

# The Collective Artistic Identity Of *Sebiji Padi* Art Group Through Its Artworks

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**Abstract.** This study aims to identify the collective artistic identity of the *Sebiji Padi* art group in Malaysia through the works of art produced, covering aspects of ideas or themes in the visual forms. A qualitative approach that emphasizes a descriptive, holistic, detailed and in-depth explanatory system was implemented to analyze the form and interpret the symbolic meaning taken from data sources such as visual artwork, documents and observations. The study's findings showed that the artworks from the *Sebiji Padi* art group are thematic reflections on the issues and polemics of self and socially expressed through the application of symbols and personalities in a surrealistic style that leads to a collective identity.

**Keywords:** Artistic Identity, Sebiji Padi Art Group, Collective Identity, Artwork.

## 1 Introduction

The world of contemporary art has undergone a rapid transformation over the past decade, demanding new territories and assimilating up to date creative practices in the arts. As a result, contemporary art is becoming more structured than ever before, with the capitals of each country competing with each other to participate in the global market.

Along with global developments, contemporary art in Malaysia is also united with the phenomenon and faces various problems in its expansion efforts. It is also making efforts to elevate its importance in the current context to maintain its existence. The transition and transformation of the landscape of modern art or Malaysian art have spanned almost 90 years with the involvement of previous artists as well as the emergence of new artists from various races and educational backgrounds. This process of transition and change has gone through a very positive phase of development from the pioneering era to the present.

Artists either individually or collectively emerge alternately to revitalize contemporary art around the world. Artists are producing signs, determining directions, as well as creating innovative momentum in their art. Artists can also reflect the values and aspirations of their own society and humanity through their artworks. The themes that range from internal issues to art polemics, social or political phenomena, and economic changes to ideology are all created to the maximum extent possible into a work of art full of aesthetics and rich in meaning. Turner (1) asserts that contemporary visual art is a product of the clash of past, present and future, a confrontation with all forms of change in which they all interact with each other.

The above explanation hints that contemporary art today is present as a space for artists to express and reflect on the descriptions or polemics that are taking place in the context surrounding the art. Nur Hanim Khairuddin (2) explains that various spaces, collectives and alternative art initiatives are becoming increasingly active and complex. They are playing important roles in advancing contemporary art and elevating the social function of art in Malaysia to the next level.

In celebrating the progressive development of Malaysian art in the millennium era, the artists have strived to create their own identity by bringing the aesthetics of their artworks to a fresher path than its history. Currently, several polemics arise as the country enters the third millennium. The polemic is the result or impact of the progress, development and change on society and culture within the same era.

In connection with the development of contemporary art, one can argue that in the past, many academic studies or writings on art in this country focused more on a broader context, namely placing it within the scope of Malaysia (2-12). In addition, most academic studies or writings are more inclined to examine identity in visual arts and culture (13-15).

Due to this and the preliminary clarification described earlier, it is necessary to approach, investigate, and explain artistic identity through contemporary visual artwork produced by dominant art groups such as *Sebiji Padi* as a significant representative of other art groups and collectives in Malaysia.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Due to circumstances explained previously, it can be concluded that the development of the Arts Collective in Malaysia moves in line with the development of modern Malaysian art. The desire of Malaysian artists from the early 1930s in particular, was prompted by the need for artists to pursue their creative endeavors in a collective environment. Agreement and purpose related to the objectives, stance, and constitution is an effort that must be done in unison to achieve the behavior of the arts that they practiced.

The art agenda is now changing, and the role of artists or art collectives shifts accordingly from drawing beautiful landscapes, timekeepers and critics through works on the aesthetics of art to finding and filling gaps in the discipline of art itself. Thus, the presence of the new art collectives in the fine arts in Malaysia indirectly advances contemporary art and elevates the social function of art to the next level.

Artists, through this collective, become direct or implicit agents or voices. Their works and activities are often critical and show a sense of concern for the situations that are taking place, especially in the country. This is a positive action in conveying a sense of being human and as a micrograph of our society. At the same time, they can shape an example of human behavior in social structures. The role played may vary according to social changes occurring in the national environment. The existence of this new collective reflects the importance of collectivity in achieving great goals and visions.

## 1.3 Objective

Based on the research problems that have been presented, a total of two (2) research objectives have been formulated as follows:

- (1) Identify the idea or theme of the art group *Sebiji Padi* which is expressed through the use of symbols or signs.

- (2) Analyze the intra-aesthetic aspects covering the form, type, and style of their visual artwork to identify a collective identity.

