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## **CULTURAL IDENTITY AND TRANSFORMATIVE SCULPTURE: A REFLECTION ON THE ARTISTIC TRAJECTORY OF AZWAN ABDUL KARIM**

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### **Abstract:**

This practice-based research investigates the artistic trajectory of Azwan Abdul Karim @ Wan de Real, with a focus on the development of his INTRANS methodology of transformative sculpture. The study explores how childhood engagements with handmade toys and global popular culture, particularly 1980s animation and action figures, shaped his creative identity and informed his sculptural practice. The research employs studio experimentation, documentation, and critical self-reflection as primary methods, supported by empirical data such as process notes, collaborative projects with artisans, and visual analysis of artworks. The theoretical framework draws on Stuart Hall's concept of cultural identity as a dynamic process and Homi Bhabha's notion of hybridity and the third space, applied to interpret how Azwan's sculptures reconfigure global influences into locally resonant forms. Findings demonstrate that Azwan's INTRANS sculptures establish a new paradigm of modular, interactive, and culturally hybrid sculpture in Malaysia. This contribution expands the discourse of Malaysian contemporary art by integrating technological transformation with cultural identity, positioning local practice within global creative industries and offering a model for how Malaysian art can negotiate global popular culture while retaining local specificity.

### **Keywords:**

Cultural Identity, Transformative Sculpture, INTRANS, Malaysian Contemporary Art, Critical Self-Reflection, Practice Based Research

## Introduction

Toys or action figures are objects or tools specifically designed for play, and since antiquity they have functioned as both a medium of entertainment and a form of social training for children to adapt within society. Materials such as wood, clay, paper, and plastic have long been employed in the production of toys, and they continue to remain relevant in the modern world. Beyond purpose-built toys, everyday objects are often adapted into playthings. For instance, a child may fold a piece of paper into the shape of an airplane and use it to “fly.” Technological advancements have further introduced new forms of play, including interactive digital entertainment. In the contemporary context, certain toys are also produced as collectible objects, intended more for display than for active play. One branch that has increasingly attracted attention is the custom toy or handcrafted toy design. Custom toys refer to playthings produced independently in limited quantities, typically created at home through creative and experimental approaches. Although this phenomenon is relatively new within Malaysian society, it has long been established globally. Historical records indicate that handcrafted toys first emerged in the West as early as the eighteenth century, and since then have become an integral part of the continuously evolving toy industry. It is within this narrative of toy-making that the journey of Azwan Abdul Karim begins, forming the foundation of this study which traces his development up to the present day.

## Research Justification

The study of Azwan Abdul Karim’s artistic trajectory is significant as it demonstrates how childhood experiences, economic limitations, and the influence of global popular culture (Slater, 2013) can shape the creative identity of a contemporary Malaysian artist. His journey from crafting handmade toys out of cardboard to producing technologically advanced transformative sculptures illustrates the continuity between spontaneous creativity and professional artistic practice (Omar, 2015). From an academic perspective, this study contributes to the discourse of fine arts by documenting studio experimentation, self-reflection, and the integration of transformative technological knowledge in sculptural production. It further enriches the literature on Malaysian contemporary art by emphasizing cultural identity—specifically, how Western popular culture influences such as *Transformers* (Launius, 2010) and *M.A.S.K.* are combined with local sensibilities to produce distinctive works. Moreover, the study is relevant to the creative industry as it highlights the potential of transformative sculpture as a hybrid medium that transcends the boundaries of fine art, product design, and popular entertainment. The documentation of Azwan’s artistic trajectory not only serves as an exemplar for emerging sculptors but also opens avenues for discussion on how Malaysian contemporary art can be positioned within the global context.

