THE SYMBOLIC MESSAGES OF 'KILANG RACUN': DIGITAL PRINT INTEGRATED WITH AUGMENTED REALITY

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Abstract. The study analysed Kilang Racun (Poison Factory) by Malaysian artist Haris Abadi, a digital print on canvas integrated with Augmented Reality (AR), with particular focus on its symbolic messages and cultural meanings within the context of Malaysian contemporary art. Situated within the discourse of new media art, the research examines how the artwork negotiates the intersections of technology, tradition, and socio economic critique. Employing a qualitative art analysis methodology grounded in semiotic interpretation, the study draws upon the theoretical frameworks of Charles Sanders Peirce and Roland Barthes to decode layers of meaning embedded in visual symbols such as the poisoned apple, industrial machinery, cartoon figures, and theatrical curtains. These elements are interpreted as metaphoric critiques of capitalism, consumer culture, environmental degradation, and the spectacle of mass media. The integration of AR extends the symbolic narrative by transforming the static composition into an interactive and immersive experience, reinforcing Jean Baudrillard's notion of hyperreality in which mediated images supplant lived reality. Simultaneously, the performative activation of the artwork through AR echoes the visual dramaturgy of wayang kulit, recontextualising Malay cosmological and theatrical traditions within a digital framework. The findings reveal that Kilang Racun reappropriates indigenous symbolic systems to articulate a critical commentary on global capitalism and digital ideology. Ultimately, the study demonstrates how Malaysian new media art functions as a hybrid platform that fuses technological innovation, cultural memory, and social critique, contributing to broader discussions on mediated realities and contemporary artistic expression.
Keywords: *symbolic message, new media art, Augmented Reality (AR), Malaysian contemporary art, semiotic analysis*

Introduction

Contemporary art functions as a mirror that reflects the intricate dynamics between society, culture, and the rapidly evolving global environment. Contemporary art adopts multiple forms, pragmatic practices, and multicultural orientations. Rather than being confined to the hegemony of Western modernism, contemporary practices return art to its contextual and lived realities. This return emphasizes that art is no longer understood solely through its aesthetic form, but through the ideas, narratives, and cultural meanings it conveys. In the realm of visual arts, the primacy of message over form has become increasingly evident. Navickaitė (2021) asserts that the communicative dimension of contemporary art is its most crucial component, situating content above mere visual beauty. Similarly, Smith (2009) describes contemporary art as a "contested zone" where local traditions, global exchanges, and socio-political concerns intersect to create layered meanings that extend beyond surface aesthetics. This highlights how art operates as both a cultural text and a symbolic space.

Turner (2004) has argued that contemporary visual art embodies the intersection of past, present, and future, functioning as a lens through which globalization, geopolitics, and cultural identity are negotiated. In Asia and the Pacific, art reflects and responds to histories of colonialism, regional transformations, and the disruptive forces of

technological development. This dynamic demonstrates that contemporary art permeates everyday life, translating social change and cultural memory into visual and symbolic language. In Malaysia, young artists have emerged as key voices within this discourse, often blending local traditions with digital media and experimental approaches. Such practices echo Abdullah (2019) perspective that art is fundamentally an act of communication, enabling artists to externalize problems, emotions, and cultural anxieties for public reflection. In this context, new media art provides fertile ground for Malaysian artists to experiment with the dualities of tradition and progress, technology and humanity, while creating unconventional forms that challenge viewers' perceptions.

One notable example is the work of Haris Abadi, a Malaysian artist whose practice explores the intersections of identity, culture, and technological critique. His artwork *Kilang Racun* (Poison Factory) exemplifies this synthesis, employing visual strategies and digital interventions to interrogate how contemporary society negotiates tradition, capitalism, and media technologies. This research aims to investigate artwork *Kilang Racun* by Haris Abadi through the framework of symbolic meaning and cultural identity. It focuses on three key questions: (1) What is the structural composition of symbolic messages embedded in the artwork? (2) What layers of meaning emerge from the interaction of signs and symbols within the piece? and (3) In what ways does the symbolic message operate within the wider context of contemporary Malaysian art? By engaging with these questions, the study not only contributes to academic discourse particularly in advancing scholarship on media art, symbolism, and communication but also offers a social dimension by providing audiences with deeper insights into how contemporary visual art can be interpreted and appreciated.

