

# SIRS COMPOSITION: AN INNOVATIVE ABSTRACT ART DEVELOPMENT FOR NEW ABSTRACT PAINTERS THROUGH THE ANALYSIS OF SEAFARER AND RENJANA WITH A COMPREHENSION OF THE GESTALT PRINCIPLE

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**Abstract:** *SIRS has resulted from a practice-based research that concentrates on the epistemology of abstract paintings. Abstract paintings painted by two artists who are presently gaining recognition as prominent figures in the fine art field are the primary focus of the analysis research. The artworks are the outcome of their most recent solo exhibition, which took place in 2023. Balai Seni Melaka was the location of The Seafarer by Rasfan Abu Bakar, while Segaris Gallery in Publika, Kuala Lumpur was the venue for Renjana by Farif Abdul Jalil. Artists who are beginning to engage with abstract painting have challenges in producing convincing artworks. Indeed, the findings of this study will enable this group of artists to initiate the creation of abstract artworks with a more methodical and structured approach. Wallas Theory, which outlines the four stages of creativity—i) preparation, ii) incubation, iii) illumination, and iv) verification—guides the method of producing this research and painting. This study is based on three fundamental Gestalt Principles: proximity, closure, and symmetry. Using the findings of the study's research, a composition template for abstract paintings called SIRS (Seafarer IRumbiya Sagu) has been created. This compositional template was specifically designed for persons who have just begun their engagement in the production of abstract artworks. Additionally, this template has been utilized by the researcher to develop an abstract painting that results in both balanced and visually appealing.*

**Keywords:** *abstract painting, practice based research, Gestalt Principle.*

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## Introduction

With Mondrian, arriving at the idea was of exceptional importance. The conception came before the painting; it was the primary act of creation.

(Harold Rosenberg, 1983)

The primary objective of most artistic creations is to elicit emotional responses. The emotions are evident in the narrative of the artwork and the methodologies employed in its construction. Abstract paintings evoke sensory experiences through the utilization of non-representational elements such as colours, lines, shapes, and textures, which contribute to the overall composition. The influence of colour on the viewer's mood, for instance, has been defined as not being a subjective but rather an objective effect in abstract paintings. This impact is decided by the nature of the hues and their interactions with one another.

According to Kang Zhang (2007) from an art historical standpoint, the term "abstract" often pertains to the formal aspects of a work and typically does not encompass considerations of colour and texture. In art literature, the term "non-objective" is occasionally employed as a substitute for "abstract" to convey the essence of abstract painting more accurately. Abstract art, also referred to as nonobjective or nonrepresentational art, encompasses several artistic mediums such as painting, sculpture, and graphic art. It is characterized by its lack of representation of identifiable objects or subjects.

The abstract painter rejects the representation of the outer world as a mechanical process of the eye and the hand, in which the artist's emotions and imagination play a minor role. Or, in a Platonic manner, he opposes the representation of objects as a rendition of the surface aspect of nature, and the practice of abstract design as a discovery of the "essence" or underlying mathematical order of things.

(Meyer Schapiro, 1937)

As stated by Meyer Schapiro (1937), before the advent of abstract painting, the value of an artwork was predominantly established based on its colour and form. Painters consistently regard music and architecture as authentic representations of art that do not necessitate replication of physical objects; instead, their influence stems from distinctive characteristics intrinsic to the art form. Nevertheless, these notions are frequently rejected because no painting has been discovered that is exclusively constituted of shapes and colours, devoid of any representational components. When assessing photographs of objects, focusing solely on their form quality results in a reduction or distortion of the image. Merely altering the form is insufficient to generate this illustration. Concerning the subject matter linked to this form, it generally concerns specific locations and persons, whether they be legendary or actual, for whom there exists a conspicuous indication of a specific period. Consequently, it is not apparent that art alone transcends history by the creative energy or personality of the artist. However, the belief in the absolute value of aesthetics and the illusion of independence materialized in concrete ways within the domain of abstract art. In inference, this article discusses the art of painting, with an emphasis on the aesthetic component.

By comprehending the works of two abstract painters, the researcher sought to assimilate formalistic aspects that centre on data and employ Gestalt Principles to present the visual

information. The inaugural artist is (i) Rasfan Abu Bakar, whose eighth solo exhibition ‘Seafarer’ was on display at the Balai Seni Melaka in Melaka City from July to September 2023. Rasfan, a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Animation and Multimedia at ASWARA, has pursued an interest in the field of fine art. According to Rasfan, A. B. (2023), his artist statement delves into the intricate and profound tapestry of human emotions, exploring the intrinsic significance they possess in individuals' lives. As sentient beings, emotions are the kaleidoscope of sentiments that constitute the essence of our existence. His artistic works endeavour to demonstrate the profound complexities of these affective terrains, extending an invitation to the viewers to partake in a voyage of self-reflection and compassion.



