

**A STUDY OF YUSOF GHANI'S ARTWORKS: THE 'WAJAH'
SERIES PAINTINGS FROM 2006 TO 2010**

MOZHGAN RAMEZANI

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ABSTRACT

Among the artists in Malaysia, Yusof Ghani is one of the most established and prolific Abstract Expressionist painters in the Malaysian modern art scene. The *Wajah* series paintings (2006-2010) created by Yusof Ghani is his latest venture into the art world. According to Yusof Ghani there is not any well-written research about *Wajah* series and the reason might be that although *Wajah* series was exhibited in Indonesia (2010) and in Canada (2009), it has never been shown in Malaysia. Moreover, currently there are limited references and materials documenting Malaysian art. Thus, the researcher's concern for the lack of research on Malaysian art for present and future generations led the researcher to embark on this issue as a research.

This qualitative research aims to analyze the selected paintings of *Wajah* series to identify the characteristics of the art elements and principles, determine the technique and explain the main concept of these paintings.

The researcher used maximal variation sampling strategy in which the researcher selected six paintings of *Wajah* series which are still available in Yusof Ghani's art gallery called *Tapak* located in *Shah Alam*, Malaysia.

The Narrative Design Method was used for conducting this research. The researcher collected the data through one-on-one interviews with the artist, field-notes, audio materials and documents. The collected data were analyzed using Art Appreciation Theory by Harry S. Broudy as the core theoretical framework in the phase of analyzing the samples.

The results show that the eyeless faces in *Wajah* series do not represent any specific identity. Instead they are symbolic representation of humankind in general. Each piece of this series contains a different narrative and the expressive faces address social issues related to human attitudes.

One of the most common features of all the selected paintings is the highly textured surfaces through the technique of impasto as well as modelling technique by sculpting the surface before the paint is applied. Controlled palette of a few hues with a limited tonal scale of dark and light and the ambiguous space of eyeless faces in these paintings set the right ambience for particular mood of these faces.

It also can be concluded that Yusof Ghani's works are technically influenced by the formalistic considerations of Abstract Expressionism in the USA. The relationship between paintings of *Wajah* series with Abstract Expressionism is clearly seen in the treatment of line and form, the spontaneous and expressive brushstrokes and the randomly placed paint by dripping and dribbles of paint onto the canvas. The Western Abstract Expressionist works are considered to be unconventional non-figurative images. However, Yusof Ghani's gestural style alternates between abstract work and figurative images and it is not purely Abstract Expressionist as seen in the context of Western art. It could be suggested that Yusof Ghani always emphasizes not only on exploring formalistic issues but also incorporating subject matter and social critiques in his works.

ABSTRAK

Di antara pelukis di Malaysia, Yusof Ghani merupakan salah seorang pelukis yang paling kukuh, prolifik dan tidak dapat dinafikan sebagai pelukis moden Malaysia yang paling berjaya dalam generasinya. Yusof Ghani adalah pelukis abstrak ekspresionis yang penting dalam perkembangan seni lukis Malaysia.

Terdapat kekurangan rujukan dan bahan mendokumentasikan seni lukis Malaysia yang merupakan satu tugas yang mencabar. Siri Wajah (2006-2010) adalah usaha terkini daripada Yusof Ghani ke dalam dunia seni lukis yang boleh dianggap sebagai model representasi yang berbeza. Menurut Yusof Ghani, sehingga kini tidak terdapat penyelidikan bertulis tentang Siri Wajah dan ini berkemungkinan kerana Siri Wajah dipamerkan di Indonesia (2010) dan Kanada (2009), dan ianya tidak pernah dipamerkan di Malaysia.

Oleh yang demikian, keperihatinan penyelidik terhadap kekurangan kajian tentang seni lukis Malaysia untuk generasi kini dan akan datang dan juga peranan Yusof Ghani sebagai salah seorang seniman kontemporari yang paling berpengaruh dalam peningkatan seni moden Malaysia, menyebabkan penyelidik memulakan isu ini sebagai satu kajian.

Matlamat penyelidikan kualitatif ini adalah untuk menganalisa beberapa karya catan Siri Wajah yang terpilih bagi mengenal pasti ciri-ciri unsur dan prinsip seni, teknik dan menerangkan konsep utama catan-catan yang dihasilkan.

Penyelidik menggunakan strategi persampelan variasi maksima di mana penyelidik memilih enam catan Siri Wajah yang masih terdapat di galeri seni Yusof Ghani yang dinamakan Tapak terletak di *Shah Alam*, Malaysia. Kaedah reka bentuk naratif digunakan untuk menjalankan kajian kualitatif ini. Untuk mendapatkan kefahaman menyeluruh mengenai catan Siri Wajah, penyelidik mengumpul data melalui kaedah temubual bersama pelukis, nota lapangan, bahan audio dan dokumen.

Selepas menyediakan informasi yang diperolehi analisa data telah dijalankan secara bertema berdasarkan kepada objektif penyelidikan. Teori apresiasi seni yang diperkenalkan oleh Harry S. Broudy dijadikan sebagai teras kerangka teori dalam fasa analisis sampel.

Keputusan penyelidikan mendapati objek muka tanpa mata dalam karya catan Siri Wajah ini tidak menggambarkan identiti secara spesifik malah ianya dijadikan representasi simbolik manusia secara am. Setiap hasil karya pada Siri Wajah ini mengandungi naratif dan ekspresif. gambaran muka yang refleksi dari isu sosial berkaitan dengan sikap manusia.

Salah satu daripada ciri-ciri persamaan yang terdapat pada catan yang terpilih ini ialah permukaan berstekstura melalui teknik impasto dan juga teknik model mengukir permukaan sebelum catan diaplikasikan. Sebagai tambahan, awalan pelet warna yang sedikit dan ton skala terhad gelap dan terang telah digunakan untuk penetapan suasana mood pada catan Siri Wajah ini.

Dari kesimpulan mendapati karya-karya Yusof Ghani secara teknikalnya terdedah kepada formalistik Abstrak Ekspresionis di Amerika Syarikat. Hubungan di antara catan Siri Wajah dan aliran Abstrak Ekspresionis jelas kelihatan pada unsur garisan dan bentuk, sapuan berus secara ekspresif dan spontan, dan cat diaplikasikan secara rawak dengan cara titisan dan percikan cat ke kanvas. Karya-karya abstrak ekspresionis barat adalah bercirikan imej bukan figuratif konvensional. Namun begitu, catan yang dihasilkan ini tidak semata-mata abstrak ekspresionism seperti yang dilihat dalam konteks seni barat. Boleh dikatakan Yusof Ghani bukan sahaja menekankan isu formalistik tetapi juga melibatkan bahan kajian dan kritik sosial dalam karya beliau.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

Yusof Ghani is undoubtedly one of the most established modern artists and significant figures in Malaysian contemporary art scene who has been mentioned within a large number of critical assessments and also several publications documenting his works. Yusof Ghani's works have been showcased all around the world, be it a solo or group exhibition ever since the 1980s.

In 1950 Yusof Ghani (Figure: 1.1) was born in Johor, Malaysia. He was initially a graphic artist from 1969 to 1979 in Malaysia then transitioned to fine arts by studying at George Mason University, Virginia on a government endowment in 1979 where he commenced his study with Professor Walter Kravitz. Before long, the works of the American Abstract Expressionists namely Jackson Pollock and William de Kooning caught his eye. Following his achievement of being the recipient of the Dr. Burt Amanda Scholarship for the most exceptional student of art, he enrolled in fine arts classes and in due course graduated with a Bachelor's degree. Yusof Ghani then pursued his Master's Degree at the Catholic University in Washington D.C where he encountered Professor Tom Nakashima who edified him on the finer aspects of painting.



Figure 1.1: Yusof Ghani in His Studio (*Tapak*). Photo by the Researcher

Yusof Ghani had his first solo exhibition in 1984 on the completion of his Master's Degree at the exalted Anton Gallery in Washington D.C. His Protest series which encompassed of his sentiments toward the intervention of the United States in Nicaragua and El Salvador at that moment in time was widely accepted and also received monumental appraisal from Washington Post's art critic, Jo Ann Lewis. On his return to Malaysia, he expanded his repertoire with a compilation of seven main series of works called *Tari* (Dance) (1984-1992), *Topeng* (Mask) (1992-1996), *Wayang* (Play) (1996-1998), *Hijau* (Green) (1998-2002), *Segerak I-IV* (A Movement) (since 2002), *Biring* (Fighting Cockerels) (2004-2007), *Ombak* (2008) and *Wajah* (Faces) (2006-2010).

In the 1970's and 1980's artists of the Abstract Expressionists following flourished in Malaysia. One of the artists known to have adopted this approach was

Yusof Ghani. The abstracted forms and imagery which the artists applied were by means of color, stressing lines and accentuating the simplification of forms (Sarena Abdullah, 2009).

The 1990s is set to be an era of development of Malaysian art as the belief that art will not only be acknowledged but also appreciated by the end of this decade is becoming a reality, as illustrated by a variety of emerging trends. This development poses a surprise to none as the community's appreciation for art is directly proportional to the economic state of a country, which is proven by the abundance of art collectors, connoisseurs and art lovers found in fully developed countries from all walks of society (T.K Sabapathy, 1996).

According to Sarena Abdullah (2012) the revolution of Malaysia's cultural domain has been noteworthy ever since the 1990s. The Malaysian art scene has emerged as an enduring and successful art enterprise that is constantly transforming.

1.1 Research Background

Chin Chin Liew (2008) suggested that the constant progress of the Malaysian art panorama in the past decades has given Malaysian artists the encouragement to strive for greater heights in their works thus bringing about an abundance of exhilarating novel works. Yusof Ghani has found favor among the art collectors in Malaysia and is irrefutably a force to be reckoned with.

Yusof Ghani boasts thirty years of excellence in art under his belt and his unique works have been on display in many continents. Furthermore, his works are widely in demand, both in the local and international market. Yusof Ghani's marvelous paintings encapsulate the zeal and fervor of an artist whose works are timeless and portray his pursuit to exemplify the elusive (Anurendra Jegadeva, 2007).

Yusof Ghani, one of Malaysia's top abstract expressionist painters has thrived in his distinctive style of art that is widely recognized and his works have been described

as spontaneous, energetic, alive and powerful by critics and collectors (T.K. Sabapathy, 1996).

According to Muliyadi Mahmood (2004) the themes of human figures and landscapes had been studied intently by Yusof Ghani since the 1980s era.

Rizki A. Zaelani (2010) noted that Yusof Ghani's paintings had thrived in the depiction of the stages of quality realization that are fundamental in relation to the 'human-scape' through its authoritative conveyance of the potency in movement, impulsiveness, perception, and its articulated disposition. The Western Abstract Expressionism was Yusof Ghani's stimulus. When he returned from his study in America, Yusof Ghani toiled on pieces with themes illustrating human figures and the dynamics of movement that resembled abstract expressionism.

Raja Azhar Idris in Muliyadi Mahmood (2004) mentioned that Yusof Ghani has a knack of turning ordinary objects into extraordinary works of art. His creative discernment helps him in the process of turning ideas into works. His ability to mold and transform ideas showcases his potential to thrive as an artist.

Lim Wei-Ling in Anurenda Jegadeva (2007) suggested that Yusof Ghani is seen as a master, whose curiosity paved a path for never-ending experimentation and exploration of new subjects and mediums that were to be used for his expressive paintings. His dabbling in a variety of themes generated excitement from his audience as his works ranged from vivacious performers in *Siri Tari*, to a re-elucidation of the figure in the *Segerak* Series and a reflection on the scenery in *Hijau* to animated mark and marionettes in *Seri Topeng* and *Wayang*.

Wajah series of Yusof Ghani's which has a thematic title created from 2006 to 2010. The term *Wajah* (face), in the Malay language is used to define (1) face, facial feature; (2) figure; (3) player; (4) anything that is in close association with face value; or (5) imagery, and styles. The distinguishing factor of these themes is seen on the

expressive human faces on each canvas. However, a constant definition of *Wajah* (face) cannot be established from the paintings (Rizki A. Zaelani, 2010).

This qualitative research is about Yusof Ghani's art works and his style as well as his concern for humanity issues. This research also focused on the paintings of *Wajah* series in terms of describing the paintings of *Wajah* series and the concept behind these works.

1.2 Objective of Research

The objectives of this qualitative research can be summarized as follows:

- i. To identify the characteristics of the art elements and principles in *Wajah* series paintings
- ii. To define the technique and medium in *Wajah* series painting
- iii. To explain the concept of *Wajah* series paintings

1.3 Statement of Problem

The documentation of Malaysian art is a challenge on its own. There has already been criticism on the lack of references in this field of study. The lack of materials and researches on prominent artists of old is a glaring setback (T.K. Sabapathy, 1996).

The *Wajah* series is the most recent works of Yusof Ghani and can be considered his latest venture into the art world. It was said that "Yusof Ghani's works on the *Wajah* (Face) series succeeded in connecting the tendencies on many of the previous works into a dialoguing field, that produced different representation models, more encompassing each of the different tendencies within Yusof Ghani" (Rizki A. Zaelani, 2010, p.25).

Although *Wajah* series was exhibited in Indonesia (2010) and in Canada (2009), it has never been shown in Malaysia due to some reasons.

There is no well-written research about *Wajah* series in Malaysia; the reason might be that *Wajah* has not been shown in Malaysia as a body of work because the *Wajah* series has not been widely understood among the Malaysians specially

the Malays. The Islamic society likes beautiful paintings, they appreciate beauty. But, the faces in *Wajah* look dark, scary and eerie, so the people are not ready to encounter it (Yusof Ghani, personal communication, December 18, 2013).

This research is derived from the researcher's concern with the scarcity of research on Malaysian art which is important for the present and future generations. Besides that, the significance of Yusof Ghani's role as one of the most influential nation's leading contemporary artists in the improvement of Malaysian modern art led the researcher to embark on this issue as a research. Moreover, *Wajah* series has not been shown in Malaysia and this research focuses on this series of paintings that has not been extensively researched. Due to lack of the studies on this subject, it seems to be relevant to explore this approach more in detail to fill a gap in the existing literatures.

1.4 Research Questions

This qualitative research attempted to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What are the main characteristics of the art elements in the *Wajah* series paintings?

RQ2: What are the main characteristics of the art principles in the *Wajah* series paintings?

RQ3: What is the technique and medium used in the *Wajah* series paintings?

RQ4: What are the differences and similarities among the selected paintings of the *Wajah* series paintings in this study?

RQ5: What is the main concept of the *Wajah* series paintings?

1.5 Significance of Study

This study extensively focuses on the paintings of *Wajah* series (2006-2010) by Yusof Ghani. As mentioned before in the statement of problem this series of paintings has not been extensively researched. The researcher has directly analysed six paintings of *Wajah* series to identify the characteristics of the art elements and principles, determine the technique and explain the main concept of these paintings. There are

limited written work and materials about these paintings. Therefore, this study is a significant endeavor in providing accessible data on this field.

This study is beneficial to the art students either local or international to improve their knowledge about Yusof Ghani who is one of the most prominent artists in Malaysian modern art and particularly the paintings of *Wajah* series.

This study benefits and helps the future researchers as their guide to improve their knowledge about Yusof Ghani's works in terms of technique and concept.

Likewise, the art experts who are interested in the field of Malaysian contemporary art might use the evidence of this study in order to get more information about one of the abstract expressionist artists in Malaysian modern art scene.

1.6 Scope of Study

This study was limited to an investigation through six selected paintings of *Wajah* series by Yusof Ghani which has been done between 2006 and 2010. These paintings had been housing in Yusof Ghani's art gallery *Tapak* located in *Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia*. Since these paintings are still available in research site thus allowed the researcher to observe and analyse them in person. Besides that, these paintings represent different formal and conceptual features of the paintings of *Wajah* series (see research sample in chapter three). The researcher focused on analysing the selected paintings of *Wajah* series based on the theoretical framework, Yusof Ghani's artistic style and the significant effect of humanity and social issues in the artist works. The researcher arranged one-on-one interview with Yusof Ghani in his art gallery to collect the relevant data for this study.

1.7 Limitation of Research

The limitation of this study was the shortage of sources and publications in the field of Malaysian art. And also some of the materials have been published in Bahasa Malaysia that limited the researcher in this study.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

The Art Appreciation theory by Harry S. Broudy, a Polish professor (1905- 1998) guided this qualitative research. After he earned his doctorate in Philosophy in 1936, Broudy administered the Massachusetts Department of Education. Broudy taught philosophy of education and educational psychology at a few of Massachusetts state teacher colleges from 1937 to 1957. Then, from 1957 to 1974 he taught philosophy of education at University of Illinois. He then officially retired in 1974 at the University of Illinois but stayed on as an active professor emeritus at the College of Education. Broudy was forced into retirement in the 1990s when he had Alzheimer's disease. He wrote, lectured and participated in educational projects before acquiring the disease.

Broudy (1988), in chapter five of the book entitled *The Uses of Schooling* mentioned that there are two major parts of doing appreciation of art: Aesthetic perception and Aesthetic Criticism

1) Aesthetic perception

Firstly, based on research questions and objectives in this study, the researcher has analysed the selected paintings of *Wajah* series by using the first part of Art Appreciation Theory which is Aesthetic Perception (Figure: 1.2) and considering four categories including sensory properties, formal properties, technical properties and expressive properties as explained below.

Aesthetic Perception classified into four steps as follows:

- i. Sensory Properties: The art elements such as line, shape, texture, color and value are identified.
- ii. Formal Properties: Description of the way the elements and principles are arranged. For example, repetition, balance, contrast, dominance and rhythm or variety.
- iii. Technical Properties: Identifying the creation process. For instance the medium used (watercolor, oil paint, acrylic, bronze, wood), the tools (brush, pencil, crayon, ink,

pen and camera) or even the method used to create the artwork (drawing, photography, painting, sculpting and printing)

iv. Expressive Properties: Response to the expressive characteristics of the artwork. For Instance, the mood, ideas, language, or philosophical concepts of the work. Descriptions of these properties are challenging and are regarded as the most essential properties.

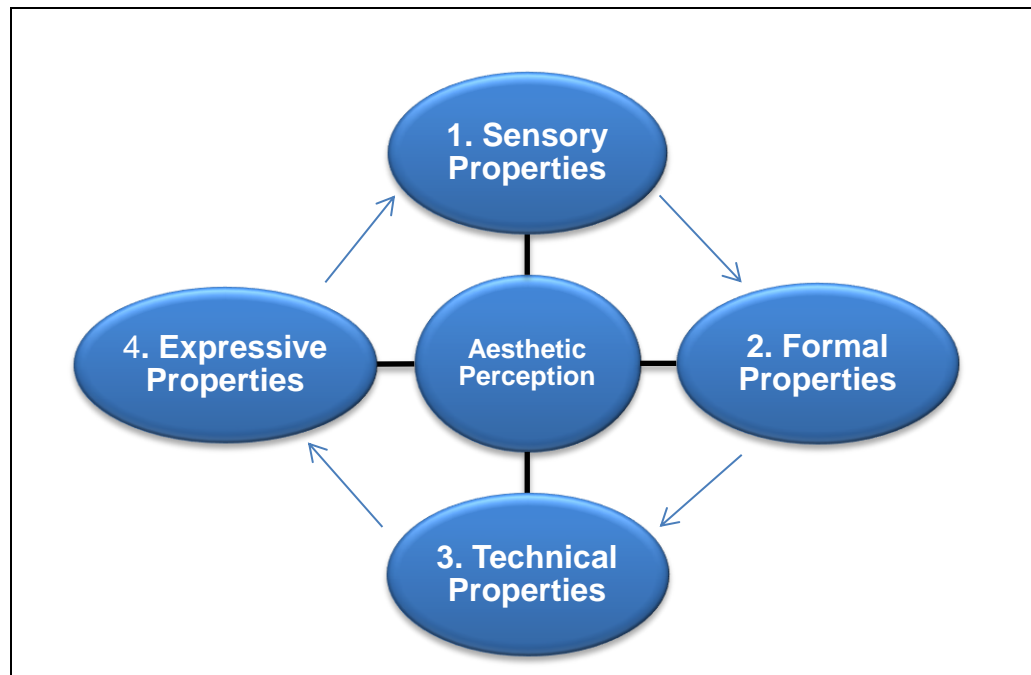


Figure 1.2: Aesthetic Perception of Broudy's Theory of Art Appreciation

2) Aesthetic Criticism

The second part of Theory of Art Appreciation is Aesthetic criticism (Figure: 1.3) which is classified into three steps:

- i. Historical: Determining the nature and expressive intent of works of art within their historical content and in relation to school, period, style and culture.
- ii. Re-creative: Apprehending and relating imaginatively what the artist has expressed in a specific work.
- iii. Judicial: Estimating the value of works of art in relation to other works using three criteria: degree of formal excellence, truth and significance.

In the second phase of analysing of the artworks in this study, Historical relevance was considered (see chapter four).

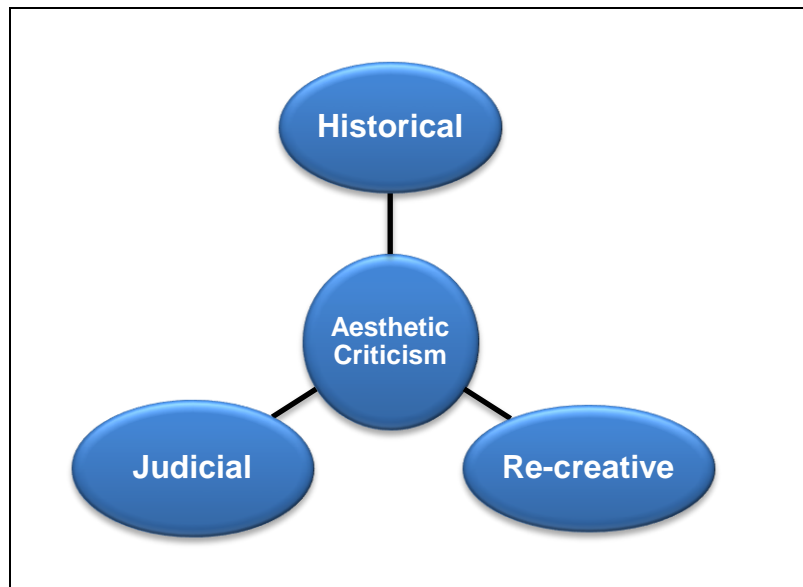


Figure 1.3: Aesthetic Criticism of Broudy's Theory of Art Appreciation

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The researcher conducted a literature review as a step in the research process to describe the past and current state of information on the topic of this study. First of all, the researcher began the search of the relevant literature by narrowing the research topic to the key terms or short phrases. In the next step, the researcher located the relevant literature in the library or through an internet search. Once the literature was located, the researcher checked it whether the literature is accurate and relevant to this study. After that, the researcher organized the literature by filing it as well as reading it and taking notes on it. The final step was writing the literature review and developing headings for the written literature review. As mentioned in the limitation of this study in chapter one, the shortage of sources and publications in the field of Malaysian art, Yusof Ghani's career and also the paintings of *Wajah* series limited the researcher in this study. However, overview of the past studies relevant to the topic of this study provided a literature review. The literature review for this study is thematic reviews by summarizing the major themes in this study which includes different parts.

2.1 Yusof Ghani's Artistic Profile

Yusof Ghani's artistic journey is evident in the development of his works in a general and unique sense. The unique developments refer to the periods of works on certain creative themes which on its own, demonstrates no sense of evolution in Yusof Ghani's works. The influences of one period on another can be seen in some of his works. Some of the publications used in this research relate to Yusof Ghani's artistic career either about *Wajah* series or other previous series as well as his style. One of the most supportive literatures for this study was the book titled *Yusof Ghani's Sketchbooks: From Tari to Segerak* written by Muliyadi Mahmood. In this book Muliyadi Mahmood

(2004) examines the sketches of Yusof Ghani as well as his stylistic career from *Tari* to *Segerak* series. This book was published in conjunction with the solo exhibition by Yusof Ghani entitled *Segerak* held at Art Case Galleries in Kuala Lumpur in 2004. In this book Mulyadi Mahmood focuses on the sketchbooks of previous series done by Yusof Ghani including *Tari* (1984-1992), *Topeng* (1992-1996), *Wayang* (1996-1998), *Hijau* (1998-2002) and *Segerak* (since 2002). The author also briefly explains about these series either in terms of visual context or content and idea.

Tari (1984-1992) is the first series of paintings done by Yusof Ghani. Mulyadi Mahmood (2004) explained that the sketches in the *Tari* series were done with pen, ball point pen, pencil, watercolor, and color pencils (Figure: 2.1). For the most part, the sketches were general however a few had titles such as *Perjuangan Selepas Merdeka* (The Struggle after Independence). The color palette used in this series was red and white symbolizing UMNO, thereby underlining the correlation of independence. The artist's works demonstrates that Yusof Ghani incorporated social issues into his works (Figure 2.2).

Mulyadi Mahmood (2004) suggested that the paintings of *Tari* series illustrate a picture of disorder and different phases of life. Yusof Ghani sees the evolution of the world through social issues and restates his stand on humanity and injustice through these works.

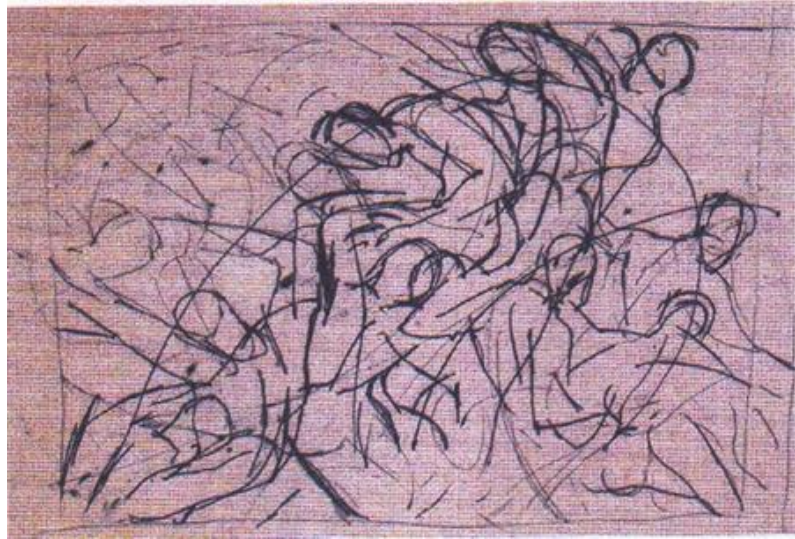


Figure 2.1: *Tari* Series Sketchbook (Extracted from *Segerak* by Mulyadi Mahmood, Malaysia: Utusan publications & Distributers Sdn Bhd, 2004, p.5)



Figure 2.2: *Tari V*, Mixed Media on Canvas, 60 x 60", 1989, *Tari* Series (Extracted from *Tari to Segerak IV* by Chin, C.L. & Haffendi Anuar, Malaysia: Starhill Gallery, 2008, p.19)

Topeng (1992-1996) is the second series of paintings by Yusof Ghani. To explain about *Topeng* Series Mulyadi Mahmood (2004) noted that Yusof Ghani's sketchbooks for this series portrayed his efforts in discovering new forms and visual methods that are concise, evocative and genuine. The sketches for *Topeng* had a combination of ink and water color bolstered by outlines (Figure: 2.3).



