



# Appreciating Artistic Expression of a Malaysian Artist Awang Damit Ahmad and The Peruvian Artist Fernando De Szyszlo

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**Abstract:** Under the study of the origins and development of the Abstract Expressionism movement, this article would show the comparative analysis of the creative process of the pictorial work of the South East Asian, Malaysian artist Awang Damit Ahmad and the South American, Peruvian artist Fernando de Szyszlo Valdelomar. The visual development of each artist is the subject of artistic expression which is intrinsic to them. In this parallel practice of both artists the study of the visual language and expressive elements are identified. This shows in one hand that through their symbolic language they create life, death, and love and on another it also shows an intimate sense of the personal struggle of Awang Damit Ahmad as it is expressed throughout his artworks; and Fernando de Szyszlo, expressing his mythical language of the pre-Columbian images that he built to form a coherent metaphor. Finally, this paper also evaluated the intercultural references that are part of the visual artistic expression and language of both artists, their artistic practices that produces a pictorial and a cultural proposal.

**Index Terms - Abstract expressionism, New York School, Pre-Columbian cultures, Awang Damit Ahmad, Fernando de Szyszlo Valdelomar**

## I. INTRODUCTION

During the last 100 years the history of arts has shown a great range of visual artist's depiction on two-dimensional and the three-dimensional visual field. Malaysia located in the South East Asian region has not been an exception neither has other parts of the world as such the South American Andean region, where Peru is located their artists are well-known for their skills and themes as well as the usage of a large range of mediums, techniques, materials, color palette, unique and distinctive visual compositions. Latin American and South East Asian means of art expression have co-existed long before any colonial influence and they had maintained some integrity in their use of symbol and graphical convention, as well as possessing their own iconology and aesthetic language. Since their independence from foreign rules South East Asia and Latin American countries have committed to developing their self-identity, own visual expression through the arts. This is showcasing their unique cultural identities and to be independent and differentiated from their previous colonial influence. This has had effects in the contemporary cultural manifestation of each nation. It has offers them expression within a globalized art world market. Different themes and subjects of painting have always been manifested despite the different art schools or modalities. Western and Eastern have develop own philosophical school of art as well, however, Nisbett 2004, expressed that people from Asian or Western countries actually think about and even see the world differently, because the ecologies, social structures, philosophies and educational systems [1]. In another hand, Armin Hofmann, expresses that picture have a universal significance because they underlying abstract forces that appeal to the immediate and natural faculty of perception rather than a cultural convention; the responses they evoke are sensual and emotional rather than intellectual [2]. The paper conducts a visual analysis of the artistic expression through painting of two prominent artists: first, a Malaysian artist, Awang Damit Ahmad, whom is compare with the second, a Peruvian Artist, Fernando de Szyszlo Valdelomar.

Peruvian painter Szyszlo's crossed over the threshold of mystery that his painting often suggests, his work bring together lessons of abstraction that eschewed earthly forms, the collected elements from the pre-Columbian cultures and an abstract motif that he creates, under this manifestation he builds own personal pictorial modern language which is very particular and unique that could never measure up to what he envisioned. As he put it "Painting is a murder of a dream". In his work the predominate forms are like geometric of figures, pre-Columbian geoglyphs etched into the desert sands, a landscapes full of abstract animal and other characters that look like totems carved in the wood or stone reminding us the characters of the Nazca society, a civilization that flourished between c. 100BCE and c.AD 700, spread over a wider region of costal valleys with an extraordinary irrigation systems of rivers that never reached the Pacific Ocean, it has been estimated that the Nazca drainage could have been capable of supporting the life of 15,000-22,000 people in scattered settlements; Paracas, an Andean society that existed between c. 800BCE and c. 100BCE, with an extensive knowledge of water management that made significant contribution in the mantles and high quality textiles, many mummified human remain were found in tombs buried under layers of cloth which was part of the ceremonial practice [3] and those of the Chavín de Huantar; another pre-Columbian civilization that flourish in the northern Andean region of Peru, between c. 900BCE and c. 200BCE, a culture characterized the intensification of religious cults, ceramics closely related their ceremonial centers and the

development of metallurgy and textiles which took thousands of years of evolution from the small farming villages to cities with large population and sophisticated political, economic and religion organization [3].

Awang Damit cultural symbolism explores the childhood inner experiences and the emotions of the places where he growth up remaining him of the younger days living in the fishing village by the costal shore of Sabah, raised by his fisherman father and house wife mother [4].

