

A Conceptual Framework in Curatorial Practices in New Media Art in the Malaysian Art Scene

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Received Date: **08.01.2024**; Accepted Date: **01.09.2024**; Available Online: **10.09.2024**

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ABSTRACT

In Malaysia, technological devices such as computers were introduced as one of the art mediums to be used in the 1980s. New media art in Malaysia is often equated with electronic art, digital art, video, and media art. Thus, the objective of this paper is to identify the curatorial practices in new media art practice by the curators in the Malaysian art scene. This paper aims to construct a conceptual framework of curatorial practices in the new media art. This conceptual framework aims to highlight the main attributes and factors in curating new media art in Malaysia's art scene. The method used in this research is the Kawakita Jiro which extracts the keywords related to the curatorial practices through the literature reviews. The result shows that the curatorial practices in new media art disciplinary, application, concept, perception, production, integration, and awareness are the curatorial practices in new media in the Malaysian art scene, and the conceptual framework shows that the interrelation between each attribute of curatorial practices has contributed to facilitating the production of new media art.

Keywords: *New media, Curator, Perception, Awareness, Art scene.*

INTRODUCTION

New media art flourished in the 1990s as part of cross-disciplinary projects and performances in the field. This new modern art was introduced with the presence of Western painters who introduced the art movement to Malaysia at that time. The creation of visual art on canvas is the beginning of the wide development of visual art in Malaysia. Early art in Malaysia was considered unrefined because there was

no guidance or education in art, so travellers from the West, namely Europe and England, influenced Chinese or Malay painters to paint pictures of the environment to expand the field of art widely. For example, in 1983, Kamaruzaman Md. Isa used the same programming platform at Commodore 64 to produce his work entitled 'Self-Portrait', to be exhibited at the Faculty of Art and Design, ITM. Therefore, the development of electronic art in Malaysia was introduced rapidly following the wave of modernity around the 90s.

Behind the development of new media art, besides artists, some curators help artists introduce their work to the public. Curators are managers or supervisors of cultural or artistic heritage institutions, such as museums, art exhibitions, photo galleries, and libraries, but half of the curators are painters or artists. According to Mohamad Faizuan (2020), curators are also often tasked with selecting and managing museum objects or works of art on display. However, some think that art curators are people who work in the implementation of art exhibitions and other art events that are usually done in groups or form teams but are rarely done individually.

The issue that happened in the galleries is the preference of exhibiting artworks such as paintings and sculptures as major artworks to represent the gallery. It seems like the curator has faced challenges in handling the new media artworks. In this case, local artists are questioning the art institutions because the institutions are against exhibiting and presenting non-traditional artworks Shanken (2011). Therefore, there is a need to identify the practice of curatorialism in the Malaysian art scene, where the art scene is used to curate artworks that involve painting and sculpture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

New Media Art in Malaysia

As early as the 1980s, technological devices such as computers were introduced as one of the art mediums in Malaysia. The important thing is that the use of high-tech tools is not only aimed at making work easier but also able to produce images that reflect the cultural identity of Malaysia. New media art is often associated with the use of applications such as computers, laptops, or tablets and forms of work that are processed using software tools commonly used in word processing. New media art is also a medium that is often used in computer technology, especially in digital technology such as distribution, advertising, visual communication, or exhibition. Additionally, new media art flourished in the 1990s as part of cross-disciplinary projects and performances in the field.

New media art was introduced in the 1980s by local artists such as Ismail Zain, Hasnul Jamal Saidon, Ray Laganberg, and Baharudin Mohd Arus. The late Ismail Zain was the first painter in Malaysia who started using new media art in Malaysia and was then followed by Hasnul Jamal Saidon, Ray Laganberg, and Baharudin Mohd in developing new media art in the Malaysian art scene. According to Sarena Abdullah and Siti Khadijah Elham (2019), and Nur Hanim et al. (2013), one of the first new media art exhibitions in Malaysia was held in 1997 whereby many visitors came to see the collection of new media artworks such as computer art, light art, and video art.

