



Cat Figures Using Assemblage Techniques as an Idea for Creating Two-Dimensional Artworks

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ABSTRACT

The process of creating this artwork is closely connected to the artist's personal experiences. An emotional attachment to cats serves as a significant source of inspiration in the creative process. The primary aim of this study is to describe the creative process involved in visualizing cat figures as an artistic idea through two-dimensional artworks employing an assemblage approach. This creation process adopts Alma M. Hawkins' method as a reference for the stages of producing collage-based works, consisting of exploration, experimentation, and realization. The exploration stage involves direct data collection through observation and literature review. The subsequent stage, experimentation, includes developing drawing patterns and beginning to experiment with the assemblage forms and techniques employed. The final stage, realization, encompasses executing the work according to the established design until the finishing process is completed. The distinctive characteristics of cats inspire collage artworks that utilize assemblage techniques, mixed media, and materials such as clay, tissue paper, and magazine cuttings. These artworks depict the daily behaviors of cats on 50 × 60 cm canvases. The final output consists of three pieces that portray various behaviors, myths, and beliefs associated with cat figures, which can be interpreted in relation to human life.

Keywords: cats; assemblage; work; collage art.

I. INTRODUCTION

Human skills emerge from lived experiences, intense emotions, the beauty of nature, or social issues that serve as sources of inspiration, which are then expressed by an artist through their chosen medium and technique. This creative process may be carefully planned or flow spontaneously. Visual artists derive ideas and objects for their works from various elements around them. Their sense of beauty and technical mastery further refine these ideas and objects into compelling artworks.

Artists express their ideas and chosen objects in various forms, including representations of reality and minimalist figurative styles. One of the objects that inspires the author is fauna, with its aesthetic beauty and diverse, unique characteristics. Cats, with their rich aesthetic appeal, have long been favored by many artists. They remain extremely popular pets today. Their popularity is supported by their adorable and amusing behavior, as well as other appealing features such as body shape, eyes, nose, and diverse fur colors that make them increasingly attractive as companions. Cats are among the animals most frequently observed, admired, and kept by humans, due to their charming nature, ease of adapting to human environments, and relatively independent behavior (Wulandari, 2022). This mammal has long established interaction and closeness with humans. The variety of eye shapes, noses, fur colors, and their playful and endearing behaviors are major attractions for cat lovers (Wulandari, 2022).



Cats are often regarded as solitary and independent animals. This solitary nature is found across almost all types of cats, including domestic cats, which belong to the same species as wild cats (*Felis silvestris*). This characteristic is likely influenced by their lineage as a solitary species, considering that the ancestors of wild cats (*Miacis*) were solitary creatures capable of driving away any intruding cats they encountered. As a result, cats appear not to have developed many typical social interaction behaviors found in other, more sociable animals (Turner, 1948).

Although each cat possesses its own uniqueness, cats generally share several distinguishing features, such as long and sensitive whiskers on their faces, functioning like radar that helps them navigate and understand their surroundings. These whiskers enable them to measure the width of narrow spaces and detect objects nearby. In addition, cats have sharp claws used for various purposes, including climbing, scratching, and capturing prey. Cats are also known for their agility; their flexible skeletal structure allows them to twist and turn their bodies with ease, making them skilled hunters and natural acrobats. They are highly meticulous in self-care as well. Their rough tongues help clean their fur, keeping it smooth, free of parasites, and aiding in body temperature regulation.

Cats are nocturnal animals, meaning they are highly active during dawn and dusk. This habit is a remnant of their hunting instincts, as prey is more visible during these times. Their hunting abilities are further supported by highly developed senses, including exceptional vision, hearing, and smell. These heightened senses allow them to explore their environment with confidence (Turner, 1948).

Cats are among the animals that have long lived in close association with humans. The author shares a personal bond with cats as companions during leisure time, as cats are indeed the pets the author keeps. The essence of the author's affection toward cats lies in the joy experienced while observing their behaviors and interacting with them. Feline behavior reflects their responses to specific environmental situations and serves as an external expression influenced by their internal emotional states. Their relatively recent domestication, tracing back to the same ancestors as African wild cats, is highly relevant to their solitary nature and forms the foundation of various natural behaviors essential to solitary animals. Cats are emotional creatures, yet they do not possess emotions in the same specific forms as humans, which can often lead to misunderstandings.

