

## S1RS: An Innovative and Potential Template For Abstract and Culturally Grounded Artworks

Zuriati Mohamed Shaari<sup>1</sup>, Noor Hidawati Mohamed Amin<sup>2</sup>, Noriza Arzain<sup>3</sup>  
Nurul Izza Ab Aziz<sup>4</sup> Siti Hajar Abd Rahman<sup>5</sup>  
<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>Faculty of Arts and Design, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia.  
Corresponding Author : izza\_aziz@uitm.edu.my, [zuriati9216@uitm.edu.my](mailto:zuriati9216@uitm.edu.my)

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This study presents the development and verification of the *S1RS* abstract painting composition template, derived from the analysis of two reference artworks through three Gestalt principles: (i) symmetry, (ii) proximity, and (iii) closure. The template's effectiveness is exemplified through the artwork *S1RS: Kancil Membilang Buaya*, conceptualized using Chang's (2008) Autoethnography theory. The innovation has been recognized through exhibitions, awards, and art project grants, affirming its creative and academic value. Findings indicate that the *S1RS* template effectively generates abstract compositions while promoting and preserving Malay folktales through visual abstraction. This research and invention also aligns with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 (Quality Education), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

**Keywords:** Abstract painting, Folktale, Gestalt Principle, Fine art

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Producing an abstract painting that embodies both meaning and narrative presents a significant challenge, particularly for artists who are newly engaging with this genre. When this research and creative exploration commenced, my artistic practice was primarily grounded in the use of representational imagery, with drawing serving as the principal medium. The transition to abstraction was driven by an intention to develop artworks that align more closely with meaning and sensibilities. However, the shift posed considerable difficulties at the outset of my abstract painting process.

From an art historical perspective, the term *abstract* typically refers to form and often does not place primary emphasis on colour or texture. In art literature, the term *nonobjective* is sometimes employed in place of *abstract* to more accurately capture the essence of what abstract painting represents. Abstract (or nonobjective or nonrepresentational) art encompasses painting, sculpture, and graphic art that do not depict recognizable objects (Khang Zang, 2007).

A primary problem in the practice and teaching of abstract painting is identifying effective strategies to cultivate creativity without imposing limitations that could hinder artistic expression. Facilitating creativity in abstract art necessitates achieving a

balance between offering structural direction and fostering freedom of thought. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) asserts that creativity flourishes in an environment that integrates knowledge, talent, and the liberty to explore. Excessive structure or prescriptive methodologies can constrain the spontaneous, intuitive processes vital to abstract painting (Sawyer, 2012). Abstract painting inherently relies on the artist's internal discourse, emotion, and nonrepresentational interpretation of form, color, and space (Arnheim, 1974). Consequently, educational or methodological frameworks designed to support artists in this field should promote exploration and open-ended inquiry instead of conformity to predetermined visual results. The objective is to establish strategies be it through reflective practice, material experimentation, or conceptual prompts that foster creativity while maintaining the artist's expressive autonomy (McNiff, 1998; Eisner, 2002).

The principal objective of most artistic pursuits is to elicit emotional and intellectual reactions from the observer. These emotional connections originate from the interaction between the artwork's conceptual framework and the techniques employed in its execution. In abstract painting, emotional resonance is attained through the arrangement of non-representational visual elements such as colour, line, form, and texture, that together create a sensory and psychological experience. Kandinsky (1912) argued that abstract art could reveal "inner necessity," with visual aspects serving as conduits for spiritual and emotional expression beyond representational forms. Colour significantly impacts the viewer's emotional state; this effect arises not only from subjective perception but also from the inherent characteristics of colours and their connections within a compositional framework (Itten, 1961; Arnheim, 1974). In abstract painting, colour serves as both an aesthetic and psychological force, influencing meaning through its rhythm, harmony, and contrast (Zuriati et al., 2024).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study was guided by two fundamental areas.

