

# National Identity in Connecting the Community through Mural Art for Petronas Dagangangan Berhad

N. Mohamad, W. Samiati Andriana Wan Mohd Daud, M. Suhaimi Tohid, M. Fazli Othman, M. Rizal Salleh

**Abstract**—This is a collaborative project of the mural art between The Department of Fine Art from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) and Petronas Dagangan Berhad (PDB), the most leading retailer and marketer of downstream oil and gas products in Malaysia. Five different states have been identified in showcasing the National Identity of Malaysia at each Petronas gas station; the Air Keroh in Melaka, Pasir Pekan in Kelantan, Pontian in Johor, Simpang Pulai in Perak and also Wakaf Bharu in Terengganu. This project is to analyze the element of national identity that has been demonstrated at the Petronas's Mural. The ultimate aim of the mural is to let the community and local people to be aware about what Malaysians are consists and proud of and how everyone is able to connect with the idea through art. The method that is being explained in this research is by using visual data through research and also self-experience in collecting the visual data in identifying what images are considered as the national identity and idea development and visual analysis is being transferred based upon the visual data collection. In this stage elements and principle of design will be the key in highlighting what is necessary in a work of art. In conclusion, image of the National Identity of Malaysia is able to connect to the audience from local and also to the people from outside the country to learn and understand the beauty and diversity of Malaysia as a unique country with art, through the wall of five Petronas gas stations.

**Keywords**—Mural art, fine art, national identity, community.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**C**OLLABORATIVE project of the art mural between Fine Art Department under the Faculty of Art & Design and PDB has took place in September 2018 until April 2019. PDB was incorporated in Malaysia under the Companies Act 1965 on 5 August 1982. It is also a fundamental marketing department of Petrolia Nasional Berhad (Petronas) and is being listed on the Main Board of Bursa Malaysia on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1994. PDB is a well-established organization, and Malaysia's renown oil and gas giant [1]. This project consists of 14 different locations within Petronas gas station all around the Malaysian Peninsular involving 7 different state including Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Perak, Kedah, Johor, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Terengganu and Kelantan. The task that was given to us was to identify local identity, culture and tradition that could represent each location within the state. The murals are a reflection of Malaysian identity and culture, the form of images that have been used to represent each place such as tradition, Malaysian delicacies, food, heritage building, traditional textiles, iconic places in Malaysia are put together in a mural design for each Petronas gas station that has been identified by PDB. This is one of the prestigious projects for

Nadiah Mohamad is with Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia (e-mail: missnadiahz@live.com).

UiTM to contribute our expertise not just for the local people around that area but also to introduce the best of Malaysia to the world through visual art.

PDB sees the importance of mural art as a trend in Malaysia that could relate to the younger generations in this country thus took the opportunity to highlight Malaysia and its identity with visual images that is best to represent Malaysia as a whole with visual art through their gas station wall and through this the younger generation are able to promote and highlight their brand through social media and networks. Another important key to the project is that the students of the Fine Art Department in UiTM, Shah Alam are able to have a real life project experience with the industry from designing the mural to putting it in the real actual wall. Last but not least, here we can say that the murals are able to connect with the local people and also for tourist through Mural Art for the public.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Identity

"Identity" is the inclusion of all of the values, culture, language, beliefs and universal views of one person. Manifestation of the inclusion of values that makes the character and personality of the next person who transmitted the character and nature of the private thinking, and self-appearance represents the tradition of race and racial identity [2].

### B. National Identity

National Identity is one of the many social identities available for people who are living in multiracial countries such as Malaysia [3]. Social identities come from the many universal groupings such as gender, social class and religion as well from the more idiosyncratic ethnic grouping that can be found in Southeast Asian countries. Against this background of diverse social categories, national identity has a central role in promoting peaceful ethnic relations. A clear sense of national identity serves as a unifying force to impart a sense of belonging as well as commitment towards cooperation and national development [4].

### C. Mural

A mural is any piece of artwork painted or applied directly on wall, ceiling or other large permanent surface, both within the confines of building interiors or exterior spaces. Scholarly debates uphold the notion of murals as aesthetically and functionally valuable to society [5].

### III. METHODOLOGY

In this research, the first part is to identify the meaning of national identity of Malaysia, what kind of images represent our local identity. We had to study our local identity of five different locations: Air Keroh, Melaka, Kuala Kedah, Kedah, Pasir Pekan, Kelantan, Pontian, Johor and Simpang Pulai, Perak. Information from website, leaflet, posters, news and articles from the tourism sector from each state is also considered part of the research in identifying the best design for the designated location. The artist would also add his or her own knowledge and experience in designing the mural to represent each state at its best.

The second part of this research will be in the Idea development on the visual analysis which involved in the understanding the elements and principle of design. Composition will be another key factor in highlighting what is needed to be highlighted in each station or mural.