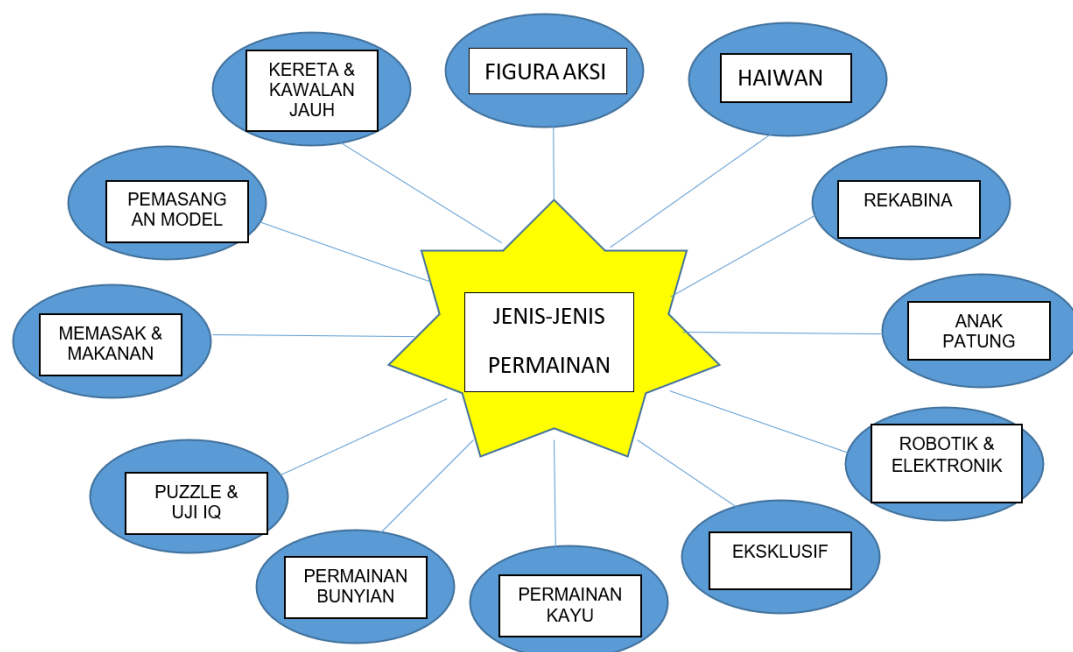
## Objective

- To analyze the artistic trajectory of Azwan Abdul Karim, tracing his development from childhood experiences to the creation of contemporary transformative sculptures.
- To identify the influence of global popular culture—such as *Transformers*, *M.A.S.K.*, and 1980s animation—on the formation of his creative identity.
- To explore the potential of transformative sculpture as a hybrid medium that transcends the boundaries of fine art, the creative industry, and popular culture at the global level.

## Literature Review

### *The History of Handmade Toys and Action Figures (Global and Local)*

The early history of action figures is believed to have originated from the tradition of dolls used since prehistoric times as representations of infants, animals, and soldiers. Archaeological discoveries reveal that these objects functioned not only as children's playthings but also as cultural and social symbols. Over time, handmade toys evolved through interests in military and railway dioramas, which emerged as early as the seventeenth century, where small-scale models were employed to depict historical events and specific landscapes. Entering the modern era, the term *diorama* gained popularity in the nineteenth century, particularly after being introduced by Louis Daguerre and Charles Marie Bouton in Paris in 1822. Dioramas subsequently became an educational and entertainment medium in major museums worldwide. This evolution paved the way for the creation of modern action figures, which began to attract significant attention in the twentieth century. During the 1970s, the American entertainment industry played a pivotal role in consolidating the status of action figures. Lucasfilm, through the *Star Wars* franchise, utilized small-scale models for film sets, which were later translated into commercial products in the form of action figures. At the same time, toy company Hasbro introduced the *G.I. Joe* series, regarded as one of the most influential action figures in modern history. These products were marketed not only as children's toys but also as collectible objects, providing enthusiasts with opportunities to create their own Do-It-Yourself (DIY) versions. Since then, action figures have developed into a global phenomenon, encompassing the influences of popular culture, comics, animation, and film. They are no longer merely toys but have become a medium of cultural identity, creativity, and visual narrative that continues to impact contemporary society. The following are the types of play forms that exist:



**Figure 1: Type of Modern Toys**

### ***The Concept of Transformative Sculpture in Contemporary Art***

In essence, the concept of transformative sculpture in contemporary art refers to three-dimensional works that are dynamic, capable of altering form, and often integrate technology with elements of popular culture. In the context of Azwan, transformative sculpture functions as a hybrid medium that bridges childhood experiences, global cultural influences such as *Transformers*, and local cultural identity. By definition and key characteristics, transformative sculpture is a three-dimensional artwork designed to change its form or function, whether through physical mechanisms, material manipulation, or technological interaction. Within contemporary art, this concept challenges the static nature of traditional sculpture by emphasizing dynamism, modularity, and interactivity (Christie's & The Artling, 2025). It frequently incorporates elements of transformation, digital fabrication, and popular culture, positioning itself as a medium that traverses both fine art and the creative industries. In relation to global contemporary art, international artists employ transformative sculpture to challenge perceptions of space and form, while offering new interpretations of cultural and technological issues (The Artling & EHarris Gallery, 2025). Collections such as *Transformative Contemporary Sculptors* showcase works that alter form, material, and meaning, reflecting a dynamic and hybrid artistic landscape (The Artling, 2025). From the perspective of Azwan's artistic trajectory, his childhood practice of crafting toys from discarded cardboard already contained transformative elements—boxes reimaged as robots or vehicles. Global popular culture influences such as *Transformers*, *M.A.S.K.*, and *Starcom* inspired the transformative concepts embedded in his work. His contemporary transformative sculptures are no longer mere toys, but artworks that merge Malaysian cultural identity with modern technology. This approach resonates with Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity, wherein Azwan's works occupy a "third space" that mediates between global and local cultures. In terms of implications for Malaysian art, transformative sculpture opens new avenues within fine arts, rendering works more relevant to a society increasingly exposed to popular culture and technology. It holds the potential to serve as a bridge between contemporary artistic practice and the global creative industries, including comics, animation, and film. The documentation of Azwan's artistic trajectory demonstrates how Malaysian contemporary art can be positioned within international discourse through the lens of transformation. Thus, transformative sculpture is not merely an innovation of form, but also a reflection of cultural identity and lived experience. In the context of this artist, it becomes an artistic narrative that connects childhood memory, global popular culture, and Malaysian contemporary art.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### ***Cultural Identity Theory in Art***

In relation to cultural identity theory, Stuart Hall's *Cultural Identity as a Process* (1990, 1996) emphasizes that cultural identity is not static but is continuously shaped by history, lived experience, and representation. In the context of Azwan, his creative identity was formed through childhood experiences—such as using discarded cardboard boxes as play objects. Global popular culture influences (*Transformers*, *M.A.S.K.*, *Starcom*) became integral to his identity narrative. The transformative sculptures he produces represent a hybrid of global and local cultures, demonstrating that his artistic identity is constantly evolving and in motion. Homi Bhabha's concept of *Hybridity and the Third Space* (1994) further illuminates this trajectory. Bhabha introduces hybridity and the third space as sites of cultural encounter that generate new forms of identity. For Azwan, his transformative sculptures emerge from the intersection of Western popular culture (robotic icons and animation) with Malaysian local

sensibilities. This process creates a “third space” in which his works do not merely replicate global culture but reconfigure it into new forms that reflect local identity. Transformative sculpture, as a hybrid medium, demonstrates how art can serve as a bridge between tradition, technology, and popular culture. In terms of relevance to Malaysian contemporary art, Azwan’s artistic trajectory illustrates how the cultural identity of Malaysian artists can be shaped through interaction with global culture while retaining local characteristics. This aligns with Hall and Bhabha’s view that cultural identity is dynamic, hybrid, and perpetually negotiated. His transformative sculptures are not only artworks but also cultural narratives that connect personal experience, global influence, and local context. Thus, the study of this artist is not merely a biographical account but a critical analysis of cultural identity within Malaysian contemporary art.