**Figure 1.1: Rasfan during the progress of the Seafarer Exhibition located at Balai Seni Melaka.**

Seafarer is a tribute to the mysterious and intellectually stimulating category known as abstract art. Anticipate becoming engrossed in a domain where subjective interpretations supersede concrete representations as you traverse this exhibition. Beyond conventional realism, the artist's brush serves as a conduit through which intricate concepts, emotions, and experiences are conveyed. Every piece embodies a harmonious blend of hues, forms, and surfaces, encouraging viewers to delve into their interpretations and uncover intimate associations (Fariz, 2023).

Conversely, (ii) Farif Abdul Jalil's solo exhibition ‘Renjana’ represents the second artist. Taking place in March 2023, the exhibition was held at the Segaris Art Centre, Publika. Farif is a senior lecturer in the discipline of fine arts at Universiti Teknologi Mara's College of Creative Arts. Farif (2023) posits that the fundamental nature of his artworks functions as a metaphor and a point of reference. In addition to the aesthetic appeal of the natural world, it embodies a state of mind that reflects an abundance of experiences and introspection.



**Figure 1.2 : Farif at the Renjana Exhibition located at Segaris Art Centre.**

Farif's paintings possess not just aesthetic appeal but also a profound and significant connection to his surroundings and personal experiences. They also reflect his dedication to exploring the depths of human nature. His impact on the realm of abstract art will persist and resonate for many years to come. The collection of works pays tribute to the impact of self-determination and represents his artistic practice and its challenges (Fuad Arif, 2023).

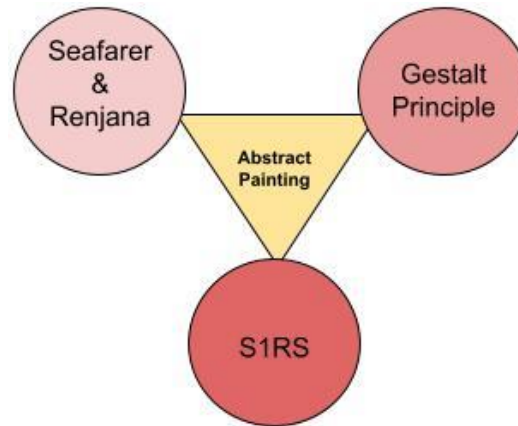
### **Problem Statement**

According to Zurin (2023), it demanded a greater degree of competency for an artist to construct a large painting that uses only color compositions yet conveys stories, appreciation, and judgment. Therefore, some guidance in the epistemology is needed for non-abstract artists to paint abstracts in particular for individuals who are only beginning to create work of this style. Observation and contemplation are customary methods for comprehending the visual intricacies of a piece. However, employing a rigorous research approach will result in a more precise visual perception. Researchers can utilize the Gestalt Principle as a basic framework to understand the elements of design and visual cognition in an artistic representation. (Fatemeh G, Farnoosh S, Jafar M, 2022). In light of this assertion, the researcher used Gestalt Principle as a framework to study two abstract pieces created by renowned painters.

### **Objective**

- i. To identify three Gestalt Principles when evaluating abstract artworks created by chosen artists.
- ii. To analyze the composition in the implementation of Gestalt Principles in two abstract paintings from Seafarer and Renjana Exhibition.
- iii. To develop a new composition and guidance for producing abstract painting based on the analysis.