According to Hasnul Jamal (2023), the virtual tour uses an existing location simulation, consists of a sequence of interesting videos or images, and uses the sound of music, narrative, and text in the work. In this regard, Google Art and Culture were introduced as an online platform that allows the public to view high-resolution images and videos of artworks around the world in order to see the works in the curator's exhibited collections more closely at home.

The new media art exhibition in 1997 made the articulating style of new media art a choice to introduce new media artworks among the new artists of the time. Thus, the exhibition in 1997 has provided evidence that the local art trend has experienced a modern change. The development of new media art in Malaysia began in the 1970s with the introduction of computer technology from foreign

countries, only through a small experiment in the production of artworks with the support of machines or computers. Nevertheless, according to Siti Khadijah (2020), video art is the first new media art; the beginning of Malaysia is marked by works produced digitally and then printed as an early exploration project around the 1980s. In addition, the development of new media art makes extensive use of computer devices in practices that integrate media and technology for software in manipulating images for production in the form of printing, digital, photography, and video presented on television.

For example, Ismail Zain's "Digital Collage" was created in 1988, which has included works such as "Al Kesah", "Magic Marker", and 'Nasyid', is a notable example of a digital print produced using a computer. Therefore, digital printing became a new way of creating Malaysian art, although a similar work was produced by Kamaruzaman Md. Isa using ASAS programming in "Self-Portrait" (1984). In addition, according to Issarezal and Setiawan (2019), new media is often associated with telecommunications, mass media, electronics, and digital in introducing artworks in Malaysia that begin with elements of painting, starting from conceptual art to new media art, performance, and exhibition at the art stage in Malaysia. For example, the first artist to go digital was Ismail Zain, who started producing his artwork using his Macintosh computer. Because of the use of technology in his artwork, he is called the forefather of new media art in Malaysia.

Curatorial practices

Art curators are described as developers and managers of new media artworks and other works of art in art galleries, museums, or institutions. Curators also play a responsible role in public relations and fundraising by implementing a programme of exhibitions of artworks, especially new media artworks, for the general public.

Curatorial practices in new media in Malaysia play an important element in curating works of art and new media, such as exhibiting high-quality and interesting art in international exhibitions at galleries or exhibitions. In addition, well-organised and successful art exhibitions by curators can increase awareness or understanding of art. According to Hasnul Jamal (2003), curatorial practices by curators play an important role in running exhibitions to give artists satisfaction in introducing artworks to the public. In 2016, Contemporary Young Talent 2016 (BMS '16) repeated history with the Contemporary Young Talent 2016 (BMS '16) award. According to Baharuddin (2019), new media art is electronic art that uses a lot of media production to advance the art, but galleries or museums benefit from the development of new media art. In addition, according to Mohd Yuszaidy and Muammar Ghaddafi (2015), new media art is less maintained because the selection of high-potential works is only important, such as "Wayang Utama" by Fairuz Sulaiman.

Curators' perceptions of new media practices in Malaysia play an important element in managing artworks and new media, such as exhibiting high-quality art exhibitions and attracting international exhibitions in galleries or exhibitions. In addition, according to Nazmine et al. (2021), in foreign countries, most artists shift direction from materials, media, tools, techniques, themes, or concepts in proposing ideas towards new media to facilitate their preparation. This is because new media art technology has the facilities or equipment to produce materials or works in new media. Moreover, this scholar mentions that most Western artists always have the imagination to practise and concentrate on the production of their work carefully. In Western countries, some artists have begun to use the natural environment combined with residential materials in designs that use new media art technology. Through new media art, the artist or artists use their work made using new media art as a curatorial communication tool for teaching or content. A Canadian-born artist named Les Levine has shown artists who create and create new media art. Around the 1960s, Les Levine worked in various fields of social, mass media, and mass communication channels. He often works with videotape, photo, and billboard technology. Nevertheless, in the age of sophistication in Western countries, artists mostly explore and innovate new media art technologies, consisting of virtual art, computer graphics, computer animation, digital art, interactive art, sound art, the Internet, video games, robotics, 3D printing, and cyborg art. However, curators are considered important to

artists in introducing and developing works of art, such as making exhibitions in galleries and museums. According to Mohamad Faizuan (2020), curators will manage, categorise, and be responsible for collecting and exhibiting art, especially new media works. Art curation is also considered an activity related to galleries. In addition, curators are seen as caretakers or researchers in the gallery. Art curator management is to preserve, care for, organise, and treat artworks in galleries or exhibitions.

