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PART 2

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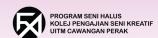
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# SEIKAT PISANG

Integrated Media in Photography

a chapter by

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## Introduction

Humankinds are multicellular organism, where each specialized cells performs various functions, integrating as unique building blocks identical to the whole-system. Integration of media in photography can also be viewed similar, in a dynamic spirit towards creativity, as well as visual expressions. The convergence between imaginations (ideas) of the 'noumena' and reality of the 'phenomena' is well conceived as a symbiotic process, in regards to how the photographer maneuvers his/her narrative in visual making, through 'light', and 'lens' of an integrated tool identified as a 'Camera'. In the history of photography, as early as the 400BC, the technical aspects which lays the foundational attributes of photography as we experience today, was develop through the principles of the 'Camera Obscura', described as well as developed by philosophers and scholars such as; Mozi from the east, Aristotle from the west, and Alhazen from the Middle-East.

## **Photography Flow**

The term "Photography" was first coined by the British scientist Sir John Herschel in 1839. Etymologically from the Greek words phos, (genitive: phōtós) meaning "light", and graphê meaning "drawing or writing". Since the creation of the 'Camera Obscura', the impact photography has brought as an integrated media has been profound towards the arts and science. Masters such as Da Vinci, Rembrandt, Vermeer, Caravaggio, as well as others has been recorded integrating 'camera obscura' tools within some of their practices in art makings. Monochrome photography was first an outcome exemplified by the daguerreotype in 1839. Hand-Colored Daguerreotypes were some of the earliest attempts, in regards towards its coloring process,

which were perceived and preferred as a more naturalistic approach in portraying reality through colors. Johan Baptist Isenring, Swiss painter and printmaker were among the earliest to apply mixture of gum Arabic and pigments of colors on their images. Colored powders were fixed on the delicate surface of the daguerreotype by the applications of heat. Nowadays, watercolors, oils, crayons or pastels, and other paints or dyes are applied to the image surface using brushes, fingers, cotton swabs or airbrushes, identified as 'Hand-Colored' photographs. The zenith of handcolored photographs lasted until the middle of the 20th century, where invention of photography took place, acting as a game changer, the latter surpassed where the Nevertheless, in today's contemporary art scene, celebration on integrated media, methods, as well as approach are celebrated inclusively. Figure 1 shows the work by photographer Shaharin Sulaiman entitled, "Seikat Pisang (2023)", translated as a "Bunch of Bananas", a mix media work, which utilizes hand-coloring approach on monochrome printed canvas, as exhibited in FOKUS50 exhibition at GESTURZ (Tuanku Nur Zahirah Art Gallery), in UiTM Shah Alam.



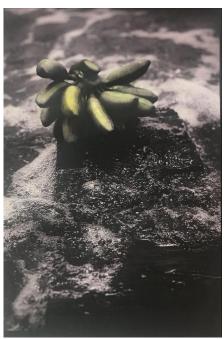


Figure 1: Seikat Pisang, Shaharin Sulaiman (2023)

## **Formalistic Aspects**

The formalistic aspects of the work "Seikat Pisang (2023)" in figure 2 can be categorized into three (3) categorical attributes which are; descriptive aspects, elements, as well as principles of photography.

Shaharin Sulaiman is the photographer of this work of art, produced and published in a photography exhibition entitled 'FOKUS50'. The photographer approaches the work through an integrated or mix medium (media), intentionally upon addressing the relevancy of the chosen figure (subject). Initially, from an extrinsic investigation on the work, the photographer has intentions to highlight the main subject, which is the bunch of bananas as focal point. Examining on the vertical as well as horizontal lines which create the structure of this image, photographer did positioned the main subject (bananas) at the intersection point on the upper section of this portrait orientation image, which appraises the principle found in the "Rule of Thirds". Moreover, the photographer takes the viewer's attention, emphasizing towards the focal point of the picture, where the bright contrast applied between yellow and green illuminates the main subject, creating a dramatic spotlight, one between the figure (subject) which acts as the positive space, as well as its black and white ground juxtapose as its negative space. Such approach exemplifies the photographer's consideration upon exploring Caravaggio's lighting technique.

Furthermore, towards investigation further towards the extrinsic aspects of the work of art, it is evident that beneath the bunch of bananas which resembles the main dominant subject, there are indications of sub-dominant, as well as subordinate subjects portrayed by the photographer. There is a blank slate of hard wood placed on the sands by the seashore in the middle ground, juxtaposed by depictions on the motion of waves in the foreground of the canvas, confronting as well as inviting the audience towards this work of art. In addition, the intention of the photographer to encapsulate such aggressive technique inter playing between the clear representation of the foreground, and the blurred aspects of the background, creates variations and values of texture as seen in figure 2. Such interesting approach evokes its viewers' attention, inviting its audience to look closer, as well as indulge together in the moments presented. Interestingly, the photographer has applied the psychology-of-lines where its central point is the main subject (bunch of bananas), the lines of each individual banana unit, pierces out towards the borders of the canvas, it creates a resonance of movement using psychological-lines which penetrates its black and white negative spaces, at the same time navigating the audience towards the main positive space, which appears as the main celebrity or focal point. The proportion of the dominant main subject are composed in a harmony manner, towards complimenting the subdominant (slate), and subordinate (waves) subjects, capturing the wooden slate, movements of the waves/oceans.