## 2 Key Terms

The title of this study is "The Collective Artistic Identity of *Sebiji Padi* Art Group through Its Artworks". Based on this title, several key terms may be formulated to refer to certain concepts such as visual art, artistic and collective identity. Therefore, it is necessary to apply a conceptual explanation to avoid misunderstanding or bias in the terms used.

### 2.1 Visual Artwork

As a concept, Barrett (16) states that visual artwork uses media to organize subjective experiences into visual forms. Although the statement seems concise, it can be concluded that the symptoms defined as a work of visual art can point to two directions. The first direction points to an object, a material thing or a work of art as a form of expression that can be referred to as a form. In contrast, the second direction points to the content of the message, idea or theme behind the visual artwork, often referred to as the content.

Visual artwork is a work created solely to fulfil the need to express a beautiful (aesthetic) taste and is not intended to fulfil a use or function of a practical nature. It also has a specific form because it seems to transcend its actual visual existence. In other words, it is deprived of being a practical object in the first place but presented to its audience as more than an arrangement of facts (17).

Visual artwork is born from creative artists and always strive to increase sensitivity and perception of the dynamics of community life (18). It requires the artist's creativity in the process of creating a work of art, and theoretically, it requires mature thinking. Indirectly, it is an inner expression of an artist that is cast through mediums and tools.

The existence of a visual artwork is determined by the appearance of the visual elements or visual essentials surrounding it (19) in the form of lines, shapes, spaces, colors, and other similar elements. These elements do not have to be present in a complete state on a work of art because each of these elements is created to bring something to a particular image.

The basic element of the formation of this visual artwork contributes more towards the world of objects, matter, substance, physical, as well as everything that man accepts as an external part of his mind (20). Rational thoughts or knowledge have been reduced or framed into the intellect of natural, rational consciousness, or awareness of an object or consciousness when it is not quite agreed upon. This issue can be studied in an intra-aesthetic context.

The components that are visually present will be developed through the placement of the subject of the study. The subject of this study will then become the creative stimulus of the artists in an effort to create pleasing forms (18). In general, it relates to everything that can be identified from the real world, such as humans, nature, places, events, or objects of human creation (21). The subject of study in a work of art can be an individual object or in groups, and it can also be a combination of selected subjects.

The theme in the success of a work of art is a reflection of the artist's thoughts. In this regard, Nooryan (19) explains that the theme is an idea that the creator of the artwork wants to communicate to the audience. Usually, the theme can be related to cultural, social, religious,

educational, political or developmental elements. Visual art is an artist's tool or instrument to realize his artistic ideas so that they can be recognized by others (22).

The diversity in the use of themes by artists in producing works of art acts as the turmoil of creativity towards the world and its environment (23) in either the relationship with oneself or the relationship with the outer circle, which continues to move, change and evolve.

## 2.2 Collective

In general, the word 'collective' will refer to and be directed at togetherness in the activity or production of something. According to *Kamus Dewan Edisi Ke Empat* (24), 'collective' means together or en masse as a group to accomplish something, the collective of a subject or the act of collecting. Nur Hanim Khairuddin (25) further explains that the concept of "collective" can also be defined as an assembly body or group "collective for all collectives".

Issarezal & Humin (26) view the collective word from two inseparable sides. The first side refers to its nature as a union of individuals joined together in one group. In comparison, the second side relates to the actions or activities performed by them as a group of individuals.

The term "collective" is widely used as an umbrella term for various social formations, such as groups, communities, organizations, people, spectators, or gatherings. The concept developed here implies "collective" as a specific form, although fragile, it is a temporary episode of dynamic stabilization in reciprocal feelings and self-understanding from the actors involved in this formation (27).

Usually, in an act to achieve an objective with a large mission, the actors or individuals involved will plan together, whether temporarily or permanently, and their involvement in social matters will be engaged together. But, apart from that, a collective is also a group of entities that share or are motivated by at least one problem or common interest, working together to achieve a common goal.

A collective artist can participate in more exhibitions a year and bring in a more significant audience and increased exposure for individual artists on an international scale. Collective artists also develop their strengths by highlighting aspects of sharing among members as well as aspects of practicality to make significant progress for the larger art world as a whole.

Collective artists are also an intimate part of post-modern artistic creation in visual art. Consequently, their presence exposes a wide range of issues, including art practice descriptions, exhibitions, sales systems, publicity and critique, and art-making styles and subjects (28).

Steinfeld (29) asserts that a collective is the clustering of parts of people who have similarities in 'values, ideas, patterns of behavior and norms'. In other words, by communicating with ease, they also share common interests and perspectives that indicate a level of respect for each other that represent the meaning of friendship.