Figure 2.3: *Topeng* Series Sketchbook Sketchbook (Extracted from *Segerak* by Mulyadi Mahmood, Malaysia: Utusan publications & Distributers Sdn Bhd, 2004, p.15)

Mulyadi Mahmood (2004) mentioned that *Topeng* is the contrast of the *Tari* series as the *Topeng* series was inspired by local themes such as the masks of the Kayan and Kenyah ethnic groups found in Sarawak. Yusof Ghani's fascination with these masks was born from his regular visits to the National Museum that drove him to find out more about these ethnic groups which took him to Sarawak. His visit to Sarawak in 1991 was for an international workshop and art festival which renewed his enthusiasm for this form of art (Figure: 2.4).



Figure 2.4: People of the Rain Forest II, Mixed Media on Canvas, 38 x 41", 1996, *Topeng* Series (Extracted from *Segerak* by Mulyadi Mahmood, Malaysia: Utusan publications & Distributers Sdn Bhd, 2004, p.120)

Wayang (1996-1998) is the third series of paintings done by Yusof Ghani. Mulyadi Mahmood (2004) explained that the sketches for *Wayang* which began in 1996, were more restrained compared to his other works even though its form was more abstract. Some sketches are more complex and resembled floral shapes and wood carving motifs (Figure: 2.5). In this series, the theme of using human figures to illustrate issues that are affected by human attitude was revisited. Yusof Ghani's ability to relate dancing and masks to human behavior in the context of culture, traditions and rituals makes his works a depiction of the human race. Yusof Ghani's constant depiction of issues related to humanity and the environment can be seen in the *Wayang* series (Figure: 2.6).



Figure 2.5: *Wayang* Series Sketchbook (Extracted from *Segerak* by Mulyadi Mahmood, Malaysia: Utusan publications & Distributers Sdn Bhd, 2004, p.34)



Figure 2.6: *Agony of Paklurah*, Mixed media on canvas, 38 x 48", 1997, *Wayang* Series (Extracted from *Segerak* by Mulyadi Mahmood, Malaysia: Utusan publications & Distributers Sdn Bhd, 2004, p.37)

It can be suggested that Yusof Ghani's statement described the theme of his humanity based paintings through the identification, description and interpretation of the images. Yusof Ghani shows similar forms and significance through *Tari*, *Topeng* and *Wayang*, be it the sketches or the end product.

Hijau (1998-2002) is the fourth series of paintings done by Yusof Ghani. Mulyadi Mahmood (2004) suggested that *Hijau* is a representation of Yusof Ghani's artistic development through his stylistic transition and thematic evolution. The artist has gone from abstract expressionist style involving human figures in *Tari* to impressionist and fauvist type landscape displays. Although Yusof Ghani had a global approach to his works, he managed to link it to eastern traditions, both artistically and culturally. When we look at composition of these works, we see that the two elements used were earth and water. The water element was the centerpiece that divided the work into two parts. Some works looked similar as the color palette was mostly red, orange, yellow, and blue. Yusof Ghani's focal point seemed to be on nature rather than location.

Mulyadi Mahmood (2004) mentioned that when looking at Yusof Ghani's works stylistically, we can see the obvious transformations from his previous paintings that were more abstract. Though Yusof Ghani's style is clearly Abstract Expressionism, we see an evolution not only in the thematic sense but also in style. His landscape paintings were mostly semi-abstract and consisted of vivid colors and free form. The theme of *Hijau* shows Yusof Ghani's consciousness of the state of the environment both in the form of appreciation for the Creator and unease for the current condition of it. In short, *Hijau* illustrates the global issues that are currently being debated (Figure: 2.7).



Figure 2.7: Rimba Terjun, mixed media on Canvas, 48 x 48'', 2000, *Hijau* Series
(Extracted from Yusof Ghani: *Hijau* 1998- 2002 by Abu Talib Putih, Malaysia: Petronas, 2002, p.64)

Segerak series is the fifth series of paintings which has been doing by Yusof Ghani since 2002. Muliyadi Mahmood (2004) suggested that the production process of *Segerak* began in 2002 which showed his reprisal of the human figure theme Yusof Ghani used in *Tari*. After four years of focusing on the theme in the *Hijau* series, he decided to go back to exploring the human figure as exploration of the nature theme had been completed. The human figure theme is a theme that Yusof Ghani has been exploring thoroughly for a long time, as we can see in his works in *Tari*, *Topeng* and *Wayang*. Therefore *Segerak* is his return from his hiatus on this theme. Yusof Ghani sees a lot more potential for this theme.

According to Muliyadi Mahmood (2004) In *Segerak*, Yusof Ghani puts emphasis on depicting human movements like working, walking or running. He focuses on the human body functioning in its environment (Figur: 2.8).



Figure 2.8: Night Rider, Mixed media on Canvas, 2005, *Segerak* Series (Extracted from *Segerak* by Mulyadi Mahmood, Malaysia: Utusan publications & Distributers Sdn Bhd, 2004, p.70)

Mulyadi Mahmood (2004) noted that the sketchbooks for *Segerak* had quick sketches to document movement and activity (Figure: 2.9).



Figure 2.9: *Segerak* Series Sketchbook (Extracted from *Segerak* by Mulyadi Mahmood, Malaysia: Utusan publications & Distributers Sdn Bhd, 2004, p.58)

Muliyadi Mahmood (2004) stated that some of the sketches for the India series that were created during train travel in that country were impulsive, lively and illustrated the motion and setting. He also argues that the *Segerak* sketches are more aggressive than previous ones and have led to the production of works depicting motions and emotions.

Segerak was a depiction of Yusof Ghani's experiences. For example, *Deer Hunter* was about a shooting of a hunter by a friend that he witnessed at the age of twelve in Rimba Terjun, Pontian, Johore, while *The Red Army* was his recollection of the threats posed by radical extremists to world peace. In Yusof Ghani's works, he proved that both the good and evil depend on human behavior.

Raja Azhar Idris in Muliyadi Mahmood's book (2004) pointed that Yusof Ghani's creative ideas have found success over the years. Ever since the 1980's, he has produced series' that are unforgettable. *Tari*, one of his works captures the viewer attention with its illusion of energetic movement of swirling figures while *Topeng* has a haunting quality to it with its multitude of facial expressions. *Wayang* has aspects of manipulation and *Hijau* portrays the state of the environment while *Segerak* illustrates the paths taken by ordinary folk to make a living.

Although this book provides a brief analysis of significant series by Yusof Ghani from *Tari* to *Segerak*, it does not include any discussion of recent series like *Segerak IV*, *Biring* and *Wajah*.

Another book was reviewed by the researcher is *Yusof Ghani Siri Tari-Topeng*. This book is a collection of the paintings of two series by Yusof Ghani includes *Tari* (Dance) (1984-1992), and *Topeng* (Mask) (1992-1996). In the beginning of this book, T.K Sabapathy (1996) in an essay titled *From Tari to Topeng : An Artistic Profile of Yusof Ghani* has briefly examined the paintings of *Tari* and *Topeng*. Sabapathy (1996) suggested that when Yusof Ghani returned to Malaysia on completion of his studies in

1984, he displayed a series titled *Tari* or Dance, inspired by his experiences in America, which was painted with vibrant, stunning colors accompanied with energetic brushstrokes that formed a composition of figures that appeared to meld into each other.

Zakaria Ali in T.K. Sabapathy's book (1996) mentioned that the *Tari* series was an illustration of his American experience that was inspired by metallic hard rock music on full blast. The strokes made to the beat of the sound were tiring and by 1991 Yusof Ghani was done.

To explain about the concept of *Tari*, Yusof Ghani in T.K. Sabapathy (1996) said that:

The *Tari* paintings series were still concerned about social comments. The *Tari* or dance is a symbol that I used to depict human behaviors. Life is sometimes like dancing, we move about with no purpose but we get lots of pleasure out of it (p.23).

Zakaria Ali in T.K. Sabapathy (1996) noted that after the *Tari* Series Yusof Ghani was looking to work on something native. Yusof Ghani was returning to his original source of inspiration and his interpretation of the masks of the Kayan and Kenyah was his homecoming. The images created are genuine and close to his heart. The *Topeng* series relates to the Dayak Kenyah masks on many levels. Yusof Ghani converted the main function of the masks which served as ritualistic objects and used for medical purposes by creating paintings that was a means to healing the soul.

It can be suggested that the *Topeng* series is a significant phase of evolution for Yusof Ghani's work as an Abstract Expressionist. Though the series bears close relation with Picasso and the African Masks, the masks of Sarawak's Dayak Kenyah was more than just about unusual and artistic matters to Yusof Ghani, it was about cultural awareness.

Although this book is among the first books published about Yusof Ghani's works and does not include any information about *Wajah* series, it can somehow help the researcher to better understand the artist's career.

Another book was reviewed about Yusof Ghani's artistic profile titled *Tari to Segerak IV* which was published in conjunction with the solo exhibition by Yusof Ghani in Hong Kong 2008. Chin Chin Liew & Haffendi Anuar (2008) in this book explains about Yusof Ghani's artworks from *Tari* series to *Segerak IV* but the author's stress is more on the *Segerak* series.

Segerak paved a way for *Segerak II*, which was made up of expressive drawn lines and brush strokes. Yusof Ghani's technique raised the quality of the figures in *Segerak II* to greater heights in an aesthetic sense as the size of the canvases increased. Yusof Ghani limited his palette to two or three complementary colors. His works were unpredictable and spontaneous and was heightened with the use of charcoal, which created grand textures in the drawings. The number of figures also increased (Chin Chin Liew & Haffendi Anuar, 2008).

In some of the paintings in the *Segerak II* series, figures of different scales are put side by side while a massive figure stands hunchback over the smaller versions of figures that were drawn with charcoal over the paintings. The figures were not colored in and were only visible because of thin outlines. Yusof Ghani is not only interested in the development of a visual language of the figures but also with creating environments for the figures to dwell in. In some paintings, the setting provided an important visual element that complimented the figures and the environment. The postures of the figures appear uncomfortable and awkward the struggle of the figures as they look to be swimming in a sea of swirling colors is clear (Chin Chin Liew & Haffendi Anuar, 2008).

Chin Chin Liew & Haffendi Anuar (2008) believed that, *Segerak III* was created in 2005 and consisted of neutral and indistinct works. The images were less compact and delicate while his smaller works were passive. As Yusof Ghani had reached a point of confidence in his works, he used drawings to represent images from his imagination. The drawings were the dominant factor in these works. Yusof Ghani experimented with charcoal, chalk, ink, pastel, oils and acrylic on jute, canvas and linen. *Segerak III* showcases a combination of drawing and painting, with an even more diminished color palette consisting of earthy and warm shades but an increasing volume and variety of lines.

Chin Chin Liew & Haffendi Anuar (2008) also mentioned that the figures in this series are seamed onto the canvas with strokes of black and white in a comfortable fashion and seem to move randomly. There were splashes of color over the figures and background with some loose paint flowing down like streams that contributed to the physicality of the paintings. The gravity element seems to be interrupting the imaginary ambit of the figures. The cascading paint drops and smears bear close resemblance to De Kooning's works.

With this in mind, it may be suggested that sketches play a huge part in *Segerak III* as they are used as the final product instead of as a process of preparation. The limited painting in his large works shows development in Yusof Ghani's art that puts emphasis on challenging the preconceived notions of using drawings as the sole method.

As a result of Ghani's zealous observations, *Segerak IV* was born. The images consist of momentous and fascinating moments. The keen observations coupled with a restless spirit that thrives on the development of art, produced a contrast of figuration and abstraction and drawing and painting. His imagination is drawn to the complexity of the figure that has many provocative insinuations and links. The figure is the most

intimate structure to be put onto a canvas and serves more purpose than the role of the initiator (Chin Chin Liew & Haffendi Anuar, 2008).

This essay concluded that Yusof Ghani created these works with the intention of portraying imaginative scenes of faceless actors in action poses. He observes the personality of the lines, the structure and spatial suggestions of the figure. However, it does not include any discussion of the *Wajah* series painting.

In the book titled *Yusof Ghani: Hijau Abu Talib Putih* (2002) analyzed the paintings of *Hijau* series done by Yusof Ghani. This book was published in conjunction with the solo exhibition by Yusof Ghani called *Hijau* held at Gallery Petronas in 2002. Abu Talib Putih (2002) stated that from 1998 to 2002 Yusof Ghani's works focused on articulating landscape plays and expressive colors than the forms created through brushstrokes. It was during this period that Yusof Ghani created the *Hijau* (Green) series (Figure: 2.10).



Figure 2.10: *Hijau* Sketchbook (Extracted from *Segerak* by Muliyadi Mahmood, Malaysia: Utusan publications & Distributers Sdn Bhd, 2004, p.42)

Abu Talib Putih (2002) stated that in the year 1998 and Yusof Ghani began depicting nature in a pictorial form. At first he was only interested in using landscape scenery for documentation of sites and places, and then it dawned on him that nature could be used for so much more than just for illustration and documentation. Yusof Ghani discovered that every object has a certain ambiguous quality to it.

Abu Talib Putih (2002) also noted that the dimensions of color in Yusof Ghani's paintings are an important aspect. The colors chosen were not solely based on the character it portrayed but also was chosen from a symbolic aspect. The *Hijau* series did not only contain green and blue paintings but had a variety of colors that were vibrant yet complemented the art similarly. It was said that "Yusof Ghani does not depict the literal greenness of nature, but rather explores its hidden side, *Hijau* series represents the concepts of nature as a whole, while the colors chosen by the artist forms a harmonious visual language" (Mulyadi Mahmood, 2004, p.48).

Another book related to Yusof Ghani's artistic profile was *Biring: Yusof Ghani*. This book was launched at the same time as an exhibition of Yusof Ghani's *Biring* series of paintings at Wei-Ling Gallery in 2007. This book includes an essay titled *Yusof Ghanis Brief Encounter with the Ayam Jantan as an Icon* which was written by Anurendra Jegadeva. Anurendra Jegadeva (2007) stated that the *Biring* series is inspired by the controversial cockfighting blood sport that is famous in Belgium, Britain, France, Colombia, Mexico, Philippines and Malaysia. Cockfighting is a sport that dates back 3000 years originating in South East Asia though it has been around for a long time that the country of origin cannot be confirmed. The rooster, to rural born Malaysians, brings back memories of kampong and family but it signifies so much more. It is a symbol of power, might, dexterity and determination that is the soul of *Biring*. Cockfighting demonstrations were held as an opening act for Silat tournaments.

Anurenda Jegadeva (2007) argued that even though Yusof Ghani expressed the beauty and dignity of the sport in the series, it is not an act or celebratory response toward cockfighting, nor is it an expression of disapproval. The rooster is perceived as a metaphor for the incapability of the human race to coexist, whether it's from a universal point or in interpersonal relationships. The magnetizing factor of the rooster is more than it being about the artistic aspect or the culture its derived from. The image portrays the passion that the human condition emancipates while negotiating. Though the use of the rooster as the inspiration of the *Biring* series symbolize the cultures of Malay and South East Asia, Yusof Ghani sees it is as a secondary factor to the paintings.

Anurenda Jegadeva (2007) also suggested that Yusof Ghani's canvases celebrate the concept of painting by incorporating various rhythms of brush strokes and techniques of painting amidst the simplicity, radiance and beauty. The line, pigment and texture of these paintings have richness in quality. Ghani also manages to assimilate a blend of abstraction and figuration in his paintings, a factor that is a necessity currently. The *Biring* series still resonates the historical and cultural aspects it was derived from even though Yusof Ghani's work is contemporary (Figure: 2.11).



Figure 2.11: *Biring L*, 97cm x 97cm, Oil on Canvas, 2006, *Biring* Series (Extracted from *Biring*: Yusof Ghani by Anurendra Jegadeva, Malaysia: Wei-Ling Gallery, 2007, p.42)

Another beneficial literature for this research was an essay titled *Wajah: Yusof Ghani's Self Opposition* by Rizki A. Zaelani which was published in 2010. Rizki A. Zaelani (2010) suggested that Yusof Ghani incorporated his understanding of the various phases of painting and the issues involved as he treats painting as a challenge. The *Wajah* series paintings have been seen to have a correlation to social and cultural situations of a variety of communities (Figure: 2.12). Zaelani (2010) stated that:

My appreciation of the paintings in the *Wajah* series lies on the tireless struggle of Yusof Ghani in exploring the power of provocative images in his works, on his loyalty in countering the spaces of canvas as a challenge that offers him a fertile land that inspired the viewers to think about life in a better way (Riziki A.Zaelani, 2010, p.33).



Figure 2.12: Scarlet, Oil on Jute, 2007, *Wajah* series (Extracted from *Wajah*: Yusof Ghani by Riziki A.Zaelani, Malaysia: Green Art Media Sdn.Bhd, 2010, p.42)

Rizki A. Zaelani (2010) noted that the sublime state that draws the viewer's attention is the size of the paintings that seems to look like it would reach out to those viewing it directly. The emphasis on facial forms that depict motion that are outlined by the play on lines and brushstrokes also contributes to the sublime effect (Figure: 2.13).

Rizki A. Zaelani (2010) believed that *Wajah* explores Yusof Ghani's enthusiasm and dedication in discovering and re-composing the themes previously used in his works. Yusof Ghani's rebellion to his style depicts the way he responds to the evolution of humanity in a social and cultural sense in different societies.

With a review of Yusof Ghani's previous series Rizki A. Zaelani (2010) found that the paintings in the *Wajah* series bore a close resemblance, in the thematic sense to *Wayang* (puppet) instead of *Topeng* (Mask) though the facial forms in *Wajah* resembles a mask. However, this study provides a basis for analyzing the paintings of *Wajah* series.



Figure 2.13: Outsider, Oil on Canvas, 2006, *Wajah* Series (Extracted from *Wajah: Yusof Ghani* by Riziki A.Zaelani, Malaysia: Green Art Media Sdn.Bhd, 2010, p.48)

Whilst such studies had examined Yusof Ghani's previous series in terms of visual and conceptual features, there has been not any comprehensive study about *Wajah* series paintings. However, in this study the researcher has extensively analyzed the paintings of *Wajah* series in terms of the visual and conceptual.

2.2 Abstract Expressionism in Malaysian Contemporary Art

There are some beneficial publications for this study relating to the Malaysian art in general and also the artist's style overview of the contribution of past research and studies relevant to the central themes of this study provides literature review which were reviewed by the researcher as follows.

Redza Piyadasa in Mulyadi Mahmood's book titled *Yusof Ghani's Sketchbooks: From Tari to Segerak* (2004) suggested that the 1960's and 1970's era were periods of evolution for the Malaysian art scene as the overseas-trained artists returned after acquiring first hand education in Europe and America. All the newly-opened art colleges and university art departments which were founded during this period were staffed with many of the artists who returned home. The artists venture to the West had revealed to them the foundation of concepts of the art movements that thrived internationally during that era. The American-inspired Abstract Expressionism was a global phenomenon. Highly distinctive, emotive and gestural considerations were the basis of its aesthetic. A number of noteworthy, outstanding Malaysian artists have emerged.

The correlation between Western art and modern Malaysian art is undeniable, particularly in the 1960's. The exposure of the local artists to the European art scene allowed the integration of methods or principles observed, in their own works. The Expressionism and Abstract Expressionism majorly appealed to the local artists such as Syed Ahmad Jamal and Abdul Latiff Mohidin who are two of the earliest artists to return from Europe. Syed Ahmad Jamal's early works like *Bait* show the influences of New York Abstract Expressionism style which are technically free and spontaneous. Meanwhile, the landscapes of Abdul Latiff Mohidin such as *Pago Pago* show the relationship with the characteristics of German Expressionism. (Mulyadi Mahamood, 2007).

The approach of the Dionysian Abstract Expression to creativity has remained a huge influence. Practitioners of this art scene are frequently featured at local exhibition despite the fixations which range from color to tactile surface decorations and tribal art. Some of the practitioners of this idiom are Yeoh Jin Leng, Cheong Laitong, Sharifah

Fatimah Zubir, Awang Damit, Chew Teng Beng, Fauzan Omar, Ahmad Khalid Yusof, Ibrahim Hussein and Yusof Ghani (Redza Piyadasa, 2003).

Syed Abdul Jamal in Mohamad Ali Abdul Rahman's book (2000), entitled '*Modern Malaysian Art*' noted that art is a form of expression of opinions through the senses and directness as well as the correlation of purpose and intentions that are seen in Expressionism. Abstract Expressionism triggers emotional and spiritual release of sentiments and thoughts as a form of meditation which is showcased on the canvas.

2.3 Abstract Expressionism in Yusof Ghani's Works

When we look at Yusof Ghani's works, the influences of Abstract Expressionist artistic styles and techniques are evident. The spontaneous and expressive aspects of art, which is the basis of Yusof Ghani's works, can be traced back to the American Abstract Expressionist painters after the World War II (T.K. Sabapathy, 1996).

Muliyadi Mahmood (2004) mentioned that from a stylistic perspective, the *Tari* series shows the continuity of abstract expressionism in our country after pioneers in the art world such as Syed Ahmad Jamal, Yeoh Jin Leng, Abdul Latiff Mohidin , and Ibrahim Hussein introduced it in the 1960's. Yusof Ghani's approach in his works, such as him stating his stand on humanitarian causes through his art sets him apart from these greats who base their works on landscapes.

Syed Ahmad Jamal on reviewing Yusof Ghani's works in Muliyadi Mahmood's book titled *Yusof Ghani's Sketchbooks: From Tari to Segerak* (2004) suggested that on first coming across Yusof Ghani's work at the 1985 National Art Gallery open show he noticed that it immediately drew attention. The works were familiar yet had an eccentricity to it. It bore close resemblance to Pollock and de Kooning's works in certain aspects but it definitely had individuality.

Syed Ahmad Jamal also claimed that the strength and openness usually displayed in abstract expressionism can be clearly seen in Yusof Ghani's works. The

refreshing personality that shines through in the works portrays the joy that comes with painting. In just short years, Yusof Ghani has emerged as one who is esteemed in the Malaysian art scene. The agility and grace seen in his works reflects his nature and temperament and his development as an artist in the Malaysian art scene. Yusof Ghani managed to deviate from the contemporary perceptions of the art society and paved his own path.

In fact, Yusof Ghani's choice of shapes and colors would define meanings which are cultural as well as historical as an Asian. He also knew that he is a representative of a society that is developing after surviving colonialism and imperialism (Rizki A. Zaelani, 2010).

2.3.1 Abstract Expressionism Movement

Since Yusof Ghani is one of the Malaysian artists known to have adopted Abstract Expressionism Style, it seems to be relevant to get know this approach. So the researcher reviewed some material on this topic as follows.

Abstract Expressionism or Action painting as it is commonly known in London is the use abstract art to express instantaneous emotional instances. Abstract art has evolved from Cubism to a technique that requires portrayal of emotions through spatters of paint, dripping and other unintentional actions as an emotional outlet (Helen Gardner, 1959). Abstract Expressionism is a painting style originating in the twentieth century in which the artists unreservedly apply paint onto a huge canvas as an outlet for their emotions and sentiments (Gene A. Mittler, 1994). During the 1940's and 1950's, Abstract Expressionism was an American art movement. This was due to World War II that affected Europe and caused many artists such as Tanguy, Ernst, Chagall, Leger and Mondrian and poet, Andre Breton to flee Europe and settle in America (Donald Williams & Barbara Vance Wilson, 2007).

Robert L. Smith (2005) suggested that conflict is the stimulus of thought and ideas and like many futuristic movements, Abstract Expressionism manifested from it, the conflict being that of the chaos caused by Nazi Germany. Many of the esteemed artists began a new life in America, in which they promoted American Abstract Expressionism through teaching. Though Regionalism dominated the art scene, the use of the mass media, countless museum exhibitions and private procurements allowed Abstract Expressionism to find a new home. This art movement was the dominating force in the art scene in years following World War II and made the United State a center for art. Abstract Expressionism is a mixture of instinct and imagination.

New York surpassed Paris as the art capital of the world during the 1940's. This is due to the amalgamation of American and European cultures that produced novel and passionate works (Williams & Wilson, 2007).

According to Tracy Bashkoff (2003) the period after World War II saw New York being the center of Modern Art, a position previously held by Paris.

Williams & Wilson (2007) noted that Abstract Expressionism thrived in New York in the 1950's and new methods and techniques were introduced. This type of art required more from the viewers, in an emotional sense. The audience was no longer just a spectator in the story, now; he or she played a part. For artists in this movement, this personal involvement became more imperative than the final product.

Though no Abstract Expressionist is like another, they do have similar notions and methods. Many artists developed daring and modern inventions that deviated from the norms. Some of the artists are Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), Willem De Kooning (1904-1997), Franz Kline (1910-1962), Lee Kranser (1908-1984), Robert Motherwell (1915-1991), William Baziotes (1912-1963), Mark Rothko (1903-1970), Barnett Newman (1905-1970), Adolph Gottlieb (1903-1974), Richard Pousette-Dart (1916-

1992) and Clyfford Still (1904-1980). The works created by these artists that digressed in theme and method were a portrayal of their individuality (Stella Paul, 2000).

Regardless of the process, technique or labels employed, the artists expressed the hard times they resided in by tapping into their innermost thoughts and emotions. In an era filled with slaughter, rage and mercilessness, this modern style formed a personal way to illustrate the mechanization and the deprivation of individuality in their world. This art movement would revolutionize art (Smith, 2005).

Guy Hubbard (2002) suggested that during the World War II era, the previous art techniques were seen as unsuitable and the artists believed that their emotions should be the driving force behind the works and also didn't want to be restricted by themes. Abstract Expressionism was thus discovered. It is a combination of Cubism, abstract ideas of the past and Expressionism, art based on emotions rather than theory. This fusion of contrasting ideas produced a new art movement. Since Abstract Expressionism focuses on the actions involved in creating the artwork than the final product, accidents and mishaps were welcome.

Enormous canvases began to be used so that space was not a hindrance to their creativity. All the fears, anxieties, despair, disappointment and insecurities of the artists were portrayed with vivid visual concepts and various daring brushstrokes (Robert Myron & Abner Sundell, 1971).

According to Marti Tuck (1996) Abstract Expressionism was an American art movement that portrayed the emotional aspects of the artists through motion. It was an effort to modernize and revolutionize the art scene. There are some action painters such as Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline, Willem de Kooning and Adolph Gottlieb. Some branches under Abstract Expressionism are Color Field Painting and Hard- Edge Painting. The significance of color as an emotional outlet can be seen in works by Mark

Rothko, Helen Frankenthaler and Morris Louis while Frank Stella's unique works that emphasized shape is a good example of Hard-Edge Painting.

To the artists, the process was the most imperative part of the art that valued impulse and innovation. The works on this movement are based on emphasis on dynamic and motion and a varied color palette. Even when painting a subject matter, the Expressionists emphasized abstract (Paul, 2000).

The expressive nature of the works correlates to the early form of Expressionism and automatism, a Surrealist technique. Though these forms of art do not share similar style, the self-expression, process and basis of art creation and the aspiration to fuse form and emotions are celebrated. Pollock formed a new style by pouring and squeezing paint from cans and tubes and his endeavor paid off as he revolutionized art in the second half of the 20th century as Pablo Picasso did before him (Bashkoff, 2003).

This type of art required more from the viewers, in an emotional sense. The audience was no longer just a spectator in the story, now, he played a part. For artists in this movement, this personal involvement became more imperative than the final product (Williams & Wilson, 2007).

In the beginning, artists used myth and archaic art as inspiration for their works. Artists such as Rothko, Pollock, Motherwell, Gottlieb, Newman and Baziotes took this route. Their works consisted of pictographic and biomorphic elements that they converted to a personal code. The lack of contemplation was an important factor in being emotive and in a letter to the New York Times (June 1943), Gottlieb, Rothko and Newman said that art is a journey into the unknown world of imagination where a good painting is always about something. They also said that having a subject matter is vital (Paul, 2000).

