

# An Analysis of Hybrid Media Practices by Selected Malaysian Artists

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## ABSTRACT

Malaysian artists had begun to explore a variety of media and techniques in producing artwork. Through this creative process, the possibility of applying multidisciplinary skills has enhanced the way of producing their concept of hybrid practice through hybrid media. The objective of this paper is to analyse the hybrid media in hybrid art practice among selected Malaysian artists. The methodologies applied in this research were the questionnaires and interviews with selected artists which was highlighting their perceptions about the hybrid media based on their artwork. The researcher distributed questionnaires to 35 selected artists who had experience in producing hybrid artwork. The data was analysed using descriptive analysis and principal component analysis (PCA). The result of the descriptive analysis shows that the experiment, new knowledge, strength, and combination are important elements in hybrid media in the practice of hybrid art. Meanwhile, the result of PCA for the evaluation of hybrid media stated that ideation, media knowledge, and applied collaboration were practised by the selected Malaysian artists. The interview result explained the artist's reflection on the result of the questionnaire.

**Keywords:** *Hybrid Media, Hybrid Art Practices, Media Knowledge*

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, digital technologies have the power to break all areas of art discipline in making contemporary artworks. The expansion of digital technologies boundaries in art has grown the interest in diverse exploration media and contemporary artists utilise the emerging possibilities for bringing their artistic ideas into the modern digital technologies systems. In Malaysia, a group of artists and researchers inspired the "hybrid" concept of making artwork which is focusing on multidisciplinary practices of artwork. They conducted two exhibitions, namely, 'D'NA → HYBRID from the Inside' which was held

at NVAG in 2005, and ‘Hybrid + ISM’ which was held at Sabah Art Gallery in 2007; the group namely “Hybrid Art Group” (Michael et al., 2020; Rahman, 2007). This group is focusing on multi discipline and diverse media in making the artworks such as collaboration knowledge of art and textile, art and cinema, and photography. Contemporary art should have appreciated its diversity (Spielmann, 2017). At this level, contemporary art on the other hand faces more sophisticated challenges to offer digital alternatives for experiencing exhibitions or artworks, but the traditional media of painting and sculpture is still preferred to be exhibited (Amorim & Teixeira, 2021). In this situation, the advanced technology and other new possibilities in media have triggered artists to explore more in media.

Similarly, the computer transformation has turned out to be a new sign of collaboration in the new digital existence with great factors. For example, art education is based on strong conservative traditions of the media. However, some artists are interested in the advancement of technology without neglecting the foundation of an artwork, whenever any offer of the latest technologies appears. As reflected in the Malaysian art scene, it is important to study the media exploration among the artists where the factors such as the advancement of technology, the tool and media influence from other fields have impacted the artists to explore more in diverse media. This led to the hybrid media in the process of making the artwork. Therefore, this paper aims to analyse the hybrid media in hybrid art practice among selected Malaysian artists. In particular, the artist’s perception of the collaboration of media in the process of producing hybrid artwork. The artist’s perception of the hybrid media would contribute to the new knowledge of media and indirectly influence the evolution of media experimentation in the Malaysian art scene.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In the early 1970s and 1980s’, artists tend to prefer applying old media in the process of making the painting, and then they shift to different aesthetic approaches in art in the 1990s. This reflected the changes in media applications in artwork and the choices of media had moved to electronic tools such as television, videotapes, and computer. The most updated technology during that time inspired young artists in the 1990s to apply new media to represent their idea and expand their creativity through the exploration of media. The transformation of media had led to a diversity of materials and not depending on advanced technology as time flies. The knowledge from different fields had become the main knowledge in the art presentation, especially in discussions on hybrid media. Back in the early 1990s, Malaysian artists begin to express their ideas through the element of thought, method, and understanding (Sarena, 2017). The direction of the art movement in the Malaysian art scene also has influenced the artist to enhance the use of different kinds of media.

