

ABSTRACT PAINTING ART STUDY YASRUL SAMI'S EXPRESSIONISM

Rian Ramadhan ^{a*)}, Agusti Efi ^{a)}

^{a)} Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia.

^{*)}Corresponding Author: rian.ramadhan.spd@gmail.com

Article history: received 12 April 2026; revised 26 April 2026; accepted 06 May 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33751/jhss.v10i1.127>

Abstract. This study aims to describe and analyze Yasrul Sami's abstract expressionist paintings systematically, factually, and accurately, including aspects of symbols, meanings, techniques, and characteristics. The study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive analysis type, based on Edmund Burke Feldman's theory which includes four stages of artwork analysis: description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive analysis research type, aiming to explain systematically, factually, and accurately Yasrul Sami's abstract expressionist paintings. The study was conducted in Padang City, West Sumatra, specifically in the painting studio of Padang State University and SMKN 4 Padang, in the period July–September 2025. Data were obtained from two main sources, namely primary data from Yasrul Sami as the core informant, as well as secondary data in the form of documentation of work catalogs, interviews with other artists, fine arts lecturers, teachers of SMKN 4 Padang, and related exhibition documents. The findings show that Yasrul Sami utilizes mixed media techniques, impasto, layering, plakat, and dripping, with a combination of dark and bright colors that create texture, depth, and symbolize emotions, self-reflection, and social dynamics. His works emphasize struggle, introspection, hope, and the human connection to life experiences. The research findings emphasize the importance of exhibitions, cultural education, and digital publications to increase public appreciation of art, introduce local artists, and strengthen Minangkabau cultural identity.

Keywords: Painting, Abstract expressionist painting, Yasrul Sami, West Sumatran artist, Fine Arts.

I. INTRODUCTION

Fine arts in West Sumatra are known through painting education, with the establishment of an education Nursery School first school of painting which was established on April 1, 1856 in Bukittinggi, this is a new form of artist and provides a place for artists to freely express themselves, such as artists in the Wakidi generation (1889-1979) who was one of the famous painters from West Sumatra. The development of West Sumatran artists was supported by painting schools, at the vocational high school level of SMKN 4 Padang, thus producing talented artists, especially in the field of painting [1].

Some famous artists who have been produced from SMKN 4 Padang school, including contemporary generation artists such as, Zirwen Hazry (2001), Herisman Tojes (1980) and Yasrul Sami (1994). Yasrul Sami was born on August 8, 1969 in Rao, Yasrul Sami's presence also colored the art of painting in West Sumatra, Yasrul Sami is not only a painter but also a lecturer in Fine Arts at Padang State University. In his work Yasrul Sami makes the diverse nature and culture of West Sumatra his idea, Yasrul Sami who is familiarly called Ucok, is one of the West Sumatran artists who has produced works and has participated in national and international exhibitions, the works produced by Yasrul Sami are abstract. In making it the same as other painters, namely using tools and materials

such as canvas and paint, Yasrul Sami sometimes uses additional materials such as plastic to create texture in his work.

Yasrul Sami in his journey has produced paintings since 1994, and has participated in national and international exhibitions including: "Gerbang Dialog" Fine Art Exhibition, National Gallery of Indonesia, Jakarta (2021), "Art Jakarta" Fine Art Exhibition at Semarang Gallery (2022), "Minangkabau: Beyond the Rumah Gadang" Exhibition, Cipta II Gallery, Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta (2020), "Sumatera Art Now" Exhibition at the National Gallery, Jakarta (2019), New life Exhibition (2020) at the West Sumatra Cultural Park, Silent Movement Exhibition (2020) at the FBS Fine Arts Department, Marapi Singgalang Fine Art Exhibition (2013) at the Fadli zon Cultural House, Jln. Raya padang panjang-Bukittinggi km 6 (Aia angek) West Sumatra, Tambo # 3 Kapacak (2018) in Bukit Tinggi, exhibition (JAF) Jogja Art Fair # 2 (2009) at Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, Scala V Dream Exhibition (2009) on Jl. MT. Haryono No. 2 Magelang. Jampuik Tabao exhibition volume 2 (2018) at Bentara Budaya Bali, Exhibition "Meeting Point: Art Exchange Indonesia- Malaysia" (2022) at Shah Alam Gallery, Selangor, Malaysia. Yasrul Sami's paintings are abstract expressionism paintings, Yasrul Sami's abstract paintings have their own characteristics, especially the values and

meanings in his works. This is important to understand for academics in general for the visual community.

The great hope for the development of West Sumatran art is the documentation, academic study, and broader appreciation of the work of artists, especially the contemporary generation who continue to actively create and bring honor to the region on the national and international stage [2]. However, in reality, in-depth research on the work of contemporary artists from West Sumatra is still limited, especially on the symbolic aspects, meaning, and tendencies of abstract expressionist painting styles. In fact, with the richness of numeric and letter symbols in Yasrul Sami's work, there is a great opportunity to discover new meanings that can enrich the discourse of Indonesian contemporary art. This gap is the basis for this research [3], [4]. Therefore, this research is important to understand the characteristics of Yasrul Sami's work, especially in his unique use of numeric and letter symbols. This study is expected to enrich the academic treasure of fine art while also showing the dynamics of the development of contemporary art in West Sumatra. Several previous studies on fine art in West Sumatra still tend to focus on classical figures such as Wakidi or studies of the history of the development of fine art in general, so there is not much research that specifically examines the work of contemporary artists, especially Yasrul Sami.

Previous research related to the study of painting shows the diversity of approaches in analyzing artists' works. [2] examined the work of Bayu Wardhana with a focus on the theme of natural beauty and expressive-impressionist style done on the spot, while [5] examined the work of Vivi Kurnia Kumalasari who raised personal experiences and the lives of rural communities, with motivational meanings and moral messages in each of her paintings. [6] research highlighted the existence of Nurdin B.S. which was influenced by social and community factors, while [7] emphasized the expression of emotion through the energy of color in abstract painting. Another study conducted by Alhabsy [8] who examined the work of children at Eko Nugroho Art Class Yogyakarta, found freedom of expression and high creativity, and [9] who analyzed symbolism and meaning in contemporary Indonesian paintings as a form of communication between artists and their audiences. These six studies are related to the author's research because they all examine paintings through theme, form, content, and meaning, but differ in terms of subject matter, style, and analyzed variables. Each artist has a unique way of working, and this is where this study differs, specifically examining Yasrul Sami's abstract expressionist works with number and letter symbols as a unique characteristic that has not been widely studied before [10], [11].

