

Recycling from SI+SA Exhibition in the Context of Visual Arts

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to discuss and identify the potential of discarded recycled materials from the daily use of society in Malaysia and turns them to produce creative artworks. The study was conducted based on the observations of the artworks exhibited during the SI+SA Exhibition at the Shah Alam Gallery, Selangor. This research focuses on the creation process, form and value of the creative artworks originating from recycled materials. The art study approach, where the foundations are derived from a qualitative approach that emphasizes descriptive and holistic explanatory systems, has been used and linked through a conceptual framework developed by the relevant concepts as the frame of its analysis. Data was collected through primary methods such as interviews and observations and secondary sources such as books, journals, newspaper clippings and magazines. The results show that the works from the SI+SA Exhibition attempted to convey a message to address humanitarian problems such as responsibility, behaviour, awareness and sacrifice. The structure of the message conveys content that represents the meaning of the values of health, hygiene and creativity that ultimately encourages the community to play their respective roles in addressing the issue of waste management and recycling on a global scale. It is hoped that this research can show that using recycled materials as an alternative to producing creative artwork is a practical approach. Indirectly, raising awareness about recycling is no longer an option but rather an obligation to all levels of society to be cultured in daily life to ensure the environment's future is secure.

Keywords: *Recycle, Visual Arts, Recycled Arts, SI+SA Exhibition.*

INTRODUCTION

Improper waste disposal has resulted in environmental pollution, which has affected the quality of human life. Undoubtedly, our society still has not fully aware of the importance of recycling. Assoc. Prof. Dr Haliza Abdul Rahman, in her position as a Senior Lecturer, Health Department of Universiti Putra Malaysia, has stated that Malaysians throw away recyclable garbage worth RM476 millions in 2018. Paper has been recorded as the highest waste production at 17 per cent or RM205 million, followed by plastics at 9 per cent or RM163 million.

A study in Malaysia has shown that 36 per cent of respondents admitted to having discarded plastic bags after being used once. On average, an individual put away almost eight plastic bags weekly despite the charges of RM0.20 per plastic bags. This charge has been implemented to encourage Malaysians to use fewer plastic bags (Muhammad Farid Ahmad Tarmiji, 2020). Another developed country, such as France, has taken a more drastic approach to ban plastic bags altogether. The implementation of banning the usage of plastic bags urges individuals to use a recycling bag, but it also helps raise awareness on the importance of saving the earth.

Our government has initiated the implementation of recycling activity for some time. Recycle can reduce the need and lengthen the lifespan of a dumping ground. It can also reduce pollution and save excessive energy consumption. Recycle also is the cheaper option compared to the cost to maintain a landfill or other waste disposal systems. Most importantly, recycling can improve the quality of life of individuals as well as helping to build a country. The relationship between society and the environment can be harmonized through several approaches including by practicing a sustainable lifestyle. Sustainable practices and lifestyles require that every member of society establish a harmonious relationship with the environment to avoid the emergence of various negative effects on the environment and health (Noor. H. Cheku, 2017).

In a visual art context, the variety and the form of the resulting work are seen as a response or approach to recycling. However, artists also aspire to be equally involved in contributing the ideas, views and feelings that beset them. One of the programmes that received much attention in the country's visual art industry is the SI + SA Exhibition at the Shah Alam Gallery. This exhibition displayed artworks by a group of lecturers from the Department of Fine Arts, UiTM Seri Iskandar, Perak. Besides being appreciated or entertained by the critics and observers, each beautiful artwork also designs to conveys a meaningful message. There are also artists who have used surplus percha cloth and the cloth is recycled into a work of art, the surplus cloth is arranged in its color and finally it forms an interesting paint. The work reminds the author of the use of percha cloth as a ceiling to cover the zinc roof in a village house (Azizan Rahman Paiman, 2020). This exhibition is planned by Aznan Omar as the curator of Al-Birunni Gallery, together with representatives from all the departments in the Faculty of Arts and Design, UiTM Perak, Seri Iskandar campus.