## 2.3 Artistic Identity

Artistic identity is two nouns that refer to the question of identity and artistic. The familiarity of this artistic identity will be seen through the creation of a design or work of art determined by the artist in a distinctive way (30). An artist who remains faithful to the originality of life and their own experience in creating works of art through his personal interpretation of place, subject, culture, past and present life will eventually produce an artistic identity.

Artistic identity is a special system of symbols molded by one's values, making it possible for others to settle into a particular group. The realization of artistic identity becomes real because of its manifestation in the form of artworks (31).

Discussion about the identity of art is placed at the level of the cultural sub-system as the embodiment of values referencing the pattern of behavior of members of society supporting it (32). This identity can be traced through the activity of creation within the process of creating something to be beautifully, usefully or amazingly accomplished by oneself using one's physical ability, or showing the work of art production, beauty, and usefulness of objects created by humans (33) as a supporter of a particular culture.

Artistic identity refers to the artist who is distinctly producing a creation of a work in his/her own way by blending artistically until an identity or identification emerges in his/her artwork. Two aspects of art are considered within the scope of aesthetics or presentations. The two aspects include the form and skill in producing styles. Meaning, the linkup is considered as the symbol of message and relevance.

### **2.3.1 Identity**

Identity is a term applied in creating and accepting us as a society actively involved in the elaboration of all forms of life events that are considered historical (14). The word identity is also synonymous with 'self, personality, individuality' and 'uniqueness'.

Yasraf Amir Piliang (34), clarifies that identity is a matter of influence, change, transformation, interaction between races, shifts, contradictions and identity paradoxes. Identities are dynamic, moving and changing due to a world of life formed by strong interdependent situations, strong influences and great competition between its elements.

The continuity of life in a society can be described on the basis of life experiences that are collectively practiced and defined. On the other hand, Zakaria Ali (35) insists that identity is a combination of values and similarities.

This value is placed as an idea by an individual who has certain elements such as appearance, skin color, language, religion, and other things that form the backbone of life. Therefore, understanding the way identity exists, the paradigm underlying identity, the ideology behind identity, the way identity is used is very important for a nation to develop (36-37).

Alternatively, Abdul Halim Husain (38) defines identity as the identification of membership based on individuals that represent a group. This definition, according to him, is an identification to represent certain groups and clusters. Man creates something, not from nothing. Man creates something from something that has existed before. Every artist becomes creative and intelligent because it departs from the material that has been created before. This is what we usually call tradition (22).

Identity is the originality of a product of social development. Identity should not be understood as something that is fixed and unchanging but as "an emotionally charged description of ourselves" (39). It is caused by an emotional, changeable, and rational identity, which depends on who the individual is in a relationship with and in a particular context.

Identity is also temporary because identity can change depending on the context in which the individual is in. In forming the identity, there will be two processes, namely rejection (exclusion) and acceptance (inclusion). In the formation of the identity, there will be the question of rejecting things that are contrary and accepting things that are appropriate for the identity.

There is no exception that within identity, there will always be conflicting values. The emergence of identity is closely linked to past social, cultural, economic, and even political relationships that have overshadowed artistic activity. The concept of 'identity' can also be defined as "a sense of self that develops as the child differentiates from parents and family and

takes place in society” (40). This concept brings meaning to the image a person possesses of who he/she is and what the identification says about him/her.

Even though a person has an identity, this concept is also related to the social group where the individual resides. Individual identity can be different from social identity (41). This process can occur through the change of gender, religion, way of thinking, and so on outside the original identity.

Having an identity will not make an individual or a group change. Still, it cannot be separated at all because a man will feel very anxious or exhausted when he feels he does not have an identity. As individuals or collectively, human beings need identity, and identity is not only individual but also collective or racial (42).

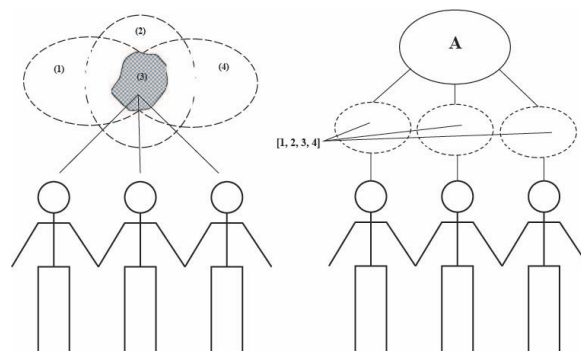
### 2.3.2 Collective Identity

Tjetjep Rohendi Rohidi (31) justifies that collective or social human identity has the same characteristics as those possessed by other identities owned by individual human beings. It lies in its nature containing the symbols of the culture of that social group, in addition to the recognition of membership in that group that has not yet taken place in other self-identities. It is also a matter of meaning (43).