Meanwhile, at the national level, abstract expressionist painting is generally studied through the works of great Indonesian artists such as Affandi, Rusli, or Zaini, who are considered pioneers of abstract expressionism in the country. These studies emphasize the techniques, painting styles, and spontaneous expressions that are characteristic of abstract expressionism [12], [13], [14]. However, the works of contemporary artists such as Yasrul Sami, who combine abstract expressionism with symbols of numbers and letters,

and draw inspiration from nature and Minangkabau culture, have not received much attention from previous studies. Thus, this study aims to fill this gap by examining twenty abstract expressionist paintings by Yasrul Sami. The focus of the research is directed at the tendency to use symbols of numbers and letters in his works, which not only demonstrate the artist's personal characteristics but also have the potential to enrich the discourse on contemporary Indonesian art from a local West Sumatran perspective [15].

Furthermore, the urgency of this research lies in the importance of documenting, studying, and appreciating the works of contemporary West Sumatran artists, especially Yasrul Sami. By understanding the symbols of numbers and letters in his abstract expressionist paintings, this research not only provides academic contributions, but also strengthens the identity of local art in the context of national and international art. Thus, this research has a novelty in examining twenty abstract expressionist works by Yasrul Sami by highlighting the tendency of using symbols of numbers and letters as important elements in his works. Although this research has limitations because it only examines twenty selected works and focuses more on symbolic aspects and meaning rather than technical aspects or comparative studies across artists, these limitations actually become the starting point for more comprehensive further research [16], [17], [18].

The limitation of this research lies in the scope of the study which only focuses on twenty abstract expressionist paintings by Yasrul Sami. The selection of these works was done as a representation, so it does not cover all the works that have been created since 1994. In addition, this research focuses more on the analysis of number and letter symbols and their meanings, without conducting an in-depth technical study related to painting methods, mediums, or comparisons with the works of other abstract expressionist artists in Indonesia or the world. Another limitation is that this research is still descriptive-qualitative, so it does not reach interdisciplinary approaches such as art psychology, comprehensive semiotics, or audience reception studies. However, this limitation actually opens up opportunities for further research to expand the study both in terms of the number of works, analysis methods, and the context of comparisons across artists. Based on the above description, the author intends to conduct research on Yasrul Sami's abstract expressionist paintings. Yasrul Sami's tendency to paint abstract expressionism which presents unusual symbols of numbers and letters has become a trigger for the researcher's interest in researching Yasrul Sami's abstract paintings. Therefore, the author will examine twenty of Yasrul Sami's abstract expressionist works.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive analytical research type, which aims to explain systematically, factually, and accurately the study of Yasrul Sami's abstract expressionist paintings. This study is based on Edmund Burke Feldman's theory, which includes four stages of artwork analysis, namely description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation, so that this method is considered the most appropriate to examine the aspects of symbols, meanings, and characteristics of abstract expressionist paintings in depth.

The study was conducted in Padang City, West Sumatra, specifically in the painting studio of Padang State University and SMKN 4 Padang, in the period July to September 2025, with the research objects being Yasrul Sami's works which can also be learning materials for fine arts education. The research data were obtained from two main sources, namely primary data obtained directly from Yasrul Sami as the core informant, as well as secondary data obtained from documentation of work catalogs, interviews with other artists, fine arts lecturers, teachers of SMKN 4 Padang, and related exhibition documents.

Data collection techniques included observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to obtain information about the works directly, including their visual characteristics, symbols, and the meanings they contain. Semi-structured interviews allowed researchers to ask open-ended and in-depth questions, thus obtaining accurate and relevant data, both verbally and non-verbally. Documentation was carried out through photographs, audio recordings, videos, and field notes, which helped support and strengthen the data from interviews and observations. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources, techniques, and time. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from Yasrul Sami, family, peers, and other relevant parties; technical triangulation used different methods to verify the same data; and time triangulation was conducted by collecting data at different times to ensure consistency of information.

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes four main stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data collection was conducted by reviewing information from observations, interviews, and documentation, then the data was reduced by selecting relevant information according to the research focus. The reduced data was presented in narrative form to facilitate understanding, then preliminary conclusions were drawn that were temporary, which could change or be strengthened as further data collection progressed. In addition, this study also refers to the biographical methods of Denzin and Lincoln to understand the context of the artist's life and its relationship to the creative process and symbolism in the works. With this approach, the study is expected to be able to comprehensively describe the characteristics, symbols, and meanings in Yasrul Sami's abstract expressionist paintings and contribute to the development of contemporary art studies in West Sumatra.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Characteristics of Abstract Expressionist Painting

Abstract expressionism painting does not focus on depicting real objects, instead, works in this movement aim to express the artist's emotions, feelings, and inner experiences directly through color and brush movements, abstract expressionism artists often paint with free body movements. brushes can be scratched, thrown, or dripped onto the canvas. This technique creates an impression of the texture of abstract expressionism paintings and is full of energy in the work. The

colors in this painting do not follow realistic rules [19]. red can mean angry, blue can mean calm, or even vice versa, colors are used to convey mood, not to describe objects, abstract expressionism paintings have no clear forms, the audience is free to interpret the meaning of the painting according to their own experiences and feelings. everyone can feel different things from the same work.

Artists in this movement are not bound by rules such as perspective, proportion, or formal composition, preferring freedom of expression. For abstract expressionist artists, the canvas is a place to pour out their hearts. Paintings become a kind of record of emotions that cannot be expressed in words. Many artists grapple with trauma and the search for meaning in life. Their paintings often reflect anxieties, hopes, or questions about social life [20].