In the present day, the presence of cats has gained increasing attention through social media. Cute and charming cats frequently become content across various platforms. This indicates that interest in cats extends beyond the physical world and has become part of digital culture. Therefore, through the creation of two-dimensional artworks, it becomes compelling to explore how the presence of cats can be interpreted artistically.

Two-dimensional art provides wide freedom of expression. The use of diverse materials such as paper, paint, and various other media offers rich and engaging dimensions in the creative



process. Thus, this creation is expected not only to visually portray the beauty of cats but also to convey specific messages through the use of diverse materials.

The form of two-dimensional artwork chosen for this creation is collage. The type of collage selected is assemblage collage. Creating an artwork that features cat figures through the application of various adhered materials offers a distinct aesthetic uniqueness compared to other works. Through the use of unconventional media and varied textures, the artwork is expected to achieve strong aesthetic value. Furthermore, the materials used are derived from objects that are rarely employed in art education students' thesis projects, giving this work a particular uniqueness. By utilizing different materials and techniques, the creator aims to produce artworks that stand out for their originality.

II. NOVELTY OR INNOVATION

The theory employed in this creation is Plato's theory of mimesis. According to Plato, within the framework of mimesis, art is understood as an imitation of nature. The theory of mimesis is one of the foundational theories in aesthetics that views art as a form of imitation or representation of nature or reality. The artist is regarded as a creator who imitates or reproduces nature and reality through artistic expression.

In the context of this creation, the theory of mimesis can be used to analyze how the cat figures presented in the form of collage artworks using assemblage techniques serve as imitations or representations of real cats in nature. The author explores and processes the visual elements of cats to create artworks that reflect observations and interpretations of the object.

The term *assemblage* refers to the process of arranging parts and fragments, as well as the condition in which objects are assembled together. Assemblage originates from the concept of *collage*, which involves cutting and pasting newspaper or other materials (Didiek, 2015). According to Flaubert (in Buchanan, 2021), assemblage is an idea so widely understood that it requires no critical thought, and any grouping or layering of objects may be considered an assemblage. The word *collage* derives from the English term *collage*, which comes from the French verb *coller*, meaning "to glue" (Muhammad, 2013). According to Sunaryo (2006), collage is an artistic technique in which pieces of discarded or waste materials are adhered or attached to create a visual artwork.

III. ARTISTIC APPROACH OR CONCEPT

Collage art is closely related to the surrounding environment and nature. It functions as a medium to convey feelings or emotions that are difficult to express through words. An artist's creative ability is tested when they communicate ideas, emotions, feelings, and experiences through their artwork, with the hope that others may see and sense the same. Thus, the creative process becomes essential in communicating the artist's inner emotions and sentiments.

The author created an artwork titled "*Cat Figures Using Assemblage Techniques as an Idea for Creating Two-Dimensional Artworks*" with the aim of visualizing the unique behaviors of cats along with associated beliefs or myths, as well as encouraging cat owners to gain a deeper



understanding of both domesticated cats and wild cats living in nature. This final project reflects the author's interest in realizing artistic ideas that explore the representation of cat figures.

IV. METHOD

In creating an artwork, a sequential process is required to produce a piece that aligns with the intended theme and objectives. The creation method refers to a systematic approach within the artistic process. This process involves detailed stages that begin with the search for inspiration (ideas), followed by planning, and culminating in the production of the artwork itself.

The creative process used for this artwork refers to Alma M. Hawkins' method described in her book *Creating Through Dance*, translated by R. M. Soedarsono (2001). Hawkins states that an effective artistic creation goes through three stages: exploration, improvisation, and forming (realization). Although this method is commonly used in dance creation, it can also be applied to the creation of visual artworks (Soedarsono, 2001 in Yudha, 2010).