Jenkins (43) reiterates that being collective is an important part of social life. It happens by distinguishing the identities of different groups that can be associated with others. Awareness of different identities provides several personal indications of how that suit us and allows us to relate to them.

The artistic identity of the collective refers to the same system of symbols, which are referenced by the members of the collective (31). The incarnation of this system of symbols gives an outstanding possibility to the collective members to carry out the process of creation and produce relatively similar works. In other words, they are more focused on collective identity instead of individual identity. Therefore, the process and artwork produced will further highlight the special features and uniqueness of the collective.

Figure 1 visually illustrates the identity of the collective. The visual part marked with (A) is the shared idea that has been guided or referred to as "collective representation" by E. Durkheim (36). The visual shows that the citizens of the community bear their cultural system in their heads. Each cultural system is integrated through interactions that will give birth to the same parts (lines) and other parts. That same part is what produces the collective artistic identity.



**Figure 1:** Collective Identity

Source: Visual Collective Identity was adapted from Durkheim (1895) in Rohidi (2000).

The characteristics of collective artistic identity will emerge through: (1) the ideas of the collective members, (2) the ideas of the collective members whose theme of thoughts or existence contains unique collective characteristics, (3) the ideas of the collective members as much as possible reside in other concerned collectives of high values so that they can be a source of pride to them and they want to identify themselves with the art, and (4) the recognition of other people or collectives in the framework of its social interaction.

The artistic identity of the collective can be seen and lies in the art in the form of ideas that are reflected in the creation process and existence of the work. This is particularly noticeable in traditional arts.

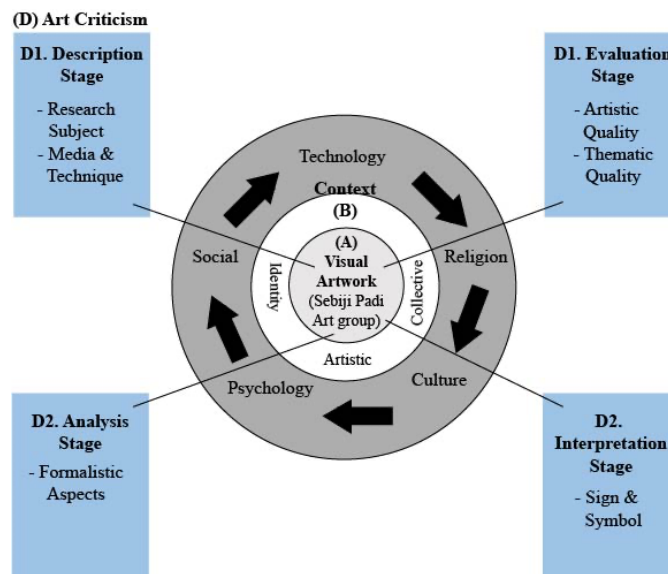
### **3 Methodology**

In order to approach, understand and further explain the visual artworks from the *Sebiji Padi* art group, this study will adopt the framework of art research which is fundamentally taken from the framework of qualitative research. This is in line with what has been expressed by Creswell (44) that qualitative research has great potential to be used to explore and understand the symbolic meanings that result from human activities or results of a human, social or cultural problem.

It should be emphasized that not all visual artworks that have been created by members of the *Sebiji Padi* art group will be discussed in this study. This means that only a few selected works from this group were analyzed. This is mainly because not all of the members in this group are actively producing works. The main criteria used for the selection of these works are determined through the works that have been produced along with the themes or issues raised. A total of two works from each member will be selected to represent the identity held by this art group. Inevitably, there will be a clash between styles, techniques and languages in the delivery process.

This study obtained data about artwork through several data collection methods such as observations, interviews and document data. These three methods of data collection were considered relevant to obtain a sufficient amount of data that are relevant to the context discussed by this study. To further facilitate data collection, recordings were made during the interview process, and a camera was also used to observe the visual art works examined.

In terms of analysis, this study will analyze several selected visual artworks from the *Sebiji Padi* art group through the approach of art criticism, as proposed by Barrett (16) and Barrett (21) below:



**Figure 2:** A model of the study of art critique of visual art works of *Sebiji Padi* Art Group in artistic identity

Source: The model is adapted from Barrett (1982) and Barrett (2000)

Based on the study model previously described, the model comprises four levels of structure. This study explores artistic identity through visual artwork. Central to the study is the model as its primary object (A. Visual Artwork), followed by several factors that influence the visual artwork itself. Sections B and C (Context) are the existence of social phenomena in art and, at the same time influencing it.