B. Abstract Expressionist Painting in West Sumatra Title

Abstract expressionism painting in West Sumatra is one of the modern art movements that has unique characteristics, combining passion in painting works, this movement developed in the Minang region, not as a pure imitation of the West, but as a search for a new artistic identity. Abstract expressionism painters, artists do not try to depict real objects, but rather express their deepest feelings through color, shape, and brush movement. Painting becomes a kind of spontaneous and passionate "inner explosion", there is no obligation to depict recognizable forms, paintings in the abstract expressionism movement often do not have clear objects, because the focus is to free the artist from traditional visual constraints [21]. Painting techniques in abstract expressionism are very spontaneous like Yasrul Sami, color is not used to depict reality, but to convey mood. Bright, dark, or contrasting colors are used to strengthen the emotions to be conveyed. Abstract expressionism paintings invite the audience to interpret freely. There is no single meaning intended by the artist. Instead, each viewer is invited to feel and connect the painting with their own personal experiences.

The development of this movement is also inseparable from the social, artistic, and cultural life in West Sumatra. Although this art is non-figurative, abstract expressionism is often infused with spiritual values and tries to capture the majesty of the Divine or the connection between humans and the universe in abstract forms [22]. In essence, abstract expressionism painting in West Sumatra is proof that creativity has no limits, abstract expressionism is a bold search for artistic identity where tradition dialogues with modernity to create a visual language, but remains firmly rooted in local cultural identity. Abstract expressionism is an art that invites us to express unlimited emotions, energy, and freedom. The goal is to expand expression and create rich textures. Abstract Expressionism remains one of the important milestones in the history of modern art, abstract expressionism also paved the way for various contemporary art movements and continues to inspire artists who want to express themselves freely and with deep meaning.

C. Biography of Yasrul Sami

Yasrul Sami Batubara, familiarly called "Ucok", was born on August 8, 1969 in Rao, Pasaman. The fifth of nine siblings, he has Minang-Batak blood and is a Sheikh from Pariaman

through his grandfather, Syaidy Syekh Muhammad Hasyim, a cleric and freedom fighter. Unlike most artistic families, Yasrul grew up in a religious environment, but from an early age he showed his love for art, often scribbling on the walls of the house with simple media. Yasrul's educational journey began at SDN Pagi-Petang, Jakarta, then SD Inpres Ranjo Batu, South Tapanuli. He continued to SMP Muaro Sipongi and SMA in Padang Pariaman and Padang City, before finally pursuing Fine Arts at ISI Yogyakarta, with a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts (1994–2001) and a Postgraduate degree in Painting Creation (2008–2010). Since 1994, Yasrul has actively participated in more than 119 art exhibitions, winning prestigious awards such as the Best Water-Color and Oil Painting Awards from FSR ISI Yogyakarta, a Finalist in the Indonesia Art Awards, and awards from Philips Morris and the Indofood Art Awards. He is also frequently trusted as a curator, including for the Southeast Asia Malay Art Festival (2012) and Marapi Singalang (2012–2013).

In his works, Yasrul elevates inner experiences, past romance, natural phenomena, and social reflections. He pursues abstract expressionism as his identity, presenting spontaneous lines, symbols, numbers, reversed letters, and water droplets in mixed media, combined with watercolor and mosaic techniques that produce distinctive textures and emotional expressions. In addition to his work, Yasrul also teaches at Padang State University, sharing knowledge and inspiration with students, university students, and the art community. His presence in the world of painting not only presents unique and expressive works, but also awakens the spirit of the younger generation to pursue art, making him a respected and admired artist in Yogyakarta and West Sumatra.

D. Title of the Painting

Detak Mixed Media 145 x165 cm (2010)



Fig. 1. Beat Mixed Media 145 x165 cm (2010)

Yasrul Sami's work is a visual representation of emotional turmoil and inner life expressed through an abstract expressionist style. Using mixed media techniques, this painting combines thick paint strokes, plaques, pencil strokes, and charcoal that create a layered texture, providing dimension and contrast between the dense areas and the smooth background. The coloration is dominated by pink with soft gradations to slightly reddish, creating a warm, romantic, and gentle feel, while touches of white, yellow, and black serve to highlight the focal points of energy. The symbolic elements in this work emphasize its meaning: random lines express the rhythm of the heartbeat that rises and falls with

emotion; lumps of texture mark the energy centers; the vast background symbolizes the universe where the energy interacts; and the color pink implies love, tenderness, and romance. Overall, "Beat" not only an aesthetic visualization, but also a reflection of deep feelings, sincerity of heart, and spiritual awareness, inviting art lovers to feel the connection between human emotions and transcendent life experiences.

Face of the Country Oil Paint 90 x 90 cm 2004



Fig. 2. Work 2Face of the Country Oil Paint 90 x 90 cm 2004

This painting uses oil paint on canvas with a spontaneous approach, creating a layered texture through the placard technique. The painting is dominated by dark and gloomy colors, such as dark brown, black, and gray, which create a heavy and hopeless atmosphere. On the other hand, there are bright colors such as white, red, yellow, blue, and green that stand out as contrast, highlighting important elements such as the red "X" and other symbols, while emphasizing the tension between darkness and hope. Symbolically, the large face depicted gloomy and distorted can be interpreted as a reflection of Indonesia's condition which is full of problems and chaos, reflecting the nation's pain. The red "X" mark covering the mouth symbolizes the silencing of the people's voice or the inability to speak freely. Meanwhile, the white crown depicts a leader in power, and the eye that is only visible from one side emphasizes the message that a leader must not see from only one side, but must understand the problems of society from various perspectives.