In each artist works predominates the strong composition, large size canvas formats, limited range of colors and tonal values, all this is depicted on a surface which is both, physically rich and visual textured like interwoven fibers translated to the canvas surface. This physical spirituality of calmness or struggle, portraits a man of vision, creativity and their final dreams. This investigation aims to establish the interconnectedness of the visual none-verbal analysis of the artistic expression by two artists, such as Awang Damit Ahmad, (Malaysian) as well as Fernando De Szyszlo Valdelomar, (Peruvian). Their works will be analyses within its cultural conventions. Although both artists were born with many years apart each other, there are a number of visual elements with similarities which are worth to comment and highlight as well as establishing a link between the conceptualized notions within the work of both artist; this paper will focus and illustrates specific points such as the role played by the shapes, forms, texture, colors, compositional arrangements as an expressive medium, the sense of planning and painting manners specifically from the artist's perspective as a brief description of the method of expression within their plastic work.

The goal of this paper is visually identified, examining, and compare the creative artistic expression, the development of these two well know contemporary artists from two different part of the world, one artist from the South East Asia (Malaysia) and another from South America (Peru). This paper will define expressions through multiple reflections indispensable to materialize both artist contribution to the development of the arts within their social context. In this way, each artist captures in his art works development the perception of own life through the filter of its interiority. Under this internal personal appearance of being human, the artistic expression "works" is presented for consideration.

This study used the empirical observational method and comparative analysis of the aesthetic proposal, where the primary focus is given to the artworks develop by the Malaysian artist Awang Damit Ahmad and the Peruvian artist Fernando de Szyszlo Valdelomar; the framework for demonstrating intercultural references as aesthetic experience and artistic language. The formalistic critical method is used in relation the analysis of the artist artistic expressions and cultural approach in their works.

## II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Work of arts generally capture the artist' life experience, both expressly depicted on the canvas and intertwined into the works' message [5], this expressed experience can be seen, felted and touched, while the hidden meaning of the work can be appreciated in the heart and mind of the viewer. Awang Damit Ahmad, was born in the state of Sabah, town of Kuala Penyu in 1956. He, study at University Technology MARA, Shah Alam, graduated in the field fine arts, specialty of drawing and painting. During his studies, he was chosen as the best student in 1983, then he furthered his studies in painting at Catholic University of America, in Washington DC in 1988, obtaining a Master's Degree in Fine Arts in 1990. Awang Damit Ahmad, work style is known as an "abstract expressionism" where the meaning of "abstract" or non-representational, non-objective art with content based on emotive expressions gives the freedom to explore the artwork and assign his own meaning comprising different visual techniques [6].

In 1940's the center of the Western art world shifted from Paris to New York rooted in Lower Manhattan, due to the devastation that European countries suffered and inflicted upon themselves during the ongoing World War II. This brought an influx of immigrant escaping the horrors of the war to America [7]. American artist picked up the European avant-garde energy, which movement such as Dadaism and cubism in all the forms it fostered. However, in the postwar years, Modernism become increase synonymous of structuralism -where there is an emphasis visual element rather than it subject. This new art movement coined the name the New York school of abstract expressionism producing paintings that were for the most part, abstract and expressing the artist state of mind [8]. Under this tendency the artist emphasizes the liberty to convey attitudes of the self-born out of profound emotion and universal themes through nontraditional and usually representational elements of lines, gestural brush strokes, sprinkles of colors, mark making, shapes, forms as well as aggressive mingling of colors creating a painting of pure thoughts and emotion with the impression of spontaneity, intuitive and free association rather than the planned and structured thoughts in the works. Painters of this mainstream widened and sometimes rejected the definition of arts and techniques achieved in the previous styles. This abstract expressionism style was divided among two grouping so called action painters who attacked the canvases with expressive brush strokes; and, the color field painters, who filled the canvasses with large areas of a single strokes and color. Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) and Willian De Kooning (1904-1997) are the most well-known representative of the style known as the action painting, working in a spontaneous improvisatory manner often using large brushes to make sweeping gestural strokes or marks. Pollock would place the canvasses on the ground and impulsively pour paint from the can or trailing it from the brush or stick. [9]. In this way the action painters a new style described by Rosenberg, "The end of Art" 1952, is where the painting breaks down the boundaries between art and life making everything included events of the artist life relevant to the works in this kind of drama the canvas become like in a four-side arena and the spectator is focus on the action, the artist psyche state is directly placing their inner thoughts and emotional impulse onto the canvas [10].

Mark Rothko (1903-1970), Barnett Newyman (1905-1970), and Clyfford Still (1904-1980), belong to the group of single-color painters. They were deeply interested in religions and myth creating single composition with large areas of colors producing a contemplative and meditational response in the viewer. In this arena Awang Damit Ahmad, Malaysian painter could be associated with the action painter's style; however, he depicts strong feeling and emotion of nostalgia of his childhood experiences in his work [4]. "Alun-alun Ke Marista" is a series of oil paint works produced between 1996-2002, which provides the opportunity to view his works with an open mind at the artist personal experiences from his childhood in a world filled with colors, capturing nostalgia connected with his living environment, raising self-questions about the essence of culture and life.

