A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND AN INTERPRETATION OF TOWARDS A MYSTICAL REALITY

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ABSTRACT

Towards a Mystical Reality (TMR) was an event launched on 2nd August 1974, comprising an art exhibition, a debate and a written manifesto entitled, *Towards a Mystical Reality: a documentation of jointly initiated experiences by redza piyadasa and sulaiman esa.*

This thesis concerns the criticism arising from local art intellectual discourse which views the manifesto as a problematic text and the definitions of *Mystical Reality* as unarticulated. This dissertation seeks to identify whether the criticisms from the art intellectuals are justifiable in response to the issues arising from the manifesto.

The findings of this study posit that textually, the meaning of *Mystical Reality* is summed up in the last line of the manifesto text. The contextual meaning of *Mystical Reality* is found within the philosophical discourse partaken by Redza Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa, which refers to the 'mystical' thinking of art, 'mystical' approach of reality and the initiated experiences that is 'mental', 'mystical' and 'meditative'—this in sum, is the art of TMR (not the objects on display). The TMR manifesto text is remarkable for its attempt to articulate Zen experience and its methodological approach to advance art from Zen Reality.

Despite the contradictions found through the textual analysis on the manifesto, TMR remained an art event which has sparked off a productive debate on art. Thus, it may be said that its contribution to local art discourse has so far been unrivalled.

ABSTRAK

Towards a Mystical Reality (TMR) [terj.: Ke Arah Hakikat Mistik] adalah satu acara falsafah yang terangkum di dalamnya pameran seni, debat awam dan manifesto seni bertulis bertajuk *Ke Arah Hakikat Mistik: Satu Dokumentasi Pengalaman yang Dianjurkan Bersama oleh Redza Piyadasa dan Sulaiman Esa,* dilancarkan pada Ogos, 1974.

Tesis ini merujuk pada kritikan yang dibangkitkan dalam kalangan intelek seni tempatan yang merujuk manifesto TMR adalah suatu teks yang tidak tepat dan bermasalah dan Hakikat Mistik yang didakwa tidak dibicarakan. Disertasi ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti sama ada kritikan dari intelektual seni adalah sebagai tindak balas kepada isu-isu yang timbul daripada manifesto.

Hasil kajian ini mendapati bahawa makna *Hakikat Mistik* disimpulkan dalam barisan terakhir tulisan manifesto. Makna *Hakikat Mistik* dikeliling oleh wacana falsafah yang dibincangkan oleh Redza Piyadasa dan Sulaiman Esa merujuk kepada pemikiran 'mistik' seni, pendekatan 'mistik' realiti dan pengalaman yang dimulakan iaitu 'mental', 'mistik' dan 'meditasi' —ini menubuhkan seni TMR (bukan pada objek yang dipamerkan). Manifesto TMR adalah penting untuk pengubahan pengalaman seni ke arah pengalaman Zen, pendekatan metodologi yang membawa renungan seni dari Zen Realiti.

Walaupun didapati adanya masalah percanggahan dari analisis teks manifesto, TMR kekal sebagai satu acara seni yang mencetuskan perdebatan seni yang produktif. Oleh itu, ia boleh dikatakan bahawa dari segi sumbangan atas debat tempatan yang dibangkitkan, TMR adalah tiada tandingan.

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INTRODUCTION TO TMR

1.1   Introduction

Unlike any other art event in the past, *Towards a Mystical Reality* (TMR) encompassed an art exhibition, a public debate and a written art manifesto entitled, *Towards a Mystical Reality: a documentation of jointly initiated experiences by redza piyadasa and sulaiman esa.*

The manifesto was written as a radical resistance to Western-centric thinking within the local art scene. Krishen Jit, Deputy Dean of Faculty of Art, University Malaya, at the time, pointed out in the introductory note that the real exhibition is the manifesto[1]. He commented, 'their manifesto is a rich tapestry of the history of aesthetics, it is a demonstration of their right to rebel' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 2). He also pointed out in the preface of the manifesto that 'what they ask for is its perpetual renewal' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 3, 21).

Critiquing the local artists for reproducing works that mimicked the West, the manifesto lamented the dilemma of Malaysian artists who isolated art creation from philosophical engagement and who overemphasised Western approaches, easel-painting and picture-making (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 3). In solving this issue, local artists are advised to eliminate Western criteria of art in concept and practice. Ideologically, TMR is a rebellion against form-oriented art that led to the adoption of Western art styles or 'isms' derived from the West (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 5).

Through the manifesto, Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa intended to highlight, what they claimed, as a tendency of the local artists to rely on Western-centric viewpoints of

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[1] 'Manifesto' is a written statement that describes the intention, motives, or views of its issuer. (Merriam-Webster, 2016) The manifesto of TMR is a written form of document which invariably challenges the local artists to move away from Western-centric viewpoint of reality art approaches.

reality in perceiving art, that is scientific, empirical and objective (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 4, 8, 10, 16, 18). In propagating the distinctiveness of TMR it is lauded that the approach to reality in TMR is 'mystical' in nature (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 12). Accordingly, Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa highlighted that they are approaching art from the Eastern viewpoint of reality that is characterized as 'mental/mystical/meditative' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 21).

At the same time, the two artists propelled the importance of linking art with Eastern philosophies whilst embracing the positive aspects of approaching art from Eastern-centric viewpoints of reality and the mystical concept of time-space. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 11, 17, 21). On the other hand, the two artists thoroughly exploited the weaknesses of Western-centric art, as well as the viewpoint of reality in wresting over the Western approach. Bearing this in mind, TMR is polemical (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 5).

As the artistic purpose behind the art-making is to bring the spectator closer to 'Reality', the two artists invited the audience (spectator) to appreciate the TMR from meditative and contemplative schemes of mental state (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p.21). In conjunction to this, the manifesto writing reveals the intention of the two artists in keeping the art of TMR as experienced through the Eastern mode of perceiving reality and their interest at this stage is with the perception of reality itself (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp.12, 18). Correspondingly, in TMR the two artists functioned as 'initiators' of the mystical experiences of art—by manipulating the visual, textual, meditative, and contemplative to lead the spectator to the ''mental/mystical/meditative' experience of art while the crafted manifesto acts as the medium that communicates this idea.

Collectively, the manifesto consists of 31 pages of writing in approximately 10,000 words under **6** chapters; (**1**) *The Dilemma of Modern Malaysian Art*, (**2**) *Anti-Formalist and Anti-Aesthetic*, (**3**) "*No Humanistic or Subjective Intent*", (**4**) *The*

Relevance of a Mystical viewpoint, (**5**) *A Mystical Concept of Time and Event* and (**6**) *A "Mental/Meditative/Mystical" viewpoint of reality as opposed to a "Spatio/Temporal/Sensorial" viewpoint of the Western artist*. In the manifesto, Redza Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa proclaimed themselves as 'initiators' or 'modern artists'. In this study, Redza Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa will be addressed henceforth either as 'the two initiators' or 'the two artists' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp.12, 22).

On the other hand, TMR faced numerous criticisms and responses from local art writers, artists, art scholars and art educators in local publications. The pissing gesture during the launch performed by Salleh Ben Joned is the general topic of conversation amongst local art intellectuals. It can be said that TMR is an art event which obtained one of the most criticisms and responses.

Given the title of the manifesto, *Towards a Mystical Reality*, it would be expected that a comprehensive account on the meaning of *Mystical Reality* be provided. However, the definition of *Mystical Reality* was charged as unarticulated in the manifesto (Yeoh, 1996, p. 94). Having said that, *Mystical Reality* as a text demands further investigation. Furthermore, the manifesto is lamented as a problematic text (Joned, 1994, pp. 25-27). These criticisms and responses may have somewhat overshadowed the creative approach of the artists. So far, no analysis has been made on the manifesto text to investigate this untested hypothesis. An investigation on the manifesto text will be conducted through the research method of textual analysis and content analysis.

In a nutshell, this dissertation seeks to identify whether the criticisms arisen from the art intellectuals is in response to the flaw in the manifesto. Attention is paid on the verbal, textual and linguistic aspects of text. The study of the manifesto involves the process of identifying the gap in the "speech" of the text, the theoretical contradictions and 'linguistic oddity' as well as an attempt to unfold the meaning of *Mystical Reality*.

This dissertation is presented in Five Chapters. Chapter One comprises of

introduction to TMR. The first section covers the context to TMR, historical background of TMR as well as documents of the responses and different interpretations of TMR made in the past. While the second section of Chapter One is the introduction to this dissertation in defining the parameters of this research which covers the statements of problem, research aims, research objectives and research questions.

Chapter Two of this dissertation informs the methodology of this study; the research methods used to conduct this study, the main text, supporting text to be studied in this research, research design diagram, research procedures as well as presenting the theoretical angles or standpoints that the researcher has taken into account while conducting the analysis.

Chapter Three and Four comprise the main body of this dissertation. Chapter Three focuses on the analysis of the manifesto text. The manifesto is analyzed from verbal, textual and linguistic aspect of text itself. Chapter Three works on the basis of spotting internal contradictions, unstable grounds, paradoxical phrases, claims and inconsistencies in the text itself in relation to the basis of TMR.

Chapter Four is written with the idea of interpreting the meaning of *Mystical Reality* by recognizing the connection between the contemplative and meditative scheme and initiated 'mystical' experiences. The meaning of *Mystical Reality* is established by investigating how *Mystical Reality* is defined based on the concepts and phrases as well as the meditative and contemplative schemes brought forth in the manifesto. Besides, the content of the manifesto and the interpretation of *Mystical Reality* is understood as an appropriation of *Reality* as articulated by D. T. Suzuki.

Lastly, Chapter Five of this dissertation concludes the findings of discussion from Chapter Three and Chapter Four. This involves a summary of evidences to support the overall viewpoint about the manifesto besides providing suggestions for future studies.

1.2 The Context to TMR

As readers begin the reading of the manifesto, the reader may question why Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa would include a manifesto in the making of TMR and what is the position of art that these artists took in TMR. It may be said that the two artists intended to a make a difference in the local art scene by shifting the focus of art from creation of artifacts to discourse[2]. TMR is meant to be appreciated as artistic discourse, as a dialectical and conceptual activity. What becomes the point of discourse in TMR is its context of art-making.

1.2.1 Art as Discourse

In their attempt to spark artistic discourse, the two artists positioned themselves, not as 'easel painting artists', but as philosophers, problem solvers and theoreticians. So they stepped out of the traditional role of artists as painters. At the same time, they were aiming at reorienting the role of modern local artists[3] beyond painters (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 5-6). What art means to them is beyond the impulse of 'art for art's sake' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 15). In their opinion, it is only then that the artist that is able to commit to intellectual conviction (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 5). Personally the two artists were determined to change the local artistic directions drastically by inspiring more art critiques. As such, Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa took a 'discourse' approach as part of their art practice (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 10).

In the text, Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa also brought up the issue of the ignorance of the local artists who were continuously copying the Western stylistic trends specifically Abstract Expressionism in the late 1960's and Constructivism in the early of 1970's (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p.6). To them it was time for the local artists to rethink the direction of Malaysian modern art and to reconsider the rationale behind their work.

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[2] 'Discourse' may be described as 'an act of communication, an expression of thought through language'. (Literary Devices)
[3] 'Modern art is constantly pushing the boundaries of the "artistic", seeking and providing new answers to the question of what art really is.'(Braembussche, 2009, p.1)

To discuss the aesthetic and philosophical aspects of art in view of the fact that no changes had been made in the past to rival Western stylistic trends. The two artists stated: 'Clearly, there has as yet been no real attempt to re-question this underlying eclecticism behind our flirtation with idioms and styles derived from the major art movements of the west' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p.5).

On the other hand, Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa extended the discourse by informing the importance of approaching art from meditative/mystical viewpoint of reality (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 21). The two artists went on arguing the relevance of holding on the mystical viewpoint of reality by 'returning to an artistic attitude that is essentially oriental' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 14). The text continues:

> WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO SUGGEST QUITE SIMPLY IS THAT THE SCIENTIFIC AND EMPIRICAL VIEWPOINT OF REALITY IS NOT THE ONLY VALID ONE THERE IS. WHAT WE ARE INSISTING IS THAT THERE ARE MANY LEVELS OF REALITY AND THE SCIENTIFIC AND EMPIRICAL VIEWPOINT ONLY LEADS TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF ONE FACET OF THAT REALITY. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p.12)

As a whole, the manifesto text carries an ideology to shape the direction of local art practice towards Eastern criterion of art. In its mission, TMR aimed to shed light on Eastern concepts, philosophical ideas and perceptions of reality that could get Malaysian artists out of the straightjacket of Western thinking (Sabapathy, 2001, p. 119).

In the context of Malaysian art history, it may be argued that TMR is the first art manifesto set out in the mission to decolonize artists from Western-centric thinking predominant in the art practice of the 1970s. Sulaiman Esa said: 'TMR was different because for the first time, we began to debunk and decolonize ourselves from Western-centricism' (Nur Hanim Khairuddin, 2011, p. 265). Piyadasa said: 'still on looking back, it was an attempt at deconstructing European art history…' (Sabapathy, 2001, p. 119).

The aim of TMR is to construct a kind of theory and mode of perceiving and experiencing art and reality so that one day local artists could detach art from the Western-oriented viewpoints of reality, attitude and thinking (Sabapathy, 2001, p. 119). It was this move that shaped the TMR as a discourse. Correspondingly, this also reflects that Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa[4] took the colonial discourse narrative to inform on the whole range of dilemma of Modern Malaysian art (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 4-5).

1.2.2 Art as Dialectical Activity

In recognizing what had been taken placed in the international art scene, Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa pointed out that it is necessary and important for local artists to take art seriously in order to be recognized as 'modern' artist. As realized:

> There was an 'absence of a serious intellectual and polemical atmosphere within the Malaysian art scene that needs to be surmounted in the 70's'. 'ART IS BECOMING A VERY DIALECTICAL[5] ACTIVITY TODAY' and supposedly "modern" artists are yet to aware of. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 5, 10)

Taking the definition of 'dialectical' into account, through the written manifesto much of the attention has been paid on examining the thematic contrast between Eastern and Western viewpoint of reality, attitude of art. Perhaps the two artists have seemingly constructed their thoughts that East and West are in opposition.

TMR as well tended in the direction of playing down the importance of fine workmanship and individuality, academicism[6] that reflects the Romanticism origin, the 19th century attitudes toward creativity besides breaking down the linking of the work of local artists with Western art style (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p.6). TMR strived to break

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[4] In this study, Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa will be addressed henceforth either as 'the two artists' or 'the two initiators'.

[5] 'Dialectical' is defined as 'a method of examining and discussing opposing ideas in order to find the truth'. (Merriam-Webster, 2016)

[6] 'In fine art, 'academicism' is traditionally used to describe the style of true-to-life but high minded realist painting and sculpture championed by the European academies of art, notably the French Academy of Fine Arts'. (Art Encyclopedia , 2016) The defining characteristics of good art are determined by the artist's principle of order, perspective, proportion and painting skill (Cox, 1971, p. 426).

down the Western humanistic notion of art because it is driven by 'unique artistic soul' of the artist as the point of reference in art-making (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 10). Thus, the notion of art that expresses the individuality is dismissed in the art practice of TMR (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 10, 21). As a result, TMR called off for "individualistic involvement in the creation as far as that was possible" (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p.12).

It is also highlighted that art is a type of dialectical activity which demanded artists to familiarize themselves in philosophical inquiry (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 5, 10). As argued 'The notion of art as …dialectical activity then demands that the artist equip himself with the means to undertake such a complex activity dealing with the world of pure idea' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 10). Considering that the philosophical vision of Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa were in search of a viewpoint of reality, art approach and art experience that could defeat our logic in looking at our existence justified by the modern man in the 20th century requires a more positive attitude and optimistic outlook towards life itself.

Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa raised the issue that the modern man was unable to eliminate the dualistic view between life and death as their sense of attachment to own existence (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 13). In line with this idea, TMR has been associated with John Cage in arguing the relevance of 'mystical' view in comprehending art and life. In dignifying the East, the two artists propelled the competitiveness of 'mystical' viewpoint of reality in approaching art in Western society (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 13). 'John Cage was very much inspired by Zen Buddhist influences and the art and life has never been divorced in the East' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 14).

In fact, the two artists looked into Zen in its purest sense and Buddhist idea of self which negates or transcends the 'ego' as the basis to work within a conscious detachment from the artwork (Sabapathy, 2001, p. 119). Similarly, the initiated experiences by the two artists are transcendental which transcend binaries .

1.2.3   Art as a Conceptual Activity

Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa highlighted that: 'ART IS BECOMING A VERY CONCEPTUAL ACTIVITY TODAY'(Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 10). 'The notion of art as …conceptual activity demands the artist equip himself with some semblance of awareness of such diverse areas of knowledge as philosophy, linguistics, psychology, sosiology, physics, mass-communication and even mathematics!' 'The effectiveness of any serious artist of the future threfore will depend on his ability to think and function beyond the confines of "traditional" notions of art itself' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 10).

Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa expressed clearly in the manifesto, that: "Our work very clearly is conceptual nature" (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 21). Based on the view that art is a conceptual activity, the initiated experiences by Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa embedded as an intersection of art and philosophy. The philosophical idea that manifests TMR is associated with Zen/Zen Buddhism. In consequence, TMR is lauded as 'mystical' in nature (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 12).

With TMR as a piece of conceptual work, Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa reinforced that, 'There are fundamental pre-requisites that seem necessary for anyone wanting to understand and appreciate our work. For one thing, it seems necessary for the spectator himself to get rid of any preconceived notions about what 'Art' is and ought to be' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 21). In fact, the two artists moved the focus of art from the artifact to the dialogue of the 'mystical' context of art (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 21). As said:

> We are not involved with artifacts but rather a series of "mental" experiences which we have produced jointly-initiated. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 21) We as the "initiators" have no more control over the situation. While spectator (art viewer) is "free to move backwards and forwards in time as the mind takes over the contemplation and meditation". (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p.22)

On the other end, through the written text of the crafted manifesto, the spectator is led to view 'object' as 'event' rather than as a form and be less attached to the physicality of the artifact. Accordingly, the initiated experiences concerned on spiritual realization and appreciating TMR goes beyond experiencing visual appearance but understand TMR conceptually. This also asserts that the art experience of TMR did not comprise of objects but of mystical experiences could be approached through meditative and contemplative scheme of mind. That in itself explains that the art of TMR is primarily complex, philosophical and yet mystical. It is under this politicized experience that brings out the possible meaning of *Mystical Reality*.

Figure 1.1: The excerpted photograph from the manifesto exhibited at National Gallery Singapore which opened on 25th November 2015 and is slated to be on view through to 2019 (Stock, 2015).

In conjunction to this take, the two artists pointed out that 'we are not involved with artifacts but we are initiating a series of mental experiences' (Piyadasa & Esa, pp. 21). The text continues:

What we are aiming at is a "meditative empathy" on the part of the spectator. It

is an empathy that is the outcome of meditative and contemplative action. Our work is therefore founded upon a deliberate attempt to force contemplation and meditation on the part of the spectator. It is however a contemplation of a special kind that we are aiming at. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 21)

The objects of TMR are meant to be perceived as 'events', consisting of half-full coca-cola bottles, a chair, burnt out mosquito coils, a potted plant, human hair collected from a barber shop, used tin of paint and paint brushes, a discarded raincoat, a discarded silk-screen, an empty bird cage and an unmarked stretched canvas. Thus, developing the bond between TMR and the Eastern 'mystical' standpoint of perceiving things (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 21, 22).

To conclude, the context of art of TMR revolves around 'conceptual' yet 'mystical' in nature with no separation made between the two. The two initiators confronted spectator by offering another possibility of choice to comprehend art and Reality from 'mental', 'mystical' and 'meditative' viewpoint of reality (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 21). The philosophical vision of TMR is also about inducing the spectator to reflect on his own 'Reality'.

1.2.4   The Pre-launch of TMR

Apart from the manifesto writing, back in July 1974, a month before the the launch of *Towards a Mystical Reality,* an interview session was conducted by Raja Yahaya Zahabuddin with the two artists. The interview was published in *Dewan Sastra.*

Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa revealed that their friendship began in 1963 during their studies at Hornsey College of Art, London, while Piyadasa was in his foundation year in Art and Design and Sulaiman Esa was in his second year of Post-Graduate Diploma studies (Zahabuddin R. Y., 1974, p. 29). Later, the two artists maintained a strong bond in profession during the years they worked in ITM, 1970-1974 (Sabapathy,

2001, p. 118).

Figure 1.2: The interview session by Raja Yahaya Zahabuddin with Redza Piyadasa (left) and Sulaiman Esa (right) Photograph from *Wawancara dengan dua pelukis konseptual, Dewan Sastra,* July 1974, p. 28

Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa shared many things in common, especially in art. What bound them together was the fact that they did not view art as an expression of individual feeling; rather, art as a collective endeavor which drives artists towards theorization and critical appraisal of art. They believed that ideas for art should come from the artist's own cultural tradition (Sabapathy, 2001, p. 118). TMR was established by two artists instead of one in the idea; all decisions will be made jointly in order to play down the individualistic as far as possible in this art-making (Piyadasa, 1974, p. 27). It was partly for these reasons that binded Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa together in TMR.

From 1970 to 1972, the two artists participated together in various art exhibitions including *Salon Malaysia, The New Scene, Experiment 70, and First Poets-Painters Exhibition, Malaysian Art 1932-71, Situasi Baru, Second Poets-Painters Exhibition, Manifestasi Dua Seni 1,* and *Dokumentasi 72* (Nur Hanim Khairuddin, 2011, p. 297). In 1972, Sulaiman Esa had already shown interest in producing artwork which used a similar concept to TMR, titled *Man and His World*. The mixed media piece won him a major prize in an art competition organized by the National Art Gallery in 1973 (Sidik, 2010). In this work, Sulaiman Esa displayed his personal belongings, such as a shirt, a tie, a pair of shoes, documents, and certificates, items derived from his

life. On the other hand, Piyadasa worked as an art writer for several publications: *Malaysian Sunday Times*, a monthly literary journal in *Dewan Sastra, Dewan Budaya, Tenggara, Malaysian Panorama,* and *The Strait Times Annual* (Sabapathy, 1978, pp. 60-63).

Throughout Piyadasa's (1939-2007) lifetime, he published a number of writings. In the 1970s many attempts were already made then by Piyadasa to reform Malaysian modern art towards Eastern roots for ideas in art. There are three articles published in *Dewan Sastra* from 1972 to 1974 linked closely to TMR; *Seni abstrack: kebaratan atau ketimuran*, April 1972, *Kesungguhan terbukti dalam karya seniman malaysia/filipina*, March 1974, *Wawancara dengan dua pe lukis konseptual,* Julai 1974. He urged local artists to function as art theoreticians and thinkers rather than technicians. He continued to expound this position in TMR.

In *Kesungguhan terbukti dalam karya seniman malaysia/filipina*, he remarked that artists should be well-versed in the history of ideas (Piyadasa, 1974 p.28). Piyadasa once reasoned that for local artists to be labeled as modern Asian artists, they were required to be aware of contemporary issues relevant to their own context of time (Piyadasa, 1974 p.27). This thought has been reiterated in the manifesto as 'Malaysian art can only become productive and creative when our artists begin to function on a much deeper level than that which has existed to date' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 5, 6).

In *Seni abstrack: kebaratan atau ketimuran*, Piyadasa highlighted the uniqueness of Zen which could capture the energy of the universe as a creative force to co-create great works of art. He was amazed with Eastern philosophical, religious and spiritual frame of art. He considered Japanaese Zen Buddhist paintings, Zen art, Okakura Kakuzo's calligraphy work and the Zen Garden at Ryoanji (a Rinzai Zen temple in Kyoto) as unique in artistic approach as they called for spiritual engagement in art-making (Piyadasa, 1972, pp. 46-49). Therefore, these texts may be viewed as the

beginning of his interest in Eastern philosophy and form an important and relevant part of our understanding of TMR's subsequent employment of Eastern artistic approaches (Piyadasa, 1974, p. 27).

Based on the restaged exhibition of TMR in National Gallery Singapore, it is noted by T. K. Sabapathy, as early as 1969, Piyadasa had already declared his interest in "making original contributions to existing international movement in art which aims at an intellectual, impersonal, non-symbolic approach" and argued for an alternative aesthetic and new ways of seeing art (National Gallery Singapore, 2016 & Sabapathy, 2001).

1.2.5 TMR as a Provocation of NCC and Extension of *Dokumentasi 72*

Historically, TMR was a reaction in response to the art policy of National Cultural Congress[7] (NCC) set in 1971. Rather than affirming the policy set by NCC, it has allowed the reactions of Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa over the Western criteria of appreciating and practicing art (Nur Hanim Khairuddin, 2011, pp. 264-265). Because of this take TMR is considered as a provocation of NCC in the face of Western cultural domination. Sulaiman Esa stated that 'the congress was very significant for us because it absolutely made us question our beliefs in the spirituality of Western art' (ibid).

One impact of the Congress was that for two years after *Dokumentasi 72* the two artists did not produce any new artwork. Instead, they avidly read and questioned the relevance of Western art in the 'Asian' context (Nur Hanim Khairuddin, 2011, p. 264). TMR began to take shape in 1972, after *Dokumentasi 72* in May 1972. *Dokumentasi 72* was an exploration and experimentation in form and a new medium, carried out

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[7] 'The first National Cultural Congress was set up in 1971 with the objective to encourage artist to project the sense of national pride and identity in their work. It is decided in the National Cultural Congress that the country needed a common national cultural identity to unify the multiracial population' (Tahir, 2009). Within this effort, the key principles outlined by the congress are: '1. Islam as a basis in the development of National culture. 2. Malaysian culture must be based on the culture of the indigenous people in the region. 3. Elements from other cultures that are reasonable and in line with the above can be accepted as an aspect of national culture' (Daud, MdZain & Amin, 2013).

between 1970 and May 1972 in Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka (The National Agency of Language and Literature). Sulaiman Esa states that:

> *Dokumentasi 72* was, for them, an initial exploration of Zen minimalism and simplicity; however, art-making then was still attached to the object since the exploration centered on visual structures, space, color, and texture, which depended on their Western formal training in art. (Nur Hanim Khairuddin, 2011, p. 261 & 265)

After the show, there were two fundamental art issues that gained their attention. Firstly, despite changing their art medium to installation art, the art experience remained trapped in the physicality of things by means of the 'Western' aesthetic sense of form and visual taste. Secondly, the artist was the soul of art creation, as attention was paid to the 'unique individuality' of the artists themselves throughout the creation process. Thus, the art thinking does not move beyond the idea of form (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 8).

TMR may be considered an extension of the previous show, *Dokumentasi 72*. Subsequently, in TMR, the two artists aimed at working towards solving these two issues. Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa took nearly two years of reading books on philosophy and seeking advice from experts in history, sociology, writing, and drama to look for a philosophical rationale that would allow them to function outside Western-centric boundaries of art (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 9).

Seeing many modern Asian artists including Malaysian artists adopted to scientific and humanistic view of things as a result of the scientific advancement influence coming from the West, Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa separated the art of TMR from the scientific view of life, art and reality, it is said that:

> So many modern Asian artists involved with modern art have so easily accepted the scientific and humanistic view of things without having bothered to reconsider any other any other possibilities seems to us quite sad today',

similarly 'Malaysian artists have…not been able to come out a viewpoint of reality that differs from that being adopted by western artists'. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 5, 12)

In response thereof two artists intended to set themselves apart from the humanistic notion of the artist as a unique individual and Western ego-centric involvement in the work of art. Subsequently, the two artists worked on with the idea of:

a. A conscious detachment from the work of art. (paragraph 3, page 12)

b. No humanistic or subjective influences or intent. (chaptertitle-page 11)

c. The artists' egoistic preoccupations are non-existent in our scheme of things. (paragraph 2, page 21)

d. To play down individualistic consideration as far as possible. (paragraph 3, page 12)

e. No emotional considerations would be allowed to dictate and manipulate of the forms that we use. (paragraph 3, page 12)

Back in 1972 to 1974, the two artists examined the thematic contrast between the Eastern and Western viewpoint of reality, an attitude which influenced how one perceives form, art concepts, and approaches in art-making. They also consulted university lecturers, historians, sociologists, religious experts, writers, and dramatists in seeking alternative perspectives. Later, the two artists moved towards philosophy in their research as they realized that every significant art form is the manifestation of definite philosophical systems (Sabapathy, 2001, p. 51). Eventually, Zen/Zen Buddhism philosophy and Taoism concept became the underlying ground of the event *Towards a Mystical Reality*.

1.2.6   The Launch of TMR

2nd August of 1974, *Towards a Mystical Reality* was launched in the exhibition hall of Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka called the Writer's Corner in Kuala Lumpur. About fifty people including artists, art writers, art scholars, art educators, art students, and the media attended the launch. Amongst them were Krishen Jit (theatre director), Ismail Zain (conceptual artist), Salleh Ben Joned (poet and art politician-cum-writer), Faridah Merican (theater producer), T. K. Sabapathy (art historian), and Ruzaika Omar Basaree (a former student of Redza Piyadasa) (Soon, 2013, p. 55).

Apart from the manifesto, the objects displayed in the exhibition: half-full coca-cola bottles, a chair, burnt out mosquito coils, a potted plant, human hair collected from a barber shop, used tin of paint and paint brushes, a discarded raincoat, a discarded silk-screen, an empty bird cage and an unmarked stretched canvas. The exhibition provoked strong reactions from the viewing public. One of the viewer's reactions entirely transformed the exhibition into a performance work.

Figure 1.3: The launch of *Towards a Mystical Reality* in Writer's Corner, crowded with people, with Redza Piyadasa standing in the middle (all in white). Photograph from the article *An Open letter to Redza Piyadasa, Dewan Sastra,* July 1975, p.57.

