

# Relational Aesthetics through Islamic Calligraphy Workshop

\*Mumtaz Mokhtar<sup>1</sup>, Wan Samiati Andriana WMD<sup>2</sup>, Nik Syahida Sabri<sup>3</sup>,  
Nor Azlin Hamidon<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1, 2, 3, 4</sup>College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi Mara, 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia.

\*<sup>1</sup>mumtaz059@uitm.edu.my, <sup>2</sup>samiati@uitm.edu.my, <sup>3</sup>niksyahida@uitm.edu.my,

<sup>4</sup>norazlin@uitm.edu.my

\*Corresponding author

Received: 21 July 2023, Accepted: 25 August 2023, Published: 1 September 2023

## ABSTRACT

Malay calligraphy is known as Jawi and is a form of writing that is less popular compared to other modern writings such as those already listed in the font selection on students' computers. Therefore, Jawi workshop was held at the Fine Arts Studies, College of Creative Arts, MARA University of Technology for 77 students of the 3rd semester who enrolled Form and Soul course. The first objective is to introduce and further strengthen the writing skills of traditional Malay writing with the theme of 'knowledge'. Secondly, the whole activity of the workshop is to establish relational aesthetic form where the facilitator and students interact directly during the demonstration and practice throughout the workshop. The theoretical concept of knowledge involved the theme, selection of phrases related to knowledge, transformation of Roman writing into Jawi spelling, and identifying calligraphy styles. The students also been introduced to several artists who applied Jawi elements in contemporary artworks. Mumtaz Caligraphy set helps the creations of beautiful Jawi calligraphy letters, the arrangement of the lines, the decoration and composition of the letters and also the layout through the assistance of Associate Professor Dr Nor Azlin Hamidon and her teammates. Relational aesthetics artwork successfully unites traditional elements and contemporary forms into a meaningful artistic creation and beneficial art for society.

**Keywords:** Relational Aesthetics, Fine Art, Calligraphy, Khat



eISSN: 2550-214X © 2023. Published for Idealogy Journal by UiTM Press. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

FET 545 or Form and Soul is a subject, in Degree of Fine Art in College of Creative Art, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia for semester 03. The subject also includes philosophy and ideas, the arts and Malay aesthetics, Islamic aesthetics, and the essence of Malaysia is one of the main volumes of the basics of theoretical research and the basics of statement construction for students. The students will be able to generate ideas, interpretations, and appreciation in an aesthetics critique aspect and this would also help the students to see new perspectives and dimensions in the interpretation of meanings and forms of artwork of traditional spirits.

The integration of art and craft into everyday life is perfectly normal in the traditional Islamic world. This idea is because Islam is essential to every part of a Muslim's life and makes it beautiful, art so Islam needs to be used to make things of everyday life beautiful. The emphasis in Islamic art is on

embellishment not on art because of art itself. The combination of these two indirectly trains and provides knowledge to students in the history of art and art of Islamic Engineering.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Relational Aesthetics

Relational aesthetics is a term created by curator Nicolas Bourriaud in the 1990s to describe the tendency to make art based on, or inspired by, human relations and their social context. Art had journeyed over the centuries from being, initially, a presentation of physical objects for mere beauty to a complex genre containing many modes of articulating creative concepts. At the term's inception, Relational Aesthetics essentially encompassed work that sought to produce a temporary environment or event in which viewers could participate in order to assimilate and comprehend the artist's specific impetus or message; interactivity and experience became more central while material, content, and form are less prioritized. Although critically this distillation remains ambiguous in its open-endedness, it does reflect an important evolution in a long lineage of art that values social encounter over product.

Works of Relational Aesthetics are typically based upon the artist's communication of his or her mission in a public, as opposed to institutional, space where the viewing population is not limited to the traditional art spectator. Thus, by expanding the works' exposure to a more far-reaching viewership, these pieces are often considered examples of temporary democracies.

