

THE INTERPRETATION OF SIGNS ON PROJECTION ART OF *VEIL OF AN ARTIST AND A FICTIONAL DIALOGUE*

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Date received: 5 October 2021 / Date accepted: 20 November 2021 / Date published: 30 June 2022

<https://doi.org/10.51200/ga.vi.3833>

ABSTRACT

The form of communication of new media art serves as a vital link between the world of art and the society. The scenario for the advancements of new media art in our country is inadequate in respect of the intellectualism aspects of studies and the knowledge of projection art. As part of this study, projection art in Malaysia will be analysed to see how artists employ technology and visual art semiotics to convey their ideas to audiences effectively. This paper discusses the projection artworks produced by Hasnul Jamal Saidon titled *Veil of an Artist* and *A Fictional Dialogue*. The semiotics approaches which involve in constructing the content analysis semiology and in-depth interviews were utilised to analyse the projection artwork by Hasnul Jamal Saidon. Furthermore, this study aims to discover the value of message that embedded in the projection artworks of Hasnul as well as to interpret the signs and meanings included in each piece of art. According to the research, projection artwork of Hasnul demonstrates the new media and its always changing, intricate ways in which individuals express and interpret in different perspective of the value of the subject, and ideologies of nature, as well as social morality, and conventional standards. Study finding shows that artworks may effectively transmit the intended messages of the artist as well as themes and issues that they addressed regardless of the date or place in which they were produced.

Keywords: Hasnul Jamal Saidon, new media art, projection art, semiotic and signs.

INTRODUCTION

The phrase “new media art” refers to artwork developed with the use of new media technologies. According to several Malaysian artists, there is a substantial difference between art and technology. As a result of these changes, it becomes more difficult to give new options in the new media art field. What’s more worrying is that advancements in the production of art that can be merged with technology are not widely recognised or embraced by the public. There may be a lack of awareness among artists and the general public about the fact that today’s new media art is being incorporated into industry (Mat & Baharuddin, 2016).

According to the author EKİM (2011), video mapping is one of the newest types of media art. In the process of creating more complicated works which employ tech-technologies that retain dynamic interactive features and are capable of construct components similar to those necessary in electronic art, indirect mapping became a new foundation. Artists working with cutting-edge electronic media may serve as examples of how visual and creative language can be employed to create realistic settings on screens. Art in new media, especially electronic art, includes many subcategories under the concept of new media art, including cyberspace and the latest mapping techniques in video, light, and computer art. It is possible to make human work in the current moment while being linked to something new, sophisticated, and technologically advanced, as long as we use a variety of technology.

To prevent perplexing viewers who interpret a work, comprehension of video-generated works is explained via transmitted notions. As a consequence of this method, the public opinion of video media as art has improved significantly in comparison to other kinds of media. Hasnul Jamal Saidon, an expert in electronic art, was chosen as the subject of this study by the researcher. A semiotic analysis was conducted on a selection of his works of art. The analytical stages of Charles S. Peirce’s work were utilised to analyse his work in its entirety.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The arrival of new technologies facilitated the entry of a new generation of art into Malaysia’s art scene in the 1980’s. Malaysia’s art has been influenced by technology on certain occasions throughout history. According to Mumtaz (2018), the Paint Program Era, the Multimedia Era, and the Programmable Computing Period were all significant periods in computer history throughout this computing revolution. As according to Naoko Tosa (2016), mapping project

is a type of art that evokes movement and emotion. Additionally, projection art is a sort of digital art that advances in lockstep with the progress of accessible technology. Projection art is a new visual art form that utilises technology to transform ordinary objects into spectacular visuals by employing high-speed cameras to capture astonishing images of current items. A curated group of photos will be created and presented in a single visual presentation that may include accompanying music.

