

PSYCHO-ARTISTIC IN THE MALAYSIA ISLAMIC PAINTINGS CONTAINED QUR'ANIC VERSES

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Abstract: *The field of art known as psycho-artistic examines the psychological aspects of how people perceive and react to paintings and other artistic phenomena. Sometimes it is known as psychedelic art or psychedelia. Therefore, visual art appreciators of the varied cultural backgrounds (education, interest, religion, and ethics) perceive Islamic artworks differently. It is involved in the perception of artworks and the response to artistic phenomena of the paintings. The paintings have optical illusions due to the creativity of the artwork presentation. They attracted the eyes of the art appreciators, who pondered the visual art and resulted in the perception of the object in the paintings. The human eyes and the faculty of mind ('aql) have freedom of imaginative interpretation of the paintings' design and contents. The visual art language created the perception or optical illusion of some viewers and formed a look-alike of any things that come to their mind. It can be considered the feeling of human eyes transmitted to the faculty of mind ('aql) in the creativity of abstract art or viewing the aesthetic of fine art in imaginary calligraphy.*

Keywords: *Calligraphy Paintings, Optical Illusion, Psycho-Artistic, Qur'anic Verses*

Introduction

The Quranic verses in the paintings are the verses excerpted from the Holy Qur'ān which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the Arabic language, 1400 years ago. The Qur'ān encompasses the holy books revealed to the prophets before Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and it is the last revelation (Ab. Latif Muda & Rosmaawati Ali @ Mat Zin, 2014). All prophets are Muslims, and the Qur'ān is the seal of all the holy books. It is the book of guidance for humanity in the contemporary age. The Qur'ān is also the first and foremost model for creativity and aesthetic work (A L Mirasa, 2006). The artists abstracted some of the familiar verses from the Qur'ān and applied them in Contemporary Islamic Paintings. The Muslim artist has their own personal expression applied the calligraphy styles in the paintings. The visual language of the calligraphy applied in the paintings are freely expressed in any form and *sharī'ah* compliance.

The letters have visual art elements and pronunciation (phonetic) elements. Thus, the Malaysian artists like to apply the Quranic verses in the painting styles to propagate the teaching of Islam. The paintings are in abstract form, contained ornamental with multi-colours, landscapes, skyscapes, or luminism. Symbols, connections, and patterns that emerge during conversation are engraved on the canvas in the form of fluent cursive calligraphy (Camilla Pappagallo, 2020). The sense of free letters is widely worked on by the artists whose influence is aesthetic value, shape, form, and hue. Some paintings are coincidentally or unconsciously formed “look alike images in the abstract art of the paintings” and psycho-artistic.

Psycho-Artistic

“Psycho” means “the mind or mental processes,” and “artistic” means “of art or artists” (Michael Agnes., 2007). It is the quality or state of being intellectual. Intellectuality and creativity are concerned with knowledge and psyche. Psyche, from a Greek word, means the organ of thought and judgment. The mind, in its totality, is distinguished from the body and is known as the psyche. Psyche is the human faculty of thought, judgment, and emotion; mental life, including both conscious and unconscious processes (Dorlands Illustrated Medical Dictionary, 2007).

The meaning of “psyche” in the Cambridge Dictionary means “the mind; or the deepest thoughts, feelings, or beliefs of a person or group.” Therefore, in Islamic art, it is a part of the human psyche capacities and mental faculties of the Muslim artists with guidance from Allah to reveal the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) for the peaceful life of humankind and avoid shirk in optical illusion.

Optical Illusion

The spontaneous graphical writing, an instant projection of a mental state, is interesting for its oxymoronic nature, capable of bringing impulsiveness with an extremely rigorous creative process (Guerrer, 2019). Arabic letters or words are deformed and transformed into images by artists. According to R. Al-Faruq (1986), one of the traditional styles is called image calligraphy, which means “picture,” because it utilizes imaginative patterns with various styles of calligraphic elements. Muslim artists intentionally or unintentionally compose calligraphy in the forms of leaves, fruits, trees, birds, or whatever comes to their minds. The visual art language creates perceptions or optical illusions for some viewers, forming resemblances to anything that comes to their minds. This can be considered as the feelings from human eyes being transmitted to the faculty of the mind ('aql) in the creativity of abstract art and in the appreciation of the aesthetics of fine art through imaginary calligraphy.

