

Childhood Memory Reconstruction through a Surrealistic Approach as an Idea for Sculpture Creation

By: Adi Sadewo Mulyoho, Warsono², Muhammad Rain Rosidi³

Institution: Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta

Institution address: Jl. Parangtritis Km. 6,5, Glondong, Panggungharjo, Kec. Sewon, Kabupaten Bantul, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta 55188

E-mail: adisadewa45@gmail.com¹

Abstract

Sculpture is a three-dimensional work that reflects the expression of its artist, involving feelings, imagination, and memories visualized in the work. This research explores the process of childhood memory reconstruction as a foundation for sculpture creation, and analyzes how personal experiences can be transformed into three-dimensional works with aesthetic value and visual narrative. The creation method uses a practice-based research approach with assemblage techniques that combine multiplex material and used drums, processed through stages of contemplation, idea emergence, to the embodiment of three-dimensional forms with a surrealistic style. The research results produced a series of sculptures representing various spectrums of childhood experiences, from happy moments to trauma, visualized through compositions of organic forms, layered textures, and the use of contrasting colors. Through the process of memory reconstruction, this research shows that personal experiences can be processed into creative energy and embodied in visual forms that have artistic value.

Keywords: Sculpture, Childhood, Memory reconstruction, Surrealistic, Assemblage

A. Introduction

Ideas are factors that drive the formation of a work (Wiksana, 2017). Each person has different ways of conveying ideas, namely by voicing opinions verbally and through art forms, one of which is sculpture. Sculpture is a three-dimensional work that reflects the artist's self-expression. Sculpture is created from experiences absorbed by the senses and undergoes sedimentation, serving as a medium of expression that involves feelings or thoughts through a processing that is visualized so that others can understand the feelings of the creator (Tumimbang, 2015). Many factors underlie the emergence of someone's ideas in producing works. Ideas can arise from personal events or experiences as well as from the surrounding environment.

Memories or recollections of childhood are the most beautiful and very enjoyable memories for some people. The most pleasant and most ingrained aspect in childhood memory is playing. Playing is an activity that is closely associated with children's lives. Playing also becomes a very important part of the child's developmental process and can

add experiences related to both the social environment and the physical or natural environment (Sukmawati & Indratmo, 2022).

The author's beautiful childhood memories are based on his time living in the village of Pandanretno, Srumbung District, Magelang Regency, Central Java. Born as the second child of three siblings, the author had many playmates both of the same age and of similar age to his older or younger siblings. The author more frequently spent time playing with friends in the village. The most familiar story is how the author and friends played without regard to time, until the shouts of Mother and Father were heard reminding them to return home. Fishing in the river, flying kites in the rice fields, to playing soccer in the rice fields and much more. These deeply ingrained memories from that time are what the author wants to implement in future works. The creation of an artwork represents the artist, as stated in the book titled *Philosophy of Art (Filsafat Seni)*: Art is born because of the artist who presents the work. The presentation of artwork can be referred to as representation. It is called so because indeed in the process, the artist comes into contact with objective reality outside himself or reality within himself. This contact creates a response or reaction (although not all realities elicit a response in the artist). This response is possessed by the artist and expressed, represented outside of himself (Sumardjo, 1999).

Childhood memories for the author are recollections and records of life's journey that can serve as learning and reflection. Childhood memories become very meaningful as provisions when we are adults in addressing various situations. After contemplative reflection about childhood memories, the author visualizes the events and stories from his own childhood. The author's interest in the past, specifically childhood memories, stems from the many childhood events that the author wishes to express and that still remain clearly embedded in his mind. Through his visual work, the author aims to provide a portrayal of childhood memories, both pleasant and sad ones.

The works in this research explore the theme of 'Childhood Memory Reconstruction' (Rekonstruksi Memori Masa Kecil), with plywood and used oil drums as the primary media, containing various different stories in each sculpture. These sculptural works can serve as a vehicle for expressing the author's memories and feelings into artwork, enabling others to participate in remembering and imagining their own respective childhoods.