## 2.1 Awang Damit Ahmad and Fernando de Sszslo

After the 1957 independence of Malaysia from the United Kingdom, there was a demand for modern subjects to be taught. The specialist teacher training institute in Cheras was established by the government in 1960 to requalify teachers into specialist teachers, among the first graduates were artists such as Yeoh Jin Leng (b. 1929) and Datuk Syed Ahmad Jamal (1929-2011) the first group of abstract expressionism painters of Malaysia [11]. The works of these artists triggered a new direction of the arts in Malaysia, non-objective imagery, non-representational or “abstract” with the content based on spontaneous and emotive expression exercising considerable freedom of technique in their execution to obtain their emotive goal [6]. Professor Mahamood, describes Awang Damit works to belong to the second generation of abstract expressionism movement that Malaysia has produced alongside with the previous generation, these artists have widened the scope of artistic expression from landscape and nature to include culture, social, and religious issues concerned to their contemporary life [5]. Awang Damit Ahmad’s is a son from a fisherman and farmer set during his childhood to dream become an artist. In his early years in Sabah, he explored the magical natural forest, the winding rivers, hills, flora & fauna, the mountain and the seas, all these recorded experiences form the framework of Awang Damit Ahmad’s life and works. As a teenage he set to work in all sort of handy jobs to provide himself with a sort of income to help his family. His conscious and sub-conscious experiences growing up have strengthened and enriched his visual language and artistic expression. This sum-up of life experiences from his childhood until the present days represent an important catalyst of his creations that has been portrayed through the abstract and semi-abstract visual language in order to share them with the audience. “Alun-alun” and “Marista” are two Brunei Malay words that underline the theme of this artwork series [5], firstly “alun-alun” means “a small winding path”; while “Marista” means “to talk about the past” therefore these two words recall the artist experience in a past full of twists and turns. The struggles he faced during his early childhood has made him acutely aware the value of life. “Alun-alun ke Marista”, is not only a nostalgia series of works but also is a source of energy and inspiration to continue strive in his life and career. Awang Damit works, represent his half-remembered shapes and forms of seagulls, fishes, nipah palms, fishing nets, boats and fish-traps and baskets that lurk in his memory from time to time [4].

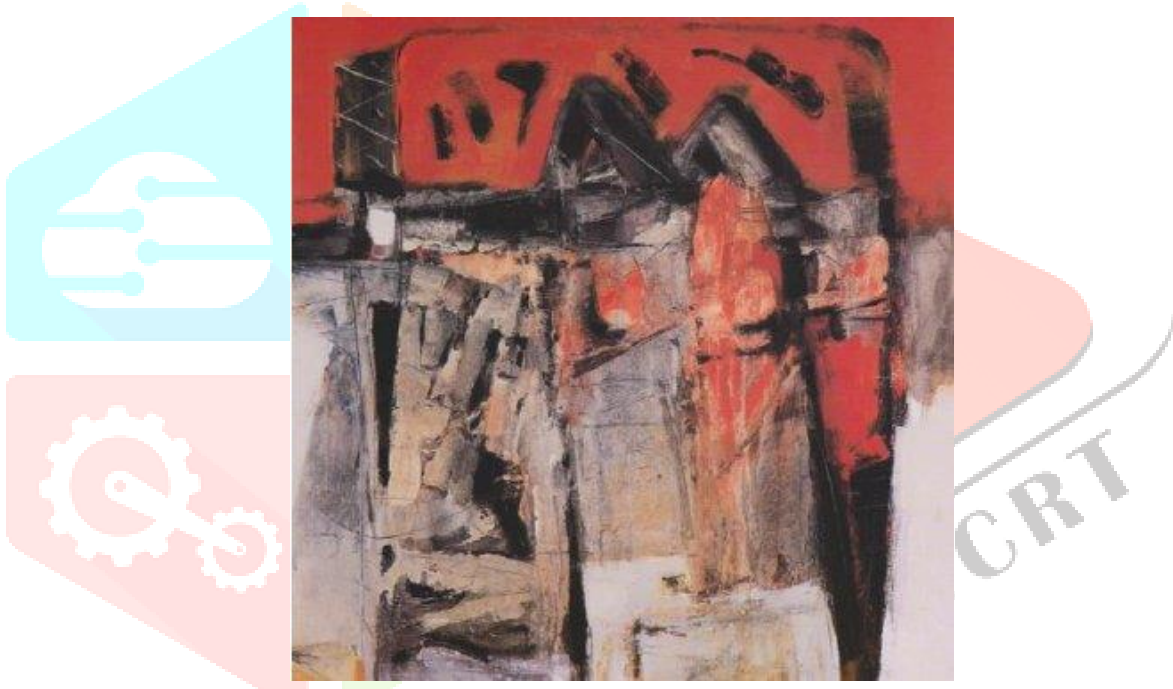


Figure 1 Awang Damit Ahmad. “*Derap-Derap - Jerami; Alun-alun ke Marista*” 2001. Oil on canvas 100 cm x 107 cm.