### Hybrid Media

The Hybrid Art Group is known as a group of artists and art practitioners who had produced hybrid artwork such as 3D Chroma depth painting, digital painting mixed with oil paint, textile installation and sound art with installation. The Hybridism Concept of Manifesto stated that the crucial criteria in the process of making hybrid artworks are the elements of culture, combination, creativity, multidisciplinary, experimentation, and media to achieve hybridism (Michael et al., 2020; Rahman, 2007). Meanwhile, the Model of Hybrid Art explains the combination of the process to make artwork and the outcome of the integration of high and low media and disciplines in artwork (Michael, 2010). In this sense, the artist can monitor and revise the media based on their idea and practical knowledge in themselves. As the artist has entered modern art, the involvement of new technology is also applied to the artwork. For instance, the software could help convert data and transform it into artistic images and sound notes, and pictures (Atiker, 2012). In terms of the practitioner, Faustini et al., (2018) stated that a hybrid scientist is knowledgeable to manage the ways of understanding and make teamwork among professional expertise.

Nevertheless, the art practitioner encourages to embrace the evolution of hybridising new fields and motivates artists and art practitioners to apply advanced hybrids conceptually. While the artist wants to introduce media from diverse disciplines, it means that the artist must do more study to operate the media so that it could achieve new effects as part of hybrid artwork and provide other functions to the artworks (Michael et al., 2022). The same goes for Pepperell (2015) who stated that when it comes to media, the artist may have methods in scientific and new knowledge while producing artwork. On the other hand, the artwork's meaning should be valued based on the artistic insight in art during the art show.

Additionally, in terms of research, it always looked up to digitization and documentation, value, categorization, optimization methods, recording and consistency, imagining and technological development (Pietroni, 2019). Various types of equipment offered in computer software applications can help in enhancing the value of the work (Appukuttan, 2021). The use of digital media is faster than using traditional media to produce good-quality results. In the context of modern art, the artist has applied hybrid media which means it is also a combination of a variety of media during the procedure of making hybrid artworks. These have influenced the artists to produce a creative way of artwork presentation. For example, the field of engineering and science contributed to the development of media in Malaysia's art scene. It was proven that by Ong and Ahmad (2015), Malaysian artists not only concentrate on the subject matter, but also highlight the art approach and style, presentation, and social narratives. This diverse media movement has affected the way of making artwork and breakdown the borders of media. It shows that the artists who work with old and new media have shaped the knowledge of the diversity of the media. Besides, the collaboration between artist and art practitioner has connected their ideas and understanding of the media.

Previously during the early digital artists in Malaysia, Ismail Zain is related to the statement for the evolvement outside of recognized to inconclusive interest and minimising utilisation of the latest advanced technology and implementing it into the local art practice (Hasnol Jamal & Rajah, 1997). Malaysian early electronic and computer artists such as Kamarudzaman Isa and Hasnol Jamal Saidon started their exploration of computer capability to create artworks. Since then, the video and installation broadening of the traditional art movement and the discipline of art creation has also been expanding. The most crucial is that people must understand early art forms and the combination of hybrids (Meskin, 2009). In addition, the same goes for Bertola and Patti (2016) the audience's behaviour in viewing the transition from conventional art to experimental art to share their knowledge and communicate with the artists. While the artist wanted to explore the media from a variety of disciplines, it designates that the artist must do more study, linking and influencing the media to achieve a new result in the hybrid artworks (Michael et al., 2020). Contemporary art is frequently produced directly for expanding the media potential in making hybrid artworks. Additionally, the character of innovative media made the artist aware of the concept of breaking the traditional method, and the strength of the media and generated their imagination in the practice of making artwork, equipment, and the application of advanced technology.

In this research, the researcher analysed the hybrid media practice through the selected artist's perceptions based on their artworks. The selection of the artists was based on the artists who had experience producing hybrid artworks that involve hybrid media such as high technology and media from other fields. In this case, the researchers need to identify suitable artists to participate in this research.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The researcher constructed questionnaires and used a Likert scale of 1 to 5. The researcher distributed the questionnaires to the respondents and the researcher met them face to face. Thus, the criteria for the artist selection: a) the researchers need to identify the artist's artwork and b) the artist has produced at least a hybrid artwork. The purpose is to make sure the selected artists can answer the questionnaires based on their reflections on their hybrid artwork. Once the researcher had selected the artists, then the researcher

identified the artist's locations such as Perak, Kedah, Pulau Pinang, Selangor, Shah Alam and Kuala Lumpur. The researcher applied close-ended questions and a total of 35 respondents were involved in answering the questions. The keywords were extracted from art journals, articles, and art books and keywords were discussed in the literature review section. The keywords are known as attributes which were character, mixed media, strength, equipment, combination, research, experiment, traditional, subject matter, influence, integration, collaboration, other function, new effect, behaviour, new technology, understanding, observation, new knowledge, and possibilities. These attributes were constructed into 20 questions which means that one attribute represents one question. Below (Table 1) are the details of the questions.