Research Questions

1. How do childhood memories influence the development of artistic ideas?
2. How are childhood memories reconstructed and visualized through sculpture?

Objectives

1. To create a new artistic work by responding to objects that exist around us.
2. To serve as a record of the past and commemorate the life journey that has been traversed.

B. Creation Concept

1. Work Concept

Childhood is synonymous with playing, as children spend much of their time playing, playing with friends, beginning to understand family and social environments. In interactions with peers and also with adults, the author began to recognize or experience forms of emotions such as anger, sadness, loneliness, and so forth. There is much out there that remains invisible to our view regarding someone's childhood life. Sometimes from the outside they appear happy, but within their hearts lies sadness. The author himself experienced something unpleasant, an incident when he was hit by his mother because he did not want to pray at the mosque. For the author, this event left a profound impression and has been difficult to forget even into adulthood. According to Anggadewi (2020), various impacts that emerge from childhood trauma include anxiety, inability to control oneself, susceptibility to negative emotions, problems in establishing relationships with family, and sleep disorders.

Not all childhood experiences are sad; there are also happy experiences with family and friends. Childhood experiences can be processed into positive or beneficial energy by drawing lessons as learning from each event. When children begin to interact with the social environment, they are introduced to and taught the norms or ethics that apply in society. They learn through parental advice, reprimands, prohibitions, or instructions. When a child makes a mistake, they are gently advised so that it becomes a reflection and learning experience.

Childhood memory as a concept is not merely presented as illustration alone, but rather is realized through an interpretation of that memory. Childhood recollections are

constructed and represented in sculptural form. Sculpture as a construction of meaning is very open to various interpretations (Berna, Wicaksono, & Wantoro, 2024). "Meaning must be actively 'read' and 'interpreted.' The meaning we take as viewers/readers/audience is never precisely the same as the meaning actually intended by the speaker/writer/painter or that produced by other viewers" (Marianto, 2002). From this point, the author attempts to provide an aesthetic experience for appreciators who contemplate it and to inspire other artists.

In reminiscing about the past, we cannot return to that time for each event and memory, but rather can only remember by collecting fragments of those memories. Collecting small pieces (information, evidence) to form a complete picture. Both good and bad experiences are the best teachers that provide us with lessons and knowledge. Art can become a means of processing experiences into beautiful works capable of providing new experiences for its appreciators.

Reconstruction is the process of rebuilding something that has been damaged, lost, or incomplete (Adnyana, Sumadiyasa, & Suwidiarta, 2020). In the context of memory, memory reconstruction is a natural and continuous process that occurs in our memory (Ningsih & Hayati, 2025). Childhood memories, which are often incomplete or blurred, are very susceptible to this reconstruction process. Understanding how the reconstruction process works can help us appreciate the complexity and beauty of our memories. It is through understanding like this that makes this life more meaningful by appreciating the past.

Our memories are not always accurate; they can change over time and are influenced by various factors. Internal factors, such as the ability to remember, tend to decrease with age, especially for short-term memory, while events that have strong emotional content, both positive and negative, tend to be easily remembered (Muliana, Jawilovia, & Fatmawati, 2025). There are genetic factors that play a role in the ability to remember. Some people have better memory than others. Memilih warna-warna ceria dalam patung bukan hanya tentang estetika, tetapi juga tentang menciptakan pengalaman yang mendalam bagi penikmat seni. Dengan menggunakan warna yang cerah dan menyenangkan, penulis dapat mengekspresikan emosi, menarik perhatian, dan menciptakan karya yang berkesan.