The most well-known was Salleh Joned's 'Act of Pissing' mock gesture which caused a stir among the crowd who broke the spell that had held him to the spot. During

the launch, he urinated on a copy of the manifesto in a corner. Later he said: 'I want to make a statement. What I'm going to do is part of the mystical reality', resulting in laughter with mock heartiness, as recalled by Ruzaika Omar Basaree that Salleh Joned made an announcement more or less like this (Personal communication, Ruzaika Omar, February 26, 2015). It remained uncovered and unreported by the media (Joned, 1994, p. 19).

His gesture left the artists and spectators speechless and clueless (Joned, 1994 , p. 19). Sulaiman Esa said, 'I didn't know how to react. To stage the exhibition and receive the kind of response and feedback we got . . . was daunting enough'. Whilst, Piyadasa said that Joned's reaction was irrelevant (Soon, 2013, p. 65). One might view Salleh Joned's gesture as a sullying of self-respect. Siti Zainon Ismail, in one of her reply letter to Piyadasa in *Dewan Sastra* pointed out that Salleh Joned's gesture was morally unjustified. In one of Piyadasa's reply letters to Siti Zainon Ismail, Piyadasa lamented that the extreme shocking element propelled by Salleh Joned in the opening disheartened him and Sulaiman Esa. Piyadasa also challenged Salleh Joned to justify his gesture, shortly after, an essay *An Open Letter to Redza Piyadasa* was written in *Dewan Sastra* by Salleh Joned (Piyadasa, 1975, p.42).

Krishen Jit noted, 'I believe that if this manifesto is torn to shreds, Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa will not be unhappy' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 3). About a year after the launch, TMR provoked numerous criticisms and a debate in local publications. Siti Zainon Ismail and Piyadasa debated about TMR for three consecutive months in *Dewan Sastra*. The criticisms in the 70's covered a wide range of topics which included TMR's art concepts, fundamental premises in the manifesto, execution of the art exhibition, the purpose of using ready-mades and the art direction. This underlines the fact that the immediate outcome after the launch of TMR was the spreading of the discourse practice. And even today the discourse of TMR is still on going.

1.3 Critiques and Responses of TMR

This section presents critiques and responses brought up by art intellectuals with the aim of providing what has been said or covered in published sources and identifying the gaps in the literatures that were found in this study.

TMR has garnered interests from art scholars, art writers, art educators, and artists. TMR marked a new way of engaging with art and opened up new vista for artistic activity. Up to date, it is found that the criticisms comprise a range of perspectives on the power relation between East-West, art identity, the role of artists and the art direction of Malaysian art and analysis of art concepts of TMR.

1.3.1 The Criticisms about TMR in 1975 -2006

In July 1975, an essay *An Open letter to Redza Piyadasa* was written by Salleh Joned. The rationale behind his *Art of Pissing* was not clear until the writing was published in *Dewan Sastra*. His *Art of Pissing* was justified as humour and protest of Zen. He said that Zen, as he understood it, 'is always alert to signs of the falsity, quick to mock anything that forgets reality in the name of Reality' (Joned, 1994 , p. 26).

He also made a compelling analysis of the art concepts of TMR and the exhibition by pointing out every weakness in the manifesto and exhibition in this letter which began the debate. Salleh Joned then went into considerable detail regarding the theoretical issues regarding the manifesto and the exhibition[8]. Despite all that, he respected the commitment of Piyadasa to art as the intellectual, he asserted that TMR was contradictory to Zen from its underlying key concepts to the manner of the

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[8] Among the issues addressed by Salleh Joned about TMR are the following:
1. The manifesto text is unreadable. He was not pleased with the tone employed by the two artists.
2. There is an 'element of bullying in the rhetoric' of the manifesto.
3. The fundamental premises of the manifesto and exhibition are ridiculous, inaccurate, pretentious, false, contradictory, and clouded by confusion.
4. The intention behind the assembled works in Writer's Corner is questionable.
5. The opening of the exhibition failed to reflect the core spirit of Zen.
6. The establishment between the concept of 'art' and 'non art' is problematic.
7. If TMR has nothing to do with 'art,' why is the term 'art' used?
8. The manner and atmosphere of the exhibition contradicted the claim of a 'self-effacing role.'
9. 'Art,' 'life,' and 'reality' cannot be identical as sameness if we valued life/reality. (Joned, 1994 , pp. 19-29).

articulation of the manifesto (Joned, 1994, pp. 23-27). He did not offer any definition of reality. However, he added that, as he understood it, Zen covers a prevalent way of seeing life or reality. He also stated that life or reality is a unity of the mundane and the mystical (Joned, 1994, p. 26).

Based on the title of the open letter and how the letter was rendered, it appears that his satire criticisms was aimed at Piyadasa. He criticized Piyadasa's understanding of Zen. He disagreed with Piyadasa that 'artist should be expected to theorize or engage in polemical discourse' (Joned, 1994, p. 25). On the whole, it can be said that Salleh Joned successfully compiled a convincing review of TMR in the letter which was written in a parodic manner. This accomplishment is closely linked to his major in English Literature. Nevertheless, Salleh Joned's justification of his art of pissing is interpreted as the provocation rather than as reaction of Zen. His arguments and criticisms made about TMR can be further debated.

In an article entitled *The Question of Influence and Identity in Art* which reviewed The National Fine Art Exhibition (30 Dec 1974 to 18 Jan 1975), Siti Zainon Ismail summed up that each artist has his or her own uniqueness, talent, and trademark style. Indeed, the creations of local artists should be based upon their self-interest and own potential. The artistic exploration may vary by theme or medium or style along their personal journey. This is how artists contribute to the modern art of Malaysia. She suggested that Sulaiman Esa and Piyadasa were still unwilling to accept this significance and so they have gone on to vigorously reject the artist as a unique individual (Zainon, 1975, p. 55, 56). Siti Zainon added, 'The creation of TMR takes on the spiritual reality and abandoned the physical reality, but whether the two artists are aware that they are simply a follower of something that influences them or merely following those whom they admired. In the state to proclaim their creative world as original, maybe, somehow the two artists must have forgotten their own identity and

where they exist in' (Zainon, 1975, p. 55). Siti Zainon expressed her view that the two artists appeared to shoot for the moon, but forgot where their feet were (Sabapathy, 2001, p. 56).

Responding to the criticisms made by Siti Zainon, Piyadasa reacted and viewed that Siti Zainon lacked a reference point in understanding TMR. As reasoned by him, art-making that is focused on the individual as the center of creativity might lead to a situation where the individual 'soul' is the expression of art (Piyadasa, 1975, p. 43). Pertaining to this, the two artists rejected all the humanistic notion of the artist as a 'unique' individual and his ego-centric involvement in the actual creation of a work (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 12). Piyadasa refuted that 'there are a few important criteria which need to be considered in art, and this includes time context, the artistic statement behind the art as well as how the art statement is made' (Piyadasa, 1975, p. 42). There is a need for us to find an alternative philosophical attitude to approach art from a more positive attitude and optimistic outlook towards life itself by now (Piyadasa, 1975, p. 43).

Somehow, it appears that Siti Zainon remains unconvinced. Consequently, in the following reply from Siti Zainon to Piyadasa entitled 'An Essay to Piyadasa' published in *Dewan Sastra* in the May 1975 Issue, she debated that the art statement in the manifesto has appeared before in the West, particularly in America. The works of TMR, including half-full Coca-cola bottles and a discarded raincoat, which were exhibited as be fragments of reality, were mimicking the Dadaist[9] ready-mades (Zainon, 1975, pp. 46, 47). Although Piyadasa has pointed out that the works of TMR were not radiated out from Dada (Piyadasa, 1975, p. 41).

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[9] The 'Dadaist' refers to the 'Dada' artists, intellectuals and writers who were losing their faith in humanity due to the outbreak of World War I (1914-1918). It is believed that Dada' or 'dadaism' was an artistic and literary movement emerged around 1916 in Zurich, Switzerland even when World War 1 was going on. The 'Dadaist' was yearning over the failure of modernity which causes nothing but the lost of human life, living in fear and struggle, perhaps it brought to mind that life is meaningless. The Dadaist 'turned to creating art that had soft obscenities, scattered humor, visible puns and everyday objects (Fleming, 2015). Roger Denson, an American art critic clarifies that the Dadaists turned out to be non-artists. The attitude of the Dadaist towards art was a protest. However, the works produced by the Dadaists are meant to be sarcastic, enjoyable and yet amusing (Denson, 2015).

Hence in the similar issue in *Dewan Sastra*, Piyadasa with his reply *An Answer to Siti Zainon* pointed out to Siti Zainon that the context of art in TMR is different from Dada. Dadaist was a sign of anti-art which propagated the shabiness of art and faults of Western society in 1914-1918 (Piyadasa, 1975, p.41). The found objects displayed in the exhibition/documented in the manifesto played out as 'actual fragments of reality', entails an awareness of the 'cosmic forces'. The exhibition encapsulated the spiritual essence of objects which meant to call for meditation towards the myriad of things within us. In fact the basis of art touches on spirituality aspect of life (Piyadasa, 1975, pp.41-44). Piyadasa also said that in the West, the intellectuals appointed the Asian conception of 'Reality' derived from East to enrich the cultural development in fine art, literature and drama (Piyadasa, 1975, pp.43). Perhaps, what has been pointed out by Piyadasa in this writing is an important source to affirm the basis of art of TMR.

In 1996, Yeoh Jin Leng local artist cum art writer in the essay *American Experiences: Malaysian Images: A Review*, commented that TMR adopted the conceptual ideas of Marcel Duchamp and declared a solution for solving the weaknesses of Malaysian art (Yeoh, 1996, p. 94). Yeoh, has a similar view with Salleh Joned. Yeoh criticized the manifesto as incompetent and unjust. He perceived the manifesto as 'a verbose document clouded with confused and contradictory statements, is a poorly ingested essay in many ways'. He added, 'On further examination the enunciation of *Mystical Reality* and mysticism remain unarticulated, in spite of the copious verbalizations propounded in the document, which is paradoxical and un-Zen in spirit' (Yeoh, 1996, p. 94).[10] In 2006, Jolly Koh pointed out that:

Once again neither the works produced nor their manifesto of *Towards a*

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[10] Leng also pointed out that the introspective re-examination of man's need for self-realization and identificantion is a phenomenon of a post-colonial era. *Mystical Reality* posture that assumption by rejecting "western-centric" humanisim without examining the inner and more profound significance and spirituality of humanism inherent in the great philosophical and religious thoughts of Islam and Buddhism.
Humanism is confused with egotism; spiritualism contradicted with intellectualism' (Yeoh, 1996, p. 94).

Mystical Reality was inherently Malaysian. They were imitations of conceptual art of the kind produced in Hippy California with all the trappings of Zen Buddhism and Eastern "spiritualism." Yet once again, the local Malaysians here failed to embrace the pseudo-Zen philosophy of R. Piyadasa and Suleiman Esa'. (Koh, 2006)

While Nasir Baharuddin opined that although TMR denied the West, it still employed a method of presenting the art event which lay in a gallery context that was very Western. Yap Sau Bin, art practitioner and educator, expressed that TMR, 'in essence, is the borrowing of Western art techniques to speak for ourselves, which is problematic according to the manifesto' (Nur Hanim Khairuddin, 2011, p. 142).

1.3.2   The Writings of T. K. Sabapathy about TMR in 1978 - 2001

Overall, TMR has been evaluated positively by T. K. Sabapathy, art historian. In *Piyadasa Monograph*, 1978, T. K. Sabapathy commented that TMR text has what it takes as a manifesto (Sabapathy, 1978, p. 33). TMR manifesto is a multidisciplinary text which encapsulates the history of ideas, art history, art criticism, aesthetics, philosophy and pop-psychology (Sabapathy, 1978, p. 33). In turn, this also reveals that TMR can be approached from a different lens and multi-disciplines.

In *Vision and Idea, Relooking Modern Art*, 1994, Sabapathy noted that 1970's was a time when local artists had undergone confusion and reflection. In an excerpt from this book, Sabapathy expressed: '…throughout the 1970s, artists began the difficult, painful process of rethinking their positions, and recasting their perception of culture, language, race, state/nation and identity' (Sabapathy, 1994, p. 71). 'May 13'[11] and the National Cultural Congress had brought artists into a disturbing world as well as great changes in artist's thinking (Sabapathy, 1994, pp. 72-73). Seemingly, these events

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[11] 'May 13' refers to the race riot erupted on May 13th 1969 among Malay and Chinese in the wake of the general elections in 1969 (Jones, 2014, p. 76).

were the benchmark that shaped the thinking of Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa in those days.

In *PIYADASA An Overview 1962-2000*, Sabapathy rationalized that the two artists articulated art beyond the defined art; they drilled their creative process into the domain of the silence, emptiness, and formlessness, and to do so, they abandoned the field of art. Similarly, in Sabapathy's evaluation of the letter written by Salleh Joned, he observed that both the two artists and Salleh Joned shared common ground in articulating the essence of art. As remarked by Sabapathy,

> Art comes into existence and can be defined, precisely Salleh Ben Joned was the one who valued TMR from its distinguished meditative force and entity. Redza Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa are tantamount to edging creative process beyond the limits of artistic definitions, into the domains in which silence, emptiness and formlessness prevail; to do so is abandon or leave behind the sphere of art. Approaching the issue with different critical lenses, Salleh Joned appraises it comparably. Art comes into being and can be defined, precisely on the ground of difference underlined by Salleh Joned; it is on those grounds too that art is apprehended and valued as a meditating force and entity. It is important to keep this constantly in mind. (Sabapathy, 2001, p. 65)

Accordingly, Sabapathy's observation is important in understanding the philosophical standpoint of TMR.

1.3.3 A Conversation about TMR by 14 Prominent Figures in 2011

In 2011, fourteen prominent figures were interviewed by Nur Hanim Khairuddin; among are T. K. Sabapathy, Roopesh Sitharan, Hasnul Jamal Saidon, Safrizal Shahir, Yap Sau Bin, Tengku Sabri Ibrahim, Ruzaika Omar Basaree, Zainol Abidin Ahmad Shariff, Raja Yahya Zahabuddin, Simon Soon, Siti Zainon Ismail, Badrolhisham Tahir,

Hasnul Jamal Saidon, Nasir Baharuddin and Noor Azizan Rahman Paiman (Nur Hanim Khairuddin, 2011, pp. 135, 147). Their comments were published in Sulaiman's book *Raja'ah: Art, Idea and Creativity of Sulaiman Esa from 1950s-2011*.

The comments about TMR mostly centered on the weaknesses of TMR in regards to its art conception which leans towards the West. On the other end, T. K. Sabapathy, was once asked the question, 'Should we or shouldn't we be beset with Western art?' in an interview by Nur Hanim Khairuddin. He responded, 'The matter is not that we are beset with Western art (what is the matter with it, anyway?). The matter is that we know little or nothing of any art beside Western art. This is a matter of utmost critical, educational, cultural, political, subjective pertinence, and consequence' (Nur Hanim Khairuddin, 2011, p. 138). Roopesh Sitharan, an educator, curator who views that TMR should not only be seen in the frame of identity but humanity as a whole (Nur Hanim Khairuddin, 2011, p.144). Seeing it from the philosophical vision of TMR, it quests for enlightment in art and life itself.

In contrast, Hasnul Jamal Saidon, an artist and art educator viewed TMR as paradoxical and that it is unconvincing to say that TMR rests on Asian spiritual values. Saidon also remarked that the presentation of the exhibition fall back into the gallery legitimation instead of directing the audience toward the temperament of *Mystical Reality*. (Nur Hanim Khairuddin, 2011, p. 155). Safrizal Shahir acknowledged that TMR is significant in the context of art but the manifesto does not have clearly defined area and fails to be ranged as an art history, art theory or art criticism text in academic context. For him, the manifesto is a faulty text—a view shared by Zakaria Ali in *Seni dan Seniman*: 'If the text is tested logically, each argument shatters' (Nur Hanim Khairuddin, 2011, p. 161).

However, there are also positive comments from art writers, artists, scholars, and educators. Says Yap Sau Bin:

In retrospect, I consider TMR quite a successful collaboration that no one, at least within my knowledge of Malaysian art, has topped. The shared willingness that we put in there, to talk about it. The meaning of art does not lie within objects. It lies in a more complex structure of context in which the artist, the critics and the audience partake in an artistic discourse. (Nur Hanim Khairuddin, 2011, p. 142)

Tengku Sabri Ibrahim on the other hand agreed with Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa that artists should be involved in intellectual discourse because he noticed what has already happened today is that the engagement of local artists in intellectual discourse is still missing. Conceivably, TMR should be seen as a reference and attention ought to be paid on what has been brought up by Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa. As an artist, he took Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa as a reference in regards to his personal development (Nur Hanim Khairuddin, 2011, p.150).

Sabapathy, meanwhile, opined that Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa showed early initiative to battle against the Western 'reliance on the external world as the primary stimulus for visual representation.' Sabapathy added that 'sight, seeing and beholding are highly cherished attributes that may be divinely ordained or spiritually nurtured or humanly cultivated' (Nur Hanim Khairuddin, 2011, p. 137). Simon Soon noted that TMR proposes a pan-Asian form of mystical perception of reality which differs from the Cartesian dualism notion of perception (Nur Hanim Khairuddin, 2011, p. 141). So far, no published writing has explored this significance.

Ruzaika Omar Basaree, artist and art educator remarked that not many artists during that time presented art from a philosophical root derived from Zen and Buddhism. Many who came to the show may not have understood Piyadasa and Esa's art that was Zen and conceptual (Nur Hanim Khairuddin, 2011, p. 153). Similarly, Raja Yahya Zahabuddin who interviewed the two artists for *Dewan Sastra* found that it was a

difficult challenge for TMR to be accepted by the local art intellectuals in the 1970s due to the fact that conceptual art was still new to the local context. He also remarked that TMR aimed at testing the acceptance of conceptual art among the local art community in the 1970s. The art concepts of TMR and its meaning may not have been fully understood by all. However, he believed that Salleh Joned had been able to grasp the fundamental concept of TMR (Nur Hanim Khairuddin, 2011, p. 159). Zainol Abidin Ahmad Shariff, art writer, highlighted that:

> What they (TMR) offered was something that's supposed to lean towards non-western thinking and non-western philosophy. They hinted about the meaning of Zen in the belief of the East, the meaning of Hinduism and perhaps touch a bit, albeit indirectly, on Islamic principles. (Nur Hanim Khairuddin, 2011, p. 139)

Nevertheless, Sulaiman Esa once remarked that TMR is not so much influenced by Islamic or Hinduism thought but Taoism and Zen Buddhism. This informs that there is confusion surrounding the theoretical breadth of TMR. Therefore, the theoretical dimension of the event itself requires further clarification.

Raja Yahya Zahabuddin who worked closely with the two artists, as he was the designer and also the photographer in charge of the manifesto's front cover design and photographing of the ready-mades. He said, 'I was deeply involved from the beginning to the end in terms of the overall design of the manifesto and photography'(Nur Hanim Khairuddin, 2011, p. 159). The front cover of the manifesto is printed in black and shaped by a circle and white outline text in the title *TOWARDS A MYSTICAL REALITY a documentation of jointly initiated experiences by redza piyadasa and suleiman esa.* He adds, the concept of the exhibition remained in a circle and empty space reflects 'emptiness'—in it there is no ending and it meditates the void. The manifesto deliberately maintained uncolored by virtue of the concept of photography in black-white which is more energetic for a circular line (Nur Hanim Khairuddin, 2011, p. 159).

Based on the review presented by Yeoh Jin Leng and Salleh Joned, we see that the manifesto has been charged as un-Zen in spirit and as having discrepancies in its underlying key ideas of Zen. Nevertheless, in the manifesto, Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa never declared that TMR was a Zen-like event. In the researcher's interview with Sulaiman Esa, he neither affirmed nor denied that TMR was a Zen-like event (Personal communication, Esa, June 21, 2016). Despite all these, Haron Rahmat has put forward that TMR was conceptualized based on Zen. T. K. Sabapathy and Raja Zahabuddin Raja Yaacob have stated that TMR has associations with the concept of emptiness, which in turn is related to Zen and Buddhism. This has brought to light the question as to whether TMR has aspects of Zen or not.

1.3.4 Recent Studies about TMR in 2013-2014

There has been a growing interest in research of studying TMR. Recent academic studies that have focused on TMR are found in the following publications: *Re-examining the Objects of Mystical Reality*, 2014, by Chong Kam Kow and Sarena Abdullah; *An empty canvas on which many shadows have already fallen* by Simon Soon 2013, and *Radical Gestures in Malaysian Performance Art,* 2013 by Rahmat Haron.

In *Re-examining the Objects of Mystical Reality,* Chong Kam Kow and Sarena observed that the showcasing of TMR's ready-mades is closely linked with Dickie's Institutional Theory, TMR exhibition is framed within the gallery concept. However, Chong and Sarena argue that TMR's assembled objects in the exhibition hall were different from Duchamp's ready-mades in reason and direction. Chong offers the following view:

In the exhibition, the artists put up everyday objects taken from their original setting in the exhibition space as a means to promote the concept of ephemerality based on Zen/Taoism ideology. They advocated a new way of confronting reality

based on how the audience should 'conceive' reality through concepts rather than 'seeing' things through the retinal or retinal sphere. (Kow & Abdullah, 2014, p. 218)

Chong and Sarena put forward that in TMR, Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa operated as critics that framed their own propositions, ideas, and concepts written in the published manifesto (Kow, 2014, pp. 211-213). The two artists operated as 'initiators' of a mental process that invited the audience into a situation that had already been planned in advance. The goal was to elicit meditative empathy in the audience to be aware of the reality in which the audience had become a part of (Kow, 2014, p. 221). This information will serve as additional knowledge for this study.

On another note, the study conducted by Simon Soon *An empty canvas on which many shadows have already fallen,* he proposed that TMR was established to propagate the concept of Taoism and Zen. TMR aimed at challenging the Cartesian individuality and dualism notion of perception (Soon, 2013, p. 62). It appears that, in TMR, the two artists intended to alter the habitual-dualistic perception of reality to a non-dual perception of reality. Still, no academic writing has focused on how TMR broke down the dualistic view of things. Therefore, this calls for a more detailed explanation.

In his article *Radical Gestures in Malaysian Performance Art,* Rahmat Haron remarks that in the same event during which Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa imposed the conceptualization of Zen, Salleh Joned's art of pissing embodied the performance of Zen (Haron, 2013, p. 273). This raises the question in which aspect of TMR is influenced by Zen philosophy.

Based on the review on the critiques and responses put forward, it is undeniable that Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa had successfully placed the text in the hands of the art writers, artists, art scholars and art educators to observe, question and argue further depending on their individual concerns. The interaction of art writers, artists, art

scholars and art educators with TMR is a clear evidence of its contribution to Malaysian art discourse. The divergent views covered by art writers, artists, art scholars and art educators in published sources have benefited this study as it underpinning the basis for analyzing and interpreting the manifesto text.

1.4   Statement of Problem

So far it is apparent that TMR is important from the historical setting. The commitment of the two artists of producing art in a discourse context, in the take of TMR challenging the Western grounds of art, aiming for critiques through the manifesto writing without doubt TMR is one of the most important exhibition. The responses and reactions of the art viewers in regards to the manifesto have transformed TMR as a lively event. Now TMR is frequently acknowledged by contemporary writers as one of the important art events that have taken place in the Southeast Asian region (Stock, 2015).

Up until then, TMR exhibition has been re-exibited at National Art Gallery twice. Recently TMR is re-exhibited at National Gallery of Singapore and won the best exhibition honor (Personal communication, Esa, June 21, 2016). The manifesto has been included in as the Documentation of Modern Asian Art at the University of Philippines. The manifesto has also served as a study text for graduates in local universities as well as abroad (Sabapathy, 2001, p. 44). TMR represents a revolutionary work that sparked off criticisms from local art intellectuals. Indeed, all these reflect TMR's value and importance.

Even though TMR has attracted a great deal of attention with the untested hypothesis claims that the manifesto is a problematic text among the art intellectuals but yet and there is an obvious lack of analysis conducted on the manifesto text in Malaysia. In response to this gap it is relevant to conduct a textual anlaysis on the written manifesto.

Current critique posed by art critic Yeoh Jin Leng, charged that *Mystical Reality* coined by Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa has remained unarticulated. Whether or not *Mystical Reality* is articulated cannot be claimed as true without further analysis made on the manifesto content. With regards to these issues, an analysis is conducted on the written manifesto content to interpret what defines *Mystical Reality* through the phrases and concepts. To a certain extent, D. T. Suzuki's conception of 'Reality' will be taken into account in order to determine the meaning of *Mystical Reality*.

Literature published so far has made general observations that the art of TMR operates on its own propositions, ideas, and concepts as written in the published manifesto. However, attempts have not been made to explore further on how TMR were established in the *Mystical Reality* context of the art. This is indeed, the area covered and explored in this study by approaching TMR from a literary strategy; textual analysis and content analysis.

A review of the literature reveals that no one has explored the concept of 'emptiness' (*sunyata*) in TMR. The concept of 'sunyata' and its function and inter-relationship with the mystical experience will be explored further in this dissertation.

1.5   Research Objectives and Aims

This dissertation is written with the following objectives:

1. To analyze and interpret the manifesto text using Textual Analysis and Content Analysis.

2. To examine the manifesto in reference to the criticisms/issues that have been brought up by art writers, artists, art scholars and art educators.

Correspondingly, this dissertation is designed with the aim to examine untested hypothesis made about the manifesto as a problematic text as well as to recognize what is meant by *Mystical Reality* in relation with the art of TMR.

1.6 Research Questions

In line with the research objectives and aims, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

a) Question 1: Is the manifesto problematic within the verbal, textual and linguistic aspects of text?

b) Question 2: How was the art of *Mystical Reality* established by the two artists?

c) Question 3: Why was the spectator invited to contemplate the event from a mental meditative and contemplative scheme of actions?

d) Question 4: What is the meaning of *Mystical Reality*?

Research Question 1 is answered in Chapter Three of this dissertation whereas Research Questions 2, 3 and 4 are answered in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

1.7 Significance of Study

Over the past 40 years, no in-depth analysis of the manifesto text has been carried out and this extensive text-based analysis may provide a better appreciation about TMR itself as well as a useful resource in enriching the reader's engagement with TMR based on some of the observations made of the manifesto.

This dissertation's methodology of using references cited in the text to expand on the meaning in the text contributes to a new understanding of TMR in regards to its art experiences and concepts, philosophical ideas which has not yet been explored in current published literature.

The importance of this dissertation is its contribution to the possible knowledge on 'Reality' in TMR's context, since the attention given to TMR by the art critics are not centered on interpreting the meaning of *Mystical Reality*.

The interpretation made that TMR's main contribution to artistic discourse

during that time was its conception of 'Reality' that lies in Zen which asserts that the art of *Mystical Reality* did not comprise of objects but of mystical experiences, is a novel contribution to the current literature published on TMR.

Indeed, this dissertation offers a more holistic reading of TMR which takes into consideration not only the manifesto but also the key references on which the manifesto is based on; this includes the text's references to D. T. Suzuki, that in itself is a contribution.

By contextualizing the conception of 'Reality' between Zen and TMR, the meaning of *Mystical Reality* is summed up in the last line of the manifesto. It appears that the two artists aims to inform that 'Reality' is a state within us, an experience of the wholeness of things without separation made by rational faculty by means of a 'return to the original state of purity and transparency' (Suzuki, 1973, p.359). Hence, this is translated by the two artists in the act that the artistic purpose behind the art-making of TMR is to bring the spectator closer to 'Reality' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p.21).

1.8   Scope and Limitation of the Study

This dissertation is mainly confined to the study of the manifesto text. Given that the criticisms are impending from various perspectives, it is not possible to address every criticism. Instead, the topics in this research are categorised according to key issues raised, which include inaccurate conceptions of Zen, contradictory and hypocritical nature of the text, and problematic conception of 'Reality'. This dissertation does not attempt to defend TMR but instead attempts to analyze the manifesto based on textual evidence. Therefore, claims made are based on the evidence found from the manifesto text.

The knowledge contributed to this study is based on the interaction between texts and the researcher. It is believes that no analysis can be made without inclusion of

the supporting texts. Therefore, this study attempts to analyze the theoretical basis of TMR through the study of the manifesto with inclusion of the texts derived from D. T. Suzuki to allow the philosophical idea of TMR to emerge throughout this study.

The discovery and argument made about this dissertation is relying on the reseacher's 'interpretation'. Interpretation might then be understood as the interaction of something with the observer which has more than one of several possibilities (McCullagh, 1984, pp. 231- 232). This means that there is no definitive answer in interpretation. Nevertheless, it is crucial that interpretation is based on a close analysis of the manifesto text; individual words, concepts, phrases, sentences and allusions which are relevant to the contexts of the texts.

Although Redza Piyadasa has passed on, interviews were held with Dr Sulaiman Esa to deepen understanding of artistic contexts that may not be obtainable from the text itself.

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter proceeds to discuss the research methods used in conducting this study and also informing the main text and secondary texts used in this study. This chapter also covers the explanation on why textual analysis, content analysis and interviews are adopted, besides providing an outline of the procedure involved in conducting a textual analysis and content analysis of the manifesto, as well as the researcher's role and the theoretical standpoint of this study.

There are overlapping between these interpretive methods of research and it is hoped that through integrating these interpretive methods, this dissertation provides a more cohesive analysis of TMR that is aligned with the research objectives and research aims.

2.2 The Main Text of Study

Despite the ready-mades, the written manifesto text[12] *Towards a Mystical Reality: A Documentation of Experiences Initiated Jointly by Redza Piyadasa and Suleiman Esa* is the work created by Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa. As mentioned by Krishen Jit the manifesto is the exhibition and it is the manifesto text that gives meaning to *Mystical Reality* and leads the spectator into appreciating and experiencing TMR. It is relevant to take the manifesto text as the subject of this study. Within the 10,000 words of the manifesto, attention is paid on the words, lines, phrases and a body of text embedded in the manifesto for the reason to discover the context, concepts, experiences and philosophical ideas of the art of TMR.

