk only about the past. That is the past heritage but also talk about the future heritage. The future heritage has to be promoted now. It is within their responsibility to protect and preserve the art form. So I think we need to sit down to discuss and have discourse on art. We also have to find new talent, supporting their art, putting it on the center stage and promoting in schools. But bear in mind I am not talking about academia here because we have other ministry that is concern with the curriculum. Commission more intellectual base public art or build a park specifically for public art, where people can benefit. It is better than do build more business centres. I think that is the critical issues and give the right input that will benefit all of us.



## Interview Transcription

30<sup>th</sup> August 06:

	<b>DewanBandaraya Kuala Lumpur ( Municipal for Kuala Lumpur), Department of Landscape and Planning</b>	
<b>(POLM2)</b>	Landscape Architect	(Part. A)
<b>(POLV2)</b>	Landscape Architect	(Part. B)
<b>(POLP2)</b>	Landscape Architect	(Observer)

**Q. To help document this interview, could you please share with me your background and experiences?**

**(Part. A)** My name is POLM2. Bekerja sebagai akitek lanskap di jabatan Senitaman Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur. Sebelum menjadi seorang lanskap arkitek, saya pernah belajar di bidang arkitektur dari UTM (Malaysian Univerity of Technology, Johor) sampai ke peringkat diploma. Kemudian saya menyambung pula dalam bidang lanskap di UiTM (MARA University of Technology, Shah Alam).

**(Part. B)** Myself, my name is POLV2. I am also a landscape architect. Been with this department for a very long time I think it's about 30 year's service with the department. We do planning and project implementation as well as maintenance of landscape for the whole of Kuala Lumpur. For myself, I have been around for a long time. I have been in all dimensions of experiences with the city hall. Especially with the landscape sector. Got some initial basic training in Singapore on horticulture and landscape design. And then pursued, further my studies to the UK to do my degree, and my postgraduate and my Master's in urban design. That is my educational background. But other than that I have been on the job, kind of thing. Working and studying and improving yourself and literally hands on experience.

**Q. What is your role in the department of landscape with the city hall?**

**(Part. A)** Kita biasanya buat kerja-kerja keseluruhan, kerja-kerja design, planning, documentations, detailing, monitoring of projects, everything. We do everything. Dari kerja penyelenggaraan dan up grading.

**Q. What kind of personal experiences have you had in the development of visual art in Malaysia? Do you also have any involvement with the development of public art in Putrajaya?**

**(Part. B)** Well if you ask me, Putrajaya is beyond our boundary. We work only within the Kuala Lumpur confinement area. But involvement (visual art), memang Dewan Bandaraya, we have on our own design and build, we are also involve in coordinating some work for Balai Senilukis (National Art Gallery) and some by the private sector. So we have collaboration. Ada involvement. Generally pun memang ada. Dekat 'Labu Sayong'. That is one that was inspired by us, the City Hall and built by us within the city hall builders. "Periuk Kera", that's another public sculpture, inspired, design and built by Bandaraya. You see another in Dayabumi, 'Arca Budaya' (Cultural Sculpture) : some laying-layang (Malay Traditional Kite), that was also done by us. And UMBC is by private sector. Private sector contribution to KL. Done by a private bank sector. So kita, we were in the building team and so we coordinate with them. Yang "Laman Asean" ni is also done by a private government agency, there was a conference in the KL, sempena conference itu, all the asean cities were asked to contribute a memorial thing of art work (public sculpture).

**Q. What kind of collaboration did the City Hall have with the National Art Gallery?**

**(Part. B)** Kerjasama. Actually masa kita melibatkan diri dengan projek-projek yang melibatkan seni , atau dengan Balai Seni Lukis ataupun dengan kita ada dekat Hitachi 'Arca Wardah' but it is no more there, it has been moved to theugu. That was actually inspired by the National Day. Done by a competition via the higher learning institution. For the contribution to the city of Kuala Lumpur. So the winner had to build it. It was a symbol of integration and national pride.

**(Observer)** Normally kita sediakan site, and then the maintenance will be by us (City Hall)

**(Part. B)** Normally the artist does everything; we actually provide them with technical assistance dari pemilihan kawasan, tapak, then if it sit in the building, we make sure that is safe for the public to use, so kita authority have to control the electrical and water supply. As for the Balai Senilukis ni we were involved as a technical committee with them. Trying to cite them where the sculpture should be position. But the art piece itself is of course done by the artist and the art association itself. Tu dia yang buat.

**Q. So who decides the type of public art suitable in public spaces?**

**(Part. B)** I think we don't decide on what form or what design the come out with. Balai Senilukis I think, have the experts there to decide what is right or tema apa atau konsep yang dibuat. Cuma kita dari segi kesesuaian tapak dimana nak letak benda tu dan safe for public to access to it. And then some of the public arts can be very fragile and it can fall off, you see. In the studio its good but not in the public outdoor use. So we have to make sure that the material used is stable and those things.

**Q. Does the City Hall consult any artist, art bodies or the National Art Gallery before proceeding with public art project initiated, design and build by the City Hall?**

**(Part. B)** No. I think being a landscape architect; we believe that we are also artist. We are involved in art and our work is always in .an art form of work. So we have the liberty to come out in any design. And the sculptural element is only a focal bid into a small mini garden. If you look at the "Labu Sayong", the landscape is big around the little sculpture. So it is not just the sculpture. Look, probably Balai Senilukis will come out with the sculpture. But they have to fit with the environment. Environment design comes from the landscape architect. So there is actually synergy between the environment and the sculpture as well. So we normally do not refer to the National Art Gallery. We don't practice this. Kalau Pn. Puteri come out with the sculpture its from her own provision?

**(Observer)** But the decision will be from the top management. But the final decision will be from DBKL

**(Part. B)** The mayor or the minister. They have to decide. We are also sensitive to local critics and things for example we try not to do any figurative sculpture because in Islamic state we don't want to get into sensitive issues. So you don't see figurative sculptures. These are simple policies which we adhere to.

**Q. Are there written policies on issues related to the depiction of public sculpture/public artwork?**

**(Part. B)** No there is no written policy. That is an observation, understanding and sensitivity to it.

**Q. Malaysia is a modern country and is susceptible to new ideas and is open to new design and art style. What do you think is the controlling factors that depict the style of public artwork in Malaysia?**

**(Part. B)** Of course the other concern is, being a public object it should not offend anybody for that matter. It can be gender issues of male or female, it could be to offensive dari segi dia punya bentuk, you know. We don't have sculpture like the one in Paris. Things that really offend people off (nudity, etc). But to them probably it might be suitable. But being a traditional Asian culture, I think we are very cautious and concern with object like that. That is why we go for either it is cultural object given an abstract look to it and make it into another object or a replica, macam 'Keris' (Malay dagger). We use to have some keris around in six or seven spot in KL for the Commonwealth games. We had a keris up side down into the ground. That was not design by us. Somebody brought it into the city and we just gave them a focal point to put the 'Keris' there. 'Keris' is also a culture and Malaysian art object, which we replicate and use it. "Periuk Kera" is also replica in nature form replicated times by scale. "Labu Sayong" also is a cultural element. And we have 5 or 6 to be done, we don't do it. We stop. We are supposed to do the Sarawak shield. But we didn't follow through.

**(Observer)** Our sculpture is more like a focal point. Not just abstract arts to be appreciated

**Q. What is the design concept for public sculpture designed and built by the City Hall ?**

**(Part. A)** Kalau kita bandingkan antara Malaysian dengan western countries, western countries dia buat arca ni biasanya, artis yang buat. So artist buat its design like Henry Moore, so tapi di Malaysia ni yang betul-betul berkepakaran sebagai sculptor tak ramai saya rasa. Dan untuk memahami sesuatu artwork tu tak berapa tinggi. Kalau kita buat macam, 'labu sayung' dalam bentuk replika, atau keris atau motif yang berteraskan etnik traditional maka ianya lebih mudah di fahami

**(Part. B)** Of course we thought about 5 year to 10 years ago to work with Balai Senilukis because we have quite number of opportunity talking to the ex director Datuk Syed Ahmad Jamal. So we had some opportunities talking to him, and he was very keen in bringing forward; because his art forms are all kept indoor, small scale and then they are good for indoor use but actually there is a lot of message that can be send out to the public. So we as landscape architect want it to be outdoor. We wanted to incorporate that and work with the artist and come out with bigger scale objects and more interactive and put in water features and use hardy materials for outdoor use but it did not go along because the two fraternities never agree about a lot of things. Professional there is not corporation between the two.

**Q. Why is it that most public sculpture in the Federal Territory Kuala Lumpur has water features?**

**(Observer)** We want the public sculpture to be more interactive with people. Because people like water and water are more attractive and more effective where you can touch and you can experience and feel the coolness of the water. It is more functional.

**(Part. A)** Satu lagi, sound of the water can camouflage the noises from the traffic and these create the calm atmosphere.

**(Part. B)** The other thing is we went through a very dry draught season. So the government was insisting that all local council should look into having public sculpture



with water features, so you have not only visually its cooling; same time the water droplet can be blown to the air and reduces local temperature. That was one concept we went through, like 5 years ago, we were going through this thing. And the other thing as Pn. Puteri said is the movement. Anything that moves will attract people's attention. So when you are stuck in the traffic jam and are 'bored to death', with the heat and everything, you'd be look forward to the water feature. That actually psychologically pleases you. It cools you down. That is the reason you see our sculptures are always at a junction, or the middle of a traffic jam area (island), and that is actually thoughts behind it, why we place it and why we have water with the sculptures. In Singapore when I was there, they had a big problem. Initially they started with a water featured sculpture but later they could not maintain it. Because maintaining water featured sculpture is very difficult and very costly. But KL (Kuala Lumpur) has got to do it, because KL wanted to have it as a unique feature in KL, walaupun dia mahal dan susah nak maintain, we still go ahead doing it. That is why you see if you notice quite a number of it. I think 80% of public sculptures in KL has water feature.

**(Observer)** Kalau sculpture yang tak ada water feature biasanya dia jadi macam abandon, jadi macam white elephant. Orang tak pergi sana, macam 'arca Wardah', even 'Laman Asean' , orang lalu sahaja la tak duduk kat situ.

**(Part. B)** It doesn't attract the crowd because there is no movement. There is no communication between the public and the sculpture itself. Not many want to go and read the abstract (rationale for the sculpture), but when there is movement like taman malam and with the lighting, it will attract you. Like one up in the hills in Jalan Ampang, of course it is very old it was to commemorate 'CHOGM' (Commonwealth Meeting) but the message was you have the water feature and the logo on it so it is an instant attraction to anyone on the street. Itu sebab kita punya sculpture ada air.

**Q. Is there any public art policy that regulates and used as guidelines by the local authorities, organisations and artists?**

**(Part. B)** As far as I know, there only controlling factor as I said is that it should not offend the 'wargakota' (public), and that is a standard policy and understanding. It is not a written policy.

**(Part. A)** Setahu saya, setakat di peringkat Bandaraya, so far kita tidak ada akta. Setiap individu boleh merekabentuk arca mengikut kepda keperluan masing masing. Biro angkasa di kawasan taman tasik akan membuat arca berbentuk futuristik. Asal di dalam kompaun masing masing.

**(Part. B)** I think we govern the private contribution. If they want to do, kita ada mengeluarkan 'D.O'- development order, for any new development, then we imposed a condition saying that developer has got to beautify the area surrounding the building development. This is the planning by law. Some developers, architects, they go one stop further and they want to beautify the compound and they want to spend money and do it nicely and in that instant they come out with sculptures, art work on the side. They have to submit to the town planning committee to comment on it. Its either our department, kalau tidak the architect department and another unit, under conservation and urban design. So they look at it also. Pengekalan seni bandar dan warisan. Tapi policy per say, I ingat belum ada lagi la for public art itself. As I explained for public art, we don't report to anyone or being governed by any rulings. There are no definate rules.

**(Observer)** Tapi yang basic rules to observe in terms of safety.

**(Part. B)** That standard good practice yang kita ada ni kita practice la

**Q. In the United Kingdom, a mechanism called 'Percent for Art' is being used to govern the inclusion of public art in new development or in a regeneration project. Does Malaysia have similar mechanism?**

**(Part. B)** I think on the aspect of economic development as you said, public art to attract tourist and things like that, we don't have policy on it. Neither a program to do it. However, Dewan Bandaraya, macam next year 2007, Visit Malaysia year , so we have

been urge to come out a lot of beautification program, landscape program to beautify the city. In that program, probably there will be one or two tucked in, sculptures with water feature included in it. But that is not tight to direct economic benefit but on the request by the planning by law, we have a standing ruling based on the 'D.O'. Surrounding area is for landscape. 5 % of the green area is allocated for a landscape, perimeter planting within a development. But it would not dictate to the landscape area. It based on the dollar and cents and we don't control them. We refer to planning by law. We usually ask 10% to be developed for landscape this includes landscape features like sculptures and etc.