### IV. IDEA DEVELOPMENT

When this project was given to the department of Fine Art, UiTM, few things had to be put into consideration into identifying the images, subjects that can relate to the area and state, so that everyone can be connected to the idea and the art. The first gas station that is going to be discussed is the Air Keroh gas station in Melaka.

As Malaysians we are all aware of what Melaka has got to offer to the local people and also the tourists and foreigners into this state. This state has got so much to offer in many ways including the heritage buildings, houses, the local cuisine, culture, 'baba nyonya' or 'peranakan' customs. Hence, when planning for Air Keroh in Melaka's Petronas gas station, we had few images and idea to put into consideration. Images such as the popular staircases in traditional houses in Melaka, *Beca* which is the trishaw and *Kereta Lembu* which is known as bullock cart is being highlighted to portray the beauty of Melaka. These were few of the idea developments that we had considered in designing for this Air Keroh in Melaka Petronas gas station. Examples in Figs. 1-3 are some of the suggestions of idea and design of the Air Keroh in Melaka's gas station.



Fig. 1 Idea development using the popular traditional staircase images for Petronas Gas Station in Air Keroh, Melaka



Fig. 2 Idea development using the popular trishaw in Melaka for Petronas Gas Station in Air Keroh, Melaka



Fig. 3 Idea development using popular images in Melaka such as the bullock cart for Petronas Gas Station in Air Keroh, Melaka

Food has long been one of the most important markers of regional and ethnic identity, along with religion, language folklore, and other distinguishing elements of culture. From a heritage perspective, cuisines are a mix of tangible (e.g., ingredients and cooking accoutrements) and intangibles (e.g., tastes, smells, recipes, and eating traditions) elements that contribute to the cultural values and characteristic of places [6].



Fig. 4 Idea development for Petronas Gas Station in Pontian, Johor



Fig. 5 Idea development for Petronas Gas Station in Johor



Fig. 6 Idea development for Petronas Gas Station in Johor

Figs. 4-6 show few of the idea development in designing for the mural in Pontian, Johor Petronas gas station. Few things were in the mind of our designers for the Pontian, Johor, Petronas gas station. Few images came into consideration into choosing what popular most in Johor, apart from the Sultan of Johor, would be the popular foods such as the Briyani Gam, Lontong, Kacang pool, Satay Johor and the local coffee. These few foods that are very popular are best to represent Johor as a state.



Fig. 7 Idea development for Petronas Gas Station in Terengganu

Next is the very beautiful state of Terengganu. The state's tourism has always featured the Songket industry compared with other states in Malaysia [7]. For that reason, the mural design for this is to highlight what Terengganu is well known in their state which is their textile such as Songket, Tenun and Batik. Other famous and well-known things in Terengganu are the beaches and island that is very popular among the tourist

that comes and visit Terengganu. Fig. 7 shows what life is like living by the beach in Terengganu, this is a typical site that visitors get to see when they are in Terengganu, this also shows one of Malaysian traditional games using nibong palm, or also known as 'tarik upih'. Figs. 8 and 9 highlight how and what Songket a Malaysian traditional fabric is made of.



Fig. 8 Artist impression of the development of idea for Petronas Station in Terengganu



Fig. 9 Idea development for Petronas Gas Station in Terengganu

The next station that we will be looked into is Kelantan Petronas gas station, another state in the east coast of Malaysia. Kelantan is a great and wonderful destination with beautiful, nice, interesting and unique attractions along with helpful, friendly and respectful people. These are few factors that could be taken into account as the major attractions in Kelantan. Obviously, Kelantan's community has their own culture value and ability to attract people to come to Kelantan. Kelantan is also known for its own Malay culture [8].

Kelantan is very popular with the beautiful traditional crafts that is 'Batik'. Malaysian Batik is a generic term referring to a process of decorating and dyeing fabric by making use of a wax resist technique [9]. However, there are two types of Batik: hand drawn and Batik Block. Without any doubt the Batik products in Malaysia are the most popular and well-known textile handicrafts and as a tourist this definitely is a souvenir for the loved ones. Indeed, batik has its own uniqueness that everyone would want to acquire them [10]. Hence, the Batik design is incorporated in the mural to

enhance the beauty of Batik in Kelantan. It is very popular for everyone in Malaysia and it is most being produced in Kelantan. Fig. 11 is one of the designs highlighting the Batik in Kelantan.

Popular with their traditional *Gasing* (spinning top) in Kelantan is usually played in Kelantan by the fisherman during their free time after coming back from the sea. In portraying this the designer tried to highlight this part of Kelantan through the design from Fig. 10.