What seduces in Awang Damit works is the spirit of synthesis, whereby lines, shapes, richness of the texture, and forms illustrate a great tale that transcends us, it’s something that makes its way within us. His works are inspired mostly in mother nature, this art moves his personal universe through seasonal changes. Sky, winds, water, mountains and the seas, all are expressions of Awang Damit’s visual energy delivered through colors that at some points can be heard, smelled and tasted. He also works out an abstract representation of the seagulls, fishes, nipah palms, sago plants, fishing nets, fishing boats, fish basket and traps with some other elements of flora and fauna. The representation of the Sabahan culture and the lives of the farmers and fishermen is strengthened by the titles of his paintings such as Marista “Gubang di Pangkalan” (1999-2000/1), Marista “Derap-Derap Jerami” (2001), Marista “Ingatan Yang Tersisa” (2001), Marista “Ragus” (2001). Throughout his work since the late 1980 and 1990s his paintings have evolved from the previous exhibition “The Essence of Culture series 1993”, using bold thick and textured strokes of colors on the canvas surface, Awang’s technique looks more exploratory this time. This approach was sincerely consistent with the soul and essence of his artistic expression, effectively creating his visual language and style of forms and meaning with a local identity and global rhythm. He builds his composition in a skillful manner through the structuring of materials and techniques and not only through unpredictable brush strokes as any action painting will require. For Awang Damit, reason has its priority over emotion, although “emotion” is a key component on his creative ability; sketches and preparatory early drawings play an important role into the process of creation of an artwork. He does admit that some visual images may disappear during this self-reflected creative process. His physical and mental energy are combined as a formula to the form and soul of this “Alun-alun ke Marista” series. Awang’s compact visual language is rich in cultural symbols, he converts local landscape into semi-abstract elements with thick compact strokes of colors which is an effort to combine abstract expressionism with minimalism principles justify in the application and the use of color, images and forms. He marries reason with emotion within gentle breathing space, this “Alun-alun ke Marista” series is quite different from any previous ones, because it clearly expressed the use of much more geometrical forms. He also uses large areas of colors which is an equivalent to visually balance the space and form, he said: “(...) these areas are breathing space where I

feel absolutely free - free of any tightness, confusion, sadness and anything that makes my life difficult (...)" [5]. The color selection is a very important factor in Awang Damit paintings, he takes and select it from a reduce color scheme, then it is added to the role of the visual image which is to express his intimate personal and yet universal meaning of his rural background. Deep blue paint may flow through the dark brown structural forms, suggesting waterways cutting through an earth landscape, or the used of the red hue and similar shades in his paintings is to express his struggle and sweat over his hard life before becoming an accomplish artist; this red color also represents the energy needed to face the upcoming life challenges. In Malay culture red color denotes courage, bravery, heroism and loyalty and it is frequently cited color in the local literature [12].



Figure 2 Awang Damit. "Essence of Culture" 1994. (E.O.C), Senja Kelabu. Mixed medium on canvas. 120cm x 100cm

Red and similar shade of this color has a long history across all continents and it has been used mostly for pottery and dye clothing among other usages. In the Latin American cultures, red was used mostly for the pottery and in the burial traditions, this color was manufacture from the female cochineal beetle insect [13], or extracted from plants, minerals and mollusks. Awang Damit has a very sensible response to mother nature, sometimes he combines a sunset orange color against a dark or black color to create a high contrast impact, he feels that these events can be found in nature, where sometimes the flora and fauna compete against each-other creating high contrast and visual impact. "Alun-alun ke Marista" series is strengthened by the artist choice of the works titles which are poetics and meaningful. If, Awang Damit, does not use images or forms in his artwork, the titles could guide the viewer imagination to form the meaning intended by the artist, this form part of the essence of "Alun-alun ke Marista" series. Through these artworks Awang Damit, widen the Malaysian art scope of abstract expressionism genre to include self-imposed questions about society, culture, humanity and religion.

Comparative to Awang Damit's artworks, Fernando De Szyszlo Valdelomar, is a Peruvian artist, painter, sculpture, and print making; He is a significant figure whom advance the abstract style in Latin America since the mid 1950's.

Fernando De Szyszlo, was born in Lima, Peru, on July 5, 1925. He was the son of Don Vitold de Szyszlo, a scientist who emigrated from Poland, and of Doña María Valdelomar, born in Ica; a sister of the Peruvian poet and writer Abraham Valdelomar (1888-1919). About his father, the artist would point out: "My father was a Polish descendant, he researched, he was a naturalist and like the character of Jules Verne, his profession would contain knowledge of botany, zoology, geography, etc., he came to South America to perform some studies" [14]. In his approach to painting, since his teenagerhood in Lima, he was a great reader having a vast library at home with books make up from his father and his uncle poet Valdelomar.