In addition to it is the manifesto text that speaks to the readers the objectives and

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[12] 'Text' from the most fundamental level refers to the terms, phrases, sentences, body of texts or paragraphs in a document (Google Dictionary, 2016). 'Term' is a 'word' or 'phrase' used to describe a thing or to express a concept (Google Dictionary, 2016). 'Word' is a single unit of language that has meaning and can be spoken or written (Cambridge Dictionary, 2016). A 'phrase' is a group of word that is part of, rather that the whole of, a sentence' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2016).

intentions of the two artists and, the theoretical dimension of the art of TMR. Consequently, the gap left in the speech of the text, theoretical controversy, 'linguistic oddity' can be found in the text may confirm whether the manifesto is a problematic text (Barry, 2002, p. 58).
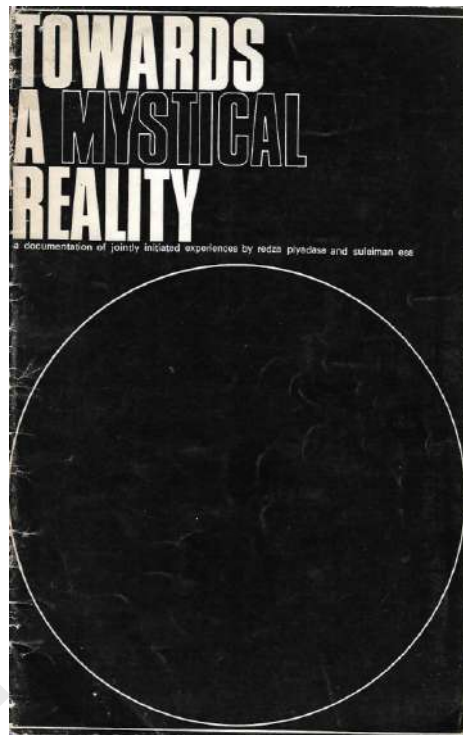
Figure 2.1: The front cover page of the manifesto. The content of the published manifesto is enclosed in APPENDIX A.

The manifesto consists of six (**6**) chapters and 31 pages of writing. From these chapters, Chapter **1**: *The Dilemma of Modern Malaysian Art*, Chapter **2**: *"Anti Formalist" and "Anti-Aesthetic"*, Chapter **3**: *"No Humanistic or Subjective Intent"*, Chapter **4**: *The Relevance of A Mystical Viewpoint*, Chapter **5**: *A Mystical Concept of Time and Event*, Chapter **6:** *A "Mental/Meditative/Mystical" viewpoint of reality as opposed to a "Spatio/Temporal/Sensorial" viewpoint of the Western artist.* All references to the chapters (**1-6**) and page numbers (**1-23**) in this chapter of the dissertation are made in reference to the manifesto itself (The published manifesto is attached in Appendix **A**). All references to the chapters and page numbers of Chapter Three of the dissertation are

made in reference to the manifesto itself.

2.3   The Supporting Texts

D. T. Suzuki has been cited in the manifesto and he is the central figure introducing Zen to John Cage and Alan Watt. Apart from the manifesto, the content of text to study in interpreting the theoretical basis of TMR is arrived from D. T. Suzuki's key writings. The knowledge of *Reality* and the contextual meanings of the phrases, concepts and terms cited in relation with the context of art—*Mystical Reality* are obtained through the knowledge of Zen derived from D. T. Suzuki. This in turn also means that D. T Suzuki's conception of Zen is one of the most valuable sources to affirm whether *Mystical Reality* is articulated or not.

However, it is unavoidable that other references will also be cited to clarify certain arguments. Therefore, the supporting texts which aid the interpretation of TMR include, but are not limited to:

a.   *Studies in Zen*, D. T. Suzuki, 1955

b.   *Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings*, D. T. Suzuki, 1956

c.   *Mysticism Christian and Buddhist*, D. T. Suzuki, 1957

d.   *The Way of Zen*, Alan Watt, 1957

e.   *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*, D. T. Suzuki, Erich Fromm & Richard De Martino, 1960

f.   *Zen and Japanese Culture*, D. T. Suzuki, 1973

g.   *Buddhism: The Living Philosophy*, Daisaku Ikeda, 1974

h.   *Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticisms,* Fritjof Capra, 1976

i.   *The Buddha Eye: An Anthology of the Kyoto School and Its Contemporaries,* What is the "I", Self the Unattainable*, The Buddhist Conception of Reality*, Essay by Suzuki Teitaro Daisetz, 1982.

j.   *Nonduality,* M.A., National University of Singapore, David Loy, 1984

k.   *Picturing Mind: Paradox, Indeterminacy and C onsciousness in Art & Poetry,* John Danves, 2006

l.   *Artistic Detachment in Japan and t he West: Psychic Distance in Comparative Aesthetics,* Steve Odin, 2001

To obtain a brief history of the emergence of TMR event and an overview of the criticisms forwarded towards TMR in the past, the eight articles published in *Dewan Sastra* from 1972 to 1975 (as follows from item "a" to "h", is enclosed in APPENDIX C) and the related literature are included to support this research.

a.   *Seni abstrack: kebaratan atau ketimuran*, Redza Piyadasa, April 1972

b.   *Kesungguhan terbukti dalam karya seniman malaysia/filipina*, Redza Piyadasa, March 1974

c.   *Wawancara dengan dua pelukis konseptual*, Raja Yahaya Zahabuddin, Julai 1974

d.   *Soal pengaruh dan identiti dalam senilukis*, Siti Zainon Ismail, Mac 1975,

e.   *Satu jawaban terhadap tulisan siti zainon tentang soal kreatif, pengaruh dan identiti, Siti Zainon Ismail,* Mac 1975

f.   *Suatu esei untuk piyadasa*, Siti Zainon Ismail, Mei 1975

g.   *Satu lagi jawaban untuk siti zainon*, Redza Piyadasa, Jun 1975

h.   *Kencing dan kesenian*, Salleh Ben Joned, Julai 1975

i.   *Dokumentasi 72 recent works by* sulaiman esa and redza piyadasa, 1972

j.   *Piyadasa in Conversation with T. K. Sabapathy, An Overview of Piyadasa 1960-2000.*

k.   *The Art of Pissing, An Open Letter to Redza Piyadasa*, Salleh Ben Joned, 1994.

l.   *Interviews with Prominent Art Personalities* by Nur Hanim Mohamad Khairuddin in *Raja'ah: Art, Idea and Creativity of Sulaiman Esa from 1950's -2011, 2011.*

m.   *American Experiences: Malaysian Images-A Review*, Yeoh Jin Leng, *Art and Thought 1952-1995*, 1996.

n.   *An Empty Canvas which Many Shadows have already Fallen*, Simon Soon, 2013.

o.   *Radical Gesture in Malaysia Performance Art*, Rahmat Haron, 2013.

p.   *Re-examining the Objects of Mystical Reality*, Sarena Abdullah and Chong Kam Kow, 2014.

2.4   The Approaches to the Study of TMR

This research employs Textual Analysis as the research method to conduct an assessment on the manifesto, on the verbal, textual and linguistic aspects of the text. Content Analysis is employed to explore the manifesto content in regards to the individual phrases, concepts and citations to identify how the art of *Mystical Reality* was established and what is meant by *Mystical Reality* according to the two artists.

2.4.1   Textual Analysis

As this dissertation attempts to conduct an analysis on the manifesto text, Textual Analysis is the research method used by the researcher to conduct this research. Frey & Botan & Krep (1999) state that 'Textual Analysis is a method of communication reseacher use to describe and interpret the message embedded in a text'. The textual analyst functions as 'describer and interpreter' (p. 225). Also, the textual analyst views text through a method, or 'lens' that illuminates the meaning of the text (p. 230).

The term 'textual' pertains to a text or a number of texts. 'Textual' also refers to the way in which something has been written (Cambridge Dictionary, 2016). Jacques Derrida highlighted that 'the context presents in an author's writing communicates what he has written, the entire environment and the horizon of his experience, and above all the intention, the wanting to-say-what-he-means' (Derrida, 1988, p. 9). Norman Fairclough views that the 'text' expresses the author's mental world in the situational

context (Fairclough, 2003, p. 27).

Wolfgang Iser takes note that text presents the said and unsaid. As what lies in the text and not, depends on the reader to make sense of the 'gap left by the text itself'(Iser, 1972, pp. 284, 285). As such, this offers the chance for researcher to fill in the gap on what is unsaid.

Whereas Jacques Lacan observed that speech, word, and language are beyond one's conscious control (Farmer, 2010, p. 105). In Lacan's essay entitled Écrits, he holds that the tones and words played on by a person do indicate hidden motives. 'The whole reality of its effects lies in the gift of speech' (Hewitson, 2016). This signifies that the thoughts, attitudes and motives of a person are reflected in tone of speech and words used.

Derrida also views that 'writers may have clearly stated intentions concerning their texts, however the author misspeaks or loses control of language and says what was supposedly not meant to be said' (Bressler, 2011, p.117).

By implying the different views about text by Iser, Fairclough, Lacan and Derrida, then this has opened up the possibility to identify the two artists' mental world followed by examining the aspects that can be read as the misspeaks in relation to the theoretical standpoint of TMR. Ever since, the text gives clues whether or not the two artists work in the sentiment, and are consistent from the benchmark set through the analysis on the verbal, textual and linguistic aspects of the said text.

Analysis includes the process of breaking complex texts down into their fundamental elements for further discussion, investigation, examination and interpretation. In order to discover how the parts of texts are interelated, this study uses the technique of analysis introduced by Steve Baty (2009), as follows:

 i. Transformation: Processing the data (text) to arrive at some new representation of the observations.

ii. Summarization: Collating similar observations together and treating them collectively.

iii. Aggregation: closely related to summarization, this technique draws together data from multiple sources.

iv. Abstraction: The process of stripping out the particulars – information that relates to a specific example – so that more general characteristics come to the fore.

v. Synthesis: The process of drawing together concepts, ideas, objects and other qualitative data in new configurations, or to create something entirely new.

(Extracted from Steve Baty, *Techniques of Analysis*, 2009).

2.4.2 Content Analysis

Content Analysis is a procedure of organizing narrative, qualitative text into emerging theme and concepts (Gibbs, 2011). Content analyst 'focuses on the characteristics of language as communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text' (Budd, Thorp, & Donohew, 1967; Lindkvist, 1981; McTavish & Pirro, 1990; Tesch, 1990).

In this regards, Content Analysis is the method of investigation to uncover the information needed to test the hypothesis whether *Mystical Reality* is articulated or not. Prior to it is the hypothesizes that the clue of what is meant by *Mystical Reality* can be retrieved from the philosophical phrases and concepts as embedded in the manifesto content. Content Analysis is employed in this study to allow the meaning of *Mystical Reality* to emerge by seeing the connection between the 'mystical' thinking of art, 'mystical' approach of reality and the initiated experiences through the study of manifesto content and references made from the supporting texts. In one way or another, Content Analysis is selected to answer the Research Questions 2-4.

The approaches of Content Analysis used in this study are Conventional Content Analysis, Directed Content Analysis and Summative Content Analysis. According to Hsiu &. Shannon (2005), Conventional Content Analysis begins with the observation directly from the text in the course of breaking down nearly 10,000 words of the manifesto content into different codes (APPENDIX B). Correspondingly, Conventional Content Analysis is applied in this study for the following reasons:

a.   To grasp an understanding of TMR in general before analyzing and interpreting text.

b.   As an initial stage to recognize what has been covered and what has not, that impedes the process of understanding TMR.

c.   To grasp an understanding of TMR from its theoretical standpoint.

Hsiu & Shannon explain that Directed Content Analysis is used when existing research text on a phenomenon is limited (Hsiu & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281). Directed Content Analysis is employed in this research since insufficient knowledge is provided to understand the conception of 'Reality' in TMR's context. This knowledge is obtained by further researching on the cited philosophical statements associated with D. T. Suzuki. Accordingly, Directed Content Analysis, which was chosen in order to:

a.   Interpret how the two artists define 'Reality' in TMR directed by the lens or conception of 'Reality' framed by D. T. Suzuki.

b.   Recognize the linkage between the art of TMR and Zen by means of developing a logical approach of mapping the relation between the art premises, art experiences of TMR and Zen and through the study of the manifesto theoretical content.

Summative Content Analysis starts with identifying the associated context and to understand the purpose and contextual use of certain terms (Hsiu &. Shannon, 2005, p. 1283). Summative Content Analysis is applied in this study for the purpose of

identifying the contextual meaning of *Mystical Reality* (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 14).

2.4.3   The Researcher's Role in conducting Textual Analysis and Content Analysis

In the context of this study, researcher takes on a close reading of the manifesto text followed by critical reading on the manifesto content. Through a close reading on the manifesto text it is the duty of the researcher to spot for disarrangement, misspeaks, underneath contradictions in regards to the benchmarks sets and theoretical basis of TMR in reference to the arrangement of text, choice of words and explanation of certain phenomena as claimed in the manifesto. This is made by deconstructing the flow of the argument to see whether there is a breakdown on text.

On the other hand, in conducting a content anlaysis on the manifesto, the researcher is required to recognize the meaning of *Mystical Reality* by relating the conception of 'Reality' from D. T. Suzuki with TMR. The whole idea of interpreting the meaning of *Mystical Reality* is to conclude the interpretation of *Mystical Reality* in a logical sense by recognizing the connection between the contemplative and meditative scheme, initiated 'mystical' experiences which in turn this reflects how the art of *Mystical Reality* is established.

The process starts by offering a background knowledge mainly about D. T. Suzuki' and his context of Zen. Later, the analysis is expanded to explore underlying concept, art premises and working practices of the two artists in TMR in relation to Zen, followed by identifying the relationship between ultimate function of meditation and contemplation schemes and the initiated art experiences of TMR before drawing to the conclusion of what is meant by *Mystical Reality.* Therefore, this research involves a study of Zen.

2.4.4 The Theoretical Standpoint of Textual Analysis and Content Analysis

As the two artists have set on to work within the benchmarks set: (a) No emotional considerations would be allowed to dictate and manipulate the forms that we use. (paragraph 2, page 12) (b) Egoistic preoccupation is non-existent in the scheme of TMR. (paragraph 2, page 21) (c) All decisions are made jointly to play down the individualistic considerations. (paragraph 2, page 12) (d) 'A conscious detachment from the work of art' (paragraph 2, page 12). Therefore, a textual analysis is conducted within the benchmark of investigating whether or not the two artists worked under these stands. These will be accessed through the textual appearance; structural elements and rhetorical features of text as well as the language used in the manifesto. Further, the underlying philosophical ideas that shaped the benchmarks as framed by the two artists to work on, will be identified.

Among the terms which consistently appears in the manifesto are: 'mental' for a total of 13 times, 'minds' a total of 10 times, 'mystical' a total of 18 times and 'Zen' a total of 13 times. The phrases 'the exponent of Zen', meditation and contemplation scheme of things and the vocabularies like 'sunyata', the *working of 'sunyata' within oneself* and 'no-mind', which appears in the manifesto text offers a clue that TMR is associated with Zen. The term 'contemplation', 'ego', 'existence', 'illusion', 'meditation', 'mental', 'meditative empathy', 'no-mind', *wu-shin*, 'samsara', 'second mind', *sunyata* are the terms borrowed from Zen/Zen Buddhism (citation as shown in APPENDIX B). This reveals that TMR has a theoretical connection with Zen/Zen Buddhism. Therefore, this thesis takes on the stand that TMR is a Zen/Zen Buddhism-inspired art event.

The researcher noticed the connotation of 'mystical' which constantly appeared in the manifesto is synonymous with 'Zen'. In another words, 'Zen' is the basis that establishes the mystical experiences, mystical approach of art and the philosophical art

thinking and premises of TMR.

The interpretation of the art of *Mystical Reality* is situated within the philosophical discourse that the two initiators partaken by means of the 'mystical' thinking and philosophical idea of art, the 'mystical' experiences of TMR, the 'mystical' viewpoint of approaching *Reality*. The main categorization of art experiences of TMR are mental, mystical and time experiences of art. In addition, the phrase 'mystical approach' has appeared in the manifesto, in paragraph one on page 13 twice and paragraphs three and four on page 14. It is consider that what defines 'mystical approach' is useful to uncover on what basis that forms the conception of 'mystical'.

The initial deduction deems that it is the concept of 'sunyata' which facilitates the 'mystical' experiences of TMR. In other words, conceptually, it is the non-dualistic element of 'sunyata' which serves as the peculiar system that informs the 'mystical' experiences initiated by Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa. In addition to this, while conducting the textual analysis this would bring into the question whether or not the philosophical insight of 'sunyata' has been applied in the manifesto crafting from textual and linguistic aspects of the text in order to examine the efficiency of the two artitsts from the application of theory to practice.

Seemingly, the 'mystical' context of the art of TMR has been linked with D. T. Suzuki, Zen scholar. In consequence, D. T. Suzuki's context of Zen was laid as the foundation in interpreting the philosophical thinking, the working practices and art premises of TMR. Subsequently, the meaning *Mystical Reality* is concluded by contextualizing two different contexts of text between the manifesto and Zen/Zen Buddhism text derived from D. T. Suzuki in order to identify what *Mystical Reality* means.
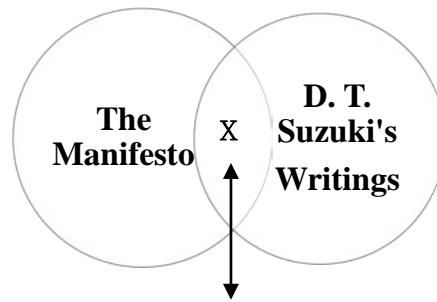
X: The possible meaning of *Mystical Reality*

Figure 2.2: Illustrates the idea of contextualizing two different texts to bring about the knowledge of 'Reality' in TMR.

In *Zen Buddhism and Its Influence on Japanese Culture* D. T. Suzuki also pointed out that Zen has its own way of handling 'Reality' being' (Suzuki, 1973, p. 218). Apart from the textual appeareance of the manifesto, D. T. Suzuki's conception of 'Reality' is an important signpost that concludes what is meant by *Mystical Reality*. In addition 'sunyata' is an iconic concept of interpreting the meaning of *Mystical Reality*. It is believed that by recognizing the logic causal between phrases and concept of 'sunyata' and the conception of 'Reality' in reference to D. T. Suzuki, it is possible to distills the meaning of *Mystical Reality*.

As noticed in several of D. T. Suzuki's writings, his articulation of Zen repeatedly emphasizes on Zen experiences, 'satori', an elaboration on the unity of 'subject' and 'object' as well as the cosmic consciousness. The researcher noticed that the initiated 'mystical' experiences of TMR speak about the reconciliation of the dualistic separation 'he' and 'object' and an awareness of the forces and energies (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 21). This similarity may serve as a focal point for researcher to further investigate whether or not the 'mystical' experience of art in TMR is highlighting the Zen experience.

Zen and Zen Buddhism are interchangeable as the value, concept and philosophical idea of Zen is built from Buddhism. Over time, D. T. Suzuki's articulation of Zen establishes a stronghold over the Buddhist philosophical idea of 'sunyata', the

nature of existence and being as well as on the basis of enlightenment experience of Buddha. Given that it is hard to draw a precise line between Zen and Zen Buddhism. Therefore, no clear division is made between Zen and Zen Buddhism in this study. Hence, Zen and Zen Buddhism are used interchangeably throughout this writing.

2.4.5 Interview

A semi-structured interview was conducted with Dr Sulaiman Esa and those who had been connected with *TMR*. These interviews serve to supplement the textual analysis and help to clarify particular contexts that are not evident in the text itself.

2.4.5.1 An Interview with Sulaiman Esa

Dr Sulaiman Esa is fully aware of the comments made by the local art community about TMR. Having declared that art is a dialectical activity, for him TMR is opened for criticisms. To him, TMR is more appreciated now (Personal communication, Esa, June 21, 2016).

He recalls that it has been more than forty years since his partnership with Piyadasa. TMR was written based on their intuitive tact and what they felt at that moment in their literary development as young radical artists. Their artistic rebellion was expressed throughout the manifesto arising from their frustration for being oppressed into colonized mindset. We aimed at defending the relevance of the 'mystical' nature of Eastern artistic approach, viewpoint of Reality in approaching art, corresponding to the effects of colonization.

Indeed, TMR was a platform that resonate his commitment towards art in the face of Western cultural domination and the social and political issues during his time and a transition period to rethink his role and identity as an artist. In summing up as to what they were trying to achieve from TMR, he states, 'We are trying to bring the viewer (spectator) a mystical perception of reality, a new way of engaging with art, as

there is more than one possibility in presenting creativity' (Personal communication, Esa, June 21, 2016).

2.5   Research Procedures

The procedure to conduct this dissertation generally involves the steps below:

1.   Identifying the main text and supporting texts of this study. Researching the relevant literature to identify issues that have been addressed in past literature. Recognizing the hypothesis claims made about the manifesto and issues that need to be addressed about TMR.

2.   Formulating research objectives, research questions to be answered and purpose of conducting research.

3.   Informing research methods for data collection.

4.   Conducting a content analysis on the manifesto via coding on the manifesto and breaking down the manifesto into its constituent parts (APPENDIX B).

5.   Identifying theoretical standpoint of TMR and noting how keywords, phrases from different parts of the topic relate to one another.

6.   Conducting a textual analysis on the manifesto to address the issues and its contradictions.

7.   Plan and gather content of information needed to test the hypothesis.

8.   Establishing thesis and reporting the findings of textual and content analysis.

9.   Conducting interview.

10.   Suggestion for future studies.

2.6   Research Design

The entire research process is concluded in a Research Design diagram in Figure 2.2, illustrating the linkage between the Research Objectives, Research Aims, Research Questions, Research Methods employed and the Chapter Outlines.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the manifesto in reference to the issues/criticisms that have been brought up by art writers, artists, art scholars and art educators.
2. To analyze and interpret the manifesto text using Textual Analysis and Content Analysis.

RESEARCH AIM 1

To examine untested hypothesis claims made about the manifesto as a problematic text.

RESEARCH AIM 2

To recognize what is meant by *Mystical Reality* in relation with the art of TMR.

RESEARCH QUESTION
RQ 1: Is the manifesto problematic within the verbal, textual and linguistic aspects of text?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ 2: How was the art of *Mystical Reality* established by the two artists?

RQ 3: Why was the spectator invited to contemplate the event from a mental meditative and contemplative scheme of actions?

RQ 4: What is the meaning of *Mystical Reality*?

RESEARCH METHOD
Textual Analysis

THEORETICAL STANDPOINT
of conducting Textual Analysis

CHAPTER 3: The Verbal, Textual & Linguistic Stage of Textual Analysis of the Manifesto.

RESEARCH METHOD
Content Analysis

THEORETICAL STANDPOINT
of conducting Content Analysis

CHAPTER 1: Intro to Dissertation, Context to TMR & Critiques and Responses of TMR in the past.

CHAPTER 2: Research Methodology; The Main Text & Primary Text, Approaches to the study of TMR, Theoretical Standpoint of Research, Research Design & Procedures.

CHAPTER 4: A Content Analysis of the Art & Meaning of *Mystical Reality.*

CHAPTER 5: Conclusion & Recommendations.

RESEARCH FINDINGS:

1 The meaning of *Mystical Reality* is summed up in the last line of the manifesto text.
2.The contextual meaning of *Mystical Reality* is surrounded by philosophical discourse partaken by Redza Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa, which refers to the 'mystical' thinking of art, 'mystical' approach of reality and the initiated experiences that is 'mental', 'mystical' and 'meditative' — this in sum, is the art of TMR.
3.Despite the contradiction found in the manifesto, TMR remained an art event which has sparked off a productive debate on art.

Figure 2.3: Research Design

CHAPTER THREE:

THE VERBAL, TEXTUAL & LINGUISTIC STAGE OF TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

OF TMR MANIFESTO

3.1   Introduction to Textual Analysis

This chapter is written in response to the Research Question (1) Is the manifesto problematic within the verbal, textual and linguistic aspects of text? Despite the criticisms that have been brought up by art writers, artists, art scholars and art educators, it seems meaningful to examine the untested hypothesis claims made about the manifesto as a problematic text. Hence, this chapter attempts to conduct an assessment on the manifesto text. This is conducted through a close reading of the manifesto text and re-read of the manifesto text repeatedly.

It seems necessary to mention again that the manifesto consists of six (**6**) sub-chapters and (31) pages of writing. From these chapters, Chapter **1**: *The Dilemma of Modern Malaysian Art*, Chapter **2**: *"Anti Formalist" and "Anti-Aesthetic"*, Chapter **3**: *"No Humanistic or Subjective Intent"*, Chapter **4**: *The Relevance of A Mystical Viewpoint*, Chapter **5**: *A Mystical Concept of Time and E vent*, Chapter **6:** *A "Mental/Meditative/Mystical" viewpoint of reality as opposed to a "Spatio/Temporal/Sensorial" viewpoint of the Western artist.* All references to the chapters (**1-6**) and page numbers (**1-31**) in this chapter of the dissertation are made in reference to the manifesto itself (The published manifesto is attached as APPENDIX **A**).

In the context of this study, the focus of the assessment is placed on the verbal, textual and linguistic aspects of the text. At the first stage of the textual analysis attention is paid on the individual phrases, the arrangement, explanation and summarization of certain phenomena of the text. This is aligned with the attention to identify the gap left in the speech of the text itself. Whereas, the second stage of the

textual analysis 'takes a more overall view of the text' in relation to the concepts or key ideas that have been put forward in the manifesto. This would raise the question whether the philosophical insight of 'sunyata' is reflected in the manifesto crafting and whether the two artists did work under the benchmarks set through the observation made on the textual appearance.

The third stage of the textual analysis on the manifesto is conducted to examine the linguistic context of the manifesto by assessing whether the words embedded in the manifesto is in compliance with the underlying key concepts and benchmark set by the two artists. The 'linguistic' stage of textual analysis highlights the 'linguistic oddity' in the aspect of the word itself in its secure meaning and in the context as to how the word is used. So, the 'linguistic' stage is carried out by looking into the 'term' itself to see whether it is misrepresented from the underlying context or phenomena, and from each part of speech, attention is paid on how the 'words' are used (Barry, 2002, p. 58).

As the manifesto will be accessed through the verbal, textual and linguistic aspects of the text; structural elements and rhetorical features of text as well as the language used in the manifesto are taken into consideration in conducting the analysis. The relevant evidence will be cited to highlight the shatters, contradictions and theoretical issues of the text if any.

In short, through a close reading on the manifesto text itself any disarrangement, misspeaks, underlying contradictions in regards to the benchmarks set, and theoretical basis of TMR ranging from the arrangement of text, choice of words and explanation of certain phenomena and prevarications, inherent in concepts and working practices of the two artists, are presented.

3.2   The Verbal Stage of Textual Analysis

This sub-chapter analyzes the manifesto text from the 'verbal' aspect of text. After reading and rereading of the manifesto, it is noticed that the manifesto is difficult to comprehend due to the following reasons:

3.2.1   The text is disorganized and does not follow a logical order

Based on the evidence found, it is apparent that the line of text tends to hop back and forward between points rather than having similar points grouped together in one section.

Example 1

The content of text related to the 'scheme of things' appeared all over the manifesto text from pages 8 to 23. Among the 'scheme of things' which appear in the manifesto are summarized as follows:

i.   To reject the "formal-aesthetic" consideration. (chapter **2**, paragraph 5, page 9)

ii.   To reject the uniqueness of the artistic soul (chapter **2**, paragraph 1, page 10)

iii.   A new respect for the spectator's ability to confront reality directly. (chapter **2**, paragraph 1, page 10)

iv.   A serious need to reconsider the "role" of the artist. chapter **3**, paragraph 1, page 12)

v.   Problems pertaining to actual gravity and movement were also manifested in our scheme of things. (chapter **2**, paragraph 1, page 8)

vi.   The willingness of the spectator to accept an altogether way of perceiving form that is purely sensorial. (chapter **6**, paragraph 2, page 23)

vii.   Concept governing "beauty", "harmony", "structure", "style", "symbolism", and "techniques" are non-existent. (chapter **6**, paragraph 1, page 21)

viii. The artists' egoistic preoccupations are non-existent. (chapter **6**, paragraph 2,

page 21)

The art of TMR is bound up by the scheme of things ranging from the criteria to appreciate TMR to the roleplay of the artists in TMR. Due to the disorganised location of certain subject matters, these scheme of things are set out in different chapters, it is opined that this might make it difficult for the reader in establishing the relationship among these scheme of things.

Example 2

 The same goes to the 'pre-requisite' of the art of TMR. One is indicated on page 12, and another is on page 22.

It is noted the 'pre-requisite' of the art of TMR on page 12 that:

> The decision to throw overboard everything that we have learned in a Western art college became a necessary 'pre-requisite'.

Later the 'pre-requisite' is stated on page 22 as:

> There are fundamental pre-requisites that seem necessary for anyone wanting to understand and appreciate our work. For one thing, it seems necessary for the spectator himself to get rid of any preconceived notions about what 'Art' is and ought to be.

> This first pre-requisite of meditation and contemplation constitutes a significant objective in our work. Alan Watts in his book, 'The Way of Zen' […].

The description of 'pre-requisite' stated in different sections instead of one may distract readers' attention in catching up with the core idea of ths'pre-requisite' of the art of TMR

Example 3

On page 12, under chapter **3** of the manifesto with the heading, *"No Humanistic or Subjective Intent"*, the two artists touched on form. They questioned the manipulation

of form, the types of form, and its purpose of production. They articulated as follows:

> That so many modern Asian artists involved with modern art have so readily accepted the scientific and humanistic view of things without having bothered to reconsider any other possibilities seems to us quite sad today. That they have up till the present time never bothered to requestion their acceptance and manipulation of art-forms derived from the West must certainly account for the fact that up till now all the art-forms produced have tended to remain little more than echoes of the Western originals, clearly we found ourselves re-questioning that we could possibly manipulate and the purpose of this form.

Somehow in chapter **6,** at the last paragraph of page 22, the text draw back the attention on the difference between Eastern and Western artists' depiction of form although chapter **6** of the manifesto distinguishes a "Mental/Meditative/Mystical" view point of reality as opposed to a "Spatio/Temporal/Sensorial" viewpoint of the Western Artist.

