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Appropriative Painting on Illustrated Surfaces as Alternative Art Media

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ABSTRACT

In the evolution of contemporary art, drawings and/or paintings remains a resilient medium yet continues to exhibit increasingly diverse visual expressions. Postmodern paintings frequently explore styles through eclectic elements and still predominantly utilize traditional techniques involving colored paint on flat surfaces as an artistic powerful paradigmatic medium. The author was interested to investigate and study further in research, as well as to innovate practically by utilizing the concept of appropriation as a stylization pattern to create images over existing images (overlay drawings). This approach consisted of several methods used include the stages of exploration, improvisation, and implementation; starting with visual comparison, experimentation with drawing media, and the application of the eclecticism of the painting by utilizing a plane material with a cross-section of the image/pattern as a medium of two-dimensional artwork (painting). As contemporary works of art often seeks to present uniqueness that triggers reflection, this research-creation aims to explore and expand the possibilities of using different—if not new—painting media while still maintaining the dimensional aspects of its flat surface. The findings of this research are an alternative offer to trigger innovation in different works of art, presenting a shift in conventional views that stimulate discussion of the novelty of fine art, while also being useful in providing an overview of the essence of postmodernism that reflects the complexity of contemporary art through elaboration of conventional painting 'standards'. Ultimately, this creation yields a distinctive alternative painting work due to its eclectic visual mix. The implication is the expanding possibilities of using media and creative patterns in creating a painting, which is not merely limited to a plain surface, but alternatively responds to the surface of a pictorial medium by adding images to it using conventional painting techniques.

Keywords: appropriation; alternative painting media; eclecticism; postmodern

ABSTRAK

Lukisan Apropriatif pada Permukaan Bergambar sebagai Media Lukis Alternatif. Dalam perkembangan seni rupa kontemporer, gambar dan/ atau lukisan masih menempatkan posisi bertahan dengan visual yang makin beragam. Katakan saja, lukisan dengan konsep pascamodern yang kerap mengeksplorasi penggayaan melalui elemen eklektik itu, pada prakteknya tetap didominasi oleh teknik tradisional yang menggunakan cat warna pada permukaan bidang polos sebagai media paradigmatis yang kuat. Ini menggugah penulis untuk menelisik dan mengkaji lebih jauh dalam penelitian, serta berinovasi secara praktis dengan memanfaatkan konsep apropiasi sebagai salah-satu pola penggayaan untuk menciptakan gambar diatas gambar. Metode yang dilakukan meliputi tahapan eksplorasi, improvisasi, dan implementasi; diawali dengan komparasi visual, percobaan medium gambar, serta perwujudan eklektikitas karya lukisan dengan memanfaatkan bidang material ber-penampang gambar/ corak, untuk menjadikannya sebagai media karya seni rupa dua dimensional (lukisan). Karena karya seni rupa kontemporer seringkali mencoba untuk menghadirkan keunikan yang memicu refleksi, maka penelitian-penciptaan ini bertujuan menggali dan memperluas kemungkinan penggunaan media karya lukisan yang berbeda—jika bukan baru—



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dengan tetap mempertahankan aspek dimensi permukaan datarnya. Temuan penelitian ini adalah tawaran alternatif guna memicu inovasi karya seni yang berbeda, menghadirkan pergeseran pandangan konvensional yang menggugah perbincangan kebaruan seni rupa, sekaligus bermanfaat memberi gambaran esensi pascamodernisme yang merefleksikan kompleksitas seni kontemporer melalui elaborasi terhadap 'pakem' seni lukis konvensional. Akhirnya penciptaan ini menghasilkan karya lukisan alternatif yang khas karena adanya padu-padan visual yang eklektik. Implikasinya adalah semakin meluasnya kemungkinan penggunaan media dan pola berkarya dalam penciptaan suatu lukisan, yang tidak melulu terbatas pada dasar permukaan bidang yang polos, namun secara alternatif merespon permukaan bidang dari sebuah media bergambar dengan menambahkan gambar diatasnya melalui teknik lukis konvensional.