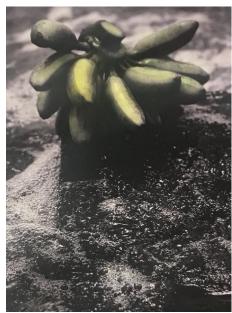


Figure 2: Closer looks of the detail in Seikat Pisang, Shaharin Sulaiman (2023)

# **Content Aspects**

The content aspects of the work 'Seikat Pisang (2023' in Figure 2 can be categorized into two (2) aspects to examine; what the photographer intended to portray, as well as what did he/she portray as the final outcome.

Affirmatively, before embarking towards aspects on the photographer's intentions and outcomes, it appears that investigating the motivation which sparks initial creation of such work, appears mutually crucial and significant. "Seikat Pisang (2023)" was exhibited in the FOKUS50 photography exhibition, given its exhibition theme "Celebrating the Diversity of Photography over the Years". The exhibition intended to capture the journey of the department of photography, from the school of art and design, UiTM in producing emerging as well as established photographers of half a decade (50 Years). Thus, FOKUS50 captures, and celebrates the spirit of 'continuity', as well as 'connectivity', as reflected through the synergy which the department of photography's has witnessed through years of its making.

Initially, from an intrinsic investigation on the work, the photographer is well influenced by the passion of still life, and fine art photography. Such influence, addresses the photographers body-ofwork (BOD) throughout his carrier, where his photography styles are inspired by the style of Edward Weston's surrealist forms through its lines and shapes, as well as Jerry Uelsmann surrealist juxtapositions of subjects which creates order as well as chaos between the rational and irrational. At times, the photographer integrates between the piscatorial and realist style in photography, where he is also inspired by Ansel Adams photography landscapes which encapsulated the beauty of nature. The main or dominant subject bananas is a universal imagery which pays homage, reacts as improvisation of its own towards works of Edward Weston such as "Bananas (1930)", and significant work of art by Mourizio Cattelan entitled "Banana (2019)". However this bunch of bananas, are tropical species found only in south East Asia, in a sense, highlighting the pride, and prejudice of the photographers cultural identity, upon where he identifies himself.

'Pisang Emas' in English is known as; the lady finger bananas, sugar bananas, finger bananas, fig bananas, or date bananas. Scientifically, it is recognized as 'Musa Acuminate'. For the Malay Civilization, these sweet yet small bananas are significantly profound, as remarked in the Malay proverb; "Pisang emas dibawa belayar. Masak sebiji di atas peti. Hutang emas boleh dibayar. Hutang budi dibawa mati", translated as if you owe a person a good deed, there's no simple way to repay them even if you return the same good deed, an act of goodness will be remembered until death do apart. The photographer intended to converge the proverb above, in portraying the journey of progress, embarked by the department of photography, upon providing unwavering opportunities, as symbiotic gestures in regard to the spirit of 'continuity', as well as 'connectivity'. Moreover, the blank slate beneath the bunch of golden bananas probed an intrinsic message depicting a concept of a vessel carrying the celebrated fruit (bananas) as depicted, and celebrated in the Malay proverb 'Pisang emas dibawa belayar' sentence, as mentioned above.



The photographer did include iconographic visual symbols which are integrated between both medias; digital as well as traditional. A visual imagery which sparks semiotic interactions, between the visual elements intended (addressed) by the photographer, and the visual image the photographer did portray as an outcome overall. The vessel metaphorically signifies a lasting voyage of experience through time and tide, ultimately identified as a fruitful journey to be embarked.

Furthermore, the waves which flow in between the dominant (bananas), and sub-dominant (slate) does interact with the subordinate (waves) chosen subject, establishing the noumenal elements of time and space. Presence of the bananas and wooden slates appears to be entities subjected towards the ephemeral of life; grow, mature, and decay. Nevertheless, the captured waves which washes the seaside, negotiates a repeating process, which clears as well as clarifies or journey in life, the non-material aspects such as knowledge, and values, continuing to last more than a life-time.

Finally, the photographer manages to integrate the form and content as described and explained above accordingly towards the key themes of the exhibition as identified. "Seikat Pisang (2023)" is a testament on how integrated media in photography is relevant as a contemporary approach, in regards to ideas, as well as identity of its maker.

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