**Q. How does the process of commissioning of public art/public sculpture work? What is the standard procedure?**

**(Part. B)** I don't think is a norm. I said earlier, landscape architects always have this feeling where we should work with visual artist, we can design a landform environment but to concentrate on a sculpture is a different ball game all together, so we have collaboration with landscape architect then it will come out with a lot of successful project. They (the artist) can concentrate on the sculpture, the form or whatever they want to say, a story behind it and we can just nicely accommodate into our outdoor landscape. Cuma I think there is currently no such practice. There is no platform for that. But if it was given the landscape architect wouldn't mind working with them. After all it is the enhancing of the environment you see.

**Q. Who does the archiving or documenting any project related to public art/ public sculpture in the federal territory/Malaysia?**

**(Part. B)** The unit which is responsible for the conservation and seni Bandar, Pn Rozaini, have to keep record, even our department but we do not have any archiving. If you notice, most of our outdoor art, other in the public parks, in the urban areas they either on the road reserve or on a traffic island somewhere and they are not going to be there forever. There could be a via duct proposed, infrastructure come first, after the

landscape. So there could be another extension like today's paper, there will be a 10 billion ringgit investment on the roads and lrt's. There could be another track introduced into the area budaya that we have or the labu sayung. It will go off. So I think we need to capture it and keep it as the archive. Esok kalau kita, there is something that we noted that there were sculpture here, walaupun jalan sudah berubahkan, I think it is a good suggestion and we should start archiving from now.

## Interview Transcription

6<sup>th</sup> September 06: Artist/ Sculptor GAT2

**Q: Could you please share with me your background and experiences in the visual art practices in Malaysia?**

I am Ms Terry Law. I am into sculpture and multimedia. Actually part of my expertise is fine art with the major in sculpture. But I am streamlined into public art and I did my internship in public art organisation when I was in United States. So when I came back to Malaysia in 1995, I concentrated in mostly public art work and at that stage there were an increasing interest in public art in Malaysia. I made a lot of proposals to DBKL, city hall and to public and private ownership, like the developers for commercial and residential (condominiums). And I got a very poor response. DBKL for instance unfortunately do not know what they really wanted and do not have the people in authority who are knowledgeable in public art to make the decisions. So they couldn't give me any slot for the commissioning of public art in public spaces. I sent in my curriculum vitae and samples of my work, but nothing came back to me that indicate a positive response. Within that same period of time they (the municipal) produce a horrendous sculpture on a round-a-bout island in Kuala Lumpur and in Petaling Jaya and I was appalled. It is because at the same time I was trying to explaining to them who I am and what I do and did not get any response from them. They were looking into public art but they were not calling people in that field (public art) to do it. They just get some other people to do it. So we do have public art in condominium which is a private ownership projects. Wai Kiat and I collaborated and manage a project. We decided rather than compete for the same project; it is might as well we work together on the same project. Because the projects itself were divided into a few smaller projects so we came out with a concept and offer different work based upon our own respective style. Both of us came from the same university anyway. So we did get some job late 1990's and after the new millennium it was even worst, where it was very difficult for us to get any commission at all.



**Q. Why is it very difficult to get a commission of Public art project?**

Well, it is very unusual. In the sense that since we are always competing with Singapore, and in Singapore, you can see the amount of public art work in that country and the amount of funding the government allocated for art. They are making Singapore the hub for Southeast Asian art. They are succeeding with the money that has been pumped in by the government. And I thought Malaysia will be competing at the same level. In Singapore you have public artwork everywhere and works by international names like Salvador Dali and Henry Moore. So no we did not get any here (funding). First thing we have to look at the policy. We do not have a budget for the aesthetic. Even spoken to interior design about the budget given to them, still there is no allocation for work of art. So very seldom that they (interior designers) will put in any sculptural piece as suppose to use the rest of the money into the furnishing. So I think it is the lack of policy to support the growth of public artwork. In Malaysia I guess if the work does not generate any sort of profit property it does not have major importance for development. They are not looking at public art beyond its function as a landmark that will distinguish a place.

**Q. What is Public art in Malaysia?**

Public art is referred to art work in public places which is probably commissioned by the federal state. It can also be privately own but sited in public spaces, for example in Kelana Jaya they did an outdoor project within a compound of a corporate building, The Glomax Ericsson headquarters. So that is public space. And I know this particularly because my major focus was in public art. I look into public issues; I look into the reference to who uses the place, the architecture and the built environment and make public statement to that. So this is what I refer to public art. We do not have policies like in the United Kingdom or the United States, where the public itself have the say on the work, but not so in this country. That is why maybe we get 'crap' work, where we get something done by an unknown person who does not have the knowledge and the function of public art work, trying to make a functional sculptural statement by producing

a clock tower or fountain and for example also the pitcher plant sculpture in Kuala Lumpur city center (Periuk Kera sculpture).

**Q. Based upon your personal experience, how do you handle the commissioning of a public art project?**

There is no consensus of how you handle the commissioning project, or whether you design the project based or reflected upon the 'voice of the people'. What I look for in any of my work is who uses the spaces which are categories into residential, commercial establishment and what is the theme that would be pertinent to that place. I also look into issues I am addressing. I also relate to the surrounding architecture and the feel of the environment.

**Q. What is your experience with the development of visual art education in Malaysia?**

I have been teaching for the last ten years and I have been Head of Foundation courses at CENFAD, Kuala Lumpur (Central School of Fashion, Art and Design) which is actually modelled from Parson School of Art and Design, New York. People from Parson, New York came over and help set up the school. From there, the CENFAD and PARSON academic committee have to fit in a Malaysian content into an American syllabus. We are tried to follow a model under PARSON School of Art, New York but unfortunately we are not at the same academic level. Finally we decided to create our own local content rather than copy the American content. When we talk about local context we are looking at local entity like culture and local heritage. I was in the committee and help to build the new syllabus in visual art.

**Q. From observations, what is the style of public sculpture in Malaysia and what is your opinion on this?**

It is a very hard question. The people who were awarding and were awarded with the commission obviously thought they were sculptures and uses object like florans and Keris (Malay dagger). You must look at the contents. It is glorifying the banality. They use common object and making a monument out of it. Here in Malaysia we do not look at the content and we do not have any specific agenda. It is just craft work, because people do not know what they are looking for, what are sculpture and the relevancy and the importance of the subject matter is. For example, they could look into community issues and use that as a guide but instead they do not. They do not have a theme. So in that instance they opt to do an easy representation like a model of a craftwork. I am not looking down at our local craftwork at all but it is all too easy and without a specific purpose.

**Q. As a public artist, were you ever invited (by the local authority or National Art Gallery) to give advise on the commissioning of public artwork?**

No. The local authority (DBKL) will usual engage the advise of the National Art gallery because the National Art Gallery is a national body and being neutral to kind suggest artist, or artwork or even help to judged and choose the work being submitted to the local authority. That is all I know and coming back to the question, artist were never consulted nor have there been a panel of people asking for our opinion on matters like site specific and etcetera. The only places/Site where were ask to give opinion was KLCC (KLCC Twin Tower) and KLIA (Kuala Lumpur International Airport). Those were the places that were proposed to have public sculptures and we were invited to give our proposals. In the end they did not commission any public artwork because they did not have the budget for it. After all that, you can see for yourself there are no public artworks on these two sites.

**Q. Who does the public art work commissioned to and how does the process of commissioning work?**

I don't know how they look at artist and at what level they look at artist. I think most of the time, the developers who appoint the architects do not know who to commission it to and maybe it is included in the architect's fees, instead of putting a separate budget for artwork and aesthetic work. Thus more likely the public artwork was commissioned to the architect. But I do have architects who come to me and ask me to propose and artwork for the space and this is how I get some of the commission. The architect will not play an active role in the design of the public artwork. The architect will suggest and look at samples of work and choose the kind of work that might cater to the owner's (of the building) need. I don't think that the Malaysian building owner's are not learned when it comes to artwork. It is strange because these owner's are usually educated abroad and they have seen and experience public artwork. Coming back to the question, the process of any commissioning of public artwork is the artist will propose the design and concept and the architect or interior designers will make it happen.

**Q. Malaysia is a modern country and is susceptible to new ideas and is open to new design and art style. What do you think is the controlling factors that depict the style of public artwork in Malaysia?**

Obviously is religion. Figurative work of any sort of human forms and animal are supposedly not allowed but even though I say that, if you go to visit Kelantan or some of the states controlled by PAS (Islamic Political Party), you do see animal forms in their public artwork and that is state funded but not in Kuala Lumpur. It is stated in the Islamic religion the usage of human and animal figure is supposedly not allowed. I am not sure why in a state ruled by an Islamic party allows the usage of figurative form and not the central government. Even if we the artist do figurative work, we usually use an abstraction or an interpretation of the figurative work. Figurative work is usually never encouraged. Usually when the artists were given the brief with whatever theme, it will normally be stated whether it should be a figurative or non figurative sculpture and

usually it's the latter. Even if you want to do an abstraction of figurative work be it human form or animal form is also not even considered and it is quite bizarre.

**Q. In the United Kingdom, there is the 'Per cent for art' policy usually used in the new development/ regeneration of a city. Do we have similar mechanism in Malaysia?**

No. I have not heard of such mechanism before.

**Q. What are the common problems faced by public artists in Malaysia?**

Well, I think getting to educate the authority and the general public. You need to go in sync with these people. The more they are aware of the intangible benefit of public work of art the better the artwork will fare. It is intriguing but it is true. You (the artist) can suggest great many ideas but if they could not see the benefit, the idea will never take off. Most of the projects that I tried to get into, which are corporate buildings, vast majority of the budget will go into the façade of the buildings thus creating an expensive outlook. So they use expensive material for the building facades, instead of allocating for public artwork.

**Q. Were you ever involved in any public art project in Putrajaya?**

No, unfortunately.

**Q. In your opinion, what could be done to strengthen the development of public art in Malaysia?**

Public awareness I supposed. If talk about public awareness, Eventhough we try as a sculpture to create the awareness, there are only a few of us. We try to do a lot of work but there aren't enough opportunities for us to show the work. If you do a survey in a year, you will see there are limited artwork exhibition in private galleries and National Art Gallery. Then also look at sculpture exhibition. There has not been any proper



exhibition dedicated for sculptures only. The last one was a couple of years ago. It is the norm to only have a sculpture exhibition once every three years. These are the main sculpture work. If that is the case, you can gauge the level of awareness that the public has on this type of artwork. There is a lot of paintings, a lot of multimedia work and a few installations but when it comes to sculptures, there so few shows/ exhibitions. So the owner's of a building, decision makers or the developer did not get to see and appreciate the work (sculpture) created by the Malaysian sculpture artists. A lot of them (developers/ decision makers) did not go to the National Art Gallery. It will be very good if we have an annual sculpture show, to showcase the variety of sculpture work by the local artist and the skills they have.

**Q. Have you been invited by any organisation or government office to contribute ideas in the policy making related to public art?**

No and I have not heard of any policy in public art or similar policy.