Kata kunci: apropiasi; eklektik; media-lukis alternatif; pascamodern

1. Introduction

The discourse of 21st-century Indonesian art has evolved significantly since the New Art Movement (GSRB), presenting broader creative possibilities (Kusmara, 2019: 270-273), including innovations in the visual production of drawings and paintings. While conventional visual forms and painting styles persist, there has been a notable shift in the technical and material aspects of painting, resulting in an increasing diversity of dynamic media (Sugiono, 2021: 2). This research-creation aims to address and resolve the issue of painting media that differs from conventional practices. Traditionally, paintings are created on blank and plain surfaces. In contrast, the creative process in this research is carried out on media that already contain images. In practices, the author responds to the existing images by creating the new ones, thereby establishing a visual dialogue between the original imagery and the images produced through the act of painting. This shift forms the foundation of this creation project, which began with research into the visuality of drawings and paintings through exploration.

Experimentation is undertaken through the use of found materials and pictorial surfaces, which serve as alternative media for drawing and painting. The uniqueness of this project arises from the overlap of visuals, which not only marks a transformation in material context but also reinforces a paradigm shift in the discourse of painting (Putri, 2016: 270), revealing diverse artistic tendencies (Fitryona, et al., 2023: 2). This is particularly significant within the framework of global art, where non-conventional media are explored without limits, driving artistic innovation (Wicaksono, et al., 2023: 44).

The dynamics that challenge the exclusivity of this artwork have been apparent since the rise of postmodernism, which redefined the form and presentation of art. While there may appear to be little that is "new" in the practical and conceptual upheavals of postmodern pictorial art, many contemporary visual artists continue to offer unique visualizations in the present era (Rahim, 2020: 75-77). Similar to how Picasso, Dali, and Pollock sought to expand stylistic boundaries within modern art by challenging traditional painting on canvas (Sugiyono, 2021: 3), the author explores materials to expand the visual possibilities of modern art painting as an embodiment of postmodernism's eclecticism.

This context serves as the foundation for the author's project, which involves creating paintings on non-conventional media. The media used consist of representative materials such as paper and cardboard sourced from product packaging, book and magazine pages, illustrated calendars, and more (Figure 1). The exploration of media involves the application of basic painting techniques atop these materials, incorporating appropriation practices to embody the eclecticism that is characteristic of postmodern art.



Figure 1: Examples of material with cross-sectional images of a book cover (left) and product packaging (right)
(Source: Author, 2024)

This creative project has a clear urgency that is directly connected to its central research issues, which are formulated within a postmodern conceptual framework. The study focuses on two main questions: first, whether two-dimensional works that utilize image-based media surfaces as their expressive field can be categorized as alternative visual art within contemporary art discourse; and second, how the embodiment of traditional painting techniques applied to alternative media can be claimed to align with postmodern visual art practices. The research preceding the creative process aims to identify tendencies in drawing-based artworks that offer conceptual novelty through the non-conventional use of alternative media. Potentially, this project is expected to broaden artists' perspectives in the development of drawing and painting practices, while also stimulating productivity through creative impetus and the articulation of novelty (Sanjaya, 2023: 23).

Pictorial art using canvas and/or paper as a medium is considered conventional, with a history spanning centuries, and it remains widely used today. However, the rapid evolution of fine arts at the end of the 20th century brought about shifts in modality, value focus, and even the objects of artistic work (Sugiharto, 2013: 28-29). This aligns with the notion that the discourse of fine arts, including its trajectory and development, is inextricably linked to the dynamics of socio-cultural discourse (Kasiyan, 2021: 254). Such a phenomenon legitimizes the possibility of a shift in the manifestation of drawing and painting, both in terms of technique and media.

2. Creation Method

This project aims to describe artworks created using alternative media by employing descriptive-qualitative and experimental methods (Creswell, 2014). In this study, descriptive-qualitative methods and experimentation are complementary and non-dichotomous. The method functions to describe, interpret, and analyze phenomena that emerge during the creative process, including conceptual, contextual, and aesthetic as well as technical experiences encountered by the author. Through this approach, the process, artistic decisions, and creative outcomes can be understood in a reflective and in-depth manner. Experimentation, meanwhile, serves as a practical strategy for testing artistic possibilities through direct trials of materials, techniques, and media. It enables exploration and the discovery of novelty within the process of art making. The result of these experiments subsequently become objects of qualitative description and analysis. Accordingly, experimentation in this research operates as a creative procedure that generates qualitative data.

