

From The Editor

The study of the performing and visual arts in Southeast Asia has mainly centred around the analyses of present day forms. Nevertheless, there has been a move towards historiography in the past two decades. Julianti Parani's article 'Intercultural Jakarta, Ambience of Betawi Theatre to Indonesian Theatre' exemplifies this trend. She illustrates how Betawi, Chinese, and Indo-European performing arts were constructed and represented during the colonial period and how these syncretic arts contributed to the development of theatre and national culture in intercultural Jakarta. Parani's findings are based on historical and colonial documents from the 18th and 19th centuries.

In his article 'Thoughts on the Aesthetics of Malay Artifacts', Zakaria Ali looks at how archeological artifacts such as pottery, megaliths, iron works, inscriptions or metalworks displayed in museums convey meaning, images of the past, Malay aesthetics, and the process of Islamization of the Archipelago. However, he cautions viewers of these artifacts to 'look for their own answers' as 'each craftsman has made his piece with love and knowledge'.

This issue also highlights the efforts of the staff and students of the School of Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia, at conserving traditional culture through ethnographic documentation, new artworks, as well as outreach programmes for teachers and school children. Toh Lai Chee's article on 'Alat Muzik dan Lagu dalam Muzik Mek Mulung' describes the musical instruments and musical pieces used in *Mek Mulung*, a theatre form which is only performed in Kedah. She correlates the structures of the musical pieces with the movements, characters, and activities in the prologue and story of the play.

Mohd Kipli shows that trance in the performance of *Kuda Kepang Mabuk* is a mystical journey which is related to the belief system of the Javanese who practise the form. The performance rituals, space, time, and actions are important media for transporting performers from the physical to the metaphysical world.

The two artworks and review of the *Heritage Heboh* festival illustrate how the staff and students are involved in revitalizing the multicultural heritage of Penang through their creative works and workshops. Moelyono's workshop on 'Lukisan sebagai Media Ekspresi, Naratif dan Analisis bagi Kanak-Kanak' and *Heritage Heboh* are also part of the School of Art's extension programmes in art education.

Finally, Helly Minarti's review of the Second Asia-Europe Dance Forum maps some 'sites of mis/understanding' between dancers of Asia and Europe. Although homogeneity seems to be occurring in our increasingly globalized world, cultural particularities persist in the making of contemporary dance as in other aspects of culture.

Tan Sooi Beng
Chief Editor