## Interview Transcription

18 July 2007

Public artist (GAV1)

**Q: Could you please share with me your background and experiences in the visual art practices in Malaysia?**

Ok, I'm an arts writer; I work in the STAR from 1998 as an intern and join them as a streaming in 1999, and join them full time in 2000 until august 2006. After that I joined the Edge as an arts writer as well, and then I resigned in November and then I freelanced, I worked freelance for Kaki Seni and I join Kaki Seni as an editor in June this year. I have a Bachelor's Honors degree in Fine Arts Drama and Theatre from University Malaysia Sarawak but I have been covering the visual arts more than I have in performing arts, simply because I saw more in need to do so, there were less writers writing in visual arts. So that's how I became interested in public art. Also, my background in university where the syllabus was structured in such a way that we were expected to learn about visual arts as well, so very basic things like "seni tapak" right up to more complex things like visual arts history and national cultural theory and policy. The policy part what let me on to look at what policy and what theory influences what kind of art we have in our country today. The reason I became interest in the visual art is that my aim to actually write about visual art and also use any means possible to bring visual arts closer to the men and the street, and after writing about it, I realized that I had to write more about art than just the ones you see in the gallery, because most of the Malaysians don't go inside the gallery even the National Art Gallery. And at the time at STAR, there was me and editor Joo Wang, sat down and talked about it, we wanted basically more readers for our arts page but the only way we could do that is to make what we were writing about and the way that I wrote about it more relevant to the men on the street. So we had to move away from writing in a very esoteric thing, things in the gallery only, things which are arty-farty and then too much big words and make it more relevant. So, we found two ways, which is to write about visual art to them using a common denominator which is numbers and money which means the business, and one way we saw that was ready for that sort of documentation was the sale of paintings like auctions and everything. After I had attended an art talk by Christie in Singapore, they came here to give talk about auctions and the value of paintings etc. I realized that we Malaysians need to

document all our works not just “who painted it?, what’s it about?” or whatever, we need to say how much it was sold for, what was estimated price and what is it estimated now. So, by having this method, our value of our works could go up and also we could attract the attention of the Malaysian public because its something to do with money and profit, which is one common denominator they would start to read about it, but then we realized something, we could write about all these works but these works are in private collections or if their in the government collection they only come out upon the decision of who is working in the National Art Gallery at the moment. So the public doesn’t really get to see them as a \_\_\_\_\_, the kind of visual art that the public gets to see is the public art works, so that’s when we started branching out. This was in early 2003 if I’m not mistaken. Then I was awarded The Australian Cultural Award Scheme Grant by the Australian government to spend two weeks in Australia to make people \_\_\_\_\_ to meet. I had to drop the post, so one of it was public art and I was asked to meet the people there, so they arranged it for me and it opened a \_\_\_\_\_ case basically because in Australia art is done in a whole different level as I’m sure you know. Everything came to the picture as in... I went to this Australia council for the arts in Sydney. Public art over there is in a different format, while here it’s decided by DBKL the local councils, while in Australia it’s decided by the local councils as well as the Australian arts council. In terms of research and documentation they have their universities etc. so, I came back here and I knew that, ok, it’s a strong story, because I knew that I have the skeleton and examples that I need to follow and I need to patch up all these things and present a story to the public. I started this in July 2004 and I actually finished all my research by mid 2005, but for a various reasons, STAR published it in September 2006... (The recorder was stopped)

... that’s when I came back, and also went through the whole in defining what’s the public art work etc. so, there was a problem of definition, even within the trained arts community. In Malaysia it is such that artists’ academic, cultural commentators don’t have a role in deciding what public art should come up, a budget a theme or whatever. All of these powers lies with the local councils, and the local councils don’t consult the artist, its not that they’re mean or cold-hearted, its just because they don’t know and they don’t aware. They sincerely think that its all right, it is okay, if you go to the DBKL and ask them, public art is not a word that they have heard of. So, at the beginning stage we have to come up with a definition within the visual arts

community themselves. Then, within the planning stages, they don't really have the chance or platform to work together with the local councils, and I found out that from my personal observation, the local councils is not mean-hearted, it's just that they're not aware that they should actually consult these artists, and at the root of that, they've never even heard of the word public art. When I went there, and I spoke to some of the senior people in DBKL and they're not aware of the word public art, for them it comes under landscape department, so it is a landscape thingy, it's a decoration. It's different from what Piyadasa said. Those are the basic practical problems that we face. People always talk about budget, but I don't think budget is a problem, you know all those Mercu Tanda and then there were those few others whatever... those actually cost a lot. There have been good public art works in National Art Gallery that red egg thingy, and then in KLCC, Lake Gardens, Putrajaya it's because they have got people going there... sorry what were we talking about?

About the DBKL and the budgets...

People in National Art Gallery and KLCC, the standard, the quality of public art are better because their commission by the people in the \_\_\_\_, like Gallery PETRONAS and National Art Gallery, and then in the Lake Gardens we all know that it was arranged by Piyadasa. But, like the ones in PJ I don't know, there is this perennial problem, and I don't know how it can be solved as in our capacity of journalist. Me and my editor, we thought about it, on how can we approach use our road of journalist to kind of ask the authorities to work with the artists. Given the politics as a practice here, we had to do it very diplomatically; we felt that we couldn't go and write like a news piece **"Local Councils Not Taking Into Account The Opinions of Artists"** because they will just put their backs against the wall, and they would not do it. That's not the way that you want them to do things. We did an interview with Rais Yatim and we did ask him "do you think that local councils should consult artist?" he did say that local councils have their own rules; I don't think they can insist what rules does the councils have to follow. At the end of the day, it depends on creating awareness in the local councils if they want to be aware, and building their good will. There are ways instead of raging at them.

**Q: Who are the ‘public’ in public art and to what extent does the ‘public’ have in determining the development of public art in Malaysia?**

Well the public would be the Malaysian public...

I don't think artist come into that ... public when the authorities think about... it's just another symptoms of the root of the problem how artist at the periphery of our Malaysian society today.

My interview with the MBPJ officers, they seem to be more inclusive on their citizens compared to DBKL. The DBKL never mention about... ah yes, I know why... after going to Sydney, they showed me their blueprint on how the public art comes up. That means they have consultations with the people who live in the council, they call for entries, they have short list and they would have selection of photos for people to vote. And then, the work that got the most vote were put up, and then the guy was telling me something there was one art work that was half way being put up and it looked very ugly, and they send in complaint letters and the artwork was brought down later on. I put this blue print and I approached DBKL and MBPJ. DBKL didn't even recognize what a blueprint; it was an alien concept for them. MBPJ recognized what it was, and they do take it into account as a public view point, and then that brings us to what the public want, and if you're looking at what the public want, no matter how artistic you or I may think, if they are not exposed to art, they will choose things that they will like. Even smudges that prod bring them into their artistic direction by telling them things like "okay! We've picked five artists here, very good Malaysian artist, they've proven themselves before winning awards or whatever, okay you all pick which one you like, and then you show whatever sculpture that they want to put" inevitably you will have to put the cost, once you see the cost, I don't think they will agree to it, because that is the Malaysian way of thinking. Because when I went around doing my street pole, I actually found out how much the Red Egg work cost was. So I went around and asked the people around... "Do you agree on spending a lot of money on public art?" people around would complain on how expensive it was. And I met this French couple in Lake Gardens, the guy works in Peugeot France, he had a different view, but he also said that the money spend on the artwork should be reasonable depending on the people's wage. Even though body like MBPJ is



making the effort to include public opinion in, but then it will still go back to the public itself.

In the early 80's that's when we had this... do you remember that historical timeline that I did for the article? Where it started off with Tugu Negara, then the National Museum and then DBP, and then suddenly it went quiet. Later on, we have the ASEAN sculpture in Lake Gardens, and that came about primarily because ASEAN was standing very strong at that moment, the old ASEAN identity. Then, the 97 financial crisis hit, I think the affects of that was definitely felt in the arts community in the ASEAN community as well. So, I don't know whether we will see that kind of work again, unless maybe our economy will do well and then we have this ASEAN pride again, which is not impossible because Vietnam is doing well right now.

After speaking to Piyadasa and Sababathy, I realized we can't run away from South East Asian identity, because historically, we were never a hub for a public art to begin with, it was always Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia because Sababathy said geographically that is where they have a big space of fertile land that obviously it will attract loads of people, big population, power bases. Whenever you have a power base, public art is always connected with expressions of power, which never happened in big kingdoms like Peninsular/Semenanjung. So, I think in the future... I don't know, I haven't done any survey, but looking at their artwork, they seem to have a better idea what should a public art be and what they want to see and then the quality. While I was doing this research, I have a friend went to Vietnam for holiday, she actually knew I was doing this research and I was amazed and a bit embarrassed because the quality of the artworks are very strong and very well done. And if they want to project the communist pride... yes that's what they did. Everything was there, sense of pride, quality etc.

**Q: Examining the history of governmental intervention in culture and art development since 1969 what is the art and cultural climate in Malaysia at present and how does this affect the typology of public artwork/art form in Malaysia?**

1969 alerted the government a lot of problems concerning about race, religion and equity. So, they decided to come up with a national cultural policy, which is in 1973.

The policy basically says that art should be focused or centred on Islamic values and the Nusantara, not just Malay, but the Malay Nusantara, Malay Archipelago that includes Indonesia, Filipino, and Balinese etc. Then, it has this phrase about other element deemed suitable can be allowed in. That phrase angered a lot of artists at the time the policy was created. Some artist until today will speak against it; one of them is Kite Wanchai. They have their reasons; I haven't gone into it enough. However in terms of public art, that mandate, the style of the sculpture, the motives that you use have to be rooted to local imagery, which is understandable. Because if it is a public artwork and want people to identify it, and then to value it as well, it must be relevant to them. After speaking to Piyadasa I realized that the thing that art having to focused or reflect on Islamic values might have caused detriment to the development of public art in Malaysia. Piyadasa feels that especially with the arabization of Islam in Malaysia, that's what he puts it; the Muslims here felt that it was not allowed to do artwork showing human beings or animals. After the affects of the Iranian Revolution in 1980's, we stopped seeing public sculptures, so, most of it is now geometric. Interestingly, the one in the KLCC Park, I look at it as some big whale jumping out from the fountain, at first sight it looks as a geometric form, it's not directly a whale. After speaking to Piyadasa, I gather that is one of the problems that contributed in the development of the public art, because I'm not a Muslim, I don't want to say that it's bad, because that is the belief of the majority of the people, and the public art should reflect that the majority of what the people want. If they have move into a state of mind and belief system where they prefer to see geometric sculptures or flora and fauna elements, well that's the direction that we have to move in. Then the question that we need to ask is the quality of the work. They are all over the place, in the Muslim world and they're very good, the artists are well-trained etc. so I think there would be as an arts writer or public arts and as a non-Muslim living in a Muslim country that would be the point that I look at, the quality of the work. Piyadasa also brought in the NEP, and affects of the NEP, he said that it hasn't brought much transparency but my view point is that, the NEP by itself may not be bad; the implementation is the one has been problematic. In the implementation somehow Malaysian society lost quit a bit of transparency in governance and that affected how the public artworks were put up, it's about the policy, but I could be wrong.

**Q: What are the contributing factors that encourage public art to play a bigger role in Malaysia?**

Let's just talk about the public arts that have started to come up in new townships. When we decided to do this story in the STAR, Damansara Perdana had just come up, and they had all these things like the red balls etc. so I went to see the developer and spoke to the guys there, and I realized while they're very enthusiastic and they did do the public art as a favour and they didn't realized that they had done so.??? Because they didn't realized that this whole dialogue of public arts that should actually happen within the architecture or housing developing community, their concern was only promoting to me as journalist, like "in order to be an award winning township so one must have all these things and full fill the criteria". I don't know who set the criteria, but I'm happy with it. I think even after the interview, I realized I was coming from a different angle, whole different perspective from them, and I don't think they understood where I was coming from, I tried to explain to them, they were very supportive as the best they could be about it, but I think it was totally lost on them, and I don't blame it on them. If you see that sort of art has probably come about in places like Mutiara Damansara maybe because the developers feel it will contribute to their township being well known and then being able to sell homes over there.

**Q: What is the impact of the National Development Policy (NDP) and how does the policy help with public art program in Malaysia?**

I don't know la...

I don't know how it affects public arts specifically, but definitely in terms of visual arts alone, we have seen an enormous influx of bumiputra artist coming through the UiTM schools and Malaysia is richer for that today. By the time I was born, and I'm 31 now, NDP was in full force at that time, so, I don't know how it is to live in a country without this policy (NDP). So by the time I was old enough to be aware of it especially going to a local university and studying with lots and lots of bumiputra students, to me it was already something, there wasn't an issue at all, I mean that's how it is, I was surrounded by Malay or bumiputra artists and it wasn't something odd. So, that's coming from my view, but if you speak to an older person who had the

chance to live before the NEP, maybe they would have a different view, but I just think that the Malaysian art scene has become richer for it. I sometimes wonder, if there wasn't an NEP/NDP to help with the education of these disadvantage bumiputra children, what the art scene would be right now. I think in terms of the Malay or bumiputra community, it would be more elite than right now, maybe arts practice wouldn't have been opened up to a lot of bumiputra children from the "kampongs" or from the villages, they wouldn't have the chance to study it, and our arts would end up being produced by people from rich backgrounds. I don't think I've seen these voices in public art a lot though, I know that while interviewing people for the street pole I interviewed people like waiters and everything and they come from Sabah, Kelantan etc. they actually like all these manggis or the prawns or the fish, big things sticking out, compared with me being a city snob... like... what? But they really like it, so I have to respect their view, because it makes them feel proud, because all these things relates back to their background. But I don't think those works were done by these, or anyone of these so many Malays or bumiputras artists that have come out from the fine art degree programs. This is because of the NDP/NEP.