In addition, according to Mohamad Faizuan (2020), curators often play a role in ensuring that everything always runs perfectly and smoothly without the knowledge of art lovers or the general public. However, according to Mohamad Faizuan (2020), the duties and roles of curators are still vague to the public. Many stated that the task or role of the curator is considered to be ‘hanging’ the artwork to be exhibited to the public. According to Mohamad Faizuan (2017), curators also play an important role in improving the development of art, especially in new media art. However, no one knows about curatorial management inside or outside media art galleries.

Therefore, in this study, the researcher wants to examine the curatorial practices of new media in the Malaysian art scene. Based on a local news article, curators bear a heavy responsibility in managing the services of those who are considered “great entertainers” and ‘defenders’ representing artists when a work of art is presented or exhibited (Latifah, 2015). Curators collaborate with artists by providing such spaces to work and interact. Various challenges face curators in new media art, such as dynamics in new media art and common problems in preserving new media artworks. In conclusion, this study will focus on curatorial practices in the context of new media art in Malaysia, paying attention to the responsibilities, challenges, and strategies used by curators in managing and presenting new media artworks.

<p>Disciplinary</p> <p>i. Knowlegde</p> <p>ii. Experience</p> <p>iii. Skills</p>	<p>Application</p> <p>i. Rules</p> <p>ii. Method</p> <p>iii. Concepts</p> <p>iv. Principles</p> <p>v. Theories</p>	<p>Concept</p> <p>i. Theme</p> <p>ii. Idea</p> <p>iii. Social</p>	<p>Perception</p> <p>i. Awareness</p> <p>ii. Understanding</p> <p>iii. Comprehension</p>
<p>Production</p> <p>i. Creative</p> <p>ii. Exhibition</p>	<p>Integration</p> <p>i. Teaching</p> <p>ii. Content</p>	<p>Awareness</p> <p>i. Practice and focus</p> <p>ii. Imagination</p>	

Figure 1. The attributes of curator perceptions in new media art in the Malaysian art scene.

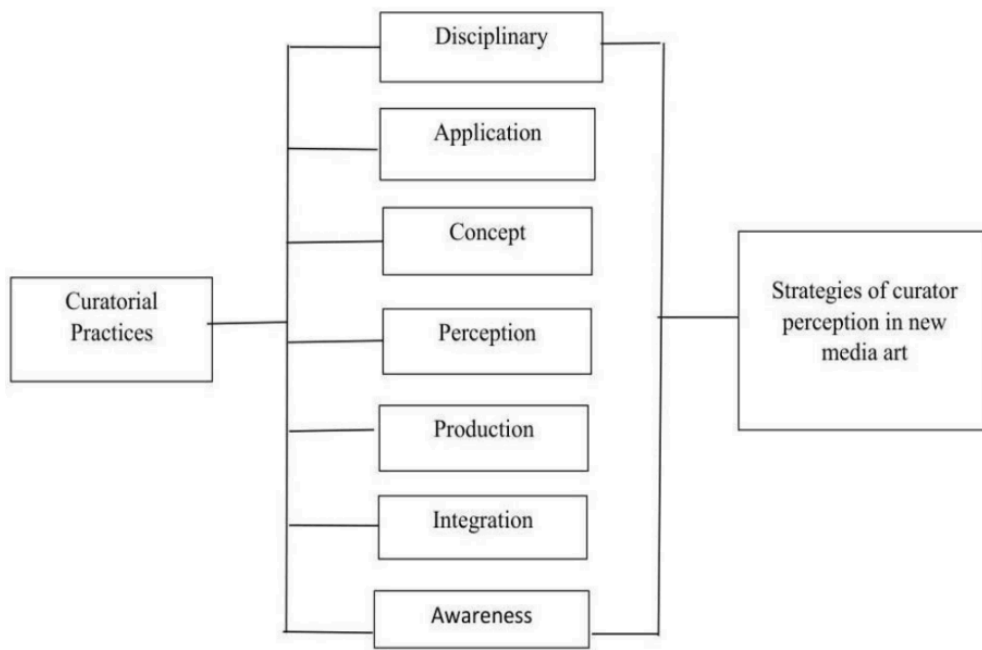


Figure 2. The diagram of new media keywords through the findings from the literature review.