Art criticism will be used to view the important content of artwork (A), which will probably show elements of the phenomenon and may also display the identity (D) of these elements. As an object that can be read by observation, the analysis will be carried out through several stages. The first stage describes (D1) what appears from the work, such as its subjects, media and techniques. In comparison, the next level is to analyze (D2), where the formalistic aspects will be reviewed and observed, including the existing elements of art. To search for signs and symbols in the work, they will be evaluated by interpretation (D3), and ideas or thematic ideas will be indirectly exposed. Upon the completion of the three stages, an evaluation process will be carried out (D4) where the findings to the question of artistic quality and thematic quality can be formulated.

Based on its relevance to the questions to be answered in this study, the process of art criticism will only be used at three levels (D1 to D3).



## 4 Findings & Discussion

The results of the analysis of this study can be organized into several sub-discussions according to members of the groups involved:

### 4.1 *Sebiji Padi*

*Sebiji Padi* is a studio space producing artworks supported by a group of graduate students from Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam. At the beginning of the establishment, this space was founded by Suhaimi Ahmad, Razif Rathi and Hazmi Sharoin. Then it was continued by Samsudin Wahab, Ruzzeki Harris, Azam Aris and Zul Husni. The space used as the artist's studio is located in Alam Megah, Shah Alam.

After several phases, the space was moved a few blocks from its original place as the membership grew. The new members who joined the studio are Haslin Ismail, Meor Saifullah Lulaed, Safwan Ahmad, Hery Zain and Hafiz Yusof.

*Sebiji Padi* is used to produce artworks, be active and acts as a center for artistic discourse. This is also an experimental project called *SOSOUND*, which is experimenting with performing arts activities with music. It is also a collaboration with members from other studios who also studied in UiTM.

In 2009, *Sebiji Padi* further developed its art direction by merging with several art groups and studios such as *Kersani*, *Ruang-Ruang Kosong*, *Pepak Tak Lumat* and *Warna Art Group* to become *Sebiji Padi* Art Community. In 2015, a group exhibition entitled FLUSH was held at the G13 Gallery, where the exhibition brought together members of the *Sebiji Padi* Art Community, showcasing the latest works of its members.

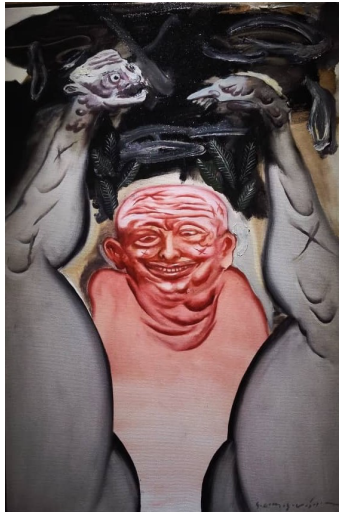
In this exhibition, 12 contents of *Sebiji Padi* Manifestos were born, which include:

1. The artist should have technical abilities (skills).
2. The artist is a king for himself (Principle).
3. The artist is not a trend follower (Originality).
4. The artist must be responsible for his/her artworks (Integrity and Dignity).
5. The art is fun yet extremely serious (Love, Passion and Thinker).
6. The artist should practice a multi-discipline attitude (Explore, Research, Experiment and Experiential with Different Kinds of Field).
7. The artist must have intellectuality (Smart and Intelligent).
8. The artist is a human being (Limitation).
9. The art should be fun (Expression of Emotion).
10. The art should represent yourself (Your True Colours).
11. The art should come from the heart while standing on the edge of perception (Pure and Decision Maker).
12. The art is the vehicle, and the artist is the driver (Purpose and Direction).

The members of *Sebiji Padi* also stressed that the main rules that must be abided with when producing works such as:

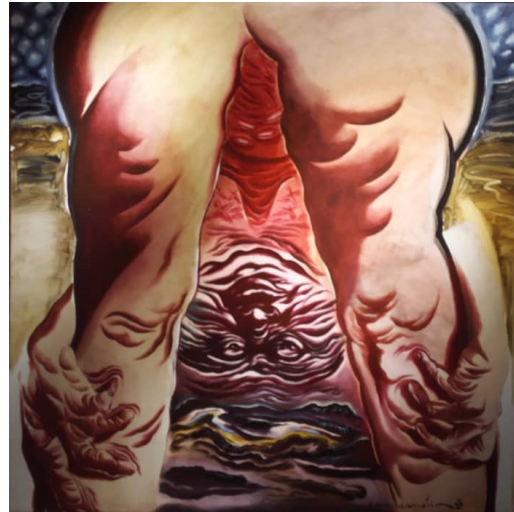
- a) The artist should not provoke the sensitivity of Islam and other religions.
- b) The artist should not provoke the sensitivity of Sultanate Institutions or Federal Law.
- c) The artist should not provoke racial and cultural sensitivities or incite any personal attack.

