

Public Art and Cultural Identity: Analysing the *Keris* Sculpture under Municipal Hang Tuah Jaya, Melaka

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ABSTRACT

In the Malay community, the *Keris* served not only as a self-defence tool but also as a significant symbol reflecting the Malay community and cultural heritage. This study explores the symbolic meaning and cultural significance of the public sculpture *Keris* at Jalan Air Keroh, installed by the Municipal Hang Tuah Jaya, Melaka Councils. Applying Feldman's art criticism theory, which encompasses four main aspects - description, analysis, interpretation, and judgement, this research seeks to investigate the design and meaning of the sculpture. Despite its prominent visibility and visual solid impact along the roadside, its deep cultural significance and influence on the local community remain enigmatic. By providing a comprehensive analysis of the symbolic and artistic elements of the *Keris* sculpture, this study aims to bridge this knowledge gap by utilising a systematic descriptive qualitative approach based on Feldman's theory. The findings of this study are expected to provide comprehensible information that can enhance both local and tourist understanding and appreciation of the sculpture. It can also strengthen interactions and appreciation of Malay culture in Melaka. Findings showed the potential of public sculpture in Melaka, which serves as an aesthetic element and a crucial component to bringing a closer understanding and appreciation in promoting the cultural and historical significance of the Malay community to the general public.

Keywords: *Public Sculpture, Keris, Symbol, Malay Community, Cultural Heritage*

INTRODUCTION

Public sculpture is a dynamic and expressive art form, effectively imbuing urban spaces with vitality. It reflects a city's cultural heritage, historical significance, and prevailing social values (Meyer, 2020). Melaka is a state in Malaysia that depicts Malaysian culture, consisting of various looks and forms obtained from various ethnicities, ethnicities and historical events (Iliyani et al., 2023). One can be seen in the formation of public sculptures in Melaka that present an enjoyable visual experience and provide an overview of the historical narrative of the state of Melaka.



Figure 1. Keris Sculpture at Jalan Air keroh, Melaka
(Source: Researcher's personal collection, 2023)

The city of Melaka is adorned with a prominent public sculpture known as the *Keris* sculpture. This significant work of art is installed along Jalan Air Keroh, a significant road leading to the city centre of Melaka. The installation of this sculpture was commissioned by the Hang Tuah Jaya Municipal Council, which reflects their commitment to enhancing the city's cultural and aesthetic landscape. Jalan Air Keroh serves as the main route, connecting travellers and residents to the vibrant centre of Melaka. The Keris sculpture, with its conspicuous presence, not only adds the aesthetic appeal of this vital route but also symbolises the rich cultural legacy of the Malay society. The *keris* possesses significant cultural importance in Malaysia, representing both a traditional Malay armament and a manifestation of values such as honour, courage, and cultural legacy (Andaya & Andaya, 2016). The Hang Tuah Jaya Municipal Council emphasises the role of public art in honouring and preserving regional culture by erecting this sculpture in such a prominent location; this sculpture not only beautifies the urban environment but also serves as a reminder of the historical significance of Malacca and the various cultural influences that have shaped the city over the ages. This prominent sculpture commands the attention of individuals passing by, enticing them to explore its narrative.

The *keris* sculpture is a homage to the time-honoured craft of fashioning the traditional Malay weapon, renowned for its unique undulating blade. It holds profound cultural significance within the

region, exhibiting design variations that reflect its geographical origin and familial lineage. As Emil (2009) points out, the *keris* holds a significance that transcends its utilitarian function as a weapon. It also embodies the distinctiveness of the Malaysian state and evokes pride in cultural heritage and ancestral values. Malaysians view the *keris* as representing the state's distinct identity, eliciting a sense of pride in their cultural legacy and the principles upheld by their ancestors.

Consequently, the presence of the *Keris* in Jalan Air Keroh Melaka accentuates the town's historical significance and role in Melaka's broader context as a hub for trade and cultural integration. The artwork represents both a visual depiction of the historical and contemporary aspects of the city, encouraging viewers to connect with the principles and customs that have contributed to Melaka's development as a captivating tourist spot. This initiative fosters a more profound appreciation among residents and tourists for the significance of cultural heritage and the narratives that form the foundation of their existence.