It was quoted in page 23 as follows:

> Oriental art consists in depicting spirit and not form. For they say that when the spirit is understood the form creates itself; the main thing is to get into the spirit of the object which the artist chooses for his subject. The West on the other hand emphasizes form, endeavors to reach the spirit of form. The East is just opposite: the spirit is the all in all. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 23)

This indicates that the discussion on 'form' shifted from one chapter to another instead of being focused on the same subject of discussion within a chapter.

Example 4

On page 23, under *A "Mental/Meditative/Mystical" viewpoint of reality as opposed to a "Spatio/Temporal/Sensorial" Viewpoint of Western Artist.* In one paragraph all the titles of the works of art are argued to allude to experience of the art objects as an event rather

than form. Meanwhile in the following paragraph, it relates to how oriental artists are depicted form Eastern-centric approach in art.

> The notion of art objects possessing 'spirit' (or semangat) is not difficult to grasp if one is an oriental. The oriental artist has always striven to emphasise the 'spiritual essence' rather than the outward form. In it the two artists quoted the summed up of Eastern-centric approach in art: Oriental art consists in depicting spirit not form. For they say that when the spirit is understood the form creates itself; the main thing is to get into the spirit of the object which the artist chooses for his subject. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 23)

However, in the next paragraph, it relates back to the mode of perceiving form. As recorded in the manifesto, 'It will become obvious that what seems so essential to our scheme of things is the willingness of the spectator to accept an altogether new way of perceiving form that transcends the pure sensorial' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 23).

Example 5

Under chapter **5** *The Relevance of a Mystical Viewpoint*, on page 18, the two artists continues by saying that the 'we are essentially approaching reality from a purely 'metaphysical' and 'mental' standpoint. In the next few lines the discussion has shifted to the fundamental differences in attitude from Taoist and Western artists in conceiving reality instead of signaling how reality is approached from a metaphysical standpoint. Later on page 20, the term 'metaphysical' is linked with the metaphysical concept of time that referred to the oriental artists conceives the element of time mentally. Based on the excerpt above, it is likely to conclude similar topic or subject of discussion is arranged in a inconsistent manner.

3.2.2 Insufficient information was provided in explaining phenomena and assumptions made

Phenomenon 1

On page 9, it is said that the spectator is free to move backward and forward in time as his mind takes over the contemplation and meditation.

On page 22, it continues,

> At this point we as the 'initiators' have no more control over the situation! […]
> The spectator's realization of this fact should result in a gradual liberation from humanistic condition'. In such way, this 'new spontaneity brings the spectator is closer to 'sunyata' (nothingness). 'It is a state of wholeness in which the mind functions freely and easily, without the sensation of a second mind or 'ego' standing in the way. This unconsciousness is not coma but what the exponents of 'Zen' later signified as 'wu-shin' literally 'no-mind' which is to say un-self-consciousness. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 22)

Based on connection between the line of text on page 9 and 22 the possible scenario is that the meditative and contemplative schemes serve as a meeting point in connecting to this mystical experience in its link with 'sunyata' and 'no-mind'. However, the interlink between 'no-mind' and 'sunyata' in connecting to the mystical experience and the meditative and contemplative schemes remain unfamiliar. The main query to be answered is how does spectator's 'ego' has been negated through meditation and mental contemplation to bring about the psychological state of 'no-mind' and the grasp of 'sunyata' is untold (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 22).

Phenomenon 2

From the introduction of TMR by Krishen Jit on page 2 in 3rd paragraph,

> The flow of creativity, they say (the two artists) that 'cut through illusion and all

other intermediates' so that the artist can directly 'confront nature' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 2).

Yet, the intermediates and the way the two artists 'cut through illusion and all other intermediates' so that the artist can directly 'confront nature' have never been pointed out.

Phenomenon 3

As remarked in chapter **6**, on page 21 in 2n$^{\text{d}}$ paragraph,

> Our work is therefore founded upon deliberate attempt to force contemplation and meditation on the part of the spectator. […] We have placed the spectator in a situation in which he is forced to requestion his own reality. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 21)

This reflects that the two initiators' called for the spectator to confront its own reality through contemplation and meditation. However, it seems necessary to point out how contemplation and meditation can bring about such realization, so the spectator could see the point of the two initiators to induce contemplation and meditation scheme of things/actions on spectator. It is suggested that how contemplation and meditation scheme of actions lead to the requestion of his own reality needs to be highlighted in order to make sense of why contemplation and meditation have been infused on spectator.

Phenomenon 4

The excerpted text above shows that the manifesto is bounded with philosophical jargon such as metaphysical, ontological but with limited description.

'Our is essentially an ontological view of reality that is not based on "physical" but rather "mental" and mystical considerations' (Piyadasa & Esa p. 21).

'We are essentially approaching reality from a metaphysical standpoint' (Piyadasa &

Esa, 1974, p. 18).

Phenomenon 5

On page 23 in the final sentence of the last paragraph, the two artists maintain: 'By choosing to contemplate on the most mundane event, the spectator, we hope will come face to face with the mystery of his own existence within an infinite and ever-evolving Universe. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 23)

Perhaps, how TMR works in bringing spectator to the infinite potential would seemingly need to be justified.

3.2.3 The cited statements and excerpts are not fully discussed, associated and linked back to the art of TMR and working practice of the two artists

It is apparent that the two artists made the assumption that the reader already has a background knowledge about 'Taoism' and 'Zen' as well as the cited terms, statements and excerpts which are not fully discussed, associated and linked back to the art of TMR and working practice of the two artists.

Example 1

In formulating Zen/Zen Buddhism philosophical view into the working practice, the two artists are referring to John Cage particularly the idea that 'art and life are no longer separate entities'. Hence, apparently the two artists arrive at the idea that there is no dichotomy in view of art and life in approaching art. In this case, daily found objects and the activities in life merged have become the work of art itself. However, this philosophical thinking of art has never been further elaborated.

On page 14, it is remarked that: Art and life, for Cage, are no longer separate entities as they have found in the Western past, but are very nearly identical and Cage's whole career can in fact be seen as a long campaign to break down the demarcation between the two. Still, the insight '*art and life are no longer separate entities*' in reference to

John Cage's art 'silent music' remains unclear. Prior to these excerpts and citations appeared as a running text.

> It is perhaps interesting to note that (i) John Cage was very much inspired by Zen Buddhist influences and (ii) the art and life have never been divorced in the East! Professor Daisetsu Suzuki, the great Zen scholar, has in fact alluded to this fact in his book, "Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist": 'In the same way, every minute of human life as long as it is an expression of its inner self is original, divine, creative and cannot be retrieved. Every individual life is thus a work of art. Whether or not one makes it a fine inimitable work of art depends on one's consciousness of the working of 'sunyata' within oneself'. (Piyadasa & Esa, p. 14)

Example 2

On page 15, as said:

> Art in the Asian past is never meant to provide 'intellectual entertainment', but rather it aims at heightening one's awareness of reality and helps bring about a spiritual and mystical communion with the nature and the Universe. It continues as such there is no dichotomy between art and life.

Nonetheless, how Asian artists in the past reconcile the dichotomy between art and life throughout the whole paragraph was never pointed out.

Example 3

Referring to the summary of the two artists' statements on page 7, it is understood from their viewpoint, that the very purpose of art is to heighten spectator's perception and experience of reality. Besides in the last line of the manifesto on page 23, the two artists conclude and maintain that 'By choosing to contemplate on the most mundane event, the spectator, we hope will come face to face with the mystery of his own existence

within an infinite and ever-evolving Universe'(Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 23). These two statements seemed to be linked as TMR invited the spectator to reflect his own 'reality'. Nevertheless, this was not discussed.

Example 4

Under chapter **3** on "*No humanistic and subjective intent*" on page 11, it is noted by the two artists that 'WE BEGAN TO CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF APPROACHING REALITY FROM ALTOGETHER DIFFERENT PREMISES'. However, the next few lines of the text do not deliver the premises as indicated by the two artists.

Example 5

On page 2, as maintained by Piyadasa, 'my works exist within the same reality as the viewer's. The time and the space are the same. Says Krishen Jit, 'They communicate to us at a fundamental level, expose us to our everyday reality' (Piyadasa & Esa, p. 2). The way in which TMR connects spectator to everyday reality in experiencing the art event was never explained in the manifesto text. This indicates that the text has missed out the key discussion.

3.2.4 The mixture of ideologies and philosophical ideas in the articulation has caused complication in understanding the art practice, direction and concept of TMR

The text revealed that TMR is a mixture of philosophical concept and idea of art in reference to the local indigenous function of 'Dalang', Taoism and Conceptual Art apart from Zen and Buddhism. The two artists borrowed and blended ideas from these sources. The sequence in the discussion of ideas is shifted from one to another without being specific. The two artists promote the importance of own cultural tradition due to

'the kinds of problems faced by Malaysian modernists today are also being faced by Asian modernists elsewhere who are beset with the dilemma of having to employ idioms and styles which are not altogether indigenous to their own cultural traditions' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 4).

In heading towards no humanistic and subjective intent, the two artists tie the local indigenous function of the 'Dalang' in *Wayang Kulit* to reinforce their role as self-effacing artist. On the other hand, the two artists are inspired by the Taoist artist, Wu Tao-tzu, in their approach to art, which is not so much in the expression of individual, but remaining as non-entity in art creation (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 10). Also, "Anti-art" artists such as Marcel Duchamp and John Cage, conceptual artists who were inspired by Zen Buddhist influences (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 10, 14, 18). This can mean that TMR is guided by Zen, Taoism, Conceptual Art and seep into *Wayang Kulit*. This has created much confusion in understanding the direction of TMR art event. Thus, one finds the complexity in understanding TMR as an art event that operates under the unifying theme of *Mystical Reality*. Is *Mystical Reality* a synthesis between Zen, Zen Buddhism, Taoism, Western Conceptual Art, local Wayang Kulit and Dada? This further indicating that TMR in ideology is an intersection and a bridge between the East and the West. This has also created an absurdity on the fundamental basis of *Mystical Reality*.

3.3   The 'Textual' Stage of Textual Analysis

The previous section has covered a textual analysis on the manifesto in regards to the 'verbal' aspect of text. This section continues the analysis on the 'textual' aspect of text. This part is carried out by looking at the text from a broader view as a whole to grasp the shifts that reveal instabilities of attitudes, beliefs, and behavior from what has been asserted (Barry, 2002, p. 57). It involves the act of spotting 'internal contradictory statements, paradoxical phrases, and inconsistencies' in the text in relation to the

concepts or key ideas that have been positioned within the description, explanation, and summarization made in the text (Barry, 2002, p. 57).

3.3.1 TMR and its Controversy

As said, the artists' egoistic preoccupations are non-existent in our scheme of thing, even if we are initiating the process of mental perception (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 21). 'THERE WOULD BE NO HUMANISTIC OR SUBJECTIVE INTENT IN OUR WORK' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 12). IN A SENSE, WE WERE AIMING A CONSCIOUS DETACHMENT FROM THE WORK OF ART (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 12).

The clarifications made by the two artists are remarked as follows:

> THE DECISION TO PRODUCE WORKS JOINTLY WAS MOTIVATED BY OUR DESIRE TO PLAY DOWN INDIVIDUALISTIC CONSIDERATIONS AS FAR AS THAT WAS POSSIBLE, ALL DECISIONS WE DECIDED WOULD BE MADE JOINTLY AND NO EMOTIONAL CONSIDERATIONS WOULD BE ALLOWED TO DICTATE THE MANIPULATING THE FORMS THAT WE WOULD USE. AS FAR AS IS POSSIBLE, WOULD NOT BE CONSTRUCTED BY US. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 12)

This is pertaining to the humanistic notion of art accentuate ego-involvement in creation which is in contrast to the attempt to negating self and ego and subjected to attachment of unique individual soul, by which it may express an individual state of emotion, personality (subjective intent). Subsequently, to differentiate TMR from the western-centric attitude in art making, the egoistic preoccupation that is non-existent in their scheme has been put forward in the manifesto in paragraph 2 on page 21 as their art concept. The 'ego' may act as the subject or merely an object that constructs more illusions in creation due to the attachment to 'ego' (Fromm, 1960, pp. 146-147).

Reginald remarks that the 'ego' consciousness provides a person's identity and subjectivity. 'The subjectivity is the 'ego-consciousness', in which a person experiences 'I' or 'me'. Meanwhile, a person's identity is a function of 'I am…' (Pawle, 2004, pp. 3-4). Based on this view, it is understood that the manifesto is produced jointly with the idea to play down the individualistic feature. Therefore, the two artists have worked based on the sentiment that:

a.   No emotional considerations would be allowed to dictate and manipulate the forms that we use. (paragraph 2, page 12)

b.   Egoistic preoccupation is non-existent in the scheme of TMR. (paragraph 2, page 21)

c.   All decisions are made jointly to play down the individualistic considerations. (paragraph 2, page 12)

d.   'A conscious detachment from the work of art'. (paragraph 2, page 12)

However, it can be easily assumed from the textual appearance that the two artists acted against these schemes rather than with it.

3.3.1.1 There are contradictions in sentiment between what have been asserted in premises and what the text end up saying

       This point aims to mention that the manifesto crafting is not in accordance with the benchmarks set. Pertaining to the claim made by the two artists, all decisions are made jointly *to play down individualistic considerations as far as that as was possible'* in the manifesto practice, which is merely a simplistic outlook. This is due to the fact that the manifesto presentation is full of the distinctive identities of the two artists in the discourse. This can be recognized from the points that have been put forward by the two artists in the discourse. In claiming '*to play down individualistic considerations as far that as was possible'*, Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa strive to become 'participating

artists', 'the modern artists', 'thinkers, 'theoretician' and 'initiators' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 4,12, 21, 22).

Consequently, it is stated that:

> The present exhibition has been motivated by the 'two participating artists' …(paragraph 1, page 4)
>
> The best modern artists of the 70's are very clearly no longer makers of artifacts but rather 'thinkers and theoretician' …. (paragraph 3, page 10)
>
> 'We are modern artist' and at such we are not with traditional art form. (paragraph 3, page 4)
>
> We are quite simply the 'initiators' of a mental process that begins initially with the confrontation which takes place between the spectator and the situation we place him in. (paragraph 2, page 21)

The above phrases reveal that 'individuality' is emphasized, and the lines taken from the text reveal that there is 'an excessive attachment to different identities or positions' or the presence of authorial voice which may be in conflict with the idea '*to play down the individualistic considerations as far as that was possible*'.

As explained by Erich Fromm, co-author of the book *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis* with D. T. Suzuki, 'individuality' is the self-assertion in which identity is emphasized (Fromm, 1960, pp. 30-31). When the ego-consciousness acts as a denominator in one's mental operation, these identities are constructed (Pawle, 2004, pp. 3, 4). It is the 'ego' that gives a person individual identity. From here, this appears that the two artists remain as two 'individuals' with self-possession and ego-consciousness while claiming to abandon the individualistic considerations as far as they could. In other words, in positioning themselves as the modern artists, participating artists, thinkers, theoretician and initiators unconsciously, Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa are dominating. Therefore, there is inconsistency in attitude and practice in relation to the

benchmarks that the two artists have established '*to play down the individualistic considerations as far as that was possible.*'

Furthermore, the local artists have been criticized for their 'inability to function on a much deeper level' but 'superficial involvement with stylistic and technical consideration alone'. The two artists' point of view is as such:

> There is no intellectual conviction behind the stylistic involvement because the local artists function within technical capacity, and the work can be easily produced. The works remain derivative and second-rate (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p.7). IT IS OUR BELIEF THAT NO REAL INTELLECTUAL COMMITMENT CONVICTION BEHIND THEIR INVOLVEMENTS! …THIS FACTOR IS SADLY, VERY MISSING IN MALAYSIAN ART! (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 6)

The text above explains that the local artists have no functionality. The local artists are all capable of producing art due to their technical brilliance, and their works remain as purely decorative and unoriginal. Conversely, the tone of expression in describing the local artists speak a range of human 'ego' and emotion of the two artists who sort of attack, insult and judge. Perhaps it becomes apparent that the two artists aim at distinguishing themselves from the rest with power of judging. Thus, this may have breached their claim '*egoistic preoccupation is non-existent in the scheme of TMR*' and '*no emotional considerations would be allowed to dictate and manipulate of the forms.* (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 4, 12, 21)

3.3.1.2 The dualistic highlights between the East and the West reveals the contradiction in practice in the claim that 'ego preoccupation is non-existent in our scheme of thing'

It is apparent that the content of the manifesto goes on to offer a reading on the fundamental differences between the Eastern and Western in the aspects of approach, attitude, and viewpoint of reality. Fritjof Capra highlights that the 'self' has the tendency

to separate the world of the self-perceived into 'individual' and 'thing', in which the self experiences this world in an isolated 'ego'. This is where the measuring and categorizing mentality takes place (Capra, 1976, p. 21). John Danves maintains that it is the 'I' or ego-consciousness in mind that projects the separation, description, and categorization of things in this world (Danves, 2006, pp. 84, 85). D. T. Suzuki adds that with the aid of language, more separations are made (Suzuki, 1956, p. 10). This indicates that the separation of things is multiplied through language. Along the similar lines, all dualistic and relational patterns of thought are wholly constructed with self-composed separation between self and other, material and mental, subject and object etc. (Danves, 2006, p. 79).

It may appear that it is the 'ego' of oneself that makes up the perception of what the experience is, and more polarity is created with the help of words. In turn, this brings to mind that whether the two artists are attached to 'ego' or not can be detected through the language used by identifying the interplay of dualism. Hence, the extent to which the two artists are attached to 'ego' can be observed through spotting the oppositional distinction made in the articulation. In concept, the two artists propagate their egoistic preoccupations which are non-existent in their scheme in paragraph 2, on page 21. However, based on the textual appearance, the 'East' and the 'West' are sharply divided into two opposite poles. Firstly, it appears in the title of chapter **6** *A "Mental/Meditative/Mystical" viewpoint of reality as opposed to a "Spatio/Temporal/Sensorial" viewpoint of the Western artist.* The word 'opposed' strengthens the opposite distinction. For the following oppositions, it can be observed from Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: The inherent contradistinctions between the East and the West in art approach, attitude, and viewpoint of reality. (#) indicates the respective paragraphs of the manifesto.

Western-centric Approach	Eastern-centric Approach
Form-oriented (#3-p18)	Mental/Meditative/Mystical (#2-p20)
Retinal/Eye (#4-p18)	Depicting spirit not form (#1-p23)
Humanistic (#1-p17)	Problem Solving (#2-p5)
Empirical, Materialistic (#1-p17)	Conceive reality (#5-p9)
Spatial/Temporal/Sensorial (#2-p20)	Mystical (#1-p13)
Picture-making (#2-p5)	Meditative (#2-p21)
See things (#5-p9)	
Western Attitude	**Eastern Attitude**
Scientific (#1-p11)	Mystical (#1-p11)
Retinal/Eye (#1-p18)	
Rationalistic (#2-p7)	
Artifact oriented (#1-p6)	
Western Viewpoint of Reality	**Eastern Viewpoint of Reality**
Materialistic (#4-p14)	Spiritual (#5-p14)
Objective, Empirical, Scientific (#1-p11)	Mystical (#2-p19)
Physical (#1-p21)	Mental (#1-p21)
	Spontaneity (#1-p18)
	Peripheral (#1-p18)

Pertaining to this, it appears that the two initiators have caught themselves in 'dualistic mode of thinking' as a result of 'ego preoccupation' in manifesto crafting. Subsequently; the separation is made between the East and the West into two opposing camps. Perhaps the binary opposition between the East and the West in the manifesto text has been multiplied and overemphasized. The act of polarizing duality is therefore clarifies that the two artists hold strongly on ego in the manifesto crafting (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 21). This affirms that the two artists do not operate within the confirmity of Zen, which emphazizes the negation of ego, in which it is inconsistent with the claim that 'ego preoccupation is non-existent in our scheme of thing'.

3.3.1.3 The internal inconsistency in concept to conjure a non-Western context of art

At the beginning of chapter **1** of the manifesto; *The Dilemma of Modern Malaysian Art*, the two artists argue that modern art in Malaysia is trapped into specific 'ism', which is derived from the West. As a result of this the local art practices were shaped by Western art thinking and approaches. As excerpted from the manifesto:

> It is our belief that all modern art produced in Malaysia up to the present time has not been altogether free from some kind of eclectic influence derived from the various 'isms' of the West. Clearly, there has as yet been no attempt to re-question the underlying eclecticism behind our flirtation with idioms and styles derived from the major movements of the West. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 5)

On the other hand, the two artists claim that their attention is inevitably drawn to such 'anti-art' artist such as the Dadaist, Marcel Duchamp instead (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 5)**.** Hence, this displays that two artists deny the imitation of the Western art style with 'ism derived from the West, but at the same time embracing the Dada or Dadaism art movement, Marcel Duchamp for his triumph. This portrays that the two artists contradict themselves with what they deny, and with what they actually embrace. Moreover, the backing up of anti-form and anti-aesthetic employed by the Western Dadaist reflects that TMR maintains a continuing relationship with the art movement and cultural setting in the West.

Next, despite the fact that TMR aimed at solving the cultural domination issue within the local context, the entire chapter **5** of the manifesto entitled, *The Relevance of a Mystical Viewpoint* debates on how relevant it is to apply the Eastern philosophical concept of art within the Western society instead. At the same time, it intersects with the Western artists; John Cage, Yves-Klein, Ad Rheinhart, Tobey and Brecht, writing from authors; Calvin Tomkins, Kenneth Coutts-Smith and Arthur Koestler who is illuminated by the Eastern philosophy. The manifesto also highlights the importance of aligning art

with the contemporarily of international art scene, which is much affiliated with the Western Conceptual Art due to the relevancy in the context of time. It also draws that the two major influencers to them were Marcel Duchamp, the Dadaist, and John Cage, the conceptual artists. This exhibits that the two artists apparently function under the influence of the Western Dadaist and conceptual premises.

3.3.1.4 The obscurity in working towards the Eastern roots of art

Based on the introductory note, it appears that the two artists aimed to construct a distinctive Asian/Eastern artistic identity through TMR (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 2). TMR was set out to step over the boundaries of western-centric criteria of art into the Eastern mode of artistic expression (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 11). While emphasizing the importance of working towards the Eastern roots of art, the textual appearance also imposed an idea that the two artists were operating beneath the surface of prevailing Western ideology and cultural setting in illuminating this vision.

Scenario 1

i. In chapter **1**, *The Dilemma of Modern Malaysian Art*, it shows that the two artists are in the strenuous effort to go against the ongoing Western artistic influences on local artists.

ii. Ironically, in chapter **2**, "*Anti-Formalist and A nti-Aesthetic*", they have supported the mainstream of art that came from the West 'anti-formalist' as they function as an 'anti-formalist', which had taken place in the West in the 1960s.

Again, the realisation that so many of the "anti-art" pioneers of the west had in fact been inspired by essentially oriental philosophical considerations certainly bolstered our determination to function outside "western-centric" considerations.

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Scenario 2

'What is the function of the Malaysian artist within the Malaysian context and what is the lesson to be learnt from the modern art developments which have manifested themselves in the West so far?' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 6). Accordingly, this offers an idea that the two artists have unconsciously reinforced the Western superiority over local art scene.

Scenario 3

In TMR, the two artists work towards the direction of 'Eastern Mystical Conceptualist' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 29). Sol LeWitt, an American conceptual artist, once said 'Conceptual artists are mystic rather than rationalists'(Piper, 2004, p. 494). Apparently, it appears that they are engaged with the conceptualist position which has been flourishing in the West.

Scenario 4

It is apparent that:

i.   The two artists dramatically draw upon the fundamental differences between the East and the West in the aspect of approach, viewpoint of reality in meaning and purpose. This asserts that the West is the West and the East is the East.

ii.   The manifesto highlights the importance of aligning art with the contemporarity of the international art scene, which is much affiliated with the Western Conceptual Art. This reflects the linkage of TMR with the West. In other words, it is heading towards the Western Conceptual Art direction.

iii.   The two artists hint that the local artistic direction should be manifested within the Eastern thinking and attitudes, since the Western avant-garde[13] artists draw

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[13] Revolutionary avant-garde movements, attempting to transcend the existing norms in art as early as around 1910, unleashed a process that has challenged any supposedly self-evident notion of art ever since. This process still continues today (Braembussche, 2009, p.1).

their inspiration from the mystical philosophies from the East (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 12, 15).

This shows that the East has merged with the West or across the East-West boundaries.

 Furthermore, it can be concluded that the two artists are bound in threefold positions. This again affirms that the West has impacted their thinking about themselves. In other words, Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa appear in controversy in themselves as well as their position and reaction towards the West. Even though TMR has its own set of art experiences and art practices derived from the East, the two artists however could not fully withdraw themselves from the Western influence. This may be the reason that Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa were caught in a dilemma to negotiate their commitment towards the East and to adore the Western educated self yet the obsession towards the Western influence.

3.3.1.5 The discrepancy in separating TMR from the West

Following Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa earlier reflection on the fundamental art issues in *Dokumentasi 72* show, the two artists question two essential considerations behind the traditional work of art, namely, (i) the relevance of 'formal aesthetic' influences in the work. As the chapter **3** distinguishes that the TMR art-making has 'no humanistic or subjective intent'. (ii) The humanistic notion of the artists as a 'unique' individual and his 'ego'-centric involvement in the actual creation of a work.' Consequently, the two artists positioned themselves as anti-Formalist and anti-Aesthetic (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 3, 8, 9).

Nonetheless, it seems that these ideas have been applied by the Western avant-garde artists in many ways. Due to these positions taken place in the West, Ellen Pearlman affirms that the avant-garde artists who draw upon their artistic inspiration from Zen react against formalism (Pearlman, 2012, p. xvii). For this reason, it reflects

that they have supported the mainstream art that came from the West 'anti-formalist', which have taken place in the West (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 2, 9). Therefore this is contrary to the objectives set by the two artists in the manifesto as:

> TO SOW THE SEEDS FOR A THINKING PROCESS WHICH MIGHT IBERATE MALAYSIAN ARTISTS FROM THEIR DEPENDENCE ON WESTERN INFLUNCES. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 4-5)

Moving on, it is written that:

> Malaysian artists have […] not been able to come up with a viewpoint of reality that differs from that being adopted by the Western artist. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 5)

Nontheless, it appears that approaching 'reality' from mystical, mental and meditative viewpoint has impacted the Western artists before TMR especially the avant-garde conceptualists. According to Ellen Pearlman, meditation and contemplation schemes of art exploration have attracted individuals in the West to search for a new freedom of artistic thought (Pearlman, 2012, p. xi). Approaching 'reality' from meditative and contemplative scheme of thing is, therefore cannot be deemed as something that differs the West, since it has been spread widely and has a relation with the Westerners especially those who have attended D. T. Suzuki's lecture in the late 1940s until 1957 (Pearlman, 2012, pp. 16, 47). The idea of fixing one's consciousness to experience the merging of subject and object through the selection of anything as the subject of meditation has been practiced in D. T. Suzuki's class (Pearlman, 2012, p. 17).

Ellen Pearlman, author of *Nothing and Everything* considers D. T. Suzuki as the major influential Zen professor to the avant-garde artists including the names that were mentioned in the manifesto, John Cage, Ad Rheinhart, Mark Toney and George Brecht. The aforementioned artists attended D. T. Suzuki's Buddhism classes and saw the unlimitedness of Zen and Buddhism philosophical insight for new a experiment in art. It

was D. T. Suzuki changed their thinking and direction of art in a radical way (Pearlman, 2012, p. xii).

To a certain extent, it appears that mystical approach is relevant since it has been adopted by John Cage, the American composer. John Cage infused Zen mind training and Zen Buddhism principles in his music class. He explored the merging of duality, the deconstruction of the sequence of sound, and indulged in the Zen idea of 'everything in every moment is available to make art' (Pearlman, 2012, p. 57, 58). D. T. Suzuki's teaching also had a major impact on art groups such as *Fluxus Group, Happening, Judson Theater* and *The Gutai* (Pearlman, 2012, p. 69, 82, 92).

Besides that the reference made in the discourse marks its linkage with the West as suggested by Calvin Tomkins. It was quoted as follows from Calvin Tomkins in his book, 'Ahead of the Game' which describes Cage's attitude towards the situation:

> Cage believes that the world is changing more rapidly and more drastically than most people realise. […] Cage insists that the true function of art in our time is to open up the minds and hearts of contemporary men and women to the immensity of these changes in order that they may be able may be able 'to wake up to the very life' they are living. Art and life, for Cage, are no longer separate entities as they have been In the Western past, but very nearly identical; and Cage's whole career can in fact be seen as a long campaign to break down the demarcations between the two. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp.13-14)

Also, the two artists vainly pointed out:

> We wish to quote the opinion of yet another western art-critic to prove the relevance of a mystical approach in art today. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 14)

Thus, this does not reflect that the two artists have separated their connection in total with the West, despite claiming at solving the dilemma of Western 'cultural domination' issue of Malaysian artists as articulated in chapter **1** of the manifesto.

Again, that so many major Western artists of the 20th century have in fact drawn

their inspiration from the mystical philosophies of the East (e.g. John Cage,

Yves-Klein, Ad Rheinhart, Tobey, Brecht) certainly indicates how necessary it is

for Asian artists to reconsider their Asian heritage. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 15)

This strengthens the claims put forward that there is a need to involve the West for

justification. Given that this affirms that the two artists have consistently exhibited their

desire to associate with the West.

Furthermore, as observed by the two artists, the particular art style that appears

in the Western art scene is mapped within the context of modernity, cultural values, and

beliefs. The art-making is accompanied by a theoretical rationale that justifies the

meaning and its creative cause of why it is made. Due to the local artists being

insensitive towards this context, the local artists are distinguished as a tool of art, a

painter, and a follower of artistic development in the West, but not as a problem-solver

or theoretician. As the two artists pointed out:

What is the function of the Malaysian artist within the Malaysian context and

what is the lesson to be learnt from the modern art developments which have

manifested themselves in the West so far? (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 6)

Perhaps, there is no wrong in reference to the cultural setting from the West as a

reference point to understand the politics behind art-making. But however, the constant

association with the West may reinforce the idea that the two artists' ideology is

inseparable from the West (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 6, 10).