The West In thing happened two years prior to that... something about them having commissions from Mutalib. They put it in front of the lobby, and then suddenly they took it down, I can't remember the reason why, and then he had seen it or he had heard the whole work chopped aside in the car park of the hotel and he was very upset. I just hope that the government could make use of all the bumiputra artists that they've trained, at least go and ask them and value them.

**Q: What kind of relationship does the Art Boards have with the local authority/local councils in the conception, development and commissioning of the public art?**

I don't think I've heard National Art Gallery telling me that they have a relationship with DBKL. You might try and look for that kind of info in Penang branch of the ministry of Penang Museum. But I do think it's a potential area, it's just that someone needs to get in there and draw a team work program with both of them.

**Q: What is the impact of public art in urban regeneration and how does it empirically affect the country's economic development?**

Malaysia is facing a brain drain for the past 25/30 years, when I think about it, I think that part of the reason for the brain drain is that Malaysians lack the sense of pride of place where it is something like a sense of history... now that can come about due to two factors, one is the education which we all know has been criticized for being very boring is because it omits certain sensitive things, the other thing is the platform for people to have a dialogue about their history and place in the country... we don't have the kind of platform that we need. Because we've always been afraid of the specter of May 1969, we've always being brought up by this boogie man story etc. I mean just a few days ago that I was reading about a number of racial clashes... I feel like we have this brain drain right... so I think that, if public art is connected to people and encouraging this pride of place amongst them, it will create the value of the public art work where its not only about the money that has been put into it. Its intangible effect that it will have on people looking at it, walking with the presence of it everyday, if it makes them feel proud, if it makes think about their contribution to their country, maybe they would think twice about leaving the country or choosing their stories or future in another land. Maybe they would feel they want to be here more. That's the thing, we don't see public art as you \_\_\_\_\_ so well \_\_\_\_\_ it out in your research there's quite a number of them, but what do they say, when you walk pass them do they make you feel like "yeah, my forefathers came here so long ago and they work so hard and here I am today" so you will cry and say that this is your country and you feel included as well in the scheme of things. I think a lot of developing countries are facing the problem of brain drain and the reason they're trying to stamp it is because they realized that affects the economic development, and while you can get migrants... you know like how Singapore is getting migrants from India and china. Last week they were talking about it, they will come in and use countries like Singapore and Malaysia as their stepping stone, they're not going to stay here, they just come here and work for few years and they will go to Canada, UK or US, they don't want to stay here, so we lose all the talent that we trained and gave the platform to, so, we lose out.



**Q: There was a lot of concern in regards to an ethical framework within artistic expression in Malaysia. In public art projects, what do public artists/architects regulate/base their artwork on? (Censorship)**

Okay, I like his work, he sell exhibitions from the day he started, he's a very clever artist and he has this discipline, not like all these fine arts fellows sometimes no discipline, anyway, good artworks, very sellable, very commissionable and sometimes we want to ask what is the message behind his artworks and why they are so sellable...

...I would have to talk to Mutalib again, someone like me would have to ask him this direct question like "do you try to include any critical statement?" "no, as an artist I'm not obliged to make social statements I'm just obliged to make a good quality work of art" which is true you have artist from 2 schools. If he is that sort of artist, then it's okay. But if he has this "mata hati" type of vision then, we have to ask, is it reflected in his very sellable and very commissionable artworks. Personally, I have not felt that when I looked at his artworks and I looked at it a lot, I even bought one of his artworks. What I feel was, it was a very beautifully done painting painted by a very talented artist, and I don't walk away feeling touched by it in terms of socially conscious. That's Mutalib coming from an architecture background; I haven't interviewed the other architects so I really don't know what they'd base their artworks on. Public artist, even like people like Chee Wan Kee and his Red Egg work. I haven't spoken to him also about what he wants to say about his artworks. But when I pass by artworks the one at the National Museum, now that sets me out thinking, every time I passed it I will always want to see more and I want to see what I've missed out. That one really engages me. Tugu Negara for instance, that's why the public like the Tugu Negara the one in National Museum and I was really surprised. Maybe he has got this stylistic figures there and everything, but he's got symbols that actually are very relevant to everyday life and people identify with it, and people come away from this Tugu Negara and National Museum, it has given them this feeling. You should speak to him about what his artworks are based on. I heard that there was some controversy surrounding that particular artwork, something about the size, apparently the reason for some of them are bigger is because to show the amount of contribution by that particular race to the formation of Malaysia.

...you see a lot of grave outspoken socially conscious artwork within the four white-washed walls of private galleries and even in The National Art Gallery. I really don't see that a lot outside in the real public art, I think it is the same principle that the government knows that very few Malaysians bother to go to The National Art Gallery, most of them are student and little children, the teachers guiding them through are not educated to the level to explain to them about the hidden message on the work. Then people don't go into National Art Gallery on their own accord and they certainly wouldn't go into private galleries on their own accord. So the government knows this and that's fine, the government doesn't \_\_\_\_\_ so much on art that challenges censorship rules in spaces like National Art Gallery and private art galleries, but once it is in a public space, all these things come into play. Arts writers, we are not affected so much by self censorship not as much as we are but not as much as the writers writing about politics, crime, education which is very politicised in our country. Why? Because our article comes out in the middle or maybe at the back, and it hardly comes out on the front page. People in the authorities know that people don't read the arts pages, if you want to verify that you can always go to the STAR's advertising marketing department and ask them, I was told as a journalist there, that when ads start coming in the advertisers actually stipulate or ask can my ad not be paste in the arts page...

They want their ads not to be paste in the arts pages or the books pages because they also know and they possibly have statistics from the research companies that people don't read those pages so why put it there. It's the same thing, we have and we practice self-censorship but its less than other journalist because the government knows \_\_\_\_\_.

## Interview Transcription (Part 2)

30 July 2007

Public artist GAN5

**Q: Could you please share with me your background and experiences in the visual art practices in Malaysia?**

I was born In Petaling Jaya. My mother was working at the NST (New Straits Times newspaper) at that time. She was permanent resident in Malaysia and born in New Zealand. My father was born in Johor but his citizenship was Singaporean. So at the time when I was born in Malaysia, neither of my parents were citizen so automatically I was denied citizenship and finally granted citizenship when I was fourteen. But at the same time my mother had also applied for New Zealand citizenship for me, so basically I hold dual citizenship which allows me to study in Australia. So I grew up in Kuala Lumpur, Petaling Jaya until I was fifteen and then, because I was doing so badly in school because I was bored, my mother sent me to New Zealand to do 'O' levels and 'A' levels. So by the time I've gone through the three years of schooling system there (New Zealand), which was much more resourceful, I discover that I like to make art work and my mother encouraged me to go to art school because she realized that, that is the thing I excelled in. So I went to an art school in Christchurch in New Zealand, and also did a double major in sociology. So that took about 5 years and then from there I went to Sydney to extend my sociological research on the sex industry. I did my art training in sculpture which was quite unusual for women at that time. Very few women in the sculptural department, which was dominated by men. So, 2 years in AIDS council New South Wales, I came back and work with 'Pink Triangle' in Malaysia. On the sexual program for a couple of days a week and then I work at 'SUARAM' under the East Timor independence programme for a couple of years. In 2000, I decided that I totally have had enough and in between I have written a book that combined my brother's journal on East Timor in Indonesia with my own observation of his journal. Then I decided that this is all over, no more time wasting activities anymore and it is time to get back at making artwork. So I joined the "Rimbun Dahan" artist in residency programme, practicing art for the last 7 years.

**Q: What have been the major influences on Malaysian art? What are the current influences on contemporary art practice?**

Ok. That is a really broad question; I mean I can answer the question based on my practice rather than making assumption on everyone else's practice. Can I do that? The major influence in my personal practice is my experiences with the human rights work that was the beginning of it. My skepticism about writings on regional history, what else... the way public space is used as means of developing identity, that is my most current issue. That is more of direct influences. The influence of government policy is constantly changes but it depends on particular period of time. Definitely the aftermath of the 1969 is a constant threat in the way the government deal with almost everything. But it varies from time to time. I was just talking to... about how close The National Art Gallery and national policies are also under the ministry of tourism. There is an expectation for artists to present those multicultural issues in their work. So, it's a tri-ethnic identity is encouraged and promoted towards artists as a representational racial tolerance towards them.

**Q: What are the contributing factors that encourage public art to play a bigger role in Malaysia?**

What are the things that can encourage more public art or what are the things that cause public art to be discussed more? Which one? Yang mana satu?

As an urban space, we are constantly changing Kuala Lumpur to reflect both new technologically advanced, urbanized, liberal Muslim society and that is very much reflected in the infrastructure and architecture at the expands of our post-independence architecture. So, public art tends to go along with that agenda in a way, because it's about beautifying the city in the same way that architecture represents the city to the outside world. It's a natural progression in a way that Kuala Lumpur is developed physically.

**- What do you mean by liberal Islam?**

Well, I think there is an ethnic... (Not clear) now to promote itself as a country that is different from what it is, but still there are Muslims, because of all the problems that are happening. That's just my assumption. Together with the concept of e-government, multimedia this, cyberjaya that and the super corridor and all that, its all part of developing the image, technologically advanced Muslim society. It would definitely encourage to... sorry I'm lost.

As an artist, I think that public art is a running and screaming in a wrong direction, definitely. Because public art is used primarily as ornament, a physical ornament in urban planning and not as a reflection of cultural development in the country. It's a roundabout art.

In my experience, a lot of the commissions public art have been coming out from the Balai Seni Lukis Negara, they have been awarded to artists who don't have the skills to create, even the basic technological skills to deal with work (not clear) and consequently, the selection process is not an open tender, nobody ask for proposals for public art, people are selected based on the personal relationship to the director. So, we are not tapping into the best of what Malaysian public art artist can offer. That's got to do with almost everything in this country in terms of cronyisms and aa... ok I'm not finish. The other thing, public art does temp to reflect a much tunnelled vision of our government thinking about what cultural expression should be and a tunnelled vision in terms of... so for example the tourists like almost its been 'damaged to death' (not clear) and its not necessarily very good, sculpturally. So, why do we need this? Why do we have to constantly go down that road? Its very cultureless specific, racialists' specific, equals religious less specific and its very generous specific, and why do we have to keep rehashing the symbol over and over again? Of course the most obvious answers that this is a Muslim country... but, I'm quite of opposed to that thinking and that form of expression. I don't believe that a lot of the public art that we see, especially what you have shown us, were being developed by artist who have had any art training, most of it being primarily have been developed by engineers and architects. What does that say about how public art



is viewed? Artists don't really want participation in "public" space. "Public" space is still the arena and the playground of politicians, architects and contractors.

**Q: What is the impact of the National Development Policy (NDP) and how does the policy help with public art programme in Malaysia?**

I don't know. How does it? I haven't heard any policy directly affecting me as an artist, so how does it? I mean, I don't exhibit and I haven't had the opportunity to have much to do with the government institutions. So, I suppose I'm not within that arena of art practice, and if there is any funding coming down towards any specific theme... when I first started practising, I was very confident that I have the skills or I could develop the skills to make public work, and I just found that road to be filled with obstacles because I wasn't on the right gender and I wasn't on the right race and I don't have the right context. I could develop the technical skills but I just didn't see how it could get to a point where I could develop a piece of public work and get paid for it.

**Q: What is the role and function of Art Boards (Ministry of Heritage Arts and Culture, the Malaysia Society of Architect and the National Art Council (also known as National Art Gallery) in the governance of arts development in Malaysia.**

I think these boards; primarily my relations to the National Art Gallery, we have very little influence in the development of contemporary Malaysian art. I mean, if I say that from the previous question that it has very little affect on me, I think it has very little affect on art practice in general. The development of work in Malaysia at the moment as far as I can see is to do with personal drive, determination, how artist have been educated and the exposure to the international art scene as well. Those are the things that influenced the development of our contemporary art practice. Not so much from the government bodies. There was a functioning art's council that provide the grants, residencies, fellowships and we could say that there was a significant contribution to the development of Malaysian contemporary art. But at the moment, no. Infact, some of the selections that were made by the national art gallery of artists to represent our

country in overseas, doesn't really reflect the quality of work that's coming out of this country.

