



The Concept of Contemporary Islamic Art: Bruneian Muslim Artists' Perspective

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Abstract

Contemporary Islamic art has emerged into a diverse and dynamic field, shaped by diverse cultural, social, and global influences. It also reflects the intersection of traditional Islamic aesthetics and the complexity of the modern world that are seen through artist's creative expressions worldwide, including those from Brunei Darussalam, a Muslim-majority country in Southeast Asia. Artists, as actual practitioners and producers of creative works offer unique insights into their experiences, faith, and identities, enriching the multifaceted nature of contemporary Islamic art. Despite the importance of artists' involvement, for the past 50 years, studies that specifically document artists' perspectives on the field have yet to be found. Therefore, this qualitative study attempts to address this gap by employing face-to-face semi-structured interviews with 10 practising Bruneian Muslim artists. These artists-participants were selected for their unique experiences as Muslims, living in a Muslim-majority country that upholds the national philosophy, the Melayu Islam Beraja (abbreviated: MIB, translated as Malay Islamic Monarchy) which places Islam at the heart of its national identity. One of the key findings of this study is the diverse thematic exploration by Bruneian Muslim artists in defining contemporary Islamic art. This includes the aspect of time, practical approaches, Islamic presence, and recognised Islamic imagery. This study provides insights into how Bruneian Muslim artists define contemporary Islamic art, drawing on their experience to shape their understanding of the term. One implication of this study is the need to recognise the importance of artists' perspectives in the field, particularly through their lived experiences as practitioners.

Keywords: Brunei Darussalam; contemporary Islamic art; experience; Muslim artists

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INTRODUCTION

Scholars have recognised Islamic art as a significant area of study in the Muslim world. It has become the topic of discussion by Western scholars since the 19th century and has obtained special attention during the past decades among the public as a different category of art (Nasr, 1987). After Oleg Grabar, many scholars have gained interest in studying Islamic art from various areas of specialisation, contributing to identifying and categorising the classical works according to the historical,

chronological and geographical location. However, there is not as much writing on Islamic art among Muslim scholars as there is among Western scholars since the 19th century. Before the field of Islamic art was invented by European scholars, there were no studies conducted on the indigenous tradition of Islamic lands (Blair and Bloom, 2003). Grabar (2006) also highlights that the opinions on the subject of Islamic art were not derived from the Muslim experience, but from the Westerners who sought to understand art, which he viewed as an issue shared by practically all researchers in the field. It was only later during the 20th century that Muslim scholars started to study Islamic art by also discussing the notion of Islamic elements such as spirituality, sacred and religious dimensions.

Given these ongoing discussions about interpretations of Islamic art, recent scholarship has increasingly focused on its evolving nature of the field within contemporary artistic practices. This foundational discourse has opened up new perspectives, encouraging studies that explore modern artistic expressions through the broader lens of Islamic art.

In recent years, studies within the field have undergone a notable transformation, shifting towards a more contemporary perspective. This change reflects a growing interest among art enthusiasts in examining the works of present-day artists, particularly those who are inspired by their cultural roots, artistic imagery and diasporic discourse (Lopes et al., 2015). Artists from the Arab world and other emerging art scenes within the Islamic world, such as Southeast Asia, are increasingly finding recognition and gaining prominence in the global art markets. This is due to several factors including the increase in connectivity, growing interest in cultural diversity, investment potential, and the enhanced support from art institutions and curators dedicated to promoting their works. These artists offer unique perspectives and narratives that resonate deeply with international collectors and art enthusiasts, drawing attention to the nuanced interplay between tradition and modernity. However, despite the undeniable significant impact of contemporary Islamic art, scholars such as Choudhrey and Bobrowicz (2016) highlight that the voices of the artists remain noticeably absent from the academic discourse surrounding the field for over 40 years. They further emphasise that most discussions and insights in the field have come from experts who are not directly involved in art making, such as art historians, curators, collectors, and archaeologists. Therefore, artists' perspectives are essential in discussing contemporary Islamic art, as they actively shape and redefine visual language. Their insights offer a deeper understanding of the interplay between traditional Islamic aesthetics, cultural heritage, and modern influences in today's context.

