

SIMON SAYS

TANYA PADA SEJARAHWAN SENI

Soalan: Bagaimana anda dapat huraikan tentang kemunculan modenisme di Malaysia?

Modenisme muncul sebagai gerakan seni yang di awal abad ke-20 untuk menyelami erti kehidupan yang tak pasti dan perubahan persekitaran yang kerap. Di bahagian dunia kita, anjakan dalam teknologi, ekonomi, politik dan falsafah berlaku dalam konteks kolonialisme. Lantaran itu, modenisme di Malaysia kerap dibincangkan melalui artis-artis yang berpendidikan dari akademi Eropah. **Yong Mun Sen, Syed Ahmad Jamal** dan **Latiff Mohidin** antara contoh pelopor. Walaupun setiap mereka mempersembahkan gaya yang berlainan, namun memiliki persamaan dalam eksperimentasi bentuk, teknik dan bahan. Ini membawa kepada penemuan bahasa baru dalam penghasilan gambar yang mencerminkan pengalaman mereka.

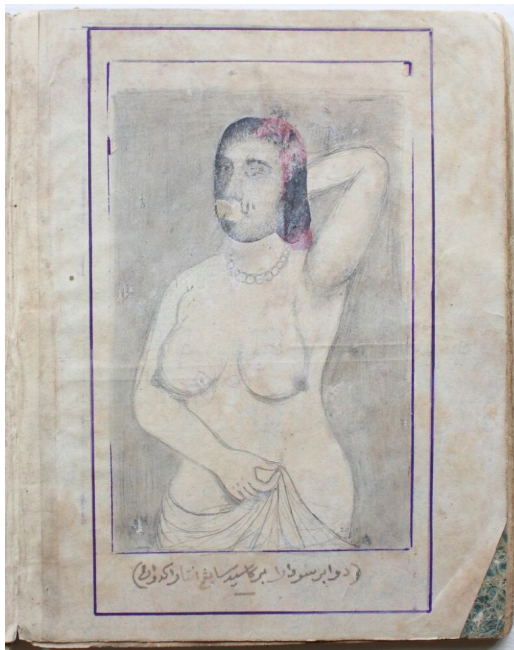
Gagasan Malaysia hanya terbentuk secara konkrit selepas Perang Dunia Kedua. Gagasan lain terhadap apa yang memaknai Malaysia telah sedia kala dieksperimen di awal abad ke-20. Kadang-kadang, pengenalan kepada bentuk visual tidak semestinya datang dari seorang seperti yang kita kenal kini. Mereka mungkin penulis, ilustrator, pemikir atau...**bomoh** sekalipun.

Contohnya ialah manuskrip 'Perhimpunan Gunawan' tahun 1911 kepunyaan bangsawan **Khatijah Terung**. Dikenali sebagai bomoh, manuskrip Perhimpunan merupakan koleksi jampi pengasih beliau. Berlainan dari buku jampi yang menampilkan ilustrasi jin dan diagram sihir, Khatijah menggunakan potongan gambar perempuan yang dijumpainya dari majalah Barat dan dilekatkan bersama manuskrip beliau. Sebahagian dari gambar ini diubah suai oleh Khatijah dengan menambah butiran yang dilukis tangan.

Ubah suai ini merangkumi lakaran perempuan bogel dari potongan gambar muka sehingga ke ilustrasi naratif pacaran yang berlatarkan orientalis. Apa yang kita lihat di sini ialah pembolehubah konteks dan imej dari budaya cetak Eropah, diberi tujuan dan makna baru menerusi intervensi artistik. Penerokaan visual Khatijah boleh disamakan dengan eksperimen Pablo Picasso melalui hubungan figura-latar menggunakan kolaj. Bagi Picasso, penggunaan media cetak dalam kolaj membawa beliau kepada analytic cubism. Bagi Khatijah pula, yang hidupnya dibayangi kolonialisme, media cetak ialah detritus visual yang boleh diguna pakai dalam sistem pengetahuan tempatan.



Manuskrip Khatijah mencadangkan bahawa modenisme di Malaysia tidak memerlukan barisan figura 'bapa' pelopor, dimana kemahiran dan nilai mereka sering dikaitkan dengan Gerakan Seni Barat yang berpengaruh. Bahkan, sezaman dengan permulaan modenisme di Eropah juga terjadi dorongan visual yang serupa di pelusuk lain dunia yang cenderung kepada eksperimental bentuk. 'Perhimpunan Gunawan' milik Khatijah ini mengingatkan kita kepada eksperimen tempatan yang menjadi kaunterpoin kepada modenisme Eropah. Kita mungkin terjumpa dengan serpihan-serpihan ini yang ditopang dan dicantikkan kepada bentuk yang mempesona.