Examples of artists experimenting with these types of artworks include Syed Naguib AlAttas, Ahmad Rajaei Awang, Omar Basaree, Syed Mokhtar al-Shahab, Nor Azlin Hamidon, and many others, to name a few. Their artworks are in abstract forms of Islamic paintings that contain “optical illusion,” and the samples are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 : Some Samples of Abstract Form of Islamic Paintings Formed Optical Illusion

Plate No.	Artists	Verses/Surah	Medium, Dimension,	Year	Look-alike	Source
1.	Syed Mokhtar Al-Shahab	<i>Al-Qalam: 1</i>	Mixed; 60 x 70 cm	1992	Masjid and Minarets	NAG
2.	Nor Azlin Hamidon	<i>Sūrah Al-Rahmān: 13</i>	Acrylic; 76 x 102 cm	2015	Bird	MAG.
3.	Mohd Yusof Hj. Abu Bakar	<i>Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn: 29</i>	Acrylic; 97 x 97 cm	2002	Fish	PSKK
4.	Ahmad Rajaei Awang	<i>Al-Insān: 23-25</i>	Acrylic; 70 x 90 cm	2013	Pear	Artist

In Plate 1. (Verse: *Al-Qalam: 1*, by Syed Mokhtar Al-Shahab), the artist shaped the Kufic style calligraphy into the shape of calligraphy six pens and look-alike a mosque with minarets. The letter “noon” (ن) is at the center of a big calligraphy pen.

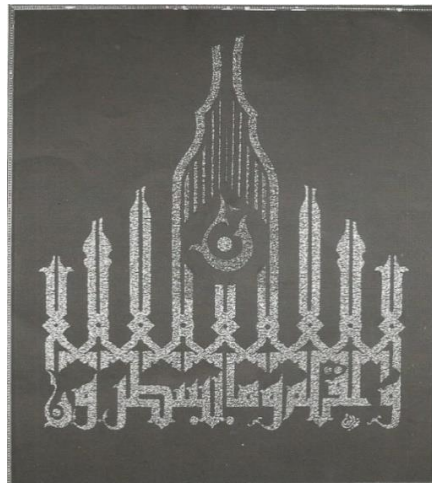


Plate 1. Title: Al-Qalam; Artist: Syed Mokhtar Al Shahab; Medium: Mixed; Dimension: 60 x 70 cm; Year: Unknown. Source: National Art Gallery

Source: National Art Gallery

The origin of the artist's free-style calligraphy, as shown in Figure 1, influenced the artist to compose the artwork in Plate 2; Title: *Al-Rahmān (55): 13*, by Nor Azlin Hamidon. Accidentally, the object of the painting resembles a bird. The painting features a differentiation of colours that form borders and lines, and by coincidence, it takes on a shape reminiscent of a bird.

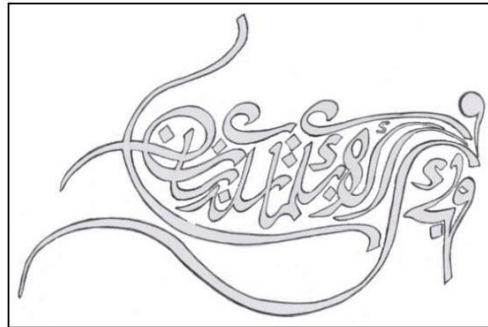


Figure 1: The Origin of the Artist's Free Style Calligraphy



Plate 2. Title: Al-Rahmān (55): 13; Artist: Nur Azlin Hamidon; Mixed Medium: Acrylic; Size: 76 x 102 cm; Year: 2015; Prove: Melaka Art Gallery Exhibition.

In the Plate 3 (Verse: Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn: 29, by Mohammed Yusof Hj. Abu Bakar), the arrangement of the script-shaped coincidentally look-alike of a fish (optical illusion) is shown in Figure 2. The artist applied the Principles of Two-Dimensional Design, in which the calligraphy designs are the concentration of the focal point. Concentration refers to a way of distribution of unit forms of Arabic letters and ornamentation, which may be slightly thickly gathered in certain areas or thinly scattered in other areas of a design. Maybe the artist tried to beautify the painting by attempting to form a boat on the surface of the sea. Unconsciously, in the visual language and the perception or optical illusion of some viewers, the form looks-alike a fish, as shown in Figure 2.



Plate 3. Title: Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn: (23): 29; Artist: Mohammed Yusof Hj. Abu Bakar; Medium: Acrylic on canvas; Dimension: 97 x 97 cm; Year: 2002; Prove: Formalisma Tampak Dalam Seni Khat & Seni Tampak Malaysia: Tema Keamanan & Keharmonian Kehidupan. PSKK