Despite the prominence of the *Keris* sculpture in Jalan Air Keroh, its more profound cultural significance and impact on the local community still need to be made more explicit. Comprehensive research is needed to explore these aspects thoroughly. The primary objective of this study is to analyse the symbolic meaning and cultural significance of the *Keris* sculpture using Feldman's theory of art criticism. This approach will help uncover the intricate layers of meaning and cultural symbolism embedded in the artwork. Understanding elements of the sculpture offers insight into the emotional and intellectual responses it elicits from viewers.

Additionally, the study aims to document the symbolic representation of Malay cultural identity as conveyed through this three-dimensional artwork. While the *Keris* sculpture is an excellent example of traditional Southeast Asian craftsmanship and has great historical and symbolic value in Malay culture, its design, artistic features, and complex cultural symbolism need to be studied more deeply in the specific context of the area under the Hang Tuah Jaya Municipal Councils. A thorough understanding is required to grasp how this public sculpture can convey the narrative of local history, traditional values and cultural identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Feldman's Model of Art Criticism

Art criticism is more than just an artistic review or a literary narrative in which the art critic observes the events of artistic activity. Instead, it is a process emphasising a realistic and thorough examination of art issues. Therefore, art critics need to understand multiple forms of criticism while emphasising the creativity and skills contained in art. Experts, artists, or academics should do art criticism with relevant art knowledge. This is because expertise is the most important and valuable in all matters related to art criticism (Duaa, 2021, p.880).

Feldman's method enables anyone with no prior understanding of art to critique any work of art by relying on the basic principles and elements of art and design. Feldman's method considers an easy way to criticise a work of art, which is the evaluation stage, based on visual elements that make it objective. The relevance of criticism to art is closely related by focusing on the artwork and demonstrating the critic's ability to understand the artist's technique (Feldman, 1967).

Feldman (1970) stressed that impartial observers view the artwork through a step-by-step description. Using words or expressions that can reveal his feelings is avoided at this stage. Feldman (1967) argues that the audience does not have to be neutral toward artwork and has no distinct ratings for

the evaluation. Feldman contends that later phases of art criticism should implicitly include the appraisal. Barrett (1994) asserts that description and analysis are closely related to the interpretation and cannot be separated.

Public Art

Works of art displayed in public spaces, typically outside buildings or in places accessible to the public, are called public art (Blandy & Boudon, 2018). Public art encompasses various forms of art created for public use and enjoyment. The availability and accessibility are one of the main aspects of public art; it is exhibited in public spaces such as parks, squares, streets, and public buildings, making them more accessible without visiting art galleries or museums (Miles, 2021). Since public art promotes social and community function, it is often designed to foster social interaction and fortify community ties. These artworks may attract attention at community events and serve as a hub for interaction with locals and tourists alike. In addition, public art serves as an educational tool by conveying historical and cultural messages or narratives, helping to raise public awareness of significant issues and cultural heritage (Brown & Perkins, 2021).

In terms of creativity and expression, public art allows artists to express their creativity on a large scale and in unconventional spaces through sculptures, murals, art installations, and various other art forms. Apart from its social and educational purposes, public art also plays a role in beautifying public spaces. It enhances an aesthetic element of the environment, making it more alluring and pleasant (Jones, 2018).

Finally, public art often reflects a place's cultural identity and history. These artworks can honour significant historical events, notable figures, or unique elements of local culture and preserve and showcase cultural heritage. Overall, public art is a way to bring art into everyday life, making it more relevant and directly related to the community, as well as enriching the public space with a reflection of the culture and values held by the community (Hall & McArthur, 2021).

Public Art and Cultural Identity: The Role and Impact of Art in Shaping Local Characteristics

Public art plays a vital role in shaping and reflecting cultural identity by incorporating artistic expression into public settings (Miles, 2021). It serves as a canvas to depict local traditions, historical events, and cultural symbols, capturing and conveying the spirit of the community's legacy. Public art, including murals, sculptures, and installations, not only enhances the aesthetic quality of the urban environment but also fosters a sense of community among residents. Local culture visually portrayed in public settings can boost community pride and inclusivity, ensuring that diverse cultural groups feel recognized and acknowledged (Gibson & Connell, 2019).

Furthermore, public art acts as a catalyst for social engagement, frequently the subject of events and discussions held in the community. It also functions as an educational tool by providing information to residents and visitors about a place's cultural and historical context. However, challenges can be overcome, such as ensuring inclusive representation and keeping artworks over time (Smith, 2018). Public art has a significant role in enhancing cultural identity, promoting the aesthetic appeal of public settings, and enriching community bonds.