Some of the features of Abstract Expressionism according to Williams & Wilson (2007) are:

- i. The trend of using large canvases, first done in the mid-eighteenth to nineteenth century was back.
- ii. Canvases were worked on, on a floor or against a wall as size was now a factor.
- iii. New mediums such as acrylic paints (quick drying) are just some of the many technologies and innovations used in this movement.
- iv. Brushes, sticks and rollers that were commonly used when painting houses were used by the artists in their works.
- v. Artists no longer planned their works but went where the wind blew them. There was emphasis on inner sentiments and emotions.
- vi. The use of realistic subject matter lost its appeal among the artists.
- vii. The natural effects of the paint such as drips and blobs were no longer seen as flaws.

According to Fred S. Kleiner (2013) the Abstract Expressionism movement developed two concepts; gestural abstraction and chromatic abstraction. The spontaneity that is the basis of this movement maintains the liveliness and dynamism of the works in the long run.

2.3.1.1 Gestural Abstraction (Action Painting)

Gestural abstraction relies on the lively and vigorous application of pigments in an expressive manner while chromatic abstraction is centered on color and how it resonates emotion (Kleiner, 2013). Smith (2005) mentioned that an example of an artist related to this concept is Jackson Pollock, whose works brim with energy and is based on the journey through his subconscious. His works have a lot of motion and the high energy content dedicated to his work is evident. Jackson Pollock's works seem to be the origin of Abstract Expressionism and though his technique isn't emulated by his followers, the spontaneous nature of it is practiced (Williams & Wilson, 2007).

Kleiner (2013) suggested that the emotional connection between the painter and the canvas that Pollock established led critic, Harold Rosenberg (1896-1989) who coined the term '*action painting*' to describe the Expressionists style as getting into the painting.

Harold Rosenberg in Kleiner's book (2013) titled 'Gardner's Art through the Ages: A Concise History of Western Art' stated that:

At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act, rather than as a space in which to reproduce, redesign, analyze or express an object, actual or imagined. What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event. The painter no longer approached his easel with an image in his mind; he went up to it with material in his hand to do something to that other piece of material in front of him. The image would be the result of this encounter (p. 427).

As an esteemed figure in modern art, Jackson Pollock comprehended the significance of the process of self- discovery and his works portrayed his journey. His works depict his quest of self- discovery and the hardships, dissatisfactions and rewards that come with it. Pollock is venerated among Abstract Expressionist as his exploration of his inner world helped discover this movement (Smith, 2005).

Jackson Pollock's signature style which created works that are the epitome of gestural abstraction, was developed in the mid-1940s. He fine tuned his technique by 1950 and had created large-scale abstract paintings. Rhythmic drips, splatters and paint dribbles were a huge part of his works (Figure 2.14). The lattice structure of varied pigments drew the viewers in. By using sticks and brushes, Pollock used various physical techniques such as flinging, pouring and dripping paint (oil paint, aluminum paint and household enamels) onto a canvas spread out on his studio floor. His method of working earned him the nickname "Jack the Dripper". Pollock highlighted the most imperative aspects of gestural abstraction and showed dedication to the creative process of his works (Kleiner, 2013).



Figure 2.14: Lavender Mist: Number 1, Jackson Pollock, Oil, Enamel, and Aluminum on Canvas, 1950, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C (Extracted from <http://aphelis.net/todays-program-jackson-pollock-lavender-mist-1950-ilene-segalove-1973/>)

Paul (2000) suggested that Pollock's deviation from traditionally used techniques and mediums such as his lack of subject matter and paintings done on huge scale came as a shock to many viewers.

To Jackson Pollock, art was subjective and was solely dependent on the imagination and emotion of the artist. The inventive and intricate nature of his works and the play on conscious and subconscious became his signature style. The development of the style was influenced by a lifetime of experiences. This environment would fuel the manifestation of a potent figure in the art panorama that would be a force to be reckoned with even in the revolutionized art scene today. The subconscious journey undertaken and the images formed as a result of it produced previously unimaginable works. Further scrutiny of Pollock's works is required to comprehend and appreciate the imaginative and creative aspects of his works (Smith, 2005).

Paul (2000) suggested that Willem De Kooning (1904-1997) also was a prominent figure associated with gestural painting however his style was a play on abstract and figurative images. Krasner and Kline also contributed to this lively and innovative form

of art. The quality of a painting lies in the spontaneity and honesty of expression. A painting is said to be the portrayal of the artist's identity and the gesture or signature style is evidence of his work.

Kleiner (2013) stated that though the public displayed doubt when encountering Pollock's works, artists still travelled down his creative path. An example is Willem de Kooning's 'Woman I' (Figure: 2.15) that though was based on figuration, had gestural brushstrokes and energetic application of pigments related to gestural abstraction. Though de Kooning was inspired by models on advertising boards, the figures created also hinted at fertility and a satiric inversion of the image of Venus, goddess of love (Figure 2.16).



Figure 2.15: Woman I, Willem de Kooning, Oil on Canvas, 1950-1952, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (Extracted from <<http://artblart.com/tag/mark-rothko-no-5no-22/>>)



Figure 2.16: Two Women, Willem de Kooning, Pencil on Paper, 1951, Private Collection
(Extracted from < http://www.starr-art.com/exhibits/deKooning_Women/)

Frank Magiera (1994) noted that De Kooning was influenced early on by Piet Mondrian and the surrealists. De Kooning dabbled with cubism and slowly became an artistic sibling to Francis Bacon. De Kooning became a symbol of Abstract Expressionism since the 1940s and his last works, gentle, lyrical paintings have been compared to cut-outs done by Matisse before he died. De Kooning's career has been a mixture of figurative painting and abstract expressionism. There is no modeling involved as we can see in "Pink Lady" and other figurative works in the 1960s. De Kooning made skin look realistic by using paint and moving it around a little on the canvas.

Irving Sandler (1976) suggested that De Kooning's works depict the anxiety and violent reality of the urban lifestyle that he is a part of. From his works, we can see that De Kooning puts emphasis on channeling his emotions than creating paintings that illustrate qualities.

De Kooning in Sandler (1976) said that:

I was never interested in making a good painting. I did not work on it with the idea of perfection, but to see how far one could go but not with the idea of really doing it. With anxiousness and dedication to fight maybe, or ecstasy (p.131).

Even though De Kooning was arbitrary on the issue of subject matter, we can see that he took women and later landscapes as the starting point of his works. This factor set him apart from Jackson Pollock's works. De Kooning's works are a portrayal of his experiences. He is thus, the epitome of Abstract Expressionism. De Kooning practiced the traditional side of abstract art in which a recognizable object is broken down into brushstrokes and shapes. De Kooning then modified the style by introducing the figure that consisted of shifting memories, concepts and perceptions and made the painting style as dominant as the figure (Daniel Belgrad, 1999).

2.3.1.2 Color Field

Kleiner (2013) suggested that in contrast to the aggressively energetic images of the gestural abstractionists, chromatic abstractionists radiate a much hushed artistic aspect as displayed by Russian born Mark Rothko (1903-1970).

The second group of Abstract Expressionists practice Color Field painting (Figure: 2.17). This group is widely influenced by Mark Rothko's works that is an attempt to divulge all the complexities of our inner self. His work is described as basic human emotions displayed on a larger and more majestic degree which utilizes geometric planes (Smith, 2005).



Figure 2.17: No. 5/No. 22, Mark Rothko, 1950, Oil on Canvas, Gallery Museum of Modern Art, New York (Extracted from < <http://artblart.com/tag/mark-rothko-no-5no-22/>)

Paul (2000) noted that Rothko, Newman and Still emphasized the use of color in a large layout. The desire was to create a philosophical and intellectual piece that was rudimentary (Figure 2.18). Rothko and Newman put emphasis on producing inspiring works rather than beautiful ones and Edmund Burke was focused on creating grandeur on a canvas as opposed to a soothing, calming effect.



Figure 2.18: Untitled, Clyfford Still, 1957, Oil on Canvas, Collection SFMOMA, Gift of the artist (Extracted from <<http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/collection/artwork/310>>)

In Rothko's works of soft-edged rectangles with bright colors, the viewers should have a religious experience, even educing tears. Pollock on the other hand used scale to define his works. The scales of the works were huge and when viewed in close environments, the image envelopes the viewers. Pollock puts emphasis on intimacy rather than extravagance (Paul, 2000).

Smith (2005) suggested that Mark Rothko's works is the solution to the visual problems experienced in painting. Rothko's works show that creativity comes with risks but those risks are cancelled out with freedom, the freedom that comes from exploring new horizons. The diverse experiences in Rothko's life molded his signature style. His works can be described as complex and emotional play on hues, shapes and scale. Rothko's ground-breaking techniques in his art originated from his diverse experiences and his struggle brought out his steadfast nature.

Each Abstract Expressionist has a very idiosyncratic style and we can see it from the difference in Pollock's and Rothko's works. Many critics believe that Rothko is the most innovative among these artists as we can see the framework of his pieces due to the ghostly hue of colors and techniques used (Hubbard, 2002).

Kleiner (2013) stated that Rothko saw reference to anything realistic as a hindrance to the supernatural aspect of the universe which is the basis of his works and his definition of art. His paintings emphasized the use of color to channel his emotions across to the viewers. Rothko's main form of expression was through color.

When describing the artistic aspect of his works Rothko in Edward Lucie-Smith (1986) revealed his complexities and unyielding nature. Rothko said that:

I am not interested in the relationship of color or form or anything else. I'm interested only expressing basic human emotions-tragedy, ecstasy, doom and so on. And the fact that a lot of people break down and cry when confronted with my pictures show that I can communicate these basic human emotions... The people who weep before my pictures are having the same religious experience I had when I painted them (p.276).

Like other Abstract Expressionists, Rothko created reminiscent works that relied on formal elements rather than anything specific in the physical world in order to connect emotionally with the viewers (Kleiner, 2013).

Smith (2005) noted that Pollock and Rothko ignored the distractions around them and looked within to find inspirations and in the process mastered the art of impulsiveness, a powerful tool in the art world especially as Abstract Expressionists. The events and happenings in the 1940's and 1950's are reflected in the works done during this period. This shows the impact an environment can have on an artist.

2.4 Appreciation of Art

Broudy (1988), in chapter five of the book entitled 'The Uses of Schooling' stated that there are two major parts of doing appreciation of art:

- i. Aesthetic perception
- ii. Aesthetic criticism

The work of philosopher Broudy, an advocate of the artistic movement was very influential where art education was concerned. Broody described artistic education as an introduction to general education as artistic education helps the process of acquiring

knowledge, intuition and reasoning. Broody also states that artistic insight can be honed through the systematic identification of sensory, formal and expressive properties of objects. Broudy's dedication to honing aesthetic perception leads to the discovery of a method for art criticism known as aesthetic scanning. Though aesthetic scanning is associated with art criticism, the former marks the shift from perception to interpretation (Delores M. Diaz, 2002).

Gloria Hewett (1985) noted that aesthetic scanning is the pre-criticism process when introducing students to identify with sensory, formal and expressive properties of art or other objects. This shows the effectiveness of art when aesthetic understanding is promoted. This aesthetic scanning process is an imperative element of discipline-based art education. It is a pre-criticism process to observe and respond to the sensory, formal, expressive, and technical properties of works of art and other objects.

Broudy (1988) mentioned that without a proper method of establishing art, the appreciation part is incapable of being expressed. Broudy said that:

Aesthetic perception differs from cognitive perception. The latter has as its goal the understanding of the conceptual significance of signs and it differs from practical perception in which the symbol or sign is interpreted for its relevance to our purposes. Because we regard a painting, a musical performance or a poem as portraits of feeling, we should not have to learn to perceive what needs translation (Broudy, 1988, p.83).

Peter Smith (1996) suggested that the aesthetic scanning model was described by Broudy in 1972 and though he used aesthetic as an adjective, the model was for the discussion of art in a classroom setting. The study had not much to do with the aestheticians that worked in subdivision philosophy nor did it have any connection to the activities usually carried out by critics. The objective of aesthetic scanning was developing Aesthetic Perception and finally aesthetic literacy.

Broudy in Smith's book titled *The History of American Art Education* (1996) stated that "Aesthetic literacy begins with the learning to perceive the sensory, formal, and expressive properties of aesthetic images that is those that convey human impact" (p.39).

Albert William Levi (1991) mentioned that aesthetic scanning is the organization, identification and interpretation of the vibrancy and passion of the emotional qualities illustrated by color, gestures, shapes and textures; the design, composition, or display of elements that puts things in one accord through balance, repetition, rhythm and context; the skills involved in the creative process (technicality) and the message conveyed through the objects (expressive significance). This method helps establish a connection between the viewer and the art and is a suitable tool to promote aesthetic perception.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

Qualitative type of research was the main approach for this research. In this study the researcher applied Narrative Research Design to obtain and analyze the data based on the research questions and objectives. In addition, the Personal Experience Story was considered as the most appropriate form of Narrative Design to conduct this study to bring out the details from the artist's point of view about the central phenomenon (Figure: 3.1).

Micheal V. Angrosino (1989) suggested that a Personal Experience Story is a form of Narrative Design in which researchers usually base their study on recordings of the individual's personal experiences found in one or several stories and events. Data is also obtained from interviews and photographs.



Figure 3.1: The Research Design of This Study

3.1 Description of the Applied Method

The term ‘narrative’ is derived from the verb ‘to narrate’ which is defined as ‘to explain’ or ‘to tell a story’ (by describing all the events in order) (Pearson Longman, 2011).

According to John W. Creswell (2012), “As a distinct form of qualitative research, a Narrative typically focuses on studying a single person, gathering data through the collection of stories, reporting individual experiences and discussing the meaning of those experiences for the individual” (p.502).

D. Jean Clandinin and F. Micheal Connelly in Creswell (2012) noted that in Narrative Research Designs, the researchers provide descriptions of the lives of individuals accumulate and divulge stories of the lives of people and compose narratives on the experiences of individuals.

The Narrative Research Design is utilized by researchers when individuals want to tell their story and researchers want to relate the story to the public. All Individuals have stories to share, their experience being the heart of the tale. Narrative Research uses ordinary types of data that are familiar with the individuals (Creswell, 2012).

Creswell (2012) mentioned that Narrative Research is said to be the fictitious form of qualitative research that is in close relation with literature and offers a qualitative approach which enables the researcher to come up with a convincing, literary form of writing in which the focal point is the micro-analytical picture of the stories instead of the cultural norms like ones found in grounded theory research.

Based on the research problem, questions, and objectives of this study, *Wajah* series paintings as a phenomenon had to be defined by the artist. After collecting the data through interviews with the artist, analysing the data was proceeded based on Narrative Design in this study.

3.2 Research Sample

The sampling strategy of this study was a purposeful sampling, so the researcher intentionally selected the samples to understand the central phenomenon. The researcher applied Maximal Variation type of purposeful sampling to develop a detailed understanding that might provide useful information. It was said that Creswell (2012) stated that “Maximal Variation Sampling is a purposeful sampling strategy in which the researcher samples cases or individuals that differ on some characteristics or trait” (Creswell, 2012, p.207).

The main subject in this qualitative research was the paintings of *Wajah* series done by Yusof Ghani from 2006 to 2010. The researcher classified the *Wajah* series paintings into six distinct groups based on their similar qualities. Then from each group one painting was chosen as sample in which the selected samples differ on some characteristics. These six groups included:

i. Early works: This group of works was produced in the beginning of the *Wajah* series between 2006 and 2007. These works are mostly influenced by previous series of Yusof Ghani’s such as *Segerak* and *Biring* in terms of expressively drawn lines and lyrical brush strokes. In the early works, the uses of lines to describe organic shapes are evident. The selected sample from this group is *Abettor*.

ii. The multi-paneled: These paintings were done from late 2007 to late 2008. The most important characteristic of these works is their unconventional composition method such as the grid format and multiplication, which is influenced by the Pop Art movement. Each work is composed of similar sized panels and the number of panels varying in different works; some are composed of more than seventy while some are only three panels. In some works, each panel is occupied by one face whereas in other works, each panel is composed of a number of faces. The selected sample from this group is *Entourage IV*.

iii. Sculpted surfaces: The works in this group were created in 2008. All the paintings of this group, which were painted in the same size, depict one subject matter which is the tsunami disaster in *Acheh*, Indonesia. The most significant characteristics of this group are the sculpted faces on the surface and the use of eclectic different materials like papier mache to create tactile textures of the faces. These paintings were painted in dark and gray colors, somber in their tone. The selected sample from this group is the aptly titled *Agony of Acheh IV*.

iv. Cold Color: With a narrow range of cool hues, the paintings of this group are dominated by tones of blue and green. All the works were produced in 2008. The selected sample from this group is *Hydra-infinity*.



v. Messenger: The work titled *Messenger* is a standalone painting, which is not under any group. This work, which was painted in 2008, is one of the largest works among the whole *Wajah* series of paintings. This odd portraiture is totally different in comparison to the rest of the works in which it is composed of only one enormous face centrally placed on the canvas.

vi. Late works: These works created in the later part of the *Wajah* series in 2009. The late works of *Wajah* are minimal in which the subjects in these works are reduced to its necessary elements. The artist tried to simplify and minimize the subject rather than the expression of the faces and brush strokes. The selected sample from this group is *Avenger*.

In sampling strategy of this study two important qualities were considered. First the samples best represented different formal and conceptual groupings of the series and second, they were still available in research site thus allowed the researcher to observe the samples and analyse in person. So in this study six paintings of *Wajah* series were considered as samples including *Abettor*, *Entourage IV*, *Agony of Acheh IV*, *Hydra-infinity*, *Messenger* and *Avenger* (Table 3.1). To get to know this approach, it was

required to do interview with the artist to describe the paintings of *Wajah* series. The researcher observed all the samples which have been housing in Yusof Ghani's art gallery called *Tapak* located in *Shah Alam*, Malaysia. The researcher then collected data through open-ended questions. After doing interviews with the artist the researcher analysed the samples based on the theoretical framework.

Table 3.1: Six Paintings of *Wajah* Series that Were Considered as Research Samples

The Paintings of <i>Wajah</i> Series	Specifications
	<p>Painting Sample 1:</p> <p>Title: <i>Abettor</i> Oil on Linen 127 cmx 97 cm 2006 <i>Tapak</i> Collection</p>
	<p>Painting Sample 2:</p> <p>Title: <i>Entourage IV</i> Oil on Canvas 206 cm x 183 cm 2007 <i>Tapak</i> Collection</p>



Painting Sample 3:

Title: *Agony of Acheh IV*

Oil & Canvas Collage
on Jute

168 cm x 147 cm

2008

Tapak Collection



Painting Sample 4:

Title: *Hydra-infinity*

Oil on Canvas

152 cm x 182 cm

2008

Tapak Collection



Painting Sample 5:

Title: *Messenger*
Oil on Canvas
200 cm x 250 cm
2008
Tapak Collection



Painting Sample 6:

Title: *Avenger*
Oil on Canvas
152 cm x 122 cm
2009
Tapak Collection

3.3 Research Site

This research is done in the artist's studio and his gallery called *Tapak* which is located in No.21, *Jalan Telukan 8/25, Seksyen 8, 40000 Shah Alam, Selangor Darul Ehsan*, Malaysia (Figure: 3.2 & 3.3).



Figure 3.2: *Tapak* Gallery, *Shah Alam, Selangor*, Malaysia. Photo by the Researcher



Figure 3.3: *Tapak* Gallery, *Shah Alam, Selangor*, Malaysia. Photo by the Researcher

Tapak Yusof Ghani consists of three parts. The home to Yusof Ghani and his family, a private gallery to showcase Yusof Ghani's art collections and an open-designed studio where the artist creates his works. All the selected paintings of *Wajah* series had been housing in *Tapak* Yusof Ghani and also it was a place where the artist and the researcher could meet and talk. The studio and the gallery with its attached informal sitting areas provided a perfect place to see the paintings of *Wajah* series as well as interview with the artist.

3.4 Research Instrument

The instruments used in this research include:

- i. Interview: To understand the central phenomenon and as the most important data collection process in this study the researcher used several one-on-one interviews with the artist. During the interviews the artist were asked general, open-ended questions on questionnaires and the researcher recorded answers from the artist at a time. The researcher then transcribed and typed the data into a computer file for analysis.
- ii. Field-notes: The researcher also recorded some text during interviews as field-notes which helped the researcher to file and analysis the data.
- iii. Audio-visual materials such as photographs, sound recordings were used during data collection
- iv. Documents: The researcher used the documents such as books, journals, articles, essays as a good source for text data for this study. The documents provided valuable information in helping the researcher understand central phenomenon in this study.

3.5 Research Process

According to Creswell (2012) conducting narrative research design involves seven steps (Figure: 3.4).

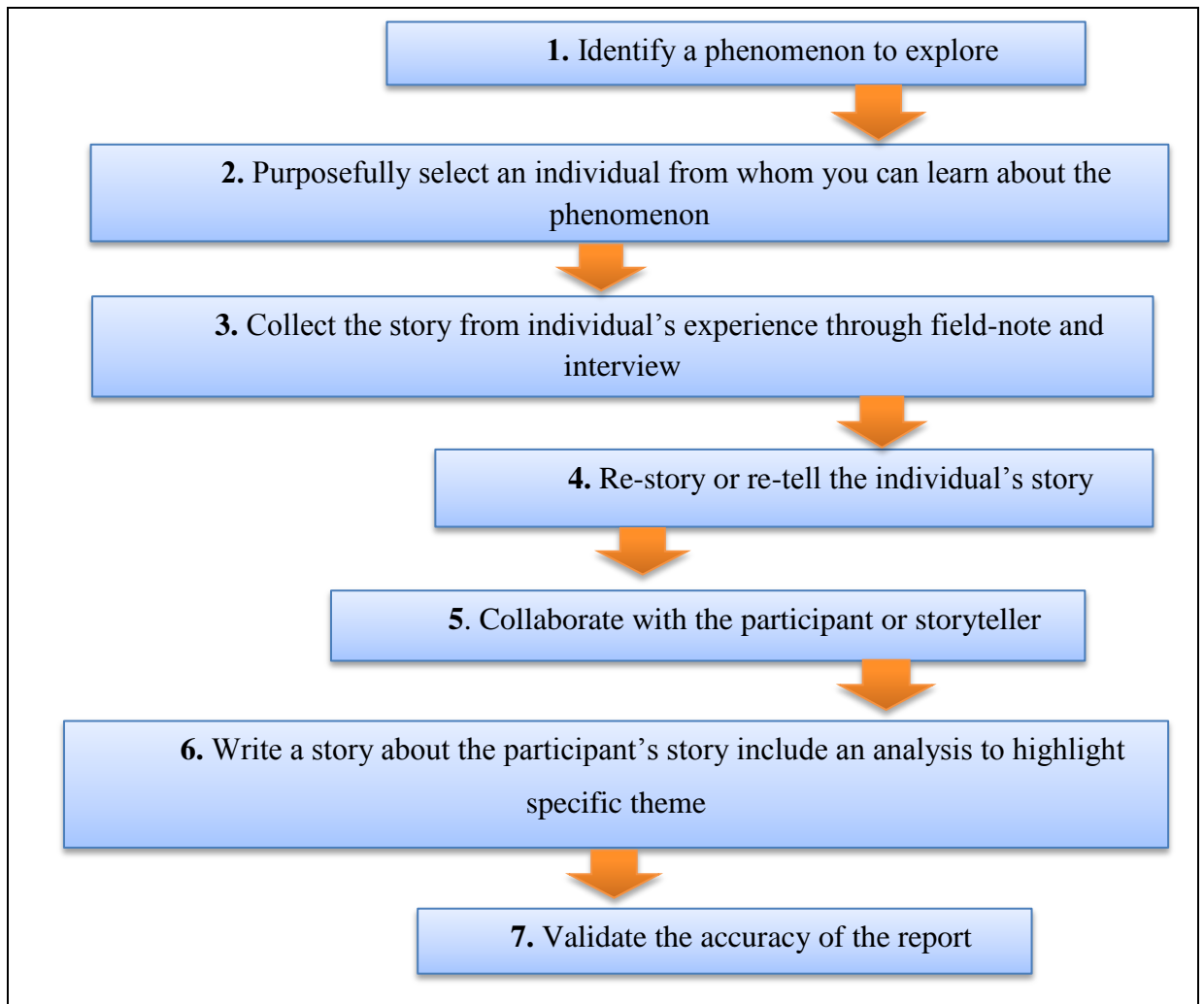


Figure 3.4: Seven Steps of Conducting Narrative Research Design

This Narrative Design research type was proceeded into sequential steps which respectively followed the research objectives. The researcher started reviewing the books, articles and indexed publications relevant to the topic of study. The researcher met the artist several times at his studio and gallery *Tapak* in *Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia*. During these meetings and conversations the researcher tried to improve her knowledge about the artist and different aspects of the artist's artworks. After identifying a phenomenon to explore that addressed a research problem, the researcher

specified a purpose for the research by identifying the purpose statement and narrowing it to the research questions about the central phenomenon. The researcher selected six paintings of *Wajah* series by Yusof Ghani as the samples. All these paintings had been housing in the artist's gallery called *Tapak* which were accessible to observe them and collect the data to learn about the central phenomenon.

The researcher started to collect the data from the artist, collect field texts through personal conversations or interviews that provided the story of the artist's experiences and his career. The interviews were done in 10.September.2013, 23.September.2013, 17.February.2014, 2.March.2014, 8.April.2014, 10.September.2014 in Yusof Ghani's art gallery called *Tapak*. The researcher recorded the interviews and conversations which sought to analyse and describe the paintings of *Wajah* series. After recording and transcribing the artist's story about the paintings of *Wajah* series, the raw data was examined and organised by the researcher to present a retold story that conveyed the artist's experiences.

During the research process, collaborated with the artist in several forms such as negotiating entry to the artist, his gallery and working closely with the artist to capture his experiences and writing and telling the artist's story in the researcher's words.

In the next step which was the major step in the process of this study, the researcher started to write and report the story of the artist's experiences. In the step of re-story or re-telling the researcher included an analysis of the paintings of *Wajah* series based on the theoretical framework to answer the research questions and towards the research objectives.

Throughout the process of this study the researcher tried to validate the accuracy of the report and evaluate the study based on the accuracy of the account by collaborating with the artist.

3.6 Method of Data Analysing

This qualitative research by applying narrative design attempted to collect appropriate data and analyse the data referring back to the research problem, questions and objectives. All the collected data was analysed based on the theoretical framework. Creswell (2012) specified six steps for analysing and interpreting qualitative data:

- i. Preparing and organising the data for analysis
- ii. Explore and code the data
- iii. Coding to build description and themes
- iv. Represent and report qualitative findings
- v. Interpret the findings
- vi. Validate and accuracy of the findings

After collecting all the relevant data, at the first step, the researcher organized the data by developing tables. The researcher also organized the collected data by type of interviews, photographs, documents and visual materials. After that, the researcher transcribed all the audiotape recordings of interviewing the artist and field-notes to a computer document by using hand analysis of qualitative data.

In the second step, the researcher started reading the transcripts details several times and tried to get a general sense of the data. Then the collected data was narrow into a few themes. It means that the researcher coded collected data by dividing it into text or image segments and labelling the segments with codes.

In the third step the researcher examined the collected data in detail and developed themes from the data. At this stage the researcher tried to answer the main research questions and formed an in-depth understanding of the central phenomenon based on the theoretical framework in the study.

In fourth step of analysing the data, the researcher represented the qualitative findings. For this purpose the researcher used a narrative discussion by summarizing the

findings and reported the findings from data analysis. The researcher reported the quotes from interviews with the artist.

In fifth step, the researcher interpreted the findings. The researcher formed the larger meaning about the central phenomenon based on personal views or comparisons with the past studies. All the qualitative findings were concluded towards the research objective, questions and theoretical framework in this study.