**Table 1. The Attributes and Questionnaires of Hybrid Media Practices**

Attributes	Questions
Character	I examine the <b>character</b> of the media before making art piece.
Mixed media	I apply <b>mixed media</b> to create my artwork
Strength	I test the <b>strength</b> of the media in the making of my artwork
Equipment	I examine the <b>equipment</b> for the process in producing my artwork.
Combination	I apply a combination of media and tools in my work.
Research	I conduct a <b>research</b> on the subject and media.
Experiment	I do <b>experiments</b> on the media and tools.
Traditional	I tend to rupture the <b>traditional methods</b> in producing artwork
Subject matter	I evaluate the <b>subject matter</b> before starting to do artwork.
Influence	I accept the <b>influence</b> from other artists in creating my artwork.
Integration	My artworks are practicing the <b>integration</b> of old media and new media.
Collaboration	I also <b>collaborate</b> with experts such as engineers / scientists especially the technical aspects of work.
Other function	I ensure that the artwork has <b>other function</b> which is to convey the message to the audiences.
New effect	The diversity of media has developed into <b>new effect</b> toward my artwork.
Behavior	I like to observe the <b>behavior</b> of audiences while they viewing my artwork.
New technology	I like the <b>technology</b> used in the artworks.
Understanding	The <b>understanding</b> toward hybrid practice is important because it will help me to understand the concept of hybrid artwork.
New knowledge	I like to share <b>new knowledge</b> to the audiences.
Possibilities	I like to experiment the <b>possibilities</b> of media in my artwork.

Besides, the researchers also conducted interviews with three artists and one academician that had been involved in answering the questionnaires. The purpose was to ensure the artist's point of view on the media would be explained in more detail and informative. In addition, one art academician was involved in explaining the applied media in art.

## FINDINGS

Based on Table 2, this is the result of hybrid media in hybrid art practice among selected Malaysian artists. The measurement of the mean is the highest score is a mean of 4 and above. In Table 1, five attributes had achieved a mean of 4 and above and the attributes were new knowledge, character, strength, combination, and experiment. It shows that the respondents were specific about the new knowledge and the character of media applied in the artwork. The score for new knowledge is 4.25. Meanwhile, the attribute of character, combination and strength shows that the mean is the same which is 4.11.

