

## **SYMBOLIC MESSAGES OF COVID-19 POSTER ART BY INTAN MUNIRAH HAMZAH FROM SABAH ART GALLERY**

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**Abstract:** A poster is not just a combination of visual and text that have aspects of beauty or entertainment. However, it is a tool or medium of non-verbal communication created by its creator to convey something in the form of messages to others. This study seeks to approach, understand and explain the message of a series of posters of Covid-19 from the Sabah Art Gallery created by Intan Munirah Hamzah covering the structure, content, and function of its message. The art study approach, which is fundamentally based on a qualitative approach that emphasizes a descriptive and holistic explanatory system, has been used at the same time through a conceptual framework built on relevant concepts as a frame of analysis. The analysis shows that the Covid-19 poster from the Sabah Art Gallery are trying to convey the message of self-safety and prevention related to the Covid-19 phenomenon that is plaguing the world today. Its message structure conveys the meanings of courtesy and morality, compliance, and even discretion when everyone is required to practice some safety and precautionary measures such as wearing a facemask, sitting at home, and frequently washing their hands. This series of poster not only plays its role in providing information and preventive measures in the face of the Covid-19 phenomenon but also activates its function through teaching values such as health values, hygiene values, sacrifice values, and new social norms values in order to ultimately encouraging or inviting people to play their part in response to this global pandemic situation.

**Keywords:** Message, symbolic, poster, Covid-19, Sabah Art Gallery, Sabah, Intan Munirah Hamzah

### **1. Introduction**

If asked about the most global phenomenon in 2020, of course the most common answer given is Covid-19. This virus, which at first had no name and was so uncommon to the medical world, was claimed by many to come from an exotic animal market in Wuhan district, China (see Aiman Saddiq Abdullah, 2020). During the study in mid-2020, the virus has not only infected more than three million people worldwide but has resulted in a huge number of casualties of around 200,000 people. It can be said that there are almost no geographical boundaries that cannot be penetrated or entered by this dangerous new coronavirus.

To prevent the spread or increase in the number of Covid-19 cases, each country has introduced its own preventive measures. In Malaysia, for instance, the preventive measures include closing the country's entry and exit borders, enforcing acts, regulations and at the same time Movement Control Order (MCO), temporarily closing all activities involving the economic, educational, social, cultural, religious and even sports, conduct Covid-19 screening test on close contact of patients as well as those with high potential infection and conduct health awareness campaigns to the community through mass media and social media.

Various initiatives have been taken by all parties involved throughout the country including in the state of Sabah to jointly assist the government in flattening the curve and controlling the spread of the virus. There are those who pour sweat and energy to sew personal protection equipment (PPE) to be distributed to front liners and there those who distribute a number of aids in the form of facemasks, disinfectants, and food aid to families in need. Also, they are a group of people who have also taken the initiative to convey their personal views and advice to the general public on various matters related to the outbreak of Covid-19 on social media.

In the context of visual art, various forms and types of artwork have appeared especially in social media as a response to this global-scale health phenomenon. This, at least indicates that artists do not

want to be left behind to contribute equally in contributing ideas, views, and feelings they have since their daily life has been greatly influenced by the phenomenon of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is not strange because most of the time they had to be confined indoors during the MCO period. So, probably they took the opportunity to express or share something through what became their expertise, namely the creation of visual artwork.

One of the visual art form that gets a lot of attention from the community in Sabah is a series of poster produced by the Sabah Art Gallery (SAG). A series of posters created by Intan Munirah, one of the graphic designers from the government agency, appeared on social media in the second week of the MCO and continued to gain viral momentum because it was shared by netizens. For most people, the poster series has several features that can attract public attention, for example; (1) the subject of the figure used is very close to the people because it is taken from an iconic painting from world-famous painter; (2) the colours used are very attractive and; (3) visual pattern loaded with elements of humor or humor that can invite laughter.