Figure 2 highlights the diagram of new media keywords through the findings from the literature review. According to Mohamad Faizuan (2020) only prepares exhibitions. However, some parties only see curation as a creative activity and there is an overlap of roles between the artist and curator, for example, the artist becomes a curator, curator becomes the artist.

In terms of discipline, disciplining oneself in the production of new media artworks with the use of technology can help an artist transform or reintroduce old artworks using art technology that can provide new experiences. Additionally, self-discipline in skills can improve and facilitate an artist in the production of new media artworks, in 2020, Muhammad Khizal Saat created a work that uses digitally printed materials, ready-made printed materials, and collage on paper, titled “Fenomena 1”, measuring 23.4 x 33.1 inches. Through the curator’s perception, researchers will know about the meaning of discipline in general or in art. In terms of discipline, Gill (2013) mentioned a discipline is defined as a combination of content knowledge, experience, and skills combined with the ability to read, write, listen, speak, think critically, and perform in a meaningful way in a specific field context. New media art can be combined with old media such as painting based on how a painter uses self-discipline with knowledge in a combination of new and old media.

According to Gruyter (2016), an application is a computer program that is designed for a particular purpose. Meanwhile, Li (2019) suggested the application of one material to another or on another surface. Application in art is more of an act of placement, for example when a mark is left by a paintbrush, by an eye dropper loaded with dye, or by a crayon, pencil, or pen. Application in art can also refer to the application of knowledge or theory in new and concrete situations such as rules, methods, concepts, principles, laws and theories. The term application in art also refers to computer software, which also includes applications used in the field of art. Applications are rules, methods, concepts, and themes; for instance, ‘rules’ in the application are a comparison of work production methods such as old media, which use more conventional media and techniques, which are basic tools and media, and use less technological assistance. Examples of works are paintings, drawings, prints, and sculptures. As for new media, more technology-based new media and techniques are used. Examples of design are technology design graphics and multimedia. In addition, the method in the application is more about the use of technology or electronic equipment, for example, “Music from Inner-Outer” by Kamal Sabran in 2007 used interactive media installation materials. In the application, there is also a theory involved which is

the curator's theory which also explains the procedures for exhibiting works and discussing artistic considerations in making an impression in an exhibition.

The concept of curatorial practice is important in the new media practices. Hoede (2021), stated that a concept meaning in art is an important aspect of the work. For example, when an artist uses a conceptual art form, all planning and decisions are made in advance and the execution is important. The concept in the application is a theme or idea that is independent of the artist or curator. For example, concept themes from the past to the present in Malaysia are more Malay themes or ideas such as Hasnul Saidon works *Kedek Kedek Ong* (1994) and *Malam Hati Celik* (2022) and some also use Malay proverbs. In the production of new media works in the past, many electronic tools were used, and nowadays, the production of new media artworks can be combined with electronic tools and advanced technology such as the use of "Augmented Reality" (AR). For social concepts related to social issues, for example, Warung Wayang: DA+C Festival 2015 using material installation, live visuals, performances, and video animations.

Meanwhile, from a perception perspective, Demuth (2013) stated that perception in art means the complex relationship between visual stimulation and personal understanding of a work. It is a theory that aims to explain the relationship between a work of art and a person's opinion and evaluation. Perception is awareness and understanding. Consciousness in perception is more for artists who are now more sensitive and meticulous in producing new media works than before because nowadays there is a lot of use of electronics or technology. In this research, it is important to understand the perception, the curator must understand how to use electronic equipment and manage the artist and the artwork.