### ***Analytical Framework for Transformative Sculpture***

From the perspective of form and physical structure, these sculptures are modular and adaptable, capable of transforming from one shape into another (Liu et al., 2024). While initially constructed from basic materials (cardboard, plastic, lightweight metals), they have evolved into contemporary forms such as eco-skeletal structures. From the perspective of visual aesthetics, the works are influenced by global popular culture (*Transformers*, *M.A.S.K.*, *Starcom*) yet integrated with local styles, including textures, motifs, and cultural resonances from Malaysia. In terms of formal innovation, these sculptures reject the static qualities of traditional sculpture, emphasizing dynamism, interactivity, and transformative capacity. From the perspective of function, the sculptures serve as creative media—expressions of childhood imagination—while studio experimentation provides a platform for learning and innovation. They also carry social and economic functions, generating additional income through customized action figures and holding undeniable potential for commercialization within the creative industries (comics, animation, film). From an educational and cultural perspective, they serve as exemplars for younger generations, fostering creativity and innovation while offering a medium to understand the relationship between art, technology, and popular culture. From the perspective of cultural identity, the sculptures embody global influences, particularly Western popular culture (action figures, 1980s animation), as primary inspiration. At the same time, local resonances are evident through the integration of Malaysian cultural elements, which foreground local narratives within hybrid works. Reflecting Hall’s (1990) notion of cultural identity as a dynamic process, Azwan’s works chart the evolution of identity from childhood to adulthood. Bhabha’s (1994) concept of hybridity and the third space is equally relevant, as his transformative sculptures occupy a cultural space that mediates between global and local influences. With such a framework (see Table 1), the analysis becomes more systematic, academically rigorous, and accessible. It connects Azwan’s personal experiences with cultural identity theory and the broader discourse of contemporary art.



**Table 1: Analytical Framework for the Formation of Azwan Abdul Karim's Transformative Sculpture**

Aspect	Analytical Focus	Academic & Cultural Implications
<b>Form</b>	Modular structure, fusion of global and local pop aesthetics, dynamic formal innovation	Challenges static sculpture; introduces interactive and adaptive art practices
<b>Function</b>	Creative expression, socio-economic utility, cultural education	Contributes to the creative industry and enriches contemporary art discourse
<b>Cultural Identity</b>	Global influences, local integration, theoretical reflection (Hall & Bhabha)	Shapes a hybrid narrative of Malaysian art within a global cultural context

### Previous Studies on Malaysian and Southeast Asian Artists

Previous studies on Malaysian and Southeast Asian artists reveal how contemporary sculptors integrate local cultural heritage with modern innovation. This trajectory resonates with the artistic journey of Azwan, who adapts global popular culture such as *Transformers* and reconfigures it into transformative sculptures imbued with local identity. The influence of local cultural heritage in Malaysian contemporary art, as discussed by Issarezal Ismail et al. (2023), highlights how younger Malaysian artists incorporate traditional elements into contemporary visual works. They preserve aspects of tradition while experimenting with modern media. Similarly, Azwan combines global influences with local sensibilities, ensuring that his transformative sculptures are not mere imitations of Western popular culture but reflections of Malaysian identity. Marina Ak. Terusan (2006) examined the trajectory of contemporary sculpture in Malaysia, emphasizing the shift from traditional forms to more experimental modern approaches. In relation to Azwan's transformative sculptures, his practice exemplifies this continuity, where sculpture is no longer static but dynamic, modular, and engaged with technology and popular culture. Meanwhile, Mohd Faizal Ramli et al. (2022) discussed how Malaysian sculptors such as Mad Anuar Ismail, Tengku Sabri Tengku Ibrahim, and Noorhaiza Nordin employ traditional wood yet approach it through modern sculptural practices. Although Azwan's medium differs (cardboard, plastic, perspex, high-impact plastics), the underlying principle remains the same: transforming traditional or basic materials into contemporary works that carry cultural meaning. Across Southeast Asia, many contemporary artists similarly merge local culture with global influences. For instance, sculptors in Indonesia and the Philippines often employ icons of popular culture, technology, and recycled materials to create hybrid works. Azwan's trajectory aligns with this regional trend, where Southeast Asian artists negotiate cultural identity through hybrid transformative art. In conclusion, previous studies affirm that contemporary art in Malaysia and Southeast Asia is moving toward cultural hybridity. This strengthens Azwan's position as a sculptor who is not only influenced by global popular culture but also contributes to the discourse of Malaysian contemporary art through the concept of transformative sculpture.