The research of Panasonic Business (2015) reports that several large events make use of projection mapping technology, which may be used for concerts, musical performances, athletic activities, and other special events. The process of creating projector-mapped graphics requires a large expenditure of time and creative energy. To begin, a high-resolution image of the intended projection surface and its attributes must be captured in order to serve as a template for the artist's following work. Surface components like as graphics and animations may be constructed from the template and included into artist projects. The individuals strolling in front of and behind the pillars of the structure may be challenging to illustrate, especially since their interactions might be convoluted.

According to Head (2012), there are a few terms that apply to outdoor forecasts that include structural projection. These principles overlap and yet also distinguish different approaches to visual projection technology on structures. Outside projection is a broad word that refers to the use of projectors to display video or machine-generated artworks on a large screen, usually a house. This may also apply to non-digital techniques such as dispositive or comparable projections. It is a projection technique that converts practically any surface or object into an unparalleled 3D experience. There is a lot to discover in this area, from structures, buildings, and architectural and design installations to sports, autos, and people. Projection mapping has gained popularity in recent years as a tool for projecting motion pictures at a variety of events and for promoting a company's brand.

The component that must be examined in order to grasp a piece of art is the medium through which it was made, after which the message may be determined. Semiotics "explains to us things we already know in a language we will never grasp" (Paddy Whannel, as cited in Chandler, 2007). Whereas, Hodge and Kress (1988: 1) define semiotics as "a branch of science concerned with the existence and behaviour of signs in society." This explains how visual conveys a message. It provides us with the language necessary to express the things we must say.

Semiology was developed theoretically in the early 20th century by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). It examines the significance of signs as well as a method for delving into the underlying structures of cultural practises in order to unearth hidden meanings. Saussure (1959:16) describes signs as having a “life in society.” This life is divided into two components: the relationship between the signifier that what communicates and makes meaning, as well as the signified which is the meaning itself. As Berger (2019) highlighted, the key insight into their connection is arbitrary. Signs may signify a variety of things, and they are interpreted differently by different individuals. In other words, Saussure emphasised the fact that names are not given to objects before to or concurrent with their naming; otherwise, every name would imply the same meaning across all languages. Nonetheless, Chandler (2007: 14) mentioned that visual signs are certainly not random, notwithstanding the legitimacy of the distinction between written and spoken language.

Semiosis, in Peirce’s model, consists of three components rather than two: sign, object, and interpretant. The sign or representamen is described in the majority of generic definitions as anything that “represents” in the wider definition, the object is what the sign implies before it is interpreted, and the interpretant specifies what a sign means to a specific mind or collection of minds. The three components of a sign and their relationship, as well as the three-part construct and its triadic relationship, combine to generate a coherent concept. The sign is both a subject and a symbol for the object it represents, and it is meaningless until it is interpreted.

Semiotics has benefited artists by providing a means of comprehending the visual world. It enables us to communicate our understanding of cultural values, to form a meaningful language, and to establish a meaningful relationship with the audience through the artwork. Brian Curtin (2009) noted that when treated as such, visual representations may function as text-like metaphors, and it’s critical to keep in mind that verbal models might impede our perception of visual imagery while judging a work of art. For instance, a sign is made of numerous components. A word is born as a result of the appearance of a sign. Images do not follow the same set of restrictions as words, which makes it more difficult to figure out what an image is attempting to portray. In contrast to a dictionary, illustrations do not create the same links between words and their intended meanings. Frequently, images have associations with the concepts they express. According to Potts (1996: 24-26), since the image’s interpretation was communicated through words, we may conceive a variety of additional visual elements, each with its own distinct meaning.

METHODOLOGY

An art research framework based on qualitative research will be carried out to explore, analyse, and interpret the projection artwork of Hasnul Jamal Saidon. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research entails examining and analysing signs in their natural context to better understand or interpret events in terms of the meaning humans attach to them. This research approach is associated with this statement.

Based on this study, the researcher employed Charles S. Peirce's semiotic theory model and a rubrics form to identify concepts, analyse signs, and interpret values in the projection artworks of Hasnul (Figure 1).