### 2.1 The Initial Focus Is To The Cultivation Of Confidence And Fluency In The Creation Of Abstract Paintings.

Many artists, particularly those shifting from representational to non-representational forms, have the issue of reconciling spontaneity with intentionality. This study analyses tactics and approaches that facilitate the development of abstract artworks with enhanced ease, confidence, and conceptual clarity. The development of the paintings was invented based on Gestalt Principles.

#### 2.1.1 Gestalt Principles and S1RS Invented Template

The Gestalt Principles were employed in this study as a methodological framework to guide observation and analytical interpretation. Three core principles were applied: (i) Proximity, (ii) Closure, and (iii) Symmetry. The Gestalt Principles, rooted in the psychology of perception, explain how humans naturally organize visual elements, recognize patterns, and simplify complex visual information during the process of

observation (Interaction Design Foundation, 2016). Fundamentally, these principles emphasize the notion of *grouping*, which suggests that the features of stimuli influence how individuals arrange or interpret a visual field (Kang Zhang, 2007). In this study, the selected Gestalt principles were used to examine and analyze 2 abstract paintings. Based on the findings derived from this analysis, recommendations for creating abstract paintings were subsequently developed, using the *law of grouping* as the guiding framework. Foundational contributions to Gestalt theory include Edgar Rubin's studies on figure-ground articulation (1915–1921) and Max Wertheimer's seminal 1923 publication introducing the Gestalt grouping principles. Further developments were made by classical Gestalt psychologists such as Köhler (1947), Koffka (1935), and Metzger (1936/2008, 1966, 1975a, 1975b), while more recent interpretations have been provided by Palmer (2003) and Todorović (2008). Gestalt theory distinguishes between the *figure* the dominant visual focus and the *ground* the background or less significant space acknowledging that this perceptual differentiation occurs in relation to specific compositional objectives. For and abstract artists, understanding the psychological and physiological mechanisms of visual perception is essential for effectively organizing visual data. Techniques such as visual grouping, object recognition, and depth perception are therefore crucial for creating coherent and engaging visual compositions.

Resulted from the analysis of the two referenced abstract paintings, a template, designated S1RS, was successfully developed based on the study of 3 Gestalt Principle above. The S1RS composition ultimately serves as both an analytical tool and a creative guide, encouraging a deeper understanding of how formal elements and Gestalt principles can work together to produce meaningful, visually engaging artwork (Zuriati & Fariz, 2024).

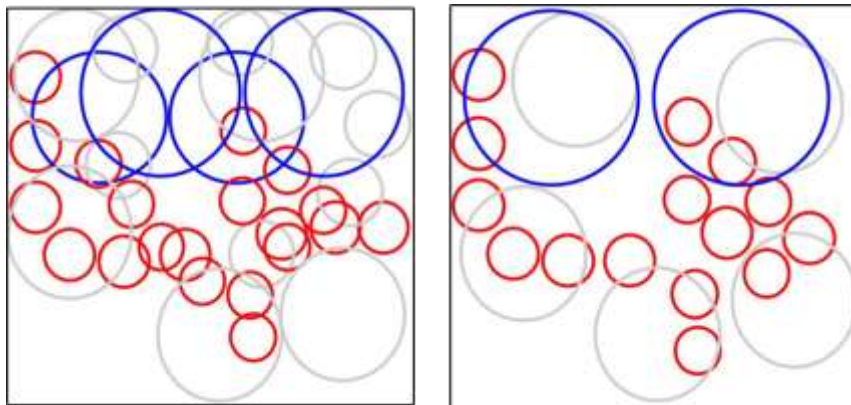


Figure 2.1: Combinations of both analytical compositions (left).