## Methodology

### *Research Approach*

This study adopts a qualitative approach, emphasizing in-depth analysis of creative experiences and artistic outcomes. Such an approach is appropriate as it provides space to understand the process of creating transformative sculptures through the artist's self-reflection. It enables the personal narrative of Azwan to be examined as part of his artistic trajectory, while also foregrounding the analysis of artworks as visual texts that embody cultural meaning and identity.

### *Data Collection Methods*

- Studio Documentation: The process of producing transformative sculptures was recorded through photographs, videos, and technical notes. This documentation is crucial for tracing the evolution of the works from early prototypes to their final forms.
- Process Notes: The artist's personal notes on inspiration, challenges, and creative decisions served as primary sources for understanding self-reflection.
- Visual Analysis: The transformative sculptures were examined in terms of form, function, and cultural symbolism. This analysis identified the influence of global popular culture (*Transformers*, *Star Wars*) alongside local Malaysian elements embedded in the works.

### *Analytical Instruments*

- Critical Reflection: Employing Feldman's (1982) framework of critical self-reflection, the artist evaluated his own creative process, including motivations, influences, and artistic outcomes.
- Comparative Analysis with Other Artists: The study compared Azwan's works with those of other Malaysian and Southeast Asian artists who similarly integrate local culture with global influences. This comparison situates transformative sculpture within the broader discourse of regional contemporary art.

### *Summary of Relevance to Azwan's Work:*

- Qualitative approach → appropriate as his works are rooted in personal experience and cultural identity reflection.
- Studio documentation & process notes → highlight the trajectory from childhood cardboard toys to contemporary transformative sculptures.
- Visual analysis & critical reflection → position his works not merely as art objects but as cultural identity narratives.
- Comparative study of other artists → reinforces his place within Malaysian and Southeast Asian contemporary art.

Through this methodology, the study achieves greater systematic rigor, academic depth, and relevance, as it connects the artist's creative experiences with theoretical frameworks and the discourse of contemporary art.

## Findings / Analysis

### *Creative Journey from Childhood to Adulthood*

For Azwan, an interest in toy-making began at the age of five, when he started using discarded cardboard boxes as a creative medium. While most people regarded boxes as waste or recyclable material, for him they were a source of inspiration with intrinsic value (Cross, 2009). As the youngest of two siblings, he frequently collected boxes of various sizes, easily obtained from his grandmother's grocery store in Ladang Sungai Mai, Jerantut, Pahang. These boxes were not gathered for recycling purposes but served as raw material for handmade toys that reflected his personal creative mission. This formative experience continued into adulthood, particularly during his tenure as a lecturer at a local public university. Beginning with a hobby of collecting *Transformers* robot figures in 2007, Azwan never lost his fascination with experimenting on toys. He has since expanded his artistic practice by innovating upon his robot figures, ultimately creating a new category of transformative sculpture known as INTRANS.

### *Evolution of Works: From Cardboard Toys → Action Figures → Transformative Sculpture*

Armed with basic tools such as a pocket knife, stapler, glue, and colored pencils, Azwan was determined to transform cardboard boxes into representations of popular animated robots admired by children of the 1980s. At that time, animations such as *Thundercats*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *Transformers*, *Ultraman*, *Starcom*, and *M.A.S.K.* had become pop culture phenomena, generating high demand for action figures (Brown, 1997; Cross, 2009). However, economic limitations—his mother being a kindergarten teacher earning around RM300 per month—made purchasing action figures such as *Ghostbusters* (priced at RM15) difficult. This constraint motivated him to innovate, producing his own toys from cardboard with designs that not only resembled robots and vehicles but also incorporated transformative features akin to those in the *Transformers* series. Between the ages of five and nine, he was already capable of creating toys that could be modified without assistance. This creativity not only fulfilled childhood desires but also laid the foundation for his lifelong artistic trajectory, culminating in the production of contemporary transformative sculptures. Today, he enjoys customizing robot figures—transforming rigid or static models into unique creations rarely attempted by others. This process challenges his mental acuity and patience, and he takes pride in producing artworks that become part of his personal collection. The customization of *Transformers* figures involves multiple processes such as painting, grinding, shading, and cutting, requiring tools including brushes, spray tanks, mini drills, knives, rulers, sculpting instruments, grinders, magnifiers, metal stencils, hammers, diamond saws, and more. His expertise captured international attention when he won the Triple Threat Challenge, a special *Transformers* design competition in the United States, with his *Masterpiece Astrotrain* (2010). Like the original *Astrotrain* from the first generation of *Transformers*, his creation could transform from robot to locomotive head and even into a spacecraft. Constructed from unconventional materials such as PVC pipes, clothes hangers, and aluminum window frames, this achievement distinguished him among hundreds of international participants and showcased the ingenuity of a Malaysian designer. Beyond customizing action figures, Azwan has received commissions for other artistic projects, including product prototypes, film props, dioramas, and sculptures. More recently, he was commissioned to produce a full-scale model of a Sikorsky Black Hawk helicopter head for the documentary *The Black Hawk Down: Wira Keamanan* aired on Astro, as well as special toy designs for a legendary American hip-hop group. He is currently pursuing doctoral studies in Transformative Sculpture (INTRANS) at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris under the Fine Arts Studio.