Based on the statements above, this study will attempt to approach, understand and explain the context of recycling in the artworks displayed during the SI + SA Exhibition. The objectives of this study are in parallel with the research questions that will be addressed in this paper; (1) What are the process involved in producing artworks from recyclable material; (2) What is the form and outcome from the completed visual artwork; and (3) What is the value of the artwork.

This study is able to benefit and contribute to the academic and practical fields. Academically, this paper should expand the field of recycling knowledge (reuse, repurpose, reconstruct, recontextualise, dan recontour) in the context of visual arts and works of art. While in practice, it can be used to guide people who want to understand in-depth any visual artworks and inspire other artists who prefer to adopt recycling theme in their artworks.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recycle

According to Act 672, Solid Waste and Public Cleansing Management, recycling can be defined as collecting and separating to produce an output. Therefore, recycling occurs when a waste material is processed according to the recycling procedure and eventually produces the equivalent product. Recycling is converting residual waste materials into other materials with a particular value (Perbadanan Pengurusan Sisa Pepejal Dan Pembersihan Awam, 2013).

In other words, recycling can refer to (1) activities involving the modification, adaptation, and construction of materials to produce new supplies from the original material. This recycling activity is one of the initiatives to reduce solid waste and proves to be an efficient way to conserve the environment. However, this waste collection system for recycling poses some problems, especially in the implementation phase, where it requires high cost, massive space and confusion on the recycling system (Muhamad Azhar Bin Abas, 2013).

With this recycling activity, waste or used, old materials can produce something (2) that is useful and functional to be put forth as new items. It includes reusing the items as their original function or distributes them to much-needed parties. Recyclable items are papers, newspapers, magazines and books; materials made up of iron, metal, aluminium and cans; materials made up of boxes, glass, glass bottles and mirror containers and materials made up of plastic such as bottle and food packaging (Norsyazwani Jaafar, 2009).

In addition, this recycling activity can also be referred to and viewed from the aspects of (3) moral and commercial values. This knowledge and activities of recycling and solid waste management have been incorporated into Malaysian's education system by introducing it in the 2019 new secondary school standard curriculum for the Form 3 Geography subject. The primary purpose of this plan is to produce human capital through the application of environmental values and cultivate recycling practices in each student while encouraging them to appreciate and love their environment. (Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia, 2013-2025).

From a different perspective, meaningful involvement in producing outputs from waste materials can also be a side-income source. Our society tends to show interest in items that look attractive due to the customisation of the used items. Recycling activities are increasingly shared by the community today through social media platform and highlighting commercially produced materials. Society was also becoming wiser in evaluating second-hand goods and using their creativity to process them into an attractive and exclusive form. For example, used jeans can be transformed into bags and pencil cases. It will become more attractive by decorating it with simple accessories (Ahmad Ridzuan Bin Abd Rahman, 2018).

Visual Arts

Historical records show that visual art in Malaysia began in the 19th century where it was produced by European officials, immigrants, and travellers who came to Malaya to trade. Most of them were the employee for a trading and shipping company; East India Company. The production of watercolours and paintings is seen as (1) an activity for them to unwind after daily dealing with trade and local people. Works depicting tropical landscapes and the emphasis on greenery have cultivated and nurtured the locals to love their nature and environment at that time (Zakaria Ali, 2015).

Consequently, in the early 20th century, there was a debate on the modern terminology and the pioneering figures in visual arts in Malaysia. Paintings are still too alien among the Malays as they were still known for weaving, carving, and wicker. Drawing using pencil and ink, using watercolour or oil paint on paper or canvas, was rarely done. Among the factors that influence this are the beliefs of the surrounding community, cultural heritage, and the difficulty of obtaining materials. Awareness of the visual arts among the

Malays began to be recognised by the publication of *Hikayat Abdullah* in 1849. This book is the first book that contains the illustrations of figures which had been published in Malaya (Ahmad Suhaimi Mohd. Noor, 2011).

