

FROM THE EDITOR

WACANA SENI provides a forum for the exchange of various discourses and issues about the arts in Malaysia and other parts of Asia that concern local and international academics. In this inaugural issue, four of the articles pertain to the development of the arts in Malaysia and Indonesia. Zakaria Ali's "Renungan Ke Atas Catan Landskap" traces the history, stylistic changes, and functions of landscape painting in Malaysia from the colonial era till today. In his study "Pengajaran Pendidikan Seni Visual Sekolah Menengah", Mat Desa Mat Rodzi discusses the importance and relevance of art education in the development of the child's cognition, cultural values and health. Janet Pillai's article "We Need a Past to Create the Present" shows how theatre for young people in Malaysia has in the past decades experimented with and combined traditional elements with new modes of musical and visual expression. In her essay, "Debates and Impressions of Change and Continuity in Indonesia's Musical Arts since the Fall of Suharto, 1998-2000", Margaret Kartomi locates the changes and continuities in the Indonesian musical scene since 1998 within the context of reformation (*reformasi*) policies.

Another set of articles deal specifically with local responses in the arts to globalization and the interaction between the local and the global. Johan Othman highlights the paths and directions taken by musicians to create their own cultural identity in post-colonial Malaysia in his manuscript entitled "Cultural Decentralization Within a Post-Colonial Territory". He puts forth suggestions as to how a dialogue between the local and the global can be carried out. R. Anderson Sutton shows that television and VCD producers in Indonesia are increasingly "juxtaposing traditional instruments and players with those of western-influenced pop" in the article "Popularizing the Indigenous or Indigenizing the Popular? Television, Video, and Fusion Music in Indonesia". He questions "to what extent western-style pop Indonesia is being indigenized or indigenous music and musical elements being popularized?" Baharudin Arus looks at how mask (*topeng*) plays important roles in the everyday lives, rituals, performing and visual arts of people in various parts of the globe including Malaysia in "Seni Topeng sebagai Manifestasi Seni yang Unggul".

Detailed ethnographic writing remains important in the study of the arts. Jamaludin Osman finds out how an apprentice of Wayang Kulit Kelantan learns to be a puppeteer (*dalang*): the different rules he has to abide by during apprenticeship, his relationship with his teacher, and the different levels of learning that he has to go through in order to become a *dalang*.

Besides academic articles, we also encourage reviews of conferences, performances, compact discs, exhibitions, art works, and books about the arts in Asia. We hope that this will promote networking and exchange between academics and practitioners from various countries who share similar interests in research, performance, or art. This issue carries a review of a recent Bangsawan performance at USM as well as a compact disc of new Gamelan compositions in Malaysia. Both art works reviewed have contributed to the search for new directions in the performing arts in Malaysia.

Finally, we would like to thank our panel of local and international advisors for their support and encouragement so that WACANA SENI has become a reality. Some of them served as anonymous referees for the articles in this issue. We benefited from their critical comments.

Tan Sooi Beng
Chief Editor