2. Embodiment Concept

In creating sculpture art, the author chooses to work with a surrealistic style. According to (Prawira, 2016), thoughts or efforts that show a combination between the real and unreal indirectly can be called an imaginary or experimental form with imagination. This style combines visual elements that need not be logical, depicting what exists in the subconscious, dream world, and fantasy, and often challenges our understanding of reality. The author's outpouring of feelings is expressed in the form of positive or negative emotions. The reason for choosing a surrealistic style is because it is considered suitable for the theme being addressed. Additionally, the author uses symbols and imagination from dreams and childhood in creating strange and mysterious sculptural works. This displays the desired character and produces surrealistic forms. The ideas embodied in the creation of sculptural artworks are executed through elements of texture, object forms, color, and good composition. Objects are arranged in good form to create a story within a work. The author strives to create a narrative in each sculpture. In the embodiment of ideas, the author realizes objects in dynamic forms and uses blocking techniques and several gradations in the coloring of objects. The author infuses a variety of colors into objects, using contrasting and different colors. Color selection is influenced by emotions associated with childhood memories. Bright colors represent joy, while dark colors represent sadness or trauma..

Construction is a combination of techniques for building or establishing through assemblage. This technique makes it possible to create diverse sculptures, both in terms of form and material (Persada, 2018). Assemblage is the process of arranging art objects by constructing, assembling, or combining various media together (Pooler, 2013) (Isnanta, 2015). The term was first used in the 1950s by Jean Dubuffet, a French painter. Assemblage is not only a transmutation of material but a composition about the reality of revealing material (Feldman, 1967). The materials chosen are plywood and drums. The construction process is vital in creating these sculptural artworks; this process influences both strength and form. This is because the sculptural works are made using materials that function both as construction and as the form of the work. Plywood pieces are connected to create organic, dynamic forms and to provide strength as well as durability. This construction is made using a collection of plywood that is linked to one another using locking techniques with screws and glue, providing additional strength..

In the creation of these sculptural works, the author considers several compositional elements of form, texture, color, and gesture, pose so that the works are created according to the author's expectations. Several fine art elements that are created can be explained as follows:

a. Form

Sculpture is an art form that encompasses three-dimensional aspects. Form is the primary aesthetic element in sculptural artwork. Form in sculptural art is the most tangible manifestation that can be perceived by human senses (Soedarso, 1992) (Fitria, Gani, & Rian, 2021). The sculpted forms take shapes that are expected to represent events from the author's childhood. Used iron drums with cylindrical shapes and volume serve as embodiments of a child's body. Plywood surfaces are cut according to pattern shapes of eyes, nose, hands, ears, feet, organic forms, geometric forms, and construction forms. The forms adopt stylistic patterns of stylization and simplification. Stylization is a change in form to achieve beauty by styling the depicted object. Meanwhile, simplification is the reduction of form without abandoning its original shape and only capturing its essence (Aruman, Junaedi, & Hariyanto, 2014). Stylization appears in the oversized nose shape. The bicycle pedal form is eliminated through simplification that takes the shape of a bicycle without pedals (simplification). In this research, the sculptures are created in various sizes, ranging from the smallest at 28 cm to sizes exceeding 200 cm, representing a diverse range of childhood events.

The influence of local culture in Indonesian sculpture cannot be denied. Sculpture is one form of fine art expression that has long been an important part of Indonesian society's life. The influence of local culture in Indonesian sculpture cannot be denied. Sculpture is one form of fine art expression that has long been an important part of Indonesian society's life (Nariyanti, Witjaksono, & Wiyono, 2023). From prehistoric times to the modern era, sculpture has consistently depicted the richness of local culture abundant with traditional values. From prehistoric times to the modern era, sculpture has consistently depicted the richness of local culture abundant with traditional values.

The element of locality in sculptural artwork encompasses the influence of culture, traditions, and local values reflected in the form, materials, and themes of the work. This demonstrates how artists integrate elements from their social and cultural environment into the artwork they create. Elements of locality are also visualized in

works such as: mosque domes, elongated bicycles, and dragon-headed kites. Figure 1 and Figure 2 represent the embodiment of sculptural artwork in this research..