Of course, the existence of visual art such as a poster is not only a combination of images to evoke the effect of beauty or entertainment to its observers, but it comes with a variety of specific messages that its creators want to convey. As Barret (1982: 6) put it, visual artwork is produced because the artist has a desire to convey something to others; be it a problem, thought, feeling, or experience contained within him into visual form. That is the purpose of the existence of a visual artwork including poster art because the artist wants to share something with others as observers of his or her works.

Based on the above description, this study will try to understand and at the same time explain the symbolic messages of poster art from Sabah Art Gallery created by Intan Munirah Hamzah. The purpose of this study is in line with some of the questions to be answered which include, among others; (1) What is the message structure from the poster including aspects of signs and symbols; (2) What is the content of the message expressed from the signs and symbols?, and; (3) What is the function of the message from the poster?

This study will contribute to both academic and practical fields. In the academic context, it will be able to develop the study of visual art in the field of knowledge of communication (message) in the form of visual artwork. Meanwhile, the practical contribution can also be used as a guide by anyone who wants to understand visual artwork more deeply and will inspire visual art activists who love the forms of poster art.

## **2. Literature Review**

Although the source of scholarly writing in the field of our local visual art is generally limited, it is undeniable that the discussion relating to poster art has been the topic of study from several writers from various points of view. Saiful Akram Che Yob (2019), for example, sees the influence of poster art as one of the visual art forms in the Japanese occupation in Malaya as a medium or tool to spreading or conveying propaganda in the context of public acceptance at that time. His study led to the discovery that romantic visuals manifested in the form of visual art (including posters) in the Japanese times were able to persuade the members of society to support Japanese administrative policies. Despite the historical writing that tends to describe the negative impact of Japanese influence through arts, his study serves the opposite perspective.

In addition, Zubaidah Osman and Nor Azura Adzharuddin (2015) also studied the influence of the elements of poster as one of the visual communication expressions in the context of community acceptance but the object of study focused on the marketing poster. The results of the analysis shows that the elements of marketing poster can give a variety of different emotional effects on observers. Here, elements of images or illustrations, graphic design, colour, or text can play a role in evoking human affective experience that implies human ability to provide an emotional response to a marketing poster. Thus, the visual and verbal elements not only become an excellent medium of delivery but also quickly affect the emotional aspects or feelings of the observers.

The design elements of the health campaign poster are the theme and focus of Hafizah Rosli's (2019) study. Through her analysis of 72 posters from four different countries namely the United States, Britain, Australia, and Malaysia; the results of her study found that there are six important elements in the design of effective health campaign poster art namely the use of bright colours, owning background space, placing titles, visual representations in vector style, A1 scale poster size, and Sans Serif font.

According to him, all of this will greatly help graphic designers from the Ministry of Health Malaysia to create health poster to better attract the attention of the general public and also convey information more effectively.

A similar study was also conducted by Nur Fazura Mohd Pahme and Norfazirah Mohd Bakhir (2014) who reviewed the design and use of printed poster art in the campaign to prevent child sexual abuse in Malaysia. A study that utilized quantitative data in the form of a questionnaire on 101 respondents found that in terms of its use, the printed is still relevant when compared to other methods because it is permanent and not easily lost such as on television screens or social media displays. However, from the design standpoint, it turns out that the visual highlight on the poster of child sexual prevention campaigns in this country still does not have the ability to attract the public because its design is considered outdated.

Poster as a form of visual art that serves as a tool to measure the level of visual literacy is the main concern of the study conducted by Mona Masood and Zakiah Ain (2011). Based on the introduction of the iconography theory founded by Panofsky on 35 high school students, the results of their study shows that the use of text or visual elements greatly affects the level of visual literacy of students in interpreting signs and capturing meaning from a poster before and after iconography theory applied. The poster dominated by text elements seems to prevent students from thinking deeply because the meaning is clear. On the other hand, if the visual element is more dominant, the ability is therefore more likely to be activated through the imagination they possess.