**Figure 2: Some Previous of Azwan Abdul Karim's Customizing Toy Artworks Since 2008.**

### ***Cultural Identity Manifested in the Works (Global Pop Culture and Local Context)***

As a global pop culture icon, *Transformers* inspired the transformative concept in Azwan's works, where mechanical, modular, and dynamic elements from the animated series became foundational to his sculptural designs. Yet his works do not merely replicate Western aesthetics; they are reconfigured into new forms that resonate with local contexts (Omar, 2015). Azwan integrates Malaysian cultural elements through materials, narratives, and visual styles that reflect local experiences. His transformative sculptures embody the imagination of Malaysian children in the 1980s—exposed to global pop culture yet shaped by local economic and social realities. Cultural identity within the INTRANS (Interactive Transforming Sculpture) framework can be understood through three dimensions:

- Interactivity – works that change form, offering audiences dynamic experiences.
- Integration – combining global influences (*Transformers*, pop culture) with local narratives and materials.
- Identity – establishing an artistic style that reflects personal creative journeys and societal culture. INTRANS thus becomes a vehicle for expressing hybrid identity: a fusion of global pop culture with Malaysian local sensibilities. This aligns with Stuart Hall's theory of identity as a dynamic process and Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity and the *third space*. In Azwan's case, INTRANS is not merely an artistic methodology but also a cultural identity narrative that situates Malaysian art within the global contemporary discourse.

### ***Contribution to Malaysian Contemporary Art Discourse***

Azwan Abdul Karim's transformative sculptures contribute to Malaysian contemporary art in several significant ways:

- **Introducing the Concept of Transformative Sculpture (INTRANS):** He pioneered the INTRANS methodology, rejecting the static nature of traditional sculpture. His works are modular, dynamic, and shape-shifting, making sculpture more interactive and relevant to contemporary society. This enriches Malaysian fine art discourse with new approaches that integrate technology, pop culture, and local narratives.
- **Bridging Global Pop Culture and Local Identity:** Inspired by global icons such as *Transformers*, his works are reinterpreted through Malaysian experiences. His transformative sculptures reflect the imagination of Malaysian children in the 1980s—exposed to global culture yet grounded in modest local realities. This demonstrates that Malaysian contemporary art can engage with global culture while retaining local identity.
- **Contributing to the Creative Industries:** His sculptures function not only as fine art but also hold potential for expansion into creative industries such as comics, animation, and film. His prototype character designs illustrate the possibility of integrating sculpture into global entertainment ecosystems, opening new pathways for Malaysian artists to enter international markets through hybrid art.
- **Positioning within Regional Contemporary Art Discourse:** His artistic trajectory aligns with Southeast Asian trends, where contemporary artists merge local culture with global influences. Yet his uniqueness lies in emphasizing transformation as a central identity, distinguishing his works from other sculptors in the region. This contribution strengthens Malaysia's position within both regional and international contemporary art discourse.