Fig. 10 Idea development using *Gasing*, for Petronas Gas Station in Pasir Pekan in Kelantan



Fig. 11 Artist impression using Batik as an image for Petronas Gas Station in Pasir Pekan in Kelantan

Coined as the Land of Grace, Perak Darul Ridzuan, the second largest state in Peninsular Malaysia, Perak is very popular and well known for its natural tropical beauty and rich cultural history, all of these examples can be seen in Fig. 13. By looking back in the early years of the British colonial time, Perak was known for tin mining and rubber tree plantation, which we can still see today. Apart from that, Perak is well known for its rustic and old colonial buildings, in fact the heritage buildings has been used in a lot of the great films such as *Anna and the King* (1999), *Embung* and also *Leftenan Adnan*. This can be seen in Fig. 14; this is just to prove that the old heritage building is being preserved and well-kept to fit the lifestyle of today's generation. Perak is well known with the magnificent and beautiful caves that date back

thousands of years such as Gua Tempurung, the cave is very famous and popular among tourists. The natural rainforests in Perak are definitely for nature lovers to explore and adventure the beauty of our mother nature [12]. Based upon the Perak tourism, our artist had to work upon this idea and stamen of beautiful Perak.



Fig. 12 Idea development using heritage building for Petronas Gas Station in Simpang Pulai, Perak



Fig. 13 Idea development using natural tropical beauty for Petronas Gas Station in Simpang Pulai, Perak



Fig. 14 Idea development using old shop houses for Petronas Gas Station in Simpang Pulai, Peral

## V. FINDINGS

After going through many rejections of images and design for the mural design, PDB has chosen the final design for each location. Fig. 15 shows the trishaw and the old shop houses as

a subject matter and their identity of being Melaka. Today trishaw is just another tourist attraction in Melaka compared to the olden days, where trishaw is part of a public transport around Malaysia.



Fig. 15 Mural in Air Keroh, Melaka, Petronas Gas Station.

The final mural design for Pasir Pekan in Kelantan gas station from Fig. 16 is the image of their traditional Batik, the one that is highlighted in this gas station. The motif of the batik is decorated by the lady wearing it, this also shows the modesty of a woman especially in Kelantan, because Kelantan is among one of the states in the country where they uphold the religion highly.



Fig. 16 Mural in Pasir Pekan, Kelantan Petronas Gas Station



Fig. 17 Mural in Pontian, Johor, Petronas Gas Station

Among others in terms of design, Pontian, Johor Petronas gas station is one of few gas stations that many of the designs that have been proposed to PDB have been rejected, because they did not meet the expectation by PDB. However, the final mural design in Fig. 17 is one that PDB has approved. This

design tells a story of what Johor is popular with their local food such as Kacang Pongol, Nasi Biryani, Lontong, Satay and also the popular local coffee. This design definitely best represents Johor as a state.

Apart from just the old shop houses in Perak, we also would like to portray the idea of a Malaysians lifestyle, food stall and a man riding a bicycle is very common site around the city in Perak. Hence Fig. 18 shows heritage building in Perak and also their lifestyle.



Fig. 18 Mural in Simpang Pulai, Perak Petronas Gas Station

The final mural design that we would be discussing will be the Wakaf Bharu in Terengganu gas station. Terengganu is well known with their traditional fabric such as Songket, Batik and Tenun. Hence, in highlighting Terengganu, Songket would be considered as one of Terengganu's prestigious fabric with its uniqueness and exclusiveness of the gold and silver thread in Songket weaving. An example of this can be seen through Fig. 19. Songket is very exclusive and expensive handwoven fabric, in the olden days only aristocrat and royalty would use it, but today it is one of Malaysia's heritages and is being used by most Malaysians, and the price varies accordingly. This design and image definitely best represent Terengganu and their identity.



Fig. 19 Mural in Wakaf Bahru, Terengganu Petronas Gas Station

## VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, through this project, the mural arts of Petronas Gas stations are able to connect with the community

and everyone who sees them. The beauty of being Malaysian is being captured through these mural arts, and being defined through our diverse ethnic and culture. The idea is actually to inspire Malaysians towards the understanding of unity and harmony. Malaysia is full of colors towards the food, people, places and culture. Through the multi-racial people in this country who are living together harmoniously, this has made Malaysia strong and proud with our tradition and custom. And through this project we would like to portray all of that through our National Identity which is presented above. Through this project also we are able to highlight the key factor of art and community and how this two can be connected to one and another.

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**Nadiah Mohamad** Born in Batu Pahat, Johor, Malaysia on the 13th of July 1979. Has a passion towards art and ever since finishes high school has entered University of Technology MARA(UiTM) specializing in Fine Art. Graduated with Bachelors Degree in Fine Art,2001 and BA (Hons) in Fine Art in 2002. With a two years experience as a designer in Malaysian Handicraft Development Cooperation from July 2002 to August 2004. Graduated in Master of Science (MSc), 2007 From Salford University, Manchester, United Kingdom in Design Management. Have been serving UiTM since February 2008 as a young lecturer and in 2016 have been promoted as a senior lecturer. Apart from that she is active in numerous exhibition local and International.