Figure 2.2: S1RS is a suggested composition established from the combinations (right)

Through the systematic analysis of abstract paintings, the S1RS provide a strong composition for both artists and viewers to interpret and understand the underlying structure, meaning, and compositional rationality of a work of art. These principles facilitate a deeper appreciation of the interactions among visual elements and help guide the viewer's perceptual experience. Below is the table of analysis for the forming of S1RS



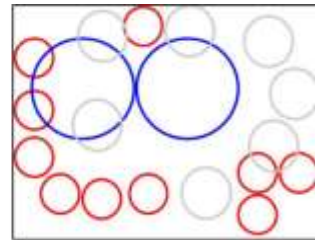
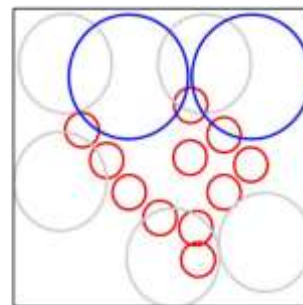
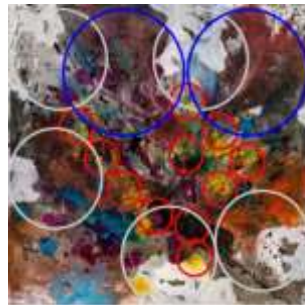
	Prominent element in proximity grouping.
	Prominent element in symmetry grouping.

Table 2.1: Indicator

A : Seafarer 1

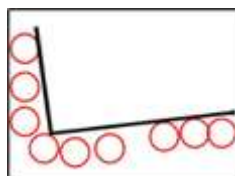


B: Rumbiya & Sagu



Gestalt Princip  
Proximity

Composition



A



B

- This principle established a visual hierarchy or structure, directing the viewer's eye to comprehend the relative significance of various elements, encompassing strokes, marks, and colors.
- The perception of depth and space in a painting can also be impacted by proximity. The composition can be rendered more dynamic by incorporating
- overlapping elements or positioning them in close proximity, which can

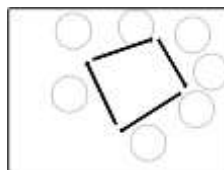
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create a sense of depth and layering.

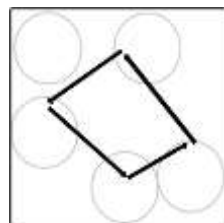
- The viewer's eye can be directed through the painting. A visual path can be created by placing elements in a specific proximity, resulting in a rhythm or flow within the artwork.

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### Closure



A

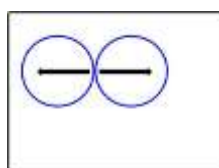


B

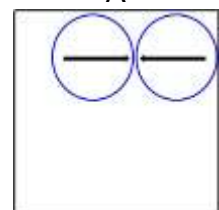
- Closure in this art, form enables artists to captivate viewers by encouraging them to actively engage with the visual experience.
- The composition perceives completeness in incomplete lines or shapes.
- Viewers can interact with the interplay within the negative and positive space.
- The use of closure leads to an introspective and more personal engagement towards a dynamic composition.

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### Symmetry



A



B

- The principle of symmetry in the painting contributes to the perception of balance and evenness. It also creates a sense of stability.
- Mirror positioning was observed to facilitate the identification of the prominent elements.
- The composition is visually appealing to the viewer due to the symmetry or balance, despite the fact that the strokes, lines, and marks in these paintings are spontaneous.

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Table 2.2: Data analysis from Seafarer 1 and Sagu & Rumbiya

## 2.2 The Second Consideration Examines How Abstract Painting Might Function As A Visual And Narrative Medium For The Adaptation Of Malay Folktales Focusing On Sang Kancil Membilang Buaya.

Traditional folktales, filled with message and ethical values, are generally conveyed through narrative and figurative imagery. This study examines how form, color, and composition can communicate the essence, emotion, and underlying themes of Malay Folktale storytelling using abstract visual language, avoiding direct representation. According to Lhueze (2015), folktales, myths, beliefs, and legends need to be safeguarded in this digital age to avoid extinction due to globalization and commercial entertainment. The rich values and lessons of life remain relevant in providing examples and guidance to the younger generations and should be continued and preserved.

