

p.92-95

Error page(s)



Lee Kian Seng

Of Image Object, Illusion Off Series Mechanism Error (3)
 1977
 Mixed media

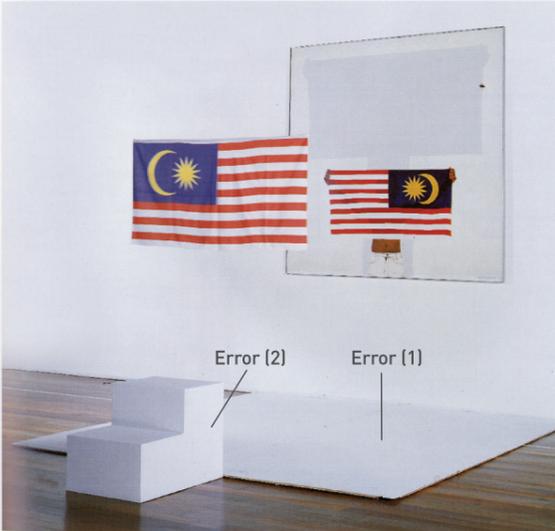
Comprising acrylic on canvas, flag/site installation, white podium, white plywood 8 x 6mm/ canvas on floor extended from the wall to the podium, lights set to cast shadow the flag on the floor canvas and in the space.

My choice is a 1977 installation work 'Image, Object, Illusion' – Off Series Mechanism by the multi-talented artist Lee Kian Seng

This installation comprises a painting on canvas, a site installation of the Malaysian flag fronting it, a white podium and a floor canvas extended from the wall. The juxtaposition of the two-dimensional painting and three-dimensional objects of flag and podium in a spatial relationship with lights set to cast shadows of the flag on the floor canvas, seem to me to create an interplay of positive and negative yin yang elements. Upon the painting itself which depicts a wall, is cast the shadow of the artist holding up the hanging Malaysian flag which is reflected reversed on the painting (image and illusion?). The unexpected appearance of the ubiquitous cockroach (an object?) making its way across the wall in the painting is, to my mind, a clever handling of a painting problem intended to heighten the three-dimensional effect of the work. At the same time by its mocking presence the cockroach is making a statement that it is a fact of life in Malaysia. No getting away from that! Dates which appear are of the years 1957- signifying Independent and Nationhood, 1967- the decade after, and 1977- the year of the work. And then, the ruler on top of the painting appears to be a symbol by which we measure the progress made during those years. This completes the picture.

Error (4a) The creative and theoretical processes are at work in the construction of this installation, where composition and painting technique are combined to challenge our perceptions and powers of comprehension. This installation also reminds us of our beginnings as a nation posing questions as to our future progress as a nation.

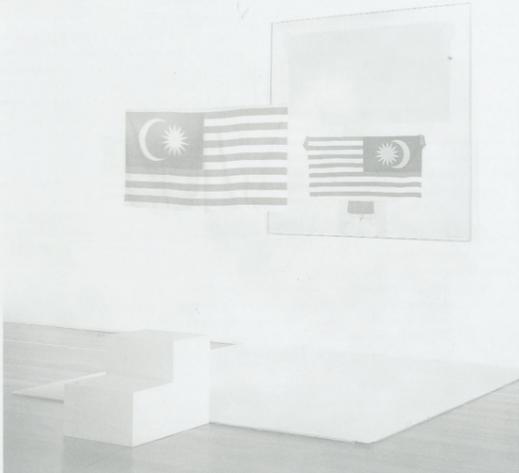
Error (4b) This work described as "Mixed Media" won the top award in an Open Art and Graphic Print Exhibition. To me – a neutral but interested observer of the art scene, it represents early tentative attempts by the artist to explore the limits and dimensions of painting on canvas which began in 1972 with his Windows of Red which won a major award, and Mankind 1973 – a minor award, followed in 1975 by Permainan Poker or Process of Playing Poker – a major award. Fortunately, three of these works are in the collection of the National Art Gallery. His successes bespeak the perspicacity of the National Art Gallery judges of that period to have recognised



In respect of the work of “Of ‘Image, Object, Illusion’ - Off Series Mechanism” in the book **45@45** (published by the National Art Gallery Malaysia in 2007), at pages 92, 93, 94 and 95 contained the inaccurate depiction/description of the work as follows:

Errata

1. The white podium depicted at pages 93 and 94 is inaccurate. The original white podium has three dimensions 12” x 20” x 24” (letter and video recording dated 19.02.2004 are referred;
2. The plywood on floor depicted at pages 93 and 94 is inaccurate in its dimensions. The original installation had a piece of painted white plywood area of 16’ x 8’ and 6mm thickness.
3. The description of the work below the title on page 92 (error 3) is inaccurate.
4. In an essay at pages 92 and 95, the following three paragraphs were not written by Dato’ P.G. Lim. Therefore, they ought to be deleted.
 - (a) “The creative and theoretical processes are at work in the construction of this installation, where composition and painting technique are combined to challenge our perceptions and powers of comprehension. This installation also reminds us of our beginnings as a nation posing questions as to our future progress as a nation.”
 - (b) “Installation artworks require space for display, and except for public institutions and museums, seldom find a place in private galleries or in private homes. For an artist to have kept up to a sustained effort in developing an art form that does not find ready buyers must mean commitment and dedication of a high order to the exclusion of everything else. Thirty years on such works proliferate with material diverse and complex, and sometimes presented in ways which are inelegant and ugly. One is reminded of some of the works exhibited in the Royal Academy’s hyped up show in 2000 entitled Apocalypse Beauty and Horror in Contemporary Art.”
 - (c) “And that in a nutshell is what his work was all about.”



creativity and new directions in art development towards three – dimensional works, for in the seventies, works such as these defied categorization in the art world. In Malaysia they were variously described as mixed media or multi-media or simply 'campuran'. Internationally, installation art did not acquire its name as such until the 1980's.

Error (4b) Installation artworks require space for display, and except for public institutions and museums, seldom find a place in private galleries or in private homes. For an artist to have kept up a sustained effort in developing an art form that does not find ready buyers must mean commitment and dedication of a high order to the exclusion of everything else. Thirty years on such works proliferate with materials diverse and complex, and sometimes presented in ways which are inelegant and ugly. One is reminded of some of the works exhibited in the Royal Academy’s hyped up show in 2000 entitled Apocalypse Beauty and horror in Contemporary Art.

Pioneering works such as those of Lee Kian Seng are of historical importance. We can take a little pride to discover that our own young artists of the seventies were already involved in creating, on their own, three-dimensional works which did not fall into the category of painting or sculpture. Lee Kian Seng has said that he did not know how to categorise his pieces. “I only knew I wanted create something new”. And that in a nutshell is what his work was all about.

Error (4c)

Interpreted by
 DATO’ P.G. LIM
 Lawyer, Art Patron