Literature review

The development of new media art has significantly expanded the possibilities of symbolic communication in contemporary art practices. Nasruddin et al. (2024) asserts that digital technology redefines the boundaries of artistic expression by incorporating interactivity, temporality, and participatory experience. In Malaysia, this transformation is evident in the works of contemporary artists who employ digital tools such as augmented reality (AR), projection mapping, and motion graphics to create multi-layered symbolic meanings that reflect both global and local narratives. Symbolism, as theorized by Barthes, operates within cultural systems of signification that mediate ideology and power. In Malaysian visual culture, symbolic imagery often intertwines with narratives of identity, postcolonial resistance, and social change. Local artists reinterpret traditional motifs such as *pohon beringin*, *gunungan*, and *wayang kulit* to engage critically with contemporary realities. These symbols act as semiotic bridges linking ancestral heritage with modern socio-political discourse, embodying Malaysia's complex negotiation between tradition and modernity. Fauzan Zuhairi et al. (2021) concept of remediation the process through which new media refashion older media forms, finds strong resonance in Malaysian new media art. Artists frequently incorporate traditional aesthetics into digital formats, producing what Anphanlam (2025) describes as a "digital syncretism" of cultural memory. The digital reimagining of indigenous forms serves not only as preservation but also as a symbolic act of renewal, situating Malaysian culture within global technological frameworks while maintaining local authenticity. The symbolic potential of interactivity, as discussed by Chen (2023), transforms the spectator into an active participant, thereby reshaping

meaning production. In Malaysia, artists leverage interactivity to provoke reflection on identity and social consciousness. By requiring audience participation, these works metaphorically represent processes of national introspection and critical engagement. Interactive art thus becomes a symbolic rehearsal for agency and dialogue, aligning with the participatory culture of digital society.

Hesmondhalgh (2006) theory of cultural production emphasizes the interplay between art, power, and economic systems. Malaysian new media artists often critique consumer capitalism and media manipulation through digital symbolism. Visual metaphors of machinery, commodities, and mass media serve as allegories for industrialization and ideological control, notion that individuals in consumer societies are commodified as products. This symbolic critique highlights how capitalism infiltrates both the material and psychological dimensions of everyday life. Ren (2025) concept of simulacra and hyperreality provides a critical framework for understanding digital aesthetics in Malaysia. Through AR and virtual imagery, artists question what constitutes authenticity and truth in a society dominated by mediated experiences. The use of illusion, repetition, and simulation in digital artworks exposes the fragility of "reality" itself, mirroring the ways Malaysian audiences navigate a media landscape saturated with spectacle, advertising, and political imagery. Posthumanist aesthetics, as articulated by Braidotti (2019), view technology as an extension of human consciousness and a metaphor for transformation. Malaysian artists experimenting with robotics, coding, and algorithmic art often explore the symbolic relationship between human spirituality and technological progress. This synthesis of Islamic metaphysical thought, Malay cosmology, and cybernetic imagery produces a uniquely Southeast Asian posthumanism, one that critiques the disembodiment of technology while affirming local cultural frameworks of harmony and balance.