This issue extends beyond the Western and Middle Eastern regions, affecting Muslim artists in Southeast Asia, including those from Brunei Darussalam. Brunei Darussalam has a rich tradition of Islamic art, especially among its local Muslim artists. As a Muslim-majority country in Southeast Asia, with Islam deeply embedded in its cultural identity, the practice and creation of Islamic art are prominently featured in both local and international exhibitions, and art dialogues (Pg Aliudin et al., 2024). Despite this vibrant artistic landscape, there remains a notable gap in scholarly research within Brunei. There are currently no comprehensive studies that document or analyse the perspectives of local artists on Islamic art. Instead, the existing body of

literature predominantly focuses on traditional crafts and cultural artefacts central to Bruneian heritage, such as studies on the motifs used in *Kain Tenunan Brunei* (Brunei's woven textiles) and analysis of the characteristics of Bruneian architecture. This lack of scholarly engagement underscores a critical knowledge gap. To fully appreciate and understand the evolving landscape of Islamic art in Brunei, it is important to include the insights, experiences, and creative processes of the artists themselves, as they are the practitioners and creators of these works.

The main aim of this study is to examine contemporary Islamic art from the perspective of Bruneian Muslim artists. It specifically seeks to address the research question: How do Bruneian Muslim artists define the concept of contemporary Islamic art? This exploration aims to uncover the unique interpretations and personal thoughts of these artists on contemporary Islamic art through their creative processes, experiences, and artistic expressions. Additionally, the research will consider the challenges faced by these artists in the context of their practice, including how they navigate the balance between tradition and modernity, and how their faith influences their artistic journey.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design, following an interpretative paradigm in an attempt to discover an in-depth understanding of the phenomena being studied. To reiterate, this study focuses on exploring the concept of contemporary Islamic art from the perspective of Bruneian Muslim artists by also considering their lived experiences as practitioners in the field. Experience is a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon that encompasses sensory perceptions, emotions, thoughts, and actions. It is both subjective and objective, shaped by individual perspectives and external factors. The study of experience involves investigating how individuals interpret, make meaning of, and respond to the world around them (Dewey, 1934). The study of experience originated and is very well known in the field of psychology, but it has been increasingly used in other areas including humanities and social sciences that involve studies on human beings (Smith, Flower and Larkin, 2009). This type of study concerns with lived experiences of people involved with the issue that is being researched (Groenewald, 2004), by also considering the aspect of consciousness of the people studied (Langdridge, 2007). Experience essentially helps to uncover certain subjects in a much deeper level of understanding and most of the time, very personal. Therefore, to gather the participants' views and experiences, this study uses semi-structured interviews as its research instrument.

This study also acknowledges certain limitations, particularly the scarcity of research available in the field of contemporary Islamic art within the Brunei context. One of the primary challenges is the limited number of scholarly articles specifically addressing this subject matter in Brunei. Perhaps the currently available source that specifically looks into this area is the study by Pg Aliudin et al. (2024) which provides an overview of Brunei's contemporary Islamic art over 35 years (1984–2019), focusing on production trends across three key aspects: date of production, art media, and artistic styles. The lack of comprehensive studies presents a challenge in fully capturing the dynamic nature of the current artistic scene and may limit the depth of

analysis in understanding the full scope of Bruneian Muslim artists' contributions to contemporary Islamic art. Despite these limitations, this study aims to offer valuable insights into this understudied domain, contributing to the growth of research in this area.

Sampling

The success of a study depends not only on the suitability of its methodology and instruments but also on the appropriateness of its sampling strategies (Cohen et al., 2000). In this study, participants were purposively selected using a selective, non-probability sampling method, which relies on the researchers' judgment in choosing participants (Langdridge, 2007). Moreover, to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon, qualitative researchers deliberately choose specific individuals and locations (Creswell, 2015, p. 204). The selection criteria require the artist to be Muslim and actively involved in producing and exhibiting work, verified through portfolios or social media. However, to get a better view of this information, a 'contact visit' (Seidman, 2006) was necessary to assess the participant's suitability for the study. Secondly, the artist must have at least 10 recognised Islamic artworks that have been exhibited, demonstrating active production and experience. Thirdly, the selection is based on the artist's years of experience in visual arts, as well as their involvement in local and international activities, including seminars, exhibitions, art events, and collaborative projects like artist residencies.