3.3.1.6 The internalization of 'self' as 'Westerner'

The term 'Western' consistently appears throughout the manifesto text for a total

of 32 times while the term 'Eastern' appears for a total of 6 times. Therefore this affirms

that TMR has a strong relation with the West. There is no doubt that the text potrays the

two artists as being deeply critical of the consequences of Western domination issue in art. However, in many ways, the two artists constitute an act that it is compulsory to put forward the Western parameter in relating to their views.

Perhaps, the articulation of art has never looked beyond the theoretical, historical and social context of the West and the Western artists in their time period. It is argued that the two artists inevitably project their 'desire' to be identified as the 'Western artist' as their 'ideal self'. There are dialogues, speeches and phrases in the manifesto that have been surrounded by the 'Western fad'. Their admiration for the Western artists and desire to be seen as the 'Western artist' can be traced from the content and tone that strengthen the two artists' own voices. To a degree, the Western psyche is reflected in the text itself. Drawing from Hegel and Kojève (1980) 'ego'-psychology, it is the desire that transforms human. It is suggested that due to the two artists desiring to be 'recognized in his human value, in his reality as a human individual' driven by self-consciousness of 'I' to attain recognition, this imposes the idea that he has of himself on as 'other'' (Kojève, 1980, pp. 3,6) (Evans, 1996, p. 132). 'Other' in this context refers to the Western artists whom the two artists admire.

To further support the argument in regards to the internalization of 'self' as Westerner, this section begins based on the evidence found. TMR is a call to return to the East or Asia, but the discussion does not fundamentally refute the Eastern paradigm. While drawing on the relevance of mystical approach to local artist, the two artists map the relevance of the mystical approach in the Western context, and the tone of discourse expresses the admiration of the Conceptual artist John Cage and entailing fascination towards Western conceptual art.

In the discourse, the two artists position themselves as anti-stylistic, anti-formalistic, anti-aesthetic, anti-humanistic, anti-scientific and anti-materialistic, while they are aware it had taken place in the West in the 1970s, as evident in their following

statement:

> We were at that time fully aware of the 'anti -formalist' developments which had taken place in the West during the 1960s (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 9).

> […] We became determined to work outside 'formal-esthetic' considerations (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 9).

Sol LeWitt, an American conceptual artist, once said 'Conceptual artists are mystics rather than rationalists (Piper, 2004, p. 494). In the same way, the artists promote themselves as 'mystical conceptualists' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 29). Like most conceptual art in the West, TMR is remarkable in regards to their attitude of working, in which the focus on art is shifted from visual to mental, and from physical to metaphysical (Piper, 2004, p. 494). As claimed, the focus of art is placed on the idea and mental experiences to involve spectator rather than artifacts. 'We are essentially approaching reality from a metaphysical standpoint'. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 18) Certainly, this idea echoes the exploration of art that has been practiced by the conceptual artist in the West (Pearlman, 2012, p. xvii). There are many arguments concerning the authenticity of TMR. In sum, there is no clear cutting point made to distinguish TMR from the avant-garde artists. This signifies that there are similarities in ideologies and art practices in TMR echoing the 'Westerner'.

Perhaps this has caused the basic parameter of TMR art event to include the ideological values, which are derived from the West instead of assuring the local artists to function within the Asian landscape. This further hints that the two artists unconsciously reveal their desire to internalize the self as 'the Westerner'. The projection of 'desire' indicates a lack in oneself. Certainly, this might be due to the 'ego'-consciousness experiences that lack within oneself. This 'lack in oneself' may be caused by the comparison made between the 'self' and the 'other', to the extent in which

one tends to be identified as 'other' (McLeod, 2008). The 'other' is formed due to the 'ego' desired to be identified as an 'other' by means of the ideal self. This analogy is similar to the Lacanian the self in a mirror, an ideal self in which the 'ideal 'ego' becomes internalized' in turn the sense of self is built by (mis) identifying with the 'ideal self' (D'Alleva, 2012, p. 79). This may be the reason why the two artists fall into the illusion of becoming the 'other', while challenge the Western-centric thinking predominant in art practice during that period. As a result, to some extent there are contradictory statements in the text and eventually this serves as the acceptable underlying reason that there is no real separation with the West from the textual appearance. These reasons may prove that TMR is not convincing enough to get Malaysian artists out of the straightjacket Western of art thinking.

3.3.1.7 The oversimplification between no humanistic and subjective intent with the self-effacing role

This point postulates that the linkage between 'Dalang' (shadow puppet master) and Wu Tao-tzu as being similar in the attitude of working in the key idea '*no humanistic or subjective*' is questionable.

As quoted in the passage on page 11:

The oriental artist… remains a non-entity in confrontation with Nature. Wu Tao-tzu's forms are not so much expression of an individual own state of emotion, but universal graphic portrayals of the flux of the world movement in action, the force that such up the tide and breathes whirlwinds. Wu Tao-tzu's design has no humanistic or subjective intent! (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 11)

As put forward on Page 12,

Our special interest in the Wayang Kulit repertoire and especially, the role of the 'Dalang' or the manipulator of the indigenous form of shadow-puppetry was to

result in our discovering a new 'role' for ourselves in our new scheme of things. The 'Dalang' suggested to us the possibilities of functioning within a 'mediumistic' capacity. His self-effacement, we discovered, was almost complete even if he constituted the real force in the whole performance! He was quite simply the medium' and the 'initiator' between the audience and his puppets. […] Our idea of the artist as functioning within a 'mediumistic' capacity then must attributed to the 'Dalang'. What deemed especially interest about the 'Dalang' was that whilst he had to mouth dialogue in the plot and out the parts of all puppets, the audience never saw him or learnt anything about him. Lastly, the two artists sum up, 'Here was very clearly an 'oriental' artist who functioned with no humanistic or subjective influences!' …It was at this point that we decided to produce works jointly to play down the individualistic considerations. (Piyadasa & Esa1974, p. 12)

In comparing the two examples substituted by the concept of '*no humanistic or subjective influences or intent'*, Wu Tao-tzu's design has been distinguished as the artist who remains as '*non-entity*' by the expression of forms that is not so much on an individual state of emotion. Consequently, '*no subjective influences*' in creation is interpreted as the artist working on the attitude of selflessness, and in turn, detachment of the 'ego' 'self' as the subject that leads to the creation. As is understood, '*no humanistic or subjective influences or intent*' explains that the creation is not objectified by emotion.

From the premises substituted by the two artists, the 'Dalang' constituted the 'real force' in the whole performance, in such it would appear that the 'Dalang' is 'self-involving' in the creation instead of self-effacing. In other words, the paragraph about 'Dalang' offers an idea that the 'Dalang' does not detach himself from the creation. This begs the question of how can the 'Dalang' functions as the 'initiator' between the

audience and his puppets while he constitutes the real force that dominates the whole performance?

The 'Dalang' has to manipulate the puppet's character, mouths dialogue, and narrates the stories in the creation as well as becomes the main lead for the whole play. Yet, the 'Dalang' is attached and subjected to his ability, skill and experience for emotional articulation in expressing the dialogue and character of the puppet. Sometimes, the character of the puppet is embodied with the human personality, the good and the bad. This informs that the 'Dalang' is not simply an initiator due to his attachment to emotion and expression in the character he plays. Ebert reported that *Wayang Kulit* requires 'ample dexterity and knowledge of the genre's potentialities, precisely because the simple shadows reveal the puppet's every movement, which, in executing an action, can be modulated subtly to suggest a wide range of 'emotions' and 'ideas''(Ebert, 2004, p. 34 & 196). This further affirms in the play that the 'Dalang' is objectified by emotion to keep the play alive instead of 'no subjective influences'.

It is apparent that both the 'Dalang' and Wu Tao-tzu are working on different attitudes in the creation. Wu Tao-tzu is working on a total detachment of self as an entity in the creation while unifying his inner energy in harmony with the Cosmos or a coherent entity with the Universe, whereas the 'Dalang' contributes to the play as a one-man show with multiple roles in the play that express his emotion to manipulate the puppet's character and narrates the stories in the play. While keeping himself behind the screen, the 'Dalang' performs a full force without wanting attention from the audience to focus on him but the show. In sum, the two artists interlink between the two artists, Wu Tao-tzu's and the 'Dalang' as self-effacing role 'without' providing a specific meaning of 'self-effacing', has created further issues to specify *no subjective influences*.

In addition, it appears that the two artists did not practice self-effacing attitude in

the manifesto writing. This reflects that the two artists constantly expressed their emotional ambivalence with the existence of 'We' in the narrative. This point will be explained in the sub-topic on lingustic oddity in the manifesto crafting.

3.4   The Underlying Theoretical Issues of TMR

This section aims to analyze each part of the content in regards to the textual message, the structural elements of text and rhetorical features of the manifesto to see whether they are appropriated in accordance with the philosophical insight of 'sunyata' and no-mind and Zen/Zen Buddhism as well as to examine the accuracy of the terms used in the textual statements and claims.

3.4.1   The dualistic dichotomies counterposing between East and West is disunity with the key idea of 'sunyata'

By looking at the 'experiences' initiated on the manifesto, it is seen that TMR aimed at infusing mental experience *the working of sunyata within oneself* on the spectator by means of break free the dual separation made between the 'person' and the 'object' in the light of 'sunyata'. Therefore, philosophically 'sunyata' cultivates a non-dual description of the myriad of things in this world (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 22). On the other perspective, it is difficult not to acknowledge that the manifesto relates in detail the fundamental differences in terms of the manner in which the Western and Eastern artists approach art.

It is opined that the binary opposition structures in categorizing the differences between the Eastern and the Western in art approach, attitude and viewpoint of reality reveal that the two initiators themselves have fallen into duality, which contradict with the central insight of 'sunyata' in which all things are non-dual and interrelated. To a certain extent, the content in the discourse has grounded in the way to prevail the tension of anti-West. In this regard, the theoretical basis of TMR can be questioned by

which it is inconsistent and contradictory with the fundamental idea of 'sunyata'.

D. T. Suzuki remarks that 'sunyata' offers an outlook that all things in this world are not in opposition relation by means of blurring the opposite distinction, in which all things are non-dual and interrelatedness (D. T. Suzuki, 1956, pp. 28-32). In Alan Watt's writing entitled *The Way of Zen*, 'sunyata' in *Lankavatara Sutra* explains that all things are non-dual. Light and shade, long and short, black and white are the relative terms and not independent of each other. (1957, p.82)   John Danves remarks that 'realizing 'sunyata' is to realize conventions of dualistic thinking, interpretation and evaluation, which are conventions' (Danves, 2006, p. 70).

However, on contrary the narration of the manifesto is constructed based on the two extreme binary structures in between the East and the West. Certainly, the fundamental idea of reality in the concept of 'sunyata' is not either physical or mental, objective view or subjective view, but it is beyond all dualities/binaries constructed by language.

3.4.2   The separation of the spiritual and intellectual into two opposition camps is not absolute

Perhaps the insight of Zen does not aim to separate the intellectual and spiritual, empirical and mystical, physical and mental from 'self'. Still, these contrary pairs are interdependent (Khrishnananda, 2016). Patrick remarked that In Leonardo Da Vinci's art-making, he utilizes his intellectual cerebral to unite the spiritual infinite flows through him to create extraordinary works (Howe, 2013, p. 93). As such, it demonstrates that it may not always be the case that the intellectual mind and spiritual sense are conjectured in separation, and yet it can be integrated at the same time in art-making. It could be that it is a unity of two into one that allows the creative energy to flow spontaneously into the artist's mind. Therefore, a separate distinction between spiritual

and intellectual is not fixed.

3.4.3 The extreme authoritative judging tone is inconsistent with the philosophical insight of 'sunyata' and 'no-mind'

Perhaps it would appear that Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa risked themselves by condemning the local artists in the plan of bringing change to local art scene. Although the intention is good, however it is argued that the way the local artists are condemned, devalued and banned from working on Western stylistic art idioms has amounted to a contradiction within the philosophical wisdom of 'sunyata' and 'no-mind'.

The notion of 'sunyata' is endowed with acceptance of things as they really are, accepting limitations without discrimination (McCauley, 2005, p. 83). This is by means of the insight of 'sunyata' that cultivates the wisdom of living and thinking in the path of 'Middle Way', the intermediary by means of dismissing the extreme feeling over all phenomenons in this world (Shi'an, 1999, p. 162).

On the contrary, the two artists made no apologies for verbally condemning, criticizing, attacking and assaulting the works of the local artists that are linked with the West to win over the audience. Perhaps, the local artists have been represented in negative terms, victimized and segueing into discrimination in number of ways that serve to buttress a sense of the two artists' superiority.

The local artists are deemed as unreflective without ever considering of stepping over the boundaries of western-centric criteria of art. As a consequence, the art produced by the local artists within the Western viewpoint is deemed as having no real significance and slavishly depending on techniques (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 10). As claimed by the two artists:

> ONE RESULT OF THIS READY ACCEPTANCE OF THE WESTERN
>
> VIEWPOINT CERTAINLY BEEN THE INEVITABLE DEPENDENCE AND

EMULATION OF FORMS AND IDIOMS THAT HAVE THEIR ORIGINS IN THE WEST. AS SUCH MOST MODERN ARTISTS WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO COME UP WITH CONTRIBUTION THAT ARE TOTALLY OUTSIDE THE WESTERN EXPERIENCE. AR SUCH, THEY CANNOT POSSIBLE MAKE ANY SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTERNATIONAL MODERN ART SCENE. THEY WILL GO ON PRODUCING WORKS, WHICH NO MATTER HOW EFFICIENT THEIR HANDLING OF WESTERN IDIOMS, WILL REMAIN DERIVATIVE AND SECOND-RATE! (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 7)

The local artists under the circumstances have never come face to face with the analytical and requestioning nature of modern art. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 6) THE OBSESSION WITH TRADITIONAL ARTIFACTS CONTINUES THEREFORE EVEN IN THE 70s AND WITH IT A SLAVISH DEPENDENCE ON TECHNIQUES WHICH REFLECT MANUAL DEXTERITY RATHER THAN MENTAL DISCIPLINE. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 6)

The fundamental insight of all concepts in Zen derived from 'sunyata', including 'no-mind'. Based on the line of text excerpted it is understood that 'no-mind' endowed a mind of freedom and egoless. Since the fundamental insight of 'no-mind' is articulated as the art experience of TMR and it is noted as,

> 'It is a state of wholeness in which the mind functions freely and easily, without the sensation of a second mind or 'ego' standing in the way'. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 22)

However, in the manner of how the local artists have been perceived in the written manifesto reveals that the fundamental qualities of 'no-mind' has been overlooked by the two artists in manifesto crafting.

Historically, the legacy of Modern art in Malaysia's context took place in Malaysia

by 1950's. This is in conjunction with the local artists having obtained their formal art education in the West and was eventually engaged with the Western art style that is involved in 'picture-making' (Chuen, 2002, p. 16). To a certain extent the benchmark of being creative and productive are set and the local artists are obligatory to accept rather than being given a chance to decide for themselves. It is said that:

> IT IS OUR BELIEF THEREFORE THAT MALAYSIAN ART CAN ONLY BECOME PRODUCTIVE AND CREATIVE WHEN OUR ARTISTS BEGIN TO FUNCTION ON A VERY MUCH MORE DEEPER LEVEL THAN THAT WHICH HAS EXISTED TO DATE. To do this our artists will first of all have requestion the kind of developments that have taken place so far. That the artistic activity has by and large been influenced by 'picture-making'. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 5)

Following what has been substantiated in the above, it is easily assumed that the text has indirectly diminished the worth of local artists and there is a sense that the local artists are supposed to follow the art-political stand desired by the two artists. Therefore, it is said that the two artists did not really expound the very essence of 'sunyata' and 'no-mind' as endowed in Zen/Zen Buddhism thought.

3.4.4 The misconception that intellectual verbalism could lead the spectator to direct experience of 'Reality' and 'sunyata'

It is recorded in the manifesto that the purpose of art of TMR is to lead the spectator 'to confront reality directly' (paragraph 1, page 10). In TMR, a direct confrontation of 'Reality' is substantiated by the terms, concepts, phrases, sentences embedded in the manifesto. However, it seems that confronting 'Reality' through intellectual verbalism is inappropriate in Zen context. Words might dismiss oneself from reaching the inner experience of 'Self'. Zen is in the innermost of being and is meant to

be understood from the inside and not outside (Suzuki, 1955, pp.135, 136) D. T. Suzuki elaborates in his book, *Studies in Zen* in the essay Zen Buddhism that:

> We now imagine that when we have ideas and words we have all that can be said of our experience of 'Reality'. This means that we take words for 'Reality' itself and neglect experience to reach what constitutes our inmost experience. (Suzuki, 1955, p.51)

In *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, D. T. Suzuki also pointed out that Zen is the inner experience which transcends the very nature of linguistics (Suzuki, 1955, p.51) So, D. T. Suzuki recognizes that 'sunyata' is free from the complexities of intellectual verbalism […] attachment of every description' (Suzuki, 1973, p. 17). Zen Master Dahui once commented that 'If you think there are any verbal formulations that are special mysterious secrets to be transmitted, there is no Zen (Cleary, 2000, p. 55). Similarly, D. T. Suzuki sees that as long as Zen is preserved in intellectualization with words, it can never reach Zen.

If it is verbalism that opens a person to direct experience of 'Reality' performed by Zen master, it consists of the purpose of freeing the mind of oneself from being caught in logical structure of thoughts and contrary pairs of linguist (Suzuki, 1973, pp. 6, 7). For instance, 'koan' (refers to the practice of dialogue or word contemplation) that employed by the Zen master and applied to the student is accompanied by actions to trigger an awakening of 'satori'[14], an effaceable state beyond the reach of all dualistic thinking (Heine & Wright, 2000, pp. 15, 16) (Michel, p. 166).

Hence, the context of 'Reality' in Zen is "not in language as it is in itself. To understand reality one must grasp it in one's own hands, or, better, one must be it.

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[14] Very often Zen is translated as 'satori', the Zen experience throughout D. T. Suzuki's writing. This implies that 'to know' Zen one must have experienced 'satori'. 'In D. T. Suzuki's *Zen Buddhism: Selecting Writing*, 'to know' is 'to see into one's nature'. It also appears that D. T. Suzuki's interpretation of 'satori' aims to inform that 'satori' is a state within us, 'to see into one's nature is a moment of spiritual awakening whereby one sees things as they are (Suzuki, 1956, p.259). 'Satori' can be considered as the experience of the wholeness of things without separation made by rational faculty by means of 'to return to the original state of purity and transparency' (Suzuki, 1973, p.359).

Otherwise, as the Buddhist saying goes, we shall be taking the finger for the moon; the finger is the pointer and not the moon itself" says D. T. Suzuki in his essay *Self the Unattainable* (Franck, 2004, p. 7).

Therefore, it would appear that to take 'text', the manifesto as the medium to lead the spectator experience 'sunyata' and to confront 'Reality' is doubtful. Certainly, the two artists are trapped in intellectual understanding of Zen. In sum, Zen is inner and an awakening experience. It will be more convincing if the meditative and contemplative action had been advocated practically in the launch, apart from relying on the manifesto itself to level the spectator to grasp the scheme of mind of 'sunyata'.

3.4.5   The term of 'intuition' is overgeneralized

As excerpted on pages 15-16,

It seems necessary here to discuss some fundamental differences which exist between the mystical and materialistic philosophical viewpoints for an understanding of their essential differences might allow for a better appreciation of reality itself.' 'If the scientific viewpoint draws its impetus from an empirical approach founded on 'logical' demonstration, the 'mystical viewpoint functions on the basis 'feeling' and 'intuition'. What seems especially interesting is that whereas the scientist aspires toward an 'intellectual' understanding of the tangible forces of nature via 'objective' research and analysis the mystic strives toward a 'spiritual communion' with the unknowable forces of the Universe via 'mental' contemplation and meditation. As a rule, the scientist has tended to dismiss mystical considerations in his adherence to a 'no nonsense' approach to things whilst the unperturbed mystic on his part has tended to smile tolerantly at the scientist's objectivity. It used to be a truism that positivist science would not admit anything that could not be explained 'objectively' but things seem to have

changed. If in the past 'intuition' had seemed a suspicious word to the scientist. It is today becoming a necessary key to new discoveries. After all, how many significant scientific 'breakthroughs' have been made on the basis of notions that first manifested themselves as 'intuitive' deductions. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 15-16)

The manifesto text merely summarizes that the mystical basis of 'intuition' is marked as the key to new discoveries to scientists. Nonetheless, this does not confirm that scientific breakthrough is manifested by the mystical basis of 'intuition' from the East. The term 'intuition' is a universal term, and the definition from the Western context might be different from the Eastern sense of 'intuition'. The term 'intuition' is described by D. T. Suzuki as 'transcendental wisdom' in the prefix 'pra' or to be known as 'prajna'. It is associated with the totality of intuition that takes place in the mind in grasping and perceiving things beyond the ordinary empirical consciousness by means of perceiving things without discrimination taking place (Suzuki , pp. 57-58).

The key meaning of 'intuition' in the Western philosophy is defined as a non-referential awareness of abstract objects or concrete truth (Livergood, 2008). According to Fitz, the nature of 'intuition' as a big subject has been discussed, mentioned and studied since the ancient times until present from both perspectives (Fitz, 2001, p7). Since the ancient times in the Western culture, the topic 'intuition' can be traced in the thoughts of Pythagoras (numbers existed in intuitive realms), Plato (school of idealism rested in intuitive knowledge), Aristotle (knowledge exists without proof), and Plotinus (knowledge can come from mystical union with the subject you desire to know) (Sharon, 2006) medieval thinking of the scholastics (Fitz, 2001, p.7) In Plato's The Structure of Human Knowledge, he believes that 'intuition' is the fundamental capacity of human reason to comprehend the true nature of reality. Livergood in his essay, 'Rediscovering Plato and the Mystical Science of Dialectic' in page 79 confirms that Plato is the man's

achievement of reason, in his Platonic Dialectic; 'intuition' involves an intuitive mode of apprehension and communication without rational cognition (Livergood, 2008).

In The Philosophical Dictionary, 'Plato held that intuition is a superior faculty, and Spinoza supposed that intuition is the highest sort of human knowledge. Russell, on the other hand, designated as intuitive any unreflective instance of knowledge by acquaintance' (Sapp, 2016). Meanwhile, Livergood defines 'intuition' as immediate apprehension […], the power or faculty of attaining to direct knowledge or cognition without evident rational thought and inference' (Livergood, 2008). The term 'intuition' has been generalized as the basis of 'mystical', but this generalization is not universally true. To account for the scientific breakthrough manifested by the mystical basis of 'intuition' from the East is inaccurate without further examination as well as evidence to support this point.

3.4.6 The misinterpretation of the term 'chi' as 'samsara'

As appeared in the manifesto on page 16:

What the Taoist mystic referred to as Chi or Hindu Yogi refers to as 'samsara' may be described scientifically as that 'energy' which can neither be created nor destroy but which may be transformed.

It is argued that 'Chi' is not identical to Hindu Yogi terminology that refers to 'samsara'. The same sense of energy addressed as 'chi' to Taoist mystic is interpreted as 'prana' to Hindu Yogi. 'Prana' is the Sanskrit word, which is a sum total of all energy in non-physical form which flows through the individual body and the cosmos. 'Prana' is associated with Hindu Yogi as the life force of energy, which directs the breathing in yoga practice. The 'prana' flows through the body, and it promotes physical, spiritual and mental wellbeing (Ambrosin, 2015). The word 'samsara' originated from Sanskrit and Pāli, which means 'continuous movement', 'continuous flowing' or 'wandering'. In

Zen Buddhism, 'samsara' is used in the context that is associated with 'the endless cycle of going through from birth, life, death and rebirth' (Kaufmann, 2015).

In *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist* on page 49, D. T. Suzuki connotes 'samsara' as the world of birth and death. The misrecognized of self as an entity; one's mind is trapped in the phenomena of 'samsara'. As stated by him, it is caused by the ignorance and lack of ontological understanding of the nature of self which leads one's life to experience 'samsara'. To transcend 'samsara', one has to come to the realization that all things are impermanent, and the self is empty of self-essence and purely nothing. He remarks that with this ontological understanding of the true nature of Self and with the prajna-intuition of seeing life, consequently one is released from the phenomena of 'samsara' in life (Suzuki, 1956, pp. 14, 39, 40, 49). With this clarification, it underlines the fact that the term 'samsara' as 'chi' has been misinterpreted.

3.4.7 The misconception between Dada and Zen are similar in approach, concept and practice

From the saying that 'Our attention was inevitably drawn to such "anti-art" artists as the Dadaist Marcel Duchamp…' as excerpted on page 9 in second paragraph of chapter **2** of the manifesto, *"Anti-Formalist" and "Anti-Aesthetic"* it appears that the Dada played an influence on the basis of TMR. Interestingly, despite Dada and Zen are quite similar, where both aim at bringing the audience to look at art from seemingly mundane view, less attached to physicality of form but they are different in concept and approach (Pearlman, 2012, p. xvi). Ellen Pearlman confirms that what differentiates Zen approach from Dada is that Zen focuses on the de-emphasizing the 'ego' of the performer in art practice (Pearlman, 2012, p. xvi). Dada is an '*attack* of artist and the egoistic preciousness of individual production' (Pearlman, 2012, pp. xvi, xvii).

The manifesto text noted that:

THEY (local artists) WILL GO ON PRODUCING WORKS, WHICH NO

MATTER HOW EFFICIENT THEIR HANDLING OF WESTERN IDIOMS,

WILL REMAIN DERIVATIVE AND SECOND-RATE! (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974,

p. 7)

It is easily assumed that the text carries an act of *attacking* the artist and the egoistic preciousness of individual production which speaks the criteria of art Dada. The difference in concept between Dadaist and Zen artists was that Dadaist does not emphasize 'the egoistic preoccupations are non-existent' nor a conscious detachment from the work' or 'to play down individualistic consideration' in practice (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 12, 21). Marcel Duchamp leaves behind his false signature 'R. Mutt' on the famous work 'fountain' and this indicates that he still declares his individuality as an artist (Burger, 1984, p. 56). This marks that his work embodies the identity of 'self'. Indeed, the artist is remarked as a 'subject' for creation and without working on the attempt to negate the 'ego' away in the art-making process.

Ellen Pearlman continues that in 1966 at a New Year's Eve celebration, John Cage came about and asked Marcel Duchamp if he was influenced by Oriental thought and he said 'not' (Pearlman, 2012, p. 40). Certainly, Dadaist Marcel Duchamp took a different approach in the art-making process as compared to the avant-garde inspired by Zen. Since Dadaist Marcel Duchamp advocates on individuality, the artist's egoistic preoccupations are instead non-existent. This indicates that Dada is incoherent with the idea that artist's egoistic preoccupations are non-existent. Therefore, it seems that a blend of Dada and Zen in art concept calls into complication.

3.5   The 'Linguistic' Stage of Textual Analysis

This section of textual analysis evaluates how the language is used in the manifesto. This touches on the 'linguistic oddity' such as the misrepresentation of vocabularies (words) from the underlying phenomena of Zen/Zen Buddhism, the benchmark set and the philosophical insight of 'sunyata'.

3.5.1   The inappropriateness usage of the term 'desire' may mislead

The term '*desire*' appears six times in the manifesto. The term '*desire*' also refers to 'motive' or denotes a motivational mental state. D. T. Suzuki expresses that 'desire' exists either in the positive or negative form. 'I desire this' (positive) or 'I do not desire this' (negative) (Suzuki, 1973, p. 154). In a broader sense, 'desire' means a motivational mental state that is driven by reason or motive' (May, n.d.). The 'desire' and 'ego' is like two sides of a coin, where one cannot exist without another. The more desire and aversion one has, the more concrete the 'ego' seems. The desire is a projection of 'ego', and the 'ego' is a projection of desire (Maithri, 2010). The craving for attention from others is considered as the reflection of 'ego'(Powell, 1977, p. 12). This means that 'desire' is also an attachment driven by 'ego'. 'Ego' and 'desire' are both interrelated (Maithri, 2010).

Considering the clarification above, it is argued that '*ego preoccupation is non-existent in our scheme of thing*' and '*a conscious detachment from the work of art*' cannot be fulfilled if there is a motive to cling to 'desire'. However, in gaining attention from others in the manifesto, the two artists have repeatedly attached to the term *'desire'* in the dialogue as highlighted below.

The '*desire*' on our part to reject 'formal-aesthetic' consideration in our scheme of things…. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 9)

The decision to produce works jointly was motivated by our '*desire*' to play

down individualistic consideration as far as that's possible'. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 12)

'The present exhibition has been motivated by the two participating artists' *'desire'* to raise some questions regarding the direction of Malaysian art in the 1970's. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 4)

That the validity of a schematized art criticism founded on an objective methodology is today being attacked by younger artists points to a deliberate *'desire'* on the part of the serious artist of the 70s to view aspects of reality without the limitations of certain 'relationships' of codified data which are based upon the art historian's form-inspired view of art. There is today a deliberate *'desire'*…… is akin to philosopher's! (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 9- 10)

Similarly, as presented by Robert Powell, in his book *Zen and Reality*, *'desire'* is corresponding to the acknowledgment of self, which is driven by 'ego' that reinforces the discrimination of 'self' as 'Reality'. The term *'desire'* that has consistently appeared in the manifesto may underpin that the two initiators have been motivated by 'ego'. Pursuing this further, the term 'desire' is contradictory to the claim *'ego preoccupation is non-existent in our scheme of thing'*. In addition, the term 'desire' used in the manifesto is inconsistent with the value of Zen that cultivates the detachment of self from the 'ego' and 'desire' (Powell, 1977, p. 31). Undeniably, it is understandable that all men are impelled by the basic desire of sensuality, self-preservation and agression. These desires, when they emerge in the form of 'desire' for power,…certainly bring about antagonisms between man and man (De Silva, M. W. P., 1967, p. 3). However, the term 'desire' is inappropriate for usage in the context of Zen.