Finally the researcher determined the validity and credibility of the findings by asking the artist to check the accuracy of the accounts.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis and Discussion

4.0 Introduction

This qualitative research focuses on the *Wajah* series of paintings by Yusof Ghani, which were made from 2006 to 2010. To analyze the paintings of the *Wajah* series, it is essential to consider formally the organization of these paintings, their techniques and medium as well as the ideas and moods that could be associated with them. How these components can be identified and defined is demonstrated through the following chapter.

As mentioned in chapter three in the sampling strategy of this study, the researcher classified the *Wajah* series paintings into six distinct groups. Then, one sample was selected from each group resulting into six selected samples that differ in some respects and each sample represents the characteristics of the paintings in its own individual group. Furthermore, the samples were selected from paintings that are still available in the artist's gallery (*Tapak*) so the researcher could observe the samples and analyze them in the flesh.

The researcher analyzed the selected paintings in terms of art elements and principles as well as technique and medium. To do this, the researcher analyzed the selected paintings of the *Wajah* series based on the Art Appreciation Theory by Broudy (see chapter one). According to Broudy (1988), Aesthetic Perception, which is classified into four steps, is a scanning process of art works in which to observe and respond to the sensory, formal, technical and expressive properties of works of art.

Based on this structured model, the first step of formal analysis is for the researcher to identify the visual elements of the selected works including color, value, line, texture, shape and space. The second step is to examine the way that these visual

elements are organized which includes unity and variety, proportion and scale, rhythm, balance and emphasis. Then the researcher defined how the work of art was created. This step refers to the method, materials and technical means that the artist used for the expression embedded in the work. Finally, the researcher discussed the expressive aspects of the artwork like mood, meaning and content.

Based on the Art Criticism (second part of Art Appreciation Theory) at the end of this chapter, the researcher has examined the artist works in relation to his style and the historical relevance.

This chapter has been divided into four main subchapters including:

- i. Analysis of Six Selected Paintings of the *Wajah* Series in terms of Form and Content
- ii. Identifying the Creation Process in Six Selected Paintings (Technical Properties)
- iii. Main Concept of the *Wajah* Series of Paintings
- iv. Historical Relevance (Yusof Ghani's Works in Relation to Abstract Expressionism Style)

The outcomes of qualitative data analysis concluded towards the research questions and objectives.

4.1 Analysis of Six Selected Paintings of the *Wajah* Series in terms of Form and Content

At this part of the research, each sample of the paintings has been analysed in terms of the visual elements of the work, which include colour, value, line, texture, shape and space, as well as the principles of art that include unity and variety, proportion and scale, rhythm, balance and emphasis.

According to Gene A. Mittler & Rosalind Ragans (1992), art is a language that artists use to communicate and transform their ideas and feelings. Like other languages, the language of art has its own vocabulary, which is made up of visual elements. The

composition of these elements help artists articulate their ideas. At the first step of formal analysis, the researcher has analysed the visual elements of the work, which include Colour, Value, Line, Texture, Shape and Space.

Mittler & Ragans (1992) suggested that to use a language, knowing the words is not enough but one should know how to arrange the vocabulary based on grammatical rules. This is the same as in art. Like the rules of grammar in languages, there are principles of art, which guide the artists to compose the visual elements to create a work of art.

To explain the importance of organization or the composition of the visual elements in an art work, Suzanne Hudson & Nancy Noonan-Morrissey (2014) said that:

The artist must decide not only which of the formal elements to use, but also how to arrange them. Design principles bring a certain sense of order to the work of art, pleasing our aesthetic sensibilities in the process (p.36).

After doing formal analysis, each sample has been described in terms of expressive aspects of the artwork like mood, meaning and the idea of the artwork.

4.1.1 Painting Sample 1: *Abettor*

Yusof Ghani's painting *Abettor* (Figure: 4.1) is the first major surviving painting from his *Wajah* series. The artist created *Abettor* in 2006. The work sized at 127 x 97 cm was executed in oil on linen and is currently housed in *Tapak* art gallery located in *Shah Alam*, Malaysia. *Abettor* is the only painting of the *Wajah* series which possesses the most influences from the previous series especially from the *Biring* series (see chapter 2).

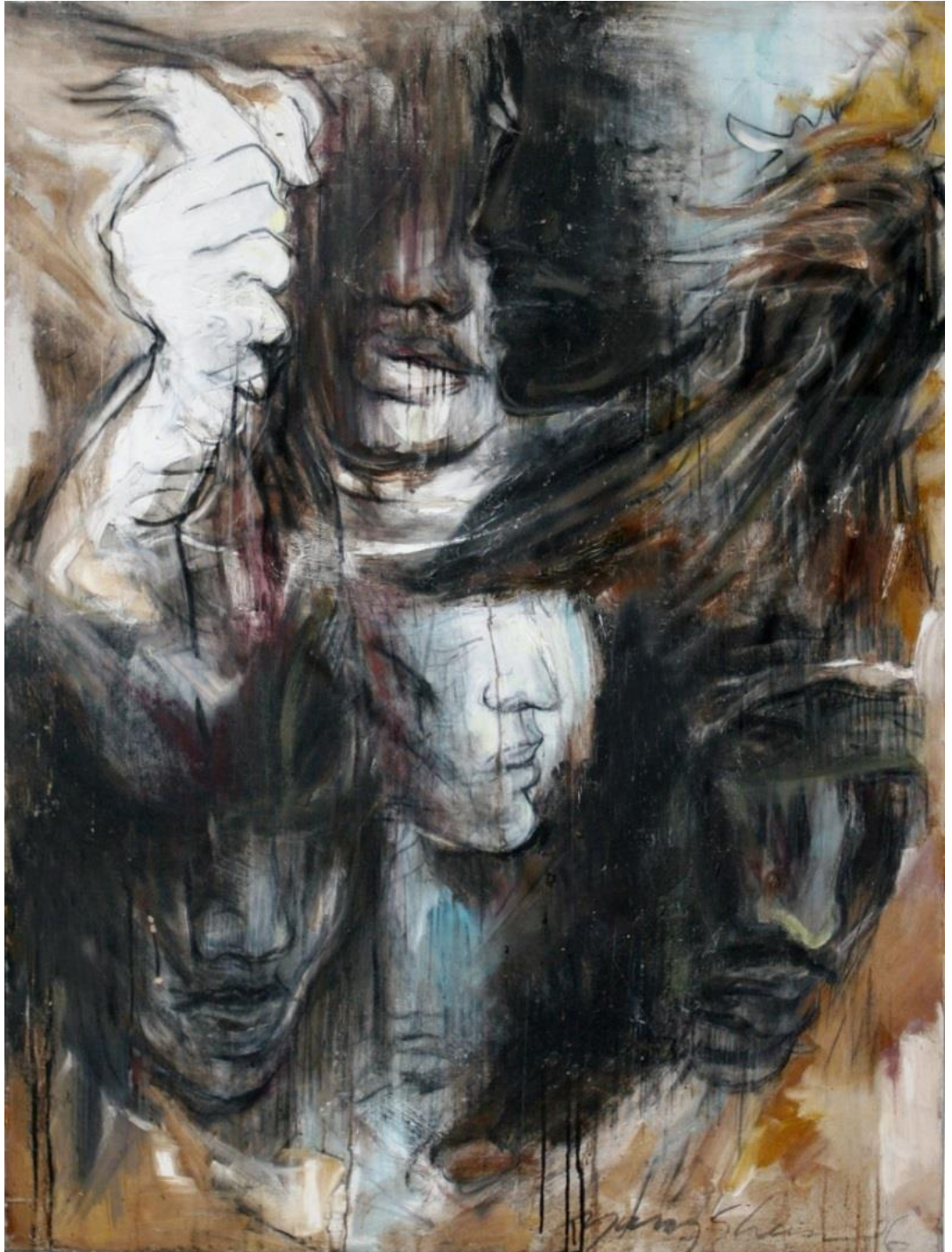


Figure 4.1: *Abettor*, Oil on Linen, 127 cmx 97 cm, 2006, *Tapak* Collection. Photo by the Researcher

4.1.1.1 Formal Analysis

The artist has reduced his color palette to a few earthly hues of amber and blue with warm hues of yellow ocher. By toning down the colors, he gives a sense of dimness and darkness to the painting. To create visual interest and a dramatic sense, Yusof Ghani has employed contrast as a tool to direct the viewer's attention to high

valued hand on the left upper corner and also the face at the centre of the composition (Figure: 4.2).



Figure 4.2: Abrupt Gradation of Lightness and Darkness. Photo by the Researcher

This piece incorporates expressive drawn lines and lyrical brush strokes. The lines appear as both counter lines of the hand and face to define the outlines of shapes (Figure: 4.3& 4.4) and also by broken and agitated brush strokes (Figure: 4.5).



Figure 4.3: Example of Counter Lines that Define the Outlines of Shapes. Photo by the Researcher



Figure 4.4: Example of counter lines that define the outlines of shapes. Photo by the Researcher



Figure 4.5: Example of Broken Brush Strokes. Photo by the Researcher

The artist has enhanced the emotional intensity of the painting by dramatically increasing the roughness of the surfaces. This texture has been created mostly by the gesture of the brush strokes and drips and smeared paint which mirror action painting's visual characteristic.

The hand and faces are quickly drawn through thin outlines onto the canvas with charcoal and oil-bars as the artist prefers of drawing over painting (Figure: 4.3 & 4.4). The hand and the face at the central composition are simply filled with white colour while the rooster at upper right corner has been suggested by expressive brush strokes (Figure: 4.5).

The illusionary space of this painting is composed of horizontal and vertical structures (Figure: 4.6) but to avoid static space, the artist has enhanced the dynamism by employing bold brush strokes and broken lines. The vague shapes of the faces loom through the dark space and give a sense of visual depth (Figure 4.7). Brightly

illuminating some parts and throwing others into darkness have made a sense of depth and flatness conjured by the strong contrast of darkness and lightness. The distribution of darkness has created an illusion of distance in the piece.



Figure 4.6: Horizontal and Vertical Structure of the Composition. Photo by the Researcher

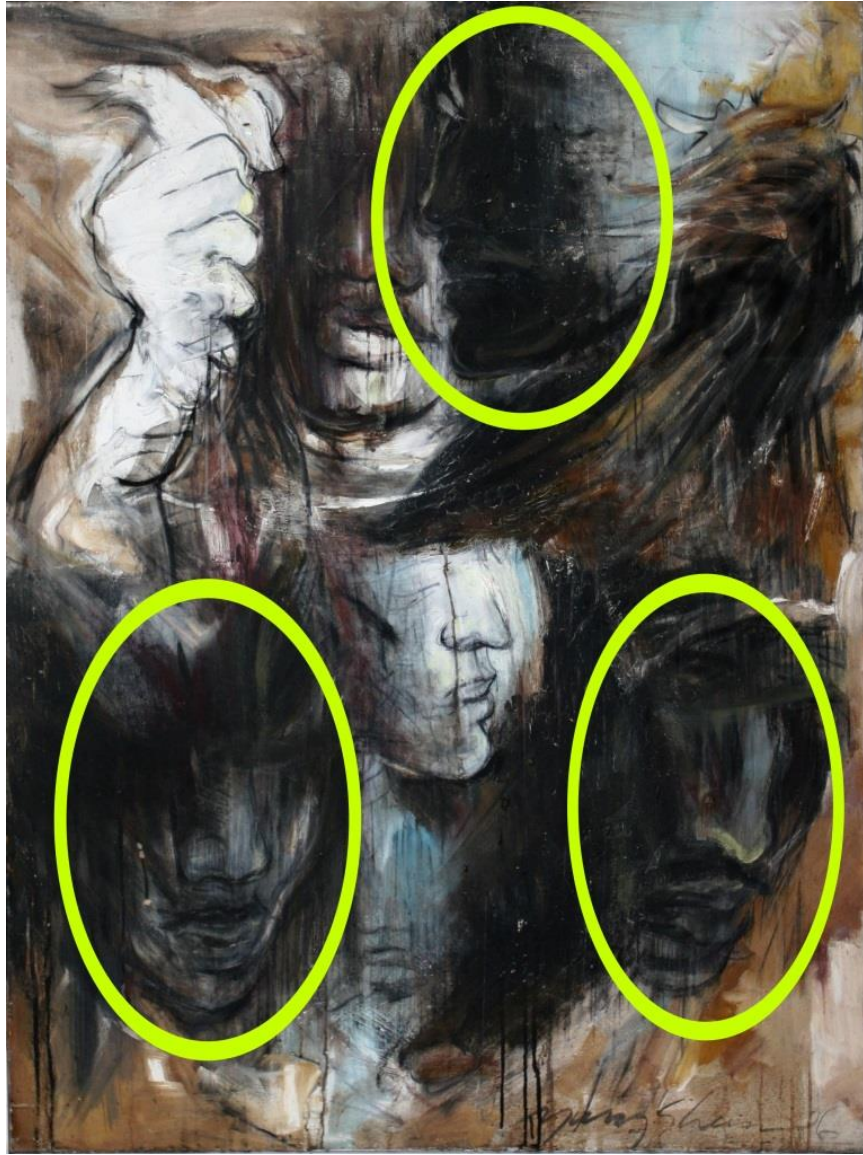


Figure 4.7: Dark Faces Give a Sense of Depth to this Painting. Photo by the Researcher

Yusof Ghani has created unity with an overall texture and patterns of repeated brush strokes through the painting. Besides that, a limited number of colors have enhanced a sense of oneness. He has achieved this sense of harmony by creating an uncomplicated look and also using similar elements like brush strokes and colors throughout the composition. Since the artwork is busy with expressive brush strokes and dripping paint, the drawing of the hand and the face at the center in different colors and high contrasts are the location where the artist has applied variety.

At the left upper corner is a hand in which its overall size seems unrelated to the space it has been painted in (Figure: 4.8).

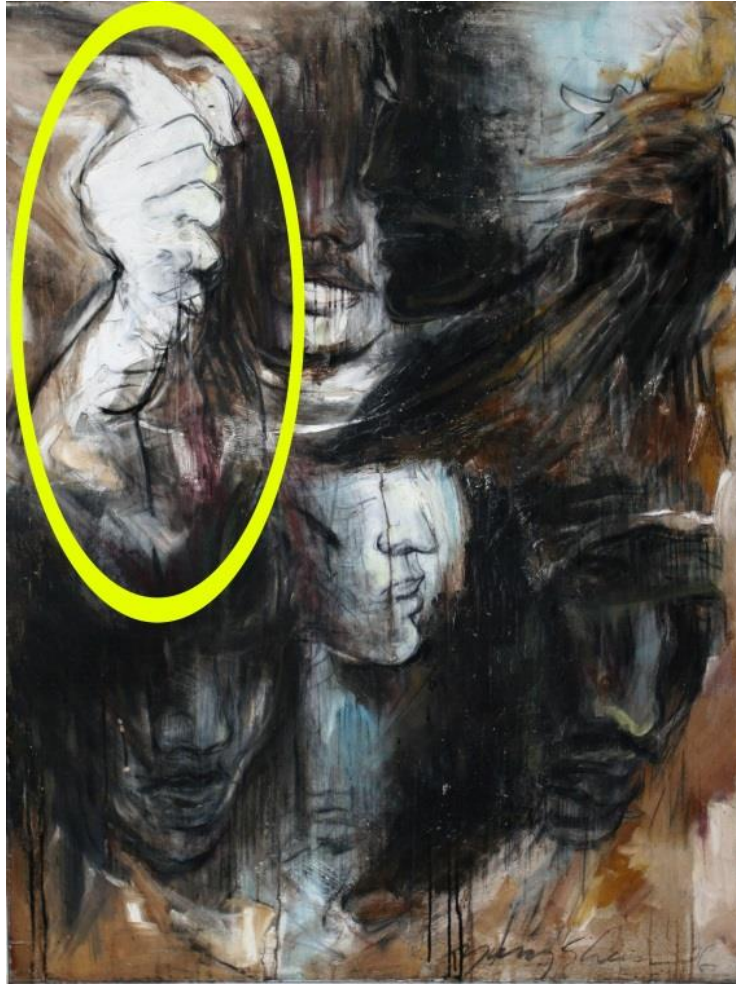


Figure 4.8: Unrelated Size of the Hand in the Space. Photo by the Researcher

A sense of an ebb and flow through the painting gives a visual suggestion of motion. Movement has been implied by the randomness in the direction of paintbrush and flicking of paint. This pictorial movement gives an energetic vitality to the painting.

The recurrence of colours, lines and textures lead the viewer's eye up and down and around. This rhythm aids the eyes to dance around the canvas and gives a sense of continuity (Figure: 4.9).

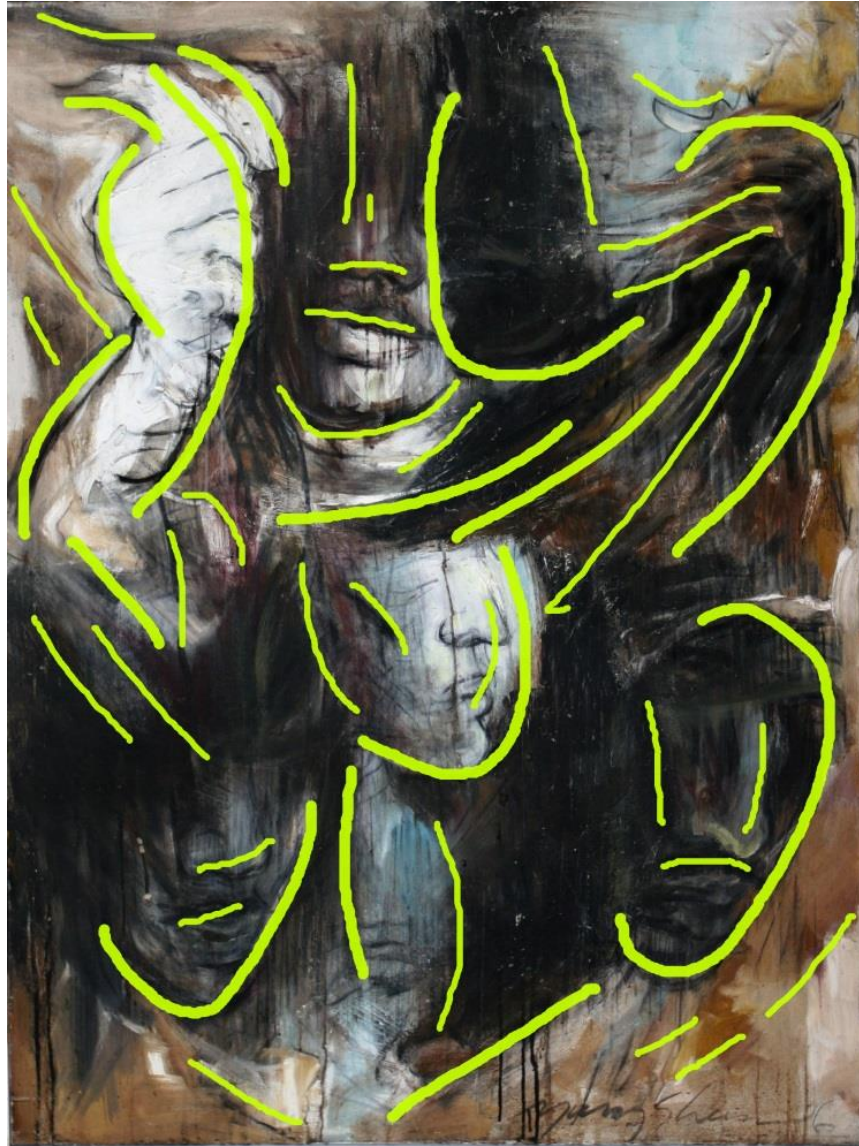


Figure 4.9: Rhythm Gives a Sense of Motion around the Composition. Photo by the Researcher

The elements have been placed unevenly in this painting to produce a sense of overall order. The distribution of masses has been asymmetrically balanced to create a state of equilibrium through different parts of the composition.

It seems that the hand at the left upper corner and the face at the center of the composition dominate over the other parts of the painting. The artist has employed the technique of contrast to emphasize these parts as these two parts have provided a strong contrast with the dark areas around them. The drawing of the hand that has not been filled with colors but is simply left empty seems to be isolated.

4.1.1.2 Expressive Properties

Abettor means ‘one associated with another in wrongdoing’. This work can be considered as an engagement between drawing and painting among the works of the *Wajah* series. The initial idea of this work is the slaughtering of animals. This piece has the most influences from Yusof Ghani’s previous series of paintings either in terms of subject matter or technique and brush strokes. The subject matter of the human figure is seen in relation to the *Segerak* series while the theme of the rooster or cockerels has been inspired by the *Biring* series.

Abettor is the initial work of the *Wajah* series, which has been derived from the *Biring* series. *Biring* is about cockfighting which is said to be the world’s oldest blood sport and has existed for hundreds of years. This sport is held between two male chickens in a ring called a cockpit. The cocks will fight until one of them dies or is seriously injured. In the *Biring* series, Yusof Ghani captured the moment of battle and strife between the cockerels in their fight for life. The *Biring* series is Yusof Ghani’s symbolic depiction of the different conflicts and tensions that exist within mankind in their fight for life and survival.

The subject of the *Biring* series is cockfighting but in this case, the people who are involved with cockfighting have become the focus of Yusof Ghani’s attention. These breeders called ‘cockers’ raise and train roosters to fight. They keep only the roosters that are willing to fight and kill the others. The roosters are kept in bad conditions and trained to fight with other roosters. Even the cockers will partially remove the bird’s natural spur and tie very sharp artificial weapons to the rooster’s legs, which are more deadly and dangerous.

According to the artist, two cockers who organize and set the slaughtering will place their cockerels in a ring called ‘cockpit’ and force them to fight until one of them dies. The roosters slaughter each other and this is for the ‘amusement’ of onlookers.

This work is about the relationship between man and animal in which the character of man sometimes can become like animal. It shows the other side of human being in which is so mean and cruel for the purpose of their own satisfaction and desire.

It can be suggested that *Abettor* possesses a symbolic narrative, which reflects the dark side of the humanistic element. Compared to other paintings of the *Wajah* series, this early work is more expressive. The expressive brush strokes and textured surfaces as well as the free flowing lines, are resulted from using of charcoal, has amplified the sense of spontaneity in the painting. Besides that, a sense of tension, struggle and ambiguity has been exerted by the high contrast of light and dark. This work has been executed in a dark mood and composed of dull and controlled hues.

By employing expressive brush strokes, textured surfaces and dripping paint, *Abettor* not only shows the dark side of human's character, but also depicts a scary and hunting scene within an erratic and expressionist vision.

4.1.2 Painting Sample 2: *Entourage IV*

Yusof Ghani's piece entitled *Entourage IV* (Figure: 4.10) was made in 2007. The work sized at 206 x 183 cm was executed in oil on canvas. This painting is a grid-structured panel composed of different recognizable faces. Each small face has been painted on a canvas sized at 20 x 20 cm. The piece's present location is at *Tapak* art gallery located in *Shah Alam*, Malaysia. Yusof Ghani has painted 72 canvases in rows that illustrate uniformed faces (Figure: 4.11). But upon closer inspection, the viewer notices that the artist has displayed a variety of faces in appearances and features. There are many different elements to take into account when formal analysing this painting.



Figure 4.10: *Entourage IV*, Oil on Canvas, 206 cm x 183 cm, 2007, *Tapak* Collection.
Photo by the Researcher



Figure 4.11: 72 Small Canvases in Rows that Represent the Faces. Photo by the Researcher

Among the paintings of the *Wajah* series, *Entourage* is composed in a slightly different way. Grids of horizontals and verticals constitute the composition. To create his composition, Yusof Ghani has repeated the unique faces each with a unique aspect to them but from a distance appear similar. This method of composition, which is quite exceptional among Yusof Ghani's works, is one of the more widely used techniques in Pop Art Movement.

A trans-Atlantic Western art movement, Pop Art first emerged in Britain in the mid-1950s' and then it was present in the United States by the late 1950s'. The movement is defined by themes and techniques drawn from the popular mass culture and the recent drive of consumerism after post-war Europe. Areas like advertising, mundane cultural objects and comic books serve as sources of inspirations and conceptual materials for works. This art movement is considered a reaction to the active and Avant-Garde ideas of Abstract Expressionism. Pop Art employed images of popular culture in art, emphasizing banal elements of consumer culture, usually through the use of irony, exaggeration and specific presentation methods.

Pop Art was different in the way that it went against the traditional views of fine art as an exclusive object endowed with an aura of uniqueness, and instead appealed to the general public borrowing the aesthetic and presentation of mass-produced goods. Artists during the movement such as Claes Oldenburg and Roy Lichtenstein took ordinary objects such as food, cigarettes, and household items, and transformed them in a way that was unnatural and slightly jarring but enough for the audience to recognize it.

This is the only characteristic of *Entourage*, which is influenced by the Pop Art movement especially by the works of Andy Warhol, but not of the idea of the movement. Warhol is the best-known artist of Pop Art for using repetition in grid-structural composition.

One of the obvious formal features of the Pop Art movement was the unconventional composition method such as repetition, grid formats and multiplication to create the holistic vision. This presentation method echoes the shelves of supermarkets and department stores. Andy Warhol used the technique of multiplication many times to convey an overwhelming production rate, almost in an industrial manner, and the technique of screen-printing proved to be particularly helpful to convey this message. The famous Marilyn Monroe painting is a good example of this (Figure: 4.12). The work features Marilyn Monroe's face that has been reproduced in a grid format. The meaning behind this image is to show the 'mass production' in America after the Great War and how easily something can be copied and reproduced to further help with the dissemination as a piece of information (Sandberg, John, 1967).



Figure 4.12: Marilyn Monroe, Andy Warhol, 1962, Acrylic on Canvas, 205.44 cm × 289.56 cm, Tate Collection, London, UK (Extracted from <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/warhol-marilyn-diptych-t03093>)

It can be noted that the Pop Art movement inspires this painting. By combining Abstract Expressionism with the Pop Art style in *Entourage IV*, Yusof Ghani has achieved a different approach to express his idea. As it was said that “One thing about me if I keep on repeating I get bored, so I use some elements of Pop Art in my work, I wanted to try something new” (Yusof Ghani, personal communication, September 23, 2013).

4.1.2.1 Formal Analysis

In this work, the colours are symbolically expressive and the artist has reduced his palette to colours like red, yellow ochre, black and white. At first glance, warm colours hold the viewer’s attention. Some small units are mostly painted in red, which indicate two diagonal red lines across the painting (Figure: 4.13). The vivid reds are of high saturation that can be seen in the intensity of the implied red cross comes forward and produces a sense of excitement against the dull hues in between.



Figure 4.13: Two Diagonal Red Lines across the Composition. Photo by the Researcher

There is light in each frame illuminating the face and background. All the faces are not illuminated from the same light source but the illusionary light source is from a different direction in each of them. The colour value of the faces change from canvas to canvas, very clouded in some and extremely clear in others. The varying degrees of lights and darks in the faces, produce contrast, illuminate some parts and throw other parts into darkness. Apart from the faces that are mostly painted in red, the gradations of light and dark are abrupt where there is a strong contrast of light and dark in the faces (Figure: 4.14 & 4.15).