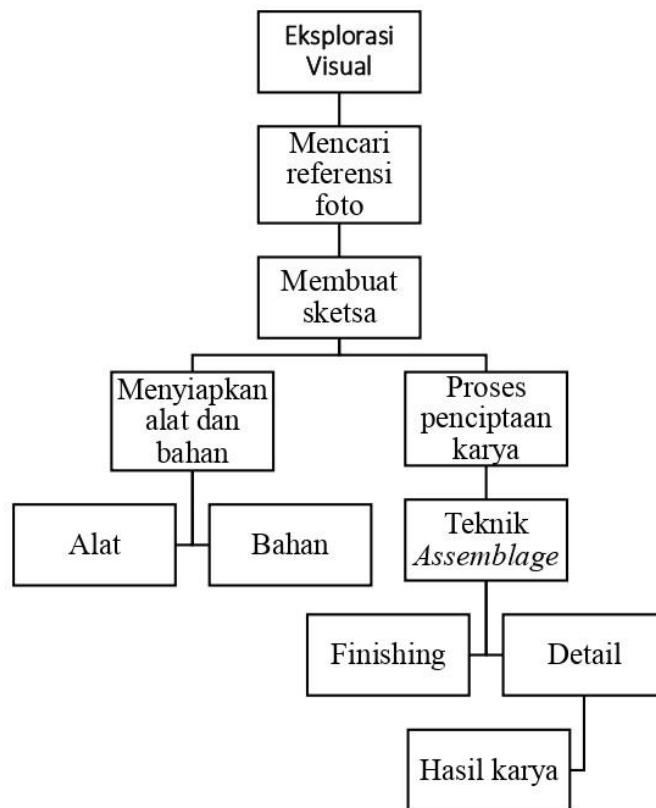


Figure 1. Flowchart of the Creative Process
Source: Ayu Widari Syahfitri, 2024

4.1 Exploration

Exploration in art is a crucial step in the process of discovering, developing, and expressing individual creativity through various artistic forms. This stage involves investigating ideas,



techniques, materials, and concepts to produce artworks that are personal and unique. During the exploration phase, regular observation is required to sharpen the artist's sensitivity. In the context of visual exploration, the author examines and observes the forms, behaviors, and objects related to cats. Developing an understanding of aesthetics and artistic skills is an essential aspect of artistic practice.



Figure 2. Visual Exploration of Cat Behavior
(Source: Ayu Widari, 2024)

4.2 Improvisation

Experimentation often highlights individual expression, creativity, and artistic freedom. It also provides opportunities for artists to explore new ideas, introduce elements of surprise into their work, and build deeper interaction with viewers or fellow artists. This stage emphasizes testing the media—materials, techniques, and tools—used in the creation process, as well as arranging visual elements that contribute to the aesthetic value of the collage artwork.

4.3 Forming

The forming stage is the phase in which the artist produces the artwork, involving a series of steps, reflections, and artistic expressions to create something that possesses aesthetic value and conveys messages or emotions to its audience. This process is highly individual and varies greatly from one artist to another. Each artist has a unique approach and style in creating their work, reflecting their vision, experiences, and personal expression. In forming artworks using the assemblage technique, the author employs a variety of media throughout the creation process.

4.4 Creative Process

In creating this collage artwork, several stages are required, beginning from the design process to the final finishing of the work. These stages are explained as follows.

4.4.1 Reference Images

The first step that must be prepared is the reference material that will serve as the basis for the artwork. The object that interests the author in creating this work is fauna, specifically cats. The main factor that led the author to choose cats as the object of creation is the phenomenon and observational findings that cats possess unique and mysterious behaviors, and several aspects of their nature are often associated with human life (Diani, 2023).



To visualize the figure and behavior of these animals, the creation of this artwork involves producing a collage using the assemblage technique. Data were collected prior to the realization process. The author's direct observations of the behavior of pet cats, stray cats in the surrounding environment, and myths related to cats found in various articles made this preparation possible. After gathering observational data, the author formulated ideas or concepts regarding the behaviors of cat figures to be discussed in this work. Based on observation and data collection, the author concluded that the assemblage technique would be highly suitable for this collage project, as it enables the creation of a work that differs significantly from conventional painting.

4.4.2 Preparation of Tools and Materials

The tools and materials described previously—including pencils, clay, glue, tissue paper, magazines, and twelve prepared canvases—are used in the process of creating the collage artworks using the assemblage technique. The author gathered a variety of materials and magazine patterns deemed suitable for achieving the desired visual form of the artworks.



Figure 3. Tools and Materials

(Source: Ayu Widari)

4.4.3 Creating Sketches on Canvas

The initial stage carried out by the author, after directly observing the behaviors and actions of cats and selecting reference photos for the collage artwork, is sketching. The author creates rough sketches to visualize the desired composition. In producing these sketches, the author incorporates dynamic and slightly chaotic effects to reflect the emotions experienced during the creative process.



Figure 4. Sketching Process
(Source: Ayu Widari)

4.4.4 Creation Process

The creation process begins with the selection of the base material. In this work, the artist chooses a white canvas as the foundation for the collage. The use of a white background is intentional, as it provides a neutral and unrestricted visual space that allows ideas to develop freely without the influence of pre-existing colors or patterns. This blank surface functions as an open field for exploration, encouraging spontaneous decision-making and flexible composition throughout the creative process.