Globalization generates new symbolic tensions in Malaysian digital art. Global cultural flows as processes of adaptation and resistance. Within this framework, Malaysian artists respond to transnational influences through symbolic appropriation and reinvention. By digitizing batik motifs, Islamic geometry, and folk tales, they assert cultural sovereignty in a globalized visual economy. This symbolic hybridity reflects both the vulnerability and resilience of local culture amid global homogenization. The participatory dimension of new media, holds strong symbolic resonance in Malaysia's socio-political context. Interactive and community-based digital installations metaphorically represent democratic participation and collective authorship. They disrupt hierarchical art structures by redistributing creative power among audiences, thus aligning with Malaysia's evolving discourse on civic engagement and cultural inclusivity. Symbolically, participation becomes a metaphor for shared national consciousness and critical empowerment. Within the Malaysian academic discourse, scholars such as Saidon and Sitharan (2008) have highlighted how digital and cyber art in Malaysia function as both aesthetic experimentation and cultural reflection. Rajah's writings on *"cybernetic space of Malay subjectivity"* position digital art as a medium that negotiates local identity in global digital flows. Hasnul, meanwhile, interprets multimedia symbolism as a continuation of spiritual and metaphysical traditions within a technological framework. Both perspectives reveal how Malaysian artists use symbolism not merely as decoration, but as epistemological tools to question existence, faith, and materialism in the modern age.

Other local scholars, including Noh et al. (2015), have examined how symbolic forms in Malaysian art are rooted in adat, mythology, and cosmology. When transposed

into digital contexts, these traditional symbols gain renewed meaning, serving as critical commentary on issues such as cultural homogenization, environmental crisis, and political power. The National Art Gallery's (Balai Seni Negara) curatorial initiatives further emphasize that Malaysian new media art operates at the intersection of culture, technology, and ethics, where symbolism acts as a bridge between ancestral wisdom and contemporary critique. In summary, scholarship on symbolic messages in new media art underscores how digital technologies serve as both medium and metaphor for cultural negotiation. In Malaysia, artists mobilize symbolism to engage with issues of capitalism, postcolonial identity, and mediated reality. Their works not only extend theoretical debates by Barthes, Baudrillard, and Bourdieu but also recontextualize them through Southeast Asian sensibilities. By merging technological innovation with symbolic storytelling, Malaysian new media art redefines how meaning, culture, and power intersect in the digital age.

Materials and Methods

Figure 1 shows this study adopts a qualitative art research approach, as categorized, where the primary aim is to interpret and clarify the symbolic meanings embedded within cultural and artistic practices. Qualitative art research emphasizes descriptive and interpretative analysis, allowing the researcher to explore how artworks function as carriers of meaning beyond their aesthetic form. Qualitative inquiry requires immersion, flexibility, and sensitivity in dealing with cultural data, making it suitable for visual art studies.

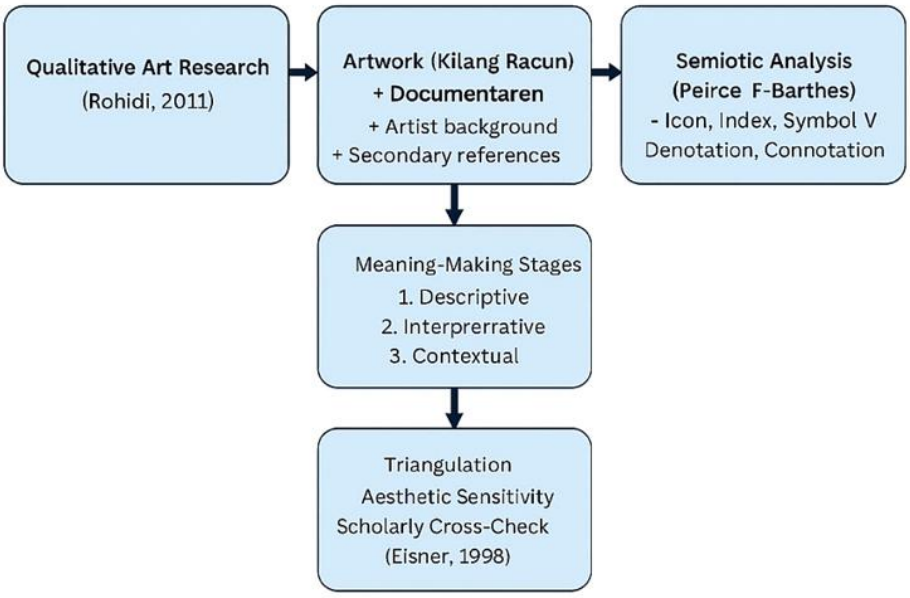


Figure 1. *Visual framework of methodology for analyzing Haris Abadi's Kilang Racun.*