Figure 4.14: Strong Contrast of Light and Dark in the Faces. Photo by the Researcher



Figure 4.15: Strong Contrast of Light and Dark in the Faces. Photo by the Researcher

In this painting, a grid of eight implied lines has been created by the repetition of the faces at intermittent vertical elements. The unpainted and thick lines created by the arrangement of the small-sized canvases generally seem to put stress on the horizontal

and vertical rows. These horizontal and vertical lines suggest tranquillity or stability. The artist has provided an overall sense of order to the composition by creating this structure whereas contrasted with the implied crosses made of the red faces (Figure: 4.13). In addition, there are many soft-edged lines made with thick and thin brush strokes to draw the faces. These gentle lines are contained within the edges of the shapes as can be seen in the noses and lips of the faces. (Figure: 4.16 & 4.17)



Figure 4.16: Example of Lines that Depicts the Noses and Lips of the Faces. Photo by the Researcher



Figure 4.17: Example of Lines that Depicts the Noses and Lips of the Faces. Photo by the Researcher

This painting is done in a painterly manner with oil paint that gives a rich and seductive appearance. The actual texture of the work is not smooth and glossy and the artist has created an uneven and gestural texture by applying several layers of tick daubs. (Figure: 4.18 & 4.19)

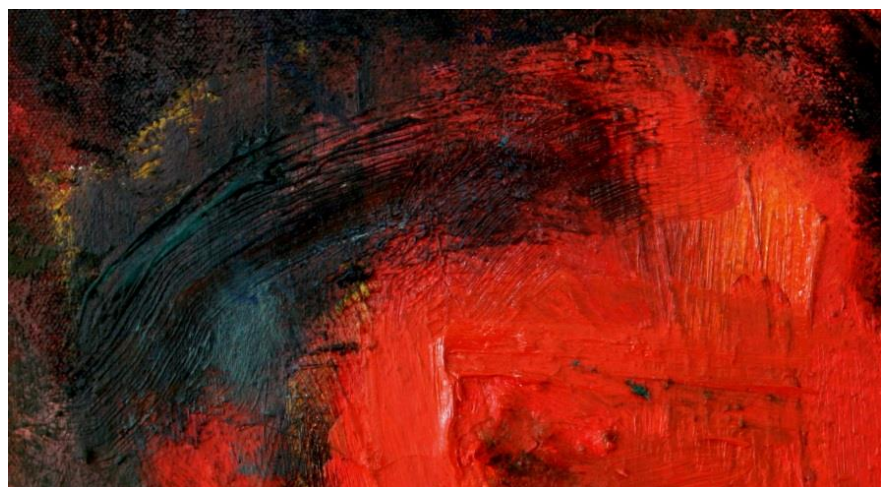


Figure 4.18: The Rough Texture of the Painting. Photo by the Researcher



Figure 4.19: The Rough Texture of the Painting. Photo by the Researcher

Lines and changes in colour create most of the irregular shapes of the faces. For example, the faces' features are formed by a shift of colour from the background. The eyeless faces are not painted in detail; instead colour patches and soft brush strokes, layer by layer, define the overall shapes of the faces. Thus, to create the shapes in this work, the artist has employed both lines and shifts in colour either together in some places or separately others.

A sense of compositional structure is achieved by careful placements of the faces. The artist has allotted the most space to the faces and the least to the empty space between the shapes. The space in this work is divided by the vertical and horizontal lines of empty space between the columns of the faces. In an overall look, the artist has

tried to create a sense of distance by creating high tonal contrasts of the faces painted in the hue of red and using more muted colours in some faces in between.

In this piece of painting, the artist has made up the arrangements of the art elements together as a coherent whole. In fact, it is not easy to find out where one part ends and another begins. The sense of oneness that is created by repetition of coloured shapes, textures and linear directions provides unity. To alleviate the visual dullness, the artist also has introduced variety by diversifying the characteristics of the faces through adding slight changes in each small canvas though they are somewhat united. Yusof Ghani has enhanced interest, dynamism and visual attraction of the work by creating different faces.

The repetition of the faces gives the work a sense of unity while the differences between the 72 faces in composition, tonality of colour, angle and mood offer variety. For example, the use of warm colours like red throughout the painting beside the dull and grey colours creates variety in the artwork. In this image, all of the proportions appear exactly as the viewer would expect. There is a suitable relationship between the size, shape, colour and position of one part to another or of each part to the whole. The harmonious combination of the elements and the correct proportion of squares to one another overtly are felt by the viewer.

The artist has created a sense of movement by arranging the faces in which to imply two red diagonal lines. These slant lines guide the viewer's eye to move from up to down and vice versa through the composition. The repetition of different faces is used to build a sense of rhythm within the composition of this painting. The reiteration of the elements of shapes, lines and colours suggests a sense of motion so that the viewer's eye will move through a grid of nine rows of faces, which varies from frame to frame; the presentation changes with each second the viewer's eyes moves across the

painting. The movement of different elements has created an even rhythm that has enveloped the whole painting.

The artist has arranged the elements by using asymmetrical balance to express order. The artist achieves a sense of balance by arranging the shapes of faces, intensity of colours and value of dark and light. No one part of this painting seems heavier than any other part, which is resulted from distribution of masses in this work.

Yusof Ghani has applied a high intensity of pure red hue in some units, which contrasts with the dull hues in the background. The use of contrast has created emphasis, which guides the viewer's eye through the artwork and attracts the viewer's attention to an implied red cross in foreground. It seems the focal point in this work exists at the centre of the composition.

4.1.2.2 Expressive Properties

What the viewer is able to see in Yusof Ghani's work is that the artist releases his physical energy onto the canvas. This release and sublimation of the emotions is resulted from the original life experiences and his concern about human and environment. It seems that, the artist was fully aware at that time of the nature of his imagery and became fully involved with his feelings, ideas, thoughts and the moment of great cathartic release was attained. Yusof Ghani's works are transformation of a reality, which includes both, the ambiguity, and multiplicity of meanings in painting.

Entourage IV has been created simultaneously in abstraction and figuration. Yusof Ghani has represented 72 eyeless faces in different moods and angles. Each small unit appears to be a rapid, spontaneous rendering representation of a different face that Yusof Ghani has worked on it. These faces can be considered as a group of people in a whole country, a group of community or a small company. The represented faces do not possess identity that is why they are painted without eyes and they can be any body.

Moreover, this work is not confined to a particular individual or a certain nationality but it is very general and universal.

The artist has selected and employed his materials and arranged the elements of art to emphasize the meaning and idea beyond the surface. Despite the visible presence of differences in each unit, there is a connection between all the faces, which assumes a single meaning.

It could be noted that although the title of this work is *Entourage IV*, it suggests a profound content. This painting gives meaning to the titling and explains the term of *Entourage*. The word *Entourage* comes from the French word *entourer*, meaning ‘to surround’ and means ‘the people who surround someone’.

Entourage is a group of people that accompanies an important person to look after their needs and assists them. But the artist did not mean to represent a group of attendants, associates or retinues; instead, entourage refers to the meaning or content of this work. However, the content is not completely evident from looking at the work and an additional research is required.

Everyone has a different role and agenda as well as a different way of thinking in an entourage but all the associates have a same objective. All the people who live or work in any group either as small as family unit or as big as country are not the same but they are different in many aspects and viewpoints. There are discernible differences among the people living in multiracial countries in which they live and think in different ways even though they are under the same nationality.

The main idea behind this work is the segregation, which has appeared among multiracial communities in all over the world. Segregation is to keep apart someone or a group from others. Each society has its own culture, languages, customs and history, which Yusof Ghani called it ‘the package of each nation or country’. There is a desire that the package of each country would like to separate and segregate themselves from

other countries or to have the nation of their own. Each nation has a feeling of loyalty to their country and often with the belief that their country is better or more important than others. Yusof Ghani has linked the idea of segregation to the title of the work and the meaning of *entourage*. It was said that:

A group of people or a large *entourage* always accompany an important person like a king or a prime minister when they travel, we also do that, we carry our things like our nationality, culture and custom, and this is our own package, different nationalities have different packages, this is like our *entourage* that is always with us. Then we try to segregate ourselves from others, we try to separate our *entourage* from another *entourage*, we always try to find a way to segregate each other (Yusof Ghani, personal communication, February 18, 2014).

The artist has depicted a red cross on the faces to oppose the idea of segregation. The red cross shows a sense of strong disagreement with the idea of segregating the nationalities and people from different countries. Though the faces are different in some aspects, they are considered as a whole. The artist has tried to convey a sense of oneness what the artist called ‘unity in variety’.

In this case, I tried to suggest a sense of unity, oneness or whole; *Entourage IV* is made up from different units like each face comes from different character, different mood even different nationality, they have variety but they are still united, they are all human beings and they all live in one world (Yusof Ghani, personal communication, September 23, 2013).

It may be suggested that the artist’s goal is to promote a world of unity and oneness through painting as a medium of communication and awareness for all members of society. The emotions and thoughts evoked by the viewer’s contemplation of the work is that this painting consists of a number of components but is considered as a single unit that makes a whole. So, all the nations should try to develop strategies that will lead them to a greater integration and unity.

In fact, the message of this work is that despite the differences in race, nationality, culture, languages and lifestyle, the most basic unifying things that link all the human

beings are that they all share the same world, they all live in the same planet, they all breathe the same air, they are all mankind and have a same objective. Thus human beings are united as a whole. The artist aims to give a sense of movement from the self and ego of the nation itself to the whole world; integration of the singular into the pluralized.

4.1.3 Painting Sample 3: *Agony of Aceh IV*

Yusof Ghani's piece entitled *Agony of Aceh IV* (Figure: 4.20) was completed in 2008. The work, sized at 168 x 147 cm is composed of oil and canvas collage on jute. The mix-media painting is currently in the collection of *Tapak Art Gallery* in *Shah Alam*, Malaysia. This piece reveals the combination between figuration and abstraction that is inherent in Yusof Ghani's practice. *Agony of Aceh IV*, which represents faces in a monochromatic scheme, is rendered essentially in black, white, with a diverse range of gray shades. The work is aptly titled as it represents the suffering of the people of *Aceh* from the sombre occasion of the tsunami that struck the province that is located at the northern end of Sumatra on December 26, 2004.



Figure 4.20: *Agony of Acheh IV*, Oil on Canvas & Collage, 168 cm x 147 cm, 2008, Tapak Collection. Photo by the Researcher

4.1.3.1 Formal Analysis

Yusof Ghani rarely relies upon the suggestions of natural colouring. The artist has painted this work in limited colours. It was done in a pale hue of low saturation consisting of amber, earth tones and cool hue of blue, with black and white. The painting has been coloured a drab blue and greys to appear sombre. Yusof Ghani's expressive choice of dark and grey colours for this work is affected by the idea and tragic story beyond this work. The sombre mood is communicated through the use of

colours to give a sense of depression and gloom. Thus, color as a visual element helps to define much of the painting's gloomy and dull mood.

The artist has created high and low values by adding white and black to the blue and brown hues. The painting is made up of a minimum range of tones from very light to very dark. The gradation of light and dark is abrupt so there is a strong contrast of light and dark which pull and push the viewer's attention through the work (Figure: 4.21). There are a few areas of high value that catches the attention like the white textured faces at the bottom left of the painting.



Figure 4.21: Strong Contrast of Light and Dark Areas. Photo by the Researcher

The lines in this work are not descriptive. It means that the lines do not refer to any object as there are not contour lines to create shapes. Yet the spontaneous and suggestive lines refer to the gestures, which were created by the pouring or dripping technique (Figure: 4.22 & 4.23) and strong brush strokes (Figure: 4.24). These lines are not controlled in which the vertical, broken and sharp lines are resulted from brush strokes.



Figure 4.22: Gestures which Created by the Poured or Drip Technique. Photo by the Researcher



Figure 4.23: Gestures which Created by the Poured or Drip Technique. Photo by the Researcher



Figure 4.24: Gestures which Created by Brush Stroke. Photo by the Researcher

The thickness of the texture, which can be felt on the surface of the painting, is resulted from the technique of impasto in which the oil paint has been applied thickly. Besides that, the use of a collage procedure that combines different materials such as papier mache and paper pulp has resulted with a rough texture at the left bottom of the work (Figure: 4.25 & 4.26 & 4.27). These sculptural faces made by the collage technique protrude from the surface and catch light. The texture is also enhanced by the employment of a fluid paint quality and it's allowed to drip and dribble on the painting's surface creating alluring effects (Figure: 4.22 & 4.23). Yusof Ghani has applied rough texture to make the surface emotionally active in an extreme way.



Figure 4.25: The Sculptured Faces Made of Papier mache. Photo by the Researcher



Figure 4.26: The Sculptured Faces Made of Papier mache. Photo by the Researcher



Figure 4.27: The Sculptured Faces Made of Papier mache. Photo by the Researcher

The eyeless faces can be seen in both dark and light areas, but the artist has represented the faces generally rather in detail (Figure: 4.28). According to Yusof Ghani (2014), “I have distorted the faces, these faces have not been painted in detail because I am not doing realism but I want to show the expressions on the faces” (personal communication, February 17, 2014).

The faces are not defined elaborately instead they are represented by colour patches and brush strokes or a collage technique overall. Some blurred faces are created by soft brush strokes and while some in the bottom left are textured and elevated above the surface of the canvas.



Figure 4.28: Example of a Face which Is Defined in General Rather in Detail. Photo by the Researcher

At an initial glance, a big circle can be seen in this work in which the faces at the centre have been blurred. This arrangement of the elements can suggest a spiral movement through the composition (Figure: 4.29). Meanwhile, the viewer is able to observe that the illusionary space in the work is divided into dark and light areas, in

which the lightness of the white colour comes forward to hold the attention and lowers the intensity of the black. The artist has created a sense of atmospheric perspective and illusion of distance by slightly decreasing the sharpness and clarity of the faces. The blurred faces in the dark areas are receded into space and give a visual sense of depth. Whereas the textured faces in the bottom left quarter are brightly illuminated and surge forward. Therefore, the sense of depth and flatness has been made by the strong contrast of darkness and light. The faces as the positive areas are merged into the both of dark and light spaces and suggest a sense of fusion in the artwork.



Figure 4.29: The Spiral Movement through the Composition. Photo by the Researcher

The artist has used similar elements in the composition and arranged them in a way to create a sense of harmony and completeness. Different elements seem to belong together to create a whole. This sense of unity has been made up by the repetition of the images of faces, textures and line directions in which the viewer's eye will move inside the work. So it might be easy to specify where one part ends and another begins. To

reduce the visual monotony and tedium of extreme unity, the artist has provided interest through the element of variety. Creating a number of textures on the painting's surface has provided variation.

The artist has manipulated proportions by creating some faces larger or smaller to generate emphasis of an object or area. By subtly emphasizing the texture and abrupt gradation of light and dark, Yusof Ghani has used several elements to keep the viewer moving throughout the painting. The large implied circular shape in the composition has established a sense of spiralling movement in the painting (Figure: 4.29).

The identical elements such as the vertical expressive lines, colours, shape of faces and textures have been repeated in this work. The reiteration of the alternating and identical elements has implied a sense of order and continuity in the painting.

The distribution of the masses has created an informal balance in this painting as the shape of the faces in the dark and light areas seem to carry equal weight.

4.1.3.2 Expressive Properties

Agony of Aceh IV reflects gloomy themes such as horror, disaster; torment, darkness and despair inspired by the devastating tsunami that struck *Banda Aceh* in 2004. *Aceh* is one of Indonesia's main islands and is located on the Northwestern tip of Sumatra. On December 26, giant waves from the Indian Ocean inflicted by a strong earthquake jolted the northern end of Sumatra and the colossal tsunami shattered the tranquillity of this area. Although the epicenter of the earthquake was about 250 kilometers off the west coast of Aceh Province, Banda Aceh was the only major city that experienced ground shaking which caused the collapse of buildings and massive damage to residential structures. *Aceh* was thoroughly devastated by the huge tsunami, causing over 221,000 people killed or missing.

The title of this painting aptly suggests the conceptual idea and meaning of the work and contains several elements that could bring this tragic event to mind.

The idea, which appears to permeate this work, expresses the artist's personal feelings and emotions towards the tsunami disaster. Frequently observing documentary movies and photos and also researching about the tragic catastrophe have invigorated Yusof Ghani's interest for creating four pieces of the *Agony of Aceh* sub-series to articulate the suffering, pain and agony of the people of *Aceh*.

I watched movies and photos and I read about that, a few days after the tsunami event, my son-in-law who works for an NGO and my brother travelled to *Aceh* for search and rescue operations, I also got much information from them on how the people suffered from the tragedy, some disappeared, some had missing family members, some of them the whole family were killed and some the whole village, those who survived were affected by the tragic disaster, it was really sad and sorrowful (Yusof Ghani, personal communication, September 23, 2013).

The main theme of *Agony of Aceh* is devastation; suffering and pain caused by a tragic catastrophe, whether natural or out of human carelessness, and its impact on more than just a few individuals. Reinforcing this, the artist has used black, white and grey paint which serves as a frightening visual metaphor to set a somber mood and express havoc and pain. The entire painting is dark with dull hues and no real sign of warmth or life. Gloom and despair are amplified by abrupt contrasts of light and shade and the representation of the horrifying faces.

Yusof Ghani has painted the victims of the tsunami in an illusionary space filled with the unfortunate dead and survivors who are injured and missing their family members. The slightly contorted faces look hysterical with fear and pain thus express simple horror and panic. The pale sculpted faces at the bottom left appear to be dead and have been merged with the frightened faces in the dark to create an exaggerated dramatic tension. Yusof Ghani has painted some of the faces with gaping mouths that seem to be screaming at the right side of the painting, dominating the viewer's impressions. It appears that there is a created space behind the ambiguous area of the

foreground and that there is a hole on the top left where a lucky person that seems to have escaped the disaster is observing the incident.

One might note that the incorporation of expressive brush strokes, textured surfaces and dripping paint not only visually depicts the destructive power of the tsunami, but also gives a sense of chaos and massacre within an Expressionist vision. Thus this painting successfully reflects Yusof Ghani's sympathy towards the tragic event.

4.1.4 Painting Sample 4: *Hydra-infinity*

Yusof Ghani's piece entitled *Hydra-infinity* (Figure: 4.30) was completed in 2008. The work, sized at 152 x 182 cm has been painted in oil and canvas. The painting is currently located at *Tapak Art Gallery* in *Shah Alam*, Malaysia. The work is a diptych, consisting of two painted panels that are hinged together. The dual adjoining panels create a continuous image, which is composed of the same size panels and possess similarities in composition, colour and sense of space. The artist has painted images of eyeless faces in a monochromatic color schemes. This work symbolically illustrates the struggle of the fishermen who live in the fishing villages on the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia.



Figure 4.30: *Hydra-infinity*, Oil on Canvas, 152 cm x 182 cm, 2008, *Tapak* Collection.
Photo by the Researcher

4.1.4.1 Formal Analysis

This painting has been essentially painted monochromatically in a range of cool hues. With a narrow range of hue, the painting is dominated by cool hue of blues and greens with an accent of red at the left half of the piece (Figure: 4.31). Juxtaposing the adjacent colours on the colour wheel has created an analogous harmony. The use of the blue hues is more suggestive and in this piece, the artist presents a controlled palette. With its close association to water, the colour blue symbolizes the sea. In addition, the joys of shifting light and varied colours have no place in this painting which could serve to emphasize the bleak milieu in the fishermen's' lives and the sombre mood.

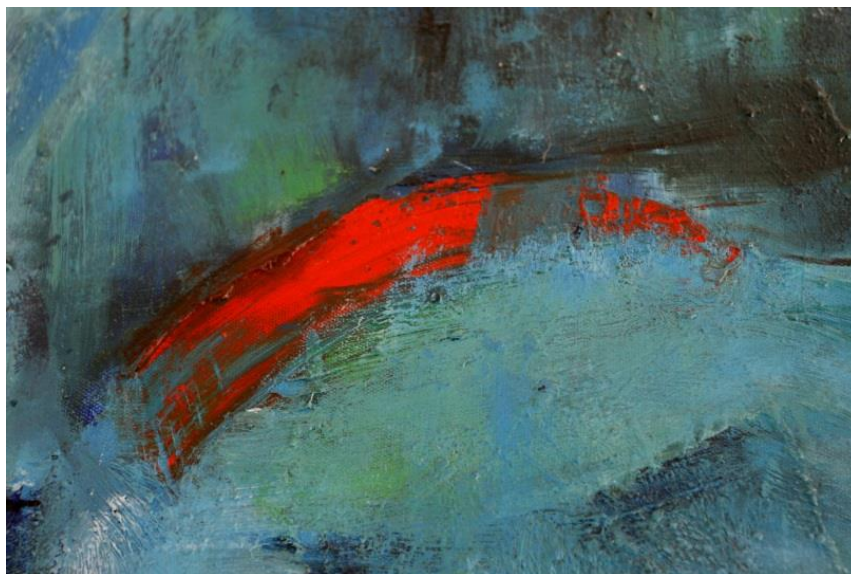


Figure 4.31: An Accent of Red at the Left Half of the Painting. Photo by the Researcher

This painting has been done in low values of dark blues. The colour values have been sensitively altered from one face to another. Yusof Ghani has moderately used of strong contrasts between light and dark colors. The gradual gradations of lights and darks have defined the shapes as well as using some high color values to illustrate the faces (Figure: 4.32). It seems that the use of green is mostly in light areas because of its natural brightness in comparison with blue.

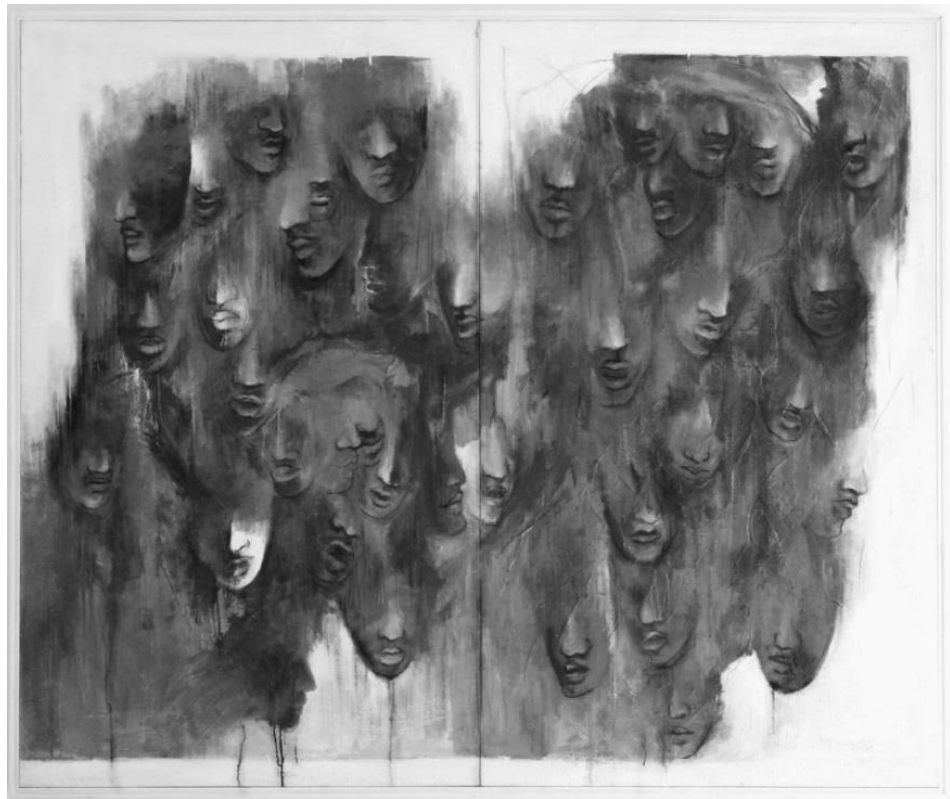


Figure 4.32: Gradual Gradations of Light and Dark. Photo by the Researcher

In this work, the element of line has become secondary in which the fundamental role of shapes in composing the painting is prominent. The function of lines is not to construct outlines of objects but the artist has instead used shading to portray the faces. In addition, Yusof Ghani has used implied lines to direct the beholder's eyes around the composition. As the diagonal line implied by the converging of the faces runs from the painting's lower-left corner towards the upper-right corner (Figure 4.33).



Figure 4.33: The Implied Diagonal Lines. Photo by the Researcher

The oil paint has been applied in a rough manner whereby the spectator's eye can easily detect the presence of the brush and feel the roughness and thickness of the paint on the surface (Figure: 4.34). This massive impasto-like application of paint has mostly been employed in positive shapes to identify the forms of the faces from the negative space.



Figure 4.34: The Roughness of the Paint on the Surface. Photo by the Researcher

The first objects that grab the viewer's attention seem to be two dominant oval shapes in the composition, which contain two groupings of small faces (Figure: 4.35). The faces have been depicted by adding illusory features such as value resulted from hatched strokes instead of representing them in detail (Figure: 4.36).



Figure 4.35: Two Oval Shapes in the Composition Contains Small Faces. Photo by the Researcher



Figure 4.36: Illusory Quality of the Faces in the Painting. Photo by the Researcher

The recession of the faces in space conveys a sense of depth. This visual sense of depth has been enhanced by overlapping the face, in which parts of one face has covered parts of another face. Moreover, the artist has slightly decreased the clarity and sharpness of the faces, which are painted at the farther distance to further enhance the illusion of distance.

There are small and big faces, I have not put all the faces in the same plane, I have cut the painting in different layers, it is not necessary to put small faces at the back or big faces in front, the faces just overlap each other, they does not stay in one space, the faces are in flow in the picture plane, I try to give a sense of ambiguity in this painting (Yusof Ghani, personal communication, March 2, 2014).

The repetition of the faces through the painting has a tendency to not only lead the eye around but also suggest unity and oneness in the painting. By using similar elements like analogous colors and shapes and placing them in a way that brings them all together, Yusof Ghani has created a sense of harmony and wholeness. The faces seem to be enclosed within the structure of the painting. Variety is obvious in the

number of different poses struck by the faces as well as the different sizes of the faces. In addition, some faces have been painted in more detail and some has been made by minimal suggestions. However, despite having a complex arrangement, the faces appear to be interconnected and unified as it was said that “I try to make a sense of cohesiveness; it means that all the elements are connected through the shapes and distribution of colors in the composition of this work” (Yusof Ghani, personal communication, March 2, 2014).

To avoid a sense of static, the artist has provided a visual movement and motion in the composition. The implied diagonal line from the bottom left corner of the painting to the upper right has enhanced the sense of action and dynamism in which moves the viewer’s eye through the painting (Figure: 4.33). The repetition of the faces either blurred or clear has provided a sense of movement or what Yusof Ghani called ‘flow of the eye’ in the painting (Figure: 4.37).



Figure 4.37: Rhythm Created by the Repetition of the Faces through the Composition.
Photo by the Researcher

The repetition of shapes, forms and colours has created a visual rhythm in this work that invites the spectator's eye to glide smoothly from one to the next (Figure: 4.37). In this work, a more controlled pattern of rhythm has emerged in which the artist has employed an even spacing and analogous colours.

For Yusof Ghani, visual balance is one of the most important elements in composing a painting. The bulky volume of the painting is located in two big oval shapes (Figure: 4.38) which have created visual interests in the composition while the negative space of the canvas is more visually peaceful through minimal usage of the elements. However, the distribution of masses has been asymmetrically balanced (Figure: 4.39). This visual balance gives the viewers the feeling that the disparate parts of the work are in equilibrium. Such a state of balance through different parts of composition has enhanced an overall sense of order.



Figure 4.38: Two Big Oval Shapes Contains Volume of the Painting. Photo by the Researcher



Figure 4.39: Asymmetrical Balance in the Composition through Distribution of Masses.
Photo by the Researcher

4.1.4.2 Expressive Properties

The title of this work is *Hydra-infinity*, which is consisted of two words. The word ‘hydra’ is derived from the word ‘hydration’ that suggests the meaning of ‘water’ and the word ‘infinity’ means the ‘quality of having no end or limits’. The combination of these two words is a suggestion of the expansiveness of the seas and oceans, which is endless and gives an indication of the idea beyond the painting. The monstrosity of the natural body, which is cruel and unforgiving but at the same time also serves as a source of livelihood for the fishermen, has implied on this duality.