As a painter, Szyszlo would admire Paul Gauguin, he notes: "Until one day, I don't know why, I read a book about Gauguin, being a stockbroker, later on when he grew up, he became interested in painting. When he saw impressionist paintings in the house of Mr. Arosa, where he worked and who he knew the pre-Columbian Peruvian art" [14]. He entered the Lima Art Academy at the Pontifical University Catholic of Peru in 1944. He was part of a drawing course at the Catholic University with Adolfo Gustav Winternitz (1906-1993), whom was the founder of the said school. Szyszlo realized that study painting was what he wanted to do. His interest in the arts motivated him to abandon the School of Engineers before, which today is the National University of Engineering of Peru; at age of 17 years old, Szyszlo was already studying architecture, but his sensitivity towards the arts led him to dedicate himself to painting and years later he was part of a join group of avant-garde artists. In 1949 he decided to travel to Europe and was heavily influenced by the art scene as well as by the group of writers and other group of fine art artists in Paris. Throughout the four years and while he continued to train under Winternitz's painting lessons, he felt strongly influenced by the old master forming his deep understanding as well as his passion for fine arts discovering and fostering his vocation.

Dore Ashton, an American professor, writer and art critic says: "Szyzlo found in Winternitz an ideal mentor, as he had taken with him from Europe the deep conviction that a painter was not a mere professional but a humanist in the classical sense; a man for whom art was a way of life and what is more important, a language which is to express human solidarity" [15]. Even though that same year he decided to leave the Lima Art Academy and marry the poet Blanca Varela, he continued his artistic training and experience in Paris, along with the other poets such as Javier Solguren (1921-2004), Sebastián Salazar Bondy (1924-1965) and Jorge Eduardo Eielson (1924-2006). As he settling in Europe, and during his last year of study in Lima, he discovered a personal interest in the Peruvian Pre-Columbian culture of Chancay and its textile, along with the abstraction learned in the work of another Peruvian

painter Ricardo Grau (1907-1970); this personal inquiry is reflected in his painting entitled "Interior" 1948, in which he explored in his motifs and style. The art historian and contemporary art researcher Alfonso Castrillón, in *Generational Tensions* (2014), on the arts in Peru, he points out: "The generation of the 50's has among its senior members Regina Aprijaskis, Jorge Piqueras, Milner Cahahuaringa, Espinosa Dueñas. Alfredo Ruiz Rosas, Alberto Guzmán, Benjamín Moncloa, Jorge Eduardo Eielson and Fernando de Szyszlo, among others" [16].

In 1955, Szyszlo returned to Lima, his painting style was perfected from the connection he establishes with the surrealism movement and the gestures produced by the abstract expressionism of the New York school, the so-called action painting.

*Joaquín Roca Rey, Jorge Eduardo Eielson, Jorge Piqueras Sanchez-Concha, José Bresciani, Fernando de Szyszlo, Benjamín Moncloa, Emilio Rodríguez Larraín, make up a social group of young peoples with similar social characteristics, they do not possess any Andean ancestry blood, they all belong to the affluent Peruvian middle class, mostly educated in private schools. The generational change is evident: these young peoples have no affinity with the indigenous proposal, and almost all of them were self-taught (Castrillón 2014, 69).[16]*

Although a generation of young Peruvian artist began to enhance their artistic approach and aesthetic position that were close to their middle social class roots and their identity as Latin Americans, with and influence of the Western arts and its political social cultural development, as a group they formed part of the group "Espacio". Szyszlo was influenced by these European artistic avant-garde's movements. He captured through his paintings this European theorist consolidating his form and symbols in which he was able to recognize his tradition and heritage of Ancient Peru.

*"Within the postulate of what a good painting is, a relationship with his roots is implied. Szyszlo points out: It is not pleasant for me to think of my painting as a search for pre-Columbian themes, but rather as the work of a person born in Peru, who would like to paint relevant pictures and whom is willing to use everything that in his circumstance as a Peruvian living in the second half of the twentieth century would provide to him. This includes themes such as geography, pre-Columbian art, past and contemporary conquest of universal culture, the political situation, the personal affective life, climate as some other." (Lauer 1975, 26).[17]*

During his stay in Washington DC, at the end of 1950's, his work recreated spaces, with great technical ability learned from the old European Masters and the 20th century avant-gardes, reproducing pre-Columbian symbols as in the work entitled "Love Letter" 1959. It is interesting to appreciate the way the colors red, purple, and pink has been used creating an atmosphere from the structure of the space with abstract forms that were taken from the Andean textile motif along with the depiction of the single line. Another important aspect worth to mention is the series to which it belongs containing direct quote from pre-Columbian art representing his aesthetic approach with great interest in the Andean region of Peru as well as with the relationship the artist establishes with Jose Maria Arguedas (1911-1969). This opposite elements of representation between modern and ancient Peru determines his pictorial development and consolidates its visual project to place of within Latin America art.