## 4.2 Samsudin Wahab



**Picture 1:** *Rindu Bayangan* (2020) Oil on Canvas

Source: Researcher



**Picture 2:** *Tonggeng* (2020) Oil on Canvas

Source: Researcher

In the work *Rindu Bayangan* [Pic 1], the painter uses oil paint on a rectangular canvas as a medium. The entire background is expressed through smooth brush strokes and the remnants of thick paint effects. Dark and bright colors are chosen for the entire painting, along with the image of an old man with wrinkles on his smiling face. A wrinkled and scarred face smiles, looking from behind the crotch slit.

The structure of human anatomy is the crotch that has human-headed hands. The crooked image can first be seen as a pair of fatty hands and with a head on each other side, observing the other. The crooked hands or scars on both hands seem to be having a dialogue with each other. Both hands with the head resemble vague images of statues which represent the spokespersons of the story in this work. The dark part of the background is a shade of a natural palm tree

The organic images in this artwork take the old man to the subconscious level, and these images only exist in the painter's memory. The painter tries to illustrate, hold a vague memory within himself on the canvas. The memory or scar is worked with the expression and urge of the fear of losing, and all that exists is a shadow of a subconscious dream (memory).

Although the *Tonggeng* [Pic 2] is a part of the oil paint series on canvas in a rectangular format, the image of a lush nude figure with a slouching state looks backwards in a vague state in terms of gender. This number is indicated by organic expression in its anatomical structure. It seems the plateau is looking back to what has happened before.

Oral traditions in the Malay world says, to determine whether an entity is a ghost or human, one needs to establish whether it is invalid or otherwise. In the context of this work, it also implies the act of looking back to the past, in other words, trying to recall something in the past.

The body parts of this figure also bear visible scars, and it is an image of the consequence or memory that is trying to be framed.

There is a strong presence of exasperation using bold lines and red colors as symbolic characterizations, although the subject's face is smiling. In this sense, this whole artwork exposes a powerful, cynical impression. Looking up or looking upside down is an expression of remembering things or past memories. The artist works on his own memory in a surreal style in order to organize each narrative of the story of the past.

#### 4.3 Haslin Ismail



**Picture 3:** “*Supermarionation*” (2011) Oil Pastel and Acrylic on Canvas

Source: Rimbun Dahan

**Picture 4:** “*Things to Come*” (2011) Acrylic on Canvas

Source: Rimbun Dahan

*Supermarionation* [Pic 3] is a work of oil pastel and acrylic medium on canvas. The work is rectangular in shape and painted with experimental image processing of the object. Its image is like a face covered with machine components. It is a machine that assembles human flesh and mechanical components.

The eyeballs look like humans, and the mouth resembles a speaker. In addition, the top of the head has a fan like a fighter jet. This work is a surrealist fantasy undertaken by painters experimenting with placing components on the human face. Fundamentally, it is a new subconscious object created by the painter. There are various elements and influences of Japanese comics, and they are combined as one object.

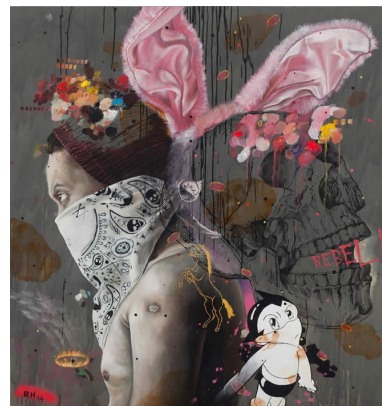
This work is like a clash between robots, machines and human anatomy. They are interconnected in giving rise to the expression of function and technology. Exploring foreign objects or objects worked through the artist's fantasy, which subconsciously makes this work

appear strange, stimulating, and requires imagination. When confronted with this work, an audience should explore it himself, and its interpretation is also the right of the individual.

Meanwhile, the work *Things to Come* [Pic 4] is an extension of the work from the same series. This work uses acrylic media on canvas and is also rectangular in shape. The whole work is like a close up of a human internal organ connected with wires instead of nerves. At a glance, an image offered is a cross-section of the back of the human face, where a part of the eye is blackened.

A smear of color is painted with a glazing technique, and the entire object is filled with droplets like saliva dripping. This work is also an experiment combining machines and humans through the painter's fantasy senses. A strong suggestion of surrealistic absurdity of technological and scientific apparatus is made in the form of a disorganized representation that materializes in the form of a face. If observed closely, it seems like an alien that never existed in the real world. It is like an inhabitant of a galaxy and is a new science fiction object. Surrealist fiction applies to this work.

