

# Interactive Art as a Medium of Speech

Adam Bin Mohd Salehuddin

Faculty of Design and Architecture, Universiti Putra  
Malaysia, Serdang, Malaysia  
adamsalehuddin@hotmail.com

Mohd Nasir Baharuddin

Faculty of Design and Architecture, Universiti Putra  
Malaysia, Serdang, Malaysia  
ibnuqalam@gmail.com

**Abstract** Interactive art is born from the idea of brainstorming through the new media artworks. It started with the transformation of computer art in Malaysia during the 90s through the first Electronic Art exhibition and have opened a new shift in the Malaysia art scene specifically in the use of integration understanding and multidiscipline approaches. However, the complexity towards Interactive Art has not been highlighted widely as a continuation stream of modern art in Malaysia due to the vagueness in its definition and function. Therefore, there's a need of discussion due to the vagueness in creating interactive arts from the angle of approach in which this article is trying to tackle by discussing the structure of semiotic approach as a process dialog in the medium of speech for interactive art. This article in particular will explain the framework in creating dialogs between interactive artworks and audience that has to face a few responding technics by processing the relations of the mind into physical relations. As a conclusion, this article is suggesting a new platform in establishing a process dialog between audience and artworks that are based on interactive art. It is step in uplifting the interaction between audience and artworks systematically.

**Keywords:** *Interactive Art, Communication Mode, Signs System*

## INTRODUCTION

After the occurrence of changes the stream of media, the presence of Interactive Art is a cultural shift that creates diversity in the mediums of communication. Everything that is associated with this media starts from the collective term of communication that later forms the environment and continuously facilitates the development of broad and dynamic communication. Hence, it is closely related to cultural shifts that facilitate all human relations between human beings, which are mediated through the works of art. Whether it is an effect or a change, it still carries the impact that moves the human social history. In addition, it has utopian powers and positive charges against modern, global conceptual ideologies and more accurately, beyond boundaries.

Interactive artworks are closely related to mediums in producing artworks. This digital technology advancement is capable of transforming a paradigm in making artworks. Interactive is a combination of clear and flexible digital processes and representations. The development science and technology led to an idea that exploration of this media is a way to face the world of globalization.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Artwork is a reference to everything that the artist produces. Whether it is drawings, paintings, installations, sculptures, writings or presentations. However, according to Parks (2015), visual arts are unique as they (artists) form a relationship where crafts, technology, philosophy and imagination come together to do something good. Interactive means the act of interacting with one another. It enables continuous two-way information linkage between computers and its users or between the users through the computers. A dialogue has been created between machine and human.

Interactive Art has various definitions to be observed

as a medium of speech. The term Interactive Art serves as a designation for a more specific category for every artwork that is supported by computer technology where there is an interaction between computer systems and audiences. They all involve the use of digital; digitalize outcomes as well as installations that create a visualization involving digital.

According to Wang (2014), today's artistic aesthetic experience will emerge from the presence of interactive elements, the concept of technology, virtual and audience engagement. The emergence of these elements is brought by the psychological mechanisms through technical support, communication effects and memory identity. This experience is a plural system in shaping the process of interactivity and also the virtual environment. This means it is a composition of new media art. As Walter Benjamin has described in the book "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," he has insisted that new media artistic features are replicability, popularity, technicality and interactivity.

The broad interaction attracts all possibilities of the meaning contained in a work of art. As such, the presence of this interactive art is able to give a shift from an active thought to the presence of a few audiences when viewing or living in a work of art. Furthermore, according to Steinert & Snell, (1999), this interactive description is a two-way response between presenter and audiences capable of satisfying both. It is also an extension of a clear discussion. The audience functions as an activator or observer in building meaningful relationships in an artwork.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

With reference to Interactive Arts in Malaysia, the involvement of artists in celebrating the technological era as a medium in producing artworks is seen as a solid foundation in responding to the environment. However,

the ability to understand the meaning of the relationship within the interactive artwork is unclear and less effective. Therefore, this study was conducted as a step to understand interactive artwork as a medium of speech through object or physical activities. The relationship between Interactive artworks and audience plays an important role in meaning making and clarifying the aesthetic values.

**1. Methodology : Triadic Model Is Use As A Mode Of Communication In Interpreting Interactive Artworks.**

It begins with an emphasis on the understanding of Interactive Art, where the researcher classifies Interactive Art as a display or representation of an idea or an idea alone. However, its primary focus is on the relationship that exists between the Audience and the Artwork. "Interactive" in this context is a clear concept of communication.