**Q: There was a lot of concern in regards to an ethical framework within artistic expression in Malaysia In public art projects, what do public artists/architects regulate/base their artwork on? (Censorship)**

First of all we are basing the premise that ethics has got to do with contestation which is problematic because, the contestation of, lets just say; the government opinion is not necessarily unethical.

As far as I'm concern, if a public art commission is not open to the artwork to put into proposals, I think it's a form of censorship. I mean if you're not selected from a range of proposals... one view point in one style and one sculpture from one artist is taken to represent art in a public space, I don't/I think its unethical.

**Q: Who are the 'public' in public art and in what capacity does the 'public' have in determining the development of public art in Malaysia?**

First of all, I don't really believe there should be a separation between artists and the public when we're talking about the public art, because artists themselves are members of the public and... I think it's too much of a moral high ground when people say artists should be responsible like 'this' whenever they work in public spaces, so that they have more connection with the public and everything with the public space. Artists have just as much as public members as anybody else and they will respond to public spaces just as much as anybody else. I'm suppose I'm talking more about murals than about... (not clear)

... What extend does the public have in determining the...

None! At the moment. None, generally, probably because the public doesn't aware that we can actually develop public work much better than what is presented to us at the moment. If the public is already subjected to 'bunga raya', monkey pot and the

‘periuk-periuk’ thing is a form of art and this basically the first/vast experiences with public art beyond tugu Negara stuff. It is the role of those boards that you have mentioned, to take public art out of this roundabout culture into another level. A level that involves artists, research and development, aesthetic style and responses to the space from which they are making the work. These boards should encourage it, but they don’t. I think it’s because it’s really a dangerous area to go down fundamentally and because cultural expression hurt once the risk of contestation, because sheer plurality in the world that we live. We are bound to offend someone. So, unfortunately we yet, those kind of generic still glance some concrete forms of public art at the moment.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **MALAYSIAN DOCUMENTS**

PAPER 1

ART POLICY OF THE  
NATIONAL ART GALLERY

Note:

This paper was presented to the Exhibitions & Purchasing Committee in 1971. It was intended to be a first effort to articulate some points as to the role that the Gallery should play in the absence of a clear-cut policy. The Paper was accepted by the Committee and thereafter tabled at a Board meeting which took place on March 6, 1971, the Board decided to discuss the Paper at a later date which did not take place. The Paper hitherto had not been formally discussed by the Board.



(Paper presented by the Exhibition's Committee  
for the consideration of the Board)

## ART POLICY OF THE NATIONAL ART GALLERY

### Introduction

-Since its inception, the National Art Gallery of Malaysia (N.A.G.) has not made any clear statement of its policy which can only be idiscerned in loose and general terms. It is therefore desirable that an Art Policy should be clearly articulated to serve as a guide-line for the future.

### Some consideration in the formulation of Art Policy

1.1 While an art gallery is principally concerned with art exhibitions, the scope of a National Art Gallery in a developing country like Malaysia, should extend beyond that role. It should give foremost consideration to the pedagogic function of bridging the existing gap between the artist and the public.

1.2 Malaysia is fast becoming urbanised with the accompanying danger that old values may become irrelevant, new ones not well understood, and the emerging cultural consciousness merely superficial and imitative. In this context, the National Art Gallery has a lclearly recognizable function to initiate, and insist upon, the most vital, pertinent, original and highest level of art.

1.3 Whilst it may be true that the absence of inhibiting influences from the past result in a fervour of creative expressions, there is a danger in Malaysia today that a haphazard search for national identity can also result in self-conscious artificiality which some may take advantage of for its own sake. Hackneyed cliché should not therefore be mistaken for the incipient characteristics of contemporary culture.

### Scope

2.1 The N.A.G. should serve three broad categories viz. the Nation, the Public and the Artists.

2.2 The N.A.G. acts as a repository of the national collection and as trustee for representing Malaysian art abroad. In both cases it should reflect sound judgement and unquestionable authority in the knowledge of Fine Art.

2.3 The N.A.G. should aim at creating a healthy climate for the preservation of the nation's art and crafts as well as one which is conducive to exploration and experimentation by artists of the present and the future.

2.4 The N.A.G. should liaise with other cultural bodies in the country to establish integrated programmes for promoting cultural participation by the public.

2.5 The N.A.G. should organise purposeful and meaningful exhibitions.

### Exhibitions

3.1 No exhibition, local or foreign should be considered from the point of view of filling in time and space available. The N.A.G. should be selective and discerning.

3.2 In presenting exhibitions, the major emphasis should be on the development of art in Malaysia. However, from time to time, the N.A.G. should present important exhibitions from abroad which would be interesting and instructive to both artists and the public.

3.3 The N.A.G. should from time to time sponsor special exhibitions to cater for varying interests of the artists and the public and to fill in certain "gaps" in the visual art scene in Malaysia. Topical exhibitions based on specialised subjects such as landscape, portraits, figures or on themes such as 'paintings and sculpture 1960-1965' etc. will create special interest amongst a greater section of the public.

3.4 The N.A.G. should as far as possible reserve one room, even in its present venue, for exhibiting a small section of its collection. A permanent exhibition from its collection, no matter how small, helps to maintain a sense of time and provides a useful basis for comparison with current works.

3.5 The N.A.G. should plan exhibitions in other towns in Malaysia.

3.6 The N.A.G. is the nation's trustee for representing Malaysian art and artists abroad. The selection of a Malaysian exhibition to be presented abroad should be based on the highest standards. The practice which was adopted for the New Delhi Triennale should be continued.

#### The pedagogic functions of the National Art Gallery

4.1 All effective art galleries in the world consider the pedagogic function as one of their important roles. In the Malaysian situation, the gap that exists between the artist and the public is far greater than that which exists in New York or London. The role of bridging the gap in this country is therefore of the utmost importance. In drawing up its programme the N.A.G. should give top priority to this important role.

4.2 The N.A.G. should be developed into a centre of excellence where the propagation and cross-fertilisation of creative ideas pertaining to visual art can be evident to the public.

4.3 The N.A.G. should give emphasis to the education of the layman (not only among the English-educated) through properly-structured activities involving art history and art appreciation so that a greater number of people can be more fully involved in art.

4.4 The N.A.G. should undertake the publication of an art journal and occasional monographs incorporating professional thoughts both on current and traditional matters relating to visual art.

4.5 The N.A.G. should organise lectures and discussions on professional matters relating to Fine Art. In this connection, the N.A.G. might institute an important Annual Lecture, perhaps by way of a Memorial Lecture, which could represent an original intellectual contribution to art in Malaysia. The N.A.G. should also seek the assistance of leading specialists to organise "conducted tours" of exhibitions. It should also organise shows of films and transparencies pertaining to visual art.

4.6 The N.A.G. should have a sound Reference Library, where among other things, catalogues of important exhibitions throughout the world and contemporary journals, as well as films and transparencies are available.

#### Acquisitions

5.1 The N.A.G. should first and foremost have a collection that represents and traces the development of visual art in the country, so that even in its present state of financial difficulty it can at least aim at establishing a concrete dossier on Malaysian art history.

5.2 The N.A.G. should be constantly on the look-out for what may turn out to be important landmarks in the development of Malaysian contemporary art.

PAPER 2

ART POLICY OF THE  
NATIONAL ART GALLERY

Note :

Strictly, this is not a separate paper from Paper 1. It is intended to supplement Paper 1 in particular where the definition of the Gallery's scope is concerned.



(Paper presented by the Exhibition's Committee  
for the consideration of the Board)

## ART POLICY OF THE NATIONAL ART GALLERY

### Introduction

Since its inception, the National Art Gallery of Malaysia (N.A.G ) has not made any clear statement of its policy which can only be discerned in loose and general terms. It is therefore desirable that an Art Policy should be clearly articulated to serve as a guide-line for the future.

### Some consideration in the formulation of Art Policy

- 1.1 While an art gallery is principally concerned with art exhibitions, the scope of a National Art Gallery in a developing country like Malaysia, should extend beyond that role. It should give foremost consideration to the pedagogic function of bridging the existing gap between the artist and the public.
- 1.2 Malaysia is fast becoming urbanised with the accompanying danger that old values may become irrelevant, new ones not well understood, and the emerging cultural consciousness merely superficial and imitative. In this context, the National Art Gallery has a clearly recognizable function to initiate, and insist upon, the most vital, pertinent, original and highest level of art.
- 1.3 Whilst it may be true that the absence of inhibiting influences from the past result in a fervour of creative expressions, there is a danger in Malaysia today that a haphazard search for national identity can also result in self-conscious artificiality which some may take advantage of for its own sake. Hackneyed cliché should not therefore be mistaken for the incipient characteristics of contemporary culture.

### Scope

- 2.1 The N.A.G should serve three broad categories viz. the Nation, the Asian region, the Public and the Artists.
- 2.2 The N.A.G acts as a repository of the national collection and as trustee for representing Malaysian art abroad. In both cases it should reflect sound judgement and unquestionable authority in the knowledge of Fine Art.
- 2.3 The N.A.G should aim at creating a healthy climate for the preservation of the nation's art and crafts as well as one which is conducive to exploration and experimentation by artists of the present and the future.
- 2.4 The N.A.G should liase with other cultural bodies in the country to establish intergrated programmes for promoting cultural participation by the public.

### Exhibitions.

- 3.1 In presenting exhibitions, the major emphasis should be on the development of art in Malaysia. However, from time to time, the N.A.G should present important exhibitions from abroad which would be interesting and instructive to both artists and the public.
- 3.2 The N.A.G should from time to time sponsor special exhibitions to cater for varying interests of the artists and the public and to fill in certain "gaps" in the visulal art scence in Malaysia. Tropical exhibitions based on specialised subjects or themes which will create special interest amongst a greater section of the public.
- 3.3 The N.A.G should as far as possible reserve a venue, for exhibiting a section of its collection. A permanent exhibition from its collection, to maintain a sense of time and to provide a useful basis for comparison with current works.
- 3.4 The N.A.G should plan exhibitions in other towns in Malaysia.
- 3.5 The N.A.G is the nation's trustee for representing Malaysian art and artists abroad. The selection of a Malaysian exhibition to be presented abroad should be based on the highest standards. The practice which was adopted for the New Delhi Triennale should be continued.

The pedagogic functions of the National Art Gallery.

- 4.1 All effective art galleries in the world consider the pedagogic function as one of their important roles. In the Malaysian situation, the gap that exists between the artist and the public is far greater than that which exists in New York or London. The role of bridging the gap in this country is therefore of the utmost importance. In drawing up its programme the N.A.G should give top priority to this important role.
- 4.2 The N.A.G should be developed into a centre for research and documentation where the propagation and cross-fertilisation of creative ideas pertaining to visual art can be evident to the public.
- 4.3 The N.A.G should give emphasis to the education of the Malaysian public (not only among the English-educated) through properly-structured activities involving art history and art appreciation so that a greater number of people can be more fully involved in art.
- 4.4 The N.A.G should undertake the publication of an art journal and occasional monographs incorporating professional thoughts both on current and traditional matters relating to art.
- 4.5 The N.A.G should organise lectures and discussions on professional matters relating to Art. In this connection, the N.A.G. might institute an important Annual Lecture, perhaps by way of a Memorial Lecture, which could represent an original intellectual contribution to art in Malaysia. The N.A.G. should also seek the assistance of leading specialists to organise "conducted tours" of exhibitions. It should also organise shows of films and transparencies pertaining to visual art.
- 4.6 The N.A.G. should have a sound Reference Library, which serve as a database where among other things, catalogues of important exhibitions throughout the world and contemporary journals, as well as films and transparencies are available.

Acquisitions

- 5.1 The N.A.G. should first and foremost have a collection that represents and traces the development of visual art in the country, so that even in its present state of financial difficulty it can at least aim at establishing a concrete dossier on Malaysian art history.

- 5.2 The N.A.G. should be constantly on the look-out for what may turn out to be important landmarks in the development of Malaysian contemporary art.
- 5.3 The N.A.G. should either purchase or cause to be purchased works by foreign artists of high standards, if the prices are within the means of the Gallery or reasonable enough to be considered by a donor.
- 5.4 The N.A.G. should invite firms and individuals to purchase and present works for the Permanent Collection. Such purchases should fall within the scheme of the Gallery.

#### Finance

- 6.1 While the question of finance does not fall within the purview of this paper, it is nevertheless necessary to offer a comment as money is basic to carrying out any of the functions planned by the Gallery. The N.A.G. should look into every means by which it can raise more funds to pay for its activities. This should receive urgent attention.