Sumber

<https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP153-13-5#?xywh=-118%2C-586%2C2352%2C3199>

https://www.academia.edu/30595365/Khatijah_Terung_dengan_karyanya_Perhimpunan_Gunawan_Bagi_Laki-Laki_dan_Perempuan_bahagian_1

<https://www.thepatriots.asia/khatijah-terung-pengarang-wanita-melayu-awal-yang-mendepani-zaman/>

SIMON SAYS

ASK AN ART HISTORIAN

Question: How would you describe the emergence of modernism in Malaysian art?

Modernism emerged as an artistic movement at the turn of the 20th century to explore what it meant to live in an uncertain and rapidly changing environment. In our part of the world, shifts in technology, economy, politics, and philosophy took place within the context of colonialism. Therefore, modernism in Malaysia is often discussed through the figure of artists who had received formal Art training from European academies. **Yong Mun Sen**, **Syed Ahmad Jamal**, and **Latiff Mohidin** are examples of such pioneers. Although each artist represented diverging styles they shared an underlying principle, which was their experimentation with forms, techniques, and materials. This led to the discovery of a new language for picture-making that reflected their own experiences.

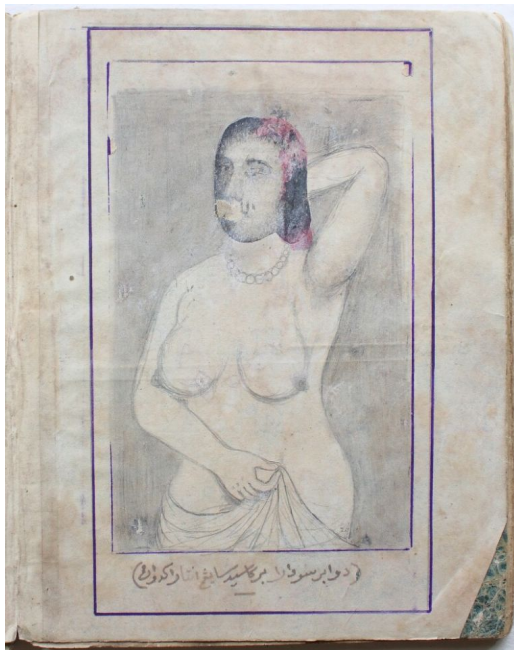
The idea of Malaysia, as we know it today, only began to take a concrete shape after the Second World War. The competing ideas of what Malaysia could possibly mean were already being experimented in the early 20th century. Sometimes, earlier experimentations with the visual form were not necessarily introduced by personalities who we recognize as artists today. They may be writers, illustrators, ideologues, or even... **bomohs**.

An example of this is a 1911 manuscript 'Perhimpunan Gunawan' that belonged to a Riau aristocrat **Khatijah Terung** (aka Khatijah the 'eggplant'). She was known to be a bomoh and the Perhimpunan was her collection of love spells. However, unlike older spell books that featured illustrations of djinns and other magical diagrams, Khatijah inserted cut-out photographs of women found in Western magazines and artfully placed them within her manuscript. Some of these images were modified by Khatijah with the addition of hand-drawn details.



Such alterations ranged from sketching a nude female body from the cut out of a photographed face to an elaborate illustrated narrative of courtship in an orientalist setting. What we see at play here is an adaptive recontextualization of photographs and imagery found in European print culture, given another purpose and meaning through a process of artistic intervention. Khatijah's visual exploration could be likened to Pablo Picasso's experimentation with the figure-ground relationship through the use of collage. For Picasso, the use of print media in his collages led him to analytical cubism. In Khatijah's case, living under the shadows of colonialism, printed media came to her as visual detritus that can be adapted purposefully in a local knowledge system.

Khatijah's manuscript suggests that modernism in Malaysia does not have to be a parade of pioneering 'father' figures, whose *métier* and worth is often described by the association of influential European Art movements. Instead, contemporaneous with the beginnings of modernism in Europe was also a whole range of creative impulses in other parts of the world that shared modernism's interest in experimental forms. Khatijah's 'Perhimpunan Gunawan' is a reminder of local experimentations that offered a counterpoint to European modernism. We may stumble upon these fragments that were shored up and made beautiful into an enchanting form.



Sources

<https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP153-13-5#?xywh=-118%2C-586%2C2352%2C3199>

https://www.academia.edu/30595365/Khatijah_Terung_dengan_karyanya_Perhimpunan_Gunawan_Bagi_Laki-Laki_dan_Perempuan_bahagian_1

<https://www.thepatriots.asia/khatijah-terung-pengarang-wanita-melayu-awal-yang-mendepani-zaman/>