Takambang Mixed Media 120 x 120 cm (2012)



Fig. 3. Takambang Mixed Media 120 x 120 cm (2012)

This painting features a combination of broad, thick brushstrokes with thin, fine lines, demonstrating the use of a variety of media such as acrylic paint, pen, and pencil. There are also scattered drops of acrylic paint, as well as areas with a thicker or rougher texture, indicating the application of placard techniques and transparent techniques resembling the shape of the letter 'N'. The painting's coloring is dominated by gray, white, cream, and a hint of brown, while the layered background creates a sense of depth and space. Bright colors

such as red, yellow, and green are used to attract attention, with the red paint drop in the bottom left standing out and providing an emotional impact, symbolizing the state of suffering. In terms of symbolism and meaning, "Takambang" goes beyond mere representation of the physical realm, becoming a metaphor for the broad realities of social life and a source of life lessons. The scribbled lines depict chaotic and disordered thoughts, emotions, or memories, while the abstract shape resembling the letter 'N' symbolizes stability, strength, and foundation. The star placed above the letter 'N' adds meaning of hope and light, creating a contrasting narrative where the 'N' represents structure or foundation, while the star symbolizes inspiration and enlightenment born from that foundation.

Tracing the Signs Mixed Media 150 x120 cm (2022)



Fig. 4. Hit the mark Mixed Media 150 x120 cm 2022

This painting consists of two side-by-side canvas panels, featuring a textured painting technique using impasto, where thick strokes of acrylic paint create a rough and wrinkled surface. Furthermore, there are more fluid brushstrokes, visible from the dripping paint that flows down, indicating the use of a thinner medium such as acrylic paint with a higher water content. The painting's coloring is dominated by red in various shades, combined with a little yellow, which gives a strong emotional impression. Other colors such as yellow, blue, and black are used to create sharp contrasts and draw attention to certain points. Symbolically, the concept of "Tracing the Signs" represents the journey of life, where one moves forward through various traces, symbols, or experiences. The color red symbolizes passion, anger, energy, or suffering, while the wrinkled texture and flowing paint drips depict scars and overflowing emotions, indicating the depth of experience that cannot be contained.

Alphabet (Letter) Acrylic on Canvas 200 x 150 cm (2009)



Fig. 5. Alphabet (Letter) Acrylic on Canvas 200 x 150 cm 2009

This painting uses a layering technique, where artist Yasrul Sami piles paint onto the canvas with spontaneous strokes of quick, rough lines, creating a sense of energy and

spontaneity like a sketch. Some areas of the paint are scraped or scratched to reveal the underlying layers, adding a rough texture, while the non-figurative style emphasizes the emotional expression and movement created by the brushstrokes. The background is dominated by soft, faded bluish grays and greens, creating a calm and hazy atmosphere, reminiscent of a misty sky or an old wall. Conversely, bright, warm contrasting colors such as yellow, orange, and bright red are used to highlight key shapes, such as the circle on the left and the number in the center, creating visual focus and energy amidst the calm background. The painting's symbolism is evident in the large, black, yellow, and orange circular shapes that serve as the center of emotion, the core of the self, and energy, representing the artist's inner turmoil or inner world. The faded gray and light blue background depicts tranquility, empty space, or the subconscious. Shapes such as boats, upside-down fish, and floating objects symbolize life's journey, direction, or vehicles for ideas, while sharp, knife-like shapes suggest danger, decisions, or cutting ideas. Scattered, rough lines emphasize spontaneity, energy, and chaos, reflecting the honesty of emotions beneath the seemingly calm surface.

A Childhood Dream (Childhood Dreams) 190 x 230 cm 2009



Fig. 6. A Childhood Dream (Childhood Dream Acrylic on Canvas 190 x 230 cm 2009

This painting features an impasto technique, where paint is applied thickly, primarily red, creating a rough texture and a dense impression on the surface. Layers of paint are overlapped with other colors such as white, gray, and yellow, which are partially covered by the red base color. There are rough and spontaneous strokes in the form of black lines, scribbles, and quick sketches that create a sense of energy, anxiety, and spontaneity, similar to scribbles in a notebook. The layered forms appear as if material has been pasted or formed from the thick, processed paint, adding dimension and visual complexity. The coloring is dominated by a strong and bold red, mixed with a little yellow to create an orange impression, while contrasting colors such as white, bright yellow, black, and a little blue/gray are used to highlight symbols and shapes, so that the overall painting is not monotonous. Symbolically, the dominant red color represents courage, emotion, energy, childhood joy, and anger, expressing emotions from past memories. The black strokes and lines signify spontaneity, freedom, and limitless expression, reflecting the freedom of children's minds before being restricted by adult rules. The layered shapes and blending of layers of paint symbolize childhood memories and dreams that shape personality, showing the depth and complexity of experiences and emotions, while reminding us that high dreams must be accompanied by prayer and effort to

be achieved.

Face of the Country Mixed Media 120 x 100 cm (2016)



Fig. 7. Work 2 Face of the Country Oil Paint 90 x 90 cm
2004

This painting uses a mixed technique with an uneven surface texture, indicating the use of additional materials such as plastic and paper before or during painting, then overlaid with layers of acrylic paint to create a dry, cracked, and wrinkled effect. The transparent layer technique is applied in thin strokes, especially blue, so that the underlying layers remain visible and provide a sense of visual depth. A dripping effect is visible on the bottom right side, indicating a fluid and spontaneous application of paint, adding to the impression of damage or wear, while some parts are scratched or scraped to reveal the underlying layers and strengthen the impression of age or injury. The dominant coloring is dominated by cool colors such as blue, white, and a little purple/gray, creating a gloomy, mysterious, or cold atmosphere that can be associated with clouds, ice, water, or sadness. Dark contrast is present through a little dark blue or black on the edges, especially the top and bottom right sides, providing drama and highlighting the damage and depth.

Symbolically, the cracked and wrinkled surface texture represents history, burden, and fragility, as if reflecting the long journey of a country full of challenges and wounds. The cold and pale blue color expresses the gloomy conditions, sadness, and cold calm, implying difficult times or crises in the country. The faint lines and shapes behind the texture indicate the identity and basic values that still exist despite being covered by difficulties. Vertical drops of paint represent tears or gradual destruction in society or the environment. The overlapping transparent layers of paint indicate that the “face of the country” is formed from various events, memories, and experiences that overlap but still influence the current condition. With all these elements, this painting depicts the face of the country in blue with a cracked texture as a symbol of feelings of gloom, pressure, and deep social instability, presenting the “face” of a country full of suffering.