## Research Framework And Method

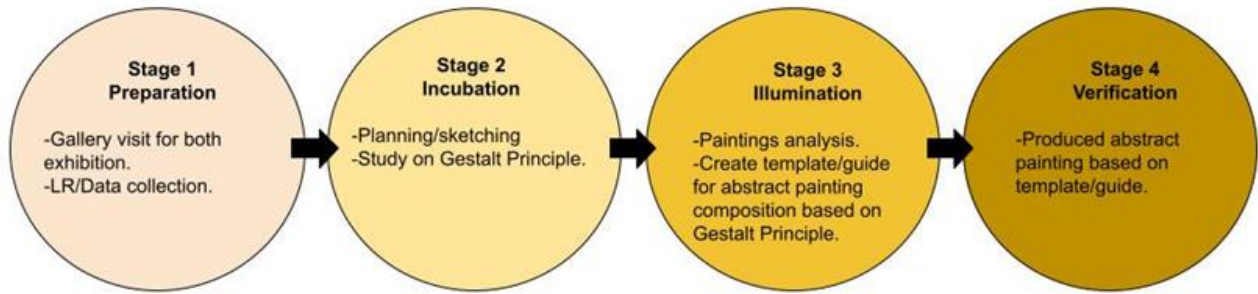


**Chart 3.1: Research framework**

The Gestalt Principle is used to guide the method of observation through analysis in the present article. 3 principles have been used in this study: (i) Proximity, (ii) Closure, and (iii) Symmetry. Gestalt Principles are fundamental principles or laws of human perception that elucidate how humans categorize comparable elements, discern patterns, and streamline intricate representations during the process of object observation (Interaction Design Foundation, 2016). The principles of Gestalt focus on the concept of grouping, which states that features of stimuli lead us to arrange or interpret an issue or visual field in a particular way (Kang Zhang, 2007).

Using three chosen Gestalt Principles, this analysis has examined and investigated two abstract artworks. Following this, using the law of grouping as a guide, recommendations for creating abstract paintings were developed based on the analysis's findings. Edgar Rubin's book from 1915–1921, which discusses figure-ground articulation, and Max Wertheimer's article from 1923, which presented the Gestalt grouping principles, are two examples. Other classical Gestalt psychologists (Köhler, 1947; Koffka, 1935; Metzger, 1936/2008, 1966, 1975a, 1975b) and other researchers have explored and developed these issues; Palmer (2003) provides more recent accounts, and Todorović (2008) provides a brief review. Gestalt makes a differentiation between the prominent figure and the irrelevant ground, and it naturally takes into consideration the idea that such a decision is made in accordance with a certain compositional objective. To successfully organize visual data, visualization designers should understand visual psychology and physiology, similar to how abstract artists do. Effective techniques include visual grouping, object recognition, and depth perception. In visual data mining and information visualization, one of the most crucial steps is data grouping, also known as data clustering (Khang Zhang, 2007).

- i) Proximity
  - elements that are closer are more likely to be grouped (VOGELS W., 2006)
- ii) Closure
  - Items are grouped together if they tend to complete some entity (Khang Zhang, 2007).
- iii) Symmetry
  - areas demonstrating symmetry tend to be seen as a distinct figure (VOGELS W., 2006)






**Chart 5.1: Stages of the method used based on the Theory of Creativity Graham Wallas's.**

The method used in this study is guided by the Theory of Creativity Graham Wallas's. According to Graham W. (2014: 8-9), the four stages of creativity are i) preparation, ii) incubation, iii) illumination, and iv) verification. The chart above explains the relation between the stages and the study that was conducted.

**Analysis**

Gestalt principles facilitated the comprehension of abstract art's patterns, shapes, and structures. This approach is to comprehend the visual information contained within the composition of both paintings. Most essential, is to capture the figure and the ground. The figure is a prominent element in the painting, with the ground serving as the background or the space surrounding the prominent element. Throughout these paintings, the researcher designated the figure as the subject that captivated the most attention, while the remaining subjects were the ground.

**Table 5.1: Indicator:**

Circle	Principle
	Prominent element in proximity grouping.
	Prominent element in closure grouping.
	Prominent element in symmetry grouping.