Bourriaud called relational artists and their audiences "microtopias," in that the communal bonds that are formed from these experiences create a temporary container for experiencing human connectivity within the social context of the works. Because of this, it's no surprise that much of this art evokes political conscientiousness and inspires change.

Oftentimes, relational pieces evoke "witnessing publics," considered provocative in that they allow unrelated individuals to participate in a common feeling or event they might not otherwise experience collectively.

An artist's subjectivity is often eschewed in the presentation of relational works. Instead, the experience itself and the people participating combine in the present time to determine the overarching tone and evoke the work's ultimate meaning.

### 2.2 Islamic Calligraphy

*Khat* or calligraphy is a precious Islamic treasure, it is considered to be part and parcel of the Quran. It is developed at the hands of Muslims, thus, it cannot be neglected. In the early development of khat calligraphy, it was meant to write the Quran and other documents, thus many styles of khat calligraphy such as Kufi, Nasakh, Thuluth and Diwani were developed.

Malaysian calligraphy is greatly influenced by Islamic forms, based largely on the Islamic literature of Al-Quran which is respective of an Islamic system of law and also the arts of languages. Consequently, Malaysian calligraphers also have long drawn from the Al-Quran or proverbs as art, using the flowing Arabic language to express the beauty they perceive in the verses of the Al-Quran. According to Ismail Al-Faruqi and Lois Lamya Al-Faruqi (1986), the terminology of Islamic calligraphy colloquially describes it as Arabic calligraphy which relates to the artistic practice of handwriting in the lands sharing a common Islamic cultural heritage. Claude (2006) also agreed with Ismail Al Faruqi and Lois Lamya Al Faruqi who defined that the calligraphic practice as the art of giving form to signs in an expressive, harmonious and skillful manner. Therefore, the development of Islamic calligraphy in Malaysia is directly assimilated from the Arabic literature to spread out the knowledge of the Al-Quran. Malay calligraphy is known as jawi which consisted of 37 letters.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

This is qualitative action research in practice. Action research is a method used for improving practice. It involves action, evaluation, and critical reflection, and is based on the evidence gathered and changes in practice are then implemented. Action research is participative and collaborative; it is undertaken by individuals with a common purpose.

Based on this study, *Jawi* calligraphy workshop where students are exposed to the Islamic arts and culture. The idea of this program is mainly to inculcate students' interest in Islamic khat and calligraphy writing especially the younger generation. Even though some residents had knowledge about khat and calligraphy, it is important to raise awareness in knowing and preserving the skills of Islamic arts and culture. This program is conducted on 10th January 2023 and was successfully managed to achieve the targeted objectives with a number of participants is 77.

### 4 RESULT AND FINDINGS

It needs patience and skill to produce good quality *Jawi* calligraphy. The skill is not only in writing the calligraphy but also in handling the tools. The tools for the calligraphy workshop are a set by Mumtaz which contains, a pen, ink, and paper. The pen is made from reed and must suit the calligrapher hand posture and angle. Finally, the ink which has special ingredients to ensure it is not faded. There are other additional tools to assist the writing such as silk or cotton wad, and almaqta.

Things that need to be considered and prepared by trainees to write Naskhi calligraphy:

1. Prepare a pen used in calligraphy writing activities.
2. Prepare a dime ink used in calligraphy writing activities.
3. Preparing media used in calligraphy writing activities.
4. Prepare a pedestal or table for use in calligraphy writing activities.

In the implementation of mentoring activities, the art of writing calligraphy uses several methods.