In line with the study presented above, Salinatin Mohamad Saled and Mustaffa Halabi Azahari (2013) produced a study that tried to understand the function of poster in shaping public awareness of diabetes based on socio-economic patterns. The results of their observations revealed that poster have an important function especially in conveying the message about diabetes to the community even though it turns out that the urban community is more sensitive to the existence of poster in treatment centers or hospitals compared to rural communities. In addition, the results of their study also prove that the visual element in a poster is more influential on the long-term memory of society in both socio-economic backgrounds to the disease when compared to the text element.

Finally, Noorlida Daud and Ahmad Zamzuri Mohamad Ali (2019) reviewed the poster from the aspect of applying new elements, namely emoji with a flat design that can provide added value to a poster of consciousness, especially conveying positive emotional effects. The findings of the study present a theoretical framework based on literature review conducted and tested in the field to prove that the use of emoji with a flat poster design that is minimalist and simple can convey an emotionally charged message and also provoke empathy among observers. The effect of this empathy directly or indirectly will also affect the observer in terms of making decisions related to his awareness of the main message conveyed through poster.

Based on the literature review that has already been discussed, it is clear that studies of poster art can be said to be still growing and continuously fought by academics in this country. In addition, it can be seen that the theme or topic of writing revolves around the side of the influence of poster on society, design elements, its function as a medium or tool to form the awareness of observers. Thus, this study can accommodate and fill in the gaps that have not yet been filled, especially if it is related to the context of the symbolic message of the poster. After all, this study focuses on the art of poster in the state of Sabah, the location of the study that has not been explored much by previous studies as previously presented.

### **3. Methodology**

This study is classified as an art study as outlined earlier by Rohidi (2011). According to him, the study of art is actually under the big umbrella of qualitative research that emphasizes on the exploration and understanding of symbolic meanings resulting from human activities from a single humanity, social, or even cultural problem.

Like other qualitative studies, art study also operationally involve important efforts such as the direct involvement of researchers in the field or real-life situations in depth, conducting full or holistic view and capturing data about art and local actors through the views of those artists itself through a process of in-depth observation, flexible interviews and the collection of relevant documents. In the case of the presentation of the final report, the art study does focus on the result of the creation of art or

poster as the target or object of the study but the description is in the form of words or descriptive. Here, the accumulation of aesthetic experience from the researcher is very much needed, especially the high sensitivity and appreciation of the poster studied so that in turn can avoid the results of the study presented dry and biased.

In order to be able to approach, understand, and explain the problems to be answered in this study, namely the message on the poster, the below discusses some concepts from several disciplines of science that are considered relevant.

### **3.1 Message**

As a concept, a message can be understood as a series of signs or symbols used by a person to express a particular meaning or purpose to others (Changara, 2002: 14). In that sense, it is implied that a message is a unit of two main components namely; (1) the structure of the message, which contains a set of signs or symbols composed or arranged so as to be representative or mediator to a particular meaning; (2) the content of the message, which refers to the meaning, meaning or significance of a sign or symbol that can represent, express or symbolize objects, concepts or thoughts, moods and feelings, ambitions, hopes or human experiences.

Messages can be created in two forms, namely verbal (non-verbal) and non-verbal (non-verbal) messages (Tassoni, 2006: 38). The difference between the two lies in the use of signs or symbols where verbal messages use verbal signs or symbols that are words and are often universal in the form of conversation or text writing; whereas, non-verbal messages use non-verbal signs or symbols such as body movements, sounds, visuals, and others and are generally not universal but bound by cultures such as in the form of dances, songs, and even paintings.

Judging from its function, of course, the presence of a message is not without purpose. Among its purposes are to inform, teach, encourage, raise awareness, criticize, entertain, or change human attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, or actions. All of them can be grouped into three general functions, namely informative function, persuasive function, and coercive function (Mufid, 2009: 84). The informative function contains factual information in which others then draw their own conclusions and decisions. The persuasive function contains persuasion, which is to awaken the human understanding, and awareness that what is conveyed will change his attitude on his own will. Meanwhile, the coercive function contains coercion by using acts, orders, or rules to foster inner stress or fear in society.