ART POLICY OF THE  
NATIONAL ART GALLERY

Note :

This paper was presented to the Exhibitions & Purchasing Committee in 1971. It was intended to be a first effort to articulate some points as to the role that the Gallery should play in the absence of a clear-cut policy. The Paper was accepted by the Committee and thereafter tabled at a Board meeting which took place on March 6, 1971, the Board decided to discuss the Paper at a later date which did not take place. The Paper hitherto had not been formally discussed by the Board.



## NATIONAL ART GALLERY

A paper submitted for consideration by the Exhibitions and Purchasing Committee of the National Art Gallery on the Policy with regard to its future scope

### 1. Preamble :

1.1 The National Art Gallery's existing policy indicates that its main area of operation covers PAINTING ( including drawing and prints ) AND SCULPTURE. Although Sculpture is intended to receive the same degree of emphasis as Painting, its representation, both in frequency of appearance in exhibition and extent in the Permanent Collection is limited due to the fact that it is relatively ' unpopular ' as a medium of expression. The term Painting, for the Gallery's purposes, has found expression in easel painting or pictorial representation by artists on portable supports such as canvas, paper, board or other flat surfaces convenient for exhibition. Similarly, Sculpture is limited to objects executed for exhibition. The emphasis, therefore, is on exhibition art. Non-exhibitional objects under the definition of Painting such as symbol or idiograms for magical or religious rites - painted calligraphy, temple paintings - or cinema posters or three - dimensional objects conforming to sculptural criteria such as hilt of krises, bangau prows of boat, temple sculpture etc. at present remain outside the purview of the Gallery.

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1. The policy hitherto conceived states :

' Broadly speaking, the Policy of the National Art Gallery has found expression in two ways:(A) The presentation of art exhibitions originating either locally or from overseas, and

(B) The building of a Permanent Collection of paintings and Sculptures etc.

( Para 16 - Policy - Exhibition and permanent collection. Report of the Working Committee on Activities and Achievements from June 3, 1958 to Feb. 28 1963 )

1.2 The position of the National Art Gallery as an institution that principally deals with PAINTING AND SCULPTURE per se is therefore anomalous.

1.3 Some attempts have been made in the past to include exhibitions of traditional crafts in the activities of the Gallery 2, and also recently some aspects of contemporary design have been included in the exhibitions organised by the Gallery. But, they do not as a rule fall under the general scheme of the Gallery's policy particularly with regard to that of acquisitions for the the Permanent Collection. 3

2. The Weaknesses of the present ' Policy '

2.1 The present ' Policy' of the Gallery limits its main interest only to exhibition art. Such a policy therefore presupposes that cultural consciousness is only reflected by art objects executed for the purpose of exhibition.

2.2 The ' exhibition-type' art, viz. easel painting and sculputre are relatively new to Malaysian society. Their history hardly predates the second world war. Plastic expression executed for exhibition therefore cannot represent a total history (even of recent history ) of cutural expression in graphic form which have taken place in this country.

2. Since 1968 two exhibitions of traditional Crafts had been held at the National Art Gallery. They were :

“ Batik Design & Art “ 15.7.68 – 26.7.68 •

“ Traditional Malay Carvings in Wood “ 6.7.71 – 20.8.71

The I.T.M. Exhibitions of Konsep '72 and Konsep '73 include contemporary crafts. They are composite exhibitions and not craft exhibitions per se.

2. Crafts in Permanent Collection

2 Kain Songket purchased in 1973

8 Ceramics purchased in 1963 and 1965

13 Russian Folk Art – donated in 1967

2.3 The importance of painting and sculpture as the two major media through which the sensibility of a period is reflected is slowly but surely being undermined by the necessity to adopt other media such as film, video or just statement. It can safely be said that artists' dependence on the traditional notion of painting and sculpture will gradually decrease as new needs are experienced and more effective media are discovered by them. The outcome of such an occurrence will find the Gallery's main preoccupation under its present practices obsolete.

3. The Case for Craft and Applied Arts

2.1 Today there is a worldwide renaissance of interest in Craft and Applied Arts. The highest attainment in these fields is already recognised as something in no way inferior to Painting and Sculpture. Craft and Applied Arts have now acquired a unique place of their own as ' legitimate ' form of contemporary cultural expression.

- 2.2 The emergence of a new designer/craftsman who is innovative and sensitive to new materials and technique will shift the position of Craft in this country from its traditional concept of one which is static and impersonal to something which will constantly be subjected to changes. The concept of 'living art' - which is continually reflecting the sensibility of a generation with emphasis on time and space - will now apply to Craft and Applied Arts. It will not be wrong to say that the best of contemporary batek design or a well-designed commercial poster and the most relevant art work are influenced by the same contemporary sensibility under which they were created. The contribution of Craft and Applied Arts in this new concept, will now be one of the unique cultural phenomena of this country.

4. The Role of Muzium Negara

The Muzium Negara describes its role thus : 4

Peranan Jabatan Muzium ialah untuk menyebarkan pengetahuan tentang kekayaan warisan kebudayaan tradisional serta menyelamatkan dan melindungi harta kebudayaan negara. Ini diperolehi melalui pungutan-pungutan, peliharaan-peliharaan, pameran-pameran dan selidikan. Di dalam tugasnya mencari kesan-kesan peninggalan zaman silam, Muzium menganjurkan kerja menggali di kawasan-kawasan yang tertentu, menjelajah gua-gua, menganjur penyelidikan ke atas tempat-tempat memuja, kota-kota dan tempat-tempat utama di mana orang dahulukala tinggal. Memelihara dan menyelamatkan tempat-tempat dan bangunan-bangunan seperti ini adalah terkawal di bawah undang-undang "Antiquities and Treasure Trove Ordinance No. 14/1957".

Jabatan ini membiayai Muzium Negara di Kuala Lumpur dan Muzium Perak di Taiping. Juga berkhidmat sebagai penasihat kepada Muzium-Muzium yang dikelulakan oleh Negeri-Negeri di Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Pulau Pinang dan Kedah dan juga membantu lain-lain negeri di dalam membina Muzium Negeri mereka sendiri.

Tugas-tugas Jabatan ini termasuklah :

- (a) Memungut dan memelihara bahan-bahan antik dan contoh-contoh kaji haiwan dan menyediakan untuk pameran di dalam balai-balai pengetahuan orang ramai;
- (b) Menyelenggara kawasan-kawasan bersejarah dan candi-candi ;
- (c) Memimpin kerja-kerja menggali kajipurba ;
- (d) Berusaha mengkaji sejarah bangunan-bangunan, kawasan-kawasan, dan gua-gua disenaraikan sebagai harta kebudayaan negara ;
- (e) Memelihara dan menyelamatkan harta-harta kebudayaan negara ;
- (f) Menyelenggara sebuah perpustakaan rujukan dan mengadakan kemudahan-kemudahan untuk penuntut-penuntut dan pekerja-pekerja penyelidikan ;
- (g) Mencetak Majalah Muzium (Museum Journal ) yang mengandungi makalah-makalah sains dan yang berfaedah kepada muzium-muzium ;
- (h) Menyusun pameran-pameran sementara di Muzium-muzium, di Perhentian Keretapi, Kuala Lumpur dan di Lapangan Terbang Antarabangsa ;



4. Extracted from the chapter on Muzium Negara - pg. 281, Anggaran Belanjawan Kerajaan Persekutuan 1973.

- (i) Meminjamkan bahan-bahan untuk pameran-pameran di sekolah-sekolah dan menyusun ceramah-ceramah dan syarahan-syarahan ;
- (j) Mengadakan alat-alat kemudahan bagi kelas Seni Lukis Kanak-Kanak; dan
- (k) Mengadakan kemudahan-kemudahan dan membantu lain-lain pertubuhan kebudayaan untuk mempamerkan bahan-bahan pungutan mereka.

5. The Role of Muzium Negara, the present role of the National Art Gallery and the GAP.

5.1 The present situation leaves a great deal of contemporary cultural Practices which reflect the sensibility of the time within a " no-man's land " which is not systematically and seriously ' supervise ' by any of the two institutions. The natural outcome of modernization such as urbanization, industrialization and modern educational philosophies will inevitably bring about a much greater awareness on contemporaneity and the values it engenders. The collection, recording and documentation of contemporary expression under such conditions, even in their formative stages, will increasingly become valid and imperative. It is only through giving serious consideration to these points that the concept of living art will truly be meaningful.

"THE PROGRESS OF ANY NATION IS RECOGNISED BY ITS CULTURAL ACHIEVEMENTS AT ANY PERIOD, AND THIS HAS BEEN PROVED BY HISTORY " 5

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5. Y.A.B. Perdana Menteri at the opening of the Cultural Congress - August 1971.

PROPOSAL

6. The National Art Gallery – Its new rôle

6.1 It can be deduced from the above-mentioned premise that the most logical step for the National Art Gallery to take in the development of its future is to envision a more exhaustive, multifaceted, democratic institution that places importance on cultural practices generated by a genuine contemporary sensibility which forms the basis of our search for a national identity. Such an institution which will operate on the line of a Museum of Modern Art in a more-advanced country will focus on a more or less complete collection of objects illustrative of this modern History of Art of the country and its immediate neighbours.

6.2 The proposed scope should cover the following areas:

6.2.1 Painting and Sculpture and other practices .Paintings include prints, cartoon, 2 dimensional graphic arts, while sculpture includes installation, 'happening', performance art ,environmental art and street art , site-specific art,conceptual art and multi-media expressions and also Orang Asli sculpture.

6.2.2 Traditional crafts which are influenced by new concept of design, material and technique – e.g.

textile

ceramic

carving

jewellery & silver-smithing

weaving

6.2.3 Photography ,video and films made by artists; art films both experimental and creative , including animation.

- 6.2.4 Fashion and textile design
- 6.2.5 Industrial art
- 6.2.6 Folk and popular art
- 6.2.7 Tribal and traditional art
- 6.2.8 Art expression employing new media
- 6.3 It is proposed that the new name for the Gallery should be Museum of Contemporary Art Malaysia or Muzium Seni Sezaman Malaysia.

7. Constraints :

- 7.1 Whilst any form of duplication between the duties of the National Art Gallery and other institutions with seeming corresponding aim and purpose such as the Muzium Negara and Arkib Negara is to be avoided, some overlapping in areas of interest is not only unavoidable but necessary. It should be pointed out the Gallery's main purpose is to serve as a repository and a centre for the study of contemporary artistic and cultural expressions. For these purposes, the National Art Gallery will have a definite and a unique function to play in the development of this country.
- 7.2 The National Art Gallery Ordinance 1958 states " there is hereby established in the Federal capital of Kuala Lumpur an art gallery, to be called the Balai Seni Lukisan Negara or, in English, the National Art Gallery. The translation of the word "Art" into "Seni Lukisan" which is a semantic inaccuracy will be anomalous with the proposed policy of the Gallery. To facilitate a change of policy the Ordinance will not only have to be updated , but perhaps a more workable and authoritative Charter has to be enacted.

Ismail Zain  
Director/Secretary  
Balai Seni Lukis Negara

August 1973





National Art Gallery

THIS MONUMENT PROJECT IS CONCEIVED OUT OF A NEED TO COMMEMORATE AND HONOUR MALAYSIA'S ACHIEVEMENTS AND TO SERVE AS AN ENDURING TRIBUTE TO THE NATION'S CULTURE, HISTORY, AND LEADERS. THE MONUMENT WILL ALSO SERVE AS A PLACE IN WHICH A TIME CHIP, DOCUMENTING A NATION'S JOURNEY OF KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF HUMANITY, SHALL RESIDE.

# ***national millennium monument design competition***

SUBMISSION  
15TH SEPTEMBER 2000

PRIZE  
1ST: RM 100,000  
AND 5% CONSTRUCTION  
DESIGN SUPERVISION FEE  
FROM TOTAL PROJECT COST  
2ND: RM 50,000  
3RD: RM 25,000



THE COMPLETE CONSTRUCTION AND DEDICATION FOR THIS MONUMENT IS SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST 2001.



**BEST COPY**

**AVAILABLE**

Variable print quality



The National Millennium Monument Design Competition is intended to serve as a tribute to Malaysia's unique and totally individualised vision for our culture and future. It shall represent our sense of solidarity and offer a place of memory and contemplation for all people. Many discussions were held since the proposal was submitted by The National Art Gallery, the visual arts agency of the Ministry of Culture Arts and Tourism, and until the launch of this competition.