#### 4.4 Ruzzeki Harris



**Picture 5:** *Bagai Bintang Di pagar Bulan* (2008) Mixed Media on Canvas (2 panels)

Source: HOM Art Trans

**Picture 6:** *Rebel* (2014) Oil and Arcylic on Canvas

Source: Wei-Ling Gallery

The work '*Bagai Bintang Di Pagar Bulan*' [Pic 5] is a large-scale two-dimensional work. This rectangular work is made using paint and mixed medium on canvas. The main image featured is a shirtless human figure sleeping on a crescent moon. The tumultuous background with dark and bright color tones is adorned with balls of various sizes. A groove of color coming out of the head adorns the background with the figure's right hand pointing upwards, as if in a semi-conscious state.

It can be interpreted that this work is a social critique of drug addiction as the main enemy to the country. While an individual is under the influence of drugs, his brain is not able to work properly, and everything that he sees and experiences is in his subconscious. This kind of situation resembles a world that belongs to a trapped person.

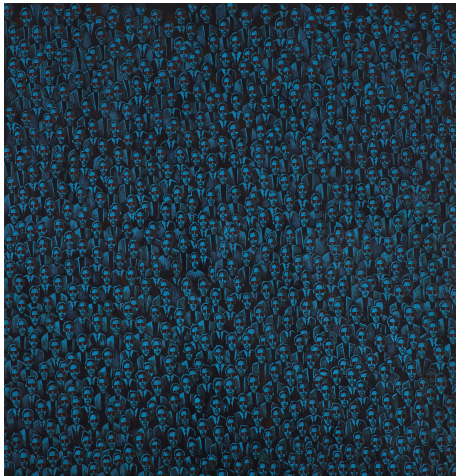
These cynical works are a satirical dismantling of current issues. Although the artwork cannot directly prevent the social problem caused by drug addiction, it is an indirect visual tempo. This painting is a social critique with a pop-surreal style, as it features issues related to the influence of drugs.

As for the work of *Rebel* [Pic 6], it is a work of painting using oil paint and acrylic on canvas. This work is also a social criticism. The images offered are of a shirtless figure wearing a half-face mask fashioned from a bandana. The background features skull sketch images with rabbit scarves and the Japanese anime character known as Astro Boy. Other supporting images are sketches of a horse and *Rebel* writing to reinforce this work.

This painting has a gray background, created as a base for mixing colors. A drizzle of dark color drips down from the top of the canvas. All of these images are at the center of the canvas as an affirmation. The figure of a man wearing this bandana can be interpreted as a young man (the use of the Astro Boy character) who is a rebel, angered by the state of his surroundings. The skull, on the other hand, can be considered as an endless struggle until death beckons.

This work is also an allusion to the community and observant artists who are taking issues that may be viral as influences in producing their works. This work is a pop-surrealist dream that conveys the concept of chaos and panic, with the text as a guide to the content and interpretation of the work.

#### 4.5 Azam Aris



**Picture 7:** *Killer On The Road (Storm)* (2015) Acrylic on Canvas

Source: HOM Art Trans

**Picture 8:** *Other Lives (To be Continued)* (2015) Acrylic on Canvas

Source: HOM Art Trans

*Killer on the Road (Storm)* [Pic 7] is a two-dimensional work painted using acrylic on a rectangular canvas. The surface of this canvas is adorned with repeated depictions of neatly dressed male figures in suits. The density of this arrangement of figures fills the space of the

canvas. At a glance, it is similar to the repetition of figures wearing sunglasses with different clothes.

Essentially, as an interpretation to illustrate the uniformity in dressing, it refers to the urbanites who represent social structures. The social phenomenon implies the herd mentality determined to hide the real person by covering the scene with sunglasses. As ordinary human beings, we can rarely predict people around us without their veil opened, even if they are in the same social system.

This work can be considered an artwork with a hint of surrealist style because the suggested space is not clear and dense without background support. However, if viewed from another perspective, it can be described as an assembly of urban people of different identities and personalities in a narrow space that makes the effects of modernization in this age possible.

On the other hand, the work *Other Lives (To be Continued)* [Pic 8] is also a two-dimensional work painted using the acrylic medium on a rectangular canvas. This work serves up images of figures of various ages and genders. These figures are arranged, resembling a photo-taking scene at a photography studio. It is like a picture of a big family gathered after a long absence.

Two important aspects emphasized in this work are the wearing of astronaut helmets as well as sunglasses. The wearing of astronaut helmets can certainly be interpreted as a situation that does not feature the real world. It is like a grouping of human beings in another realm, another space or dimension. This image is supported by a background painted in black as if in outer space with the help of flickering stars.