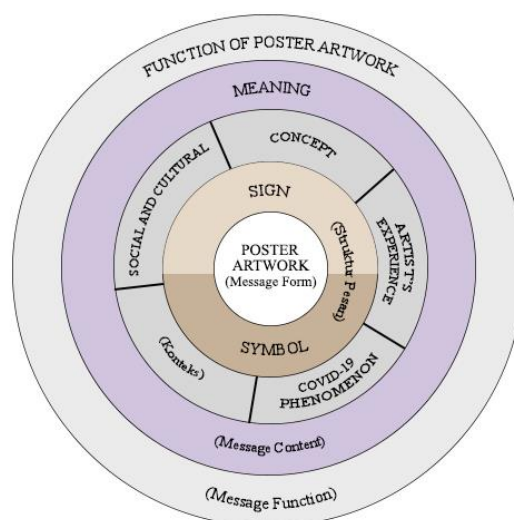
### **3.2 Poster**

A poster is a visual combination of image and text elements and contains numbers of information in the form of invitations, announcements, or advertisements with the intention of attracting attention or motivating human behaviour printed on a piece of paper or other material and placed in a public space (Sudjana & Rivai, 2005: 51). The definition explicitly states that a poster must be a form of work that has been printed and pasted or posted in a public space for the eyes of observers or target users. Even so, today's poster is no longer limited to printed results (manual) but can also be uploaded (digital) results through social media display because as presented by Imelda and Addley (2018: 141), the development of information and communication technology that is rapidly evolving has implications for the transformation of visual artwork itself.

Like other visual artwork, the elements of the poster that contain visual elements and text can be created through the subject's description of recognizable objects such as humans, objects, events, natural scenery, animals, letters, numbers, and so on. In addition, sometimes the elements of the formation are presented through images that do not resemble something or abstract such as colour change, lines, appearance, interweaving, and others. In the context of its real form, a poster can be a combination of all the elements already mentioned (Barrett, 1992: 116).

In terms of its function, a poster is a medium or tool used to convey information that refers to a particular problem or problem in accordance with what the creator thinks, feels, expects, or aspires to. The purpose is varied; it can be an important means to give or realize understanding or enlightenment (thoughts), attract attention (perception), influence or persuade (feelings) and also motivate behaviours or deeds (behaviours) that are considered in accordance with the norms, rules or cultural values of a society in a certain place (Hafizah Rosli, 2018: 305).

Based on the understanding gained from the concepts presented above and by considering the relationship between the concepts, all of them can be simplified as the conceptual framework diagram below which can also be used as a guide to analysing the message in the Covid-19 posters from the Sabah Art Gallery.



Source: Changara (2002) and Sudhana & Rivai (2005)

**Figure 1:** Model of the symbolic message of poster artwork

Based on the conceptual framework above (Figure 1), it can be explained that the poster which is a form of a message (non-verbal) is placed in a central position as the object of study analysis which basically has a visual element in the form of pictures and text.

Next, the analysis begins by identifying and explaining the structure of the message consisting of aspects of the sign as well as the symbols present from the visual elements of a poster studied (see the second layer of brown circles). As a sign, a visual element of a poster can represent or depict an event, figure (person), natural scenery (place), animal, word, number or even abstract image. Thus, a sign has a direct relationship with what it marks and the meaning of a sign depends on the relationship between the visual elements in the poster itself.

In contrast, as a symbol, it has an arbitrary or arbitrary nature and thus a symbol has no direct relation to what it symbolizes. To interpret a symbol, it is necessary to pre-understand its context (refer to the dark gray third layer) as a reference background for its reference that has to do with related aspects such as artist experience, concept, social and cultural, science and events or history.