In today's modern era, art can be seen as a creative and innovative field and can produce and create (2) art forms that lead to aesthetics elements and functional. The work of arts is sourced from the absolute power of thought and art in the individual's mind and then translated into natural objects that can be seen with naked eyes. Therefore, art possesses uniqueness, ranging from the ordinary to the extraordinary. Sometimes, an artist only requires a limited space to an infinite space, from a small space to an ample space that is global. When these artworks are exhibited, they are more diverse and can have a conventional character such as painting, sculpture, printmaking, and non-conventional characters as mixtures of ideas, materials, techniques, and underlying themes. In other words, creating an artwork enables an individual to practice perceiving something with a broader perspective from the aesthetics or applied aspects (Mikke Susanto, 2004).

As a result, more researchers and visual art critics nowadays are more familiar with the new way of appreciating an artwork that involves characteristics that emphasise additional aesthetic elements in their critical appreciation. Terms such as ethnography, field study, observation, case study, symbolic interactions, phenomenology, historiography, and interview, which were initially the working procedure of studies in other fields, have become common in the visual art case study (Tjetjep Rohendi Rohidi, 2011).

By understanding the aspects above, artists are also seen appreciating culture or visual art heritage and practising it in their daily lives, especially in (3) enhancing their value of life. By considering art as a culture or cultural subsystem, its function can be identified in human life. Art is a way of life in society by conducting activities in which its essence is to formulate a model of cognition, a symbolic system, or the giving of holistically related meaning is historically interpreted symbols (Tjetjep Rohendi Rohidi, 2000). Indirectly, they can practice their understanding of visual art and increase their sensitivity to become a more rational artist and handle life by bringing along good values.

Recycled Art

Recycled art is an initiative of artists in (1) producing creative artworks using waste materials. As stated in the 4th Edition of *Kamus Dewan*, the word *residue* means something left after use. It also means surplus, remnant, waste, worthless trivial waste, something leftover or in excess. These recycled arts often refers to artwork that (2) symbolises the environment or has (3) the awareness and a feeling of love for nature. Waste materials, found and fibre waste act as alternative materials recycled in various mediums and formats to produce artworks based on nature (Azizan Rahman Paiman, 2020).

Referring to the theory of surrealism, any object found in an environment, such as shells, can be used in the process of producing artwork. These objects are technically given an artistic touch by an artist, including natural objects discarded or found, either by chance or unintentionally (Peter & Linda Murray, 1997). This recycled art occurs when there is an individuals awareness of the responsibility to care for the environment.

This expression of recycled art is nothing new in the world of visual arts; we can see this art movement from the past. An example is a collage artwork produced by Pablo Picasso and George Braque that used old newspapers and magazines materials to create their artwork in the early 20th century, such as Pop Art, Trash Art and Drap Art. In 2002, William McDonough and Michael Braungart successfully defined a concept called *upcycle* in their book "*Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*". This approach can also be referred to as the *readymades* conceptual works introduced by Marcel Duchamp. The appropriation of art and the use of these discarded items is one of Duchamp's artistic strategies by way of borrowing, modifying subjects, objects or ideas (Muhd Syafiq Fawwaz, 2021).

Among the eco-artist from the western countries who are actively creating art in sculptures, lighting and even interior decoration products based on discarded materials is Sarah Turner. Her residential area was faced with the problem of a high volume of used waste production. Initially, Sarah viewed herself as someone who produced traditional craft arts and considered this activity merely a hobby. However, today, she is a successful entrepreneur who has inspired other entrepreneurs and small traders in Nottingham, UK. She also actively participates in prestigious art exhibitions such as in London, Milan, Paris and Los Angeles. She also establishes Contemporary Maker Movement, which brings together many craft professionals from all over the country.

The use of these discarded materials is also significant in Malaysia's artists, Nor Tijan Firdaus's artworks. Application from sources considered waste, recycled materials, and everyday object has redefined this type of artwork. Nor Tijan establishes identity by cultivating ideas from the sculpting tradition and assemblage art. The manipulation of used materials in his New Formal exhibition should be seen as a new understanding of artwork that bridges the gap between reality and art and offers ideas and re-questioning the actual function of art (Zena Khan, 2021).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative method approach because this paper attempts to analyse a social science phenomenon. As depicted in other qualitative studies, the study of art involves efforts such as the researcher's in-depth and direct involvement in the field by conducting surveys through detailed observation, interviews and compiling relevant documents. Data is collected through the observation method without direct communication with the informant (Sabitha Marican, 2006).