## Painting 1



**Figure 6.1: Seafarer 1**

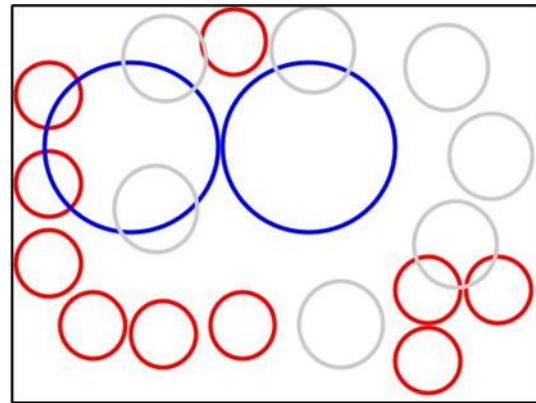
Artist : Rashfan Abu Bakar

Title: Seafarer 1

Media :Mix Media

Size : 36 in x 48 in

Year : 2023



**Figure 6.2: The marking of circles on prominent elements in Seafarer 1 referred to Gestalt principles.**

## Painting 2



**Figure 6.3: Rumbiya & Sagu**

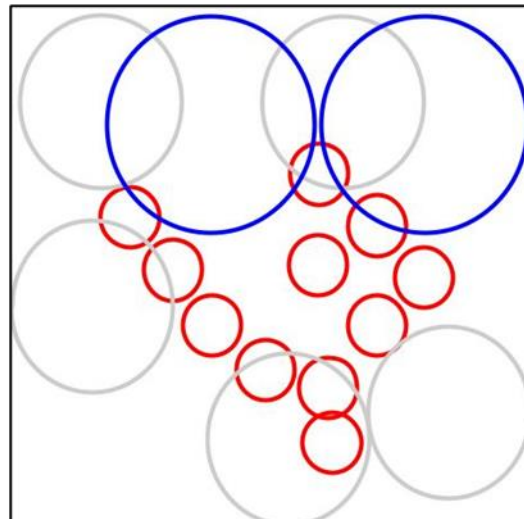
Artist : Farif Abdul Jalil

Title: Rumbiya & Sagu

Media : Mix Media

Size : 153 cm x 153 cm

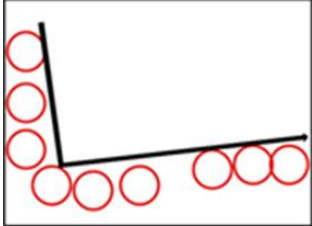
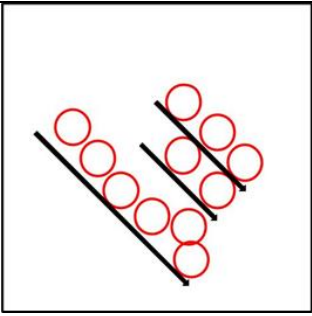
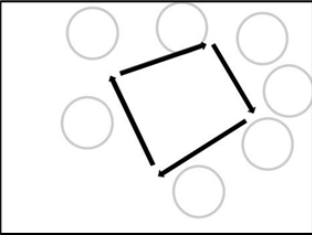
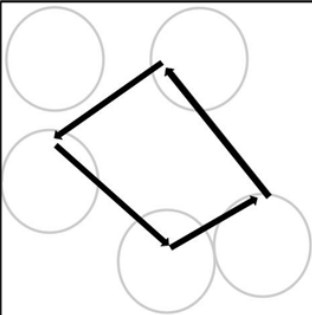
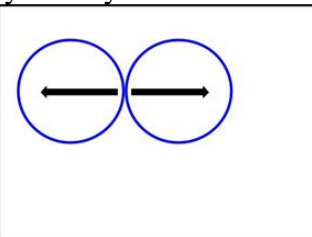
Year : 2023

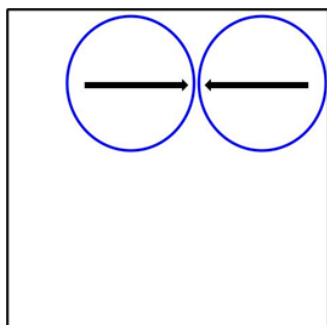


**Figure 6.4: The marking of circles on prominent elements in Rumbiya & Sagu referred to Gestalt Principles.**



**Table 6.1: The analysis of Seafarer 1 and Rumbiya & Sagu guided with Gestalt Principles**

A : Seafarer 1	
B: Rumbiya & Sagu	
Gestalt Princip	Composition
1 Proximity	
 <p style="text-align: center;">A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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 create a sense of depth and layering.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
 <p style="text-align: center;">B</p>	
2 Closure	
 <p style="text-align: center;">A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closure in this art, form enables artists to captivate viewers by encouraging them to actively engage with the visual experience.</li> <li>• The composition perceives completeness in incomplete lines or shapes.</li> <li>• Viewers can interact with the interplay within the negative and positive space.</li> <li>• The use of closure leads to an introspective and more personal engagement towards a dynamic composition.</li> </ul>
 <p style="text-align: center;">B</p>	
3 Symmetry	
 <p style="text-align: center;">A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The principle of symmetry in the painting contributes to the perception of balance and evenness. It also creates a sense of stability.</li> <li>• Mirror positioning was observed to facilitate the identification of the prominent elements.</li> <li>• The composition is visually appealing to the viewer due to the symmetry or balance, despite</li> </ul>