The Origin of *Keris*

This *Keris* has been rooted since the maritime merchant kingdom along the Silk Road. This road facilitated the relationship between the Indian continent, China, and the Malay Archipelago that started in the early centuries of the early era. Miksic (1990) stated that the maritime trade network was necessary to facilitate the transfer of commodities, concepts, and cultural customs among geographically distant areas. Meanwhile, the Malay Archipelago is used as a strategic position because it is the main route for traders, and through this, there is an emergence that combines culture and ethnicity.

In this dynamic cultural milieu, blade production and metallurgy craft discovered a conducive environment for prosperous development. The frequent interactions among traders, artisans, and explorers who navigated the maritime trade routes facilitated the exchange of knowledge and technological progress. Hill (1956) stated that the spread of knowledge and skills related to the production of weapons such as *Keris* and swords occurred due to this interaction. At that time, the maritime trade kingdom in Southeast Asia was widely recognized for having exceptional expertise in navigation. Consequently, they have experienced and experienced a maritime network that extends across the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea. The trading kingdoms, namely Srivijaya and Majapahit, were instrumental in advancing the *Keris*, as noted by Manguin (1993).

The *Keris*, characterised by its unique undulating blade, gradually emerged as a pioneering innovation that distinguished it from contemporaneous weaponry. The *Keris* possessed a distinctive and remarkable aesthetic due to its asymmetrical design, characterised by a sinuous blade. This particular attribute eventually emerged as a defining characteristic of the *Keris*. The design of this particular artefact was not solely motivated by aesthetic considerations but also served practical functions during combat, enabling more efficient execution of slashing and thrusting techniques (Shahrum, 2009).

The precise historical chronology of the *Keris* evolution poses a considerable challenge, yet archaeological findings have gleaned valuable insights. Numerous instances of early *Keris* blades have been discovered in archaeological sites, suggesting that the utilisation of the *Keris* can be traced back to prehistoric eras within the geographical area (Miksic, 1990). The chronological antiquity of these artefacts serves as evidence for the profound historical origins of the *Keris* within Southeast Asia's cultural customs and practices.

The *keris* held a significance that transcended its mere practicality as a weapon. Over time, it transformed, becoming a representation of social standing, religious beliefs, and cultural heritage within Southeast Asian societies. Creating a *Keris* was regarded reverently and involved elaborate rituals, typically carried out by proficient craftsmen called "emu." The production of a *Keris* blade necessitated the application of metallurgical proficiency and the integration of sacred components, invocations, and spiritual benedictions, thereby imbuing the weapon with symbolic potency (Sedyawati, 2014).

The historical roots in the maritime trading kingdoms that flourished along the maritime Silk Road in the early centuries of the era. The convergence of different cultures at these crossroads provided a conducive environment for exchanging knowledge and technological innovations, ultimately contributing significantly to developing the *Keris* as a uniquely crafted dagger with asymmetrical design. The profound significance of the *Keris* in Southeast Asian societies, serving as both a tool of combat and a representation of cultural heritage, highlights its lasting impact within the region.

Keris as Art Form and Craftsmanship

The *Keris*, an emblematic dagger characterised by its undulating blade, occupies a singular role as a utilitarian weapon and an exquisite artistic creation within diverse Southeast Asian societies. The *Keris* has garnered significant admiration throughout history due to its refined aesthetics and meticulous artistry, elevating its status beyond a utilitarian implement. This section examines the artistic elements of the *Keris*, investigating the exceptional abilities of expert artisans and the customary techniques transmitted across successive generations.

Zainuddin et al. (2022) thoroughly studied the artistic attributes inherent in the *Keris*. The author sheds light on the intricate patterns and designs meticulously etched onto the blade, providing valuable insights into this aspect of the artefact. The artistic embellishment of the blade frequently incorporates elaborate motifs, referred to as "*pamor*," that are produced through the amalgamation of iron and nickel layers during the forging procedure. The above patterns possess aesthetic and spiritual significance, as they are widely believed to encapsulate mystical powers and safeguard the individual who possesses them. He emphasises the artistic skill and meticulousness required in creating these patterns, exemplifying the refined expertise developed and refined over numerous centuries.

In addition, the research conducted by Gardner (1973) explores the enduring craftsmanship traditions transmitted across generations in Southeast Asian societies. Creating a *Keris* entails a painstaking and methodical procedure, carefully curating superior-grade materials, including iron, steel, and valuable metals. The forging and *pamor*-making stage is considered to be a highly significant phase in the process of crafting a *Keris*. The blacksmith employs a meticulous technique of layering various metals to fashion distinctive patterns and motifs, which are chosen based on the *Keris* desired spiritual or symbolic attributes. The successful execution of this technique necessitates meticulous management of temperature, utilisation of specific hammering techniques, and adherence to a meticulous process of metal layering. This skill has traditionally been transmitted from a master to a pioneer in an apprenticeship system that is given recognition.