*It can be said that with "Love Letter 1959", Szyszlo takes up more determination to explore the theme of the Andean roots that began in 1952. In is large format painting where there are no direct quotes from the pre-Hispanic world, but its atmosphere achieved with the warn colors and the exaltation of the texture. The way was open for "Ila" (1960), "Cajamarca" (1961) and finally "Apu Inka Atawallpaman" (1965-66), (Castrillon 2014, 85).[16]*

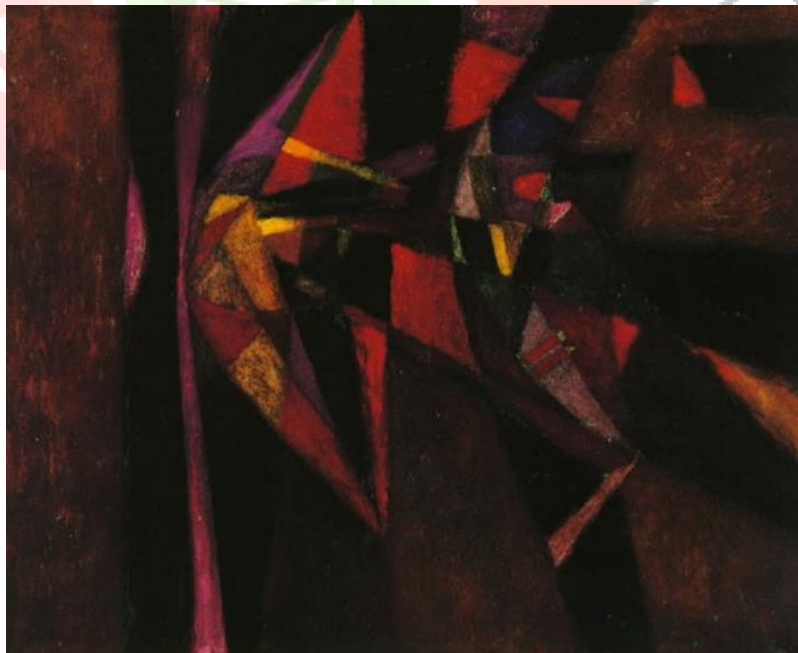


Figure 3 Fernando de Szyszlo. "Lover Letter" 1959. Acrylic on canvas. 128.9cm x160.7cm

Although his painting exhibits and combine great technical and mastery skills, it also works his very personal iconography full of abstract forms where these forms created become symbols for other much more complex forms of his iconography, for example: the sun, the man, a mythical animal as well as other landscape, with infinite horizons and stars, indoor spaces with architectural elements. In this history of abstraction, we have been observed of the lavish talent and his firm vocation for the execution of technical and patient work that was almost created from scratch, demonstrating one of the most coherent creative process in Peru [16].

His works has had influences of cubism, abstraction, surrealism, and in-formalism, which is a tendency of gestural abstraction develop in France in 1942-1950 and in the rest of Europe during the World War II, this style is known as to the American abstract

expressionism which began somewhere around the 1946. Szyszlo did not completed his studies instead he joined the progressive intellectual circles of Lima culture in the second half of the 1940s. In the 1944, he consolidates his participation in the gatherings organized at the Librería Ayra and the Peña Pancho Fierro, his involvement in the editorial committee of the magazine Las Moradas (1947-1949), as well as his close relationship with the “Agrupación Espacio” (Group Space)—a group seeking to change the attitude towards architecture and modern art—were defining moments in Szyszlo life.

Driven by these catalysts, Szyszlo began a quest to combine the expression of the native Latin American believe and historical moments with a plastic vocabulary indifferent from a realistic conception and much closer to the international avant-garde’s style. Mancilla Gomez (2011), described his works as: “Szyszlo is part of a wave of painters whose origin is in the lands of Latin America, who by dint of having a deep contact with the reality of these peoples, where inequality and injustice prevail, but who in turn are owners of an unmatched cultural wealth, they forged in themselves an awareness of their roots and the importance of rescuing them from oblivion” [10][18]. Within Szyszlo artworks there is a depth dialogue between the production and the range of symbols he used where lines, dots, circles, squares, blocks, and other forms may prompt figurative elements extracted from his sub consciousness and surrounding reality to establish a dialogue while the viewer appreciated the works. His works is inspired by and borrowed from traditional Inca imagery, the Andean environment that offers a magnificent view of the cost and monumental mountain range as well its cultural heritage that came before; depicting ominous and lively scenes with explosive color range are always in a totemic block a creature like monoliths, toothed stone at the forefront compositional arrangement.