Data sources

The core object of study is Haris Abadi's artwork *Kilang Racun*. In addition to the artwork itself, supporting data were gathered from related documents (exhibition catalogues, critical reviews, and artist statements), background information on the artist,

and secondary academic references. These multiple sources serve to contextualize the artwork within broader cultural, technological, and social frameworks.

Data analysis

The analysis applies a semiotic framework, combining Peirce's triadic model of signs (icon, index, symbol) with Barthes's concepts of denotation, connotation, and myth. This layered approach enables the researcher to decode how visual, auditory, and interactive elements in *Kilang Racun* convey symbolic meanings. The analysis proceeds systematically: first identifying signifiers within the artwork, then exploring their signified meanings, and finally situating them within cultural narratives.

Interpretation

The interpretative stage of this study unfolds across three interconnected levels. At the descriptive level, the focus lies on documenting the observable elements within *Kilang Racun*, including its visual motifs, narrative structure, and interactive features. Moving to the interpretative level, attention is given to uncovering the symbolic associations, metaphors, and intertextual references that emerge from the interplay of signs and symbols in the artwork. Finally, at the contextual level, the analysis situates these findings within the broader discourse of Malaysian contemporary art, emphasizing how Haris Abadi's work negotiates the intersection of identity, culture, and technology in shaping meaning.

Validation

To ensure rigor, the study employs triangulation, combining data from artwork observation, secondary sources, and cultural theory. The researcher's aesthetic sensitivity plays an important role in interpreting symbolic layers, but findings are strengthened through cross-referencing with scholarly discourse. This validation strategy helps balance subjective interpretation with academic credibility. Based on *Figure 2* the conceptual framework diagram, the new media artwork is positioned at the centre of analysis, serving as the primary object of study. Surrounding this core are the elements of expression (second circle), which encompass various artistic components such as form, appearance, text, video, sound, movement, light, space, and time. These expressive elements form the initial layer through which the artwork communicates meaning. Subsequently, these elements are examined through the lens of semiotic categorization (third circle), where they are identified as either icons or indices, leading to the discovery of their denotative meanings (fourth circle). Once identified, these icons or indices may progress into symbols (fifth circle), which attain connotative significance (seventh circle) when interpreted within specific cultural or social contexts (sixth circle). Ultimately, the layered process of decoding, from expression to symbol, from denotation to connotation, culminates in an understanding of the function of the artwork's message (eighth circle), revealing how the new media piece communicates within a broader cultural and artistic framework.

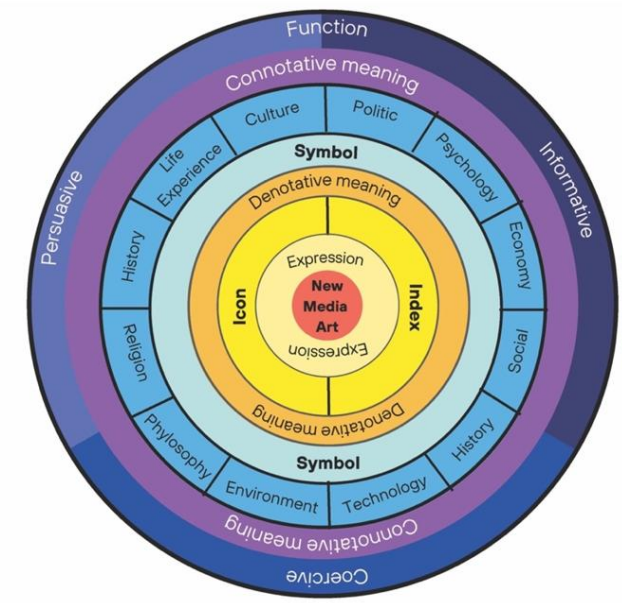


Figure 2. *Conceptual framework diagram of the symbolic message of new media art.*

Results and Discussion

The analysis of the result can be describe in *Table 1*.