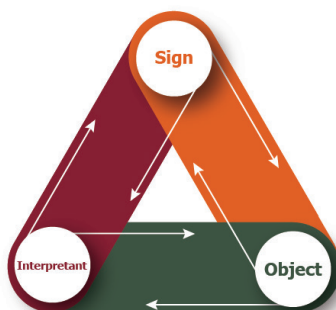


Figure 1 Semiotic Triangle Approaches by Charles S. Peirce (Hardwick & Cook, 1977)

With reference to the semiotic triangle approach mentioned above, Peirce's model is divided into triadic separation which is the "sign," "the object," and "the interpretant" (Chandler, 2007). A Sign is something that may be recognised by the human senses. It is feasible that the presence of the sign will elicit the interpretant in the mind of a person as a sign that is similar to it. As a consequence, the meaning of a sign can only be fully understood if it is connected to the relevant object. Whereas the Object to which the sign refers is a notion understood by the sign reader as "reality" or anything that is regarded existing. The object is the item to which a sign refers, and the interpretant is "not the interpreter; rather, it is the sense generated by the sign" (Chandler, 2007), which is the meaning transmitted by the sign about the object that was once unintelligible but is now imparted. The relationship between signals, contexts, and meanings may be identified, described, and interpreted as long as all three of these components are reciprocally connected, as illustrated by arrows lines directions. In other words, the semiotic interpretation model explains that interpretation consists of three separate components processes that are all interrelated.

The first step of interpretation is to connect with or communicate something as a representation of reality. According to this viewpoint, identifying the parts that comprise a work of art that has the potential to become a symbol or sign, whether as a study subject, medium, technique, or creative element, is a key aspect of the process of interpretation, as it may be utilised to decode hidden meanings.

The next phase in the interpretative process is to describe and explain what has occurred, taking into account external elements, or context, in order to grasp a sign completely. As a result, some familiarity with the circumstance is required to adequately comprehend the meaning or intention behind the existence of a sign in the context of a projection artwork. Lastly, this ultimate purpose of interpretation necessitates some kind of translation and meaning transmission. By revealing the message's substance or meaning, translation shows what is being transmitted. Signs that are relevant or that can be interpreted in a certain context assist audiences in better understanding and in bringing the meaning or substance of a work of art to the forefront of their minds.

Interpretation of Signs on Projection Artworks of *Veil of An Artist and A Fictional Dialogue Veil of an Artist (Hijab Seorang Pelukis) 2005-2011*

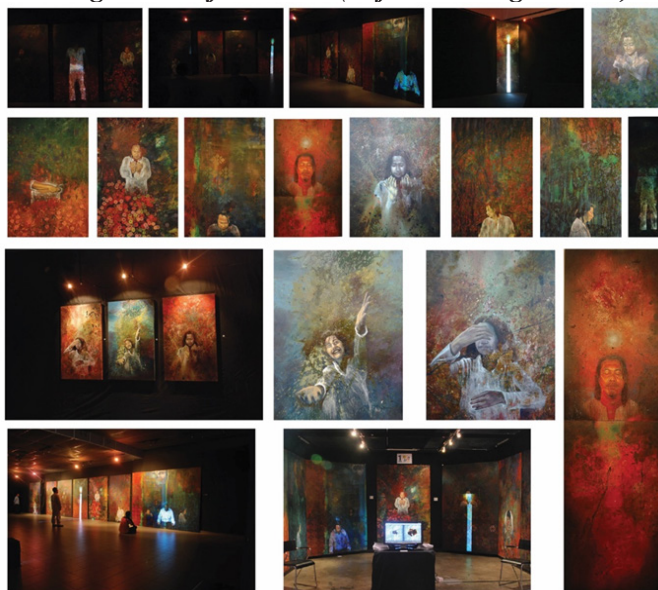


Figure 1 Installation view of *Veil of An Artist (Hijab Seorang Pelukis)* (2005-2011) Fine Arts, Painting, projection mapping