The *Keris* hilt is carefully designed and given full attention in its production because it focuses on the details and finesse of its art. Objects made from various materials, including wood, ivory, and metal, will feature intricate carvings and depict cultural and symbolic motifs. The design of the hilt often reflects the identity and culture of an ethnic group and hints at the genealogy of this *Keris*. Making this *Keris* often involves a form of work that features subtlety and a balance between technical and artistic expertise. Skilled artisans will demonstrate their competence in producing a form of art with attractive aesthetics and practical utility. A perfectly produced *Keris* will display the craftsman's ingenuity, skill, and prowess.

Beyond the function of a weapon made into a *Keris*, it is a medium for skilled artisans to display their technical expertise in producing it. *Keris*'s position in works of art is unique because its production requires subtlety, and complicated patterns require a deep appreciation. The *Keris* remains a lasting emblem of artistic heritage in the region due to the preservation and perpetuation of traditional craftsmanship practice.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative and descriptive approach based on Feldman's (1967) theory of art criticism, which offers a structured approach to understanding and evaluating art. This theory consists of

four different categories: widespread criticism, journalistic criticism, scientific criticism, and educational criticism. Each category has its purpose in the discourse on art. *Keris* sculpture at Jalan Air Keroh was chosen because of its cultural and symbolic significance. Moreover, the sculpture's prominent location on a busy roadside makes it an obvious and relevant landmark for studying public art and its impact on local identity. Therefore, Feldman's scientific art criticism approach is used because it emphasises the evaluation and interpretation of art based on knowledge and expertise on the art of *Keris* sculpture. The process of scientific art criticism involves four main stages:\

Table 1 : Feldman's Model of Art Criticism (Feldman, 1982)

Stage	Description	Art Work Analysis
Description	It is the first step of art criticism. This stage is about gathering information about the work of art, such as the artist's name, title, date of creation, size and medium (Duaa, 2021, p.880; Feldman, 1982)	Studying the essential elements of the <i>Keris</i> Sculpture in Jalan Air Keroh, including size, material (ferrocement and wire mesh), and colour
Formal Analysis	It is the second step of the art crisis. Analysis means the way the work of art has been organised. This step also involves an analysis of the principles and elements of design. The design elements include line, shape, form, space, colour, texture, and value. The design principles include emphasis, rhythm, movement, pattern, balance, proportion, and unity (Duaa, 2021, p.880; Feldman, 1982)	Examines the structure and design of the statue, as well as how it is integrated with the urban environment of the circle.
Interpretation	This is the third step of the critique process. Interdating is finding the meaning of work or expressive qualities, such as mood, feelings, or emotions. This stage uses the previous description and analysis stages of the work to explain the critic's interpretation (Duaa, 2021, p.880; Feldman, 1982)	Understanding the meaning and symbolism of the <i>Keris</i> Sculpture, as well as its impact on the cultural identity and community of Jalan Air Keroh, Melaka
Evaluation	The fourth step of critical analysis is judgement. This step is about evaluating the work about aesthetic excellence and other works of its type. The judgement is a conclusion drawn from the previous stages, what qualifies as aesthetic excellence is based upon the critic and the type of critical judgement they use (Duaa, 2021, p.880; Feldman, 1982)	Assess the aesthetic and cultural value of the statue, including its impact on community pride and local identity.

The data was collected through a literature review and direct observation to understand the cultural and social implications of the representation of *Keris* sculpture in Jalan Air Keroh, Melaka.

FINDINGS

This study demonstrated that Feldman's method was applied to evaluate works of art. His model of criticism has served four steps to make a statement about a work of art. Feldman believed that people would fully comprehend and appreciate art if they could discuss and talk about art (Feldman, 1982). In order to evaluate public art and the cultural identity of *Keris* sculptures under the Hang Tuah Jaya Municipal Council, Feldman's method offers a critique model consisting of description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation.