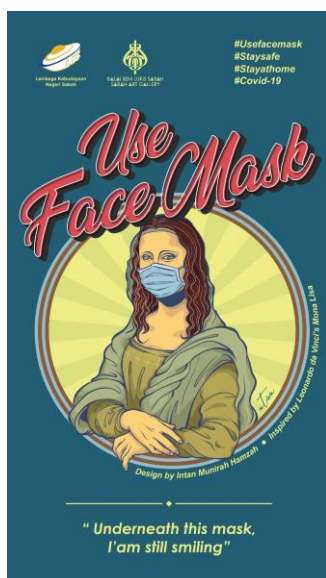
The combination of meanings derived from a sign or symbol in turn paves the way for an understanding of the meaning or significance of a poster that is the content of a message (refer to the purple fourth layer circle). Finally, the meaning or purpose can be determined as well as finding a function of a poster that is also seen as a function of a message which includes informative function, persuasive function, or coercive function.

## 4. Analysis and Discussion

### 4.1 Structure and content of the message in poster 1

This artwork entitled *Use Face Mask* is one of a series of Covid-19 poster by the Sabah Art Gallery which was uploaded on social media in the second week of the second Movement Control Order (PKP) was introduced. It depicts a portrait of a woman named Monalisa who is an iconic figure from the paintings of the famous Italian painter Leonardo Da Vinci. The visual element has been borrowed by Intan through digital manipulation of shapes, interweaving effects, and even colours that are basically simplified by her and she tends to change from Leonardo's original style that is realistic to the style that is more into comic illustration. Not only that, the borrowing is not reckless, even Intan also

presents a clear difference in the portrait by making changes to Monalisa's face which is worn with a face mask that covers the top of the nose up to the bottom of the chin.



Source: Intan Munirah Hamzah (2020)

**Figure 2:** Intan Munirah Hamzah, *Use Face Mask*, 2020, digital poster

Monalisa's face wearing a face mask has distorted or diverted our understanding of herself as a woman who once lived in the Renaissance era in Italy. She is no longer a representation of a human being in the 16th century but has represented a human being in the 21st century living in the midst of the Covid-19 virus transmission situation that has plagued the world. The understanding of the sign is further strengthened by Intan through the highlighting of the background which removes the gloomy landscape view of the original work and is replaced by the use of geometric patterns with bright colours so that at first glance evokes a modern, modern, and viscous effect with a touch of technology.

In addition, the visual signs of wearing this face mask also indicate that some of the key features that create the character to the iconic face can no longer be seen by the eyes of others because it has been covered by security devices. That literal meaning is also meant by the text mark below the visual mark of Monalisa's portrait where it can be read as an expression thrown by the figure himself through a combination of words that form the statement "Underneath this mask, I am still smiling". At a glance, it shows the notion of nothing changing on her famous face with a mesmerizing sweet smile even though it has been covered by a face mask. It's just that what has changed is that her enigmatic smile can no longer be seen or accepted by others.

It is interesting to point out here that the thing Intan emphasizes the text mark is on the aspect of Monalisa's hidden smile and not on the aspect of her face that can be seen. This is where the appropriateness of the visual borrowing of Monalisa's portrait seems relevant because according to the historical view of visual art, one of the special features of Monalisa's portrait work is her smile that captivates the attention of her observers. In the cultural context, body language in the form of a smile as can be seen in the original image of Monalisa's work reveals the polite human confession of the presence of someone in front of him (Ali Nurhasan Islamy, 2015: 47). Thus, a smile can be understood as a symbol of human courtesy and decency when interacting or making contact with other human beings.

The meaning of this poster at least wants to convey the meaning of the shift as well as the adjustment of norms (manners politeness) in a social relationship when the phenomenon of the spread of diseases such as the Covid-19 virus occurs unexpectedly. More specifically, wearing a face mask that serves as a step that can be taken to protect oneself from being infected with the Covid-19 virus does not mean that human beings have lost their manners and decency when it comes to social relations between themselves. However, in order to maintain personal safety, human beings do not want to have to sacrifice, give up, or put aside the practice of old social norms that were previously considered

important and valuable for a while because they are hindered due to new practices such as wearing face masks.