Title	<i>Veil of an Artist (Hijab Seorang Pelukis)</i>
Year	2005-2011
Material	Video Installation
Exhibition	Chandan Gallery, Publika, Kuala Lumpur, July 2013, and at the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum (FAAM), Fukuoka, Japan, October 2013.
Collection	Artist

This exhibition has 16 mixed media paintings that are all inspired with an abstract expressionism style and realism in the sense of an abstract design model derived from Eastern traditional aesthetic language. The artworks include “Standing,” “Ask,” “Submit” and “Letting Go,” “Peace,” “Embrace,” “Me in You,” “Map of Soul,” and others. The works of Hasnul incorporate a variety of mediums, including paintings, interactive media, and installation videos.



(i)



(ii)



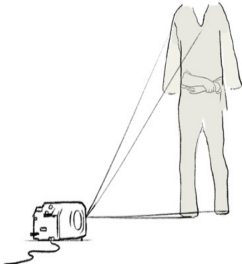
Photo 1 (i) *Standing (Mendiri)* (2010), (ii) *Artwork Standing (Mendiri)* with projection

Source: Hasnul Jamal Saidon (2013)

There is an image of two crossed arms clad in white in the artwork of “Standing.” The garment is embellished with branch and floral embellishments. However, this branch extends from the bottom end of the background and the flowers densely packed at the bottom portion of the artwork. Expressionist style is used to accentuate the background. Hasnul used the installation form and video projection system components in this piece to display a moving image onto the artwork.

The exhibition *Veil of an Artist* explores issues of cultural identity, representational crises, and self-discovery in the context of globalisation and the emergence of information technology through a hybrid of painting and projection art. It is through the creation of these works that an attempt is being made to dismantle the false dualism of the divider between the physical and ethereal, or between the visibly seen subject and object.

Table 1 Semiotic analysis *Veil of an Artist* (2005-2011)

No.	Sign	Object	Interpretant
1	Arm crossed	 <p>Both arms are folded together at right angles to an upright across the chest.</p>	Self-reflection in which one experiences resistance, pressure, anxiousness, uncertainty, fear, or reacts to discomfort in the painting.
2	Motif of flowers	 <p>A pattern which has an arrangement of repeated or corresponding parts, decorative motifs of flowers.</p>	Flower patterns that embody a sense of harmony in collaboration with the background.
3	Projection of a man	 <p>A moving image of a man in form of shining a light appear on a surface of the painting.</p>	Reflect the diverse nature and distinct characteristics of the man.

Hasnul depicts his personal struggle as “painting” artist by taking off his veil by using the projection as an object in this artwork. Portrait perspective is used to depict the inner self as an unchanging, immobile, distinct, and steady objecting exercise to suggest the inner self to be rekindled in these works of art. In a metaphorical sense, the projection serves as a trigger to reveal the unpredictability of an immutable subject in a painting. The source of light acts as the catalyst for its projection, functioning as an act and example of transforming into a new veil capable of eliciting our feeling of identity.

This *Veil of an Artist* expresses identification with many types of self-importance as one way of commenting on the constancy in creating a feeling of connection and unity to those who look to it for guidance and direction. A projector is used to display moving pictures of Hasnul, which can be seen in his self-portraits and moving images of himself that are projected. Coming through the veils is seen as the way people identify themselves is greatly impacted by their present surroundings, whether they describe themselves in terms of social roles and relationships or as physical features and skills. It is crucial to take into account an individual’s values, opinions, perceptions, and thoughts about themselves as a whole.

Personal development requires research and commitment in order to create the self-identity. According to Hasnul, having a firm grasp on one’s own values might assist in defining one’s sense of self. In other words, values determine the characteristics that you value in yourself and others. Hasnul’s persistence and determination in identifying and establishing his own identity helped him to see and appreciate his own inner worth, regardless of the constraints of physical attributes or perspectives, social role, ability, or position.