The method is employed to formulate meanings, patterns, and implications derived from the experimental outcomes, allowing both approaches to constitute a coherent and integrated methodological framework. The experimental practice forms the foundation of the creation, with an emphasis on experimentation throughout the process. This approach recognizes that in academic research on pure

and applied arts, practice is often the main method for gathering information. (Nuning, 2015: 25). The practice-led research is considered the appropriate method for designing and creating this work, as the outcome is a tangible artistic creation that did not exist prior to the research. Moreover, the ideas, concepts, and actions that manifest in the artwork are developed within a singular spatial and temporal flow, occurring simultaneously with the implementation of the research (Hendriyana, 2021: 13). This research also employed Alma M. Hawkins' theory of art creation that classifies the process into three stages—exploration, improvisation, and implementation (Eliza & Martozet, 2022).

At exploration stage, the author examines conceptual references, visual sources, theoretical frameworks, and material possibilities relevant to the research focus. Analytically, exploration functions to formulate artistic questions, define parameters of inquiry, and identify tensions between conventional and alternative media. The data generated in the form of visual note, observations, and preliminary experiment serve as the basis for decision-making in subsequent stages. Rather than being spontaneous in purely intuitive sense, improvisation stage allows the author to critically respond to findings from the exploration stage by manipulating materials, techniques, and compositional strategies. Analytically, this stage enables comparison, evaluation, and reflection on emerging visual outcomes, revealing patterns, limitations, and potentials within the artistic process. In the implementation stage, selected strategies and findings derived from exploration and improvisation are consolidated into finalized artworks. Analytically, implementation functions to assess the coherence between concept, method, and outcome, while demonstrating how experimental insight are translated into resolved artistic forms.

3. Results

During the creative process, the author produced a series of paintings using non-conventional materials, specially patterned cloth as an alternative illustrated surface. Beyond introducing visual novelty, this approach generated several analytical insights regarding the interaction between pre-existing imagery and painterly intervention. The patterned surface was found to actively influence compositional decisions, color relationships, and layering strategies, positioning the cloth not as a neutral support but as a co-constitutive visual element within the artwork (Rahim, 2023: 387). One significant finding is that illustrated or patterned surfaces function as an active semiotic layer that challenges the conventional hierarchy between background and image. Rather than beginning from blank field, the author engages in a dialogic process of “image responding to image”, in which the existing patterns both constrain and stimulate creative choices. This interaction produces visual tension and complexity that cannot be achieved on plain canvas or paper, thereby expanding the expressive potential of traditional painting techniques.

The use of patterned cloth also revealed a shift in the role of traditional media. Techniques such as brushwork, glazing, and layering were adapted to negotiate the texture, rhythm, and symbolic content of the underlying patterns. This adaptation demonstrates that traditional painting methods remain viable within post-conventional contexts, provided they are recontextualized through alternative supports. In this sense, the findings align with earlier observations on non-conventional materials in painting practices (Aruman et al., 2014: 36), while extending them by emphasizing the analytical role of pre-illustrated surface in shaping artistic outcomes. The author believes that many more design patterns could be explored to create paintings that deviate from conventional approaches while still offering distinctive value.

Furthermore, this exploration suggest that alternative illiustrated surfaces open new avenues for conceptual and material experimentation. Traditional painting surfaces like canvas, boards, or plain paper can be substituted with alternative materials, as demonstrated by Balinese artists who employ buffalo skulls as a base for their paintings (Sucitra, 2020). The findings indicate that material substitution is not merely a technical choice but a conceptual strategy that redefines authorship and visual meaning. Consequently, it can contributed new knowledge to practice-based painting research by demonstrating

how alternative-illustrated (media) surface generate distinctive aesthetic, compositional, and conceptual values beyond those afforded by conventional painting.

4. Discussion

The creation of artworks using pictorial materials surface in this project is grounded in postmodern strategies, particularly eclecticism and appropriation. Eclecticism functions as a critical method that disrupts established aesthetic hierarchies through the juxtaposition of heterogeneous visual elements, enabling the integration of modernist idioms and contemporary non-art imagery within a single pictorial field (Piliang, 2003). This approach reflects the postmodern emphasis on hybridity, plurality, and contextual meaning. Further situates the project within postmodern painting discourse by challenging notions of originality and authorship through recontextualization. Rather than reproducing existing images, the study demonstrates how appropriated visual elements acquire new meanings when negotiated with alternative illustrated surfaces. This not only enhances the visual appeal but also adds layers of narrative and meaning, characteristic of postmodern art (Aruman, 2014: 36). In line with contemporary theories of alternative media in painting, these pre-illustrated supports operate as active semiotic agents that shape composition structure, visual rhythm, and narrative complexity (Fitriyona et al., 2024: 2). Accordingly, this discussion positions the artworks as both aesthetic outcomes and conceptual investigations into expanded possibilities of postmodern painting through material and media experimentation.