The same goes for 'production', the activity of organising the practical and financial matters relating to the preparation of a film, play, or television or radio program. Roy (2024) stated that the meaning of production is a creative professional who is responsible for producing a work or a product to be presented or exhibited to the public. Creativity in production is to generate the artist's creativity to work because now there are many tools or technologies that make it easier for artists, especially new artists. For exhibitions in production, artists or non-artists can also follow or participate in competitions or exhibitions such as the "Bakat Muda Sezaman" (BMS) competition.

The awareness of curatorial practices is also important in managing the new media art in the Malaysian art scene. According to Reinhardt (2012), awareness is knowledge and understanding of a particular activity or subject. Meanwhile, McQuire & Radywyl (2010) stated that it is more about exploring how to apply the tools of arts professionals' imagination, practice, focus and point of view. Practice and focus allow an artist to combine low technology with high technology such as AR, AI, PS, and others for practice and focus on the production of works. Imagination in consciousness is to create the artist's imagination and art practice. Therefore, through the curatorial practices, the researchers identified 7 keywords namely disciplinary, application, concept, perception, production, integration, and awareness that practices in the new media art. Furthermore, the researcher has proposed a conceptual framework for curatorial practices in new media art in the Malaysian art scene.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researcher employs the Kawakita Jiro (KJ) method, a technique known for its effectiveness in analyzing and emphasizing ideas, particularly within unstructured information (Scupin, 1997; Munemori & Nagasawa, 1991). The KJ Method, also referred to as the Affinity Diagram, was developed by Japanese anthropologist Jiro Kawakita in the 1960s. It is widely utilized in fields such as business, project management, and design to organize ideas, data, and insights into meaningful clusters or groups. The researcher applies the KJ method by focusing on selected keywords from the Literature Review (LR). In Figure 3, the process involves extracting these keywords from journals and catalogues, where they are identified as attributes. New main attributes are then categorized based on the grouping of

these attributes, which were derived from the literature review. The primary objective of using the KJ method in this context is to construct a conceptual framework for curatorial practices in new media art within the Malaysian art scene.

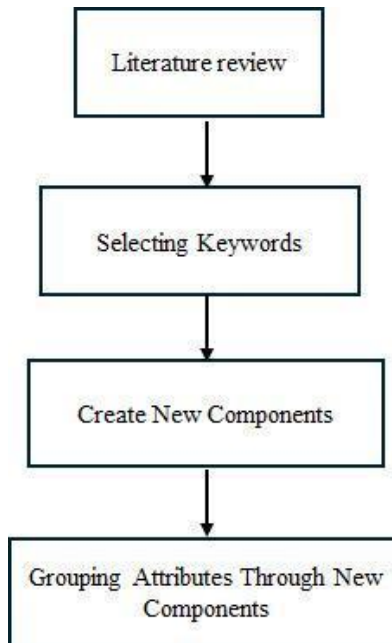


Figure 3. The process of extracting new attributes

FINDINGS

Tables 1: The new components of curatorial practices and contributions from the literature reviews.

Authors	Curatorial Practices	Type of literature review	Contribution
Gruyter (2016)	Application	Narrative review	Based on the application researcher's view, there is a theory involved, which is the curator's theory, which also explains the procedure of exhibiting works and discusses artistic considerations in making an impression in an exhibition.
Hoede (2021)	Concept	Systematic review	Based on the research, curating new media art involves an extensive understanding of conceptual theories of art along with the technological possibilities that may be harnessed to provide an impactful and thought-provoking encounter.
Demuth (2013)	Perception	Narrative review	It is important to understand the perception, the curator must understand how to use electronic equipment and manage the artist and the artwork.