Soul Flame (Soul of Fire) Acrylic on Canvas 180 x 180 cm (2009)



Fig. 8. Soul Flame (Soul of Fire) Acrylic on Canvas 180 x

180 cm 2009

The painting is entitled Soul of Fire This painting uses a layering technique with acrylic paint applied in layers, starting with a base color of red or brown, then adding layers of bright colors or transparent strokes spontaneously. Like other abstract expressionist works, there are many thin lines, scribbles, and spontaneous sketches that give a sense of uncontrolled energy and restlessness, as if the mind is moving very quickly. Thin lines of bright yellow or orange cross the canvas, resembling energy trails or spontaneous light trails. The coloration is dominated by a warm palette of red, burnt orange, and dark brown, which evokes the impression of heat, fire, passion, and strong emotions, as the painting's title suggests. Contrasting colors such as bright yellow, neon green, and off-white provide visual accents, with a slight green appearing as a cool contrast to balance the composition.

Symbolically, the colors red, orange, and dark brown represent passion, life force, and internal energy, depicting a soul full of passion and burning enthusiasm, while brown suggests the roots or foundation of that soul. Thin lines of yellow and bright orange represent the flow of energy and emotional connections, uniting memories and emotions within the soul. Scribbling and restless abstract shapes suggest conflict and spontaneous expression, representing the emotional turmoil that the artist seeks to express. Soul of Fire The presence of a hint of neon green signifies the need for balance or hope amidst burning passion. Thus, this painting conveys the message of never giving up, continuing to fight against obstacles, and maintaining passion like a burning fire..

Contemplation (Contemplation) Acrylic on Canvas 190 x 150 cm 2009



Fig. 9. Contemplation (Contemplation) Acrylic on Canvas
190 x 150 cm 2009

The painting is entitled Contemplation This painting uses an open, thin canvas technique, revealing many areas of the canvas's original cream or light yellow texture and color. The paint is applied thinly and transparently, creating a sense of lightness and spaciousness, while pieces of material such as paper or plastic, as well as strokes of letters and numbers, are added over the paint. Thin lines and sketches, mostly horizontal and vertical, are made with pencil, chalk, or a fine brush, giving a sense of structure and depth. Contrast is present in the lower center through areas of thick, dark paint, while the dominant palette consists of calming colors such as light yellow, cream, and pale brown, symbolizing peace of mind and a light atmosphere. Soft touches of pink, light blue, and gray add shadows or blurred reflections, while black, dark blue, and maroon are used to create contrasting focal points.

Symbolically, the pale yellow and cream background represents peace of mind, a space for reflection, and an

opportunity for thought. The bold, dark object in the bottom center represents a focus of contemplation, an inner conflict, or an emotional issue that is difficult to unravel. Thin vertical and horizontal lines indicate structure, boundaries, or a time frame, reflecting the mind's search for logic in abstract chaos. The pile of acrylic paint and materials such as worn paper at the top of the painting represent records, archives, or evidence from the past that form the basis for current contemplation. Thus, this work conveys the message that one should think before acting, using contemplation as a guide for dealing with decisions or inner conflicts.

Untitled (Without title) Mixed Media 140 x 145 cm (2008)



Fig. 10. Untitled (Without title) Mixed Media 140 x 145 cm 2008

The painting employs flat color and thin layers, with most of the blue background applied evenly to evoke a sense of infinite depth, reminiscent of the night sky or the deep sea, while some areas, such as the clouds, are rendered thinly and blurrier, enhancing a feeling of ethereal uncertainty. Fine sketch lines, symbols, and delicate pencil or brush strokes overlay the background, creating intricate details reminiscent of writing on darkness. The composition contrasts the simplicity of the broad background with the complexity of the forest and tree roots, and the sharp perspective, where roots and forest seem to vanish into a focal point, adds dramatic depth and height. The dominant dark blue conveys mystery, the subconscious, and the void, while bright green, orange/red, and yellow in the forest and roots symbolize life, hope, and the struggle of reality against darkness. Light blue patterns of roots and branches protruding into the ravine evoke lighting effects and a haunting sense of depth. Symbolically, the lone leafless tree at the cliff's edge represents individual fragility and critical reflection, the dense forest signifies social life and stability, and the descending roots indicate deep introspection into one's psychological foundation. The sharp chasm embodies risk and boundaries between worlds, while floating clouds represent fleeting thoughts, dreams, or ideas that exist independently of tangible reality.

Indak Kayu Janjang Dikapiang Mixed Media 110 x 90 cm (2012)



Fig. 11. Indak Kayu Janjang Dikapiang Mixed Media 110 x 90 cm (2012)

This painting displays extreme texture with a thick, rough, and wrinkled lump of material in the upper left center of the canvas, possibly plastic or treated material, creating a strong focal point. Dark, wet layers of paint are applied using dark gray and brownish black, appearing damp and aged, with numerous vertical drips of paint giving the impression of tears or persistent moisture. Faded colors such as white, pink, and yellow are added over the dark background to indicate attempts at communication or note-taking, as well as creating contrast with the transparent white paint shapes and floating lines of light. The dominant gloomy coloring using dark gray, dark brown, and greenish black, creates a heavy and oppressive atmosphere that symbolizes difficult conditions, while contrasting colors such as bright yellow, white, and a hint of pink highlight symbols and shapes as sparks of light or hope that counter the darkness. Symbolically, the rough lump in the upper center left represents the burden, obstacles, and real difficulties that must be faced, in accordance with the challenges described by the Minang proverb about the absence of wood. The dark and dark gray background reflects the gloom, despair, and difficult conditions as the backdrop for struggle. Vertical paint drips signify sadness, devastation, or worsening conditions resulting from prolonged hardship. Faded, crossed-out letters and numbers represent solutions, ideas, or emergency documentation efforts, suggesting quick thinking and planning to overcome problems, akin to the act of "scraping a ladder." Bright white and yellow shapes signify hope, an unyielding spirit, and creative ideas emerging from the darkness, becoming a beacon of light that points the way out of difficulties.