This method systematically interprets the events, behaviours, objects, artworks and the words used in the artworks. Current behaviours or issues are recorded by observing directly and applying knowledge, experience, and expertise to interpret what has been observed (Tjetjep Rohendi Rosidi, 2011).

The understanding attains from the concepts above can be summarised as the conceptual theory framework below. This framework can also be used to analyse the recycling concept in visual arts from the exhibited artworks in the SI + SA Exhibition in Shah Alam Gallery. It can be described that the recycled art from the SI + Sa Exhibition is positioned in the middle as the object of analysis of the study, which consists of the elements of art and design principles.

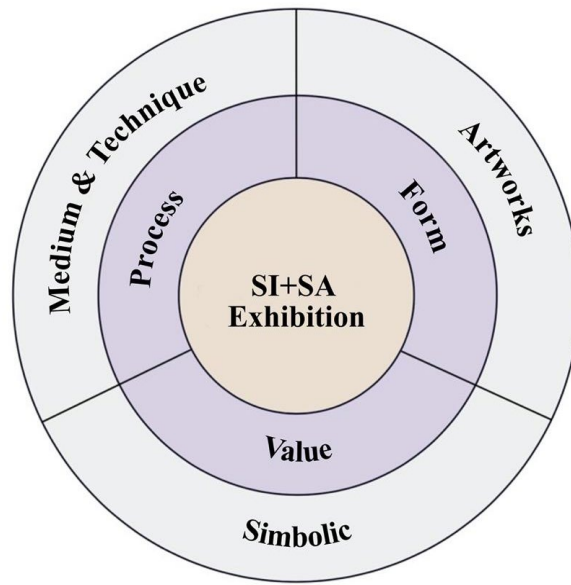


Figure 1 : A recycling study model in the context of visual arts

Source: Changara (2007) and Sudjana and Rivai (2005)

Furthermore, the analysis is continued by identifying and explaining the processes, forms and values found at the studied recycling stage. The study at this stage emphasises how these recycling activities are implemented in creating new artworks that possess their functions and values. Thus, recycling is seen as having a direct relationship with the artists' intention to convey depending on the approach implemented.

Next, the study is unfolded by identifying the media and the techniques used to create an artwork. Then, the forms of visual artwork that exhibit the artistic value, aesthetics and symbolic values behind the creation of the artwork will be discussed in-depth. In interpreting the symbol and its meaning, its understanding or context may be associated with the aspects of experience, social and culture, knowledge of events, and history. Finally, the relationship between recycling activities and the creation of visual artwork can be determined and explain thoroughly through this method.