3.5.2 The subjective pronoun 'we' and 'our' dominating the narrative indicates the disunity with the art premise 'a conscious detachment from the work of art'

Although the two artists escape from 'I' negation and replace it with '*we*' to disintegrate the existence of self, the subject '*we*' and '*our*' however still appear as "entity" with thoughts, wants, and beliefs in the narrative dimension as well as the privilage of the two artists in the manifesto crafting rather than 'a conscious detachment from the work of art'.

It is stated in page 4,

> It seems necessary from the outset to state that '*we*' (subject) are modern artist' and as such we are not with traditional art form. However '*we*' are borrowing Asian philosophies in order to come up with an attitude which we hope will help enrich the international modern art movement… '*WE*' ARE HOWEVER ATTEMPTING TO WORK OUTSIDE THE WESTERN-CENTRIC OF FORM. WHAT '*WE*' ARE TRYING TO DO IS TO SOW THE SEEDS FOR A THINKING PROCESS WHICH MIGHT SOMEDAY LIBERATE MALAYSIAN ARTISTS FROM THE DEPENDENCE OF WESTERN INFLUENCE. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 4)

> The present exhibition has been motivated by the two participating artists' desire to raise some question…. In attempting to do this, '*we are*', however not limiting ourselves to a wholly provincial outlook. It is our belief that the questions we are raising relate directly to a greater Asian situation and as such, '*we are not*' functioning within 'nationalistic considerations'.

In the last line of page 21, it is highlighted that:

> '*We*' (subject) are quite simply 'initiators' of a mental process that begins initially with the confrontation which takes place between the spectator and the situation *we* have placed him in. '*We*' […] have no more control over the

situation. Besides the spectator is free to move backward and forward in time as his mind takes over the contemplation and meditation. The final outcome of these thought-processes functioning within 'mental' time is within 'mental' time is dependent on the workings of the spectator's mind and his own imagination. At this point '*we*' as the '*initiators*'. '*We*' are however borrowing from Asian philosophies in order to come out an attitude which '*we*' hope could enrich the international modern art movement which needs to be considered in global terms these days. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 21)

Besides that, the combination of 'subjective pronoun' and 'verb' is contradictory with the idea:

'*We* (subject) *were aiming a conscious detachment from the work of art…*' (paragraph 3, page 21)

Against this,

'*We* (subjective pronoun) *decided* (verb)…' (paragraph 3, page 12)

'*We* (subjective pronoun) became *determined* (verb) *to*' (paragraph 2, page 9)

'*We* (subjective pronoun) *think* (verb) and *function beyond*' (paragraph 4, page 9)

'*We* (subjective pronoun) *discovered* (verb) …' (paragraph 2, page 12)

'*We* (subjective pronoun) *wish* (verb) to quote …'(paragraph 3, page 14)

'*We* (subjective pronoun) were now *faced* (verb)**…'** (paragraph 2, page 18)

'*We* (subjective pronoun) were not *interested* (verb)….' (paragraph 1, page 17)

There a…necessary for anyone wanting to understand and appreciate '*our*' work. (paragraph 1, page 21)

'*Our*' is essentially an ontological view of reality that is not based on "physical" but rather "mental" and mystical considerations. (paragraph 1, page 21)

Within '*our*' scheme… (paragraph 2, page 22)

The first pre-requisite of meditation and contemplation constiutes a significant objective in '*our*' works. (paragraph 2, page 22)

It will be noticed that all '*our*' titles allude to the event. (paragraph 3, page 22)

According to Heather MacFadyen, a possessive pronoun such as '*our*' indicates that 'the pronoun is acting as a marker of possession and defines who owns a particular object or person'. The use of **'*our*'** within the structure of the narration highlights authorial voice which surfaced the embodied self and the self-presence of the two artists instead of a conscious detachment from the work of art or non-self-existing entity.

Certainly, the combination of the 'subject' and the 'verb' conveys the two artists placed themselves as the central attention in TMR which also speaks power, self-assertion, emotions as a reflection of their ego-attachment. Given such emphasis, it also marks the overriding of the two artists' personal narrative in the manifesto crafting.

It is suggested that 'non-egoistic preoccupation' as one the schemes of art creation and a conscious detachment from the work of art only succeeds if the two artists could keep away from the use of subjective 'pronoun' or fully come into being of '*no-one*' in the rhetorical dimension or perhaps retorting the unauthorative third-person's voice in the narration.

3.5.3 The verb uses 'force' and 'forced' and 'insisting' stand in opposition to the phrase of 'no more control'

Heather MacFadyen pointed out that traditional grammar classifies words based on eight parts of speech: the verb, the noun, the pronoun, the adjective, the adverb, the preposition, the conjunction, and the interjection. Heather MacFadyen stated that 'a verb or compound verb asserts something about the subject of the sentence and express actions, events, or states of being'. This point aims to highlight that the verb

or compound verb *'force'* and *'forced'* conveys 'insisting' and also compels a dichotomy atmosphere which indicates the disunity to the phrase *'no more control'* with over the situation in paragraph 1 on page 22.

On page in 21 paragraph 1, it is remarked in the text:

'At this point, we as the "initiators" have *'no more control'* over the situation.

In contrast:

i.   On page 21 in paragraph 2, 'Our work is therefore founded on deliberate attempt to *'force'* contemplation and meditation on the part of the spectator.'

ii.   On page 21 in paragraph 3, 'We have placed the spectator in situation in which he is *'forced'* to requestion his own reality.'

This point affirms that verb used, explicitly 'forced' the spectator, which contradicts the claim that the two initiators have *'no more control'* over the situation.

3.5.4   The choice of word 'sadly' indirectly reveals that the two artists are carried away by emotion, which it is in disunity with what has been claimed in the manifesto

It is noted that:

> IT IS OUR BELIEF THAT NO REAL INTELLECTUAL COMMITMENT CONVICTION BEHIND THEIR INVOLVEMENTS! …THIS FACTOR IS SADLY, VERY MISSING IN MALAYSIAN ART! (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 6)

Apart from the ready-mades, the manifesto is the work of art produced by the two artists. Linguisticlly the term 'sadly' used in the manifesto directly state the emotion rather than *'no emotional considerations would be allowed to dictate and manipulate of the forms as far as that was possible'* (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 12). The manifesto itself is a form crafted by the two artists besides the ready-mades, constituted by text.

3.5.5 The vocabularies used to address the Western artists reveal the disunity with the principle of 'sunyata' that upholds acceptance and, intercultural understanding and respect

As mentioned earlier, the notion of 'sunyata' is endowed with acceptance of things with no extreme feeling over all phenomenon in this world (Shi'an, 1999, p. 162). From art-political context, TMR art event is an attempt to change and relocate the artistic directions in Malaysia towards the Eastern art lineage. In the discourse, the two artists prolong a heated debate on the dissimilarities between the East and the West. In defense of TMR, the two artists of Asianess reject all Western-centric viewpoint of reality and art approaches. To affirm the competitiveness of the East, the words such as 'redundant' and 'naive' (as highlighted) are used to address how the Western artists are viewed by the Eastern artists.

> The western artist's attempt to create works which exist 'within the viewers own space' then must seem quite '*redundant*' to the oriental artist. Similarly, the commonly held notion amongst so many 'Kinetic' artists is that their works are only 'active' when 'switched on' would seem, very '*naïve*' to the Taoist'. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 20)

Tracing from the words used by the two artists to describe the Western artists are viewed by the Eastern artists to battle against the West is internally contradictory with the fundamental principle of 'sunyata' that upholds the intercultural understanding, to find unity in plurality and to complete one another rather than competing with each other.

3.6 Summary of Chapter

This chapter has presented the texual analysis of the manifesto from verbal, textual and linguistic aspects of the text. In the discussion, the words, lines, phrases and a body of text embedded in the manifesto and relevant knowledge from supporting texts

have been cited to justify the claims made about the manifesto. Based on the textual analysis that has been carried out on the verbal aspect of the manifesto,it indicates that:

1.   The text is disorganized and does not follow a logical order.

2.   Insufficient information was provided in explaining phenomena and assumptions made.

3.   The cited statements and excerpts are not fully discussed, associated and linked back to the art of TMR and working practice of the two artists.

4.   The mixture of ideologies and philosophical ideas in the articulation has caused complication in understanding the art practice, direction and concept of TMR.

From further examination of the textual analysis and the lingusitic aspects of text, it can be inferred that there are underlying theoretical issues, conflicts and controversies lies within the written manifesto. The text speaks on placing TMR towards the Eastern lineage of art, however it also says the reverse. There are multiple terms and phrases embedded in the manifesto text that are incoherent and contradictory in meaning and concept in relation to Zen. These terms and phrases are also paradoxical in deliberating a non-ego involvement in the creation. Since there are contradictions in the application of key idea/concept into working practice of the manifesto crafting. The way in which Eastern and Western viewpoints of art is propagated is against the backgdrop of Zen. The following are the rundown of findings garnered from further analysis on the textual and lingusitic aspects of the text:

1.   There are contradictions in sentiment between what have been asserted in premises and what the text end up saying.

2.   The dualistic highlights between the East and the West reveals the contradiction in the claim that 'ego preoccupation is non-existent in our scheme of thing'.

3.   The internal inconsistency in concept to conjure a non-Western context of art.

4. The obscurity in working towards the Eastern roots of art.

5. The discrepancy in separating TMR from the West.

6. The internalization of 'self' as 'Westerner'.

7. The oversimplification between no humanistic and subjective intent with the self-effacing role.

8. The dualistic dichotomies counterposing between the East and the West is disunity with the key idea of 'sunyata'.

9. The separation of the spiritual and intellectual into two opposition camps is not absolute.

10. The extreme authoritative judging tone is inconsistent with the philosophical wisdom of 'sunyata' and 'no-mind'.

11. The misconception that intellectual verbalism could lead the spectator to direct experience of 'Reality' and 'sunyata'.

12. The term of 'intuition' is overgeneralized.

13. The misinterpretation of the term 'chi' as 'samsara'.

14. The misconception between Dada and Zen are similar in approach, concept and practice.

15. The inappropriateness usage of the term 'desire' may mislead.

16. The subjective pronoun 'we' and 'our' dominating the narrative indicate the disunity with the art premise 'a conscious detachment from the work of art'.

17. The verb uses 'force', 'forced' and 'insisting' used stand in opposition to the phrase 'no more control'.

18. The choice of word 'sadly' indirectly reveals that 'that the two artists are carried away by emotion, which it is disunity with what has been claimed in the manifesto.

19. The vocabularies used to address the Western artists reveal the disunity with the principle of 'sunyata' that upholds acceptance and, intercultural understanding and respect.

CHAPTER FOUR:

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE ART & MEANING OF

MYSTICAL REALITY

4.1   Introduction

This chapter seeks to identify the origin of the art of *Mystical Reality*, the underlying reason of Piyadasa and Sulaiman approaching art from mental meditative and contemplative scheme of things and to scrutinise whether *Mystical Reality* is articulated in the written manifesto. This in turn will answer the following research questions: (2) How was the art of *Mystical Reality* established by these two artists? (3) Why was the spectator invited to contemplate the event from a mental and contemplative meditative scheme of actions? (4) What is the meaning of *Mystical Reality*?

Based on the content of the manifesto, the art of *Mystical Reality* is situated within the philosophical discourse that the two initiators partake in chapter **5** and **6** of the manifesto. Chapter **5**: *A Mystical Concept of Time and Event,* Chapter **6:** *A "Mental/Meditative/Mystical" viewpoint of reality as opposed to a "Spatio/Temporal/Sensorial" viewpoint of the Western artist.* From page 21 onwards in chapter **6** of the manifesto, the text starts to present the 'mystical' viewpoint of reality in approaching art and initiated experiences (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p.8).

D. T. Suzuki's conception of Zen and 'Reality' are the most insightful resources to affirm whether *Mystical Reality* is articulated. The quoted text derived from D. T. Suzuki also provides the clue to the interpretation of the art of TMR— *Mystical Reality*.

To begin with, this analysis provides a brief introduction of D. T. Suzuki's interpretations of Zen. All these aid the understanding of *Mystical Reality.* Moving on, the analysis continues to address the initiated experiences by the two initiators, the way

in which 'Reality' is approached, the art is established in TMR and the possible contextual meaning of *Mystical Reality.* D. T. Suzuki's conception of 'Reality' will be adopted to explain the conception of 'Reality' of TMR.

4.2   The Background of D. T. Suzuki and his Zen Tradition

D. T. Suzuki is the centre of reference for Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa in associating TMR with Zen. Therefore, D. T. Suzuki's interpretation of Zen has become the required reading for a precise understanding of the Zen aspect of TMR. In the manifesto, D. T. Suzuki is regarded as a Zen scholar (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p.14).

Renowned, Professor Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki or commonly known as D. T. Suzuki (1870-1966) was born in Kanazawa, Japan. He was an influential scholar, who devoted his life to Zen/ Zen Buddhism. Besides that, he was also a promising philosopher. In D. T. Suzuki's early age, he was trained in Engakuji monastery, Rinzai lineage of Zen [15] (Pearlman, 2012, pp. 2-4)

The Rinzai lineage of Zen revolves around meditation, 'zazen' to obtain enlightenment under the influence of Mahayana Buddhism. D. T. Suzuki was practicing 'zazen', answering 'koan' and 'samu' in the four years of being in Engakuji Temple to train his mind in Zen (Pearlman, 2012, p.2-4).   Zazen' is a portmanteau of two words with 'za' meaning 'to sit' and 'zen' being the meditation practice to obtain 'satori' in Japanese (wu in Chinese), the spiritual awakening experience of Zen (Suzuki, 1973, pp. 16-17). The sitting of 'zazen' is shown in Figure 4.1.

When D. T. Suzuki almost gave up on Zen training in December 1895, he lost track of time, body, posture and plunged into a world of emptiness; a realization of 'satori' (Pearlman, 2012, p. 8). Despite the predicaments faced, D. T. Suzuki never

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Based on *The Official Site of the Joint Council for Japanese Rinzai and Obaku Zen* (2006) it is said that the Rinzai lineage of Zen is the Japanese branch of Chinese Linji lineage of Zen Buddhism originated from China founded by Linji Yi Xuan through the monk Eisai or Yōsai Zenji (1141-1215) who travelled from China to Japan. The Rinzai sect is one of the three sects of Zen school in Japan aside from Soto and Obaku. The Rinzai lineage of Zen migrated to the United States of America through Imakita Kosen (1816-1892) (Pearlman, 2012, p. 5).

'satori' (Pearlman, 2012, p. 8). Despite the predicaments faced, D. T. Suzuki never proclaimed himself as Zen master.

Figure 4.1: Monks are in their sitting position of practicing 'zazen' or meditation. Retreived from: http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhistworld/japan-txt.htm

Based on D. T. Suzuki's experience of Zen, he proclaims that Zen is the experience wholeness of things without separation made by rational ability by means of 'to return to the original state of purity and transparency', to restore the experience to the original inseparability' (Suzuki, 1973, p.359).

Apart from 'zazen', particular attention was placed on the practice of 'koan' and 'samu' to experience Zen (Suzuki, 1973, pp. 16-17). The word 'samu' is an amalgamation of 'sa', meaning work, and 'mu, which means 'to devote one's attention to a non-dual basis between meditation and daily activity'. In lesser words, 'samu' is an expansion of meditation to its function. 'Samu' is practiced by the monk through their daily chores such as floor cleaning, cooking and eating, to help train the mind in Zen. D. T. Suzuki also asserts that the Zen experience is multi-faceted and therefore can be found in our daily aspects of lives such as eating, drinking, or businesses of all kinds. Zen 'satori' hitherto is hidden in our daily activity (Suzuki, 1973, p. 16).

Figure 4.2: Monks are carrying out floor cleaning activity.
Retrieved from: http://www.tierrazen.com/catalogo/productos/samu-e

Whereas 'Koan' refers to the practice of dialogue or word contemplation, an effaceable state beyond the reach of all dualistic thinking (Heine & Wright, 2000, pp. 15 & 16) (Michel, p. 166). It is presented that this mind is in the state of 'empty-minded-ness' (Suzuki, 1973, p. 114).

D. T. Suzuki was a student of Shoyen Shaku (1860-1919), the new abbot of Engakuji Temple by 1892 (Pearlman, 2012, p. 8). He followed Shoyen Shaku on his travels to America to introduce the Shoyen lineage of Zen to the West. He served as a translator and a mediator for his Roshi to translate from Japanese to English and vice versa. (Fors, 2006, p. 128).

D. T. Suzuki maintained a close personal relationship with his schoolmate, Nishida Kitaro (1870–1945), a philosopher and the founder of Kyoto school. D. T. Suzuki's Mahāyāna Buddhist's thought and conception of Zen practice was attributed to Nishida's philosophy of religion. However, D. T. Suzuki is famous in his own accord instead of being associated with Kyoto University (Davis, 2014).

D. T. Suzuki's teaching has a profound influence on art groups such as *Fluxus Group, Happening, Judson Theater* and *The Gutai* (Pearlman, 2012, p. 69, 82, 92). D. T. Suzuki is the propagator of Zen to the West. He is considered as one of the most influential Zen philosophers who has made Zen Buddhism accessible to the Western

world[16] (Larson, 2012, p. xi). Today, his Zen philosophy has become an important source for Western scholars to dicusss further about Zen in relation to Western philosophy.

D. T. Suzuki has made an important contribution to the West and his enunciation of Zen continues to fascinate the postmodern scholars and the avant-garde artists. Ellen Pearlman, author of *Nothing and Everything* declares D. T. Suzuki as the most promiment Zen professor of the avant-garde artists such as: John Cage, Ad Rheinhart, Mark Toney and George Brecht. The aforementioned artists attended D. T. Suzuki's Buddhism classes and saw the unlimitedness of Zen and Buddhism philosophical insights as new sources of experiments in art. Additionally, TMR is inextricably bound up with the name of John Cage. Evidently, what was created by the two initiators was the result of a contemporary art of its time.

Figure 4.3: D. T. Suzuki (left) with John Cage (right) in 1962. Retrieved from: http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/books/2012/06/where_the_heart_beats_john_cage_bi ography_by_kay_larson_reviewed_.html

It is believed that D. T. Suzuki changed the avant-garde artists' thinking and direction of art in a radical way (Pearlman, 2012, p. xii). John Cage infused Zen mind

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[16] "D. T. Suzuki travelled extensively throughout his long life, lecturing and engaging in dialogue with many of the most important artists and thinkers of his time. His influence is widely acknowledged; no discussion of the position of Japan in the intellectual history of the 20th century can be complete without consideration of D. T. Suzuki. Undoubtedly one of the most significant figures of the last century, his important contributions includes writings on Buddhist philosophy and the arts of Japan – writings that influenced artists worldwide". (Marty Gross, 2016)

training 'zazen' and Zen Buddhism principles in his music class. John Cage also explored the merging of duality, the deconstruction of the sequence of sound, and indulged in the Zen idea that 'everything in every moment is available to make art' (Pearlman, 2012, p. 57, 58). Similarly in TMR, the two initiators asked for spiritual realization, "an awareness of the forces, the energies and the ungraspable laws of reality within which the spectator himself exists and functions" as embedded in page 21, the last line of second paragraph of chapter **6**. The spectator was persuaded to appreciate the event from the mind of contemplation and meditation. Consequently, the spectator was enabled to realize the "mental" experiences which they have jointly initiated as mentioned in the paragraph 2 of page 21. Correspondingly, in the mental/meditative/mystical experiences itself, the text speaks about the merging of 'he' and the 'object' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 22).

Seemingly, the practical attitude adopted by the Zen monk in practicing Zen for living has been appropriated as the working practices of these two artists, since the actions sprouting from all kinds of activities are part and parcel of TMR. According to the manifesto, the artists documented daily activities, spaces and objects that they encountered as part of the works of TMR.

4.3   The definition of Taoism and Zen

The terms 'Taoism' and 'Zen' have been consistently appearing in the manifesto text which gives an idea that the art of TMR is related to 'Taoism' and 'Zen'. 'Taoism/Taoist' appears 7 times and 'Zen' appears 13 times. Therefore, it seems nessasary to define 'Taoism' and 'Zen'.

Zen and Taoism are contented as philosophy. As stated in the manifesto that 'It seems necessary to state at this point that Taoism (and Zen, which spring from it) is essentially a philosophy rather than a religion' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 18). Therefore,

Taoism in the context of TMR is in reference to 'Dao' (Tao), the philosophy of *Dao de Jing* by '*Lao Zi* and *Zhuangzi*' [17], Taoist's idea, instead of *Daojiao*, a religion (Guan, 2000, p. 1).

D. T. Suzuki implies that 'Tao' is the essence of truth, literally pinpointing the 'way' or 'road' or 'passage'; a metaphysical connotation (Suzuki, 1956, pp. 18-20). Tao' can be mediated as the Chinese metaphysical interpretation of the relationship between the Cosmos and all the myriads of things[18] in this world. 'Dao' is considered intriguing because it is undefined by logic. According to *Zhuangzi*, 'the distinctions among things are relative. According to *Zhuangzi*, 'there is no real demarcation betweeen things' in 'Dao' (Haiming, 2012, p. 50). For *Zhuangzi* the idea to live life harmoniously with the universe through meditation is to forget the self and body by 'quiet[ly] sitting and forgetting'[19] (Haiming, 2012, p. 52).

As viewed by *Zhuangzi* 'everything is equal to every-thing else'. Benjamin Schwartz clarified this by saying that Taoist aims to deconstruct the "absolute categories of predi-cation which we bring to our preceptions". As a result of this thorough rejection, there is no distinction but only undifferentiation left among all things (Hongchu Fu, 1992, p. 304). Within such a view, all differences are united and become one (Hongchu Fu, 1992, p. 303). From this perspective of 'Dao', ' there is no real difference or demarcation among things' (Haiming, 2012, p. 50). This philosophical insight of 'Dao' has practical applications in life and serves as a way to ensure harmonious living between humans and the universe by guiding humans to understand the world (McCauley, 2005, p. 336).

Scholars have discovered that the history of Zen is complicated. Before Zen was

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[17] *Lao Zi* and *Zhuangzi* are philosophers of Taoism. '*Lao Zi* roughly lived at roughly the same time as Confucius (Kongzi) (551-479 BC) and *Zhuangzi* lived at around 369-286 BC (Haiming, 2012, pp. 22, 38)

[18] 'Things' refer to being, non-being, the existence of all myriad of things in the universe. 'Being' (you) and non-being (wu) or nameless are viewed from *Laozi*'s perspective, all myriad of things in the universe are being named. (Haiming, 2012, pp. 40, 42, 43)

[19] 'Quiet sitting and forgetting' is interpreted as an experience 'to exist oneself to have no form and to exist as if there is no self', reaching a state of no self or mind (Haiming, 2012, p. 51).

introduced to Japan, it was perceived as a synthesis of the Indian Buddhist and Dao worldview, the epistemology of pre-Qin China (Haiming, 2012, p. 98). Buddhism in India emphasizes on 'sunyata' as the basic description of all things. In early Buddhism, 'sunyata' was defined as 'annatta' (Pāli); 'non-self'. 'Sunyata' or 'emptiness' as the heart of Zen (Soh, 2011).

In D. T. Suzuki's writings on Zen is polysemous. In D. T. Suzuki's book *Studies in Zen* (1955), in answering what Zen is, he has put forward the term 'Zen' as an s abbreviation of the sanskrit term 'Dhyana'. The followers of Zen ('Zenna' in Japanese or "Cha'an" in Chinese), practice contemplation or meditation which are disciplines of tranquilization (Suzuki, 1955 p.12). Zen is therefore related to meditation and contemplation (samādhi).

In *Zen and Japanese Culture*, D. T. Suzuki noted that 'Zen is a discipline in enlightenment' which is central to the teaching of Buddhism in order to obtain the enlightenment mind (Suzuki, 1973, p.5). This awakening experience is attuned to the pulsation of 'Reality' in the Zen context. Zen is both philosophical and practical in guiding the way of life (Suzuki, 1973, p. 9).

D. T. Suzuki also says that 'satori'[20] and Zen are synonymous (Suzuki, 1955, p. 218). Franck remarks that D. T. Suzuki's Zen philosophy is relating to his adaptations of "logic of identity through difference". He says, "The core of D. T. Suzuki's philosophing method is traced as the sokuhi no ronri, the "logic of identity through difference," which transcends formal logic and is the very basis of Zen thought. It may be summed up as "A is A means A is not A; therefore A is A," in other words, that any statement of truth must include its opposite (Franck, 2004, p. 83).

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[20] 'Satori' is the Zen experience. D. T. Suzuki implies 'to know' Zen one must have experienced 'satori'. 'In D. T. Suzuki's *Zen Buddhism: Selecting Writing*, 'to know' is 'to see into one's nature'. It appears that D. T. Suzuki's interpretation of 'satori' aims to inform that 'satori' is a state within us, 'to see into one's nature is a moment of spiritual awakening whereby one sees things as they are (Suzuki, 1956, p.259). 'Satori' can be considered as the experience of the wholeness of things without separation made (Suzuki, 1955, p.81, 82).

D. T. Suzuki, in defining Zen emphasises on the mysterious yet spiritual awakening experience of Zen,'satori', in Japanese (wu in Chinese) (Suzuki, 1955, pp. 81-82). Robert H. Sharf, a professor in Buddhism, expressed that, D. T. Suzuki has indeed exaggerated the mysterious aspect of Zen in order to indulge the reader in the meditative experience of Zen, by means of 'satori' (Sharf, 1995, pp. 46-48).

The philosophical meaning of Zen is closely related to 'sunyata'. 'Sunya' means nothing and 'ta' in context, a suffix, means '-ness' (Soh, 2011) D. T. Suzuki's interpretation of 'sunyata' is associated with the Mahayana Buddhism notion of 'sunyata' ; the doctrine of Emptiness, emphasizes on the realisation of emptiness of all phenomena and negates the existence of all things (Suzuki, 1955, p. 188). In this regard, 'sunyata', is often translated as 'emptiness' or 'voidness' by D. T. Suzuki. (Suzuki, 1973, p. 230).

Theoretically, 'sunyata' helps oneself understand the fundamental question of existence, in which it proposes that all things are undifferentiated; unified as a whole (D. T. Suzuki, 1955 p.41). The philosophical message of 'sunyata' highlighted in TMR offers a fertile ground for the spectator to realize the mystery of its own existence, which is 'egoless' and inseparable from the universe. In addition, 'sunyata' is also the essential factor determines 'Zen is pure'. In the purest sense of Zen, it entails an awareness the two artists worked under the ego-transcending mode — to set themselves apart from ego-centric involvement in art practice (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 21, 22).

4.4   D. T. Suzuki's Context of Zen

This section aims to provide the background context of D. T. Suzuki's Zen. The information on D. T. Suzuki's context of Zen is collected from the views of philosopher and scholars as well as observation made by researcher of D. T. Suzuki's texts. This content of text may somehow be relevant in providing a better of D. T. Suzuki's Zen.

D. T. Suzuki wrote a number of books about Zen and Zen Buddhism in English through his study of the original text in Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese, and Japanese Zen and Buddhist text including translating the *Tao Te Ching* to English. Among the books written by D. T. Suzuki are *The Manual of Zen Buddhism*, *Studies in Zen*, *Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings*, *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, *Studies in Zen*, *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*, *Zen and Japanese Culture.* He also translated *The Lankavatara Sutra: a Mahayana Buddhism Text* from Sanskrit into English.

Figure 4.4 : D. T. Suzuki at his desk.
Retrieved from: https://www.kanazawastation.com/the-d-t-suzuki-museum/

A very large number of intellectuals in the West have heard or read of D. T. Suzuki's writing. D. T. Suzuki's writings influenced Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Arnold Toynbee, and Aldous Huxley, particularly in the field of philosophy and psychology (McIntosh, 2014, p. 201). Over time, he inspired psychologists, Erich Fromm and Karen Homey, scholars of Eastern philosophy, Alan Watt, and president of the Buddhist Society in England, Christmas Humphreys. D. T. Suzuki has been recognised by Swiss psychiatrist and psychotherapist, Carl Jung, as living Buddhism in the foreword notes in his book *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (Suzuki, 1964, p.9).

Even though Robert. H. Sharf greatly criticized D. T. Suzuki's writings, he acknowledged D. T. Suzuki as the main inspiration for philosophers, theologists, psychologists, artists, and scholars. Paul Wienpahl, a professor in Philosophy in his *Review: Practice of Zen*, notes that Western writings on Zen employs the writings of D. T. Suzuki as their referential point (Wienpahl, 1963, p.355).

Thomas Merton, a theologian and mystic posits 'It may be said that all Dr. Suzuki's books are pretty much about the same thing. Occasionally, he will draw back and view Zen from the standpoint of culture, psychoanalysis, and even from the viewpoint of Christian mysticism (in Eckhart). Nevertheless, even then he does not stray away from Zen and plummet into some other field, or take a radically new look at his subject' (Franck, 2004, p. 21).

Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist is the writing that has been cited in the manifesto. It appears that *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist* was written with the idea of finding parallels between Eckhart's theology of 'pure nothingness' and Buddhist emptiness (sunyata). In a way or another Christians can somehow understand Buddhist 'sunyata' through the comparison made by D. T. Suzuki between these two teachings. In the context of Buddhist 'sunyata', D. T. Suzuki places a special importance on transcending all mutual relationships, between subject and object, birth and death, God and the world, something and nothing, yes and no, affirmation and negation (D. T. Suzuki, 1957, p.28). In this regards, the writing of D. T. Suzuki, *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist,* has been criticized for the hidden motives in promoting the competitiveness of Eastern mysticism, Zen Buddhism in relation to Christianity (Sharf, 1995, pp. 46-48).