### 2.2 Sang Kancil Membilang Buaya as Narrative

In accordance with the established S1RS template, I have created an abstract painting employing the autoethnography method (Chang, 2008) to visually interpret the narrative of *Sang Kancil Membilang Buaya*, incorporating augmented reality to enhance viewer engagement. Autoethnography, as Pelias (2003) notes, "allows you to use yourself to get to culture," emphasizing the researcher's positionality in cultural interpretation. Following Chang's (2008) triadic framework, reflection, analysis, and interpretation - this study primarily focuses on the latter two components. Denzin (2012) further describes interpretative autoethnography as framing "a person's life experiences as performances." In the context of this painting, I concentrated on the analysis and interpretation of the story *Kancil Membilang Buaya*, as presented in *Kumpulan Cerita Sang Kancil*, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2015. The resulting artwork, augmented with a digital overlay, that can be experienced interactively through the Artivive application.




Figure 2.3: Researcher's painting was produced based on S1RS composition(left).

\*Download Artivive apps and scan this painting for augmented reality experience.

Figure 2.4: Painting with the template on for comparison (right).

The table below illustrates how visuals in the augmented reality (AR) experience are derived from analytical data based on Gestalt Principles. By examining human perception and the relationships between visual elements, this framework informs the

design of cohesive and effective AR visuals. Integrating these psychological insights into visual design enhances user engagement and facilitates clearer communication.

Principle	Visual from digital overlay	The excerpt from Kancil Membilang Buaya, Kumpulan Cerita Sang Kancil 2015
<p>Closure:</p> <p>To bring resolution to incomplete or unsettling experiences. Referred to the action of Sang Buaya and friends gathered to answer the call of Sang Kancil on behalf of King Soloman.</p>		<p><i>“Dengar sini!” laung Sang Kancil dari atas tebing. “Untuk memudahkan tugas hamba, eloklah tuan hamba sekalian berbaris. Sekarang, berbarislah wahai sekalian buaya, dari tebing sebelah sini hingga tebing sebelah sana!”</i></p>
<p>Proximity:</p> <p>To reinforcing bonds and influencing perceptions. Referred to the Sang Buaya with certain attitudes or behaviors (in this case, form a line from a river bank to another), they may be more likely to adopt similar attitudes or behaviors themselves influenced by Sang Kancil</p>		<p><i>Maka semua buaya itupun menurut arahan Sang Kancil. Tanpa membuang masa lagi, Sang Kancil pun melompat ke atas kepala buaya-buaya itu. Seekor demi seekor</i></p> <p><i>sambil menyanyi dengan gembiranya.</i>  <i>Satu, dua, tiga lekuk</i>  <i>Jantan, betina kena ketuk</i>  <i>Empat, lima, enam tujuh</i>  <i>Lapan, sembilan, sepuluh</i></p> <p><i>Sebelas, dua belas dan tiga belas</i>  <i>Ekor kalian jangan melibas</i>  <i>Empat belas, lima belas, enam belas</i>  <i>Tujuh belas dan lapan belas.</i></p> <p><i>Begitulah berulang-ulang sehingga Sang Kancil sampai ke seberang, Sang Kancil segera melompat ke tebing dan menuju ke pokok jambu air yang lebat buahnya dan tengah masak ranum.</i></p>
<p>Symmetry:</p> <p>To applies to feelings and emotions, emphasizing the importance of balance</p>		<p><i>“Wahai semua buaya yang ada! Kamu semua sudah kuhitung. Tugas kita sudah selesai. Bersurailah!” seru Sang Kancil. Maka semua buaya yang ada pun beredar dari situ. Tetapi</i></p>

in maintaining relational stability and reflecting emotions in balanced way. Referred to Sang Kancil's delight in obtaining his will and Sang Buaya's despair about being tricked by a little animal.