Initially, 10 artists were approached for interviews, with seven agreeing to participate. Of the 3 who declined, one participated in a pilot study. Given the small sample size, additional participants were recruited based on recommendations from the original participants. This sampling strategy is known as snowball sampling (Creswell, 2012), also known as 'chain referral' or 'networking' sampling (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). The total number of shortlisted participants for the study is 12. While this may seem small, it is important to note that the study focuses on involving only relevant participants. Research involving personal experiences often uses a smaller sample size to gather in-depth data needed to answer the research questions (Langdridge, 2007; Creswell, 2009). Despite initially shortlisting 12 participants, only 10 were interviewed. This decision was influenced by data saturation, described by Creswell (2014) as the point when new data no longer provide additional insights or reveal new properties (p. 296).

Research instrument and procedure

This study used face-to-face, semi-structured interviews to gather insights from Muslim artists about their experiences with contemporary Islamic art. Semi-structured interviews offer flexibility and encourage genuine responses (Burns, 1994). Potential participants were contacted directly, either by phone or in person, initiating the interview relationship (Seidman, 2006). They received detailed information about the study, the interview process, and the voluntary nature of their participation. The majority of the interviews took place at participants' homes or studios, allowing them to discuss and showcase their work conveniently. Some used visual examples to clarify their points, enriching the study through direct interaction with their art. A few participants preferred casual settings, such as restaurants, for comfort. The interviews began with questions about participants' backgrounds, including age, occupation,

education, and experience in visual arts. The second set focused on their perspectives on contemporary Islamic art, exploring characteristics or concepts they associate with it. While the questions were initially drafted in English, they were also translated into Malay and conducted in Malay language to ensure participants could respond comfortably. This strategy was effective, with minimal issues in communication.

Data analysis

This study employs Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) for its data analysis, as it focuses on participants' experiences to understand the phenomenon. Moreover, IPA involves interpreting both textual and image data (Creswell, 2009). While the main objective of IPA is to offer a detailed exploration of participants' perspectives, Langdridge (2007) highlights the importance of the researcher's role in interpreting participants' understandings. Additionally, thematic analysis was used, as it is a key analytical approach within IPA (Langdridge, 2007). IPA is chosen for its flexibility, consistency, and repeatable process allowing researchers to either describe the data or conduct interpretative analysis, depending on the study's objectives. This study follows the analysis steps recommended by Smith, Flower, and Larkin (2009). The first two steps—reading the transcribed data and taking initial notes—were conducted simultaneously. This involved translating interview transcripts from Malay to English, capturing participants' nuances, and noting first impressions. The second step focused on making detailed descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual notes.

The next stage of analysis involved developing themes, starting with immersive reading and exploratory commentary. An iterative coding approach was used to ensure a balanced interpretation, preserving the integrity of participants' responses while integrating the researcher's analytical insights. Through this process, codes emerged, were refined, and grouped into broader themes to identify patterns and conceptual connections. This thematic analysis provided a structured method for data organisation, aiding the identification of recurring narratives and key ideas. For example, in the interviews, participants referred to contemporary Islamic art as "the works of today," "current works produced," and "works produced to date." These responses contributed to the emergence of themes focused on the temporal aspects of artistic production.

The final stage of analysis involved the development of superordinate themes (main themes), allowing for deeper interpretative engagement by organising insights hierarchically for conceptual clarity. In the case of the aforementioned themes, it was categorised under the subordinate theme of the concept of "time." These were later validated through peer debriefing, also known as peer validation, as described by Larkin and Thompson (2012), which involved discussions with peers to cross-check for consistency and coherence. All the steps were implemented to fulfil the study's objective of exploring the concept of contemporary Islamic art among Bruneian Muslim artists. Finally, the findings are presented with detailed descriptions and critical reflections, ensuring analytical transparency and depth while preserving the authenticity of participants' voices, as discussed in the next section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Contemporary Islamic art: Bruneian Muslim artists' perspectives

Bruneian Muslim artists have presented a range of interpretations of contemporary Islamic art, encompassing both literal and conceptual perspectives. Their explanations range from straightforward references to present-day contexts to more profound connections with sacred and religious meanings. This aligns with Esanu's (2012) claim that contemporary art is inherently multifaceted, with different interpretations based on the specific context in which it is discussed. In the context of this study, artists have offered a spectrum of responses to explain this subject of study. While agreement has been reached on certain concepts, differences in interpretation are also evident. Frequently, artists have conveyed the deeper conceptual meaning of the term by illustrating it through their own practical experiences. This discussion is structured into different themes, with the thematic approach in this study facilitating the organisation and exploration of these interpretations. Additionally, to maintain anonymity in this discussion, the artists involved in the study will be referred to as participants and identified by codes (e.g., P1, P2, P3, etc.).