This project is our nation's commitment to develop a high quality public domain for the new Administrative Centre of the Federal Government of Malaysia, Putrajaya. The purpose of the competition is also to strengthen and enhance the civic nature of this location, now also known as the Model Garden City of Malaysia.

The design competition is open to all Malaysian individuals and professionals including artists, designers, urban designers, landscape architects, interior designers and architects. The complete construction and dedication for this monument is scheduled for August 2001.

## SUBMISSIONS

- A** In addition to a completed Submission form (A, B & C), a 1: 10 to 1:50 scaled model and written artists statement, the following will be required.
- B** A maximum of six images either prints or transparencies illustrating the exterior and some interior views if any, of the monument. All images submitted will be scanned and should be no larger than 297mm x 210mm (A4). Digital images are preferable and can be emailed or sent as an enclosure on floppy disc, or CD and should comply with the following requirements: Jpeg, Tiff, EPS @72 dpi and a maximum size of 514 pixels x 370 pixels per image. All emails with image attachments should state clearly the name of proposal and the number of attachments.
- C** The following drawings are required and should be reproduced in A4 size (297mmx210mm) at a 1:10 to 1:50 scale which should be clearly marked:
  - i** site plan showing relationship with immediate surroundings;
  - ii** other supporting conceptual, perspective and elevation drawings; and
  - iii** diagrammatic sections or axonometric drawings showing environmental control strategy, if possible.

**SUBMISSION:**  
**BEFORE 4 P.M. ON FRIDAY,**  
**15TH SEPTEMBER 2000**

**JUDGING:**  
**28TH, 29TH & 30TH**  
**SEPTEMBER 2000**

**AWARD**  
**PRESENTATION:**  
**OCTOBER 2000**

**LAUNCHING:**  
**AUGUST 2001**

## LOCATION

In determining a construction venue for the monument, The NMM Committee selected Malaysia's first Intelligent Garden City, the Putrajaya, located in Sepang, Selangor. The city covers 4,581 hectares of undulating terrain, with five confluence which meet at the north forming a main waterway which flows across the city area.

**The Monument can be located in one of the parks, bridges or lakes in this modern city. It will be placed within a site that is in harmony with nature and, at the same time, easily accessible to the public.**

Entrants are invited to propose a site within the Putrajaya for the construction of the monument.



The design competition is aimed at stimulating artistic ideas from individuals and groups by identifying a new and truly unique design form that is strong and emblematic of Malaysian culture and history.

The theme is based on the notions of the Malaysian / Nusantara character. The proposed form should have a local or regional aesthetic sensibility, with a pronounced sense of identity and historical continuity. The monument should serve as a counter balance of several forces -- the material with the spiritual, the technological with the natural, the futuristic with the traditional. **Overall, the judging will be based on the design's environmental and aesthetic impact and its relevance to contemporary living.**

Proposals should take into consideration the relation of the monument as a built environment within the city in its entirety. The judges will be looking for evidence of environmental commitment, which balances economic development with socio-cultural responsibility.

A submission form must be fully completed, signed and dated by the Entrant. Emailed submissions will be deemed signed. The proposals submitted should be in the form of a Maquette supported by technical and conceptual drawings.

A shortlist of twelve submissions will be considered for the Prize. Shortlisted entrants will be invited to an interview on the 30th September 2000. The announcement and awards presentation will be held at the National Art Gallery at a later date. The Monument should be completed by August 2001.

## THE PRIZES

The following prizes will be awarded:

1st: RM 100,000 and 5% design supervision fee from total project cost. 2nd: RM 50,000 and 3rd: RM 25,000

## THE JURY

The jury members will comprise of two international judges and three local Judges, who shall preside from the 28th to the 30th September to be held at The National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur.

Registration is free. The registration form is available in print and is also downloadable from the National Art Gallery website. Please direct any further enquiries to: <http://www.artgallery.org.my>



## TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- 1 On entering the 'National Millennium Monument Competition', the 'Entrants' (the person, persons or organization entering the competition) agree to be bound by the terms and conditions defined below and the National Art Gallery shall only accept Submissions on these basis.
- 2 Entrants must submit the necessary materials to take part in the competition to The National Art Gallery (refer to Item 7). For the avoidance of doubt, this clause does not transfer intellectual property rights of the Submission which include, but art not limited to, copyright or design rights.
- 3 The National Art Gallery shall give due care to all Submissions. However, it shall not, in any circumstance, accept responsibility for the loss, damage or corruption of or to Submissions upon receipt or in transit. The National Art Gallery will not be responsible for the return of any Submissions. These should be withdrawn by the Entrant or by a duly authorized representative after the final judging, the date of which will be later specified.
- 4 The Entrant grants the National Art Gallery and its agent or agents non-exclusive reproduction rights to use the Submission for purposes it sees fit, including broadcasting advertising and promotion publicity. Reproduction of the Submission in part or in whole may include print scanning and other electronic media, and alteration of the Submission for the purpose of reproduction.
- 5 By entering a Submission, the Entrant warrants that it is the legal owner of all-intellectual property rights (which include, but are not limited to, any copyright or design rights) and moral rights of the Submission, or that the appropriate permission and licenses have been granted from the relevant third party. The National Art Gallery shall not be responsible for any failure by the Entrant to ensure that ownership or use by license of intellectual property rights has not been arranged and the Entrants accept any liability of whatever kind resulting from this.
- 6 In the event of any claim by a third party that the use of the Submission infringes third party rights, the Entrant who entered the submission shall pay, satisfy, discharge and fulfill all costs, claims and expenses, liabilities and obligations of whatever kind relating to such a claim and shall indemnify the National Art Gallery against them.
- 7 Each Submission must be signed and failure to do so renders the Submission ineligible. Submissions made by electronic mail are the exception and are deemed signed for these purposes by virtue of having been submitted. Submissions must be completed correctly and the National Art Gallery reserves the right not to accept the Submission if it is filed in incorrectly.
- 8 The judges to this Competition have been selected by virtue of their expertise and in judging, shall use their absolute discretion. Their decision will be deemed final.
- 9 The National Art Gallery reserves the right to withdraw one or more Submissions from the judging process at any time and for whatever reason.
- 10 The National Art Gallery reserves the right to change the Submission deadline and timetable for whatever reason. The National Art Gallery will endeavour to inform all Entrants of these changes. Furthermore, the National Art Gallery may terminate this Competition before judgement is made and it will endeavour to notify Entrants of the termination and, where possible, provide an explanation of such a termination.
- 11 The prize for the winning entrant is RM100,000 and 5% construction design supervision fee from total project cost.
- 12 Shortlisted entrants will be required to meet with the panel of judges. They should be prepared to supply further information such as environmental reports, additional images, or other evidence to support the Submission proposal.



## **APPENDIX 3**

### **GUIDELINES TO PUBLIC ART POLICY**

### **3. Proposal for A Standardise Public Art Policy**

#### **3.1 Introduction:**

A dedicated Public Art Policy can provide a framework for Malaysia to create a process for increasing the range of opportunities to initiate, develop and implement public art projects both within the Local Authority services and those of external bodies. Public art cuts across a wide range of the city's service areas including Planning, Economic Development, Tourism, Housing, Leisure, Environment, Education and Community Planning. As part of the overall service delivery of the Local Authority, it will attract investment and funding, enhance and complement the environment, bring communities together, offer social and educational opportunities and promote tourism. A policy must be developed in recognition of the potential for developing Public Art in Malaysia.

From commemorating important events in the country's history or representing the local culture, public art in Malaysia today made a profound contribution to public life, adding extraordinary elements to the cityscape and improving public spaces. It has been the goal of public art to respond to the country's diverse communities and much of the artwork has been created in active response to the character and history of the Malaysia multi-cultural background.

Public art policy in Malaysia has to conform to the Malaysia Laws and Policy on Culture and the Malaysia National Art Gallery enactment (ACT 516) which dictates some consideration in the formulation of a new art policy. This is because the social structure of Malaysian society has required the policy to be more concerned and sensitive towards the needs of different ethnic groups. Hence the main criteria for any form of art to be valued, is to understand how art can play an important role in developing good contact and close



relationship between people of different cultures, foster unity between races and solidarity in the country.

Apart from providing guidance to any person or organisation wishing to commission public art in the country, the purpose of the Public Art Policy provides a description of ‘how and why’ public art is an essential part of developing a conducive and positive built environment. This assists the potential commissioners, artists and general Malaysian public to develop an understanding of the concept of Public Art and how it can improve the quality of life of communities. It also provides pro-active strategic planning and guidelines for the initiation of the Public Art Policy objectives, aims and values. A Public Art Policy offer:

- A formal statement provides a consistent and coherent approach to public art across the authority, and with growing levels of private investment in new development and regeneration schemes within the country. The adoption of a comprehensive guideline would maximise the potential public art outcomes through public and private development.
- Public Art policy can attract modest additional funds to the development process, and more significantly can strengthen funding applications for major regeneration/development projects.
- Investment in Public Art encourages sustainable cultural activity through the employment of local artists, encouraging the professionally qualified artists working in Malaysia to participate and help the growth of art in the country.
- Expectations with regard to the quality of environmental improvements and cultural provision in Malaysia are growing with its regeneration. The programme will make a significant contribution to the creation of high quality spaces and buildings, raising the standard of living for residents and making the area generally more attractive to new employers/investors and employees.

- Public Art is a key indicator for quality business sites, enabling them to compete effectively for inward investment against competition within the wider region.
- Failure to resolve future resources and responsibility for the public art programme will limit its short-term effectiveness, sustainability as an initiative, and the long-term benefit of its legacy.

### **3.2. Guidelines to a Malaysian Public Art Policy**

A comprehensive Malaysian public art policy is synonymous with positive growth in public art and when considering future public art projects which will result in artworks of high calibre. It is also determined through existing planning objectives that have involved extensive local input and research. This can be achieved through the installation of local artist's work in the public domain that reflects Malaysia's environment and society. Public art must be integral part of future commercial, retail and industrial development and planning for open spaces. The scope of art in the public domain will be embraced to include commissioned sculptures, digital art, water features, murals, mosaics, paintings, banners, functional objects (such as sculptural seats, playgrounds, hand railings, bollards, community notice boards, bike racks, gates etc) and urban design elements. It will also involve community projects that focus as much on the process of making as the end result, in particular the connection of residents from different language groups and cultural backgrounds. Other themes identified are local culture, energy and movement, sporting history, floras and faunas, transport, food and the environment.

Themes provide linking mechanisms within the community, increasing opportunities for education, social unity and understanding. A diverse range and scale of artwork will be explored, from large monumental works to small sculptures for all to enjoy. Temporary artworks will contribute to the evolving urban canvas and can include outdoor exhibitions,

changing murals, banners, sculptures and projects that encourage continuing community involvement. While a wide range of public and private sector agencies and organisations deliver public art voluntarily, local planning authorities can also encourage property developers to include artworks in schemes requiring planning permission. Empowerment, however, requires an appropriate policy to be included in the Local or Federal Development Plan. Many of the objectives, contained within these documents on the environment, community development, employment and so on, relate to quality of life issues; public art has a strong role to play within the delivery of these. Public Art policies can be further developed in Community Plans and in Supplementary Planning Guidance such as Planning Briefs for individual sites.

It is important to have a public art strategy, which places public art within the planning and development process and which is complementary to good urban and building design and which clearly identifies how artists can engage with the environment. In order to start the process rolling, an audit should be undertaken to establish what has already taken place and what is planned and, where possible, an evaluation of the impact of the projects in relation to the effectiveness or otherwise of the development.

Alongside this, a series of advocacy or awareness-raising seminars for key elected members and staff should be organised, in order to establish how public art can contribute to the aims and objectives of the Local Authority in delivering its services. Public art policies work best if they are viewed as a corporate policy; they may be integrated with a public realm strategy and should be always be a component of a cultural strategy. Therefore, it is important that all departments within the authority are involved and feel a sense of ownership not only for the strategy but also in terms of its delivery.

In order to do this, a steering group should be convened which represents the various departments. The remit of this group will be to identify what work needs to be carried out to construct the brief and to monitor its progress and outcomes. This group will also be vital in ensuring that the recommendations put forward are capable of being implemented effectively by all the departments affected. It is also important to identify someone who will help steer the aims and ambitions of the group through the process of getting the policy adopted.