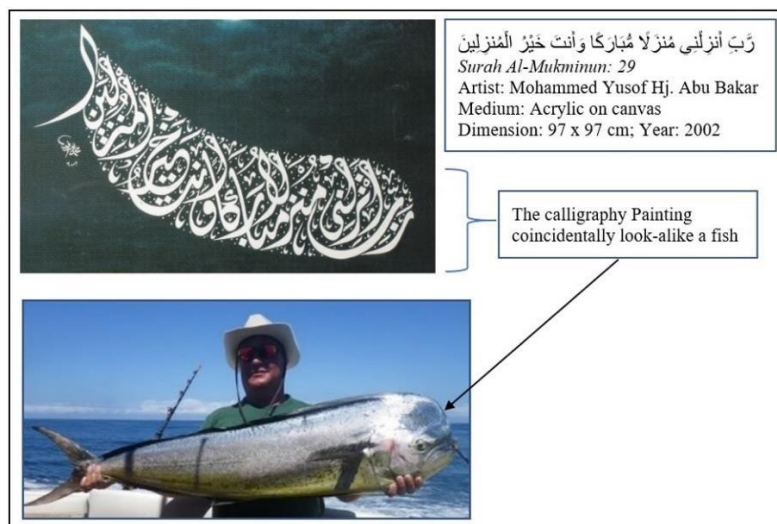


Figure 2 : The Painting Coincidentally Look-Alike (Optical Illusion) a Fish.

In Plate 4 (*Sūrah Al-Insān: 23-25*), the Quranic script in *Diwani Jaly* accidentally formed a pear. According to the artist, the Quranic verses are nice to recite and sweet like eating a pear (researcher casual conversation and interview with the artist). Therefore, the painting look-alike a 'pear' as shown in Figure 3.

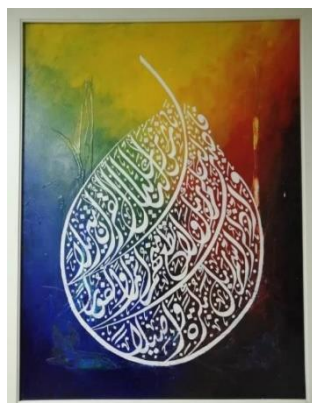


Plate 4. Title: Al-Insān (76): 23-25; Artist: Ahmad Rajaei Awang; Dimension: 75.5 x 97.5 cm; Medium: Acrylic on canvas; Year: 2013; Prove: Pameran Terbuka Galeri Shah Alam 2014.

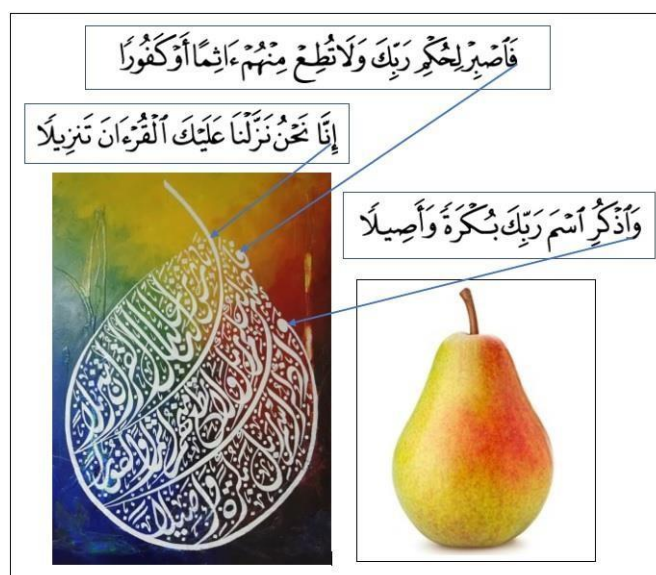


Figure 3 : Composition of the Script, Ornaments colors formed Look-Alike a ‘Pear’

In further observation, the paintings, are perhaps more of a stage of development or a new trend of contemporary Malaysia Islamic paintings style. The paintings destined to undergo further development and the demands of aesthetics in Islamic abstract painting. The demand for expression; is needed to find a new model, a new perspective, in the study of calligraphy letters in the application of the Quranic verses in the painting. The artists' artworks are more totally about, for example, strength, power, reality, or illusion, which is conveyed through the message of symbols and aesthetics. The realm of aesthetic and artistic control that is based on a strong understanding of elementary aspects such as line, color, texture, shape, space, and other compositions with Quranic script cultivates a new look in the painting. The abstract artworks are promoting new artistic values and enrich the symbolic-spiritual images of the plastic physical dimension of Arabic calligraphy. Their work is a work of painting, which is based on the letters of the Qur’ān and ornaments. It begins with a process of peak creativity, which is rich in messages of intellectuality and creativity.

Intellectuality and Creativity

The intellectuality of different people with different cultural backgrounds and educational backgrounds has different perceptions in viewing visual art. In appreciation of Islamic art, the intellect viewers have knowledge of *fiqh*, *tauhid* and *tasawuf*.

The creativity of the artists in the paintings give space to the mind and senses to gain knowledge on the scope of which could be achieved by the faculty of mind and senses. It depends on individual eyes and mind perception. The individual human eyes and mind process the imaginary perception of the paintings. It is the human eyes and mind's perception of individual thinking. Therefore, the eyes of Muslims with religious backgrounds will look at the painting from the angle of *fiqh*, while Muslim art and design professionals view the aesthetical creative thinking and critical view of messages. Both are sharī'ah compliance reception of human eyes and mind perception.