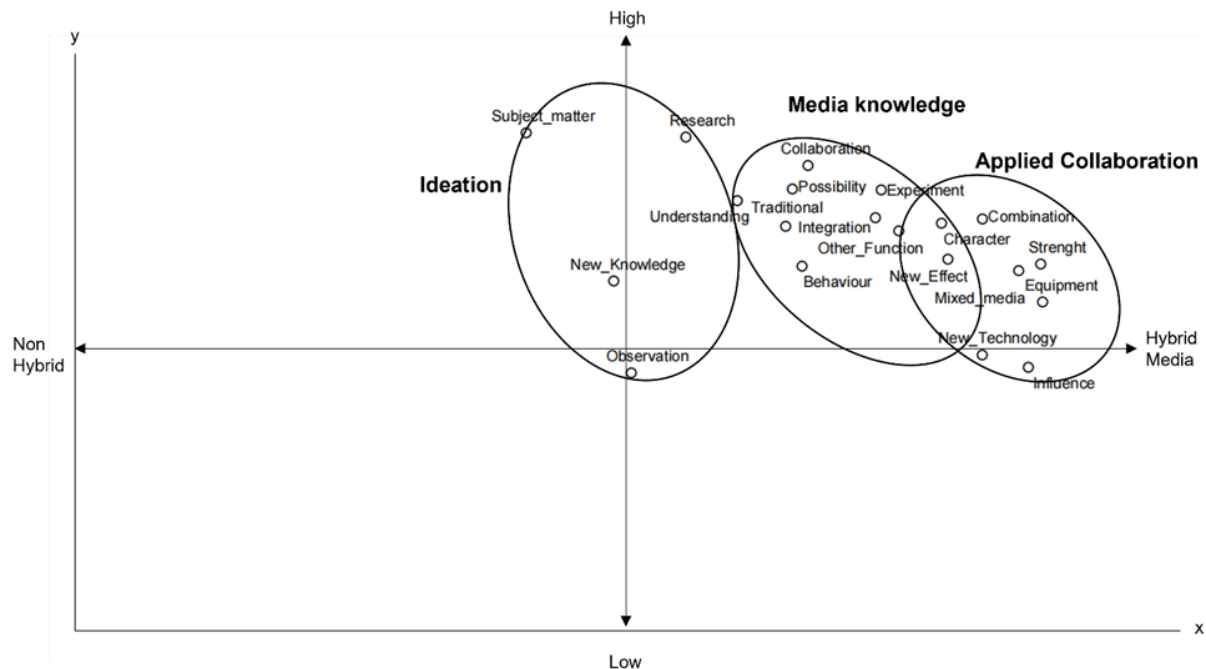
Additionally, the lowest attributes are collaboration, integration, and observation. For example, for the attribute of collaboration, the mean is 3.25 and it shows that some of the artists did a collaboration with other art practitioners from other fields and integrate the new technology to produce the artworks. There is engagement between them but the practical part of applying media is not practised by both parties.

**Table 2. The Evaluation of Hybrid Media in Hybrid Art Practices among Selected Malaysian Artists**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation
New Knowledge	35	3.00	5.00	4.2571	0.81684
Character	35	2.00	5.00	4.1143	0.79600
Combination	35	1.00	5.00	4.1143	0.99325
Strength	35	1.00	5.00	4.1143	0.86675
Experiment	35	1.00	5.00	4.0857	0.98134
Possibility	35	1.00	5.00	3.9429	1.10992
Mix_media	35	1.00	5.00	3.9429	0.99832
Influence	35	1.00	5.00	3.9429	0.96841
New_Effect	35	1.00	5.00	3.9429	0.93755
Equipment	35	1.00	5.00	3.9429	0.93755
Subject_matter	35	1.00	5.00	3.9429	0.99832
Behaviour	35	1.00	5.00	3.8857	1.15737
New_Technology	35	1.00	5.00	3.8857	1.07844
Research	35	1.00	5.00	3.8571	0.80961
Traditional	35	1.00	5.00	3.8571	1.11521
Understanding	35	1.00	5.00	3.8286	1.20014
Other_Function	35	1.00	5.00	3.8286	1.07062
Observation	35	1.00	5.00	3.8000	0.79705
Integration	35	1.00	5.00	3.6286	1.19030
Collaboration	35	1.00	5.00	3.2571	1.22097
Valid N (Listwise)	35				

Based on Figure 1, this is the result of the Plot of Hybrid Media in Hybrid Art Practice Among Selected Malaysian Artists. There are 2 axes; the y-axis consists of high and low and on the x-axis, there are hybrid media and non-hybrid (what was happening in the art scenario in today's art). Based on the plot above, most of the attributes are identified between hybrid media and the high y-axis. This reflects the positive scenario for the hybrid media in their artworks and yet some of the respondents did apply the hybrid art practices. Next, the measurement for the result of the y-axis is high and the practice is the subject matter, research, collaboration, and possibility. In the Y-axis low section, the attributes such as observation and influence.

Then, the researcher identified the cluster as reflecting the attributes and there were three new clusters known as components. These new components were clustered based on the related attributes; the components are ideation, media knowledge and applied collaboration. The first component is named “ideation” which represents the formation of concepts and ideas. The attributes under this component are research, subject matter, observation, and new knowledge. Next is the component of “media knowledge” which represents the understanding and study of the media that is applied in the artworks. The attributes under this component such as other functions, integration, behaviour, tradition, understanding, possibility, and integration. The last component is “applied collaboration” which represents strength, character, mixed media, combination, influence, and new technology. Based on the plot, two components are the intersection between each line. It is because the combination of these two components is crucial, and they need each other; media and experimentation are the keys to the process of making hybrid artworks. At this stage, the artists’ involvement in and knowledge of spatial relationships have become more diverse and complex.