Emphasis on this is also conveyed by Intan solidly through the main text marks of this work which can be read as "Use Face Mask" or "Wear a Face Mask". The words are displayed by Intan with a red colour that contrasts with cool colours such as bluish-green and yellowish-green that dominate almost the entire space of the background composition so that it becomes the main focal point of the poster. In the context of colour psychology, red is a colour that is often associated with reminders (Khadher Ahmad & Munirah Abd Razak, 2012: 881). So, the use of colour can at least be interpreted as a reminder to observers or the public who see this poster that wearing a face mask is something that is important and should be practiced by everyone when the country is dealing with the phenomenon of the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### 4.2 Structure and content of the message in poster 2

The second poster from the Covid-19 series from the Sabah Art Gallery entitled *Stay At Home* shows a portrait of a half-body man from the rearview but his face is turned to the left side of the composition. Based on the title of the work as well as the features that appear on his brown and thick hair, this figure is a representation of Vincent van Gogh, a Dutch-born painter who is famous for his portraits and landscapes in the post-Impressionism characterized by the application of opaque colours, heavy lines and the illusion of air and light movement.



Source: Intan Munirah Hamzah (2020)

**Figure 3:** Intan Munirah Hamzah, *Stay at Home*, 2020, digital poster

Even so, van Gogh's figure in this poster is not a re-representation of a painter who lived in the late 19th century but is portrayed by Intan as a modern man who works, adopts a modern lifestyle, and lives in urban areas. It is characterized by the attributes of formal dress style as well as the style of haircut that reflects comfort. Not only that, the modern lifestyle of this era was also emphasized by Intan through changes in the visual pattern of the work that replaced the overlap of basic colours from the post-Impressionism work to the application of bright flat colours and geometric patterned backgrounds.

Next, to get an understanding of the visual cues presented in the message structure of this poster, one way is to connect it with a text mark at the bottom of the composition where it can be read as an expression of van Gogh himself in the form of a verbal statement transferred in the form of words that read "I've lost my ear, still I listen to the authority's order". The meaning of the text mark at least points to two directions namely on the one hand, it marks van Gogh as a disabled or disabled person and on

the other hand, it exhibits his attitude as a person who is obedient to instructions or rules from the authorities.

Talking about van Gogh outside the context of his works certainly reminds us of his ears. Through visual art history, it is linked to van Gogh's self-mutilation which cut off part of his earlobes in a fit of rage after an inside quarrel between him and his fellow artist Paul Gauguin while living together in a studio in Arles, the southern region of France (see Wood, 2015: 19). So, it turns out that the choice of the word "I've lost my ear" by Intan is not merely meant to show his physical disability only but more than that symbolizes a form of deficiency in terms of human personality that tends to be eccentric, difficult to give in, unable to control and selfish. That is the textual meaning that Intan is trying to convey through the sign language of van Gogh's body figure who turned his back on the observer of this poster. At a glance, it is clear that the style of body language marks him as a rude, selfish human being and does not care about his environment.

The meaning that is loaded with negative content from the personal or individual aspects of life is also faced by Intan through the selection of the rest of the words from the text mark van Gogh as a modern human being who has an attitude of obedience to the instructions of the authorities. The meaning of obedience can also be revisited on the prominence of the visual mark from this poster, which shows the position of his face turned to the side as if he was listening to something conveyed through one side of his ear that was still functioning. Even so, his flat and tense facial expression signifies an unhappy mood and feelings. In the context of psychology, the meaning of the expression can symbolize a form of sacrifice because in general, a person's obedience to instructions or rules does not come from voluntarily but due to the existence of threats in the form of punishment or fines that will be received if breaking a command or rule.

The instructions or rules of the authorities meant by this poster are clearly emblazoned through the main text mark in the form of a green letter arrangement and can be read as "Stay At Home". In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, sitting at home is considered a precautionary measure to prevent the spread of the virus. Thus, it can be a symbol of human safety. Then, the use of green colour which is a complementary colour of red that dominates the background of this poster is believed to relieve tension or stressful situations so that in turn create a balanced feeling effect full of peace, tranquility, and security (Purbasari & Diah, 2014: 364). This at the same time deepens its literal meaning to a symbolic meaning that by sitting at home, individuals or communities can save themselves from the dangers that may come from the Covid-19 virus and at the same time be able to live calmly.