The Reception of Human Eyes and Mind Perception

The Eye is the organ of vision and is also known as the Oculus. This organ conveys a remarkable variety of complex social and emotional information. It relates to the mind. Mind is the faculty or function of the brain, by which an individual becomes aware of his surroundings and of their distribution in space and time; and by which experiences feelings, emotions, and desires (*nafs*), and is able to attend, remember, to learn, to reason and to decide (AnneMarie W.B, 2007). The human eyes and the faculty of mind (*'aql*) have freedom of imaginative interpretation of the paintings, optical illusion, and the paintings visualized lookalike of a certain object (Giakoumi, 1999). The paintings' is psychedelic art style, also known as psychedelia (<https://en.wikipedia.org>). Psychedelic art is a western art movement in 1960's (Gregg Berryman, 1984).

The samples of the paintings show the painters have the theme of the beauty of nature, people and peace as a statement through symbols or the like in art media (Sallehuddin Mohamed, Pameran Media Seni VI, Keindahan Alam, Manusia & Keamanan, 2024). The artworks imitating the natural world in the application of the Quranic verses in form of calligraphy styles in the painting. These styles are the abstraction of the word or verses from the Qur'ān and the imitation of the natural world which unconsciously produced images or shapes. It existed from the soft fine feeling of the artist's mind which comes from the emotional feeling, an artistic taste of the artworks in the appreciation of the creation created by Allah the Almighty. It can be considered the feeling of human eyes transmitted to the faculty of mind (*'aql*) in the creativity of abstract art or viewing the aesthetic of fine art in the traditional styles in imaginary calligraphy.

The Traditional Styles in Imaginary Calligraphy

According to Ismail R. Al-Faruqi, one of the traditional styles is Imaginary Calligraphy, characterized by the use of imaginary patterns combined with calligraphy elements in a multistyle approach. Some calligraphers and artists unconsciously or accidentally shaped their calligraphy artworks into various forms such as vegetables, humans, animals, buildings, or musical instruments—reflecting the influence of Iranian calligraphers in these artistic expressions (D. Sirojuddin, 1997). Therefore, when approaching contemporary Islamic painting in museums, galleries, books, or on television, careful consideration is required to understand why the artists use and adapt specific forms and how these differ from more 'conventional' art-making methods (Whitham, 2003).

Artists express their unique perspectives on Islamic visual art, freely incorporating Arabic

letters in various forms, regardless of their conventional beauty. The letters take the shape of expressionist calligraphy, not confined to traditional calligraphy pens. The norms of calligraphy are not mandatory in these paintings. The artist's spontaneous brush stroke sometimes coincidentally and beautifully shaped into forms resembling vegetables, fish, birds, or building, showcasing the creativity of the paintings. According to Drs. D. Sirojudin AR., there is no wrongdoing in developing existing calligraphy styles into new and diverse forms, such as slightly deforming elegant parts of the letters, opening up possibilities for variation. These approaches contribute to a more dynamic atmosphere of creation (D. Sirojuddin AR, 1995).

To revive and preserve *Jawi* and Islamic calligraphy art, Professor Dr. Hashim Haji Musa suggests increasing the number of contemporary Islamic calligraphy works that record the *Qur'ān* (Hashim H M, 2006). It is a contemporary stylization of Islamic painting. According to Syed Ahmad Jamal, Islamic painting is produced with full awareness of the Islamic values, specifically `Aqīdah emphasizing monotheism (Syed Ahmad Jamal, 1984). It is a manifestation of the love of wisdom.

Conclusion

The Islamic artists possess the crowning glory of their artworks and through their talent they accrue good deeds (*ajrūn/ اجر*), often sacrificing their lives to safeguard their art in accordance with Sharī'ah compliance. The artists are unconsciously formed certain images. According to Department of Islamic Development Malaysia that application of the Quranic verses in paintings to form images are forbidden (Muzakarah Jawatankuasa Fatwa Majlis Kebangsaan Bagi Hal Ehwal Ugama Islam Malaysia, 2015) Their love of wisdom is paramount, enabling them to possess a wealth of experience and knowledge and the ability to critically or practically apply Quranic verses in their paintings, whether on canvas or any flat surface. Without the love of wisdom, the artists cannot truly succeed in embodying Quranic verses in their artwork.

From the researcher's keen observations and close interactions with these artists, it is evident that they embody patience, high morality, and possess the necessary experience and knowledge, particularly in calligraphy styles and the application of Quranic verses. This includes the adept use of colors in their paintings, showcasing their ability to apply these verses critically and practically.

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