It can be suggested that *Hydra-infinity* is a symbolic reflection of the themes of hardship, distress and adversity. The main idea of this work is the difficulties of earning a livelihood and struggles of making an honest living. *Hydra-infinity* is the story of hard-working people who labor solidly to earn an honest, pure and dedicated living and try to become a good “provider” for their families. Those who work with commitment,

determination and focus by the sweat of one's brow to cover some living expenses. Unfortunately, despite hard labor to make a living for the benefit and improvement of their family, they continually live in poverty.

A significant influence on *Hydra-infinity* was Yusof Ghani's visits to fishermen who live in Terengganu in the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia. Fishing in the open China Sea is the main source of livelihood for many people in that area. *Hydra-infinity* conveys the fishermen's life and their struggle to make a living. In fact, Yusof Ghani has used the fishermen's life as a subject matter to express his idea on the hardship of life, which in actuality could be formularized to contextualize that hardship in life to different human ecosystems.

It could also be suggested that the sorrowful theme, dark areas in the painting and the artist's choice of the muted palette of blues have been derived from the artist's experience of a journey to the fishing villages and conversing directly with those fishermen.

Yusof Ghani mentioned that the fishermen of the East Coast are some of the hardest workingmen and it is a real hard life for them to earn a living from the sea. Fishermen have been suffering severe financial hardship because the return for their efforts is too little and they do not obtain any income during the monsoon months. These fishermen live in little huts and their lifestyle is very simple. They get to work at dawn when it is still chilly and dark. They pray to God before going to the waters, hoping to get a good catch. Sometimes the nets are loaded with fish but sometimes, luck does not favour them and they do not get a good catch. By noon, they start returning to shore (personal communication, March 2, 2014).

The fishermen must be prepared for all possible outcomes. They have to fight various calamities like unpredictable weather in the sea, dangers of the rough and choppy waters of the South China Sea, the reality of being poor and the plight of a

fishing family. Some will die at sea and it is expected by all. However this is only their life and they are forced to live with it, their life goes on with all hardships and gets passed down to the next generation. However, the fishermen have to be strong and adventurous.

One may note that the expressive qualities of the colors in this work are personal and in an idiosyncratic way, express the artist's mood. The meaning of the painting has been indirectly invoked through the strategic use of symbolic colors. The hue of the blues symbolizes the water and sea and gives a feeling of coolness, expansiveness and openness. Besides that, choosing austere and cool colors is a reflection of the artist's feeling and mood towards the doleful subject matter of this painting so that a sense of misery, sorrow, hardship and mystery are evidently exerted by the colors. According to Yusof Ghani (2014), "I wanted to change the mood of the painting towards more sad, sorrow and deep, of course the cold colors are the best colors to give that sense" (personal communication, March 2, 2014).

It must be suggested that this painting is an example of how Yusof Ghani would mix figuration with abstraction to symbolize daily life realities. This gloomy allegorical painting is a symbolic depiction of the hardship of the fishermen's life and suffering in the open sea to earn an honest living and their courage in the face of adversity. Such a doleful and sorrowful subject matter and mood of anguish have been subtly accented with cool hues.

4.1.5 Painting Sample 5: *Messenger*

Yusof Ghani created *Messenger* in 2008 (Figure: 4.40). The work sized at 200 cm x 250 cm was executed in oil on canvas and is now housed at *Tapak* art gallery located in *Shah Alam*, Malaysia. Among the paintings of the *Wajah* series, *Messenger* is the only one, which exists on a colossal scale composed of a single eyeless face dominating the center of the composition.

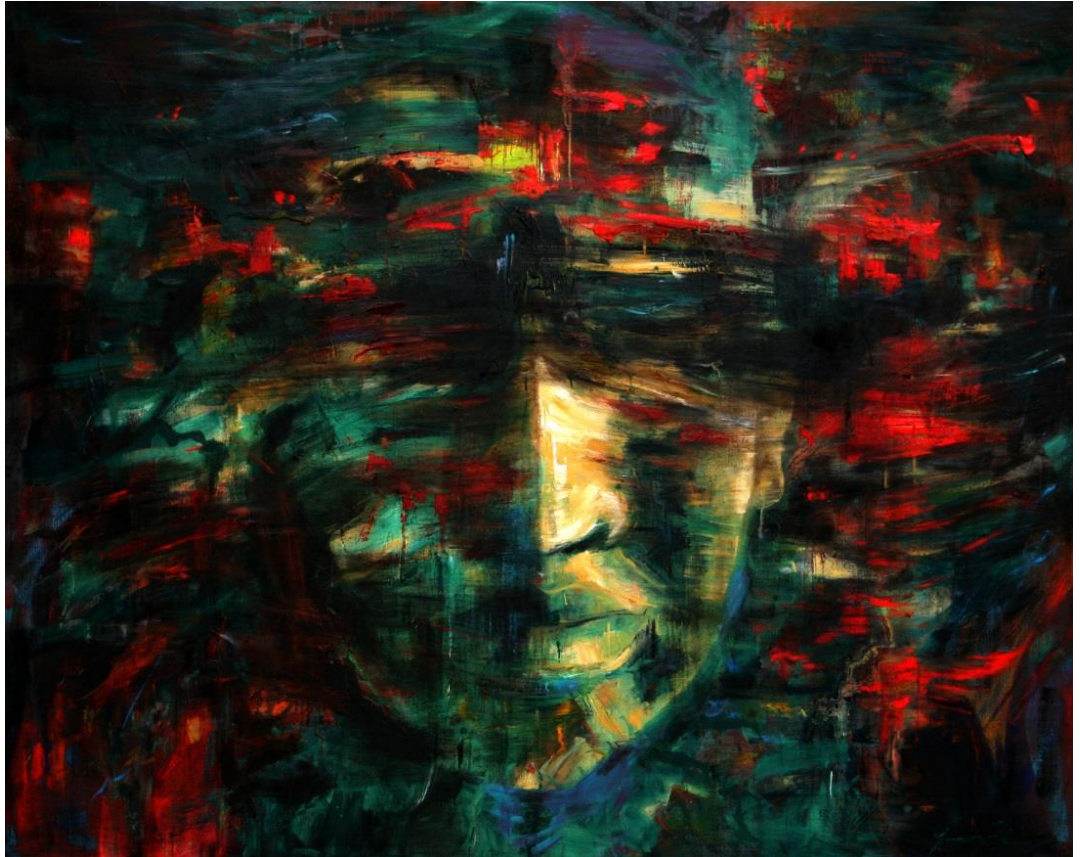


Figure 4.40: *Messenger*, Oil on Canvas, 200 cm x 250 cm, 2008, *Tapak* Collection. Photo by the Researcher

4.1.5.1 Formal Analysis

Yusof Ghani's choice of colours for the *Messenger* has been limited to green, dark browns, black, warm colours like yellow ochre and red with some accents of blue. The variations of dark amber structure the painting while warm touches of yellows and saturated reds guide the eye through the piece.

Illusionary light enters the painting from the right thus the left half of the face has been painted dark. With minimum range of tones from very light to very dark, the face has been created in a bold contrast with the dark colours of the background in which the head protrudes forward giving a sense of visual dynamism (Figure:4.41).



Figure 4.41: Strong contrast of the face against the dark background. Photo by the Researcher

This large-scaled face has been visually emphasised. Organic, flowing, gestural lines subtly caress and define the face in the indistinct space. The gestural quality of the lines reveals the physical movement of the artist. In the centre, a vertical line implied by strong contrasts on the nose and lips divides the entire painting into two almost similar rectangles (Figure: 4.42).



Figure 4.42: The Movement of Gestural Lines and Implied Vertical Line at the Centre of the Composition. Photo by the Researcher

This painting has been done in a painterly method in which the thickness and roughness of the paint projects out from the surface of the painting (Figure: 4.43). Such an uneven texture is again enhanced by almost mechanical geometric brush strokes on the painted surface. According to Yusof Ghani (2014), “Among the paintings of *Wajah*, Messenger is more on the manipulation of surface, texture, layering of paint and strokes, rather than subject matter, image of the face and composition” (Yuso Ghani, personal communication, April 8, 2014).

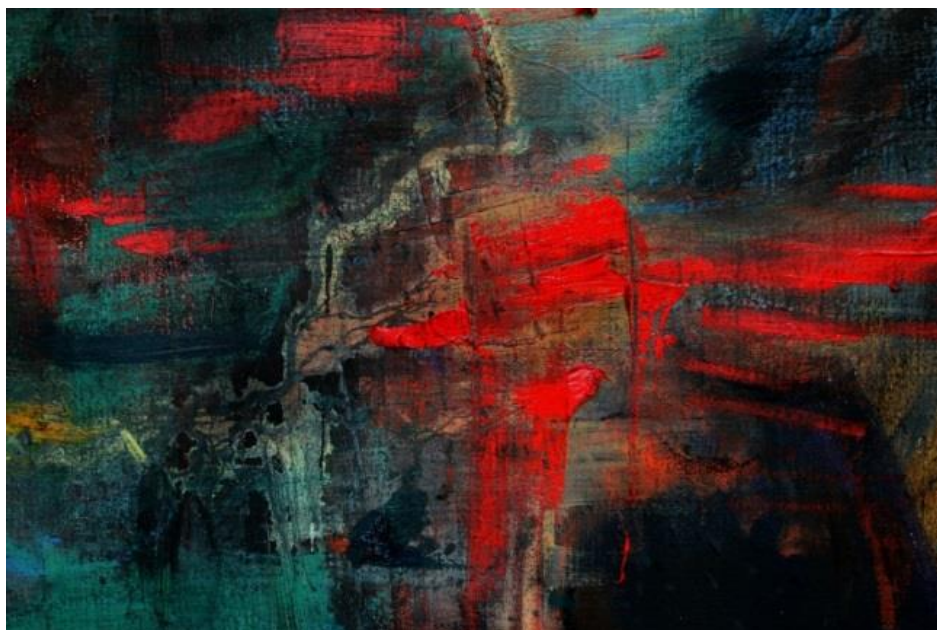


Figure 4.43: An Example of Rough Texture on the Surface. Photo by the Researcher

The shape of the massive face has been depicted by broad touches of colours while ignoring details. The face melts into the background by dark and heavy strokes and moving through the different layers, these broad strokes have concealed half of the face as well as the eyes.

The monstrously scaled face in the centre of the composition seems to advance forward and the other areas recede deeper into a distant background. By creating a dark space which contrasts with this face, Yusof Ghani has tried to push and pull different areas of the painting into and out of the background to give a sense of ambiguity and mystery.

All parts of this work have some relationship to the whole thus giving a sense of unity. The distribution of the similar elements throughout the composition not only directs the eye around but also has unified the work. Such a sense of oneness has been provided by repetition of textures and consistent use of paint touches in this work, as the viewer could easily follow the red colour in the face and the background.

This overwhelming face looks exceedingly larger than life and commandingly confronts the viewer with its monstrosity. The massive face, which has filled the

colossal canvas, has produced a different effect in which it seems more expansive and more energetic, even somewhat aggressive (Figure: 4.44). Yusof Ghani has expanded this work to a monstrous scale which causes the viewer to see a magnified mundane item in a completely different way thus changing its meaning. It seems that the artist has purposefully exaggerated the scale of the painting in order to emphasize the subject matter and overwhelms the viewer with a simple portrayal of a face in a monumental way.

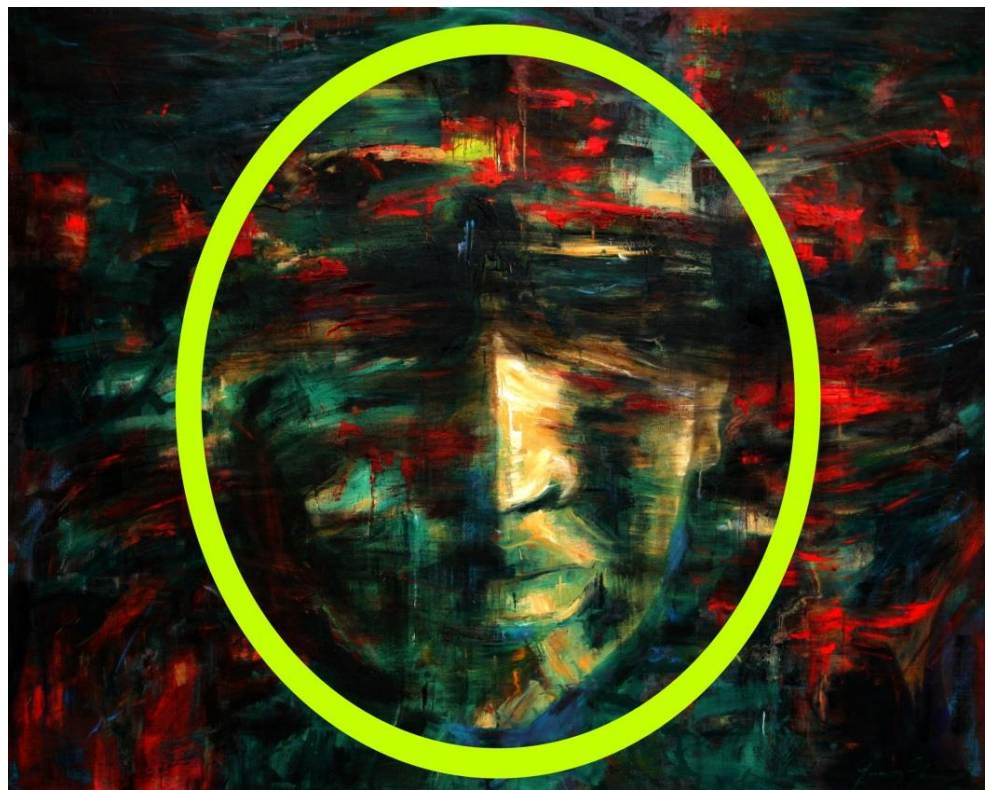


Figure 4.44: Massive Face which Has Filled a Colossal Canvas. Photo by the Researcher

The repetition of colors and textures seem to flow throughout the composition and has provided a sense of visual movement and motion (Figure 4.42). Such similar elements repeated in a random order make the composition appear to possess a lyrical movement. This movement of the elements such as the red colour and the geometric brush strokes aid the viewer's eye to travel through the composition while giving a flow and rhythm to the this piece.

The artist has asymmetrically balanced this painting and the careful distribution of masses has created a sense of equilibrium. Such a state of equilibrium at different parts of composition has enhanced an overall sense of order and harmony.

4.1.5.2 Expressive Properties

This works make evident the technique of enlarging an image into a monumental scale thus blurring the boundaries between figuration and abstraction when viewed at different ranges. Vibrant colours and geometric brush strokes bring to life to this massive painting. Yusof Ghani artistically presents monumental portraits on a larger-than-life canvas, allowing the viewers to delve deep into the work. The viewer is stunned not just by the massive proportion of the painting but also by the eerie and mysterious ambiance exudes by the painting. Explaining of his intention on composing a single face on a large-scale canvas, Yusof Ghani (2014) in a personal communication said:

A large-scaled face is more addressing; this face is calling the viewer, hey man! Look at me, the impact of this single face in the composition is like controlling the ambience, for example, when an important person like a prime minister goes on the stage and controls the audience and influences the audience by his presence and even if he does not say anything, this still gives a sense of energy and power, I tried to give the same feeling to the viewer (Yusof Ghani, personal communication, April 8, 2014).

Messenger suggests a profound content. According to Yusof Ghani (2014), “Some people like politicians have the power or personal quality to influence individuals, inspire them or possess authority over large numbers of people” (personal communication, April 8, 2014). With this in mind, it may be suggested that not everyone is a charismatic speaker and has the power to convince those opposed to change their minds and beliefs. Only certain people in society like leaders, ministers, governors or commissioners have this power to speak confidently, using self-assured gestures and body language and a strong tone of voice. And once they see an

opportunity, the person works to make it more commanding so that people are drawn to them and convinced to accept a new ideology.

It must be noted that *Messenger* is a stunning spontaneous representation a single gigantic face which has occupied the central composition and is closely tied to the focal point. This eyeless face can be considered as a symbolic depiction of a human being type (leader) and carries a psychological dimension. The idea behind this work is about the ability to attract other people and make them admire you, to convince someone to accept a new ideology and belief system or update his knowledge or beliefs about an existing idea.

4.1.6 Painting Sample 6: *Avenger*

Yusof Ghani's piece *Avenger* (Figure: 4.45) was completed in 2009. The work, sized at 152 x 122 cm has been painted in oil and canvas. The painting is currently located at *Tapak Art Gallery* in *Shah Alam*, Malaysia. This piece is the last painting of the *Wajah* series which illustrates a number of eyeless faces in limited color schemes. This work is one of the most lyrical and distinctive works in the series, which has been done in a minimal and non-gestural way. *Avenger* explores the intersection between figuration and abstraction in painting.



Figure 4.45: *Avenger*, Oil on Canvas, 152 cm x 122 cm, 2009, *Tapak* Collection. Photo by the Researcher

4.1.6.1 Formal Analysis

The artist has a more controlled palette in this work and was disciplined in his usage of a limited palette of reds and greens with black and white.

When viewing this painting, the observer's eyes are drawn towards the dark colour patches at the centre of the composition. The artist has added the darkest darks and lightest light to give the painting a limited though jarring tonal scale. Thus the strong contrast of shade and light are resulted from the abrupt gradations of light and dark (Figure: 4.46). The values of colours in this work have as well created the illusion of space.



Figure 4.46: Abrupt Gradations of Light and Dark. Photo by the Researcher

The lines are not all the same, they are similar or contrasting, hard or soft-edged and thick or thin (Figure: 4.47 & 4.48). Some lines are contained within the edges of shapes and some, which are calm, define the outlines of the white faces in the background (Figure: 4.49).



Figure 4.47: Different Qualities of Line in the Composition. Photo by the Researcher



Figure 4.48: Different Qualities of Line in the Composition. Photo by the Researcher



Figure 4.49: An Example of Soft Lines which Define the Faces in the Background. Photo by the Researcher

By applying a multi-layered technique in a rough manner, the thickness of the paint and the presence of brush can be felt on the surface of this painting. Texture is again enhanced by broken and short rectangular brush strokes (Figure: 4.50).



Figure 4.50: The Thickness of the Paint and the Presence of Brush on the Surface. Photo by the Researcher

Shapes tend to flow into one another. The faces have been not represented in detail and yet they are quite suggestive. Yusof Ghani has reduced the representation to a more abstract manner in which the faces have been depicted in a minimal and modest way so that the viewer can appreciate the colour patches that control the shapes while ignoring the details.

The initial space of this work is divided into dark and light areas. Within the painting, there is sense of depth from the contrast between the warm, darker colours and the cool, lighter colours. The space in which the painting exists is remarkably effective in conveying a sense of being surrounded by the muted and eyeless faces. In the centre of the work, a violent motion is expressed through the profusion of entangled lines, but in the background, all is calm, with soft-edged lines and colour harmonies. Meanwhile, a sense of ambiguity and illusion of space has been created by obscuring some of the faces in white.

In this work, a quality of wholeness is achieved through the effective use of the elements of art and principles of design. The artist has created a sense of unity by adjusting different parts of the work so they relate to one another and holistically. Besides that, this painting seems more unified by simplification and limiting the number of variations of an element. Repetition of the faces, colors, lines and brush strokes also suggests a sense of coherence. Variety has been implied by using different quality of lines and also differences within subtle shifts in colors and values. Furthermore, the proportions within this painting, between the faces are similar to the proportions found in the physical world.

The repetition of the elements such as texture, lines and abrupt contrasts of light and dark as well as the repetition of the dull blurred faces gives a sense of a gentle motion to the painting. In addition, the masses of broken shapes and tangled lines in the center of the composition, motions the viewer to follow along a triangular shape and retains the viewer's eyes moving throughout the work (Figure: 4.51).



Figure 4.51: The Masses of Broken Shapes and Tangled Lines in the Center of the Composition. Photo by the Researcher

By using patches of colours, repetition of strokes and lines, to the entire subjects and varying spaces between the shapes create a dynamic rhythm set by the artist and giving a sense of immense dynamic activity. The obscured grey faces repeated across the entire canvas, creating a smooth, waltz-like rhythm serves as a gentle backdrop whereas by creating dark patches of colours and lines, Yusof Ghani then repeated this motion within the central composition of the painting, giving the viewers a staccato-styled visual rhythm.

Through minimal usage of elements, the artist has enhanced a sense of equilibrium throughout different parts of the composition. Here, the dark colors, which

are heavier, have been asymmetrically balanced with muted and light colors, giving a sense of stability and harmony to the composition.

It seems that the areas of dark colours within the artwork entice the viewer's retinal attention thus becoming a focal point. Additionally, the subordination of other compositional elements brings the attention to the focal point, which is in the centre composition.

4.1.6.2 Expressive Properties

The idea that the artist tried to communicate in this work is about revenge in which it can be negative or positive. According to Yusof Ghani, *Avenger* does not mean that one takes on revenge as a payback but it is about fighting for what is right.

It may be suggested that *Wajah* is about humanity in social, cultural and political contexts and thus in that sense, *Avenger* refers to the cultural norms that control societies. Cultural norms are values, attitudes, beliefs and behavioural patterns that are typical to a specific society or groups. Norms vary widely across cultural groups. Some norms are good while others are not so productive. Some contribute to the betterment of individuals, families, and communities; others are treated as obstacles that people in the society would like to reduce or eliminate and *Avenger* is about the latter.

In some societies, culture controls everything, when culture says this is normal, you cannot go against the norms, but sometimes you want to get out of the box, example even as an artist in my family and my village, when they hear you want to be an artist, ooh no... you must be crazy, becoming an artist is not normal, it does not serve anything, it does not make sense, and sometimes you want to get away from that, it is like you want to go against the norms (Yusof Ghani, personal communication, April 8, 2014).

Some people go against the norms and free themselves from the norms because they have a desire to express themselves. They want to get out from the system that limits them. This system can be in a family, workplace, in a society and even governed

by abstract rules and regulations. To explain about the idea of *Avenger*, Yusof Ghani (2014) in a personal communication said:

Avenger is as though I want to voice up, I want to protest, it is about society, culture, my experiences in life, for me the most important thing is that you must enjoy what you do, you cannot be depressed in your workplace, this is not a negative thing, this is only to express yourself (personal communication, April 8, 2014).

Avenger could also refer to the idea of unfairness and cruelty, which is happening in our world today. This cruelty is not necessary physical. Sometimes people are not treated well in the society or authorities attempt to oppress them. So people voice up, they express and complain about something unfair.

It must be noted that Yusof Ghani's *Avenger* is an exercise in contrast with an impressive use of art elements to establish depth, shape and solidity. The work is above all a juxtaposition of abstraction with representative elements, real with non-real, dark with light, positive with negative and ambiguity with clarity. Not only light and dark, looseness and rigidity oppose one another, but also Yusof Ghani's intention is meant to impart a sense of social protest.

4.2 Identifying the Creation Process (Technical Properties)

In this part of the analysis of the selected paintings; the researcher has identified how the works of art has been created. In the process of creating these paintings, the artist has applied the same style throughout with slight differences. So, this part could be referred to the six selected paintings of the *Wajah* series. This step refers to the method, material or technical means that the artist used for the expression in the works of art.

4.2.1 Sketches in Yusof Ghani's Works

Sketching is one of the processes artists go through before producing their final product. It involves a creation of mark-making strokes as a product of pulling, pushing, etching, or dragging a drawing instrument using a wet or dry medium, on a surface. It

also means converting an idea from a thought to a visual form. Even though sketching is a spontaneous and preliminary process in producing art, some artists consider their sketches as finished works (Duane Preble, Sarah Preble, 1999).

Muliyadi Mahmood (2004) suggested that some of the renowned artists such as Leonardo Da Vinci, Auguste Rodin, Paul Cezanne, Vincent van Gogh, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Willem de Kooning and David Hockney have documented and polished their artistic ideas in sketchbooks. Sketching is a vital process when one is looking to develop ideas and hone their ability to document spur-of-the-moment breakthroughs. Basic sketches consist of a few expressive lines that are used as foundation for a larger and more intricate works of art. Sketching helps an artist to increase his consciousness of his surrounding, be it sketching from memory and imagination or from direct observation. This process not only works as a form of relaxation but also acts as an outlet of expression anytime, anywhere.

Sabapathy (1997) suggested that even at a first glance, it's evident that drawing is an essential part of Yusof Ghani's art and is used widely in his works.

For Yusof Ghani, sketching is an initial stage to painting and it is an important part of the creative process. The artist believes that in order to familiarize ourselves with artists' works, it is important to look at his drawings. The artist subjects himself to a thorough course of drawing and sketching when developing each series. Yusof Ghani like many artists uses sketches to document events and to form and develop ideas. His sketchbooks illustrate the evolution of ideas into finalized artworks. It was said that "Sketching is a process of studying about an idea and collecting data before painting, drawing is a way to transform ideas and thoughts to the visual elements" (Yusof Ghani, personal communication, September 23, 2013).

It must be noted that although sketches are the basis of his works, during creation of his final painting, Yusof Ghani does not refer to them. The artist just gets the whole

idea of the composition of elements from the sketches and starts painting after much improvement and refining. For Yusof Ghani, referring to his sketches restrains the exploration and imagination that is fundamental in creating his art. Yusof Ghani uses sketches to jog his memory while analyzing the structure, movements and emotions portrayed by his subjects. The sketchbooks of the *Wajah* series consist of a blend of lines with various movements and positions that reveal the whole idea of the artist before painting but not in complete detail (Figure: 4.52 & 4.53). This is a testament to Yusof Ghani's statement that "sketches are not a preparation of the final artwork but serves to help retain memories and emotions by documenting them".



Figure 4.52: Sketches of *Wajah* Series. Photo by the Researcher



Figure 4.53: Sketches of *Wajah* Series. Photo by the Researcher

4.2.2 Yusof Ghani's Technique in Creating Art

Yusof Ghani's technique in creating art can be referred to as gestural abstraction because his technique emphasizes the formal process of creating art with the energetic use of brushstrokes and experimental paint application.

If the label Abstract Expressionism means anything, it means painterliness: loose, rapid handling, or the look of it masses that blotted and fused instead of shapes that stayed distinct, large and conspicuous rhythms, broken colour, uneven saturations or densities of paint, exhibited brush, knife, or figure marks (Clement Greenberg, 1995, p.123).

Many Abstract Expressionist artists do not plan the composition of their work, and prefer to work spontaneously and immediately with a direct expression of their inner feelings and emotion. However, in the process of creating, Yusof Ghani would start drawing to create the whole composition and distribution of the elements in the space of the painting, which is not in detail. He would usually use water-based medium to draw because it is faster to dry and easier to handle.

One might note that Yusof Ghani's process of making art is an interaction of 'chance' or random occurrences with a sense of 'control'. In general, the artist often uses a variety of techniques that includes dabbing, smearing, dripping, and even flinging paint onto the canvas (Figure: 4.54) and then directing the broad gestures by his sense of control.

First, I just throw the paint onto the surface of the canvas, sometimes I just paint and let it go, and then I sit back and look at my painting, I decide on where I want to cover it up, apply more paint or let it go (Yusof Ghani, personal communication, February 17, 2014)



Figure 4.54: The Random Effects of Dripping Colour on the Surface. *Agony of Acheh IV*, Oil & Canvas Collage on Jute, 2008, *Tapak* Collection. Photo by the Researcher

It must be suggested that when starting to paint instead of traditional methods of painting, the artist would start smearing and pouring thinned paint on the canvas, which is laid on the ground because of its enormity. First, Yusof Ghani would create expressive and spontaneous effects and textures. To achieve this purpose, Yusof Ghani would use water-based media like acrylic or ink and would rub the soft pastel and mix it

with water on the surface (Figure: 4.55 & 4.56). The reason of Yusof Ghani using water-based mediums in the beginning of his painting is because the fluid nature of the medium provides a possibility for the artist to create dripping colors and texture effects.