Table 1*. Visual structure, symbolic interpretation, and function of Augmented Reality (AR) in Haris Abadi's "Kilang Racun".*

Visual Element / Structure	Description	Symbolic Interpretation	Function of Augmented Reality (AR)
Symmetrical Composition	Two cartoon figures mirror each other, pouring poison onto a moving apple on a factory conveyor.	Emphasizes repetition and mechanical order — visual metaphor for the endless capitalist production cycle.	When viewed through AR, symmetry becomes animated, reinforcing the sense of automation and perpetual movement.
Factory Machine (meters, pipes, chimneys)	Industrial structures dominate the center, producing a mechanical rhythm.	Represents the technological core of capitalism—cold, emotionless, and exploitative.	AR adds movement and sound to the machine, simulating real industrial noise, thus intensifying its oppressive atmosphere.
Cartoon Figures	Nostalgic, childlike characters inspired by classic animation.	A satirical critique of media manipulation—how capitalism disguises exploitation through cute imagery.	Through AR animation, the figures "come alive," parodying how digital media seduces and normalizes ideological toxicity.
Apple on Conveyor Belt	Shiny red apple continuously processed by the machine.	Symbol of consumer goods—appealing yet poisoned; critique of commodification and alienation.	AR enables the apple to rotate or move, creating illusionary appeal—mirroring the seduction of consumerism.
Theater Curtain	Draped across the composition, framing it like a stage.	Symbol of illusion and spectacle—capitalism as a global performance of pleasure and deception.	AR transitions the curtain as if it opens, revealing deeper narrative layers; this interactive act mirrors unveiling of hidden truths.
Cultural Motif: Gunungan / Banyan Tree Reference	Curtain shape resembles the sacred wayang kulitbanyan motif.	Reflects the inversion of spiritual cosmology—traditional harmony replaced by capitalist machinery.	AR bridges myth and technology, turning the digital screen into a new "shadow play" that merges heritage and modern illusion.

Message structure and content

Haris Abadi's *Kilang Racun* presents a meticulously composed symmetrical structure that transforms industrial imagery into a theatrical spectacle. Two cartoon-like figures stand on either side, each holding a poison canister and pouring it over an apple that

travels along a factory conveyor belt. At the composition's centre, a massive machine filled with knobs, meters, and smoking chimneys dominates the scene, surrounded by deep red stage curtains. This balanced composition emphasizes the mechanical, repetitive, and relentless nature of capitalist production. The red curtains simultaneously transform the image into a performance space, suggesting that the production of poison symbolic of capitalist ideology is being staged and aestheticized for a global audience. Theorizes in *The Society of the Spectacle*, modern life unfolds within a spectacle in which representation replaces reality. In *Kilang Racun*, the factory machine and the theatrical drapery together manifest this condition: capitalism as entertainment, its toxicity disguised beneath aesthetic pleasure. The work exposes how the visual allure of production conceals systemic harm, creating a surface of spectacle that masks the deeper corruption of labour and desire. Haris's use of familiar cartoon forms amplifies this critique, transforming the artwork into both a stage and a mirror of late-capitalist culture.