The wearing of sunglasses is associated with a hidden identity, mentality and personality. Children, adults, seniors sit together in a state of readiness to be photographed. Here, there is a difference between race and religion when there is a figure of a veiled woman.

This work of the subconscious is a reflection of the question of life in the world that wants to continue in other realms. Although in the real world, the differences of social status, identity become the main question to ponder. All human beings are the same in the next world, and there is no difference except for their deeds.

#### **4.6 Artistic Identity of *Sebiji Padi* Art Group**

The descriptive analysis of the eight visual works from four *Sebiji Padi* art group members can be explained in a matrix in Table 1. The artistic identity presented by the *Sebiji Padi* art group members revolve around the variety of issues that are visualized as a narrative in conveying ideas. Each artist has his own artwork style to reflect the storytelling behind the visuals. The artworks are painted using acrylic media, oil paints and mixed materials on canvas, loaded with issues that are diverse and different from each other such as self-subconscious, memory, cynical impression, fantasy, experimental image, fiction, new subconscious object, absurdity, social critique, satirical, popular culture and identity. At the same time, the most notable similarity between them is the surrealist style offered in each work. Based on this similarity, there is a visual artistic identity for the *Sebiji Padi* art group.

**Table 1.** Artistic Identity of *Sebiji Padi* Art Group

<b>Artist</b>	<b>Artworks</b>	<b>Artistic Identity</b>
Samsudin Wahab	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rindu Bayangan (2020) Oil on Canvas</li> <li>2. Tonggeng (2020) Oil on Canvas</li> </ol>	<p><b><u>Surrealist</u></b>, Self-subconscious Memory, Cynical impression</p>
Haslin Ismail	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “Supermarionation” (2011) Oil Pastel and Arcylic on Canvas</li> <li>2. “Things to Come” (2011) Arcylic on Canvas</li> </ol>	<p><b><u>Fantasy-surrealist</u></b>, Experimental image, <b><u>Surrealist-fiction</u></b>, New subconscious object, <b><u>Surrealistic absurdity</u></b></p>
Ruzzeki Harris	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bagai Bintang Di pagar Bulan (2008) Mixed Media on Canvas (2 panels)</li> <li>2. Rebel (2014) Oil and Arcylic on Canvas</li> </ol>	<p>Social critique, Satirical, <b><u>Pop-surrealist</u></b></p>
Azam Aris	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Killer On The Road (Storm) (2015) Arcylic on Canvas</li> <li>2. Other Lives (To be Continued) (2015) Arcylic on Canvas</li> </ol>	<p>Social critique, <b><u>Surrealist</u></b>, Identity</p>

## 5 Conclusion

The surrealistic images revealed on the artworks by the *Sebiji Padi* artists are visible examples of dominance. In many ways, these artists are aware that they have to have the courage to elaborately transform the mind either by disapproval and disobeying any aggravating circumstances that linger for some period of time in their life, or from nostalgic and memorable moments in the past, into something that has a close relationship to the territory of surrealistic approval. It is a way out to a number of transcendental absurdities within the context of social phenomena.

This reflective paradigm does not represent the whole point of subconsciously agreeing with something that is in the process of changing from a particular state of mind to another. In fact, sometimes, the process of mind transformation would always rely on things that have gone wrong, giving someone considerable pressure to escape the sudden damage or suffering. As for the reason why are they shifted their mindset toward something different and bitter, one should realize that visual-morphologically, the unforeseeable dynamics of emotions, rational, and faith, fine-tuned by their academic background of knowledge, are engaged to slowly but surely plummet and explode every time and then come to light in their artworks. These processes closely describe what happened to these artists in relation to their stipulation of the circumstances they have to confront, whether it is a revolutionary or evolutionary change of social, cultural, and political circumstances relevant to a particular event, condition, or action.

Hence, to a certain extent, they still retain the possession and reflection of their stupendous artistic apparatus as well as the existence of their concept of spirituality strong enough to hold

their faith and truthfulness about race and religion, shown by their unidentifiable human subjects, subtly rebellious representations, or the unascertained depth of dark and light spaces. Other than that, the characteristics of the locality of these artists are no longer relevant to the ideas and concepts they hold. Instead, these artists have declared themselves urban and academic local people through contemplative thoughts and feelings that elevate them to a more sublime level. They bear their identity through their universal works of art.

It can therefore be concluded that their existence in *Sebiji Padi* is an idealistic amalgamation that dissolves through the expression of each other's emotions and feelings. These indications of visual syntax are somehow a legible self-personification of artistic as well as aesthetic behavior, metaphorically reflected on their artworks. But more distinctively, they represent the surrealistic urbanism identity of *Sebiji Padi* art studio as a group of artists in their own space and time of existence.

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