Description

This piece of public sculpture adapts the shape of *Keris*, the Malay weaponry. The *keris* is constructed vertically on a marble stone, with the head of the *Keris* pointing to the front of the road, and nature is the background of the *Keris*. There is a foliage motif with a twist on the *Keris*'s body. The dimensions of the *Keris* are 12 feet in height x 140 in width x 140 cm in length. This significant work of art is installed along Jalan Air Keroh, a significant road leading to the city centre of Melaka. The golden yellowish was applied to both the head and the sheath of the *Keris*, and white was used for the decorative motifs on the sheath and *sampir*. Cement concrete is used in the part of the *Keris* base that is constructed and decorated with marble.

Analysis

This public sculpture replicates the shape of the *Keris*, consisting of the head of the *Keris* (1) and the sheath of the *Keris* and *sampir* (2)— the upper part of the *Keris* (1) known as *Hulu Pekaka*. *Hulu Keris* is presented with *sarong Keris* and *sampir* (2) in the shape of a classical boat and embellished with ornamental patterns. Curving foliage designs are used as decorative elements on the body of the *Keris*. A golden yellowish colour is applied to the head of the *Keris* (1), the sheath and *sampir* (2), and decorative motifs in the form of a circle. While the raised and coloured decorative motifs on the sheath of the *Keris* and *sampir* (2) are white, creating a striking contrast with the golden background and drawing attention to the intricate details. Cement concrete is used in the *keris*-based part, which provides stability and durability. The base is decorated with marble, enhancing the overall presentation's aesthetic appeal. The *Keris* sculpture is situated alongside the Jalan Air Keroh and is a significant lead to Melaka's heart. Space where both locals and tourists can appreciate it, such as a central plaza, cultural district, or near historical landmarks. In terms of interaction with the environment, this sculpture should blend in with the surrounding urban setting. In Melaka, a city with a blend of colonial and traditional architecture, this sculpture needs to harmonise with the existing structure while standing out as a cultural landmark.

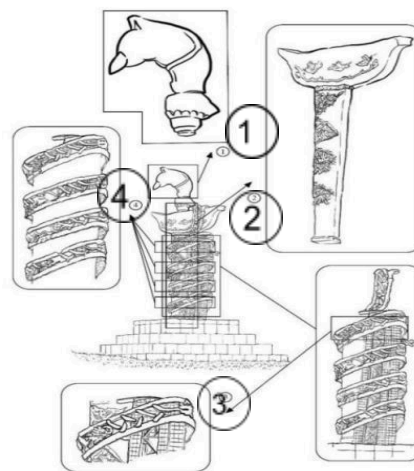


Figure 2. 1. Keris Hilt (*Hulu Keris*)
2. The *Keris* Sheath and Boat- Shape Crown (*Sarung Keris* and *sampir*)
3. Wavy Leaves Motives decoration
4. Ornamental pattern that wrap around the surface of *Keris*

(Source: Researcher, 2023)

Interpretation

Keris is one of the prevalent weapons and is associated with Malay symbols. In general, *Keris* is a stabbing weapon used for self-defence (for example, during martial arts) and the greatness of the royal tool (Yub, 1991). It comes in a range of shapes: some long and some short, curved, sharp and covered with sheaths. The meaning behind the dagger implies a philosophy, aesthetic value and the greatness of the Malays, symbolising the strength and majesty of a kingdom and the Malay nation (Yusof et al., 2022).

The function of *Keris* in ancient times was as a weapon for self-defence. In modern times, however, *Keris* are used as accessories for official clothing on occasions such as royal ceremonies and ornaments in homes, offices and others. This *Keris*, a Malay symbol, has its origin and history (Mohamed et al., 2012). In Malaysia, there are many types of *Keris*, but the most popular during the Malacca Sultanate was the *Keris Taming Sari* (Yusof et al., 2022).

In *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, *Keris* are used in significant ceremonial practice within the palace and play a role in the King's dignitaries. *Keris* was often crafted by the King and given as a gift to whomever desired. It symbolises the King's gratitude for the loyalty and devotion given by his dignitaries or subjects. One notable *Keris* is Taming Sari, who was wielded by Admiral Hang Tuah while serving as admiral of Malacca. This particular *Keris* is very well known for its reputed magical properties, which means that when fighting, the owner is not impervious to the opponent's weapon or invulnerable (Frey, 2003). According to legend, this *Keris* could hover in the air, allowing it to chase down enemy regardless of their escape.

“..... pun suka melihat Tun Tuah bertikam dengan Taming Sari itu. Maka Tun Tuah pun fikir dalam hatinya: ‘Apa juga dipakainya maka tiada lut kuparang? Tetapi pada firasatku sebab kerisnya inilah maka ia tiada dapat ditentang lawan dan tiada lut kuparang tubuhnya ini. Jikalau demikian, apa juga kehendaknya? Baiklah kerisnya ini Kuperdayakan’ (Tengku Marlina & Salina, 2013).