The next stage involves the realization of the initial concept. According to Gustami (2007), realization refers to the process of transferring conceptual ideas—initially expressed through alternative sketches—into their physical artistic form. At this stage, the artist follows the predetermined design while maintaining openness to intuitive changes that may arise during execution. Realization is therefore both a technical and interpretative process, requiring the artist to translate abstract ideas into tangible visual outcomes.

Material placement constitutes the core of the assemblage collage technique. As noted by Solichah (2017), collage art allows the use of a wide range of materials, such as recycled paper, fabric scraps, metal, wood, dried plants, seeds, and other mediums depending on the creator's intention. In this project, the artist employs clay, tissue paper, glue, and magazine fragments. The creation process unfolds through three layering stages: the first layer involves applying paper clay to establish texture and form; the second layer uses plain tissue paper to refine uneven surfaces and soften the base; and the third layer incorporates cut-out magazine images and additional materials placed intuitively across the canvas. Rather than seeking perfect composition, the artist intentionally follows intuition, allowing emotional impulses to guide material arrangement while still maintaining awareness of tonal contrasts and visual balance.



Once the primary surfaces are filled, the artist proceeds to add fine details. This step includes defining the cat's eyes, nose, mouth, and other small elements that enhance the overall texture and strengthen the resemblance to the intended figure. The addition of these details not only enriches the tactile quality of the artwork but also provides a personal expressive touch, completing the assemblage collage with both clarity and aesthetic depth.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In an effort to realize and express the creative ideas behind the production of three collage artworks, the author provides an explanation of the meanings embedded within each completed piece, as well as the selection of tools and materials used in the process. The author selected images from various objects related to the theme of assemblage collage, gathering these visual references to develop ideas, concepts, and visual formulations that would later be transformed into collage compositions. These objects and subjects represent a range of feline behaviors and myths associated with cat figures.

Each of the collage artworks produced serves as a representation of real cat figures, incorporating both observed behaviors and existing myths surrounding cats. The author employs colors that correspond to the mood, distinctive characteristics, and atmosphere associated with each cat, while also integrating personal interpretative choices that support the intended emotional tone of the work. Before presenting a detailed description of each collage piece, the author outlines the meaning of each artwork, the positioning of the objects, the conceptual planning, and the choice of background elements to achieve optimal visual realization.

The final outcome of this creative project consists of three collage artworks employing the assemblage technique, each mounted on individual canvases. These works are titled *Sobriety*, *Roof King*, and *The Myth of a Black Cat*.

5.1 Artwork I: "Sobriety"

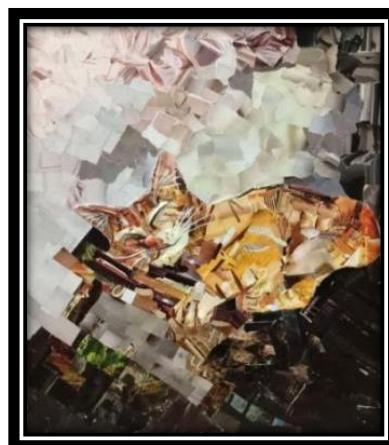


Figure 5. Title: *Sobriety* (Calmness), Size: 50 × 60 cm, Medium: Tissue Paper and Magazines, Year: 2024
Artist: Ayu Widari Syahfitri



The collage artwork titled *Sobriety* (Calmness) is inspired by the cat behavior observed by the author, particularly when cats appear calm and comfortable while resting. In this piece, the cat is depicted with a serene and peaceful facial expression. Its eyes are gently lowered, as if savoring a moment of deep rest. The cat's orange-brown fur contrasts with the pastel-dominated background composed of soft hues such as white, gray, and pink. This combination of colors creates a warm and gentle atmosphere. Typically, after wandering outdoors; searching for food or even engaging in fights; cats will retreat to a safe place. This behavior illustrates their need for rest and tranquility. The cat's closed eyes and relaxed posture in the artwork further emphasize a sense of calmness. Although appearing peaceful, the cat also carries a subtle aura of mystery. Its partially obscured gaze and slightly blurred body contour prompt the viewer to wonder what thoughts may lie behind its stillness.