The cited text derived from D. T. Suzuki's text, *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist* as stated in the manifesto: It is perhaps interesting to note that (i) John Cage was very much inspired by Zen Buddhist influences and (ii) the art and life have never

been divorced in the East! Professor Daisetsu Suzuki, the great Zen scholar, has in fact alluded to this fact in his book, "Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist":

> In the same way, every minute of human life as long as it is an expression of its inner self is original, divine, creative and cannot be retrieved. Every individual life is thus a work of art. 'Whether or not one makes it a fine inimitable work of art depends on one's consciousness of the working of 'sunyata' within oneself'. (Piyadasa & Esa, p. 14)

Van Meter Ames, a professor of philosophy claimed that D. T. Suzuki glorifies transcendentalism due to his approach of Zen as an intuitive approach (Sellmann, 1995, p. 97). Abbot Kobori Nanrei Shaku of Ryoko-in, Daitokuji, who was a student of D. T. Suzuki comprehended that D. T. Suzuki's writings were imbued with "A distinguishing characteristic of his thought is the spontaneous flow of his consciousness so deeply rooted in the Zen experience" (Franck, 2004, p. 84).

Sharf, on his view in regards to D. T. Suzuki's articulation of Zen as D. T. Suzuki's own iconoclastic view of Zen, an excessive elaboration on the unity of 'subject' and 'object' in Cartesian assumptions that, in turn, is regarded as 'Asian spirituality'(Sharf, 1995, pp. 46-48). Accordingly, the initiated 'mystical' experiences of TMR speak about the reconciliation of the dualistic separation 'he' and 'object', the merging of duality. This reflects the engagement of TMR with D. T. Suzuki's thought of Zen elaboration on the unity of 'subject' and 'object'.

D. T. Suzuki's interpretation of Zen is grounded around the context: 'there is no real existence from the false indication of correspondent to name'(Haiming, 2012, p88). Indeed, the mystical experiences initiated by the two initiators are grounded in the trancendental nature of Buddhist attitude by means of transcending everything including the false pretense of naming [21]

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[21] After Kumarajuva arrived in China in 401AD, Buddhism began to see a myriad of things in the world as having no true existence

D. T. Suzuki's *Zen Buddhism and Its Influence on Japanese Culture* has been charged as an excessive discursive of Zen and Samurai nationalist sentiment (Nāgapriya, 2010). Sharf shared a similar viewpoint and considered D. T. Suzuki's exposition of Zen as consisting hidden nationalistic ideology. Additionally, Sharf alleges that D. T. Suzuki's projection of Zen is re-constructed by propagating Japanese spirituality and ignoring the monastic practice and ritualistic aspect of Zen and overlooks the historical development of Buddhism in India and China from which it emerged (Sharf, 1995, pp. 46-48).

The historian, Dr. Hu Shih, has debated that D. T. Suzuki's description of Zen ignores the scientific history of Zen as it is presented, not being centeredon the historical assembly of Zen. D. T. Suzuki's presentation of Zen is not centered on the historical assembly of Zen. However, D. T. Suzuki demanded Hu Shih to view Zen from a non-historical viewpoint because Zen is not a thing of the past and is, in fact, alive. He also urges that the understanding of Zen is not through the sacred sutras as the fundamental insight of Zen is derived from Buddhism and does not lie in the doctrine. As it appears, even though the fundamental insight of Zen is derived from Buddhism, the understanding of Zen does not slander the principle (Suzuki, 1955, p. 24 – 34, 41).

Sellmann, a Zen Buddhist scholar opines that D. T. Suzuki excludes the histography aspect of Zen as he interprets Zen as living history (Sellmann, 1995, p. 100). David McMahan, a Zen Buddhist scholar filled in the void left by the different reviews on D. T. Suzuki's context of Zen by positioning D. T. Suzuki as evoking a form of modern Buddhism that accommodates Western culture and intellectual development. Collectively, D. T. Suzuki's strategy in approaching Zen has close relations with the

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and are, in fact, interdependent. Seng Zhao (384 – 414AD) a Buddhist philosopher views that they are known as 'things' under false pretense of naming; there is no real existence from the false indication of correspondent to name. (Haiming, 2012, pp. 87-88)

field of Western philosophy, psychology, science, theology, and the Romaniticism movement (McMahan, 2008, p.6).

In reference to D. T. Suzuki's writing, Carl Jung claims that D. T. Suzuki's Zen can be regarded as philosophy. To Rosemont, D. T. Suzuki's Zen is regarded as philosophy because all terms like "metaphysical" and "ontology" are philosophical terms that are used in D. T. Suzuki's writing (Rosemont, 1970). Seemingly, 'metaphysical' and 'ontological' are the terms that have appeared in the manifesto and are connected to Zen.
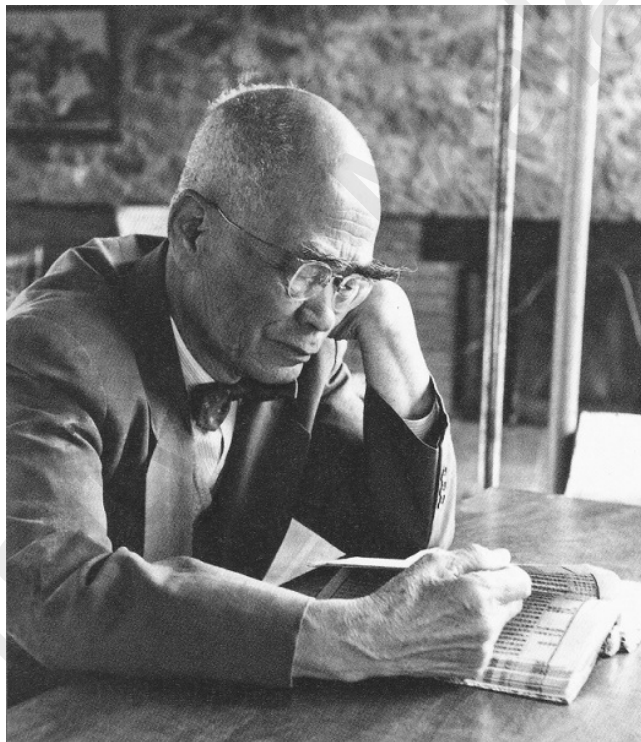
Figure 4.5: The moment of D. T. Suzuki in reading.
Retrieve from: http://www.kanazawa-museum.jp/daisetz/english/

The researcher observes that D. T. Suzuki's writings aim to discuss Zen philosophy in relation to Western psychoanlysis. Fromm stated that D. T. Suzuki's context of Zen can be viewed as the Eastern version of psychoanalysis. It looks into the human psyche and examine the nature of human mind and the interpretation of the 'self', 'ego' and 'mind'. In *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis,* D. T. Suzuki discuss the Zen mind enlightenment from a psychoanalysis perspective, the concepts of 'Self' in Zen

Buddhism. To a certain degree, D. T. Suzuki's Zen enlightenment covers the mental, physical, psychological, and behavioral aspects of man (Suzuki & Fromm & Martino, p.77). This knowledge is important as it was initiated by the two artists from TMR who spoke about the ego-transcending experience of art.

4.5   TMR and Zen

Zen is an attitude to life whereas Zen has been taken as an attitude to art by Piyadasa and Sulaiman in TMR. The relation between TMR and Zen is indicated in the art premises and working practices of the two initiators. The following paragraphs intent to describe how the art premises and working practices of the two initiators are established in relating to Zen.

4.5.1   The Relation between Zen and the Art Premises and Working Practices of the Two Initiators

TMR has turned the art thinking towards Zen/Zen Buddhist philosophy. As mentioned by Piyadasa in conversation with T. K. Sabapathy in *Piyadasa An Overview 1962-2000,* 'The more we started looking at Zen, we began to realize that 'Zen' in its purest sense is a negation of the self, negating or transcending the 'ego', which is very Buddhist' (Sabapathy, 2001, p. 119).

Zen is very Buddhist in the sense that the fundamental essence of Zen is derived from Buddhism (Piper, 2004, p. 294). The researcher found that the benchmarks set with regards to the art practice of Piyadasa and Sulaiman are transformed by the Zen way of understanding existence that is 'egoless'. On a deeper meaning, the two artists denied the primacy of the artist as the center of art creation and negating the 'ego' and 'self' away in working under the purest sense of Zen. Subsequently, the two artists describe themselves as "initiators" (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 21, 22).

D. T. Suzuki mentioned that Buddhist denies the existence of the 'self'.

'Buddhist generally speaks about the egolessness (anattā or anātmya) of all things'. (1956, p. 124). Zen is pure due to its non-dual origin, namely 'sunyata' as the foundation that contributes to the purest sense of Zen. In another way of saying, the essential factor that determines 'Zen is pure', a drawing extracted from the fundamental idea of 'sunyata'. As 'sunyata' is the description of the existence of all things by which:

(a)   All composite of things are emptied of self-essence.

      'An 'essence' is that which makes something what it is' (Ross, 2006). All composite of things are empty of self-essence depicted as the existence of all things is emptied of intrinsic characteristics that make up what it is. Given that all things are not made up by its self-essence but, in turn, is empty of intrinsic characteristics. As posited by D. T. Suzuki, "The emptied self is simply the psychological self cleansed of its egocentric imagination" (D. T. Suzuki, 2004, p. 4). Consequently, in the purest sense, Zen cultivates a 'self' that is empty of 'subjectivity' and is 'egoless' (McFarlane, 1995). Pursuing this further, the two artists aspired to work on '*ego preoccupation as non-existent in our scheme of thing*' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 22) and in the idea of '*a conscious detachment from the work of art*' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 12). Besides this, based on the insight all composite of things are emptied of self-essence, it results of 'an all together new way of perceiving forms that transcends the purely sensorial', all 'objects' are conceived as "formless-ness" and also a 'liberation from 'form-oriented' considerations in the scheme of things (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 20, 21, 23).

(b)   All phenomena in own-being (self) are empty (Hanh, 2013).

      According to D. T. Suzuki, "The 'self', it may conclude, is after all nonexistent" (D. T. Suzuki, 2004, p. 4). As all things lack independent substance and are generally interdependent, all phenomena in own-being are void. As all phenomena like perception, emotion, and thought are subjected to the idea of 'I' , all is void (McFarlane, 1995). The

two artists, therefore, inferred that '*no emotional consideration will be allowed to dictate form*' by means of the artistic practice being unbound by emotion. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 22)

(c)   The true nature of all things is the unity of all as one and interdependence (Danves, 2006, p. 74).

Adapting to Thích Nhất Hạnh's lecture of emptiness, he elaborates that the true nature of all things are interdependent, like the flower having to rely on the element of soil, water, and air that completes its existence. Similarly, the 'self' is made of non-self elements. He describes the meaning of interdependence with the analogy of a piece of paper only being so when it has two sides as a way of reflecting how all things are interdependent (Hanh, 2013). Similarly, in TMR 'he' and 'object', animate and inanimate are interdependent (Piyadasa& Esa, 1974, p. 22).

Ultimately, approaching art from all together different premises formed by the benchmarks and art thinkings as below:

i.   A conscious detachment from the work of art (paragraph 3, page 12).

ii.   The artists' egoistic preoccupations are non-existent in our scheme of things (paragraph 2, page 21).

iii.   To play down individualistic consideration as far as possible (paragraph 3, page 12).

iv.   No emotional considerations would be allowed to dictate and manipulate of the forms that we use (paragraph 3, page 12).

v.   Art and life are no longer separate entities (paragraph 1, page 14).

vi.   A deliberate liberation from 'form-oriented' considerations in the scheme of things (paragraph 1, page 21).

4.6   The 'Mystical' Thinkings and Philosophical Ideas of Art

The term 'mystical' has been consistently appearing in the manifesto for 18 times in the manifesto. It is assumed that the connotation of 'mystical', as it constantly appears in the manifesto, was synonymous with Zen. As in D. T. Suzuki's point of view, Zen is considered 'mystical', beyond human intelligence, ego and no doctrine or sutra can reach Zen. Erich Fromm, a psychoanalyst remarks that due to Zen being not only a theory but also a technique to achieve enlightenment, as meditation and contemplation are one of the methods to lead oneself to experience Zen, the West regards Zen as 'mystical' (Suzuki & Fromm & Martino, 1960, p. 70).

The art of TMR is lauded as 'mystical' based on the fact that the two intiators have turned their art thinking towards Eastern philosophy, particularly Zen/Zen Buddhism which can be traced from the philosophical ideas embedded in the manifesto:

(a)   The working of 'sunyata' within oneself (paragraph 2, page 14).

(b)   Art and life are no longer separate entities (paragraph 1, page 14).

(c)   The form transcended their object-ness and exists as documentation of 'event (paragraph 2, page 20).

(d)   The mystical concept of time and event (chapter title, page 17).

4.6.1   The working of 'sunyata' within oneself

In reference to D. T. Suzuki's *Mysticism Christian and Buddhist*, he elaborates that *the working of sunyata within oneself* as the realization in one's consciousness that in the circumstance of having two objects for identification, there is only one object or subject. In such an experience, there is no contradiction as all forms of mutual differences has been transcended.

He continues,

Art is cultivated by 'sunyata' when the artist transforms himself as a spirit into

the object itself by means of losing the subject in the object. The artist begins to see his work as being separate from himself and subsequently becomes the object itself. Soon both are working inwardly, paired as one. In this spirit, the object and the artist are one. There is no inconsistency or separate pulsation in one's consciousness. (Suzuki, 1956, pp. 28-32, 79)

Based on the D. T. Suzuki's clarification on the workings of 'sunyata' within oneself, it is understood that the central insight of 'sunyata' is to free the mind from the attachment of 'ego-consciousness'. The 'ego-consciousness' is the projection of the separation, description, and categorization of things in this world, including the differentiation of 'subject' and 'object' (Danves, 2006, pp. 84, 85). The 'subject' refers to 'the one who has the experience' and is distingushed from the object of experience, while 'object' is antonymous with what experiences it (the subject) (Proudfoot & Lacey, 2010, p. 281, 391).

The 'ego' is responsive to itself, the recognition of 'I' who is having thought, will, desire, judgment, and control in mind as a reaction and response to the external world (Suzuki & Fromm & Martino, 1960, p. 143). The 'ego' is formed due to the illusion of that self (experiencer) and consciousness (experience) are distinguished separately. Thereon, it is the root of the duality in everything resulting from the separation of experiencing self which is apparent from what is experienced. In other words, the fictional 'ego' constructed by the 'self' comes into sight when there is an entity and what this entity experiences. Subsequently, the duality in thinking is formed (Gullette, 1976). Hence, oneself perceives that 'there is 'me' and then there is the world around me' (Farrell, 1997).

The initiated 'mystical' experiences of TMR speaks about the reconciliation of the dualistic separation constructed by the pretense of naming of the myriad of things, between 'object and event' and 'object and the person' which reflects that the initiated

experiences by Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa entail an awareness of 'sunyata'. In another words, the art experience in TMR involves a series of mental experiences comprising the conscious merging of the apparent distinction 'the person' and 'object', 'object' and 'event' as well as the 'person' and 'event' (Piyadasa & Esa, p.22).

As embedded in the manfesto:

'The realization that 'he' and the 'object' are both processes existing in time results in a breaking down of the essential differences between the ''thing' and the 'person', 'a gradual liberation from humanistic consideration' This does not result in 'dehumanization' (a western phobia!) but rather in a new spontaneity which brings him closer to 'sunyata' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 22).

Based on D. T. Suzuki's framework of Zen to interpret the said 'a gradual liberation from humanistic consideration'… a new spontaneity which brings him closer to 'sunyata'(Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 22). This is the moment where one is experiencing one in all and all in one, in the state of mind that is unhampered by senses and intellect—one who has experienced 'sunyata' (Suzuki, 1973, pp. 5, 6, 13, 16-17). Seemingly, *the working of 'sunyata' within oneself* embraced by D. T. Suzuki has been translated as the 'mystical' experiences of TMR. With this in mind, TMR is remarkable for the skillful use of the philosophical idea of 'sunyata'.

4.6.2   Art and life are no longer separate entities

Each dualism of thought constructed by 'ego' is meant to be transcended in the art of TMR under the light of 'sunyata'. 'Art' and the 'life', 'art' and 'reality' appear dualistic to oneself, which are superimposed by the binary structure of language (Suzuki, 1973, p. 17). In concept, the idea of 'art and life are no longer separate entities', but refined by the non-dual nature of 'sunyata' that breaks free the dualistic thinking between 'art' and 'life' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 14).

Rather than being trapped in the separation between 'art', 'life' and 'reality', as a sequence, John Cage, a conceptual artist of *silent music* who was much inspired by Zen Buddhist viewed that art is beyond the separation of life and reality. As such, he attached his philosophy of art in the state that 'art and life are one reality'. John Cage in his *silent music* exposed his audience to the background sound as performance; to hear the movement of the trees, the sound of the rain and even the audience talking as a way to embrace the moment of life in four minutes and thirty-three seconds (Pearlman, 2012, p. 28, 29). This philosophical approach to creation was intended to change his audience's view that there is no dichotomy between music and non-music; underlying both are sound and the notion of music as being inseparable.

In flourishing the philosophical idea 'art and life are no longer separate entities', the two artists integrated part of their everyday lives into creation to blur the dichotomy or borderline between art and daily life. This included object and spaces that they encountered in everyday life for example, human hair at a barber shop in Petaling Jaya. This includes the very moment of life, object and spaces that they encountered in living; the human hair at barber shop in *Petaling Jaya* and used paint tins palette and paint brushes *ITM School of Art and Design* and potted plant watered and looked after by the two artists over a period of seven months. With the presence of these works, the spirit of artistic expression was no longer alienated from life and instead united art and life. As a sequence, this relates to the backyard living as an art process.

This returns spectator to the awareness that art exists in everyday, mundane context. The works of TMR exists in mundane quality and indirectly it instills the value of appreciating every little thing in daily life. Certainly, this would be one of the significant meanings of the art of TMR. Thereon, it can be said the two initiators worked in the context of breaking free dualistic separation between art and life by transforming 'living' experience as 'art'. In other words, the philosophical idea of 'art and life are no

longer separate entities' and has been transformed into action bringing forth the idea that everyday life itself is an art. Hence, there is coexistence between art and life. As noted: TMR 'communicates to us at a fundamental level, exposes us to our everyday reality. My works exist within the same reality as the viewer.' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p 3)

Perhaps the two initiators worked on art within the notion of Zen way in which art comes to life spontaneously, with less self-seeking for art in comparison to the rationalistic and scientific framework of production. For this reason, this philosophical idea of art is strongly recommended by the two artists in the face of modernity. Consequently, it is cited that:

> Cage believes that the world is changing more rapidly and more drastically than most people realize. […] Cage insists that the true function of art in our time is to open up the minds and hearts of contemporary men and women to the immensity of these changes in order that they may be able "to wake up to the very life" they are living. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 14)

4.7   The Art of *Mystical Reality*

This section seeks to describe how *Mystical Reality* was established in relation to:

(a)   The initiated mental, mystical and time experiences of art (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 21, 22, 23).

(b)   Approaching art from mental, mystical, ontological and metaphysical view of Reality (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 18, 21).

(c)   Approaching art from the meditative and contemplative schemes of things (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, pp. 21, 22).

4.7.1   The Initiated 'Mental', 'Mystical' and 'Time' Experiences

Based on the observation made on the title of the manifesto, it informs that the manifesto of TMR is *a documentation of jointly 'initiated experiences' by redza piyadasa and sulaiman esa.* By exploring further, it is found that there are three series of experiences are being initiated by the two artists; 'mental', 'time' and 'mystical' experiences.

4.7.1.1 The Initiated "Mental-Experiences"

It is noted on paragraph 1 on page 21 of the manifesto that 'we are not involved with artifacts but we are initiating a series of mental experiences'. Indeed, it is the intention of the two initiators to move the experience of art away from the artifact so called less attached to the physicality of the artifact. As the objects documented in the manifesto are meant to be transcended in the poetic phrase that FORM TRANSCENDED THEIR OBJECT-NESS AND EXISTS AS DOCUMENTATION OF 'EVENT'(Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p.21). The objects found in the manifesto to be transcended as 'object-ness' are half-full coca-cola bottles, a chair, burnt out mosquito coils, a potted plant, human hair collected from a barber shop, used tin of paint and paint brushes, a discarded raincoat, a discarded silk-screen, an empty bird cage and an unmarked stretched canvas.

The objects are collectively meant to be read as an 'event' since TMR is indirectly alluding the 'essence' or 'spirit' of the work which exists by virtue of the event. These events are daily activities recorded in colorless photographs together with the photo captions with or without the specific date and time. All titles alluding to the event are as follows:

1.   Two half-drunk Coca-cola bottles (Figure 4.4), as shown on page 20 of the manifesto.

2. Burn-out mosquito coils used to keep away mosquitoes on the night of 25th March 1974 (Figure 4.6), as shown on page 26 of the manifesto.

3. Discarded silk-screen which was used to produce many beautiful prints, as shown on page 22 of the manifesto.

4. Randomly collected sample of human hair collected from a barber shop in Petaling Jaya (Figure 4.1) , as shown on page 17 of the manifesto.

5. Used tins of paint, palette and paint brushes found at the ITM School of Art and Design (Figure 4.2), as shown on page 13 of the manifesto.

6. Discarded raincoat found at a Klang rubbish dump at 4.23 p.m. on Sunday 13th January 1974 that must have belonged to someone, as shown on page 17 of the manifesto.

7. Potted plant watered and looked after by the two artists over a period of seven months (Figure 4.3), as shown on page 15 of the manifesto.

8. Empty chair on which many persons have sat on (Figure 4.5), as shown on page 19 of the manifesto.

9. Empty bird-cage after release of bird at 2.46 p.m., on Monday 10th June 1974. (Figure 4.7), as shown on page 10 of the manifesto.

10. Empty canvas on which so many shadows have fallen, as shown on page 26 of the manifesto.
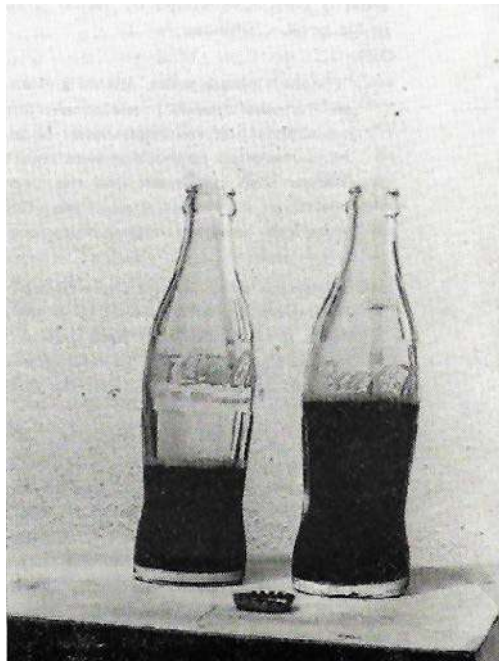
Figure 4.6: The event of two half-drunk Coca-cola bottles (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974).


Figure 4.7: The event of burn-out mosquito coils used to keep away mosquitoes on the night of 25th March 1974 (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974).

Figure 4.8: The event of used tins of paint, palette and paint brushes found at the ITM School of Art and Design (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974).

Figure 4.9: The event of randomly collected sample of human hair from a barber shop in Petaling Jaya (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974).
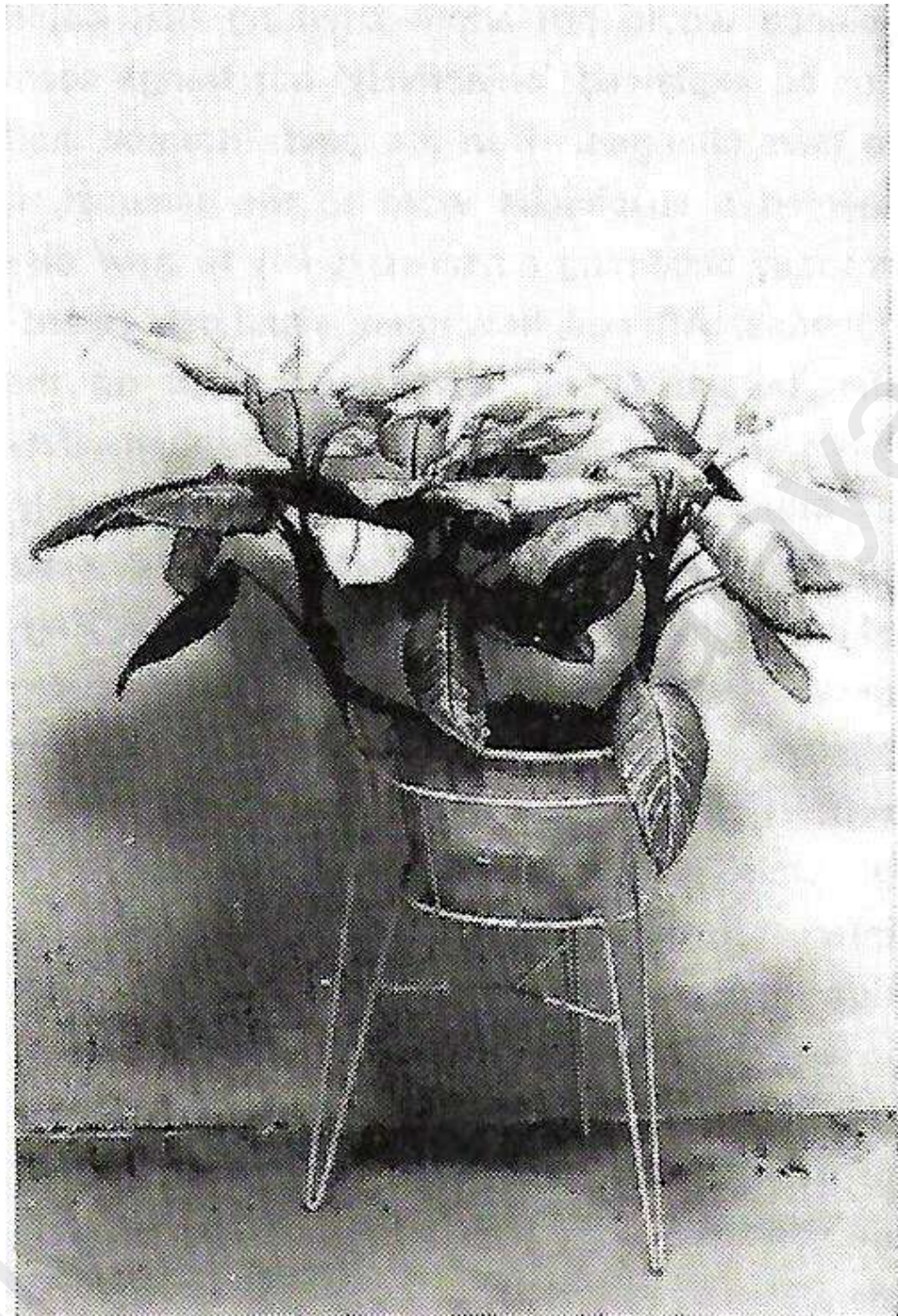
Figure 4.10: The event of potted plant watered and looked after by the two artists over a period of seven months (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974).

Figure 4.11: The event of empty chair on which many persons have sat on (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974).

As these ready-made objects, the data and the existence of the spectator are meant to be realized mentally as a series of 'events' and the spectator himself and the ready-made objects exist primilarily as a series of mental 'processes'. This draws the spectator's attention to the fact that it exists within a continuum just as he does (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 22). Within this attempt, TMR has been lauded as unique in its 'mental' experiences.

4.7.1.2 The Initiated "Time-Experiences"

TMR is unique on its own as it occupies the concept of 'mental time' to speak to spectator that the art experience of TMR is a series of "time-experiences" (Paragraph 3, page 21). The time-experiences is elaborated as:

> A series of time shift manifest themselves in the spectator mind and the spectator is transported "mentally" into a time dimension that is essentially fluid and not hampered by physical limitations. The final result should be multiplicity of "time-experiences" which exists beyond the work and the spectator himself. Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 21) The spectator is free to move backwards and forwards in time to perceive when it is art within one's mental space-time'. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 22)

Much influence of the time-experiences as instigated by the two initiators are derived from Zen Buddhism conception of 'time', as 'time' in Zen Buddhist sense has no beginning and ending since all things are constantly changing (Shi'an, 1999, p. 195).
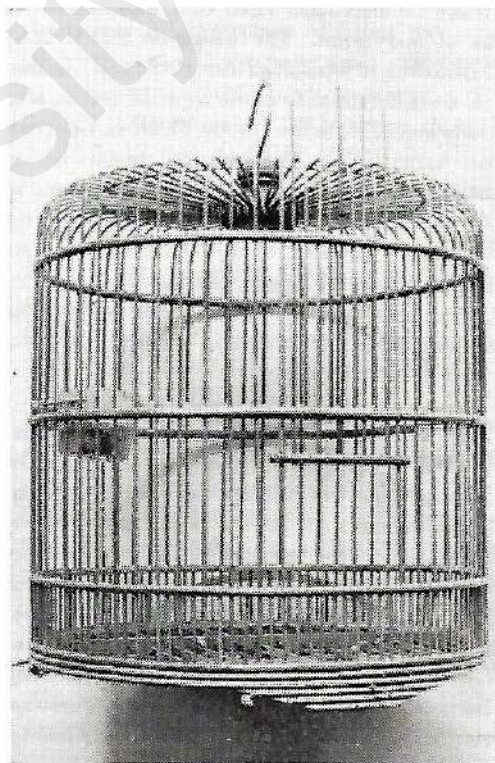
Figure 4.12: The event of Empty bird-cage after release of bird at 2.46 p.m., on Monday 10th June 1974 (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974).

4.7.1.3 The Initiated 'Mystical' Experiences

As retrieved from chapter 6 of the manifesto, apart from the 'mental' and 'time' experiences, it is found that there is a series of 'mystical' experiences that were initiated by the two artists. 'The realization that 'he' and the 'object' are both processes existing in time results in a breaking down of the essential differences between the ''thing' and the 'person', 'a gradual liberation from humanistic consideration' […] in a new spontaneity which brings him closer to 'sunyata' as appeared in paragraph 2 on page 22. This initiated 'mystical' 'experiences called for transcending the 'ego'.