The key to understanding above is the presence of interactive technology into art that is referred to as the "Language". The language we see is a communication mechanism that does not stand just the communication of material ideas. However, it acts as a tool that builds an awareness barrier that everything should be peeled and given a deeper and priceless shift. Art is one language that can be deciphered narratively. Referring to Roy Ascot's writing in Art, Technology, Consciousness, (2000). He states that,

*Art is of course language, and as such can be form of world building, of mind construction, of self-creation, whether through digital programming, genetic code, articulation of the body, imaging, simulation, or visual construction."*

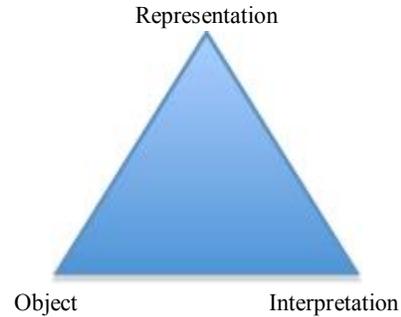
From this statement, the researcher notes that in every movement of the art stream, it refers to various ways and re-views on how the artistic idea is presented to be an understanding that reflects the artistic ideology more clearly. Therefore, the awareness of the development of art that enters this technological environment should be placed on the conscious mind of a clear idea in forming an understanding not to deviate from the cultural idea, though it is only as an experimental language.

Furthermore, in understanding these modes of communication, researchers refer to an observation of relationships in the semiotic approach. Charles Sanders Peirce highlights the concept of this relationship. Through the theory of Charles Sanders Peirce, he laid the concept of semiotic with the use of the main elements of the Triadic Model consisting of representations, objects and interpretations. Representation is something that the observer refers surrounding the sign. Object is referred to as a reference to the sign that is referred to function as a switch in building interactions. Whereas interpretation is the concept of thinking that casts views, ideas and forms meaning and is translated by observers. This process of Charles Sanders Peirce's theory, he described the elements in the sign system, the Triadic Model as below:

- Representation = Form that takes the position of the sign. It

is not necessarily the material, usually depends on the interpretative sense.

- Object = Refers to something that exceeds the sign context.
- Interpretation = Not only as a translator, but also as an interpretation in seeing signs.



**Diagram 1.** Adaptation of Relationship between Sign Elements.

The interpretation of these three criteria shall be in each artwork and interconnected between the conveyor of the sign (Artist) and the recipient of the sign (Observer). It is also referred to as the Zaimar semiotic process, (2008:4). Therefore, this relationship model is important in understanding interactive artworks. Danial Chandler also notes that this semiotic study is a study of signs and anything that can be assumed against signs. It is not only what's spoken, but also include anything that represents everything. From this statement, the researcher stated that whatever is seen, felt represented is a central sign. The study of this sign refers to how the meaning is created and how a reality is presented. It also refers to text or media. From this point, the researcher states that certain subjects and themes in balancing the interpretation of the observer form the representation of certain social relations, the language. This concept is applied to each other's main position. This position is analyzed through previous references in giving a regular explanation. The researcher has placed the position in order to facilitate the understanding process in the discussion chapter. The positions are:

Table 1. The Classification Concept Used in The Research.

<b>Triadic Model of Semiotic</b>	<b>Relationship Position in Interactive Artworks</b>
Representation/Sign	Artwork
Object	Audience/Observer
Interpretation	Meaning created through Observation and Activation

**2. Discussion : From A Generation Culture To An Interaction Leading To Interpretation.**

As a result of the analysis through this semiotic approach, the researcher discusses in the discussion chapter the position of the relationship resulting from this interactive artwork is a structured process in understanding the artwork. Moreover, with the presence of this interactive meaning, various media and ideologies

are present as an idea that impacts the acceptance of universal humanity on the socio-culture in Malaysia. The relationship between artwork and audience is an ideological relationship that needs to be deciphered and understood through the sign systems. As a need of today's sociocultural, the public's obsession towards this technology has been translated into the contents of a work of art.

Triadic model by Charles Sander Peirce is applied to untangle the work of Please Wake Up, 2013. Referring to this artwork, the researcher described it as a work of art that gives out a literal comment in order to understand. This work is an interactive artwork that is dynamically interactive involving observers to activate the work. The analysis is carried out with reference to the relationships characterized by the visual language as well as the content of the icons displayed by the author. This icon serves as a major sign in support of the message contained in the artwork. This artwork is a work that features one of today's societal cultures known as the "ZZZ Generation". Its own creator represents the so-called "ZZZ Generation". Referring to Roland Barthes (1972), he stated that semiotic method is a method to look at a cultural context through sign system and assumptions that reflects a particular society within a certain time.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

Figure 1, 2 & 3 : Please Wake Up, 2013 Artwork by Sufri Jay, Representation at the National Visual Arts Gallery, Malaysia