Figure 1

Work titled "Bruised, Mosque" ("Memar, Masjid") (2024)
(Personal Document, 2024)



Figure 2

Work titled "Smoking on the Roof" ("Merokok di atas Genteng") (2024)
(Personal Document, 2024)

b. Texture

The physical texture found in sculptural works adds dimensional depth and value elements, and can ultimately emphasize a particular perspective/viewpoint when viewed from a certain angle. Texture is the tactile value on a surface, whether real or apparent. A surface may be rough, smooth, hard or soft, coarse or slippery (Pertiwi, Dangkoa, & Naini, 2023). In this case, the use of smooth texture in sculpture is also realized with sanded plywood surfaces. However, the bumpy and rough texture on the

drum surface caused by cracked paint, as exemplified in the sculpture titled "Smoking on the Roof" ("Merokok di atas Genteng") (2024), appears in the orange-colored section, actually giving the impression of dry skin as if a child had played too long under the sunlight. This difference in texture usage is caused by artistic exploration during the creation process. And the layered texture resulting from the combination of several layers of plywood surface material or color can create visual depth and complexity

c. Color

According to (Susanto, 2011), color is defined as vibrations or waves received by the human sense of sight that originate from the refraction of light through an object. Light that can be sensed by humans has a wavelength between 380-780 nanometers. Light produced from distances accessible to human senses can be broken down through a glass prism into colors, which are then given the name light colors. Additionally, colors usually have impressions capable of providing nuances that can be felt by both art appreciators and artists..

The selection of colors used in this work consists of bright colors indicating the atmosphere of the story within each sculptural piece. Cheerful colors symbolize the happiness of playing during childhood. The use of bright colors can strengthen the message or theme intended to be conveyed. Color has the ability to communicate emotions and feelings (Aliyasari & Martadi, 2021). Black color, as in the work titled "Smoking on the Roof" ("Merokok di atas Genteng") (2024), represents negative aspects. Red color on the drum, as in the work titled "Flying a Kite" ("Bermain Layang-layang") (2024), depicts a red face from playing under the midday sun..

d. Movement, Gesture, and Pose

The creation of these sculptures employs irregular forms—shapes that do not follow geometric rules or usual proportions. This creates strange and unusual impressions, often reminiscent of dreams or subconscious experiences. These irregular forms nevertheless convey a sense of dynamic movement in the sculptures.

According to (Thompson, 2023), pose refers to how a figure is positioned in a work of art or refers to its body language. Pose is a situation/movement that is frozen, captured by the author, to preserve or store the movement of the depicted subject. Poses that photograph the movement of a child playing, especially in one of the works titled

"Playing Ball" ("Bermain Bola") (2024), implement the gesture of kicking a ball with one foot in front and one behind. Gesture itself is a body movement to communicate something, either clearly or not, through the movement of body parts (Wibowo & Astuti, 2021). Gestures are more commonly used to convey an implied impression.

C. Creation Process

Tools and Materials

In the process of creating a sculptural artwork, one cannot be separated from the materials and equipment that support the creative work. The selection of materials varies for each artist. The ability to process materials and express oneself is adjusted according to the concept of formation. Deepening one's understanding of a material's characteristics needs to be studied so that its use can be efficient and the results can be maximized. The main media chosen are plywood and drums. Materials used in the creation of works include: Plywood, Drums, Acrylic paint, Eternity glue, Spray paint, Jack Nuts Screws, Wood screws, Tape, Nails, Wood putty, while the tools used include: Jigsaw, Nails, Ruler, Screwdriver, Plywood saw, Chair, Drill, Sandpaper, Cutter, and Brush.