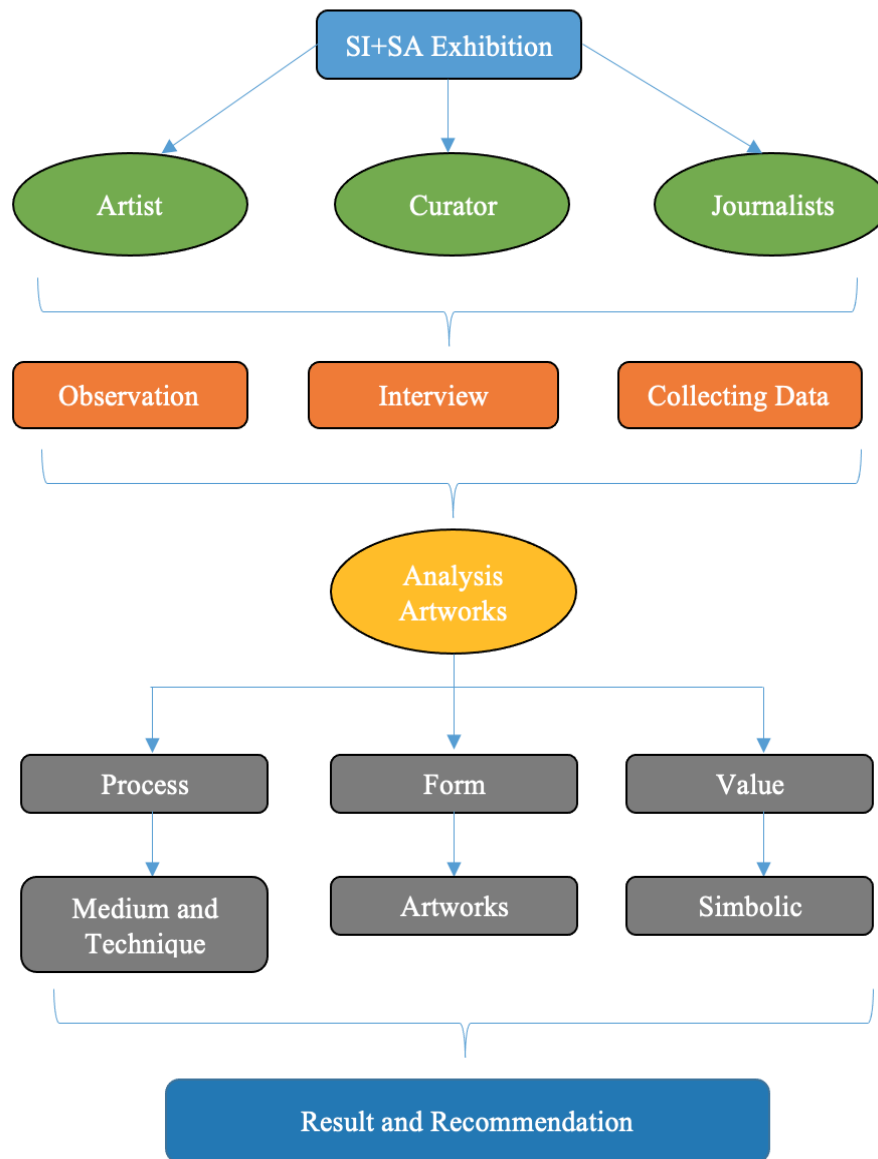


Figure 2: Flowchart of Research Process

FINDING

Table 1: Method Art Criticism (Title: Permukaan; Study 1) The Critical Process by Edmund Feldman



| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <p>Artworks 1</p> | <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Artist: Hamidi Hadi Title: Permukaan; Study 1 Medium: Mixed Media on Cement Board Size: 52 X 51 cm Year: 2020</p> </div> |
| <p>Process</p> | <p>This artwork is made from recycled materials, which is coloured crushed papers and placed on a square cement surface. Materials such as used drawing papers are in abundance in the artist's environment in his position as a lecturer from the Department of Fine Arts, Faculty of Arts and Design. The cement is the remaining material from his house renovation project.</p> |
| <p>Form</p> | <p>The form that is to be expressed is challenging to be explained through the visual aspect. However, it is more of an abstract form that shows pieces of paper that focus on the crack surface resulting from the recycled materials. Scribble lines can be seen on the paper's surface produced from fine brush smears of various colours.</p> |
| <p>Value</p> | <p>The use of these recycled materials can provide the ability in publishing proposals of form, meaning and creation of aesthetic value. The use of this material also acts as an effort to manifest appreciation, experience, immerse the memory of the material and its existence in the realm of man and nature. In other words, it is a reflection of nature and life.</p> |

Table 2: Method Art Criticism (Title: Is + Sa = Keluar Masuk) The Critical Process by Edmund Feldman