*masih ada seekor buaya yang belum berganjak walau sedikit pun.*

*Sang Kancil pun segera mencampakkan setangkai jambu air kepada Sang Buaya. "Makanlah jambu ini. Inilah kurnia baginda kepada sesiapa yang memberi kerjasama kepada hamba," kata Sang Kancil.*

*"Mana mungkin buaya makan jambu air? Kalau daging munasabah juga," rungut Sang Buaya.*

*"Tuan hamba mesti ingat, ini kurnia Raja Sulaiman. Kalau tuan hamba ingkar..."*

Table 2.3: The analysis and development of Augmented Reality

### 3. ISSUE

According to Zurin (2023), creating a large-scale painting that relies solely on colour composition, yet successfully communicates narrative, emotion, and judgment, demands a high level of artistic proficiency. Therefore, epistemological guidance is crucial for non-abstract artists who wish to engage with abstract art, especially those at the early stages of exploring this genre. Although observation and contemplation remain traditional methods for interpreting the visual intricacies of an artwork, adopting a systematic research approach can enhance the accuracy of visual perception. The Gestalt Principle offers a valuable framework for examining the relationship between design elements and visual cognition in artistic representation (Fateme G., Farnoosh S., & Jafar M., 2022). In alignment with this view, the present study employs the Gestalt Principle as a conceptual framework to analyse two abstract paintings by renowned artists. The fine arts discipline is increasingly expected to produce outputs that are comparable in quality, innovation, and rigor to those generated in other academic and professional fields. While disciplines such as engineering, science, and technology frequently achieve recognition in innovation competitions at the university, national, and international levels, fine arts programs must similarly demonstrate their capacity for originality, conceptual depth, and technical excellence. Developing such high-impact outputs not only enhances the visibility and credibility of fine arts within the broader academic community but also fosters interdisciplinary engagement, attracts research funding, and opens opportunities for professional recognition and entrepreneurial initiatives. In this context, the creation of structured frameworks, templates, and methodological approaches can play a critical role in ensuring that artistic productions meet the standards of innovation and competitiveness expected in contemporary higher education.



#### 4. OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study and associated invention is to develop a structured template to produce abstract paintings. This template has been specifically designed to facilitate the creation of artworks that convey the narrative of *Sang Kancil Membilang Buaya*. The development of this invention, informed by a precise understanding of artistic principles, has generated multiple opportunities, including recognition through awards, access to project grants, and the potential for entrepreneurial initiatives.

#### 5. METHODOLOGY

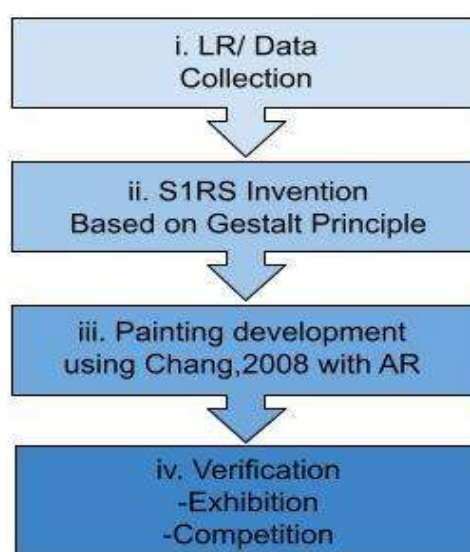


Chart 5.1: Framework used for the study and invention

##### i.LR/ Data Collection

The study and development of the S1RS template commenced with the aggregation of data pertaining to Malay folktales, particularly the narrative *Kancil Membilang Buaya*, as documented in *Kumpulan Cerita Sang Kancil* (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2015).