The cartoon characters in the work resemble classic animation icons, evoking nostalgia and the perceived innocence of childhood entertainment. Yet, when these figures handle poison, their friendly façade turns into a biting satire. As Luo and Luo (2023) argue in their theory of the *culture industry*, mass entertainment serves as an instrument of capitalist ideology, shaping perception under the guise of pleasure. Here, Haris's cartoon figures become symbols of ideological seduction, cheerful messengers spreading a globalized form of toxicity masked as joy. The apple, a universal symbol of knowledge, temptation, and poison, represents the modern cultural commodity: attractive, desirable, but ultimately harmful. As Øversveen (2022) explains, capitalism alienates human beings from the authentic value of their labour and its products, replacing *use value with exchange value*. The poisoned apple, therefore, becomes a metaphor for consumer goods stripped of their natural essence, contaminated by the logic of profit and excess. While *Kilang Racun* draws heavily from global capitalist imagery, Haris Abadi also roots his critique in the Malay–Nusantara symbolic tradition, establishing a dialogue between Western industrial metaphors and regional cosmology. The banyan tree (*pohon beringin*), for instance, carries local significance as a symbol of cosmic balance and a bridge between the physical and spiritual realms. When juxtaposed with the poisoned apple a product of Western myth and global capitalism the *beringin* reclaims indigenous spirituality as a counterpoint to industrial toxicity.

Through this cultural synthesis, Haris recontextualizes the capitalist spectacle within a postcolonial framework, revealing how global systems of production infiltrate not only economies but also local epistemologies. *Kilang Racun* thus stands as a powerful allegory of resistance where digital media, mythology, and critique converge to expose the seductive machinery of capitalism and its insidious effects on both the human and ecological psyche. The curtain in this artwork can be interpreted as a symbol of illusion. As Ren (2025) explains in his theory of *simulacra*, representation replaces reality in the modern age. The curtain here signifies that the audience is merely witnessing the *performance* of capitalism its entertaining façade rather than the real poison that lies concealed behind it. From a Malay cultural perspective, however, the curtain may also be compared to the gunungan in *wayang kulit*, which is shaped like the *pohon beringin* (banyan tree). In traditional shadow play, the beringin marks the threshold into the world of stories, a cosmic symbol uniting the heavens, the earth, and the spiritual realm. In this context, the red curtain in *Kilang Racun* functions as a modern gunungan, a digital gateway into a global narrative. Yet, its meaning has been inverted: what once

symbolized cosmic balance has now become an emblem of capitalist toxicity. The factory machine, with its gauges and smoking chimneys, stands as a symbol of the cold, unfeeling nature of modern industrial systems. Modern technology often functions not to liberate humanity, but to preserve the capitalist status quo. Within this context, the machine in *Kilang Racun* can be interpreted as an "inverted banyan tree" of the modern world no longer the cosmic centre of harmony and balance found in traditional cosmology, but rather the epicentre of capitalist production and contamination. It replaces the sacred axis of the universe with a mechanical one, transforming creation into consumption and spirituality into industrial toxicity.

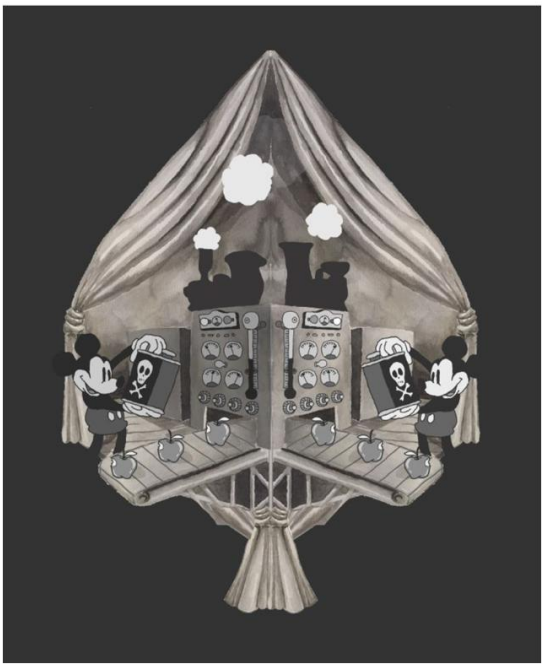


Figure 3. *"Kilang Racun" by Haris Abadi (Digital Print on Canvas with Augmented Reality content, 92cm × 112cm, 2018).*