Self Reflection Mixed Media 80 x 80 cm 2017



Fig. 12. Self Reflection Mixed Media 80 x 80 cm 2017

This painting uses a mixed technique with a rough texture on the canvas surface, where artist Yasrul Sami applied spray in several areas, such as the top left, creating a visual burden and the impression of aged layers. This technique provides depth and a sense of mystery, as if the subject is hidden behind darkness. The dripping effect in the form of vertical lines of paint, mainly white and dark, gives the impression of tears, moisture, or persistent regret. Spontaneous scratches and some rough strokes in the form of +, V, S, or scribbles made spontaneously with a brush or other tool, indicate an attempt to record or find clarity amidst inner turmoil.

The dominant colors of this painting are gloomy, using dark gray, dark brown, and greenish black, creating a heavy and introspective atmosphere, suitable for the theme of self-reflection. The shape in the upper right is painted in bright orange or red, becoming a strong emotional focal point, symbolizing the burning emotion, passion, or trauma that

must be faced during reflection. White is used to form symbols and drops, functioning as light, awareness, or hope amidst the darkness, symbolizing the enlightenment that arises from introspection.

Symbolically, the dark and foggy background depicts inner gloom, hazy memories, and mental burden, creating a difficult space for introspection. The orange shape in the upper right symbolizes core emotions, hidden passions, and traumas that emerge upon reflection. The white form in the form of a plus symbol and a line indicates the search for meaning, hope, or a neutral point in the midst of difficulties, reflecting self-awareness. The dark dripping form in the lower left symbolizes ongoing problems, depression, or the impact of the past that is the main subject of contemplation. Vertical drops of water paint, white or dark, symbolize emotional release or regret acknowledged during the introspection process. Thus, this painting conveys a message to do self-introspection first before judging others and appreciate others if you want to be appreciated.

E. Discussion

Based on an analysis of 12 abstract expressionist paintings by Yasrul Sami, the main characteristics of abstract expressionist painting can be drawn that consistently appear in these works. First, the techniques used tend to be experimental and varied, including mixed media, oil paint, or acrylic, with approaches such as impasto (thick layers of paint), layering (thin layers), dripping (paint drops), scraping (scratches), and spontaneous strokes. This creates a rich, thick, rough, or layered surface texture, thus providing a deep visual dimension and emphasizing the physical aspect of paint as a medium for emotional expression. Second, the coloring in this painting is symbolic and emotional. Dominant colors are used to express mood or inner state: red and orange indicate passion, energy, or anger; blue and gray reflect gloom, sadness, or introspection; while bright colors like yellow and white serve as focal points, symbols of hope, or light in the darkness. Color contrast is also often used to emphasize the tension between different emotions or complex social realities [23].

Third, the symbols and shapes in abstract expressionist paintings are not always realistic or figurative. Random lines, scribbles, circular shapes, letters, numbers, or abstract forms such as textured blobs and paint drips serve as visual representations of feelings, energy, memories, or social conditions. For example, random lines can symbolize the rhythm of a heartbeat or emotional turmoil, while the 'N' shape and star in "Takambang" symbolize foundation and hope [24]. Fourth, the meaning of each painting emphasizes inner experience and psychological reflection. These paintings depict deep emotions, inner conflicts, life journeys, social histories, or self-reflection. Works such as "Wajah Negeri" (The Face of the Nation) and "Indak Kayu Janjang Dikapiang" (The Wood Scattering) highlight social conditions and the burdens faced by society, while works such as "Detak," "Soul Flame," or "A Childhood Dream" emphasize the artist's personal feelings, energy, passion, and emotional spontaneity.

Overall, the characteristics of abstract expressionism in Yasrul Sami's work emphasize free and spontaneous

expression, texture and color as a medium for emotional communication, abstract symbolism rich in meaning, and a focus on inner experience and social reflection. These findings indicate that abstract expressionism is not only oriented towards formal visuals, but also serves as a means of profound psychological and social expression.

The works of Yasrul Sami that were studied, starting from [25], [26], demonstrates the consistency of Abstract Expressionism style with a mixed media approach and acrylic/oil paint that is rich in texture, spontaneity, and symbolism. Each painting displays an exploration of different techniques, such as impasto, plaque, spray, layering, dripping, and scratching, which not only emphasize the visual aspect, but also contain deep emotional, social, and philosophical meaning.

The major theme that binds these works is search for identity, self-reflection, and representation of social conditions. For example, the work *Beatmore* attention is paid to the inner turmoil of humans which is visualized through the rhythm of the heart as a symbol of life energy, while *Face of the Country* in two periods [27], [28] presented socio-political criticism of the condition of the nation, depicted with gloomy faces, the "X" symbol, and cracked textures as metaphors of historical wounds and collective suffering. Works such as *Takambang And Indak Kayu Janjang Dikapiang* elevates the philosophy of Minangkabau local wisdom, where symbols of letters, stars, and extreme textures serve as metaphors for life's challenges and the value of never giving up. *Hit the mark And Self Reflection* more emphasis on individual life journey and inner introspection, with red as a symbol of passion, wounds, and energy, and drops of paint depicting uncontrollable emotions [29].

Apart from personal and social aspects, works such as *A Childhood Dream*, *Alphabet*, and *Soul Flame* confirm dimension of spontaneity, childhood memories, and zest for life, where random lines, quick strokes, and warm colors are used to convey intense psychological energy. In contrast, the work *Contemplation And Untitled* presenting a more contemplative dimension, with pale colors, line structures, and symbols of reflective space that invite the viewer to reflect on the limits of existence and the depths of the human soul [30], [31]. Overall, Yasrul Sami's work can be understood as a visual narrative that records the dialectic between individuals and inner experiences, society and social reality, and local traditions and universal struggles. Through diverse techniques and strong symbolism, he has succeeded in creating works that are not only aesthetic but also reflective, providing a wide interpretive space for art lovers to participate in the emotional, spiritual, and social experiences offered by each of his canvases [32].