Based on the understanding gained from the text marks and visual cues, then a comprehensive understanding emerges about the overall meaning of this poster. Simply put, it wants to reveal human sacrifice in the form of attitudes and behaviours in terms of its relationship with the government through instructions or rules from the authorities to stay at home while the country is facing the Covid-19 virus. In this case, the intended sacrifice is when human beings are willing to give in or tolerate by changing the attitudes and actions taken to be in line with what is outlined or gazette in the form of instructions or rules even though it is actually contrary to their original personality.

#### **4.3 Structure and content of the message in poster 3**

This last piece from the Covid-19 poster series from the Sabah Art Gallery entitled *Wash Your Hands* depicts a portrait of a woman in the front view from the waist up. Based on the information written on this poster, the subject of the figure is a woman named Adele Bloch-Bauer I, a wife of Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer who is a banker and a well-known sugar manufacturer in Vienna, Austria in the early 20th century. This female figure was once immortalized by Gustav Klimt in a painting entitled *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I* or often also referred to as *The Lady in Gold* commissioned by her husband and fully completed around 1907 and now on display at the Neue Gallery, New York (see Furman, 2019: 1-2).





Source: Intan Munirah Hamzah (2020)

**Figure 4:** Intan Munirah Hamzah, *Wash Your Hands*, 2020, digital poster

Unlike the two posters that have been discussed before, in this piece, Intan did not make any significant changes to the original visual reference involving the addition of a new element, either in shape, posture, style (clothing or hair), or facial expression. On the other hand, the changes present are in the form of techniques related to the adjustment of appeal rates, techniques of processing works that are more to the simplification of shapes and colours so that it tends to show comic illustration style as well as background processing that combines geometric elements and bright colours so that they all evoke modern, modern and full of technological touches. The change in technique, although not as strong as the previous two works, is still able to indicate that this female figure is not a wealthy woman who lived in the early 20th century but was part of the upper-class society of the 21st century when the world fought against the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Like her previous work *Stay At Home*, the message structure of this poster is easier to understand if it starts from the text mark at the bottom of the composition and it can be read as a word-shaped expression from Adele which is a unit of words that make up a statement "No matter how fancy you are, always wash your hands". This statement literally signifies that personal hygiene does not recognize one's external appearance. In fact, it is not too much to say that personal hygiene is the most basic need of human life because it fulfills human desire to have a calm and comfortable life (see Abdul Aziz Alimul Hidayat & Musrifatul Uliyah, 2004: 19-20).

However, it is interesting to discuss here the selection of adorned women as the target group in relation to the practice of hand washing. Judging from beauty care, it is believed that washing hands regularly can cause dry, rough, or flaky skin problems and even invite inflammation that causes pain or wounds where it at once affects a person's appearance (Priherdityo, 2015). So, in this context, washing hands regularly can be a symbol of physical harm from the aspect of one's beauty or appearance. So, it is clear that the target group in this poster was chosen by Intan as a symbol of women's obsession with beauty.

Visually, the meaning of obsession with beauty is represented through the attributes of clothing, accessories, hairdressing, and make-up that are loaded with patterns and impresses excessively. From there, it can be determined that Adele is a woman who likes to decorate, dress up, and be stylish more than usual. Even so, despite her obsession with beauty, Adele is thus described as a woman who practices personal hygiene by washing her hands. Just look at the action of his hand asking as if showing the right ways in washing hands. Judging from the context of Covid-19 events where washing hands regularly can prevent and protect a person from infection, the action can symbolize the figure of Adele as a symbol of wisdom because she is willing to put her own safety above her own appearance.