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|--------------------------|---|
| <p>Artworks 2</p> |  <p style="text-align: center;"> Artist: Issarezal Ismail Title: Is + Sa = Keluar Masuk Medium: Acrylic on Paper Box Size: 48 X 96 cm Year: 2020 </p> |
| <p>Process</p> | <p>The artist modestly creates his artwork by manipulating recycled materials from used boxes. The artist also manipulates these materials by giving them a tearing effect on some parts of the box to create texture. The background of this painting is left in its natural state to retain the originality of the paper surface. There is a realistic illustration of a mouse in acrylic paint in the middle of the painting.</p> |
| <p>Form</p> | <p>Visually, it depicts a rat going in and out through a narrow hole in the middle of the perforated box's surface. This situation demonstrated the actual state of the animal's habitat, which mainly in a landfill or a waste-crowded area.</p> |
| <p>Value</p> | <p>The use of boxes from recycled materials and the existing texture elements can describe a dirty landfill and indirectly create an emotion of discomfort to the observer. The use of rats as subjects is symbolic of the artist's experience, which illustrates the challenges, resistance and tests of life that he has gone through over the years. It also aims to recall the memory of the past when going through the painful situation and difficulties experienced while being a former student (Issarezal, 2020).</p> |

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| | <p>back then, most of the assignments had to be completed using waste materials due to financial constraints and inability to afford drawing papers.</p> |
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Table 3: Method Art Criticism (Title: Simpang Kejayaan) The Critical Process by Edmund Feldman

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|--------------------------|--|
| <p>Artworks 3</p> | <div data-bbox="683 581 1122 1037" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="743 1073 1062 1234"> Artist: Norzaleha Zainun Title: Simpang Kejayaan Medium: Mix-media Size: 61 X 61 cm Year: 2020 </p> |
| <p>Process</p> | <p>The artist is a lecturer from the Department of Fashion Arts, Faculty of Art & Design. Therefore, patchwork was chosen to be the recycled material used as the primary material in producing this artwork. Various patchwork materials are used in this artwork, such as piping, calico and satin, which are carefully stitched and sewn using fine threads. This meticulous and neat patchwork indirectly demonstrates her expertise in using good sewing techniques in line with her career as a fashion lecturer with approximately ten years of experience.</p> |
| <p>Form</p> | <p>Visually, various sizes of patchwork are cut into small pieces in geometric shapes. The patterns found on the patchwork pieces show a braided arrangement of various fabric sizes and the appearance of bright and harmonious colours. Some fabric patterns use subtle weave elements with softer colours. It is further emphasised by the thick gold-coloured braids found throughout this work</p> |

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|--------------|---|
| Value | The arrangement of geometric-shaped patchwork symbolises a process towards success. Every success requires high sacrifice and struggle. The spirit of never giving up and <i>istiqomah</i> is the key behind every success that one wants to enjoy. This patchwork arrangement also reminds the author of patchwork used as a ceiling to cover the zinc roof in a village house once upon a time (Azizan Rahman Paiman, 2020). Indirectly restores the beautiful memories of childhood. |
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CONCLUSION

The exhibited artworks at the SI + SA Exhibition are not just a combination of recycled materials and an exhibition of artwork creation techniques that possesses the aspects of beauty or entertainment alone. However, it is a tool or non-verbal communication medium produced by the artist to convey something in the form of reprimand or reminder related to human issues or problems such as behaviour, responsibility, awareness, love, and sacrifice. These are the fundamental of human nature. This approach indirectly publicises the situation and encourages the surrounding community to change their behaviour and act better and rationally.

These artworks also serve as the artists' expressions or symbols about the value of an artwork produced from waste materials. These artworks also construct values such as health values, hygiene values, creativity values, and the values of awareness and responsibility, which ultimately invites the community to play their respective roles in addressing waste management and recycling on a global scale. In the longer run, it expects future generations to better understanding and implements recycling practices on an ongoing basis

Recycling art enthusiasts consider this type of artwork interesting, but they are also motivated by contributing to the well-being of the environment. This approach is also a fascinating educational method to raise recycling awareness in the local community, primarily to educate the children about the consequences of our actions on the environment and the importance of recycling practices in improving hygiene and having a better quality of life. Recycling is no longer an option but rather the duty of all groups of people to be practised in their daily life to ensure the environment's future is secure

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