Previous research has revealed how Abstract Expressionist painting is understood through its techniques, colors, textures, and symbols. Several studies have emphasized that gestural techniques, spontaneous scribbles, and dripping are means of direct emotional expression, where the process of creation is as important as the visual outcome (Pollock, Rosenberg, & Greenberg). Other research explains that the use of impasto, or thick layers of paint, and additional materials can increase emotional intensity while giving a stronger tactile dimension to the work [33]. The techniques of

dripping and pouring are also understood not only as physical phenomena, but also as symbols of the release of emotions or trauma [34]. In terms of color, color psychology shows that red triggers attention, passion, and even anger, while blue and gray are associated with sadness, distance, or calm [35]. Findings from visual perception studies also reveal that art connoisseurs consistently interpret emotions in abstract paintings, for example, red and solid lines are considered to symbolize anger, while blue and vertical lines are associated with sadness (Lindborg & Friberg, 2015). Semiotic research adds that the use of letters or numbers in abstract works provides a new dimension of communication, such as emergency notes or identity records [36], [37]. Other studies link cracked textures, scraping, and layers of material to narratives of historical wounds, social damage, and collective memory [38]. Furthermore, research in art therapy also shows that the dynamics of lines, scratches, and paint drips can be used as indicators of psychological conditions, thus strengthening the meaning that the formal elements of the work are able to reveal the inner state of the artist [2]. Overall, these studies show that the techniques, colors, symbols, and textures in Abstract Expressionism are not merely visual elements, but rather a medium for emotional, social, and historical expression experienced by both artists and connoisseurs.

The implications of these findings indicate that public interest in art, particularly Abstract Expressionist painting, remains low. Many people do not fully understand the role and contribution of an artist, and most still consider art to be limited to simple drawing or painting. This situation is clearly evident in West Sumatra, where most people are unaware that their region boasts unique, creative artists capable of creating works of high aesthetic value and cultural relevance. Yet, Indonesian artists possess qualities and creativity that rival those of international artists, both in terms of technique, concept, and the emotional expression conveyed through their work. This low level of interest demonstrates the need for specific strategies to increase public awareness and appreciation of art, including early arts education that can instill an understanding of various art forms, particularly abstract painting [13].

Furthermore, introducing artworks through art exhibitions is crucial, as they serve not only as a means of visual appreciation but also as an educational tool to explain the symbols, techniques, and meanings behind each work. Utilizing social media as a publication platform is also crucial, given today's society's heavy reliance on digital and visual information. By uploading artworks on social media, artists and curators can reach a wider audience, including younger generations unfamiliar with traditional and modern art, while simultaneously building a cultural narrative relevant to local identity.

These steps are expected to not only reintroduce artists and their works to the Minangkabau cultural community, but also strengthen the position of local art so that it can survive amidst the currents of modern development and cultural globalization. By increasing public knowledge and appreciation of art, it is hoped that a sense of pride in local cultural identity will emerge, while also creating an ecosystem

that supports the sustainability of the artistic profession, including the availability of support from the government, educational institutions, and the arts community. Ultimately, these implications emphasize the importance of collaboration between artists, the community, and related institutions to make art not just visual entertainment, but also a medium for education, cultural reflection, and the development of sustainable creativity.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

So it can be concluded that public interest in art is relatively low, sometimes people do not know who an artist is and only know him limited to drawing, especially for the people of West Sumatra, many do not know that West Sumatra has unique and creative artists in Indonesia, this is very unfortunate even though artists from Indonesia are no less great than other artists. Therefore, the need to introduce and understand abstract paintings by holding exhibitions and then uploading them on social media is the most effective solution to reintroduce the Minangkabau cultural community about artists from West Sumatra and their works and hope that they can survive in the face of developments..

REFERENCES

- [1] M. Khairullah, N. Y. Aryanti, T. Kartika, A. F. Ashaf, and P. Putra, "Relational Dialectics of Women's Identity in the Colonial Era in RA Kartini's Letters," *Electron. J. Educ. Soc. Econ. Technol.*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 320–326, 2025.
- [2] A. Arlinawati and D. Daryusti, "The Meaning And Function Of Ornaments In Bridal Make-Up In Terms Of The Boh Gaca Tradition In Beutong Sub-District, Nagan Raya District, Aceh Province.," *Electron. J. Educ. Soc. Econ. Technol.*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2025.
- [3] C. Saepulmilah, L. A. Musthafa, and U. Ruswandi, "Building Harmony in Diversity: A Study of Pluralism and Multiculturalism in Indonesia," vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 1136–1147, 2025.
- [4] R. P. Triyuma, "Abstrak Ekspresionisme Dalam Translasi Tradisi Makan Bajamba Melalui Karya Musik Gestural Basantok," *Paraguna*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2024.
- [5] S. L. Hikmah, M. A. Al Husaini, and G. Faisal, "Penerapan Arsitektur Ekspresionis pada Sekolah Tinggi Seni Rupa dan Desain di Pekanbaru," *J. Arsit. ALUR-Vol*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2021.
- [6] M. Patriansah and R. Sapitri, "EKSPRESI DALAM SENI PATUNG KARYA GIUSEPPE PONGOLINI," *Besaung J. Seni Desain dan Budaya*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2022.
- [7] R. A. Hayati, "Self Healing dari Trauma Masa Lalu dalam Karya Seni Lukis Abstrak," *Invensi*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 109–119, 2021.