As mammals, cats possess an instinct to seek warmth and security; survival instincts embedded since kittenhood. Their body temperature is slightly higher than that of humans, making them naturally inclined to seek heat sources to maintain optimal warmth. Cats also engage in considerable physical activity, such as jumping and playing, and finding a warm place helps soothe their muscles and joints while promoting faster recovery. Warmth induces relaxation, allowing cats to feel safe and comfortable, often enabling them to fall into a deeper sleep. The posture of the cat, seemingly merging with its background, indicates that it feels extremely at ease in its surroundings, further reinforcing the impression of peace and tranquility.

The background, composed of variously sized and colored paper fragments, creates an abstract and imaginative visual effect. The patterns formed by these fragments may be interpreted as representations of dreams or slowed thoughts. The cat remains the focal point due to the contrast between its realistic depiction and the abstract background. Overall, this artwork can be interpreted as a reflection on the importance of taking moments of rest amidst the busyness of life. As a symbol of peace and serenity, the cat encourages us to relax and appreciate the beauty found in simplicity. The work also serves as a reminder of the necessity to make time for the things we enjoy amid the demands of daily routines.

5.2 Artwork II: *Roof King*



Figure 6. Title: *Roof King*, Size: 50 × 60 cm, Medium: Tissue Paper and Magazines
Year: 2024
Artist: Ayu Widari Syahfitri



The collage artwork titled *Roof King* is inspired by the author's observations of everyday feline behavior, particularly when a cat growls and its fur stands on end when confronted by a threat. This reaction represents a powerful form of non-verbal communication and a natural self-defense mechanism that has evolved to ensure their survival.

The artwork presents a unique and character-rich scene. The central subject is a cat depicted with a dramatic facial expression that forms the core of its visual narrative; an expression filled with anger, as though the cat is shouting. Its wide, glaring eyes, erect fur, and open mouth constitute universal body language that signals anger, fear, or heightened alertness.

The cat's position atop a rooftop reinforces the impression that it is asserting dominance over its territory. The stronger or more intimidating the threat, the more intense the cat's reaction becomes. Within this context, the cat's expression suggests a moment shaped by past negative encounters with other animals, motivating it to protect its territory from potential intruders while remaining vigilant and reactive to possible dangers.

Overall, this artwork can be interpreted as a social commentary on human attitudes toward nature and other living beings. The cat's enraged expression symbolizes feelings of frustration—parallel to how humans often become preoccupied with worldly concerns or how certain individuals habitually violate the rights or boundaries of others. The piece thus reflects both animal instinct and broader human behavior.

5.3 Artwork III: *The Myth of a Black Cat*

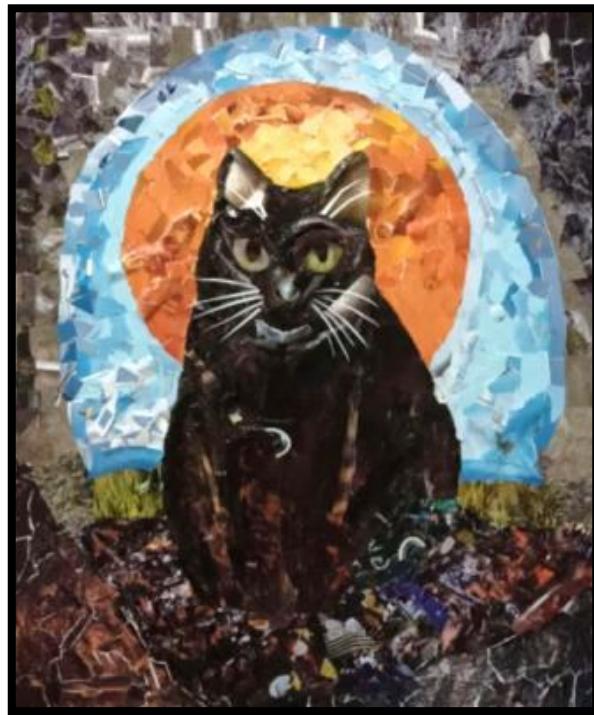


Figure 7. Title: *The Myth of a Black Cat*, Size: 50 × 60 cm, Medium: Tissue Paper and Magazines, Year: 2024
Artist: Ayu Widari Syahfitri



The collage artwork titled *The Myth of a Black Cat* is inspired by myths found both in local communities and across the world. Some people believe that black-furred cats bring misfortune and are signs of supernatural presence. Black cats are often associated with jinn or spirits because of their entirely dark fur. In several cultures, it is believed that crossing paths with a black cat can bring bad luck. There is also a myth claiming that a cat can bring a deceased person back to life if it steps over the body.