Figure 4.55: Using Water-based Color to Create Expressive and Spontaneous Effects by the Artist. Photo by the Researcher



Figure 4.56: Creating Different Effects at the Beginning of the Painting by the artist. Photo by the Researcher

After mounting the dried painting on the wall, the artist would control the elements by applying the layers of different media. The massive number of layers in Yusof Ghani's works gives a sense of illusion in depth. However, almost eighty percent of all the paintings have been done in oil.

What Yusof Ghani calls 'dialogue' would occur continually at this step as the artist is always involved in the process of painting. By this 'dialogue', the artist would direct the spontaneity and immediacy of expression by his sense of control.

I talk to my work and it talks back to me, I paint then I sit down and talk to it, I concentrate on the balance, space, colours, that is difficult to explain but it has been happening all the time (Yusof Ghani, personal communication, March 2, 2014)

According to the artist, this dialogue between artist and artwork gives him a sense of excitement and without this dialogue, the process of creating art become static and boring (Figure: 4.57). To explain about this process of art making, it was said that "I will never able to do highly structured paintings, the static painting is boring to me, and for me I want to challenge it, this process give me excitement and this excitement keep me working" (Yusof Ghani, personal communication, March 2, 2014).



Figure 4.57: Yusof Ghani in His Studio (*Tapak*). Photo by the Researcher

It must be noted that Yusof Ghani has always had a close relationship with his works as so that for the artist, the canvas is an arena for spontaneous activities instead an object. The artist mentioned that in the process of his creation, there have always been elements as described by the artist as ‘attach’ and ‘detach’. What the artist means by ‘attach’ is the unconscious expression of the act of pure creation in which the subconscious part of the artist’s inner emotions and energy are released and express themselves. ‘Attach’ would happen through immediate dripping, throwing and splashing the paint onto the canvas while on the floor and also by vigorous brush strokes and painterly gestures resulted from calculated arm movements. After the stage of immediacy and spontaneity of the artist’s action, Yusof Ghani would step back and observing his work. This is the time to ‘detach’ in which Yusof Ghani would determine to keep, wipe, exaggerate or ignore the certain areas.

It can also be suggested that the paintings of *Wajah* series reflect Yusof Ghani’s technically masterful painting process. While the artist starts applying paint on canvas,

that is the time that the artist makes his quick decision to choose the colors and place them in the composition. Since Yusof Ghani is formalistically an abstract expressionist painter and influenced greatly by the works of American Abstract Expressionist painters from the New York school, the qualities such as spontaneity, directness and immediacy can be seen in his works. But, the paintings of *Wajah* looks a bit more structured in this sense as compared with the other series.

The artist would usually use a variety of media and tools to create different formal effects or what Yusof Ghani calls ‘different activities’ in his artworks. Yusof Ghani employs different types of media until the desired effect is achieved. Some of the media used include dry mediums like charcoal, pastel, crayon, oil bar and water-based mediums like water colour, ink, acrylic and oil-based like enamel paint, oil paint as well as a number of tools including traditional paint brushes of different sizes, sticks, cloth and a mop to apply the pigment (Figure: 4.58 & 4.59 & 4.60). It was said that “I use different tools and mediums, different brushes, palette knives, sticks, mops, coconut brooms, my brush handles, cloth, I use anything even my hand” (Yusof Ghani, personal communication, February 17, 2014).



Figure 4.58: Some of the Artist's Mediums and Tools in the Artist's Studio. Photo by the Researcher



Figure 4.59: Some of the Artist's Mediums and Tools in the Artist's Studio. Photo by the Researcher



Figure 4.60: Some of the Artist's Mediums and Tools in the Artist's Studio. Photo by the Researcher

However, the oil-based medium has been considered as the main medium in all the works of this series though the artist has employed different media in making his works. The reason might be that almost eighty percent of each work has been done in oil.

Multi layering technique is one of the most important features of the artist's works. According to Yusof Ghani "A painting which is done in more layers looks more mature, there are a lot of layers in my paintings, the more layers the better" (Yusof Ghani, personal communication, September 10, 2013).

Although the accumulation of layers of the colours contributes to the sense of time, the several layers blended together contain visible hints of the previous layers.

These paintings can be considered as palpable multiple layers of paint upon the canvas's surface. The artist works on the canvas, building up the paint layers in distinct stages and only after the previous layer had dried, the new layer of paint will be applied. Through layering of paint and different media, the artist reveals and conceals some parts of the faces, allowing the eye to creep into the imaginary space from the centre of the canvas and moving in. Yusof Ghani starts out with thinner layers of paint and makes his way towards thicker layers until the desired effect was achieved (Figure: 4.61 & 4.62). It was said that "The first layer is water-based just to create the overall composition, after that I start applying layers of different media in between but always I use the oil for the last layer because the oil makes the painting mature" (Yusof Ghani, personal communication, February 2, 2013).



Figure 4.61: Example of Multi-layer of Paint Upon the Canvas. *Hydra-infinity*, Oil on Canvas, 2008, *Tapak* Collection. Photo by the Researcher



Figure 4.62: Example of Multi-layer of Paint Upon the Canvas. *Avenger*, Oil on Canvas, 2009, *Tapak* Collection. Photo by the Researcher

Yusof Ghani works in a painterly method. It can be strongly suggested that thickly applied quantity of paint is a common characteristic of Yusof Ghani's paintings which offers a range of expressive possibilities to the artist. This extreme textural impasto rises above the surface and catches the beholder's attention. This massive application of paint or what Yusof Ghani called 'manipulation of the surface' results in a rough layering of paint on the canvas. *Messenger* which is Yusof Ghani's most favorite painting of *Wajah* is a good example of this notable feature of the artist's works (Figure: 4.63 & 4.64). It was said that "I was not too worried about the face here, but layering and the process of making the surface and to get as much activity as possible was more important" (Yusof Ghani, personal communication, April 8, 2014).



Figure 4.63: Example of Extreme Textural Impasto above the Surface. *Messenger*, Oil on Canvas, 2008, *Tapak* Collection. Photo by the Researcher

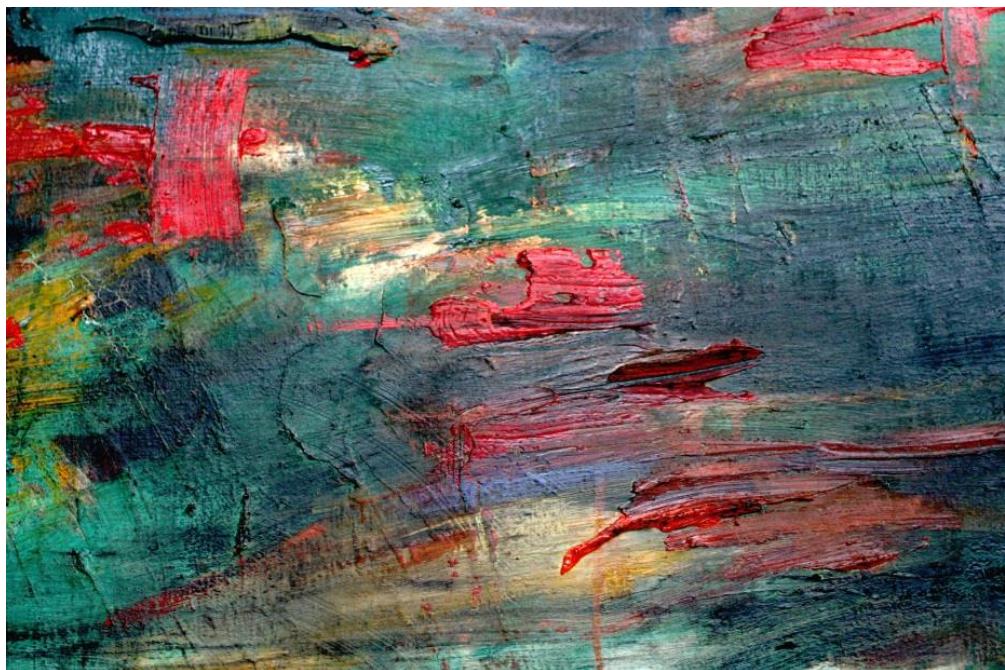


Figure 4.64: Example of Extreme Textural Impasto above the Surface. *Messenger*, Oil on Canvas, 2008, *Tapak* Collection. Photo by the Researcher

To produce the actual texture of the paintings, different materials have been employed. This is similar to sculpting on the surface using modelling paste or similar materials prior to the painting process. For example in *Agony of Acheh IV*, the sculpted faces upon the canvas are associated with the heavy buildup of paint and the

combination of different materials such as papier mache and torn paper to create an illusion (Figure: 4.65 & 4.66). The composite material of papier mache consists of paper pieces bound with an adhesive which is widely used in sculpture practice. After making these faces by papier mache, the artist then glued them to the canvas through collage procedures and finally painting them. The use of tactile texture can give a sense of emphasis, rhythm and contrast as well as moving the image beyond the realm of two-dimensionality.



Figure 4.65: Examples of Sculptured Faces Made of Papier mache. *Agony of Acheh IV*, Oil & Canvas Collage on Jute, 2008, *Tapak* Collection. Photo by the Researcher



Figure 4.66: Examples of Sculptured Faces Made of Papier mache. *Agony of Acheh IV*, Oil & Canvas Collage on Jute, 2008, *Tapak* Collection. Photo by the Researcher

Yusof Ghani usually uses various brush techniques which are completely evident in his works. In some parts, the artist uses dry-brush technique in which he puts a minimal amount of wet paint, which is not very juicy or fluid on a dry brush for application. It seems that the artist holds the brush parallel to the surface to create rough textures by grazing the brush against the surface (Figure: 4.67 & 4.68).



Figure 4.67: Examples of Dry Brushing Techniques. *Entourage IV*, Oil on Canvas, 2007, *Tapak* Collection. Photo by the Researcher

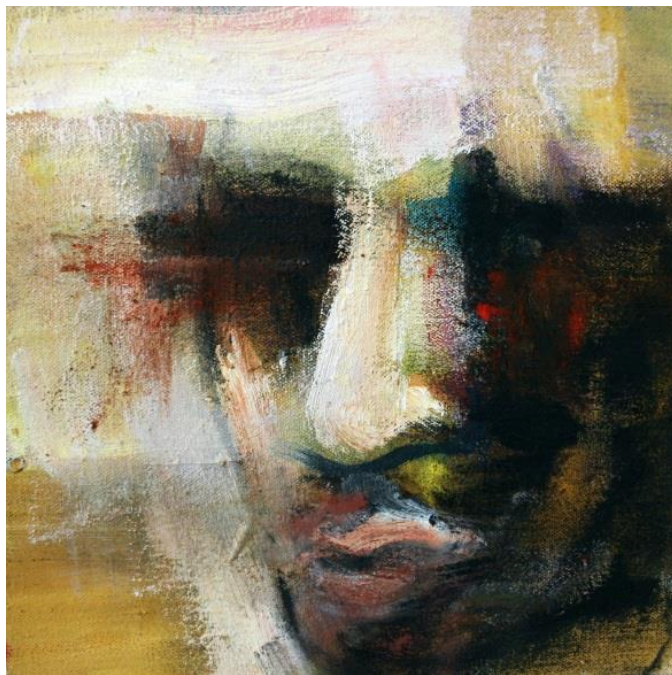


Figure 4.68: Examples of Dry Brushing Techniques. *Entourage IV*, Oil on Canvas, 2007, *Tapak* Collection. Photo by the Researcher

Yusof Ghani has mostly used either a flat brush to create broad brushstrokes or thin brushstrokes by turning the brush and leading with the narrow edge. In some parts,

the artist has got a tapering mark by varying the pressure as the artist applied the brush to the canvas or flicking the brush across. Besides that, the broken and scratchy effects in lightness and darkness of the faces have been produced by applying oil-bar.

Another significant characteristic of Yusof Ghani's brushwork is the crisscross brushstroke method in which the artist can quickly cover a big shape or area of the painting. However, for Yusof Ghani, the energetic brush stroke is 'the presence of artist in the work' in the process of art creation in which makes the art work more formally dynamic (Figure: 4.69).

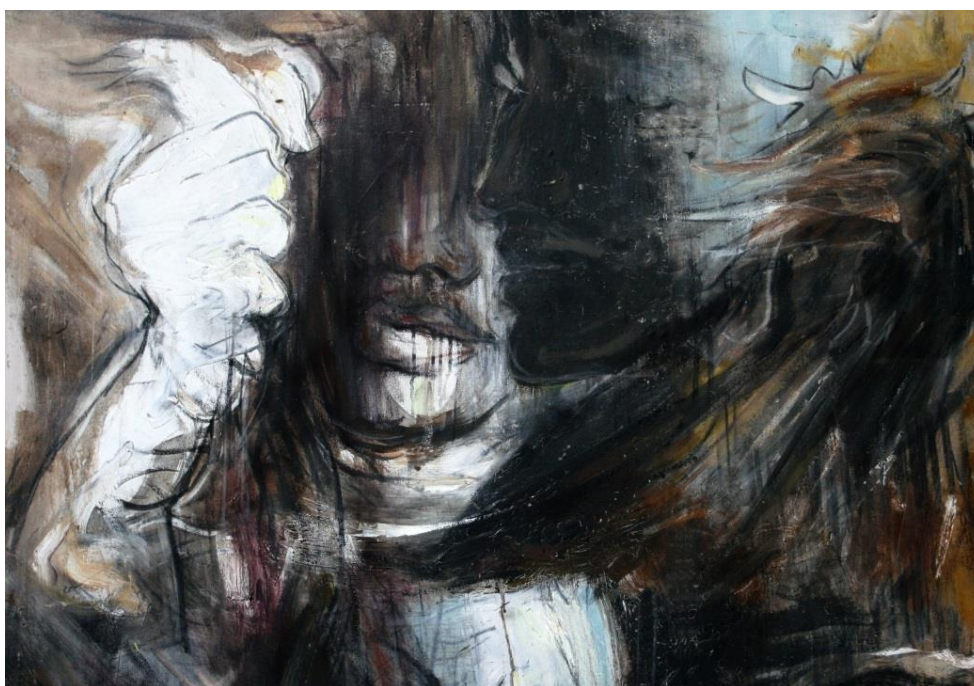


Figure 4.69: Example of Using Expressive Brushstrokes and Oil-bar to Create Different Effects. *Abettor*, Oil on Linen, 2006, *Tapak* Collection. Photo by the Researcher

It can be strongly suggested that for Yusof Ghani, the process of creating art is challenging. The completed painting in his opinion is beyond his control. To make decision when a painting is completed and when to stop working is based on the artist's satisfaction whether people like it or not. According to Yusof Ghani "Sometimes people say the painting is done, stop working on it, but I say no, I will let it go only after I

solved all the problems of space, composition, texture and colour, then only I tell myself ok it is finished.” (personal communication, March 2, 2014)

4.3 Main Concept of *Wajah* Series Paintings

Yusof Ghani emphasizes that the *Wajah* series revolves around issues of humanity and the human condition as in his previous series. The artist’s main focus however, is currently on the human function of its milieu and the positive and negative aspects of life as well as on social criticism. The works are based on specific social commentaries, from a global perspective as well as from the artist’s personal experience in localized social settings. The *Wajah* series of paintings displays an imaginative approach, which continually appraises what is worthy within humanity. The series is a result of an intense study and keen observations of human life as well as the societal pressures and challenges. The images of *Wajah* are a transformed visual diary of significant moments personally experienced by the artist.

Most of the artist’s works is about human in relationship with his environment as well as human behaviour framed within social, cultural and political contexts. Yusof Ghani’s concern about humanity is obviously evident in most of his series.

Most of my work is about humanity and human behaviour and I get the ideas of my paintings from my travels, traveling is a very important part of my thinking process, when I travel I see a lot of things in this world and I see a lot of wrong things like poverty, imbalance and disparity (Yusof Ghani, personal communication, September 10, 2013).

Every nation has its own lifestyle. Yusof Ghani believes that although people’s outlooks differ in social, cultural, ideological, and ethical aspects, they still have some common needs and desires.

One of the important ideas of Yusof Ghani’s work is to understand the dimensions of human life through the literal images and to inspire the viewers to think about life in a better way. Yusof Ghani also claims that *Wajah* is about life and each person can be considered as a ‘package’ of his life. Everyone is as unique ‘package’ that includes his

past, present and future. In fact, 'package' symbolises the idea of '*Qada and Qadar*' in Islamic beliefs. The faces in *Wajah* indicate that everything in a man's life and universe happens by the will and decree of God.

Each person has his own life, his own package, in Islam we call it '*Qada and Qadar*', instead of '*Qada and Qadar*' I call it '*package*', so they are the faces of life then I call it *Wajah*, I started looking at people, the faces, the features, the expressions, because I can see the peoples' characters in their face, so this time the faces become instance to me (Yusof Ghani, personal communication, September 10, 2013).

Based on the Islamic teachings, belief in '*Qada and Qadar*' means to believe that Allah knowingly created the whole universe and everything in it based on a program. Allah's creation of things and events is based on His pre-eternal knowledge and ordaining. Allah ordains and determines everything in the world and His knowledge covers everything. Allah knows what happened and what will happen whether good or bad from pre-eternity to past eternity, their time, place and characteristics.

It could be suggested that the faces of *Wajah* are different packages of life. Each of them has a different story. In this series, Yusof Ghani has employed the faces as a subject matter. It was said that "I can see different characters and life stories in the faces, and that inspired me to create the *Wajah* series" (Yusof Ghani, personal communication, September 10, 2013).

Although the initial idea of the *Wajah* series is about humanity in general, each piece of this series contains a different narrative. Each painting is a depiction of the artist's experience towards peoples' daily lives and how they deal with different situations, either bad or good.

It must be noted that faces of *Wajah* transcend the human anatomy but they have evolved collectively to represent the feeling of that time and a manifestation of an era of human expression. The reason that these faces became very dominant in this series is that they represent samples of human gladness, sorrow, anxieties and fears in the world.

Face as a reflection of one's inner being can show people's life, character, expressions and inner soul. Perhaps the face is the best window to observe the human soul and the essence of what is within. Faces of *Wajah* are spoken thought creating dynamic exchanges between form and context.

In the *Wajah* series of paintings, the faces are suggestive in which they have not been given character, personality or identity because the faces are used as a symbolic representation of humankind in a general rather than a specific way and not bound to political and ethnic groupings. They also do not possess eyes and look eerie and seems to be more expressive and provoking.

The faces of the *Wajah* series act as a model decorated with important signs regarding the embodiment of experience. These faces have the power to provoke the viewer's consideration to a man's life and those who are provoked by the provocative images on Yusof Ghani's canvases can move forward in appreciating the problem of content in Yusof Ghani's paintings.

4.4 Historical Relevance (Yusof Ghani's Works in Relation to Abstract Expressionism Style)

Yusof Ghani is considered the cream of the crop of Abstract Expressionist painters in Malaysian with his personal, expressive and socially critical works. He has thrived in establishing his signature style that is highly recognizable. Since Yusof Ghani's works are associated with Abstract Expressionism movement, in this subchapter the researcher has examined the artist's works within their historical content and in relation to period and style either in local or international context.

It can be noted that Expressionism, a European-born movement flourished in the 1920s and involved many cultural and art fields such as literature, theatre, music, painting and architecture. This significant 20th century art movement which took off in France and Germany was a revolt against the Impressionist's faithfulness to the

rendering of nature and it appeared thus turning the artist merely into a recorder of the outside world. The Expressionists emphasize the representation of subjective emotions and express the inner world of the artists. The paintings of Expressionist movement display elements such as impulsive use of color and line, extreme angles, garish and violent colors and distorted views.

Guy Hubbard (2002) stated that during the World War II era, the previous art techniques were seen as unsuitable and the artists believed that their emotions should be the driving force behind the works and also did not want to be restricted by subject matter and themes. Thus, Abstract Expressionism was discovered which is a combination of different artistic thinking-or 'isms' consist of abstract ideas of Cubism created 50 years earlier and Expressionism that emphasize expressing emotions. This fusion of contrasting ideas produced a new art movement. Since Abstract Expressionism focuses on the actions involved in creating the artwork than the final product, accidents and chance events were welcome.

The relationship between Malaysian modern art and Western art is evident especially in the 1960s. As mentioned by Muliyadi Mahamood (2007) in the context of modern Malaysian art in the 1960s, the characteristics of Expressionism and Abstract Expressionism can be clearly seen in the works of Syed Ahmad Jamal, Tay Hooi Keat, Ismail Zain, Yeoh Jin Leng, Ibrahim Hussein, Cheong Laitong and Abdul Latiff Mohidin. These artists borrowed the language and approach of the movement, bringing their inner world onto the painterly realm and materializing emotions into a material format.

While the rejection of figurative representation and emotional intensity are evident in this first generation of Malaysian Abstract Expressionists, the second generation then-after upheld the same painterly approach and formal appearance. In the subsequent decades of 1970s and 1980s younger artists emerged in the scene included

Yusof Ghani, Sharifah Fatimah Zubir, Awang Damit, Tajuddin Ismail and Suzlee Ibrahim. One might note that the emergence of stylistic approaches influenced by international movements were a result of artists having their training overseas and returning back to Malaysia to practice and this is the case with Yusof Ghani as well.

In Malaysia the bulk of the ideas on abstraction were applied on formal investigations. According to Safrizal Shahir (2012) in Malaysia the ideological considerations and philosophical explorations that serve as underlying makeup for Western Abstraction were not applied thoroughly but only a superficial focus were put on style, application and technique of works.

It can be suggested that Yusof Ghani's works has been repeatedly classified by a number of academics as expressionistic instead of abstract expressionistic as they do not entirely display characteristics of American Abstract Expressionism as the artist includes evident figuration as well as lacking the underlying philosophical motivation.

However, through the analysis of Yusof Ghani's works earlier in this chapter it must be noted that his works still revolves around the subject matters and themes like social commentaries and issues of humanity as it cannot be denied in the *Wajah* series. Although Yusof Ghani's works were technically exposed to formalistic considerations of Abstract Expressionism in USA, the important aspect of his works is that it emphasizes both, exploring formalistic issues and incorporating subject matters in his works.

In terms of international context, it must be suggested that Yusof Ghani's works are strongly related to De Kooning who became a symbol of Abstract Expressionism since the 1940's in New York, USA (see chapter two). Willem De Kooning is Yusof Ghani's early influence especially when he was studying in USA. However, the paintings of *Wajah* as well as the previous series by Yusof Ghani have evolved through his personal explorations that started from the initial influence.

William De Kooning, a major figure in the Abstract Expressionist movement relies on figuration as content for his philosophical explorations thus putting an importance for the figure as part of the formal language of Abstract Expressionism. De Kooning's career has been a mixture of figurative painting and Abstract Expressionism. The American artist's expressive portraits of women, displayed in a series painted between 1951 and 1953 present heavily-worked pictures that are figurative though expressive in the application of paint. Willem De Kooning's painting's display energetic and loosely painted portrait with slashes of colors though the legibility of the forms varies from painting to painting with some displaying very obscured figures.

It seems that Yusof Ghani followed the same approach by using the spontaneity, urgency and free-flowing brushworks. One could clearly see similar treatments by De Kooning to the figure by Yusof Ghani, in which a centralized figure is broken-down through expressive brush marks such as in *Woman I* (1950-52) (Figure: 4.70). The painting painted with a subdued hue of pastel colors display a female form that has been repeatedly interrogated with the brush and eventually has lost its sense of femininity. The grotesque and disproportionate figure with eyes wide-open stares nonchalantly at the viewer. The painting took Willem De Kooning a considerable amount of time to complete in which the artist continued to work on it by applying layers of paint and energetic strokes, building its surface and image over time.

One of the works by Yusof Ghani examined earlier in this chapter is *Messenger* (Figure: 4.71) which displays elements similarly found in Willem De Kooning's *Woman I*. Willem De Kooning's work in which a figure centralized in the composition becomes an expressionistic study display a general figure studied intensely. *Messenger's* centralized figure and *Woman I's* centrally placed female form both face the viewer frontally with confidence while being surrounded by slashes of energetic brushworks. Both of the figures are indistinct, generalized and not intended to portray a

specific person though they command the pictorial space that they exist in. Also, both paintings are heavily worked through many layers in which the central image or focal point are refocused and obscured and the artists continually worked on them. The weight of the works is not only conceptual in nature but also physical. With similarities, there are as well evident differences between Yusof Ghani's and De Kooning's figures. De Kooning's appear apparently flat, painterly and it is freely rendered, on the other hand the Malaysian artist's figures or more specifically face appears modelled and carved out of paint with a discernible dimension. Yusof Ghani is more traditional in approach and *Messenger* displays awareness of the chiaroscuro technique when painting his figure.

Also, De Kooning's painting emerged from a time in New York in which Abstract Expressionism was recognized as the pre-imminent style and that apart from painting, the artists were involved in politically motivated activities and they display a progressive modernist attitude towards culture and life. On the other hand, Yusof Ghani's practice is framed within the Malaysian context and art history and his Abstract Expressionist style is not the zeitgeist of his time in locally. With the similarities and differences, one could see the formal relationships and stylistic approaches between the two paintings. However, framing the figure within the energetic Abstract Expressionist treatment and including the figure within the formal language as an ingredient in the underlying philosophical structure of the practice seem crucial and logical. The figure could be seen as a vessel for meaning, a point of anchor for the viewer to quickly understand and digest a work in which if its fully abstract, the work might only ignite response formally to a niched audience. Though, Yusof Ghani has in a sense applied a stylistic rendering borrowed from an exotic time period and his works do not possess the utopian Modernist attitude towards the progression of humanity and culture which were in the tone of the original Abstract Expressionists.



Figure 4.70: Woman I, Willem de Kooning, Oil on Canvas, 1950-1952, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (Extracted from <<http://artblart.com/tag/mark-rothko-no-5no-22/>>)

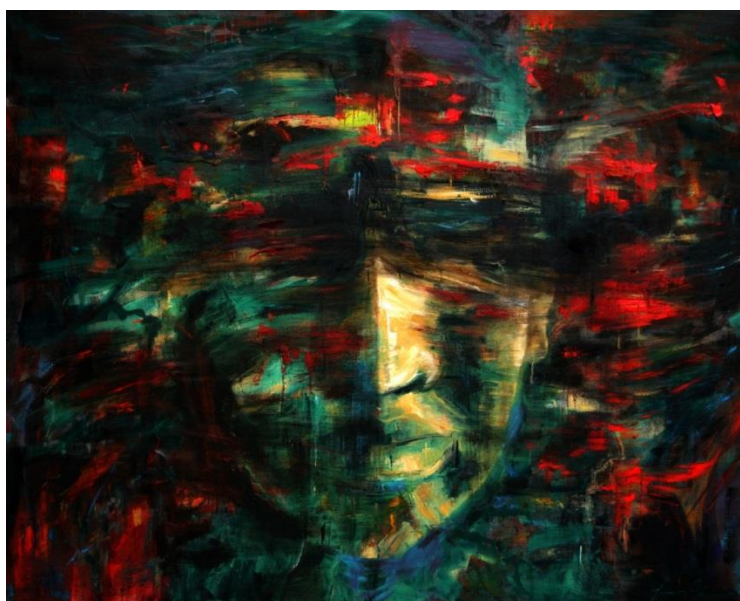


Figure 4.71: *Messenger*, Oil on Canvas, 200 cm x 250 cm, 2008, *Tapak* Collection. Photo by the Researcher

In terms of local context, observing the local development of Expressionism and Abstract Expressionism, the varying styles and interests display a diverse output and illustrate many permutations of the interpretations of the styles in the local context. Formal differences are evident, and examining other artists' works that are practicing around the same period as Yusof Ghani, one could see the differences as well as similarities more clearly. It could be suggested the reason for lumping the varying Malaysian artists such as Tajuddin Ismail, Sharifah Fatimah Zubir Awang Damit and Yusof Ghani under one banner of Abstract Expressionist was purely an academic exercise evolved from the contexts of art schools. Though their works display diverse styles and interests, they were grouped together mainly due to the technical aspects and gestural characteristics.