- [8] R. P. D. Silaban, "TEMA KEMANUSIAAN DALAM LUKISAN AFFANDI KAJIAN SEMIOTIKA," 2020, *Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta*.
- [9] S. Nabila and Y. Dwirainaningsih, "PERANCANGAN MOTIF BATIK EKSPRESIONISME ABSTRAK DENGAN SUMBER IDE SISI EMOSIONAL UNTUK FASHION STYLE BAD GIRL," *Canthing*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2024.
- [10] F. D. Arrusida and M. Kibtyah, "Analysis of the Values of Preaching and Community Sincerity in the Ritual of Ruwat Dreadlocks in Dieng Kulon Village, Batur District, Banjarnegara Regency," *Electron. J. Educ. Soc. Econ. Technol.*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2025.
- [11] F. B. K. Pulu, K. Fikri, and H. Bupu, "Enhancing Literacy and Numeracy Through Traditional Music-Based Learning in the 7th Batch of the Program Kampus Mengajar at UPTD SD Inpres Beiposo, Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia," *Electron. J. Educ. Soc. Econ. Technol.*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 334–340, 2024, doi: 10.33122/ejeset.v5i2.214.
- [12] A. Sungkar, "Seni Lukis Realisme Kontemporer," *Dekonstruksi*, vol. 10, no. 04, pp. 37–44, 2024.
- [13] A. Sungkar, "Ahmad Sadali Perintis Seni Lukis Abstrak Indonesia," *Dekonstruksi*, vol. 11, no. 01, pp. 17–24, 2025.
- [14] M. Azrial, "Persepsi Mahasiswa Psikologi Universitas Negeri Makassar Angkatan 2020 Kelas A Terhadap Lukisan Ekspresionis Affandi," 2023, *Fakultas Seni dan Desain*.
- [15] J. S. R. Herliansyah and M. P. Sari, "Implementasi Aliran Seni Rupa Ekspresionisme pada Fotografi Fine Art," *INVENSI*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 35–46, 2022.
- [16] F. A. Rachma, "Umi Dachlan sang Ekspresionis Abstrak," *J. Contemp. Indones. Art*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 1–10, 2024.
- [17] F. AMILIA, "STIGMA ANAK SULUNG PEREMPUAN DALAM PENCIPTAAN KARYA SENI LUKIS ABSTRAK EKSPRESIONISME," 2025, *UNIVERSITAS NEGERI JAKARTA*.
- [18] W. Kandinsky, "The origins of abstract art," *J. Mod. Art*, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 1–24, 2024.
- [19] G. U. Hayn-Leichsenring, Y. N. Kenett, K. Schulz, and A. Chatterjee, "Abstract art paintings, global image properties, and verbal descriptions: An empirical and computational investigation," *Acta Psychol. (Amst.)*, vol. 202, p. 102936, 2020.
- [20] M. B. M. Al-Abbas *et al.*, "People's Reflections in the City: Exploring the Painting Practices of Figurative Expressionism by Academic Research," *People*, vol. 11, no. 10, 2020.
- [21] C. Palazzolo, O. van Kaick, and D. Mould, "Breaking art: Synthesizing abstract expressionism through image rearrangement," *Comput. Graph.*, p. 104224, 2025.
- [22] F. Echarri, I. Miguélez, N. Vereá, and T. Barrio, "The aesthetic experience of the sublime for a group of Highly Sensitive Persons: Maselli's figurative style versus Rothko's abstract expressionism," *Front. Psychol.*, vol. 16, p. 1609994, 2025.
- [23] W. Yunlong, M. F. M. Arif, Z. Ziyi, and Y. Zifan, "A phenomenological expressionist approach to mixed media painting," *Environ. Proc. J.*, vol. 9, no. SI23, pp. 269–275, 2024.
- [24] M. S. Öztürk and Ş. Misman, "Automatism in abstract expressionism," 2023.
- [25] H. H. M. Al-Husseini, "Abstract expressionism and its relationship to visual attraction In the designs of modern women's fabrics," *J. Tech.*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 19–27, 2020.
- [26] O. Vasiliu, "Dialogues between art and psychiatry (I)—the case of American Expressionism," *Psihiatru. ro*, vol. 81, no. 2, 2025.
- [27] F. Bosco, "Performing a brushstroke. Pop Paintings on Abstract Expressionism," *WHATEVER*, vol. 4, pp. 65–101, 2021.
- [28] H. Latif and S. Rafiq, "Analyzing the Use of Color in Abstract Expressionism This paper investigates the complex use of colour in Abstract Expressionism, a mid-20th-century art movement that revolutionized the modern art agenda. It explores how colour has served as a vehicle for," *Pattern Soc. Sci. Rev.*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 47–55, 2024.
- [29] F. M. Gonzalez and D. I. Burin, "Judging Abstract Expressionist and Conceptual Artworks under Different Information Conditions," *Art Percept.*, vol. 11, no. 3–4, pp. 295–318, 2023.
- [30] M. J. G. Narag and M. Soriano, "Discovering artistic influences of painters from expressionism, impressionism, and surrealism art movements using convolutional neural network," *J. Cult. Herit.*, vol. 51, pp. 182–193, 2021.
- [31] S. Naveed, "Abstract Art and the Language of Form," *J. Relig. Lit. Cult. Stud.*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 16–26, 2024.
- [32] K. K. Imbir, A. Wielgopalan, J. Stępniewska, and K. Benda, "Database of Expressionist, Impressionist, and Post-Impressionist paintings: Affective norms for 60 art pieces," *Q. J. Exp. Psychol.*, vol. 77, no. 5, pp. 1093–1105, 2024.
- [33] A. Pirrie, "Abstract academic expressionism: an alternative aesthetics of scholarly practice," *New Perspect. Acad. writing. thing that wouldn't die. London Bloom.*, pp. 161–171, 2023.
- [34] S. A. Awsaj and I. yas Khudair, "The aesthetics of abstract expressionism and its representations in the artistic productions of the students of the Department of Art Education," *Al-Academy*, no. 110, pp. 35–50, 2023.
- [35] K. Kajiya, "Painting as Information: The Reception of Abstract Expressionism in Japan," in *American*

Art in Asia, Routledge, 2022, pp. 51–67.

- [36] G. Gilbert, “The Intersection of Abstract Expressionist and Mass Visual Culture—An Historiographic Overview,” in *Arts*, MDPI, 2023, p. 64.
- [37] A. Budiman, Y. Sami, S. Sn, M. Sn, D. A. Hafiz, and M. Pd, “Senyum Dalam Ungkap Karya Seni Lukis,” *Serupa J. Art Educ*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2018.
- [38] P. Chia and N. Fitryona, “Analisis Karya Seni Lukis Yasrul Sami,” *Gorga J. Seni Rupa*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 598–605, 2022.