In various cultures, the belief that black cats bring misfortune has developed over centuries. Mythological traditions, religious beliefs, and even the influence of literature and media contribute to the negative perception surrounding black cats. For example, in medieval Europe, black cats were considered representations of witches or supernatural entities. They were frequently seen as evil spirits or companions of witches. Such beliefs significantly shaped society's overall view of black cats.

The background dominated by blue and orange creates a striking contrast with the cat's black fur. Blue is often associated with intuition and calmness, while orange symbolizes energy. Together, these colors produce a complex and nuanced atmosphere. The crescent moon behind the cat further enhances the mystical and mysterious tone of the piece, as the moon is commonly linked to life cycles, change, and magical forces. The collage technique used in this work incorporates layered and textured paper fragments to form both the cat and the background. This technique symbolically reflects the overlapping experiences and events that shape human life.

The purpose of this collage is to remind viewers that the belief in black cats as bearers of misfortune is merely a myth or superstition, not grounded in scientific fact. Black cats, like cats of any other fur color, do not possess magical powers or special fortune. Negative stereotypes about the color of a cat's fur should be avoided, as they stem from unfounded beliefs and can affect how people treat these animals. Each cat is a unique individual with its own personality and characteristics. Therefore, it is crucial to treat all cats with kindness and not allow their fur color to shape our perceptions of them.

Overall, this artwork can be interpreted as a reflection of human duality. The black cat, representing the darker side of existence, reminds us that every individual possesses both strengths and weaknesses. The dynamic background symbolizes continual change and life's fluctuations. The work encourages viewers to contemplate themselves, their inner strengths and vulnerabilities, and the unresolved mysteries of human life.

VI. CONCLUSION

Proses penciptaan karya seni kolase dengan teknik assemblage pada penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa figur kucing merupakan objek visual yang kaya akan makna, baik dari segi perilaku, kebiasaan, maupun mitos yang berkembang di masyarakat. Observasi langsung terhadap kucing—baik kucing peliharaan maupun kucing liar—memberikan pemahaman mendalam tentang karakteristik fisik dan emosional hewan tersebut. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa kucing memiliki keragaman tingkah laku yang dipengaruhi oleh lingkungan tempat ia tumbuh serta interaksi dengan manusia, sehingga menjadikan figur kucing sebagai sumber inspirasi yang kuat dalam proses penciptaan karya seni.



Visualisasi figur kucing dalam karya ini diwujudkan melalui penggunaan media kertas tisu, potongan majalah, dan paper clay yang menghasilkan tekstur relief khas teknik assemblage. Proses perwujudan menuntut ketelitian dan waktu yang panjang, mulai dari penyusunan sketsa, pengaplikasian paper clay, hingga penempelan elemen kolase. Tantangan yang muncul, seperti perubahan proporsi bentuk akibat tekstur clay dan retakan selama proses pengeringan, berhasil diatasi melalui penyesuaian teknik dan penguatan material. Pemilihan warna dan komposisi visual dilakukan berdasarkan prinsip gelap-terang, sehingga menghasilkan harmoni visual yang sebanding dengan teknik melukis pada umumnya.

Secara metodologis, proses penciptaan mengikuti tiga tahapan utama, yaitu eksplorasi, improvisasi, dan pembentukan, yang memungkinkan pengembangan ide secara sistematis sekaligus memberi ruang bagi spontanitas artistik. Melalui proses ini, penulis dapat mengolah data observasi menjadi karya visual yang tidak hanya merepresentasikan bentuk fisik kucing, tetapi juga memaknai simbol, mitos, serta karakter emosional yang melekat pada figur tersebut.

Sebagai hasil akhir, penelitian ini berhasil menghasilkan **tiga karya kolase teknik assemblage**, yaitu *Sobriety*, *Roof King*, dan *The Myth of a Black Cat*. Ketiga karya ini merepresentasikan tiga tema utama; ketenangan, territorialitas, dan mitologi; yang masing-masing memperlihatkan bagaimana estetika dan makna simbolis figur kucing dapat diolah ke dalam bahasa visual dua dimensi. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa teknik assemblage dapat menjadi media ekspresi yang efektif untuk mengungkapkan kompleksitas makna dalam representasi figur hewan, khususnya kucing, serta membuka peluang kajian lebih lanjut tentang pemanfaatan material alternatif dalam seni rupa kontemporer.

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