##### ii) S1RS Invention Based on Gestalt Principle

Based on two reference paintings -*Seafarer 1* (2024) by Rashfan Abu Bakar and *Sagu dan Rumbiya* (2024) by Farif Abdul Jalil, both wellknown abstract artists in the fine arts scene who had recently held their inaugural solo exhibitions at the commencement of this study. The analysis was conducted employing three Gestalt principles: (i) Symmetry, (ii) Proximity, and (iii) Closure. Insights from this analysis informed the derivation of compositional strategies that culminated in the development of the S1RS composition, which functions as a structured template to produce abstract paintings. This template provides a practical framework for artists who are initiating explorations within this stylistic domain.

iii) Painting development using Chang 2008 with AR.

The creation of the painting that adapts the story *Sang Kancil Membilang Buaya* refers to Chang's (2008) theory. Essentially, it is based on the triadic balance defined by Chang (2008), which consists of three components: reflection, analysis, and interpretation. iv) Verification through Exhibition and Competition. The Augmented Reality overlay can be experienced through the Artivive application. Technology is a platform to bring new people closer so that folktales are easier and more interesting to live without changing the original story (Nordiana, 2020)

iv. Verification through Exhibition and Competition

The artwork entitled S1RS: Kancil Membilang Buaya, produced utilizing the S1RS template, has additionally underwent a verification process through exhibition, competition engagement and awarded with grant.

## 6. RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FINDINGS

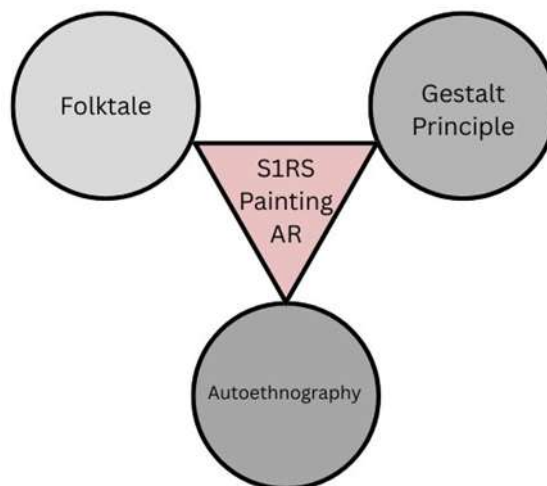


Chart 6.1: The Developed Framework

The research framework outlined above was systematically constructed in accordance with the adopted research methodology. By integrating all the constituent elements, the study has generated findings that are not only inventive but also aesthetically compelling and conceptually innovative, demonstrating a synthesis of creativity and rigorous inquiry. This template is a potent epistemological framework for the creation of abstract artworks. S1RS: Kancil Membilang Buaya has been effectively produced and further enhanced by the integration of augmented reality advancements. It enhances the value of the artwork, positioning it as a source of inspiration and knowledge that elevates visual art as an instrument for preserving Malay Folktales among art enthusiasts and the wider community.



Figure 6.1: During the award ceremony at Galeri Shah Alam on the 27 February 2025.

The artwork was successfully selected by the jury for the Open Show at Shah Alam Gallery (PTGSA 2024) and was exhibited from 14 January to 14 March 2025. It was further distinguished with the Shah Alam Gallery Open Exhibition Incentive Award 2024, valued at RM3,000. These recognitions not only affirm the artistic and conceptual strength of S1RS but also validates the effectiveness of the S1RS template as an innovative framework for developing abstract works grounded in cultural narratives. The exhibition provided a platform to present the integration of abstract visual language and augmented reality technology, demonstrating how traditional Malay Folktales can be reimagined through contemporary visual art practices. Such acknowledgment underscores the significance of merging research, creative methodology, and digital innovation within the fine arts discipline.