Creation Method

This research employs a Practice-Based Research (PBR) approach. This approach integrates the process of artwork creation as a main part of scientific exploration, where the artist not only creates art, but also reflects upon and documents the entire creative process to generate new knowledge. In the context of sculpture creation in this research, it enables the author to reveal personal ideas through the sculptural medium with reflective, experimental, and symbolic approaches, while simultaneously recording the creative journey as a form of research. One technique used in the creation of this work is the assemblage technique, which is a technique of forming sculpture or three-dimensional work by uniting or assembling several objects into a new composition. This technique provides freedom for artists to use various types of materials such as wood, metal, plastic, cloth, and other materials. After being assembled, the sculpture can be colored to add visual expression, or left without coloring to highlight the character of the original material (Yudhistira, Kuntoro, & Oktania, 2024). The assemblage technique strongly supports this approach because it allows for exploration of broad forms and meanings, and facilitates the creation of works rich in personal values

and life experiences. In line with research by (Nuning. W., 2015), Practice-based research has proven effective in building critical and creative thinking abilities in fine arts because it positions the artist as the main subject actively exploring and realizing ideas through concrete projects. This approach is also reinforced by (Budiawan, 2023), which shows that practice-based models encourage deep understanding of material as well as the ability to work independently and originally.

Formation Stages

1. Preparation

At this stage, the author prepares the materials and tools used in creating the work. Necessities prepared include a mat made from a chair for cutting plywood, a jigsaw machine, and a drill. Also not forgotten is the preparation of the media used, namely plywood and drums. Then the plywood is placed on top of chairs that have been arranged, followed by pattern-making.

2. Contemplation

In this stage, through the creation concepts already outlined, the author engages in reflection to represent what is felt and can be conveyed in the visual form of sculptural artwork. This begins with rough brainstorming on paper, searching for references regarding the theme of childhood memories through the internet and visiting libraries and reading books that support the creative process. Additionally, the author expands references and writing vocabulary when visiting libraries, invites friends, colleagues, or family for discussions, and seeks material for ideas and references through watching films and visiting exhibitions.

3. Emergence of Ideas

The search for ideas is obtained from several social media platforms, exhibitions, films, and works of other artists who use similar materials. The process begins with creating sketch scribbles on paper and looking for the common thread of symbolism in the sculptural form. The next step is to make sketches or imagine the three-dimensional shape of the desired sculpture. In creating sketches, one can start from what theme is to be raised and represented by the sculptor. Consideration of perspective or viewpoint, as well as construction, is necessary in the sketching process, so the sketches are not made

from only one direction. Furthermore, the process includes exploring forms by experimenting directly during the pattern formation process on plywood. It also involves finding the symbolic connections in the sculptural forms with concepts already present in the sketches/scribbles.

4. Formation Process

After finding the right visualization or one that feels appropriate, the sculptor proceeds to execute the sculpture to a further stage. In the embodiment stage of sculpture creation, one must first know the technique and medium to be used. The process utilizes plywood material and drums as the main materials in making the sculpture and employs the assemblage technique in the creation of the sculpture.

D. Conclusion

Ideas or concepts in creating artwork can be obtained from and through various ways, anywhere and anytime. An artist often gets ideas by chance or intentionally. Every artwork, however, relates to existing reality. Experience and environment also provide enormous influence in the creative process. Ideas can be taken from reality or events in the past. In this case, that reality relates to the life that has been lived by each individual. Every human being is endowed with the ability to remember things that happened in the past. Memory is often also called 'memori' which is an absorption of the word 'memory.' Everyone has memories of their childhood, whether in the form of good memories or bad memories. Childhood memory consists of recollections and events from childhood, togetherness, happiness, and sad events. The representation of childhood in the expression of experience contains a unity of meaning, namely the result of thinking about the creation of sculptural artwork by visualizing events and incidents recorded in the author's memory. Visualizing childhood memories with a surrealistic style is considered suitable for the theme being addressed. Regarding the method or technique chosen, all empirical experiences and observations or insights gained during discussions with friends/family have become a collage to be realized into sculptural artwork. Through all its processes, there are many lessons obtained, both technically regarding the creative process, writing, and the theme that the author wishes to convey.

This research has explored the process of childhood memory reconstruction as a foundation for sculpture creation, resulting in a series of three-dimensional works that successfully visualize the spectrum of personal experiences through assemblage techniques with a surrealistic style. The use of a combination of plywood materials and used drums has proven effective in representing the complexity of memory, with form, texture, and color becoming important elements in communicating emotional narratives.

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