The underlying message behind the 'sunyata' in relation to the question of existence denies the existence of 'self' and deconstructs the habitual separation formed by 'ego' (Suzuki, 1955, p.124). Correspondingly, TMR negotiates the similar message through its initiated experiences in which TMR anticipated 'sunyata' to enhance our understanding of our own existence — an awareness that all things are in emptiness including own existence, the answer to the fundamental question of existence (Suzuki, 1956, p. 13, 14)

In relation to the philosophical message of 'sunyata', these few lines of text signal that the 'mystical' experiences of TMR speak about two states of consciousness.

(a)   A non-dual perception of things

The realization that he and the 'object' are both processes existing in time results in a breaking down of the essential differences between the 'thing' and the 'person'. In a sense, both are essentially energies in an infinite situation. As such, no hierarchy can exist between the animate and the inanimate! (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 22) This realization also means of no separation made of all things and this leads to the view that 'objects' and 'he' are synonymous as 'event'! (Paragraph 2, page 22). It is therefore, spectator no longer perceives 'he' and 'object' as separate entity.

(b)   A realization of the coexistence between the 'Self' and the universe

The awareness of the forces, the energies and ungraspable law of reality within which the spectator himself exists and functions! (Paragraph 2, page 22). As posited, this unconsciousness is not coma but what the exponents of 'Zen' later signified as 'wu-shin'-literary 'no-mind' which is to say the un-self-consciousness. It is a state of wholeness in which the mind functions freely and easily without the sensation of a second mind or 'ego' standing in the way. ! (Paragraph 2, page 22)

Thus, it is also affirmed that to come to such transcendental experiences. Strategically it is through the meditative and contemplative schemes that leads to such ground and metaphysical experiences of art.

4.7.2 Approaching Reality from the 'Metaphysical' and 'Mental' Standpoints

In wresting the West, the manifesto highlighted that 'The western artists still persists in viewing the physical state of the world, we are essentially approaching Reality from 'metaphysical' and 'mental' standpoint' in paragraph 3 on page 18 of the manifesto.

> 'Metaphysical' refers to 'an idea, doctrine, or posited reality outside of human sense perception. In modern philosophical terminology, metaphysics refers to the studies of what cannot be reached through objective studies of material reality. Metaphysical is a type of philosophy or study that uses broad concepts to define reality and our understanding of it. Metaphysical studies are concerned with explaining the features of reality that exist beyond the physical world and our immediate senses. (Yunt & Haddox, Wegter, & McNelly)

In reference to the definition of 'metaphysical', approaching reality from 'metaphysical' standpoint gives a clue that the nature of reality of TMR is metaphysical, an emphasis on 'the emptiness of all' which is beyond logic, the understanding from the sense of

perception and judging mind (D. T. Suzuki, 1957, p. 14).

Whilst approaching 'Reality' from 'mental' standpoint, is synonymous with approaching 'art' and 'reality' from the meditative and contemplative state of mind. As posited on page 21 of the manifesto, 'it should become clear that our whole effort is geared towards the initiating of the state of mind via meditation' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 22). Literally, this approach of reality from 'mental' standpoint is taken from the Zen position, by which the spectator is invited to requestion his own 'Reality' through meditative and contemplative state of mind (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 21).

4.7.3 The Ultimate Functions of Approaching Reality from Meditative and Contemplative Schemes

As posited on page 21 of the manifesto: What we are aiming at is a "meditative empathy" on the part of the spectator. It is an empathy that is the outcome of meditative and contemplative action. Our work is therefore founded upon a deliberate attempt to force contemplation and meditation on the part of the spectator. It is however a contemplation of a special kind that we are aiming at. (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 21) The following discussion aims to answer how contemplating the event from mental meditative and contemplative schemes of mind could transcend our 'objective' view about what 'Reality' is by exploring the ultimate function of meditation and contemplation.

Meditation is defined as 'a mental program that withdraws one from the normal preoccupation with constantly changing sensory stimuli and idea centered on oneself.' In the meditative state, one's mind realizes that the 'ego' is merely illusory (Leaman, 2000, p. 222). While D. T. Suzuki in his book *Studies in Zen* views that the ultimate purpose of meditation (zazen) is keeping the mind gradually away from all sorts of attachment to 'ego', as the purpose of Zen is to point to oneself, the 'Self' is egoless

(1955, p. 41).

Meditation
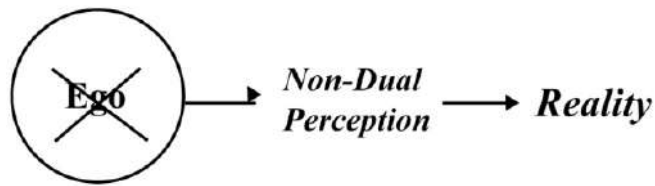
Figure 4.13: Illustrates meditation negating the 'ego' where an individual
could come to a state of non-dual perception of things, in a metaphysical sense of 'Self'
is equipped with an ontological understanding of 'Reality'.

In concept, when the 'ego' is dissolved there is no distinguishing of the self (experiencer) and the consciousness (experience) in the meditative state. Everything is in one, not two, as the root of duality is defeated (Watt, 1957, pp. 65, 66). At such it is not the 'ego' that constructs what 'Reality' is (Sekida, 2003, p. 165).
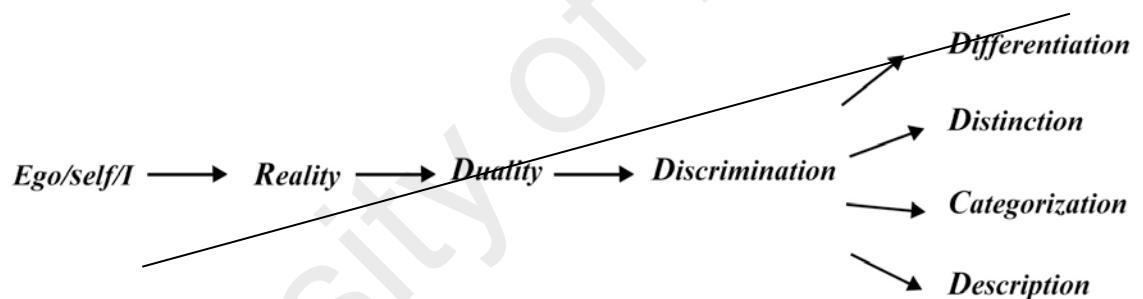
Figure 4.14: Illustrates the outcome of meditation which dissolves the 'ego' and keep
the 'self' or 'I' away from make up what 'Reality' is.

Since meditation breaks away the self-constructed dualistic view of things (figure 4.11). In relating this concept to the 'mystical' experiences as initiated in the manifesto writing, the initiated experiences of TMR is parallel with the idea. Consequently, the initiated 'mystical' experiences by the two artists informed that the opposite separations between 'he' and 'object', the animate and the inanimate, the 'person' and 'event', 'event' and 'object' are reconciled. This concludes that TMR undertakes the ultimate function of meditation transcends spectator 'ego' and in turn leads to a non-dual perception of things (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 22).

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While contemplation is a spiritual practice that enables one to engage in a state of a non-controlling mind, in which one's consciousness is taken by infinite cosmic consciousness. In other words, contemplation aims at leading one to realize the 'Self' as being inseparable from the universe (Meditation Station, 2014), and a sense of spiritual unification between 'Self' and the universe in which an aptitude that closes to cosmic consciousness (Komjathy, 2011). 'Self' in this sense is the awareness of cosmic energies within own existence (Suzuki & Fromm & Martino, 1960, p. 25). At such metaphysical sense of 'Self', all perception of phenomena, emotion, and thought is subjected by 'I' as merely an illusion, a void (Hsu, 1995, p. viii). This explains the reason why spectator was invited to experience TMR in the mind contemplation action.

When the 'ego' is suspended from consciousness during the meditation, consequently, the spectator is aware of the forces and energies that exists within himself and functions in the following mind contemplation action, a mental state of 'no-mind'. 'No-mind' is a state of wholeness of mind, where oneself realizes his coexistence with the universe. In a practical sense, D. T. Suzuki relates the state of 'no-mind' to the case of the psychical state of the swordsmen, the Japanese Samurai, who empties the mind to allow the unconsciousness to come forward during swordplay (Suzuki, 1973 p. 111, 116).
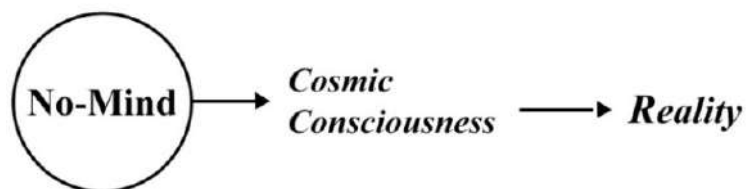
Figure 4.15: Illustrates contemplation entails an awareness of cosmic consciousness in which a mental state of 'no-mind' in a metaphysical sense of 'Self' is eqquiped with an ontological understanding of 'Reality'.

On the whole, meditative and contemplative scheme of things have been

appropriated as the methodological approaches of appreciating the 'mystical' experience of art.

4.7.4 The Underlying Reasons of Approaching Art from the 'Mystical', 'Meditative' and 'Ontological' Viewpoints of Reality

On page 21 paragraph 3, the text read as 'We (Piyadasa and Sulaiman) have place the spectator in a situation in which he is forced to requestion his (spectator) own reality'. The act of requestion spectator's own reality is accomplished via approaching art from the 'mystical', 'meditative' and 'ontological' viewpoint of reality. This approach is closely related to the take of the two initiators in formulating a methodology for spectator to conceive 'Reality' from the meditative and contemplative scheme of things (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 21).

It is claimed by the two initiators in the manifesto on page 21, in the last few lines of paragraph 1, 'Ours (TMR) is essentially an *ontological viewpoint of reality* […] it is as such a viewpoint that transcends the senses and find impetus in the workings of the mind'. In reference to D. T. Suzuki, '*Ontological view of reality* that is not based on physical' which demands the spectator to realize that this idea of 'Reality' is better understood when the mind is in a non-objective (non-dual) position. Ontological understanding of reality provides an understanding that Man and nature is inseparable (Suzuki, 1955, p. 180). Therefore the underlying reasons of approaching art from ontological view of reality is in response to the take of the two initiators to transform spectator's 'objective' and 'intellectual' understanding of 'Reality' in which this is expressed as beyond the multiple Western viewpoints of reality that are 'empirical', 'objective', 'scientific' and 'materialistic'(Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 11).

4.7.5 The Conception of Reality of TMR — *Mystical Reality*

On page 18, paragraph 2, Piyadasa and Sulaiman emphasized that 'our interest at this stage is the perception of reality itself'. The content of text 'face to face with the mystery of his own existence within an infinite and ever-evolving Universe' (last line of the manifesto text) appears to be aligned to D. T. Suzuki's articulation of 'Reality' in Zen term.

According to D. T. Suzuki, in his essay *The Buddhist Conception of Reality*, he says that: "Reality is known by various names. To Christians, it is God; to Hindus, Brahma or atman; to the Chinese, jen, tao, or t'ien (Heaven); to Buddhists, Bodhi, Dharma, Buddha, prajña, tathata, etc" (D. T. Suzuki, 2004, p.85). The definition taken from the writing of D. T. Suzuki *Zen and Japanese Culture*, he remarks that Zen has its own way of handling 'Reality'. D. T. Suzuki upholds that:

> 'Reality' in accordance with Zen is about 'seeing directly into the mystery of one's own being'. (Suzuki, 1973, p. 218)

This statement demonstrates that, what 'Reality' is in Zen is beyond the sense of intellectual but a metaphysical understanding of 'Self'. The 'Reality' in Zen is the direct experience of 'Self'[22]. 'Being' in TMR's context refers to 'he', in the state where the mind is free from the self discrimination.

In *Studies in Zen* D. T. Suzuki states that 'Reality' when in accordance with Zen can only be intuited by the man itself from a metaphysical sense of of existence. […]. Within this backdrop, it is interpreted that the notion of 'Reality' in TMR is pertaining to an experience of Zen in oneself. Correspondingly, this 'Reality' is lauded as to be conceived mentally (mind) (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 11).

On the philosophical level, this in turn means that TMR intends to bring

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[22] The 'Self' with uppercase is different from the 'self', a person or human individual that defines individuality and the intrinsically 'I' (Bett, 2015, p. 139).

spectator to the realization by which 'he' is 'Reality, the metaphysical sense of 'Self'. the 'Reality' of TMR is perceived from 'metaphysical' and 'mental' standpoint, a realization of the forces, the energies and ungraspable law of reality within which the spectator himself exists and functions', his existence is 'selfless', 'a series of processes' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p.18). This, here is where the spectator comes to the mystery of its existence in spectator's mental state.

Subsequently, Piyadasa and Sulaiman choose to end the manifesto with the line, 'By choosing to contemplate on the most mundane event, the spectator, we hope, will come face to face with the mystery of his own existence within an infinite and ever-evolving Universe' (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 23). This line of text in turn also meant that the initiated experiences; the 'mundane' and 'mystical' are as in one experience.

The discussion of how *Mystical Reality* is established, is concluded with a graphical image as in Figure 4.16 that illustrates how these different parts of the topics; the ultimate function of meditative and contemplative schemes, initiated 'mystical; experiences initiated by the two initiators, the application concept of 'sunyata' and 'no-mind' as articulated in the manifesto attributed to the idea of *Mystical Reality*. Above all, this knowledge is important in making sense of how TMR works.
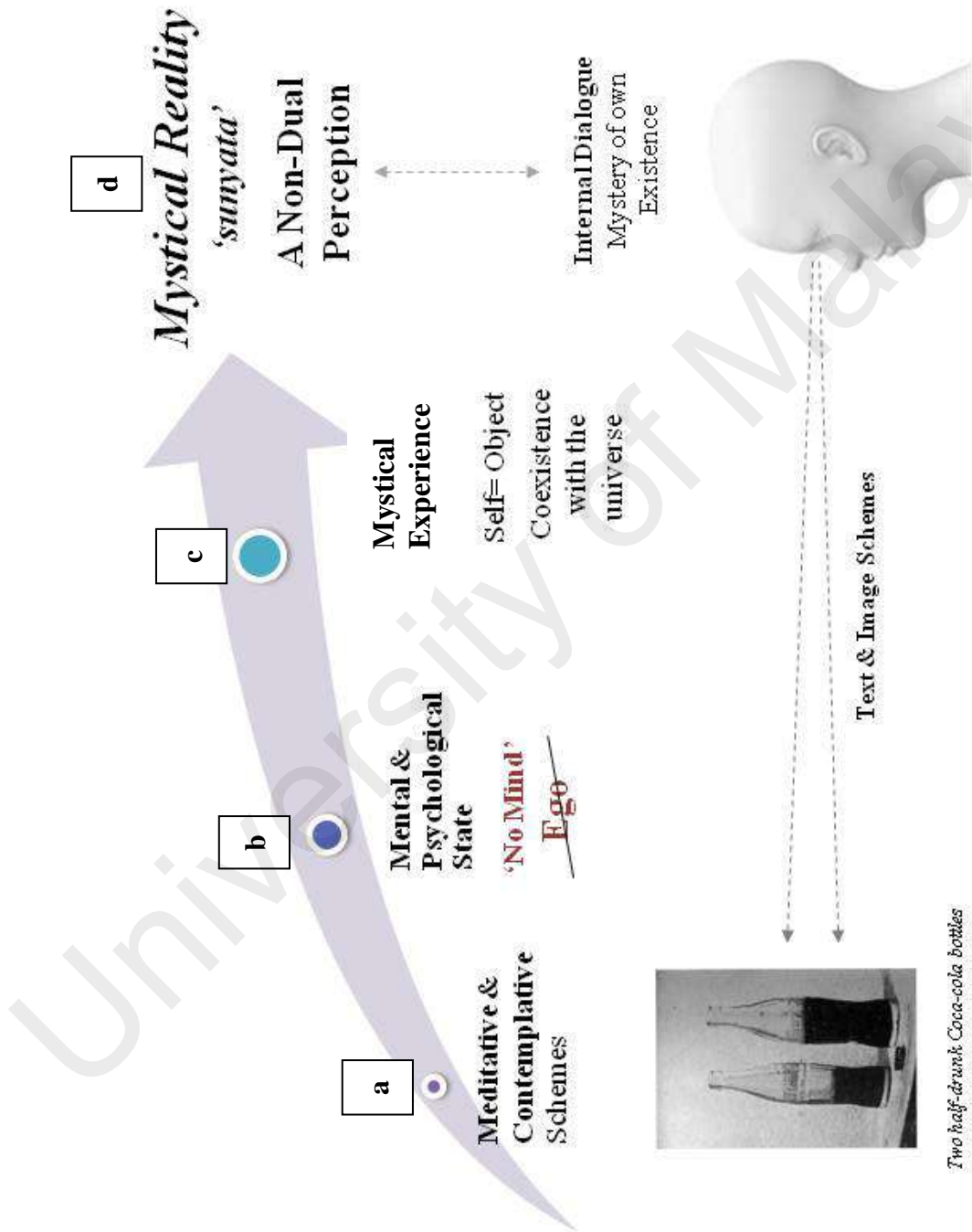
Figure 4.16: An illustrated graphical image showing the linkage between the text, image and the underlying meditative and contemplative schemes that link spectator towards a *Mystical Reality*.

Figure 4.16 is illustrated based on the mapping of the concepts and phrases based on Steve Odin's, a philosopher review of D. T. Suzuki's interpretation of Zen (Odin, 2001, pp. 145, 146).

Steve Odin a professor in philosophy who reviews on D. T. Suzuki's *Zen and Japanese Culture*, he elaborated that when a person is in the mental and psychological state of 'no-mind' and 'egoless' (b) metaphysically is grounded in 'sunyata' (d) (Odin, 2001, pp. 145,146). Firstly, the spectator is invited to appreciate TMR from the mind that mediates and contemplates (a) in order for the spectator to conceive 'Reality' from the mental and psychological state of 'no-mind' and 'egoless' (b).

This is a state in which the spectator is attached to nothing, a total abandonment of conditioning thought arisen from self-knowledge (egoless). The mind makes no comparison and differentiation. In connection with this idea, the works of TMR which meant to be experienced as an 'event' (a). And within this frame of mind, spectator no longer reasoned what 'Reality' is by the 'self' or 'I'.

Accordingly, the spectator could realize his existence consisting of forces and energies. Prior to the spectator is indulged in the experience of 'sunyata', an awareness that our existence is non-dual nature in a sense there is no separation, dichotomy or contradiction between 'self' and the myriad of things in this universe and his coexistence with the universe. This also reflects the adaptation of Zen experience as the mystical experiences of TMR (c). Subsequently, this brings the spectator to 'come face to face with the mystery of his own existence within an infinite and ever-evolving Universe'—*Mystical Reality* (d).

Mystical Reality is also connoted as Zen Reality, and 'sunyata'. The state of knowledge of 'sunyata' is the underlying description of Reality which underpins the initiated art/mystical experience of TMR.

Prior to the philosophical vision of TMR is also about inducing the spectator to

reflect on his own 'Reality'. In answering what 'Reality' is, the two artists did not denote a single meaning for 'Reality'. The possible knowledge of 'Reality' in TMR which are attained in the mind of meditation and contemplation can be summarized as below.

a. This knowledge of 'Reality' challenged our rationality to reason that begins with the 'I'.

b. This knowledge of 'Reality' speaks about the mind in mental and psychological state of 'no-mind' and 'egoless'.

c. This knowledge of 'Reality' is beyond the self, an experience of reality in 'egoless' state.

d. This knowledge of 'Reality' is inducing the metaphysical sense of 'Self' as 'Reality'.

e. This knowledge of 'Reality' is free from the consent of judging mind to make up what 'Reality' is.

f. This knowledge of 'Reality' entails an aptitude closes to cosmic consciousness which meant to be realized to be the sole 'Reality'.

g. This knowledge of 'Reality' transcends all polarities between art/reality and art/ life, reality/life, person/object, object/event and person/event.

4.8   Summary of Chapter

This chapter has confirmed that the art of *Mystical Reality* is estabished in response to the philosophical discourse partaken by the two artists. TMR is unique as the parameter of the manifesto revolves around the 'mystical' thinkings of art. The adaptation of Zen experience as the art (mystical) experiences of TMR has turned TMR towards Zen while the working practices and art premises set by the two artists are significantly in relation to the purest sense of Zen. Correspondingly, this chapter has

traced the various philosophical thinking and art experiences in order to understand the art of TMR.

Based on the synthesis of D. T. Suzuki's interpretation of Zen/Zen Buddhism in his conception of 'Reality' and the phrases and concepts embedded in the manifesto, it is postulated that TMR intends to indulge spectator into the mental and psychological state of 'no-mind' and 'egoless'.

The meditation and contemplation scheme of things serve as the 'mystical' approach to 'Reality' that link oneself to comprehend art and reality from the mental and psychological state of 'no-mind' and 'egoless'. How to come to this state is enunciated in the discussion with relevant illustrations presented in Figures 4.13, 4.14, 4.15 and 4.16.

The contextual meaning of *Mystical Reality* is appropriated in the context of how the art of TMR is conceptualized through the use of concepts and phrases, the linkage of the meditative and contemplative schemes and the initiated experiences by the two artists in relation to Zen. The meaning of *Mystical Reality* is clarified in the last line of the manifesto text while the contextual meaning of *Mystical Reality* is surrounded by the philosophical discourse partaken by the two artists in their quest to approach art from the 'mystical' viewpoint of reality and the initiated experiences—this in sum, is the art of TMR.

As clarified by D. T. Suzuki, 'Reality' is 'seeing directly into the mystery of one's own being' (Suzuki, 1973, p. 218). The conception of 'Reality' in Zen context allows us to rediscover the coexistence between the 'Self' and the universe and a series of non-dual perception of myriad of subjects. *Mystical Reality* is lauded as a state where the spectator comes to the mystery of its existence by means of 'face to face with the mystery of his own existence within an infinite and ever-evolving Universe' as mentioned in the last line of the manifesto (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 23). This also

reveals that TMR is considered philosophical event as it raises the basic questions of what 'Reality' is.

The researcher found that the initiated experiences are perceived as a complex whole. The initiated experiences by Piyadasa and Sulaiman are three categories of experiences, i.e., mental, time and mystical experiences. The initiated experiences are embedded in the metaphysical understanding of Self to promote an awareness of the coexistence between the 'Self' and the universe and a series of non-dual perception of a myriad of subjects. The initiated experiences; the 'mental', 'mystical' and 'time' experiences are as in one experience. These experiences are recognized as "experiential-ness", in essence it establishes a connection between things and bring about a "higher awareness" that transcends polarization and realization 'Self' is 'Reality'. The initiated experiences; the 'mundane' and 'mystical' are as in one experience.

As this thesis is built in view of the untested hypothesis claims made by art critics whether the self proclaimed *Mystical Reality* is unarticulated, D. T. Suzuki's conception of 'Reality' is one of the most insightful sources to affirm whether *Mystical Reality* is articulated. To conclude, by incorporating what is meant by 'Reality' by D. T. Suzuki in the Zen context, textually *Mystical Reality* is articulated in the last line of manifesto while the context of *Mystical Reality* is surrounded in the content of text that speaks about the 'mystical' viewpoint of reality, approach of reality, initiated Zen experiences and Zen philosophical idea of art. Hence, textually, it cannot be said that the meaning of *Mystical Reality* is unarticulated in total.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. 1   Research Findings

The following conclusions can be made based on the findings garnered from Textual

Analysis and Content Analysis of the manifesto:

a.   TMR appears as a fusion of ideologies derived from Eastern and Western

philosophy. The two artists drew from a variety of sources including Dadaism,

American Conceptual Art, Wayang Kulit, Zen, Zen Buddhism and Taoism in

framing their own ideas and concepts. This complicates the interpretation of

TMR and conflicts with the artists' claims of being non Western-centric.

b.   The manifesto gives a detailed account as to why local artists should reject

Western-centric art, how Eastern artists practiced art in the past and how

Western artists were transformed by Eastern philosophical concepts of Zen, Zen

Buddhism and Taoism. However, it is less committed to situate these discourses

within the uniqueness of TMR in terms of philosophical ideas as its basis and

alternative strategies/methodology to art-making. Thus, the discussion conflates

the comparisons between Eastern and Western art practices with the exposition

of the event itself. This complicates the spectator's reception of, and

engagement with TMR.

c.   Instead of aiming at decolonizing possibilities of the art from the West, the

discourse was inhabited with the superstructure consisting of Western

ownership of Eastern mystical approach of art. To some extent, the text has

highlighted the two artists' approach to art influenced by John Cage.

d.   In addressing on the relevance of Eastern mystical approach of art practice for

local context, the discussion establishes how Eastern mystical approach could

solve the spiritual crisis of modern man in the 'Western' society. This buttress a

sense of East's supremacy over the West. However, some parts of the narrative demonstrates that the artists wrestled with their own Western centricity while simultaneously exhibiting adoration towards the West. To a considerable degree, this sentiment reflects that the two artists did not fully reject the West but sought to compete against it.

e.   The cited names and texts which have a direct influence on them have revealed that their art influence came from the West. The linkage of TMR with the West is significantly over represented.

f.   As pointed out, there are contradictions within the text as well as 'missing links' in the explanations of certain phenomena which make TMR difficult to comprehend.

g.   The content of text associated with 'Reality' is articulated all over the places. This complicates the understanding on the conception of 'Reality' in TMR's context. The art of TMR is complex especially for audiences without knowledge of Zen/Zen Buddhism or Taoist philosophy.

h.   The two artists positioned themselves as 'initiators' with no more control over the thought processes of the spectator and 'conscious detachment from the work'. The art of *Mystical Reality* belongs to the spectator. Conversely, there is a sense of privilege of the two artists and a sense of ownership. Even though they claim that no subjective intent is allowed in the work, emotive, controvertible and expressive tones are used throughout the discourse to gain attention from art viewers.

i.   The major contradiction of TMR in relation to the concept of 'sunyata' is conditioned by the separate distinctions made between the East and West. On one hand, the initiated mystical experiences by the two artists called for the spectator to transcend the disctinction between 'a person' and 'object', the

animate and the inanimate, the object and the event, the spectator and the initiator in the light of 'sunyata'. On the other, the two artists polarized the 'East' and the 'West' as oppositions endlessly, which is contradictory to the former.

j.   The philosophical message of 'sunyata' also underlies in TMR offers a fertile ground for the spectator to realize the mystery of its own existence, which is 'egoless' and inseparable from the universe.

k.   By identifying the ultimate function of meditative and contemplative scheme, this has answered how the spectator is removed from the habitual approach of perceiving 'Reality' that cut through the 'ego'.

l.   Based on the textual analysis made on the manifesto text, what 'Reality' means in TMR's context apparently is left open for one to realize, this resulted in the lapse of understanding TMR. No doubt TMR aimed to be stipulated as an Eastern 'mystical' event in relation to Zen through its initiated experiences. However, the manifesto text offers limited information on the theoretical basis of TMR in terms of the relation of Zen and the art of TMR.

m.   As clarified by D. T. Suzuki, 'Reality' is 'seeing directly into the mystery of one's own being' (Suzuki, 1973, p. 218). The conception of 'Reality' in Zen context allow us to rediscover the coexistence between the 'Self' and the universe and a series of non-dual perception of myriad of subjects. *Mystical Reality* is lauded as a state where the spectator comes to the mystery of its existence by means of 'face to face with the mystery of his own existence within an infinite and ever-evolving Universe' as mentioned in the last line of the manifesto (Piyadasa & Esa, 1974, p. 23). This also reveals that TMR is considered philosophical event as it raises the basic questions of what 'Reality' is. The art experiences transcend polarization and realization the metaphysical sense of 'Self' is 'Reality'.

5.2   Conclusion

This study has provided an in-depth analysis of the manifesto's text, based on the chosen methodology. It has also attempted to interpret the meaning of *Mystical Reality* in relation to the methodological approaches and initiated experiences of the two artists.

The art of TMR is complex as it is conceptual yet philosophical as a whole. *Mystical Reality* has been criticised for its problematic articulation of "Reality". This thesis argues that the manifesto is problematic because little attention was paid to the critical linkages between concept-art-experience (the concept of mystical reality/the art of mystical reality/the experience of mystical reality). Thus, there is a lack of association between the art of *Mystical Reality* and the philosophical discourse forwarded by the manifesto.

The major concern of the researcher was to find a way to present the complexities of *Mystical Reality* in an uncomplicated manner. This was resolved by planning the structure of the entire discussion of *Mystical Reality* in two parts. Firstly by identifying the 'mystical' context of art and secondly, by explaining the methodological approaches of the two artists—that is the meditative and contemplative schemes that articulate the mystical experience of art.

Needless to say that textually, TMR manifesto is notable for its attempt to articulate Zen experiences and its methodological approaches to advance art within the framework of Zen Reality. The meditative and contemplative schemes that forge art experience closes the dichotomy between person/object, object/event and person/event which also transcends the polarity between art and reality or art and life.

The researcher suggests that TMR raises the basic questions of what 'Reality' is. However, as a text it cannot fully transform the spectator's understanding of 'Reality'. Moreover, the conventional set-up of the art exhibition did not facilitate a meditative mood proposed by the artists.

Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa had placed themselves in a challenging position by attempting to set themselves apart from artists who adopted Western artistic outlooks. However, their discourse continued to be influenced by West concepts which can be traced from the verbal, textual and linguistic aspects of the manifesto text.

TMR remained an art event which has sparked off a productive debate on art. Thus, it may be said that its contribution to local art discourse has so far been unrivalled.

5.3 Suggestion for Future Studies

There are still many areas that can be further debated around TMR. For future studies, the discussion can be further extended on the specific arguments put forward by the art scholars, art writers, art educators and artists which have not been covered here. In addition, the writer opined that this research provides a platform for future researchers to embark on the interdisciplinary study between art and philosophy.

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