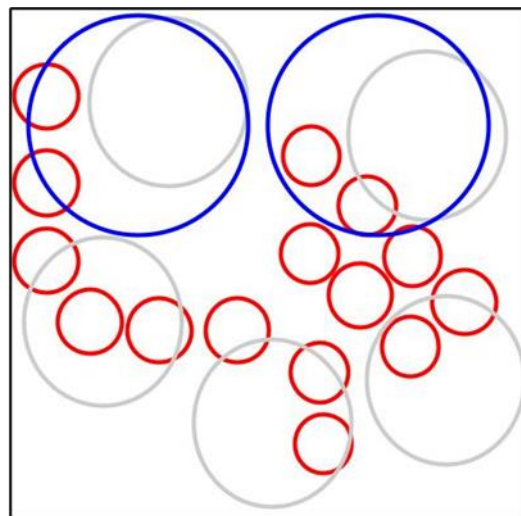
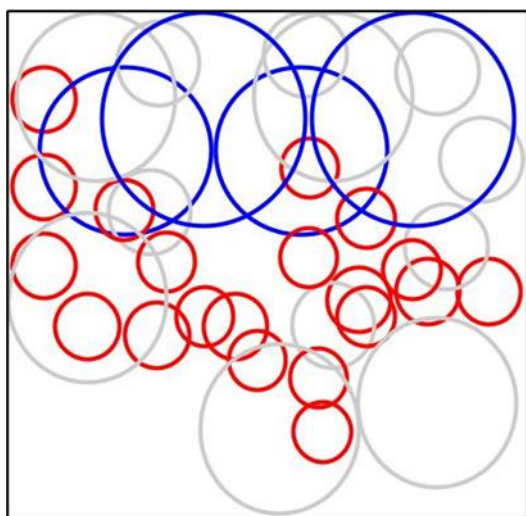


B

the fact that the strokes, lines, and marks in these paintings are spontaneous.

### Findings

Through the analysis of abstract paintings, Gestalt Principles serve as a framework for artists to comprehend the artwork and grasp its fundamental structure and significance. Both paintings demonstrate the effective application of the principles of proximity, closure, and symmetry, which are positioned in nearly identical areas of the artworks. Both artists utilized comparable attributes to perceive and stimulate ideas and methods for creating abstract paintings. Below are the combinations of the analytical compositions from both paintings. Finally, the suggestion of **S1RS** (are referred to by taking the initial letter from each word) composition based on the analysis of the acquired visual data was made.



**Figure 7.1: Combinations of both analytical compositions (left).**

**Figure 7.2: S1RS is a suggested composition established from the combinations (right).**

In accordance with the composition that was established, the researcher has created an abstract painting through the approach of self-expression. Below is the process of the art making based on S1RS created composition. The composition was applied to direct the painting process by transmitting it to the canvas via the LCD projector.



**Figure 7.3: The process of making painting based on SIRS.**



**Figure 7.4: Researcher's painting was produced based on SIRS composition (left).  
Painting with the template on for comparison (right).**

Title : SIRS 1.0

Size : 91 cm x 91 cm

Media : Acrylic on canvas

Year : 2024

### Discussion

Explored through the understanding of Gestalt Principles, abstract paintings provide a fascinating foundation for comprehending how artists organize their work and communicate meaning. The Gestalt Principles, comprising proximity, closure, and symmetry, have a decisive role in influencing our perception and interpretation of visual inputs. The results obtained from the examination of the abstract paintings demonstrate that these principles are not only essential for understanding the artworks but also illuminate shared techniques adopted by many artists. The execution of the SIRS composition, which is derived from the analysis of visual data, indicates a systematic methodology for comprehending and producing abstract art. Through the systematic consideration of proximity, closure, and symmetry, artists may enhance their capacity to communicate and create meaningful connections with their audience. This suggested framework has the potential to be a useful instrument for both up-and-coming and well-established artists to investigate novel approaches and enhance their creative process.

### Conclusion

The implementation of Walas Theory as the fundamental approach for this research framework expedites the study process. As an emerging abstract artist, researchers determined that

comprehending the epistemology of the work development obtained from data analysis was highly valuable and beneficial. Both reference paintings were selected for their ability to provoke novel concepts and were obtained from a recent solo exhibition that took place in 2023. Additionally, a publication was produced by both artists in conjunction with the exhibition, and a number of artworks were successfully sold. Such observation suggests that the artworks were duly recognized and have substantial worth within the art field. Therefore, they appropriately serve as a reference for this study. The epistemological basis of creating abstract artworks derived from the results of this research is highly advantageous for an artist who is just embarking on this artistic endeavor. Throughout the painting process, the researcher felt more confident and guided. The Gestalt Principles utilized in this work functioned as a visual framework or a pragmatic and relevant template for composition. The present composition, designated as template/composition of SIRS, was obtained by an analysis of two abstract paintings, notably Seafarer 1 and Rumbiya & Sagu. Ultimately, the use of the SIRS template/composition is essential in the production of abstract paintings as it leads to compelling, dynamic, and visually spectacular artworks.

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