*In the case of Szyszlo, this inescapable commitment to reality is embedded in his desire to rescue our indigenous legacy. Thus, the proposed images move more resolutely in the temporal dimension, diving into the abyssal entrails of a past not devoid of multiple but obscure messages. From these entrails he draws the elements, the sign that he knots in the night with solar bean, in plural trajectory of meanings with interwoven allusions, all of which are at the root of that space or expansion of his imaginative universe so impregnated of poetic emotion. (Lauer 1975, 38).[17]*

The color like a mood of the painting spread out into different planes of viewer subconsciousness, this emotional vitality summons the viewer for personal input. Szyszlo’s acrylic painting of monumental size takes the viewer into this soberness and mystery, murky depth that may be the vast night-darkened stretch of a strange land or claustrophobics antechambers such as those happened in dreams. There are often glows about their centers an aggressive mysterious calm and circumscribed bean of light that shows an eternal fight between light, dark, and shadow, where the painting narrative quick dissolved into an alarming mumble of pure abstraction.

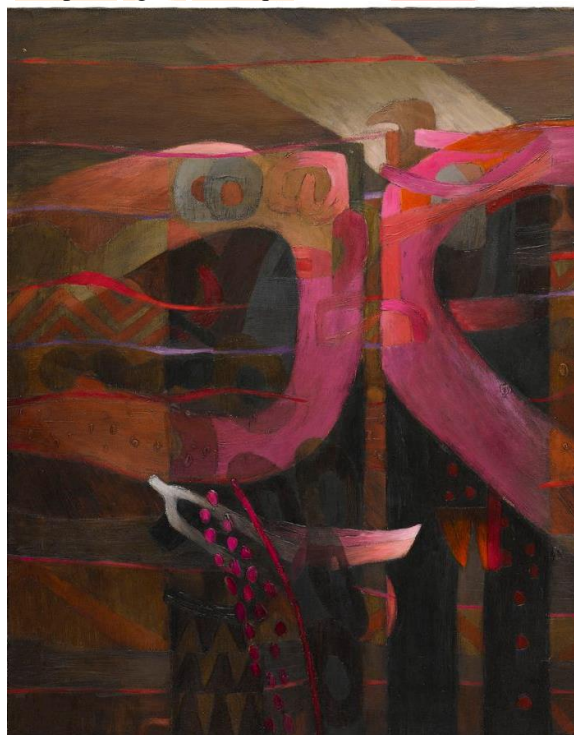
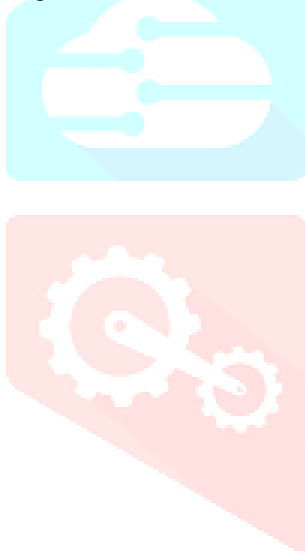


Figure 4 Fernando de Szyszlo, 1988. *Mar de Luring*. Acrylic on canvas 150cm x 121cm

## 2.2 The Color and its Representation

Szyszlo, describe the fundamental idea of a painting without a color, he said: in my work there is always a relationship between the light and dark; at the beginning the color does not exist, is not important to me, the color will arrive after in the last stage of the development of my work, maybe because, I am not good in selecting colors per sake. The main challenge that Szyszlo faced in his paintings is to establish a well balance visual composition where the figure and ground forces represented as of dark and light, the fight between the shades, darkness and clarity are all present. He selects the colors from the color wheel working them by the color proximity that shows one to the next adjacent color, for example: orange, red-orange and red, or re-violet, violet and blue-violet, this selection is called analogous combination where one color is the ‘dominant’, usually a primary or secondary color from the color wheel. He never works-out any complementary colors of red and green, blue and orange or yellow and violet, like the impressionism artists of previous generation did. His color selection is similar to Rembrandt where the main challenge is always within the essence of the light, the dark areas and the shadows. It serves to enhance the contrast between light and shadows by making them vibrate [19]. Szyszlo, plan the initial drawing and composition which set the work alive, then the work evolves from the flat surface to a more texture one and colors such acrylics are mixed with a Plaster of Paris powder to create a thick layer on the canvas surface. This technique is known as relief surface. There is an advantage as the canvas is rich in texture and a disadvantage by doing it so; if the

artist makes a mistake of the color selection or wanted to change the relief composition; he/she may have to remove or scratch it out the entire surface to start it again. Szyszlo, does preferer having a rich and texture variety on the canvas surface creating a complex visual game. This way of working is very similar to Awang Damit, where he also works-out thick layer of oil, creating rich textures surface where this visual energy of colors can be touched, smelled and tasted. Color, texture, and canvas surface are elements that the artist used like a poet use words to construct a poem, by manipulating these elements the artist build the meaning of the painting until it becomes an object of contemplation

Szyszlo's used acrylic paint, a bodyless materials which is a medium that does not behaves or performance like an oil paint; oil can be use and stand-alone by its thickness, on another hand acrylic paint is much more translucent in nature quite similar to a water color, dry fast and not easy to be remove. The manner of its application over any canvas is better by layers of color juxtapose one over another. This builds up and enriched the inner layers as well.