A Fictional Dialogue (1997)



Photo 3 Installation view of *A Fictional Dialogue* (1997) animation, film, fine arts

Title	<i>A Fictional Dialogue (Dialog Fiksiyen)</i>
Year	1997
Material	Computer animation in video projection on a corner of a gallery wall
Exhibition/	1st. Electronic Art Show, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, 1997
Duration	About 5' loop
Collection	Artist



Animated video loops playing in time with the sounds of the dialogue are shown in a corner of the exhibition space as part of *A Fictional Dialogue*. The general emphasis of the piece has been shifted by projecting a beam of light or moving images onto a wall corner. As a consequence, the focus point and presentation style allow to be creatively reoriented. It demonstrates how projection affects the media's ability to influence public attitudes.



Photo 4 Hasnul is performing in front of *A Fictional Dialogue* in corner of wall captured by TC Liew
Source: Hasnul Jamal Saidon (2013).

In *A Fictional Dialogue*, matrix words in many languages are shown on the screen as they move across the screen. An animated text looping movie is projected onto a cornered wall, and a figure moves about within the video while it loops for five minutes at a time. Brown, Lewis and Harclerod (1977) described the animated video as a fast presentation of a static image sequence that provides the motion illusion. Simultaneously time, Brown, Lewis and Harclerod (1977: 232) referred to it as a sequence of movies created from still pictures that, when projected, provide the impression of movement. A repeat of the matrix phrases in the film creates horizontal lines across the wall by bringing them into foreground.

Table 2 Semiotic Analysis *A Fictional Dialogue* (1997)

No.	Sign	Object	Interpretant
1	Projection of the image of matrix words	 <p>A moving image of matrix words in various languages with a silhouette man was projected horizontal at the edge of the corner.</p>	The images of matrix words in various languages with a silhouette man projected in the corner of the exhibition which interpret as man is being cornered and squeezed by the mass media.
2	An animated text looping video	 <p>5 minutes durations of an animated matrix words of text in the image were moving horizontal as the Cathode-Ray Tube screen resolution.</p>	The images of matrix words in various languages in the form of animated video interpret as the narrative of questioning our own identity and self-awareness in vivid media scene.

The theme of *A Fictional Dialogue* discussed the idea of how a person might lose sight of himself or herself while immersed in a heavily saturated media environment. People able to get confused because of their interactions with mainstream media. They may have lost track of their own identity if they allow themselves to get taken away by the media. It is certain that they will lose themselves if they take their involvement seriously and immerse themselves blindly. It metaphoric that Individuals may get submerged in a media ocean. Hasnul describes the ocean of media as a horizontally moving text. Horizontal lines are a slang term for the resolution used in older television broadcasts that used horizontal lines. Hasnul Jamal Saidon intends to use CRT tube technology, which provides resolution depending on coding into his work. By questioning his own identity and self-awareness, Hasnul broadens this interpretation to include the question of whether media is made by us or if the media has forged us, given that the artworks try to locate a saturated media environment and to keep it to its ground.



Photo 5 *Fictional Dialogue* (1997) from another angle

Source: Hasnul Jamal Saidon (2013)

A Fictional Dialogue is about a person who is metaphorically drowning in a sea of media and ends up in the middle of a media-saturated environment. It is human nature to be able to lose control of emotions like rage, depravity, and secretion. It may possibly be losing its sense of self and has unintentionally been overlooked in certain ways. While Hasnul Jamal Saidon's work was more than just a criticism of media technology at the time, it was also a call to action.

In 1997, according to Hasnul Jamal Saidon, Malaysian politics was in a state of flux. Political democracy is prominently portrayed in the media, despite the fact that the media is primarily devoted to presenting fiction intended to deceive the people. *A Fictional Dialogue* metaphor is used as a dialogue, but ultimately the dialogue is just a fiction. Despite the fact that it seemed as there was a debate, yet no discussion was made. It's a critique of the media that makes use of the metaphor of being "squeezed" or "cornered" by it. A person's character is portrayed in the media. The media uses these narratives to corner individuals. Even if individuals don't fit the stereotype, it's difficult for them to avoid it. Due to mainstream media that smother people with this stereotypical and narrative portrayal, humans have lost their individuality. Humanity has been stifled by the narratives of those in power. Our image was sculpted by those in positions of power and leadership who created a fiction about who we are.