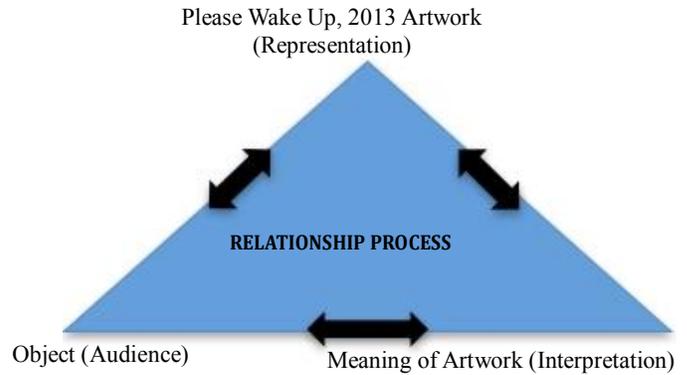


Figure 2. Application of Triadic Model against the Concept and Relationship Position

Firstly is Representation. The thing to be identified in the Representation of this work is how it opens an active behavior through that relationship. The position for this Firstness is called a Static Representation. It has not change any form of work yet; it is capable of attracting audiences who are already questioning. In this situation, the researcher portrays that the icon presented by the author is something called as "autonomous signifying system". He stands as an intermediary that has been marked by a society culture. This is because, the author performs an act of what he has experienced as a translation of the artwork.

Secondly objects that are represented by the audience. The presence of the audience is to tap the pedestal's surface in front of the monitor to activate the two character icons on the sleeping-screen display. The characters are acting by their own authors. The acts are divided into two, firstly the icon will wake up in anger and secondly the icons wake up and get busy doing work. Both acts react after audience interaction occurs by way of tapping the pedestal.

Thirdly, creating interpretations depending on the audience understanding of the work. Even though it is subjective in nature, it can be decipher in a more structured manner. It can be seen when the audience translates the interpretation and responses. The existence of the vulnerability that occurs in the context of today's society is at an alarming level and clearly they are potentially weak in learning interpersonal skills. According to what is described in today's world manifesto; in order to pursue the challenges of globalization, the present-day generations' thinking must be shaped with positivity throughout the continuously competitive pathway.

The situation described by the author is his response to a generation that has a high intensity towards the development of identity and the society. They need to be more involved in activities to form a more critical and innovative thinking including more social interactions. At the same time, the researcher is able to state that this is a wake up call in cultural changes as an effective way of building methods, techniques, and learning processes. If

changes and prevention are not carried out, this generation will drift far away from alertness.

Furthermore, from the cultural space presented in this artwork, the author has described some of the relations of life in this generation society as a trait that must be addressed. Going beyond the rapidly changing aspects of globalization, these works of art have given a response to the social world in Malaysia communicating views that are sometimes critical.

The process of interpreting a work depends on the ability of the audience to understand. It does not lead to something that is hard and heavy. However, it is likely to be able to slip away from the real context if the artist's illustrated ideology is vague. Objects can sometimes not be able to initiate an interpretation when compared to a physical interaction that results in an experience. Therefore, the semiotic approach in this interactive art is capable of crafting a scientific form that leads to the interpretation through symbols leading to the mind and formulating the process of actions.

Hence, it is understandable that from this process it is able to enhance communication in interactive artworks. Walmsley, (2015), stated that something underlying this digital system could democratize the exchange of information more critically, reflects criticism, and positively able to shift the perceptions of previous ambiguous art forms. Thus, as tested by the researcher interactive digital artwork is a simulation of the reality. It's a step to repeat, build and interpret by audiences to be use towards awareness.

### **3. Result of Analysis**

As mentioned above, the researcher found that in order to increase the engagement of observers in this interactive artwork, more intellectual elements must be added. These intellectual elements should be addressed with answers that reflects the technological capabilities of interest and balanced by the objects experienced culturally clear and orderly by society. For example, if you want to enhance the capabilities of this interactive art, the creator should look at the sociocultural environment of that particular place in order to steal the attention of the audience making them more interested in finding out more about the artwork. This is because the observer is more active today. Referring to Roland Barthes, he stated that the function of the semiotic method of study was as a way of looking at something in the context of modern culture. This should be evident in addressing the ever-expanding era of globalization that art enthusiasts must engage in to attract the audience so that the artwork can be responded by observers as opposed to being hung dead and stiff to the wall.

### **CONCLUSION**

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This semiotic approach featured by Charles Sanders Peirce is a process of understanding artworks more structured. In the course of focusing on the activities of the interaction, audiences are able to understand the communication processes in order to achieve it, it should be seen using clear rules. The relationships between artworks (Sign) and audiences (Objects) will build the thinking or interpretation (Interpretation). From these processes, the researcher described that this interaction system is a system capable of altering audience perceptions of works of art. Quoting Ahmadi's statement, (2005), he notes that symbolic interaction focuses on interpretation beyond the subjective meanings of which it is born out of human interaction with environmental responses.

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