Time

In discussing contemporary Islamic art, the participants in this study emphasised the aspect of time. They frequently use phrases such as "the Islamic artworks of today" or "Islamic artworks produced today" in trying to define what constitutes contemporary Islamic art. These responses align with the general understanding of contemporary art, which typically refers to the most recent artworks created. For instance, Szekely (2014) discusses this common perception of contemporary art, often described as the "art of our times."

The collective viewpoint from the participants suggests that this art form includes a wide array of creations made in the present era, regardless of specific content or style, as long as they retain a connection to Islamic themes or aesthetics. For instance, one participant (P1) remarked, "*Any work produced today is considered, even if it's a landscape, it is considered as well.*" Similarly, P2 stated, "*Whatever you produce today is contemporary, no matter what it is, even if it's classical art.*" However, the explanation of the term "today" among the participants is subjective as they did not mention explicitly any specific time frames to further describe their views. To gain a deeper understanding of this context, the participants were asked prompt questions aiming to elucidate more detailed insights.

Other participants convey their understanding of contemporary Islamic art using the Brunei context as an example. It was understood that the participants were pointing to the importance of the year 1984 (Brunei Independence) to explain the context of contemporary art in Brunei. The mention of 1984 as a crucial year indicates that it may have denoted a significant change or advancement in the Bruneian art scene, possibly influenced by political, social, or cultural transformations that impacted the art community and its creative approaches. This specific historical context provides valuable insights into the development of contemporary Islamic art in Brunei and how it has adapted to evolving circumstances. For example, P1 identified 1984 as a pivotal year marking a significant transition in the practice of contemporary art in Brunei. He specifically pointed out that this shift is evident in the

diverse artistic styles employed by local artists in their exhibitions. P1 mentioned that *“Bruneian previously likes to produce realistic landscape works, portraits, Kampong Ayer, and mostly focus on aesthetic, but not many deals with concepts. But after 1984, we started to see some changes in emphasising concepts and styles in their work”*. Arus (2013) also addressed, though not solely, the transition of diverse artistic styles in the setting of Brunei, tying them to the year 1984, on the occasion of Brunei's Independence Day. Based on the participants' responses, it can be concluded that time is the most emphasised factor in explaining contemporary Islamic art.

Practical Approaches

The participants also emphasised the practical approach to differentiating classical and contemporary Islamic art by comparing various elements such as artistic styles, subject matter, forms of Islamic art, techniques, and the materials used in their creations.

When it comes to style, the key area highlighted by the majority of the participants emphasises the importance of adhering to certain rules and guidelines. These rules have historically been a significant aspect of producing Islamic art, especially when it involves sacred and religious themes. Some participants often use Islamic calligraphy as an illustrative example to explain their approach. For example, they follow strict styles and formats used by calligraphers in the past when writing the Quran, as it was primarily intended for reading purposes and as a deeply internal process of pure devotion and meditation. The primary emphasis was placed on writing the entire scripture with a focus on its aesthetic quality, not so much on the artistic side of the work.

In contemporary times, calligraphy artists have redefined their artistic practices by blending modern and traditional artistic elements while keeping the fundamental Islamic spirituality intact. This fusion involves a selection of specific Quranic verses, driven by religious, cultural, or personal preferences, rather than the writing of entire chapters. These chosen verses are then transformed into various images of artistic expression. This practical approach is marked by an emphasis on experimentation and exploration, with artists working with composition and symbolism. In some cases, the chosen verses are intertwined with imagery that complements or relates to the text. This innovative approach not only pays homage to Islamic calligraphy's rich heritage but also allows it to evolve and flourish in a contemporary art context, where artists can express their spirituality and creativity in unique and personalised ways.

The participants also emphasised the significance of their approach to representing contemporary Islamic art by steering clear of using clichéd imagery, considering it superficial. Instead, they advocate for a more diverse array of subject matter, extending beyond common images such as calligraphy, mosques, and pattern works. They assert that Islamic ideas can be effectively conveyed through various subjects, including simple representations of nature and abstract imagery. Ultimately, the main aim remains to reflect Islamic values within the artwork. Furthermore, they stress the importance of techniques such as blending the background and subject matter to create a cohesive and unified artistic composition. *“It should not be flat like you just put it (subject matter) there. It is not interesting. It needs to be blended to create that depth, almost like the subject matter is going out from the background”* (Interview with P1).