In addition to eclecticism, the author incorporates the concept of appropriation in the creative process. According to Shuker, as cited by Yuliantari & Danu (2018), appropriation involves borrowing, reworking, and combining elements from other sources to create new cultural forms (Rahim, 2024: 387). The author uses appropriation, deliberately borrowing visual elements from other artworks, to complement the eclectic approach and align with the evolving discourse of postmodern art (Effendy, 2020). While appropriation often raises questions about authenticity, it can be used to critique the adaptation of external cultural influences and their integration with local culture (Martarosa, et al., 2019: 90-91). Visual artists frequently employ appropriation as a technique for creative expression, using elements from previous works to establish a dialogue between different concepts and ideas (Wibowo, 2019: 118; Burhan, et al., 2022: 6). Through online research, the author identified appropriation-based practices that legitimize the use of non-conventional materials in contemporary painting. An international reference is found in the work of American artist Michael Mocca, who appropriates classical and modern visual imagery and applies it to everyday materials such as shopping list and receipts (Artwoonz, 2019). Mocca's practice exemplifies an "aesthetic error" that disrupts conventional hierarchies of medium and image (Kasiyan, 2021: 261), reflecting a broader paradigm shift in contemporary art (Sugiharto, 2013: 28).

Mocca's artwork appropriates visuals from classical-modern era paintings, applying them to non-conventional media such as shopping receipts (Figure 2-left). Comparable approaches are also evident in Indonesian contemporary artists, such as Heri Dono and Tisna Sanjaya who employ appropriation and mixed media to recontextualize traditional imagery, popular culture, and alternative media, often emphasizing socio-political narrative and symbolic reinterpretation (Sanjaya, 2023: 23-25; Widyaevan, 2017). While these practices foreground thematic and cultural critique, they tend to treat material experimentation as a supporting strategy (Figure 2-right). Meanwhile, the author's practice positions illustrated surfaces as active pictorial plane that directly shape compositional structure and painterly decisions. The novelty of this approach lies in its systematic exploration of the imagery already inscribed on the alternative media used. This expands the practice of Indonesian and global appropriation in painting research based on postmodern practices.

From the outset, this shifting phenomenon captivated the author and sparked the idea for a creative project, which was carried out in three stages: first, exploration, involving in-depth research through



Figure 2:

Left: Appropriation painting on a shopping receipt by Michael Moccia
(Source: <https://artwoonz.com/receipt-art-michael-moccia>. Accessed on: 12 August 2024)

Right. Instalation and painting on a bamboo woven by Tisna Sanjaya
(Source: Widyaevan, Jurnal Rupa Vol. 03, No.01, 2017: p.15)

literature studies and visual comparisons; second, improvisation, where the effectiveness of drawing tools was tested for creating alternative sketches; and third, implementation, where the eclecticism of the painting was realized by using materials with pictorial surfaces as the background.

The initial step in the implementation phase involved sourcing and selecting pictorial materials to be used as the painting medium. The images were then analyzed to find a conceptual connection with the artwork to be appropriated, ensuring harmony in both narrative and visual aspects. This approach aimed to make the exploration process more fluid, allowing the final artwork's meaning to be easily interpreted by viewers. At this stage, three works were produced, all of which appropriated notable paintings from early Western modern art, including works by Piet Mondrian, Vincent van Gogh, and Edvard Munch.

The first piece created by the author draws on Piet Mondrian's 1935 painting "Composition C (No. III) with Red, Yellow, and Blue" (Figure 3-left), which was then appropriated onto the illustrated "kayon" area of a 2013 calendar (Figure 3-right).