**Figure 1. The Plot of Hybrid Media in Hybrid Art Practice Among Selected Malaysian Artists**

## DISCUSSION

### Ideation

The component of ideation has developed and is aware of the type of suitable media to produce the artwork. At this stage, the artists started to search for the idea and analyse the need for the subject matter. Usually, the artist started to visualise and do an observation toward the subject matter and so to the media. Even though the artist wanted to produce a 2-dimensional artwork, the idea of combining media such as using sensors and digital painting, this approach has created a variety of media to portray their creativity. Furthermore, some of the respondents did focus on new knowledge and the significance of the content of the hybrid artworks. Similarly, for research, it is a crucial element in the analysis of the concept of

producing hybrid artwork that involves a creative process, details of subject matter, and study of the meaning of the idea.

In this ideation section, the concept of an artwork is the experimentation with a variety of media and has transferred new experiences and understanding. Artists today have even more creative ideas where the artists can enhance the practice of making art, alter the media possibility, and expand the media function. The experimentation knowledge includes art media, non-art media and high and low technology. To explore this, the boundaries between media art and non-art media need to be blurring the boundaries and associated with hybrid art practices principle, which allows the artist easily to translate their idea in a way that is more advanced and creative. Based on this research, not every artist is involved with high technology and new devices, for example, in Figure 1, the attribute of new technology almost reached the target which is hybrid media. In other words, it shows that some of the selected artists did practise the new technology in their artwork, they had expanded and come out with a hybrid media in their artworks. For instance, the artwork from Haris Abadi entitled *Teletopia* was produced in 2017. This installation was more on practising non-art media where this artist used single-channel video, projector, polyvinyl chloride colloquial, garden bench, dry leaves, and branches. This artwork is a challenge that causes a social world that has been permanently transformed into the digital world. In short, the artist has created different ways to expect art and research where the artist studies the behaviour of the media, explores different techniques and challenges unusual artistic practices. In this sense, the artist would not work conventionally, but the artist attempted to venture into the new thing and not static to the same practices. Besides that, they prefer to continue the same idea of using hybrid media and alter the form and concept of the art presentation, as the artist had used the same media.

## Media Knowledge

In media knowledge, there is a need to study the character of the media, especially in terms of its weakness, strengths, and possibilities of the media. Artists creatively influence media based on their ideas and thoughts to make art objects. Artworks, therefore, can exhibit individual ideas, feelings, and principles as well as social and cultural contexts. As the artists believe the media can stand out their idea or artwork concept, the artist could expand their idea based on their knowledge of the media. The process of making art fosters creativity; it is not just the duplication of other works or the manipulation of art tools. It is a purposeful activity that combines a variety of skills, tendencies, knowledge, and materials. For example, two artists (R1 – Respondent 1 and R2 – Respondent 2) interview opinions on the attribute characteristics of the media:

*“I’m more into exploration in media. At least, people who view my work manage to learn something about media. So, some of the audience reactions were also surprised that electronic type of media can become an art”.* (R1)

*“It is one of the most important roles that affect my process. As we know, the character of media has changed and evolves then it makes things easier”.* (R2)

The statements above prove that knowledge about media is an essential role in the understanding of art and media because the direct knowledge of creating art exclusively starts with certain perceptions of many characteristics of significance expressed in works of art. For example, the attribute of integration, artists and art practitioners are needed to develop hybrid media knowledge as the integration could make an impact on the artwork so that the audience can experience the experimental kind of artwork. Apart from that, it could contribute to the hybrid knowledge and significance to transform by strengthening the dialogue of media collaboration and multidisciplinary. For instance, hybrid media artwork by Fairuz Sulaiman, namely “*Salam 1 Jepun: A Cross-Cultural Response*” was influenced by P.Ramlee's film title “*Laksamana Do Re Mi*” and combined with the Japanese popular cultural icon ‘Pikachu’. The idea presented surrealistic humour between two countries which are Malaysia and Japan (Fairuz, 2013). The media that he applied was a combination of analogue and numeral which could be seen in the puppet,

colour tracing and video projector creating the numerical effect. This artwork was a hybrid performance in which the digital media assisted the self-made puppets. At the same time, the hybridity portrayed the interaction, history, cross-discipline, and mixed media practised in the artwork.