In addition, it is also about the way the elements and principles of art are used in the work. P3 for example gave an example of the importance of colour choices and styles in contemporary art, *"most contemporary works today use much brighter colour, like fluorescent or more vivid colours compared to the classical works."* However, upon making such a comparison, it is important to note that one of the challenges in creating Islamic artworks in the past was the restricted access to a diverse range of colours and pigments. Unlike modern times, when artists have access to a wide array of colours with various shades and names like sky blue, ultramarine, cobalt, and royal blue, artists in the past were limited to a more confined selection of natural pigments sourced from minerals, plants, and insects. This limitation was not exclusive to Islamic art but was a challenge faced by artistic traditions across different cultures and historical periods. Despite this, Islamic art has evolved over the centuries, finding innovative ways to use the available pigments and materials. Artist today benefit from a broader spectrum of colours, which enhances creativity and precision in their work, while still preserving a link to traditional techniques.

Other areas highlighted by the artists are the usage of new mediums and materials, a development that has significantly impacted the creation of Islamic artworks globally. This shift allows artists to explore innovative avenues for expressing their ideas and engaging with their cultural and religious heritage in fresh and meaningful ways.

The production of various new mediums and materials has broadened the horizons for contemporary artists providing them with more opportunities to explore and experiment in their work. Additionally, the incorporation of modern mediums and materials has become a common practice in the creation of contemporary Islamic art. In the context of Brunei, using a single art medium in an artwork is considered traditional. However, the adoption of mixed media art is now regarded as a hallmark of a contemporary artistic approach, transcending various art forms, including painting, design, and installation works. However, one key consideration when making artistic decisions, as emphasised by P3 during the interview, is how the work will be presented to the audience. This highlights the importance of the presentation aspect in conveying the intended message and impact of the artwork in the contemporary art scene in Brunei.

Islamic Presence

The third concept regarding contemporary Islamic art, as seen through the eyes of the Bruneian Muslim artists is they emphasise the importance of Islamic principles throughout the artistic process. It goes beyond the physical appearance of the artwork and encompasses the spiritual and ethical dimensions that guide its creation. These aspects are a central focus of discussions with artists during interviews, highlighting the intrinsic connection between the art and the principles of Islam. *"Islamic art in a way is a sacred work, like serious work. It is a very special kind of work. I feel that I have to protect that secrecy as well."* (Interview with P3). This is one of the ways to capture the audience's attention and promote a more profound understanding of religion, culture, and the interpretations offered by artists through their works.

When artists address the physical aspects of their work, they emphasise the need for caution, particularly in how they depict subject matter and imagery. Their primary

concern is to make choices that avoid potential controversies that could reflect negatively on the Islamic religion, cultural beliefs, and themselves. Some of these artists are more concerned with the selection of images, subject matter, and titles of their work, rather than the creative techniques they employ. The aim is to create art that respects Islamic principles or cultural sensitivities while still expressing their creativity. *"The work is also a way of portraying Islam, so we need to always be careful not to make it look bad."* (Interview with P4).

Bruneian Muslim artists also agree that it is important to acquire some Islamic knowledge to produce Islamic artworks. However, this does not necessitate them becoming Islamic scholars, but it does entail having a fundamental grasp of essential aspects of the religion, such as the understanding of the Five Pillars of Islam and its core principles. For example, when asked about the significance of Islamic knowledge in creating Islamic art, all participants agreed. P4 further emphasised this by stating, *"We cannot do something that we do not know about; that would be ignorant."*

The concept of spirituality in Islamic art remains relevant, not only among Bruneian Muslim artists but also within the broader Islamic art tradition. Islamic art reflects a deep connection between artistic expression and understanding of religious values. This deeper understanding of Islamic spirituality helps explain why scholars, particularly Muslims (Michon, 1985; Nasr, 2006; Khawaja, 2011; Daud, Zain, and Amin, 2014), have placed significant emphasis on its importance in explaining Islamic art.