Figure 3:

Left: Reproduction photo of a painting by Piet Mondrian, 1935
(Source: <https://wikioo.org/id/paintings.php>. accessed on August 25 2024)

Right: Calendar produced by PT. Surya Palacejaya (2013) featuring an illustration of 'kayon', Dentsu Indonesia, titled 'What Goes Around Comes Around', 21x21 cm, printed on Mohawk Option 100% PC Cream White 270 gsm paper
(Source: Author, 2024)

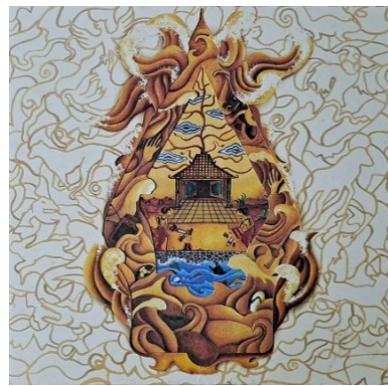


Figure 4: Visual details of the calendar cross-section showing a depiction of 'kayon' that includes a nature illustration
(Source: Author, 2024)

The decision to visually appropriate one of Mondrian's works onto the surface of a kayon-illustrated calendar was deliberate and conceptually grounded. Both Mondrian's "Composition" and the kayon share a substantive narrative connection: Mondrian's abstraction is rooted in the basic geometric structures of nature, such as trees and rivers (Barriga, 2011: 110). Similarly, the kayon visual (Figure 4), which depicts a tree and whose form represents a mountain, is inherently tied to natural themes (Pramudita, et al., 2022: 195).

This conceptual overlap is further enhanced by the contrasting visual styles: Mondrian's abstract geometry and the illustrative nature of the kayon. The juxtaposition of these two distinct visual approaches—abstract and illustrative—strengthens the eclectic concept, creating a new, layered visual that harmonizes these opposites.

From a technical standpoint, the first stage of creating the work began by sketching an appropriated version of Mondrian's painting freehand in pencil on a 1:1 scale, matching the dimensions of the calendar medium. The sketch was then transferred to the calendar surface using a pencil and ruler. Once the sketch was completed, the coloring process was initiated using acrylic paint and a brushstroke technique (Figure 5).

The choice of acrylic paint and technique, which was refined during the earlier improvisation phase, proved effective. Acrylic paint, with its properties similar to watercolor, allowed for transparency through thin brushstrokes. This technique resulted in a nuanced visual overlap, creating an intriguing transparent effect in the final work.



Figure 5: Steps in applying acrylic paint to a sketch using brushstroke techniques (Source: Author, 2024)



Figure 6: Artwork No. 1, 'Postmondria Kayonatura,' dimensions 21 cm x 21 cm, painting technique, acrylic paint on illustrated calendar paper, 2024 (Source: Author, 2024)

The title "Postmondria Kayonatura" for the final piece (Figure 6) reflects its hybrid nature by combining several elements: "post" for 'postmodern,' "mondria" for 'Piet Mondrian,' "Kyon" for the kekayon/gunungan visual, and "natura" for the natural theme. This title embodies the eclecticism implemented in the work, a significant concept within the postmodern art discourse.

The second work was based on Vincent van Gogh's 1888 painting "Terrace of a Café at Night" (Figure 7-left), which was appropriated onto a paper page featuring an image of a 'building corner landscape' from a photography catalog (Figure 7-right).