In order to rouse the society, Hasnul utilises the video as a medium of activism. Hasnul Jamal Saidon now understands that mastering the way people think and feel via the employment of media and media technologies with capital mastery necessitates mastering the way people think and feel. He noticed that the media's role in disseminating knowledge about these societies, countries, and economies.

The core of a conquering force is a universal power that affects the whole world. It's not just a single village, but a large network. As Ismail Zain previously said in the catalogue named "Digital Collage," media might influence a user's behaviour in several ways. Ideological wars and battles over morality and values should never be abandoned. Narrative production and perception are a battlefield in the media environment. In order to carry out the point of view, Hasnul Jamal Saidon has chosen electronic media as a weapon of communicating his message to the public.

CONCLUSION

Based on the interpretation and analysis of Hasnul Jamal Saidon's projection artworks, it can be concluded that the projection art has semiotic aspects and reflections that bring up a range of cultural and identity issues in the context of Malaysian culture. It is via our socialisation that we learn to interpret the world in terms of the rules and norms that are common in the specific sociocultural situations and positions in which we find ourselves. Our 'identity' is formed when we adopt a certain way of experiencing the world. It is our sense of who we are as people that allows us to remain rooted in our understanding of the world (Chandler, 2007). That is why it is vital for the society to teach individuals what the symbols imply, as their meanings are established in society. The irony of growing up in a society is that it teaches people that society is only a notion and that there are only individuals involved. We are unaware of the extent to which culture influences our ideas, emotions, and behaviours, as well as our identities. Constant communication is necessary because of the inherent social aspect of meaning.

The aim of the research is to better comprehend the semiotics that is included in the content of Hasnul's projections. The allure of projection art is intertwined with the research of the definition of a symbol, an object, and an interpretant, which is the subject of this study. In order for a message to be received and understood by others, symbolic language is often used in conjunction with other media such as visuals, sounds, words, and emotion. It is the focus of Hasnul to help us perceive the creation of identities, as well as ourselves and our community as a whole via his projection art. He uses a complex indirect communication method to express the relevance of prominent components in his artworks. His visual artwork communicates a message in a unique manner, pointing in a new direction. Cultural identity may be seen from two perspectives. One of them is rather of relying on just a few components of your impression of a certain identity, such as physical attributes or characteristics,

social roles or talents, or position, you may instead concentrate on all of your inner values and qualities and your inherent personality. On the one side, there are concepts like being too influenced by the media, which leads to a rejection of one's actual self and eventually culminates in the loss of oneself identity and the erasure of one's original objectives.

According to the findings of the study, Hasnul has introduced creative and more profound visual concepts through the use of projection art, which has resulted in the development of a new and more sophisticated visual language. Research has shown that relationship between art communication and society being interpreted, as well as a stimulus for more new media artwork. It is suggested that the total number of artworks examined be increased and more relevant approaches and ideas should be applied in analysing the selected artist's work in future studies. It is necessary to conduct a more thorough and systematic examination before art critics can make an informed judgement about a piece based on the new method. This is essential for creating surroundings into a dynamic virtual world by employing a wide scale and providing exposure to the audience in order to understand a piece of art.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our gratitude to the journal's editors for providing us with great opportunities to publish our articles based on this study. After that, we would want to thank Dr. Imelda Ann Achin, the supervisor, for all of her suggestions and advice, which have helped us improve the quality of this work. Not least, we would like to express our appreciation to the informant, Hasnul Jamal Saidon, for his cooperation in providing information from the archival collection for this research.

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