Some of the things discussed by the participants include the deeper aspects towards intention, resolving good deeds, mediation and devotion. It is always the question about the purpose of creating works of Islamic art in the first place. It is a spiritual journey for the artists, a form of meditation to get closer to Allah and please Him by doing good deeds, hoping to get rewards in life and hereafter, especially towards mature age. P5 for example stated, *"I mean, it is natural, once you grow older, you try to get closer to the religion, closer to Allah, and do good deeds as much as possible."*

Ethical considerations were also mentioned to play a significant role in the realm of Islamic art, particularly concerning the creation process. While this aspect is intertwined with the concept of spirituality, it predominantly focuses on how artists produce their work, especially when dealing with sacred and religious themes. For example, when artists work with Quranic verses, they must engage in extensive research. This involves making thoughtful choices regarding the words or text used, ensuring the utmost accuracy in their representation, and employing appropriate imagery if needed. All these processes are essential to demonstrate profound respect for the sacred words they are working with. Moreover, some participants also mentioned the idea of 'purifying' themselves before working with Quranic texts, including performing the act of ablution, praying and supplication. With that, they hoped to get blessings from Allah in whatever they engaged.

Recognised Islamic Images

The last point in defining the concept of contemporary Islamic art from the perspective of Bruneian Muslim artists is through recognised Islamic images. When the participants were asked about specific imagery that they considered 'Islamic,' these artists highlighted four predominant images: Islamic calligraphy, depictions of

mosques, intricate geometrical patterns, and vegetal patterns such as arabesques. P7, for example, stated, "Yes, of course, the mosque is very obvious. Then there's Islamic calligraphy and patterns – I use them quite a lot." Similarly, P8 also mentioned several recognised Islamic images which are obvious, but emphasised that they are not limited to only these: "Some obvious ones are like calligraphy, mosques, and also geometry and floral patterns like we see on mosque walls. But not only these, yeah. It can also be non-representational like abstract, but it carries Islamic ideas."

It is interesting to note that when these participants share their perspectives, they consistently centre their discussions around their roles as Bruneian Muslim artists and their strong connection to their cultural identity. For example, when explaining Islamic calligraphy, these artists attribute the significance of such art to its roots in the Malay world, which they have embraced as their own, known as *Jawi* which is adopted from the Arabic culture. *Jawi* writing holds deep significance in the Brunei Malay community where it holds high cultural value reflecting the rich interplay of culture, religion, and art through Islamic calligraphy. Additionally, Bruneian artists commonly include representations of mosques in their works because of their iconic status, symbolising not only Brunei but also the nation's identity as a Muslim country.

Geometrical and vegetal patterns were also mentioned by the participants as some of the recognised images that carry Islamic elements. Bruneian Muslim artists shared a common understanding of the reasons behind the use of these patterns in their art. They stated that Islamic prohibitions against figurative and representational art have encouraged many artisans from the past to channel their creativity into "neutral" forms of art as a precautionary measure. Some local artists also emphasise that these patterns are an integral part of Brunei's cultural identity. These patterns can be found in various aspects of Brunei's heritage, such as Brunei's woven textiles, known as *Kain Tenunan Brunei*. Many, if not all, of the designs within this cultural material, draw inspiration from nature, particularly the diverse flora native to Brunei, and are simplified and abstracted, often incorporating geometric elements.

CONCLUSION

Contemporary Islamic art is a diverse and evolving genre that reflects the intersection of modern artistic expression with Islamic religious and cultural themes. It encompasses a range of interpretations and definitions. Overall, contemporary Islamic art is a dynamic field that defies a single definition, encompassing a wide spectrum of styles, themes, and cultural influences, while continually evolving to reflect the changing dynamics of the Islamic world and the broader art world. This study outlines four pivotal elements characterising how Bruneian Muslim artists define the concept of contemporary Islamic art. These include the idea of a time frame, encompassing practical approaches in artistic production, the imbued presence of Islamic principles, and the deliberately recognised Islamic imagery. Notably, the participants often explain the term by making a connection with their own cultural identity. In certain cases, the intricate aspects of Islamic art that involve spiritual and ethical elements may not be fully comprehended simply through visual observation. To gain a deeper appreciation of these underlying meanings, it is advantageous to engage in a dialogue with the artist or delve into their thoughts and intentions. This

consequently illustrates the importance of artists' involvement in gathering insights into the contemporary Islamic art field.

RECOMMENDATION

Other potential future research opportunities are to focus more on the younger generation who are bombarded with various cultural dialogues, knowledge, skills and much recently technology. It will be interesting to look at how they deal with their religious identity through their artworks. Moreover, with the evolving trends, the prospect for future studies can also be extended to the practical application of digital art in producing Islamic art. Today, artists, especially a much younger generation are exposed to many forms of digital art equipped with Artificial Intelligence (AI) in producing their artworks. It will be interesting to see how they make use of AI technology to generate ideas that according to them suit the notion of contemporary Islamic art.

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