Tajuddin Ismail is one of the Malaysian artists that his paintings have repeatedly been labeled as Abstract Expressionist in style. He can be considered as the second generation of Malaysian Abstract Expressionists same as Yusof Ghani. Tajuddin Ismail, born in 1949 in *Negeri Sembilan*, he was initially trained at ITM School of Fine art before furthering his studies in Graphic Design at Art Center College of Design in Los Angeles, USA. Tajuddin Ismail's whose practice is about the exploration of the formal possibilities of the style has stated that the formal problem in painting is resulted from design fundamentals and principles (Figure: 4.72). He works in a formal approach relies on preparation and sketches before confronting the canvas and this greatly differs from Yusof Ghani's approach in which the former would start a painting almost intuitively with very little planning. The designed appearance of Tajuddin Ismail's works is possibility informed by his training as a graphic designer as well as by his professional work as an interior designer that he practiced while painting. Also formally, Tajuddin Ismail's paintings which are evidently less textured than Yusof Ghani's and use more obscured figuration are composed of soft lines and flat shapes. With giving his works a

polished look and heightening the designed-ness, Tajuddin's works display a restrained gestural abstraction with smooth surfaces.

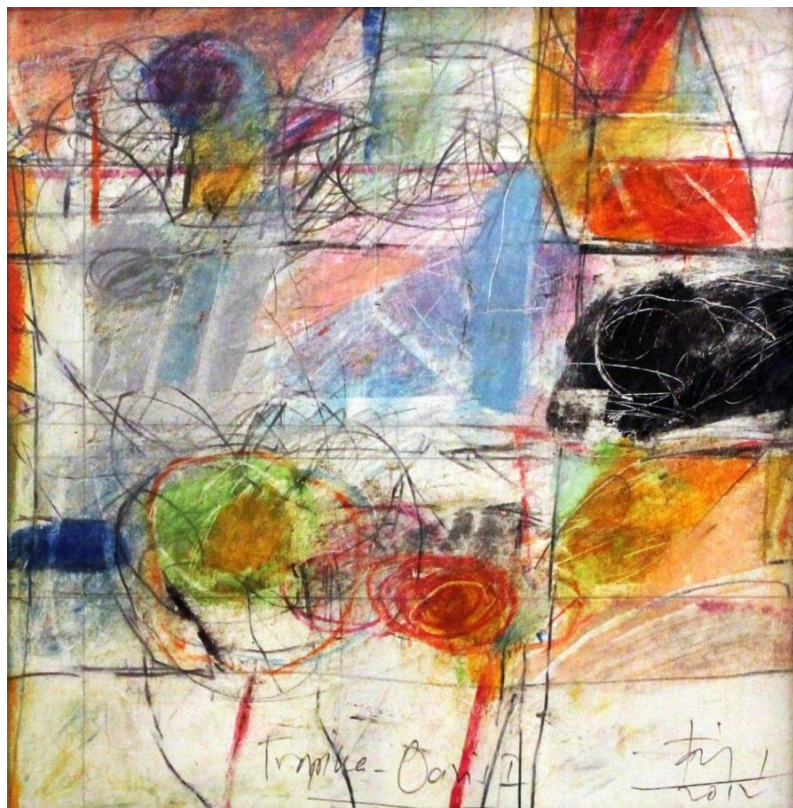


Figure 4.72: *Tropika Oasis I*, Tajuddin Ismail, Mixed Media on Paper 25cm x 24cm, 2012 (Extracted from <<http://segaris-artcenter.blogspot.com/2013/01/upcoming-show.html>>)

Sharifah Fatimah Syed Zubir is one of the few female painters that had adapted the Abstract Expressionist style within her work. Sharifah Fatimah is from the second generation of Malaysian Abstract Expressionists same as Yusof Ghani. Trained at Mara Institute of Technology ITM (1967), Reading University, UK (1973-1976) and at Dratt Institute in New York, USA (1978), her paintings borrow local motifs from varying cultural sources done in vivid colors and dynamic flat shapes. Similarly found in works by other Malaysian Abstract Expressionists painters of her generation, as in the works by Tajuddin Ismail, there is a lyrical and almost musical quality of abstraction in her works in which seems to be painted in a Kandinsky-esque manner. Sharifah Fatimah's *Rasa Mustika Jingga Sakti 2* (Figure: 4.73), which was painted around the same time as

the *Wajah* series displays this visual-to-sound quality in which the forms and shapes in the central composition seems to dance to an imaginary tune and floating in a semi-abstract landscape. Comparing these works with the works of the *Wajah* series by Yusof Ghani (earlier in this chapter), one could notice the different of the lack of musical or lyrical quality of Yusof Ghani's works in which Yusof Ghani's paintings seem to be more serious or graver in tone than Sharifah Fatimah Zubir's.



Figure 4.73: *Rasa Mustika Jingga Sakti 2*, Sharifah Fatimah Syed Zubir, Acrylic on Canvas, 61 cm x 76 cm, 2009 (Extracted from http://www.galerichandan.com/chandan_2008/page62/page64/page64.html)

Another peer of Yusof Ghani that displays interesting similarities and differences is Awang Damit. Awang Damit was born in 1965, *Kuala Penyu, Sabah*. A friend and fellow artist of Yusof Ghani's, they studied together under the same tutor, Tom Nakashima at Catholic University Washington, USA in 1983. Awang Damit works are

labelled as Abstract Expressionist with a tendency to use localized forms inspired by his childhood experiences. Mulyadi Mahamood (2002) in his essay entitled '*Capturing Nostalgia in Alun-alun ke Marista*' suggested that Awang Damit expresses the themes and topics of his *Alun-alun ke Marista* series through a structured approach, in which he is not as an uncritical reaction to his environment.

Similarly found in Yusof Ghani's textured surfaces of the *Wajah* series, Awang Damit paintings use texture as an important part of the visual language in an impasto method.

Awang Damit's *Siri Iraga* (Figure: 4.74) which was produced around the same time as the *Wajah* series, displays an earthly palette, harmonious and controlled composition and rigorous formal structure. This piece represents a much intended manner in painting which can be seen in building the composition and selection of hues and tones. The erratic and spontaneous brushworks, typically found in Yusof Ghani's *Wajah* paintings (earlier in this chapter) are avoided; instead Awang Damit's relies on internal structuring and pre-planning in order to develop a painting. With regards to the element of time, Awang Damit's painting approach is slower and more hesitant than Yusof Ghani's. Yusof Ghani's, which are evidently, free flowing and spontaneous requires a spur-of-the-moment sense of energy and quick unreserved gestures. Thus two evident differences between the two prominent Abstract Expressionists that are colleagues and contemporaries are the differences in structure of their methods and control of elements in their paintings. Awang Damit displays more control of his elements and a more structured as it was said that "for Awang Damit early sketches and the preparation of a structured and textured canvas surface play an important role in the creation of the works" (Mulyadi Mahamood, 2002, p.28).

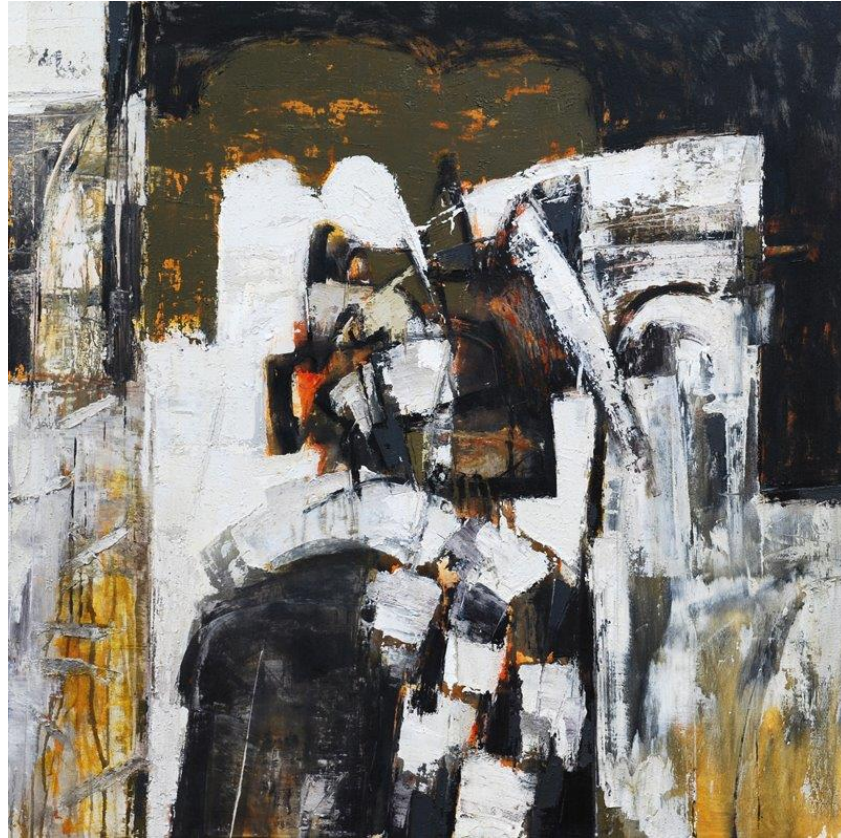


Figure 4.74: *Siri Iraga*, Awang Damit, 2008, mixed media on canvas (Extracted from <
<http://lakaranlukisancatan.blogspot.com/2011/07/awang-damit-ahmad-sentuhan-dan-simbol.html>>)

Consequently, the usage of texture for both of the artists are evidently different, in which for Awang Damit created through the usage of varying store-bought texture paste and serve as formal structural elements in strengthening the composition of work while Yusof Ghani's is the byproduct of the accumulated paint on the surface of the painting which is created in the later process of working. Awang Damit's texture serves as a sketching method when preparing the canvas prior to painting and Yusof Ghani's is a superficial element, emerged in the later part of painting. So, both works by artists labelled as Abstract Expressionists in the context of Malaysian Art and both of Yusof Ghani's and Awang Damit's work are examples of the localization of an international style through the usage of indigenous motifs and subject matter.

It could be concluded that the period of 1960s illustrates the peak of the relationship between local artist and international movements. In the following of the

1970's and 1980's the characteristics of Expressionism and Abstract Expressionism is evident in the works of Malaysian artists which display an intense artistic creativity and appropriation of styles. Their works show that culture indeed reflects and borrow from varying sources and appropriations of ideologies and formal properties mixed. Malaysian artists have managed to adopt the stylistic elements of the style and personalized them into varying approaches though these local interpretations are devoid of the philosophical belief and vision of the original American movement. Moreover, as the local adaptation of Abstract Expressionism being decorated by sensuous elements and features such as optical sound, lyrical abstraction, indigenous cultural motifs and societal commentaries, have further complicated the connection between the Malaysian interpretations with the original movement and have caused the varying formal links and conceptual strands to be tenuous at best.

Though Yusof Ghani's works are technically exposed to Abstract Expressionism style in America in terms of line treatment and brushstrokes, they retain the theme of human figures to reflect issues around human attitude and social commentaries. The works of Yusof Ghani in relation to his peers do help to give a good macro view of the mutated movement, and surprisingly their works exert a lot influence as seen in works by the younger generation of painters displaying in local galleries in Kuala Lumpur.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.0 Introduction

In this study the researcher focused on the paintings of the *Wajah* series (2006-2010) which has been done by Yusof Ghani. The main purpose of this study was to analyze the paintings of the *Wajah* series and particularly six selected samples of this series in terms of form and content. The research samples were purposefully selected based on their different characteristics. Based on research objectives, analyzing the selected samples was guided by Art Appreciation theory by Harry Broudy (see chapter one). After communication through one-on-one interviews with the artist and reviewing the related materials, the researcher summarized the findings and concluded this study towards research objectives and initial research questions.

5.1 Research Findings

Yusof Ghani is one of the Malaysian Abstract Expressionists whose works can be described as spontaneous, energetic and alive. Yusof Ghani's masterpieces were never meant as his final verdict on various topics but he sees his works as a means of adventure and exploration, which leaves a lasting impression on its audience.

It must be noted that as one of the modern artists, Yusof Ghani is generally associated with Abstract Expressionism and the paintings of the *Wajah* series illustrate the technical treatments of this movement such as the highly textured surfaces and the evidence of the treatment of the materials such as spontaneity, immediacy and drips that hint at action painting, the style developed by American Abstract Expressionists like the Willem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock. The expressive, bold and rapid brushstrokes as well as randomly placed paint by dripping and dribbling onto the canvas highlight the most significant characteristics of gestural abstraction and its emphasis on the creative process and sense of physicality. Though Yusof Ghani's works are technically

influenced by Abstract Expressionism style in America in terms of line treatment and brushstrokes, his gestural style alternates between abstract work and figurative images and his works are not purely Abstract Expressionist as seen in the context of Western art. Unlike the Western Abstract Expressionist works that solely focused on unconventional non-figurative images and formalistic aspects, Yusof Ghani's works have retained the subject matter of human figures to express the ideas and issues relating to humanity and social commentaries. This thematic aspect of his works sets him apart from the Western Abstract Expressionists that steer clear of social critique in their works.

The thematic similarity evident in all the examined works is the socially aware themes that act as a thread stitching the disparate pieces together. The themes of the *Wajah* series are based on issues of humanity and socio-politics similar to his other series though the *Wajah* series is more symbolic and addressing. The eyeless faces in *Wajah* paintings do not possess any specific identity but instead is an effort to address the humanity and social issues, which is beyond the visual aspects of the works. Yusof Ghani has worked on a platform to explore and voice out his concerns on human behavior and issues pertaining to humanity and the environment. The artist has focused on social criticism as well as the negative and positive aspects of ordinary life. Though the works focus on themes of humanity, concentrated focus of the themes are either on the macro or micro levels. Some of the paintings such as *Entourage IV*, *Avenger* and *Messenger* focused on a more individualistic point of view or personal experience while works such as *Abettor*, *Agony of Acheh IV* and *Hydra-infinity* are based on social commentary from a global perspective and examine larger social groups. Thus the *Wajah* series of painting focuses on aspects of humanity and society on both macro and micro levels, looking at the person as an individual and the groups in which he or she exist in.

It could be suggested that these paintings' themes though slightly varied are all about the varying issues concerning the plight and struggles of mankind in contemporary times. Incidents and topics such as the *Acheh* tsunami in Indonesia (*Agony of Acheh IV*), the hardship faced by the East coast fishermen in peninsular Malaysia (*Hydra-infinity*), one's relationship with nature (*Abettor*), one's social stature and standing within specific societies and in relation to others in a social context (*Entourage IV*), a person's charisma as a source for power and influence (*Messenger*) and standing for one's right and integrity amidst group pressure and preconditioned systems (*Avenger*). These social themes and concerns expand the artist's works beyond just formal investigations and stylistic experimentations, intensifying the possibility of using the formal language of Abstract Expressionism to articulate on humanity's plights.

Wajah is about life and each person's life is a 'package' of his past, present and future which tells different stories to the audiences. The faces in *Wajah* can be considered the faces of life, faces of our time and experiences and each of the faces has a different story. In these paintings, the face as the main subject matter is very prominent. The reason might be that the face is the best window to observe the inner human soul and is able to reflect one's emotions.

It can also be suggested that in this series the face as a 'symbolic representation' of humankind is rather general than specific. The face is not depicting anyone specific and appears nationless. Yusof Ghani has painted multiple faces to represent groupings of people, a community, or possibly even humanity itself. The viewer therefore is left with an assortment of definitions of the *Wajah* (faces). As a matter of fact, Yusof Ghani deemed his profession a suitable outlet for his moral and intellectual beliefs and *Wajah* portrays Yusof Ghani's creative evolution in which he continuously assesses the worthiness found in man and humanity.

Meanwhile, the faces of these paintings look eerie and haunting. The shape of these faces has been not painted precisely. There are no ocular representations on the faces but a variety of facial expressions and some of the distortions may be found on the canvas. It seems that the artist has meant to paint the faces in an expressive style rather than realistically. The physiognomy of the paintings tells tales of the human mind, its expressions, suffering and joy. However, they were of strangers with no way of being identified thus rendering any effort of derivation of character and personality from these faces fruitless. These faces do not possess eyes which is one of the most notable characteristics of these paintings. The only recognizable features were the nose and mouth; they were indecipherable as they were scribbled out of these non-identifiable faces though are not a hindrance to the appreciation of the art as we acknowledge them as a whole and not as something unfinished.

In terms of technique, one of the most important characteristics of the process of making art in Yusof Ghani's works is the artist's close correlation with his works. The procedural element of 'chance and control' is one of the similarity evident and common features in all the works selected. The element of chance which in his practice is defined as the early stage of painting in which the artist would directly and spontaneously apply water-based medium (acrylic paint) on the canvas usually directed by subconscious efforts. The quick actions help shaped the compositions in the preliminary stage and would become the visual director for the works to progress. Control appears later in the process, in which Yusof Ghani would apply oil paint in calculated moves, shaping the final artworks.

With this in mind, it could be noted that for Yusof Ghani, the canvas is not a space to redesign and analyze an object but the process of creating art is physically and conceptually challenging and the decision to know when to stop working on a painting is sometimes beyond his control.

Another similarity that the selected paintings share is ‘multi-layered’ quality and ‘texture’. All the paintings in the *Wajah* series display tactile surfaces and surface built-up. The highly textured surfaces are created through the process of the accumulation of variety of the mediums such as oil paint or sculptural media. This thick application of paint (impasto) with either a brush or palette knife has created a palpable layering of paint upon the surfaces as witnessed in *Messenger*. Moreover, the use of collage procedures, combining different eclectic materials like papier mache and modelling paste have clearly made a rough texture that resulted in evidently protruding faces from the surface as seen in *Agony of Acheh IV* (See chapter 4). However, the oil-based paint has been considered as the main medium in all these works as according to the artist, almost eighty percent of the work has been created in oil. The quality of texture as a crucial expressive feature in all of the selected paintings provides some possibilities to communicate something beyond a flat surface. The textures add another dimension to the visual language of the work, challenging the works definition as only paintings and extend the pictorial space into real space. It seems that the meaning of these works appears to reside beneath massive layers of paint, and within the virtuosity of brushwork. The viewer would feel that these tactile layers must be penetrated to reach the profound meaning of these works almost in a manner of peeling an onion.

The ‘artist’s presence’ in the works which is consistent in all the paintings of the *Wajah* series is another similarity evident. Yusof Ghani’s general style and his highly personal brushstrokes display his personalized style of paint manipulation that serves almost like a signature in his paintings. His legible style signifies the ‘presence of the artist’ in all the works and is an important unifying factor throughout the series. Never hiding the artist’s ‘touch’, his hands-on painting method and the gestural nature of his images become an important unifying agent to all the works in this series. Yusof Ghani has used various brush techniques and among the selected paintings of *Wajah*, the

painting *Abettor* evidently displays the most free-flowing and expressive brush works influenced by the previous series of the artist.

After formal analyzing the selected paintings, the researcher summarized that the most eminent characteristics of the art elements and principles of the samples as follow (Table: 5.1). It may be suggested that the element of color in these selected paintings has become secondary compared to other series of Yusof Ghani's. The artist's palette appeared to be more controlled and limited to a few earthly and monochrome hues but the colors are not as vibrant and vivacious as in his previous series. Colors set the right ambience for a particular mood of faces. Moreover, there is a limited tonal scale of darks and lights, which has created a strong contrast in all of the selected paintings. This abrupt gradation of lights and darks gives a sense of illusion to space of the works in which the viewer encounters an ambiguous space that embodies the melted faces. Another element in *Wajah* series is the element of line which is less free, loose, and somewhat out of control compare to the previous series of Yusof Ghani. Somehow, the expressive lines of the faces transform and translate themselves into multiple faces and bear the expression of a community or the general disposition of humanity as a whole.

Table 5.1: Summary of Formal Analysis of Six Selected Paintings of *Wajah* Series

Art Elements and Principles	Samples					
	<i>Abettor</i>	<i>Entourage IV</i>	<i>Agony of Acheh IV</i>	<i>Hydra-infinity</i>	<i>Messenger</i>	<i>Avenger</i>
Color	limited and earthly colors	limited and symbolically expressive	limited, expressive, dark and grey	monochromatic symbolic cool hues of blue and green	limited and symbolically expressive	limited and simplified
Value	strong contrast of light and dark	strong contrast of light and dark	abrupt gradation of lights and darks creating strong contrast	strong contrast of lights and darks	minimum range of tones from very light to very dark creating strong contrast	limited tonal scale created strong contrast
Line	descriptive outlines of shapes spontaneous and agitated brush strokes	non-descriptive grids of horizontal and vertical lines between small-sized canvases suggest tranquillity or stability	non-descriptive broken brush strokes spontaneous and suggestive lines created by poured or drip technique	non-descriptive spontaneous lines created by brush strokes	non-descriptive gestural lines created by brush strokes	hard or soft-edged and thick or thin calm lines define the outlines of white faces
Shape	not precise and suggestive	not precise and suggestive	not precise and suggestive	not precise and suggestive	not precise and suggestive	not precise and minimal
Texture	uneven and gestural texture of brush works and drip technique	uneven and gestural textures by applying several layers of tick daubs	actual texture is uneven and rough gestural texture by applying collage technique	uneven and gestural texture by applying several layers of tick daubs	uneven, rough and gestural texture by painterly method	uneven and gestural texture by applying several layers of tick daubs
Space	vertical and horizontal structured-illusion of distance	grid structured of multi-panel	spiral structured by arranging the forms and distribution of darks and lights. illusion of distance	overall space divided in two dominant oval shapes illusion of distance	ambiguous space by the melted big scale face in the dark	initial space of this work divided into warm, darker colours and the cool, lighter colours, ambiguous space
Unity	distribution of colors, textures, brush strokes gives a sense of oneness	distribution of colors, textures, brush strokes gives a sense of oneness	distribution of colors, textures, brush strokes gives a sense of oneness	distribution of colors, textures, brush strokes gives a sense of oneness	distribution of the similar elements gives a sense of oneness	distribution of the similar elements gives a sense of oneness
Variety	high contrasts of darks and lights offers variety	the differences between the faces tonality of color, angle and mood offer variety	a number of textures on the surface offer s variety	the number of different poses struck by the faces as well as different sizes of the faces offer variety	tonality of colors offers variety	variety of lines and subtle shifts in colors and values offers variety
Proportion and Scale	overall size of the hand seems unrelated to the space	in proportion	manipulated proportion	in proportion	the massive face is exceedingly larger than normal size of a face	in proportion

Table 5.1, continued

Art Elements and Principles	Samples					
	<i>Abettor</i>	<i>Entourage IV</i>	<i>Agony of Acheh IV</i>	<i>Hydra-infinity</i>	<i>Messenger</i>	<i>Avenger</i>
Rhythm	repetition of colors, lines, brush strokes and paint drips gives a sense of movement and continuity	two implied red diagonal lines and repetition of faces and other elements give a sense of movement and continuity	spiraling movement in the composition. repetition of the elements give a sense of movement and continuity	the repetition of the faces and the implied diagonal lines in the composition enhance the sense of movement and continuity	the repetition of the colors brush strokes and texture give a sense of movement and continuity	at the centre, a violent motion is expressed along a triangular shape created by the masses of broken shapes and tangled lines. a staccato visual rhythm composed of repetition of dull faces dark patches of colours and lines at the centre
Balance	asymmetrically balanced	asymmetrically balanced	asymmetrically balanced	asymmetrically balanced	asymmetrically balanced	asymmetrically balanced

The paintings of *Wajah* series display variations of formal inventions. Yusof Ghani has displayed an inventive play of the one motif into a number of variations. It must be noted that in terms of art principles, the unifying element that appears in almost all of the works studied with the exception of *Messenger* is repetition. Yusof Ghani uses repetition by multiplying specific images, in this case ‘anonymous faces’ as visual content. The artist has manipulated the single face as an iconic image as illustrated in the work *Messenger*. But, he has multiplied the icon into various compositions, increasing the number of faces until one is confronted with 72 faces in work *Entourage IV*. From one to many, this significant increase of the number of faces implies the differences on thematic focus in which a single face would refer to the individual while the abundance of faces implies towards the collective. The repetition of the iconic image of the face in these paintings expands the formal potential of the single image into smoky clusters as well as pluralizing the individual into a mass. This repetition also alludes to the artist interest with the social aspect of imageries in painting.

In addition, this repetition enhances the sense of movement. for Yusof Ghani, the principle of movement in the composition is an expression of the journey that the audience undertakes with him, in which he acts as a guide. Even the smallest component can give a sense of movement to the painting to keep the viewer's eyes moving through these works.

It may be noted that the works in the *Wajah* series are both simultaneously varied and unified. They retain Yusof's Ghani's approach in serial works in which formally, the language appears similar though variations are introduced as the series progressed, evolving organically in terms of concept, materials and imageries. The works thus display sensitive differences though strongly unified when examined formally. The thematic focus of the series is also consistent, concerning humanity and it's plight in contemporary times, whether regarding day-to-day survival or against a natural calamity, the series maps out a wide-ranging social concerns, giving us a facade of humanity's soul.

It can be concluded that the paintings of *Wajah* are successful in terms of formalism and expressionism. From the perspective of instrumentalism, one can conclude that these works are efficacious in conveying the message of humanism, especially on the aspects of humanity's well-being and peace.

In these paintings, through one facial expression, one could have so many different perceptions and readings. The works in the *Wajah* series allow the viewers to relate to them on a personal basis. Though the paintings illustrate indefinite connotations, the viewers are still able to connect with it. The paintings of the series aim to evoke reactions from its audience, such as there are incidences when one fears and flee at the sight of one painting. These faces are 'provocative images' which are an exemplification of an experience. They are a revelation of inner thoughts and sentiments. If we recall what was said by Yusof Ghani "My images are not to illustrate,

but to be provocative, to provoke the state of the mind where one can consider the things in one's life", then we see that the *Wajah* series has done just that.

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APPENDIX A

PICTURES



Figure 1&2: The Researcher Interviews with The Artist in his Gallery Called *Tapak*



Figure 3&4: The Researcher Interviews with The Artist in his Gallery Called *Tapak*



Figure 5&6: The Researcher Interviews with The Artist in his Gallery Called *Tapak*

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW FORM

“Open-Ended Questions for Interview with the Artist”

1. How would you define *Wajah* series paintings? What is the main concept of the *Wajah* series paintings?
2. What are the main characteristics of the art elements in the *Wajah* series paintings?
3. What are the main characteristics of the art principles in the *Wajah* series paintings?
4. How does the art elements and principles in *Wajah* series paintings relate to the meaning?
5. What are the main characteristics of the technique in these paintings? How do you apply the technique to express your idea?
6. Whose these faces belong to? Why they are not possible to identify?
7. What is the expressive intent of *Wajah* series paintings in relation to the social or humanity issues?
8. What do you try to provoke the viewer's into by symbolic faces in paintings of *Wajah* series?