## Discussion

Azwan Abdul Karim's creative journey since childhood demonstrates how personal experience shapes cultural identity in artistic practice. Beginning with cardboard boxes as a medium of play, he transformed the economic limitations of his family into a source of innovation. This experience not only fostered DIY creativity but also reflected the social realities of Malaysian society in the 1980s. The cultural identity manifested in his works is a fusion of local childhood imagination with global aspirations, consistent with Stuart Hall's (1990) view that cultural identity is always in a process of formation and negotiation. The transformative sculptures produced through the INTRANS methodology reject the static nature of traditional sculpture by introducing modular, dynamic, and interactive forms (Metwally, 2024). Although inspired by global popular culture such as *Transformers* (Launius, 2010), his works integrate local elements through materials, narratives, and Malaysian social experiences. This aligns with Homi Bhabha's (1994) concept of hybridity, where transformative sculpture becomes a "third space" that bridges local traditions with global contemporary aesthetics. Thus, his works are not mere adaptations of pop culture but hybrid mediums that enrich Malaysian contemporary art discourse. Azwan's transformative sculptures also hold significant potential to transcend the boundaries of fine art and the global creative industries. His prototype character designs illustrate the possibility of integration into comics, animation, and film. This demonstrates that sculpture functions not only as an exhibition object but also as a visual narrative resource that can be expanded within the global entertainment ecosystem (Cuxart, 2025). Such potential reflects contemporary trends in which visual art interacts with creative industries, positioning his works as relevant within the context of cultural globalization. Within Southeast Asia, many contemporary artists similarly merge local culture with global influences. For instance, sculptors in Indonesia and the Philippines employ pop culture icons, technology, and recycled materials to produce hybrid works. Issarezal Ismail et al. (2023) highlight how young



Malaysian artists integrate cultural heritage into contemporary visual art. This comparison underscores that Wan de Real's artistic trajectory aligns with regional trends, yet remains distinctive in emphasizing transformation as a central identity. His transformative sculptures demonstrate how Malaysian art can be positioned within international discourse through hybrid approaches that connect tradition, technology, and popular culture.



**Figure 3: Azwan Abdul Karim's Transforming Sculpture (INTRANS) Artworks Since 2020.**

## Conclusion

### *Summary of Key Findings*

This study reveals that Azwan Abdul Karim's artistic trajectory is rooted in childhood creativity, particularly the use of cardboard boxes as play objects. His evolution from handmade toys to action figures, and ultimately to contemporary transformative sculptures through the INTRANS methodology, reflects a unique continuity of artistic practice. The cultural identity embedded in his works is a hybrid of global pop culture influences and Malaysian local narratives, making transformative sculpture a distinctive reflection of his artistic and cultural journey.

### *Implications for Fine Arts and the Creative Industry*

Azwan's transformative sculptures challenge the static qualities of traditional sculpture by introducing modular, dynamic, and interactive forms. This enriches Malaysian fine art discourse with new approaches that integrate technology, pop culture, and local narratives. From the perspective of the creative industry, his works hold potential to cross into comics, animation, and film, opening opportunities for global commercialization. The study affirms

that Malaysian contemporary art can be positioned internationally through hybrid approaches that bridge tradition and modernity.

### *Recommendations for Future Research*

Future studies could explore comparative analyses of other Malaysian artists who integrate local culture with global influences, such as sculptors employing traditional materials (e.g., wood, metal) in contemporary approaches. Comparative studies with Southeast Asian artists are also important to understand how regional cultural identities are negotiated through hybrid art. Additionally, further research could examine audience reception of transformative sculpture, particularly in the contexts of exhibitions, creative industries, and art education.

Overall conclusions, this study highlights that the process of creating action figures requires patience, precision, and creativity, particularly in material selection, measurement, and design realization. Although complex, the effort proves rewarding, yielding not only creative satisfaction but also economic returns through additional income. Azwan Abdul Karim's artistic trajectory illustrates a transition from childhood hobbies to professional aspirations, including the establishment of his own toy company and the production of prototype characters for international projects. His ambition to present original characters in comics, animation, and film signifies the interconnectedness between global entertainment industries and local artistic practice. Furthermore, these experiences enrich his knowledge as a sculptor, providing a foundation of skills to be further developed within contemporary sculpture. The integration of transformative sculpture into Malaysia's fine arts industry not only expands local art discourse but also contributes to strengthening cultural identity within the global contemporary art context.

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