Figure 6.2: Gold Certificate Award DIID 2024 (left)  
 Figure 5.3: Best of The Best Professional -Social Science (right)

S1RS: Kancil Membilang Buaya painting through innovation titled *Sang Kancil AR Painting: Bridging Tradition to Technology* was presented at the Digitalised International Invention, Innovation and Design (DIID 2024) competition organized by Universiti Teknologi Mara Johor, where it received both the Gold Award and the Best of the Best Professional (Social Science) recognition that worth RM1,000. This achievement highlights the project’s innovative integration of augmented reality with traditional Malay folktales, demonstrating how digital technology can enhance cultural

storytelling through visual art. The success of this work affirms the potential of the S1RS template as a creative research framework that bridges traditional narratives with contemporary innovation in the fine arts discipline.



Figure 6.4: The display at the IIDEX 2025.

The S1RS composition template, implemented through *S1RS: Story In Re-Storying Abstract & AR Painting Template, Where Tradition Meets Technology*, received the Gold Medal at the Invention, Innovation and Design Exposition (IIDEX) 2025 organized by Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam. The award highlights the template's effectiveness in integrating traditional Malay narratives with abstract painting and augmented reality, demonstrating its potential as a framework for culturally grounded, technologically enhanced artworks.



Figure 6.5: During 'Soul on Canvas: Painting Dreams of Tomorrow' workshop at Monash, Johor Bharu (left)

Figure 6.6: The output of the program (centre)

Figure 6.7: Paintings display at Hospital Sultanah Aminah, Johor Bahru (right)

The S1RS research and invention also received a grant of RM10,000 from the National Visual Art Development Board under the Tabung Bantuan Seni 2025. The project titled "*Soul on Canvas: Painting Dreams of Tomorrow*" took place on 22 August 2025. This funding supported the development and realization of the artwork, while also facilitating a workshop on abstract painting using the S1RS template for medical students at Monash University, Johor Bahru. The students' creations were subsequently exhibited at Hospital Sultanah Aminah, their affiliated teaching hospital. This initiative not only provided practical, hands-on exposure to contemporary art practices but also demonstrated the adaptability of the S1RS framework in educational

contexts, fostering creativity, cross-disciplinary engagement, and the integration of cultural narratives into innovative artistic practices.

## 7. CONCLUSION

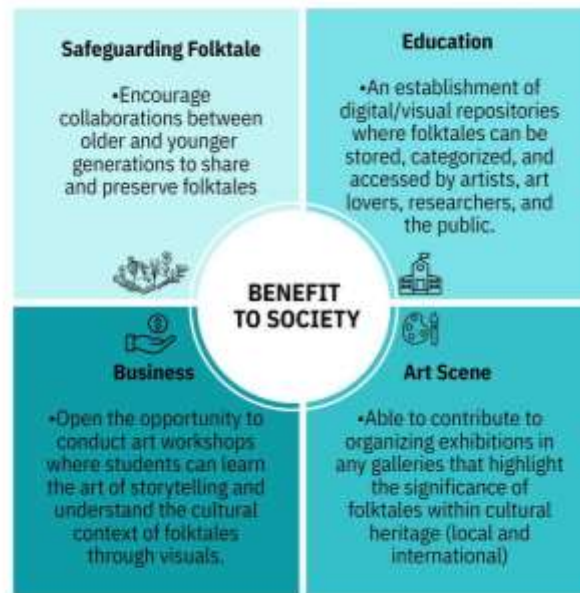


Chart 7.1: SIRS and the benefit to society

In conclusion, integrating folktales into contemporary visual art generates significant cultural, educational, and professional benefits while advancing key Sustainable Development Goals. It supports Quality Education (SDG 4) by providing a structured pedagogical framework for teaching abstract art and cultural storytelling; Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10) by democratizing access to creative methodologies for emerging artists and underserved communities; and Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11) by preserving and promoting Malay folktales through exhibitions, community engagement, and digital repositories. Collaborative intergenerational practices and art workshops further ensure the transmission of intangible cultural heritage, enhance creative skills, and deepen understanding of cultural narratives. Gallery exhibitions highlight the ongoing relevance of folktales, fostering inclusive participation and broadening public engagement in contemporary art.

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