In addition to officers, the steering group should include some elected members who will be able to offer guidance and support. The group should have sufficient status to ensure that the appropriate committees take on board the recommendation it makes. It is also essential that opportunities for public comment or involvement are built into the discussions and subsequent recommendations. Unless the expertise can be identified in-house, the drafting of the policy will necessitate the appointment of a specialist public art consultant or agency. The brief for this consultancy needs to be carefully considered and, once appointed, the consultant should be fully supported by the steering group in terms of access to information, key officers, contacts and consultation/discussion groups. The consultant should also be given an opportunity to present the final document in person, in order to contextualise the findings and recommendations and to be able to debate any issues which arise.

Once the public art policy has been agreed, there needs to be someone responsible for implementing it. It may be feasible to extend the remit of an existing member of staff or a new post may have to be established. Alternatively, an external specialist or public art agency could be used or an independent agency or trust could be created.

Raising awareness about the policy will be a key aim in implementing it. In order to do this, a further series of training or seminars may be necessary to ensure that officers responsible for delivering the policy, working on design briefs and supplementary planning guidance and

negotiating the Percent for Art policy feel confident and able to do so. It will also be necessary to establish a 'public art group' who will be responsible for overseeing its implementation, advising on opportunities and briefs and advising on applications which are submitted. Monitoring and evaluation is a key component of any policy. This should be done on an annual basis and consideration should also be given to reviewing the policy every five years.

### **3.3. Objectives for a Public Art Policy in Malaysia**

1. To promote and develop public art in its broadest sense, embracing all forms of public art including temporary and performance based projects where appropriate as well as cutting edge works.
2. To implement "Percent for Art" programme on the Local Council's own building and open space capital works, whenever possible, aiming for achievement of at least two percent of any development budget.
3. To promote and ensure that a best practice approach is applied to all local council public art commissions in particular encouraging the involvement of artists at the earliest stages possible of design processes.
4. To promote the commissioning of public art by other developers through the planning process.
5. To promote the use of best practice in commissioning public art by other developers, in particular encouraging the involvement of artists at the earliest stages possible of design processes.
6. To support other developers to implement best practise guidelines in commissioning public art where necessary.
7. To develop ownership of public art by including the wider community, as an integral part of all public art projects. At the very least, community consultation should be carried out. However preference should be given to projects which actively involve community members.
8. To raise awareness of the public art that already exists in Malaysia cities and developments and of new public art projects and commissions.



9. To continue to build upon the Local Authorities' strong track record of encouraging public art projects that reflects the identity and heritage of the area/city/development and its residents.

### **3.4. Budgets and Funding**

A budget for the public art project should be drawn up at the start of any project and appropriate sources of funding identified. In most instances the 'Percent for Art' should be introduced in the country to fund for public art programme. The 'Percent for Art' could be used by the Local Councils in the absence of a dedicated funding specifically available for public art projects. Therefore, funding for public art projects must be identified from other sources. The possible sources are:

- Existing budgets for works that can incorporate a public art element (lighting schemes, signage, street furniture).
- 'Percent for Art' on the council's own building and open space capital works.
- 'Percent for Art' on new building and landscaping schemes by private developers.
- Public art funding via schemes such as "Awards for Art in Public Places"
- Regeneration funding
- Sponsorship from private bodies
- Collaborations with other public bodies and private organisations in which resources can be shared.

The outline of various elements that should be considered when preparing a budget for a public art project budget must include the following:

#### **3.4.1 Administration**

This might include administration time, postage, photocopying, etc.

#### **3.4.2 Project Management**

This might include the costs of employing a project manager or of reallocating staff time to manage a public art project.

### **3.4.3 Advertising/Recruitment**

This includes the costs for any posts relevant to the project. This could be the project manager, the artist or anyone else involved. Costs might include adverts in relevant press, expenses for applicants, recruitment costs including administration and salary costs.

### **3.4.4 Expenses**

Examples of expenses could be travel and subsistence for the selection panel if applicable (especially if involving members of the community) or community groups taking part in the project.

### **3.4.5 Selection Fees**

This is a small fee for short listed artists to give a presentation to the panel. The fee can include travel expenses, presentation expenses and expenses/time for creating a small model of their suggested design.

### **3.4.6 Community Involvement**

This can be included in the artist's fee or can be included as a separate element of the project or a mixture of both. When included as an element of the artist fee, the artist will control this element of the budget. The cost might include administration, hire of facilities and materials and staffing costs of workshops

### **3.4.7 Design and Production**

Most artists will request an upfront payment to cover materials at the very least and this will be followed with either further payment installations and/or a final payment on completion of the project. Payment arrangements should be agreed at the contract stage. A means of monitoring progress of work before instalments are paid should be organised if necessary. The costs of design and production will depend on processes used and materials used. Advice should be sought when preparing the project brief if necessary.

### **3.4.8 Installation**

This can be included in the artist's fee or can be included as a separate element of the project or a mixture of both. When included as an element of the artist fee, the artist

will control this element of the budget. Installation costs should also include transport of artwork to the site, insurance costs for the installation process if necessary, hire of equipment needed for installation etc.

#### **3.4.9 Advocacy and Awareness**

This might include many different ways of promoting the artwork and any additional community elements of projects. Advocacy and awareness should be considered before, during and after the project takes place. Cost effective ways of promoting the project can be local press releases, press photo calls and use of existing websites and publications.

#### **3.4.10 Signage**

Costs of a plaque or other form of interpretation for public art should be included in the main budget. Either the commissioner or the artist could carry out the role of organising the interpretation.

#### **3.4.11 Maintenance and Cleaning**

Maintenance costs will need to be forecast and appropriate sources of funds to cover these identified. This could be from existing maintenance budgets if possible. The artist's advice should be sought when forecasting maintenance costs. The responsibility for maintenance and cleaning needs to be agreed at the start of the project.

#### **3.4.12 Decommissioning**

If the artwork is temporary, a decommissioning cost should be included in the main project budget. This will include the removal of the artwork.

### **3.5 Introduction to the Percent for Art Scheme**

This term refers to a widely used funding mechanism for public art projects. 'Percent for Art' means setting aside a proportion of the capital cost of building and environmental schemes for the inclusion of work by artists and craftspeople. Normal practice is to encourage the public or private sector developer to set aside a recommended value of two percent of the

budget, but this amount can increase or decrease depending upon the size, nature and scale of the project. Percent for Art schemes encourage the artist or craftsperson to be involved at the very beginning of the design process. This ensures a cohesive and fully integrated scheme. It can also be cost effective as the artist can work within existing capital budgets. Requirements with regard to initial preparation and installation can be specified in advance to the main contractor.

It's important to remember that Percent for Art is only a mechanism for funding visual arts and craft activity. So, in order to use it effectively, it should be employed in the context of a wider public art strategy adopted by an authority. It should not be viewed as the only way of encouraging commissions. Local Authorities can adopt a Percent for Art policy for their own capital schemes and where the sale of its own property or land is involved. In order to encourage private developers, an authority has to be seen to lead by example.

It is also helpful to produce a guidance note for developers about public art and Percent for Art and how it benefits them and how to go about developing a public art commissioning plan for their development. Once the principle has been established and accepted, it should make assistance available to those who wish to commission work. One way of doing this is to set up a resource which can give advice on every aspect of commissioning: budgets, contracts, examples of projects and how to identify artists. The need for access to professional expertise in the form of a public art consultant or project manager should also be recognised and information made available as to who can undertake this sort of work.

The overall benefits to the community and the environment of including public art provision in development projects are widely recognised and, by raising a development's profile and increasing its attractiveness to occupiers, may also enhance its investment value too

### **3.6. Commissioning Process**

Aims and objectives should be set for each public art project to establish why a piece of art is being commissioned, what is hoped to be achieved and who will be involved in the process.

Aims and objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and within a set time constraints.

Artists should be appointed at the earliest stage possible in any public art project or development which includes public art to ensure that their work can be fully integrated and that they can advise on the development of the project. Hence an artist's brief must be drawn up. This should establish timescale, the artist's role, contract stages, ownership and copyright including designs and models, public liability and child protection requirements where necessary. It should also set out the artist's role in consultation and evaluation. Depending upon the project's aims and objectives, the initial artist's brief can focus on a process or approach to a public art project rather than the outcome. This can allow a very creative way of working and allows for the inclusion of community ideas and even community participation in design and creation.

A selection panel should be established involving appropriate stakeholders and professional advisors. The Local Council will seek to provide advice and support where appropriate for developers and other partners with regards to the commissioning process. Equal opportunities should be applied throughout the commissioning process.

### **3.7. Community Involvement**

Community involvement encourages ownership of completed artworks. This can add to the identity of an area, positive local feeling about a piece of artwork. It can also result in a



reduction in vandalism suffered by artworks. The community involvement should range from the consultation of the project to full participation in design and even production of public art, when possible. It is recommended that the level of community involvement in any public art project should be as high as possible. Levels of involvement in a project correlate directly to the community's sense of ownership.

Opportunities for local artists to benefit from the project in terms of training, mentoring or other forms of continuous professional development should be considered when developing any community involvement element of a public art project. When planning community involvement, accessibility to all members of the community should be considered and equal opportunities policies applied. Community involvement can have a wider reaching emphasis that just the art itself and this should be considered at the outset of the project.

### **3.8 How can the Local Authority Implement a Public Art policy?**

Firstly, the Local Authority should act as an exemplar for private development by integrating high quality, well resourced and managed public art and design into all major schemes. This principle should be enshrined in guidelines provided to architects and landscape designers contracted by the authority.

Secondly, clear guidance for private developers should be included in the Local Plan and other relevant policy documents, requiring the incorporation of public art and design into planning applications for all medium/large commercial or residential developments, and to liaise with a specially appointed Public Art Officer. Although the Public Art Officer will provide support for this process by maintaining a database of suitable artists, drawing up shortlists, drafting contracts and maintenance schedules, developing community consultation

strategies etc, the success of the Public Art programme relies as always on a wider understanding of the process and an enthusiasm for high-quality developments. This essential co-operation between departments has been established but could be jeopardised by disagreement over responsibility for insurance excesses and maintenance, and this issue requires immediate resolution.

### **3.9 Employment of Public Art Officer**

The employment of a Public Art Officer to deliver outcomes, generate external funding opportunities, partnerships and funding solutions is important. At present, Local Authority is reliant on advices given by their officers from the Landscape Department or occasionally from the Malaysian National Art Gallery (also acting as the Art Council in Malaysia), to implement planning. The duties of the present advisors are arbitrary, which does not cover all aspects of cultural development for Malaysia, limiting the number of projects that can be undertaken.

The proposed Public Art Officer will report to the Director of the Local Authority. Once in position, the Public Art Officer should produce a business plan based on this document to demonstrate how it will be implemented. If Local Authority is unable to employ an officer in this position the planned activities for the next five years will need to be modified. It is proposed that a significant portion of this officer's duties will be the management of a Public Art Program, which will involve community members, increase community ownership and maximise Local Authority's resources.

### **3.10 Guidelines for Private Developers**

The most effective point for the inclusion of public art and design occurs as new developments are in the earliest stages of planning. This widens the range of approaches that can be taken, increases the opportunity for community engagement and maximises the potential for developing unique spaces that engender community pride and a sense of ownership. The Public Art officer needs to be made aware of new developments and involvement at the pre application stage is desirable. Development control case officers will refer individual cases to the Public Art Officer at the earliest opportunity, and as a fail safe the Public Art Officer receives a copy of the weekly list planning applications received.

The concept of Public Art will be included as part of development briefs. For example, the Local Authority would state the value that Public Art and unique design can bring to any developments. To comply with the policy, the developer will work with the Public Art Officer to ensure the successful integration of commissioned public art and design works within the development proposals. Such proposals shall be submitted and agreed as part of the planning application.

In this way public art becomes a set part of the development, budgeted for and properly integrated into the plan. This policy may be inappropriate for small developments such as individual houses, but should be applied to developments in receipt of public funding, developments that create new public space to be adopted by the Local Authority, developments over sizeable areas that allow public access or have communal areas such as reception foyer, and housing developments of more than fifty dwellings. The route taken to comply with this policy requirement would be negotiated on a case by case basis by the

Public Art Officer in reference to the scale and significance of the proposed development, but would typically follow the 'Percent for Art' scheme.

Clearly the inclusion of Public Art brings additional quality to the development, and provision should therefore be made within the project budget to include this. Public Art is however generally part of public realm works and there is an argument for additional public funding - the Public Art Officer will provide advice to the developer on sources of match funding for arts development.

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **PUTRAJAYA PUBLIC ART ELECTRONIC DATABASE CD**