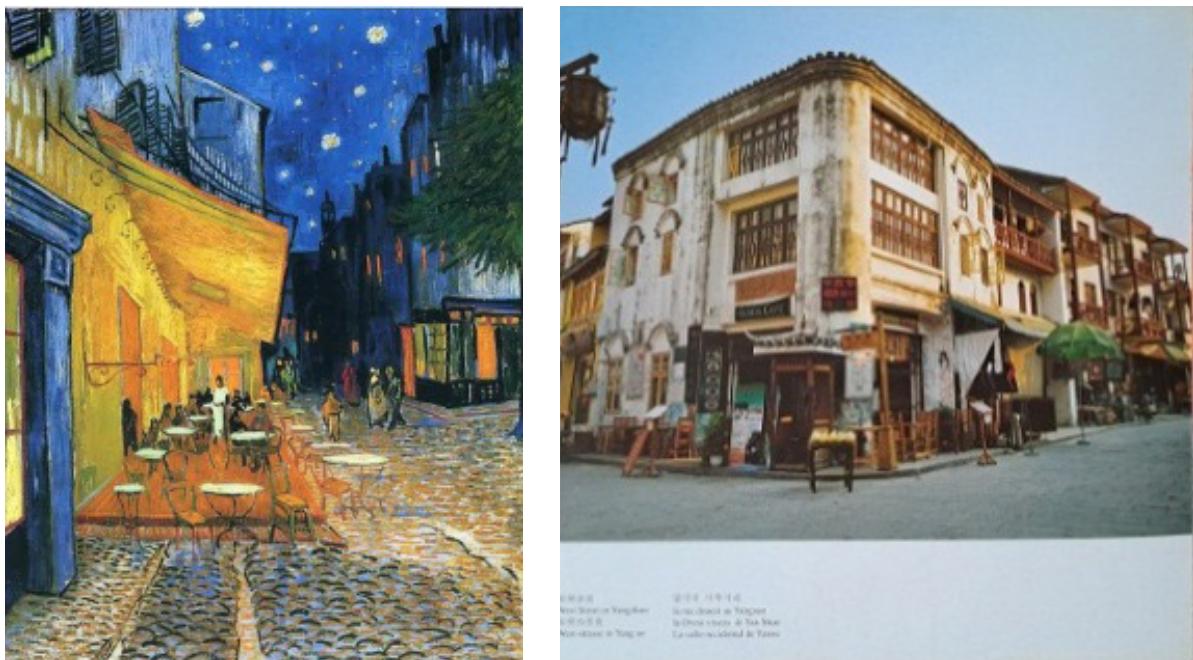


Figure 7:

Left: Vincent van Gogh's painting (Source : <https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/art-and-stories/stories/where-is-terrace-of-a-cafe-at-night>. (Accessed on: 06 September 2024)

Right: Photographic work by Zhang Liping, 'West Street of Yangshuo,' from the photography catalog 'World-Famous Guilin Landscape 100' (editor: Li Keping, 2002: 38) (Source: Author, 2024)

The second work followed the same pattern, technique, and color media as the first. The sketch was created directly on the surface of the media (an illustrated book page), starting with a pencil and completed with acrylic paint (Figure 8). This work was titled “YangGogh Cafe”, reflecting its visual sources, both of which depict a café building (Figure 9).



Figure 8: Visual Stages of Artwork No. 2 (Source: Author, 2024)



Figure 9: Artwork No. 2, “YangGogh Cafe,” dimensions 16.8 x 19.8 cm, painting technique, acrylic paint on illustrated book paper, 2024 (Source: Author, 2024)



Figure 10: Photographic work by Zhang Liping, "The Nine-Horse Mural Hill," from the photography catalog "World-Famous Guilin Landscape 100" (editor: Li Keping, 2002: 20) (Source: Author, 2024)

The third work was created on a sheet of paper featuring a 'landscape' image (Figure 10), sourced from the same photography catalog book as the second work. This piece combines elements from two paintings: Van Gogh's "Starry Night" (Figure 11-left, 1889) and Edvard Munch's "The Scream" (Figure 11-right, 1893).

The sketch for the third work was created directly on the surface of the media using a pencil, and the final touches were added with acrylic paint (Figure 12).



Figure 11:

Left: Vincent van Gogh's paintings (Source: <https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/art-and-stories/stories/all-stories/where-is-the-starry-night>. Accessed on: 08 September 2024)

Right: Edvard Munch's paintings (Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Scream. Accessed on: 08 September 2024)

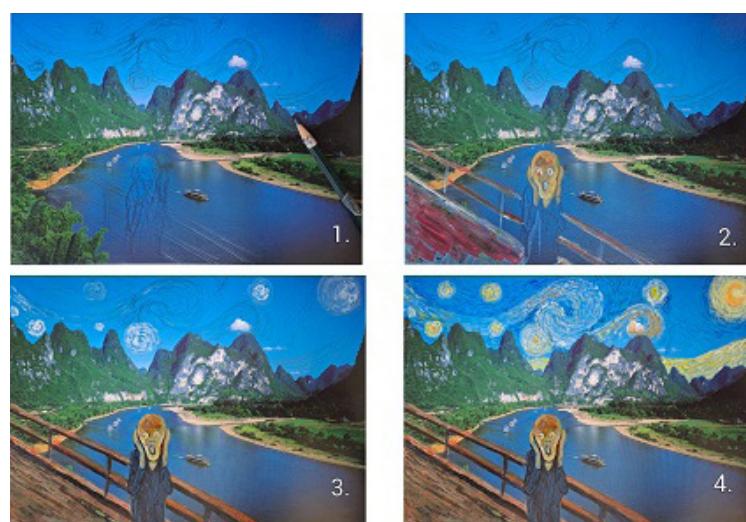


Figure 12: Documentation photo of the visual stages of Artwork No. 3 (Source: Author, 2024)