Function of Augmented Reality (AR)

The use of Augmented Reality (AR) in this artwork adds a significant layer of critique. When viewers access the image through a smart device, the work becomes animated and interactive. It does not merely serve as a technological gimmick, but rather illustrates how contemporary capitalism can "package poison" in forms that are more seductive and difficult to resist. According to Barroso (2022), this phenomenon aligns with the concept of *hyperreality*, a condition in which virtual reality becomes more dominant and convincing than physical reality itself. In the local context, AR can be understood through an analogy with the traditional wayang kulit (shadow play), which requires light and shadow to "animate" its narratives. AR, by contrast, operates as a modern form of shadow, not from the glow of oil lamps, but from digital screens, adding layers of illusion while reinforcing the message that contemporary experience is constantly filtered through virtual media. As asserts, *wayang kulit* functions not merely as entertainment but as a cosmological performance system. Through the use of AR, Haris Abadi transfers this principle into the contemporary realm, effectively bridging tradition and technology. Furthermore, AR also reflects the nature of participatory

culture in new media art. Viewers are no longer passive recipients; instead, they become part of the aesthetic experience as they move their devices to unlock hidden layers of meaning. This process aligns with concept of *convergence culture*, where modern media demand active audience participation to complete the intended message. Thus, AR in this artwork emphasizes that understanding issues of capitalism and ideological "poison" cannot be achieved linearly, it must occur through interactive engagement and critical involvement of the audience themselves.

Moreover, AR reveals the paradox between authenticity and illusion within contemporary art. This technology raises questions about the boundaries of reality, what truly "exists," and what is merely a simulation? In the context of the digital age, such questions are crucial, as our daily lives are increasingly governed by virtual representations such as advertisements, social media, and algorithms. By employing AR as a central medium, Haris Abadi invites viewers to reflect on how the reality we experience every day is already mediated, filtered, and even manipulated by capitalist technology. Within the aesthetic framework, AR functions as a visual strategy that reinforces the relationship between form, medium, and meaning. This technology not only enriches the viewer's perceptual experience but also serves as a medium of visual critique against the power of capitalism, which often conceals falsehoods beneath layers of aesthetic appeal. Thus, the artwork does not merely present interactive beauty, it also exposes the paradox that visual sophistication is frequently employed to obscure the underlying damage caused by the global economic system.

Messages function: Critique of capitalism, consumerism, and popular culture

This artwork carries a critical message against global capitalism, which produces various forms of "poison" argues that in a consumer society, human beings themselves become commodities. The poisoned apple symbolizes global consumer products beautiful on the outside yet destructive within. Mechanical reproduction as a process that transforms the aura of art. Haris Abadi's work employs digital print and AR as a form of satire: technology today is not merely a tool for reproducing art, but a factory for producing cultural toxins. In the Malaysian context, local popular culture is often shaped by global media influences, resulting in entertainment forms that blur the boundaries of reality. The cartoon figures in this artwork can be read as representations of this phenomenon friendly, playful images that subtly conceal capitalist ideology. In Malay culture, the banyan tree symbolizes the cosmos, protection, and fertility. It also represents the gunungan in *wayang kulit*, the gateway into the world of stories. However, in this artwork, the banyan tree seems to be replaced by the factory machine and theatre curtain. The gunungan, which usually symbolizes cosmic harmony, has been inverted into a stage of global capitalism an entertaining yet poisonous spectacle.