### **Applied Collaboration**

Next, the component of applied collaboration which means the practices from various fields is crucial since it is a way of searching for hybridising media from another field, especially the tool to support the production of making artwork. This collaboration has linked to multidisciplinary practice where the artist is concerned about how tools from other fields could be applied in art practice. In this situation, the collaboration becomes deeper, they explore the link of a process in making artwork. Although this line has been partially addressed from an artistic or a scientific perspective, there has not yet been a joint analysis with artists and scientists to understand how in practice, the arts contribute to new modes of research within sustainability science addressing societal transformations (Heras et al., 2021). The statements from the artist and art academician on the art collaboration in disciplines (R2 – Respondent 2 and R3 – Respondent 3) are stated below.

*“If we don’t collaborate with other fields or with scientists, art will become not relevant nowadays”.* (R2)

*“When you are asking about the diversity of media, you are talking about the down the ages, timelines, how does the media develop conventional to non-conventional, what we have today”.* (R3)

At this point, the process of making was also explored and co-produced through hybrid materials which are by engaging different experiences through arts. This act was recognized as improving participants through co-produce, assisting identity and collective reflection and introspection about multidisciplinary. Some artists have applied technology and scientific devices and machines to create provocative sculptures which contribute to a new mindset toward the media (Wilson, 2010; Cimino et al., 2018). Since the collaboration is actively applied by the artist, the collaboration with the expertise especially involving the technical part has expanded into other disciplines and this had expanded the language of art and generated media research in science and technology. Since integrations of media in artworks might involve a certain challenge to loads or forces due to its position as an object. For example, an artist such as Syafiq Abdul Samad in his artwork named “Bising-Bising” is an interactive artwork that has involved media such as a webcam, mirror, and projector. These artists experimented with these devices and investigated the webcam’s ability to interact with audiences. The webcam controlled the audience’s reflection into another output which was lines of colours. The artists are concerned about the intersection between the artist’s practices and scientific procedures by obtaining interactive artworks. As a result, the effect of technical collaboration has allowed artists and art practitioners to represent interactive artwork and hybrid media to audiences. Technically, the artwork becomes no more static and becomes more diverse media showing contemporary art.

The diversity of media art has spread to computer technology, digital media art also has become part of our life (Zhao & Wang, 2020). In this contemporary era, not only do some young artists praise it, but some artists who work in traditional art are also gradually facing a unique charm. The development of digital media art shows the arrival of a new era of culture. The development of media generates some artists to search for new media for their artwork, especially young artists. Although some of the attributes did not fully achieve the hybrid art practices, some artists did practise media collaboration aside from hybrid art group members. The awareness of the existence of diverse media has given me an understanding of contemporary art that consists of the capacity for excitement, provoking, and complication. At this point, the appreciation toward the media makes the artist represent their skill and creativity and portray the character of the media. Equally, the artist can display their ideas and engage



with the audience. This perspective was supported by Pérez-Sanagustín et al., (2016) who stated that audiences would concentrate extra time digesting the documentation and interpreting the aesthetic form of the artworks. The appreciation of contemporary art would become more complex as different dimensions will be given to celebrate the art piece. In this contemporary time, artists are committed to challenge themselves in producing new knowledge and probabilities in creating artworks. In short, in hybrid art, the boundaries are beyond the limit and more detailed in the media application in art and engagement to the multi-disciplines.

## CONCLUSION

The effect of hybrid media has moved the development of media exploration in the local art scene. The attractiveness of digital media art is inextricable from the commercialization of computer technology and other advanced technology from other fields. Contemporary art, digital technology and modern media have mixed creative thinking and rational thinking in making. Creative ideation, media exploration, and applied knowledge have expanded into critical thinking which is from the traditional method to the modern way of artmaking. Apart from that, the artist and art practitioner are also challenging the media limitation based on their idea or concept of the artwork.

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