Keris has been designated by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity since 2005 (Galeri Seni Tuanku Jaafar, 2024). This recognition is based on its profound philosophical value; it is a cultural icon of human civilization that has endured since immemorial. Therefore, the role of the *Keris*, which is related to the culture of the Malays, has been highlighted by the Municipality in consideration of the cultural environment of Malacca.

Evaluation

The shape of this *Keris* is intended to replicate the shape of the original *Keris*. However, the characteristics of *Keris* need to be clearly defined. The *Keris* does not appear to represent a type of *Keris* that symbolises the state of Melaka or is related to the state's history. While Admiral Hang Tuah is widely celebrated as a Malay legend, and the story of his greatness is often associated with the mystical properties of the *Taming Sari Keris*, which is claimed to grant its owner immunity, however, the research found that the shape of the *keris* presented does not resemble the *Taming Sari Keris*. Specifically, its upper part is elongated and finely carved, differing from the traditional depiction of the legend *Taming Sari Keris*.

Research findings indicate that the head of the *Keris* in question resembles an ivory *Keris* head with a fauna (bird) motif. Furthermore, the appearance of this *Keris* is not related to those used by the Yang Di Pertuan Agong or the Yang Di Pertuan Negeri Melaka. This also includes the *sarong Keris* (*Keris* sheath), which serves as the *Keris* attire and acts as a protective garment for the human body. It also has its role and task during the fight and protects the dagger's point. However, the *Keris* sheath also does not clarify the design, making it difficult to determine its association with the *Keris* used by the Yang Di Pertuan Agong. Therefore, the Municipal Council should carefully consider the type of *Keris* design being presented. Cultural experts, particularly those specialising in *Keris*, must be consulted to ensure the traditional *keris* is presented correctly, reflecting its function, significance and connection to Melaka.

For this work, the applied colours have faded and become mossy. This indicates that it has been neglected and is in need of proper maintenance. The local authorities should take serious action to commit to conserving this work to prevent a negative impact on the community and the environment. The value of the beauty of heritage and culture should be taken seriously and prioritised by local authorities, especially for masterpieces recognized by UNESCO.

In order to integrate the evaluation of *Keris* with the cultural identity of Melaka, particularly in Jalan Air Keroh, several necessary steps are crucial. First, emphasise the historical and cultural significance of *Keris*, especially its connection with Admiral Hang Tuah and the history of Melaka. Engage residents to understand their views on the *Keris* and collaborate with local artisans to ensure the design reflects traditional craft. Prioritise conservation efforts to maintain the historical integrity of the *Keris* and develop educational programs to raise awareness of its cultural importance. Integrate the *Keris* into local events and public exhibitions to strengthen its connection with the community. Address any design discrepancies by consulting with experts and considering community feedback. These initiatives will help strengthen the *Keris* and integrate it into the cultural identity of Melaka and Jalan Air Keroh.

CONCLUSION

The public sculpture of the *Keris* along Jalan Air Keroh has been evaluated using Feldman's method, showing its artistic and cultural significance and areas needing improvement. The sculpture, which aims to replicate the traditional *Keris*, displays the cultural reverence for this iconic Malay weapon, which has significant historical and symbolic meaning, particularly about Admiral Hang Tuah and the legacy of Melaka. However, the evaluation indicates that the sculpture's design needs to reflect the specific characteristics or historical context of the *Keris* intended to depict.

The discrepancies between the sculpture and conventional representations of the *Keris*, particularly the Taming Sari *Keris*, indicate that the design must be carefully evaluated to better align with historical authenticity and cultural meaning. The sculpture's current condition, with faded colours and mossy-covered surfaces, underscores the urgent need for proper maintenance and conservation efforts to preserve the work's artistic and cultural significance. In order to integrate *Keris* sculpture, particularly in Jalan Air Keroh, into Melaka's cultural identity, it is necessary to emphasise the historical and cultural significance of the *Keris*, involve residents and artisans in the design process, and prioritise preservation. Education activities and public exhibitions must be developed to enhance awareness and strengthen the community's relationship with this cultural symbol. Consulting with experts and incorporating community feedback will ensure that the *Keris* statue displays traditional skills and underscores its significance as part of Melaka's cultural heritage.

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