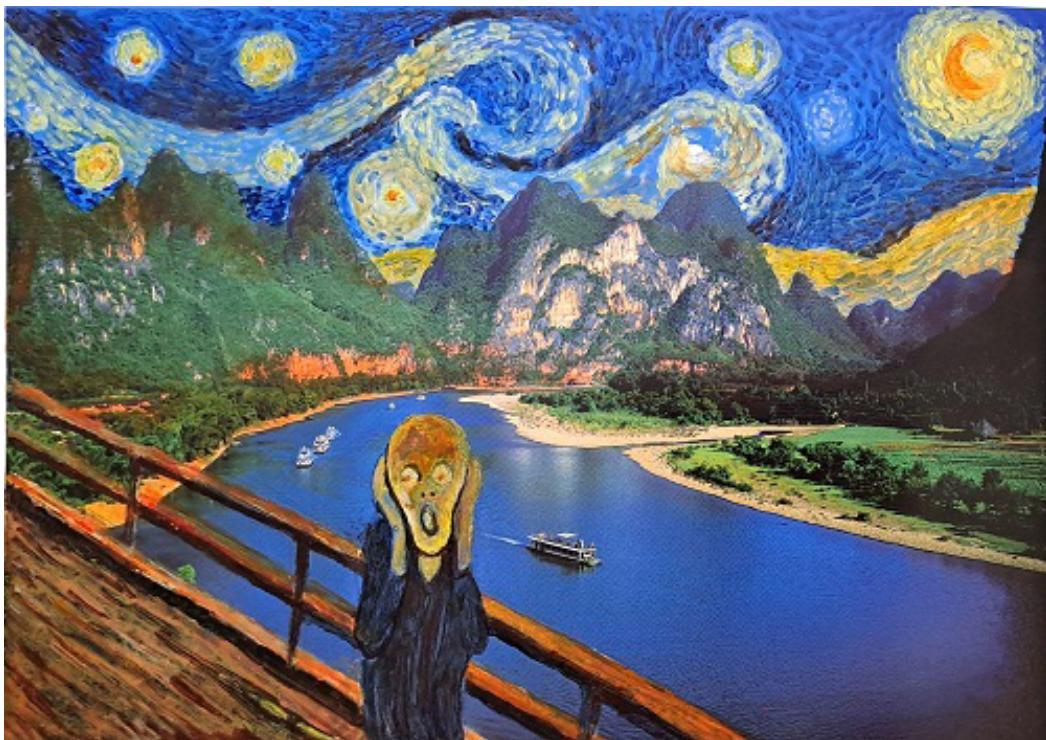


Figure 13: Artwork No. 3, “Starry Scream,” dimensions 18 x 25.4 cm, painting technique, acrylic paint on illustrated book paper, 2024 (Source: Author, 2024)

The final result of the author’s third work is titled “Starry Scream,” reflecting an eclectic combination of three visualizations (Figure 13). While appropriation enables critical dialogue between historical and contemporary visual languages, its application in author’s work also reveals certain limitations. One potential risk lies in visual redundancy, where excessive reliance on well-known imagery may reduce interpretative depth or lead to predictable associations.

Additionally, ethical considerations emerge regarding authorship and originality, particularly in balancing homage with critical transformation. This study addresses these limitations by employing appropriation not as replication, but as a contextual and material reconfiguration in which appropriated elements are altered through scale, surface interaction, and compositional restructuring. Nevertheless, the findings acknowledge that appropriation-based practices require careful conceptual framing to avoid superficial quotation and to maintain critical relevance within contemporary painting discourse.

5. Conclusions

In addition to exploring conventional painting techniques, the author proposed using non-conventional media as painting surfaces. By repurposing materials originally intended for other uses—such as old calendars and catalog sheets—into painting media, the author aligns with the representation of postmodern art. This study contributes to knowledge in the field of fine art and painting studies by providing a practice-based analysis of postmodern painting strategies through the use of alternative illustrated media. By employing appropriation and eclecticism, the research demonstrates how patterned and pre-illustrated surfaces can function as active visual and conceptual agents within the painting process. The findings challenge the conventional reliance on canvas and paper by validating alternative supports as legitimate media for artistic production. This study extends existing discussions on non-conventional materials in painting by situating them within a postmodern theoretical framework, thereby offering a contextualized model for material exploration in contemporary painting practice.

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