The meaning of this wisdom is also presented by Intan in yellow on the main text mark of this poster which is a combination of letters forming the word "Wash Your Hand". Through the

psychological perspective of colour, yellow is the colour that contains the meaning of intelligence, the wisdom of authority, or glory (Gardjito & Erwin, 2010: 65). Based on this understanding, it is able to give the meaning that the action of washing hands is a wise choice especially when it is done for good purposes such as avoiding a disaster such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

Through the understandings obtained from the text and visual elements earlier, the content of the message from this poster can be formulated. It reveals the dilemma of contemporary life that forces us to determine and make choices about what he considers to be a priority or importance in the situation of the Covid-19 phenomenon that demands us to make adjustments to attitudes and actions such as frequent hand washing. Therefore, wisdom is needed in making decisions about what is considered good and important or useful by human beings in the past may be at risk of becoming bad, insignificant, and useless nowadays because what should be given priority now is the health and safety of the human self itself.

#### **4.4 Message function of Covid-19 poster by Intan Munirah Hamzah from Sabah Art Gallery**

Based on the analysis and discussion conducted on the structure and content of the message from the Covid-19 poster from the Sabah Art Gallery, it was found and explained the function of the message from the poster that can be broken down into informative and persuasive functions.

In terms of its informative function, the posters are able to convey information about aspects of self-safety and prevention that can be adopted and practiced by every individual in society to curb, fight and avoid the occurrence of the Covid-19 virus. It does not shy away from telling its target group that in the societal and cultural situation being plagued by this global-scale health crisis, human life has generally changed from socio-cultural practices, actions, attitudes, or norms that were once part of considered important and worthwhile or not should be adapted to new socio-cultural practices, actions, attitudes or norms.

In addition, as a series of posters produced by visual arts organizations or institutions, the prominence of the subjects of figures from the history of visual arts of the world will at least able to share information about visual arts to the general public especially related to painters and his masterpieces. For observers, especially those who are not in the field of visual arts, this will open a new horizon of knowledge for them to get to know more about the world of visual arts which is basically still foreign to some of the community in this country, both living in the city and abroad.

Then, from the aspect of persuasive function, this series of posters is able to stimulate observers' concern for issues or problems related to the Covid-19 phenomenon and encourages them to play their respective roles in the practice of personal safety measures and prevention of transmission as suggested in such posters such as wearing a face mask, staying at home and washing hands regularly. Furthermore, observers can also play a role as motivational dissemination agents to others as they share the Covid-19 poster from the Sabah Art Gallery on their respective social media pages.

Not only that, the persuasive function of these posters is also seen when it tries to teach us about the value of personal hygiene, the value of sacrifice and the value of new social norms which essentially invite the community to appreciate health, comply with instructions and rules issued by the authorities and make the right choices and assessments of aspects of their personal lives in these difficult times. These values can of course be translated if the community together shows an open, tolerant attitude and high discipline, both when forced to be in public or in the house.

The function of the message from this series of posters may not entirely be taken by the observers who appreciate it, but it is felt that a simple presentation style and message structure has facilitated its delivery to continue towards the target.

## **5. Conclusion**

A poster is not just a combination of visuals and text that has aspects of beauty or entertainment. However, it is a tool or medium of non-verbal communication produced by its creator to convey something in the form of a message to others that can be related to issues or problems of humanity, society, and culture repackaged through the use of signs and symbols so that in turn it can play informative functions in explaining something and its persuasive function to encourage or invite society to change its behaviour and actions for the better.

The Covid-19 poster from the Sabah Art Gallery are non-verbal message expressions from Intan Munirah Hamzah that forward the message of personal safety and prevention related to the Covid-19 phenomenon that is plaguing the world today. The structure of the message conveys the content of the message which represents the meaning of manners and decency, attitude of obedience, and also the wisdom of the mind when everyone is required to practice some safety and prevention measures such as wearing a face mask, sitting at home and washing hands. This series of posters not only plays an informative function in providing information on personal safety and preventive measures in the face of the Covid-19 phenomenon but also activates its function through the teaching of values such as health values, hygiene values, sacrificial values, and new social norms; ultimately encouraging or inviting the community to jointly play their respective roles in responding to this global-scale health phenomenon.

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