This reflects how Haris Abadi connects local symbols (the banyan tree and *wayang kulit*) with global critique (capitalism and mass culture). The factory machine in the artwork can be read as an "inverted banyan" no longer a life-giving cosmic tree, but an industrial tree of poison. Thus, the work unites global criticism with local cultural roots, establishing a dialogue between Malay tradition and Western theories of capitalism and mass entertainment. The artwork *Kilang Racun* is profoundly relevant to contemporary issues. In the context of the modern food industry, it serves as a critique of how capitalism controls the global food chain. Food that was once organic and nourishing has become saturated with chemicals, preservatives, and additives, prioritizing profit over human health. The poisoned apple in the artwork functions as a metaphor for

consumer products that appear fresh on the outside but are harmful within. This situation resonates with today's public concerns about food safety, genetically modified organisms (GMO), and the extensive use of pesticides in industrial agriculture. The artwork thus reminds viewers that what we consider "daily food" is often the product of a capitalist factory system that harms both the human body and the environment.

The critique of the global entertainment industry is also clearly reflected through the cartoon characters who deliver poison with smiling faces. In popular culture, cartoons are usually associated with fun, nostalgia, and childhood innocence but Haris Abadi reveals their darker side. In the age of globalization, major entertainment corporations use animation, film, and music not only to sell stories but to transmit the ideology of consumerism. Viewers are drawn into colorful fantasy worlds, while behind the scenes lies an industry that reinforces capitalist dominance. Thus, the artwork questions whether global entertainment is truly neutral or merely a mask for economic power. A third dimension addressed in the work is the phenomenon of social media as a "factory of false information." In the digital age, truth and knowledge often blend with manipulation, misinformation, and propaganda. The use of Augmented Reality (AR) in this piece symbolically mirrors how the virtual world animates a "second reality" that is not necessarily true. The viewer becomes trapped in a captivating virtual experience, unknowingly absorbing ideological and cultural toxins. This resonates strongly with concept of hyperreality, where simulation becomes more convincing than reality itself. Haris Abadi thus reminds us that social media is not just a communication platform, but a capitalist machine capable of spreading toxic information to millions.

Finally, *Kilang Racun* is also relevant within the framework of global ecological crisis. The factory machines and smokestacks dominating the composition are a visual metaphor for industrial pollution. Modern capitalism poisons not only humans through food, entertainment, and information, but also the Earth itself. Climate change, air pollution, and biodiversity loss all stem from a system driven by limitless profit. In Malay cosmology, the banyan tree represents balance between humanity, nature, and spirituality. Yet, in this work, the cosmic banyan has been replaced by a toxic industrial machine a symbol of ecological imbalance. Hence, Haris Abadi's *Kilang Racun* stands not only as a cultural critique but also as a visual warning of the Earth's impending destruction.

Conclusion

In continuity with the introduction, *Kilang Racun* by Haris Abadi can be understood as a visual allegory that expands the discourse of contemporary Malaysian art beyond aesthetic experimentation. The artwork bridges traditional Malay cosmology with global critiques of capitalism, illustrating how visual media can function as both a form of cultural memory and critical commentary. By employing hybrid symbols—both local and global, Haris Abadi situates his work within a transnational dialogue that questions the moral and ecological implications of modern progress. *Kilang Racun* stands as a richly layered visual allegory, fusing global symbols with local traditions. Through the use of the poisoned apple, cartoon figures, factory machines, theatre curtains, and augmented reality technology, the artwork critiques how global capitalism operates as a factory of poison, producing toxins in the form of entertainment, food, media, and ideology. By linking the theatre curtain to the *gunungan* or *beringin* tree in Malay tradition, the artwork emphasizes how the local symbol of cosmic balance has been

replaced by the machinery of global capitalism. The tree that once symbolized harmony is now transformed into a center of contamination. Thus, *Kilang Racun* functions not only as a critique of capitalism from a global perspective but also as a reinterpretation of Nusantara symbolism within the modern world. Through this work, Haris Abadi successfully positions Malay cultural philosophy in conversation with global theoretical frameworks, creating a form of contemporary art that is both critically engaged and rooted in local symbolic traditions. *Kilang Racun* ultimately reveals that true artistic innovation lies not in technological novelty alone, but in the artist's ability to translate tradition into critique, offering a powerful reflection on humanity's entanglement with capitalism, media, and myth.

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Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involved with any parties in this research study.

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