Roy (2024)	Production	Narrative review	The production of new media art and curatorial roles are closely intertwined, with curators playing an important role in shaping the final presentation of technologically complex artworks. Their involvement ensures that the conceptual and technical aspects of the artwork are seamlessly integrated, resulting in a cohesive and effective exhibition.
Reinhardt (2012)	Awareness	Narrative review	Awareness of curatorial practices is crucial for the effective presentation and interpretation of art, particularly in the dynamic and evolving field of new media. This awareness involves understanding the multifaceted role of the curator, the impact of their decisions on the exhibition, and the broader cultural and social implications of their work.
Gill (2013)	Discipline	Narrative review	Discipline as defined here reflects a comprehensive approach to mastering a field. It's about more than just acquiring information; it's about the ability to use that information effectively, think critically, and perform competently within a specific context, while continuously growing and adapting.

Based on Table 1, the main attributes are discipline, application, concept, perception, production, integration and awareness are the main attributes that represent curatorial practice. Additionally, other attributes were extracted from the literature review. For example, in a discipline, attributes consist of content knowledge, experience, and skills equated with the ability to think critically and perform in a meaningful way in a specific field context. Application in art refers to the application of knowledge or theory in new and concrete situations, such as rules, methods, concepts, principles, laws, and theories. The concept in the application represents a theme or idea that is independent of the artist or curator. Perception in art refers to understanding in awareness and perceptual understanding. Creative in production for exhibition. Integrated content teaching about art from curators or artists. Awareness in the art of imagination, practice and focus.

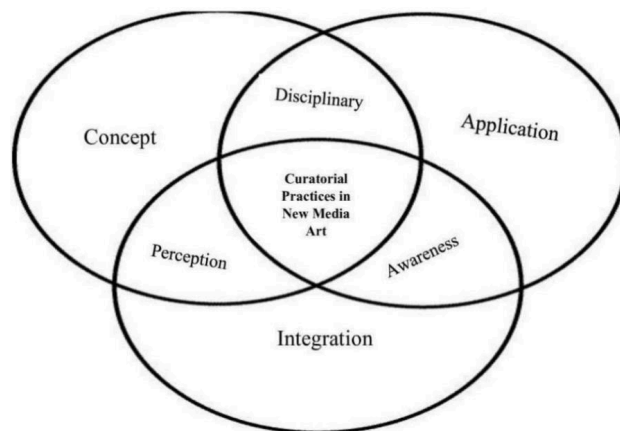


Figure 4. Proposed conceptual framework of curatorial practices in new media art in the Malaysian art scene.

Based on Figure 4, the conceptual framework is constructed based on the concept, discipline, application, perception, integration, and awareness and these attributes are integrated. Through this framework, this practice would create a relationship with the attributes and form new knowledge in new media art. Nevertheless, between concepts and applications, there is a discipline in the production of new media artworks in the use of technology that can help an artist transform or reintroduce old artworks using art technology that can provide new experiences and initiate the development of new media art in Malaysia's art scene. This would encourage the curators to combine the traditional and modern ways of curating new media exhibitions. The integration of the attributes and relating them to contemporary art in the Malaysian art scene have led to curatorial practices in new media art. In addition, this also motivates the curator to become more responsive to technological innovations and the changing of new media art throughout the years.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, new media art has challenged curators to handle the new media as there would be more modern and technological tools in creating the artworks. Besides, the curators need to encourage the artists to work more closely, especially in the use of new media technology in the production of works. This is because the collaboration in the production of art with technology has given birth to artists who deepen the use of new media technology as an important tool in producing their works in the art scene in Malaysia. Nevertheless, the sophistication of new media technology in Malaysia in producing new media artworks can change the design or processing of traditional artworks such as paintings, photographs, and sculptures to be modernised as a new form by using advanced technology or called new media that makes it easier for painters to create works. New media art is more digital art or electronic art such as use on the internet, graphic art, and many other arts that involve new media technology artistically and practically. Curators should work together to help artists and the curator is considered the leader in every public art exhibition and also promote artworks to the public.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researcher would like to thank the National Gallery of Art, namely Mr Mohamad Majidi Amir, Mr Zuriyadi Sarpin, Miss Tan Hui Koon and UNIMAS Lecturer Mr Mohamad Faizuan Bin Mat for helping the researcher complete this study. Thanks also to the researcher's supervisors, namely Dr Valerie Michael and Dr Fauzan Abu Bakar, for guiding the researcher throughout this study.

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