Picture 1 banner on the program

#### 1. Lecture Method

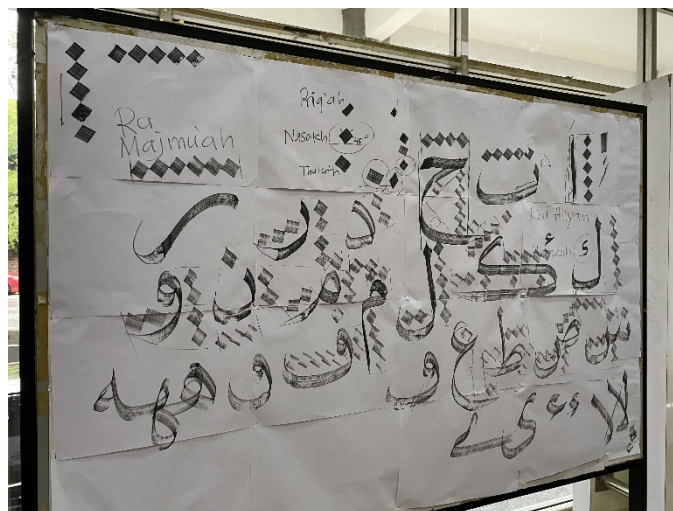
The lecture method is a method in education where the way of delivering material to students by applying oral speech to explain the description, the teacher can use other teaching aids, for example, pictures, maps, plans, or other teaching aids (Zuhairini, 1983). The lecture method was chosen to explain materials related to how to write calligraphy techniques.



Picture 2 Lecture on the Khat Calligraphy

## 2. Demonstration Method

The demonstration method is a way of presenting learning materials by displaying or demonstrating to students which are often accompanied by oral explanations (Daryanto, 2009). This demonstration method is used to explain and exemplify to students how to write correct calligraphy.



Picture 3 Basic demonstration writing calligraphy

## 3. Exercise Method

The practice method aims to make the practical activities carried out by students more meaningful with regard to the specific learning material area and provide knowledge about learning outcomes quickly and accurately (Sagala, 2009). Participants in the training practice and write directly calligraphy through training guidance using the necessary tools.



**Picture 4** One by one training

#### **4. Task Assignment Method**

The method of assigning tasks was chosen to implement learning to write Naskhi calligraphy.



**Picture 5** Finishing the task giving

### **5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The passion for art is a reflection of individual ideas, feelings, thoughts, experiences, and desires manifested in the selection of materials, media, and techniques. The interaction of moderator and participants created an active learning environment which the whole part are considered as the entity of relational aesthetics. The body of art in relational aesthetic aroused new interpretation of forms which changed artist as creator to artist as facilitator, from singular artist to team artists, form static body of work to active a lively art form. Artist and audience are complementary to the new formation of contemporary works. learning Jawi is an art activity that solves the problem of not knowing to know and not being skilled to be more skilled as well as fostering interest and getting new inspiration

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The authors would like to thank the College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Shah Alam, Malaysia, for the opportunity and support for attending this program.

## FUNDING

No financial aid was received.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors played equal contribution to the production of this manuscript.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interests.

## REFERENCES

- Claude, M. (2006). *Histoire de la Calligraphie Française*. Albin Michel: France.
- Daryanto. (2009). *Demonstrasi Sebagai Metode Belajar*. Jakarta: Depdikbud.  
<https://kaligrafiislam.blogspot.com/2022/11/jenisjenis-k>
- Ismail Al-Faruqi and Lois Lamy Al-Faruqi. (1986). *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*. Macmillan Publishing Company: New York.
- Muhammadiyah, Zulkifli, Zulkarnainsyah dan Rita Kencana. (2022). Pendampingan Latihan Seni Menulis Kaligrafi bagi Santri Pondok Pesantren Baqiyatussa'adiyah di Sanggar Assifa Kabupaten Indragiri Hilir. *urnal Pengabdian dan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat*, 3(2), 88-95.  
<https://doi.org/10.46963/ams.v3i2.684>
- Nicolas Bourriaud. (2002). *Art of the 1990s: Relational Aesthetics*. Les Presses Du Reel: Paris.
- Sagala, S. (2009). *Sagala, S. (2009). Konsep dan Makna Pembelajaran*. Bandung: CV. Alfabeta.
- Zuhairini. (1983). *Metodik Khusus Pendidikan Agama*. Surabaya: Usaha Nasional.