### 2.3 Historical Period for Both Painters and Works Characteristics.

*The roots of and artist are always deeps and inextricable, just like a root from a tree, is useful to study and research them, because they bring us closer to the mysterious center where the beauty of a painting is born and to the indefinable forces that aesthetic objects created by man are capable of liberating, thus disarming and subduing us. (Vargas Llosa 1991, 12)[20].*

Awang Damit has been develop the Abstract expressionism style since his returned from the USA in 1988. The color as means of expressions, single bold color with heavy large strokes of paint and impasto, creates strong visual content related to a hardship life that he encountered since childhood. His theme evolves from the fisherman, farmed man and simple life that can be found and appreciated in any the small seas side towns across Malaysia. In his works the viewer can see the presence of audacious and thick strokes of paint, displayed in logical and rational manners allowing the artist personal emotion to translated the magical and powerful meaning. He uses oil paints over stretched canvas for his work. Oil is much more versatile medium compare to acrylic paint. This medium allows to build thing or thick impasto layers one over another without much hazard. Oil is more consistent due to its thickness in nature compare to any acrylic. In fine art terms some materials are defined by its intrinsic properties such as consistency equally to its thickness or body; and its transparency equally to its bodyless. Bodyless medium such acrylics are needed to be mixed with other thick paste medium to form a thicker texture consistency. A disadvantage that oil paint possess against the acrylic medium is the drying process which is very slow and even slowest if it is applied in thick quantities.

For Szyszlo's, color and forms speak a silence language: "the creation of a painting is the murder of a dream" [19] through his work he tries to depict as Dore Ashton states: "it reveals the intention to reinvent historical paintings" because, unlike realistic paintings, his works are not the literal depiction of an event in particular. [21]. There are no heroes or victims, nor protests or restitutions. What can be found here is merely the subjective interpretation of a dramatic moment, full of meaning from the history of Peru and South America. Szyszlo works evokes the brutality of the conquistador through the structured thick black stripes that is due to their depth and gesturalism, which are reminiscent of Rouault, Hartung, and Soulages works.

The stripes seem to be outlining the body of Atahualpa schematically a great figure known to the Latin American History and around it, a poem of shapes and archaic colors—browns, bright reds, violets, purples, and blues—unfolds, suggesting the color selection of a Mexican artist Tamayo's and its influence over Szyszlo's personal development.

*Szyszlo works transcends the field of plastic arts and has left an important mark on the cultural life of Peru, because as a painter his spirits always is in effervescence, devour of good books, universally curios, moving with wealth of ideas in all manifestation of culture. (Vargas Llosa en Balbi 2001, 9)[20]*

Szyszlo's art reached maturity within an avant-garde language, a lyrical abstraction from the pre-Hispanic universe, which the artists considered to be "a second cultural source different from what was brought by the conquistadors".

### III. CONCLUSION

Based on this description, this study highlights related initiatives between these two extraordinary artists from Malaysia and Peru.

Awang Damit Ahmad and Fernando De Szyszlo, paintings are somehow a brilliant expression of the power that complex moral metaphor bring into the viewer, that has broadened the scope of awareness in ways which neither ordinary language nor visual signs could really obtain. From the hardship of the costal land of the South east Asian countries, the fisherman and farmed to the highland of the South American Andean regions, each artist personal metaphor seals the transposition between forms and scenario generating the meaning, significant, and ultimate visual power of the work created by them.

Szyszlo provide fundamental insight into the working of consciousness remaining us the moment and the time it takes to make his works. His contribution within the development of Latin American visual thinking becomes clear in light of the diverse trends which defined the Andean region. His works cannot be interpreted independently of the Latin American traditions and aesthetic predispositions forms and values where imagination make much more sense while understanding Szyszlo creative process. Awang Damit visual power remain latent and it also brings us a fundamental perception about the relationship between nature, man and its surrounding.

Finally, the canvas is used and/or is to be believe as an "arena", this "visual space" is where the painter does not create a picture instead, he/she act upon creating an "event", neither to re-produce nor to re-design an object; in this event the artist marks and profit the final moment as an evidence of the physical touch [22]. While action painters physically attacked the canvas, Awang Damit and Fernando de Szyszlo vigorously works the composition with carefully implement brushstrokes in these large-formats, these artists explore the universal truth, expressing the basic human emotion, overwhelming the viewer with it monumental scale and color.

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