
iNVENTX Creative Exhibition

SUSTAINAISSANCE IN PRACTICE: Quiet Materials, Loud Meaning

Shattered Dates

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Abstract

The term *sustainable* has followed us since our school days, a word that once lived in textbooks, now echoes in daily conversations, product labels, and global forums. Sustainability often takes centre stage in discussions around climate change. As digital technology evolved, new innovations like NFTs (non-fungible tokens) sparked fresh debate. While creative in form, NFTs have also raised concerns about energy consumption and digital pollution, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions, as noted by Truby (2022). *Shattered Dates* is a traditional artwork that symbolically captures the fragile state of our climate. The use of bread tags, each imprinted with dates, months, and years, represents the passage of time and the layers of environmental challenges humanity has faced. The broken, colourful fragments reflect a world in crisis, one fractured by neglect, yet still filled with memory and meaning. This piece resonates deeply with the theme of *SUSTAINAISSANCE*, a call for a creative and conscious revival. It reminds us that we are living in a critical moment. The future depends not only on acknowledging the damage but also on reshaping the way we live, consume, and create. Through art, awareness, and innovation, we can begin to piece together a more sustainable existence before time runs out.

Keywords: Non-Fungible Tokens; Digital art; Climate change; Digital pollution; New technology

Received: 26 June 2025, **Accepted:** 16 February 2026, **Published:** 30 June 2026

Artist Statement

Concept and Theme

This artwork was inspired by a project done during my foundation studies in 2007 at Multimedia University. The theme of this artwork was global warming, when the challenge was to use a vegetable or fruit as the subject matter. “Shattered Dates” fits the “Sustainaissance” well, as the challenges of sustainability are always there for us to solve, whether it is the past or the present. The colour of the bread tag represents the various sustainability solutions that the world faces. The year’s stamps are imprinted on the tags, communicating the timelines of the world’s climate crisis.

Beyond their visual function, the bread tags also act as everyday markers of consumption, often overlooked yet constantly present in daily life. By reassembling these discarded objects into a single fragmented form, the artwork reflects how small, repeated human actions collectively shape long-term environmental consequences. Combining both of the stories and the subject matter creates an imperfect, sustainable journey with this artwork.

Meaning and Impact

This artwork represents the fragility of time, especially when action toward climate change is delayed. It illustrates how years of individual and collective ignorance allow environmental issues to accumulate, until they eventually fracture, giving rise to even more complex crises.

The fragmented form of the carrot symbolises how environmental problems rarely emerge suddenly but instead develop gradually through prolonged neglect and inaction. Each broken piece reflects moments where opportunities for intervention were missed, reinforcing the idea that time itself becomes a critical material in shaping ecological outcomes. The artwork invites viewers to reflect on their own roles within these processes, questioning how everyday habits, however insignificant they may seem, contribute to larger systemic impacts.

Rather than offering a direct solution, *Shattered Dates* functions as a visual reminder of urgency and responsibility. It encourages awareness not only of environmental degradation, but also of the psychological distance people often maintain from such issues. By confronting viewers with a familiar object transformed into a fractured symbol, the artwork seeks to provoke discomfort, recognition, and ultimately a more conscious engagement with sustainability.

Materials and Techniques

The artwork began with a pencil sketch of the chosen subject: the humble carrot. Selected for its naturally cracked surface, the carrot symbolises the fragility and imperfections of our planet in the face of the climate crisis. The cracks were intentionally drawn to resemble shattered glass, a visual metaphor for environmental breakdown. The sketch functioned as a structural guide, allowing the composition to maintain its recognisable form while accommodating the irregular shapes of the materials used.

The primary material used in this piece is bread tags, personally collected by my family since 1997 and donated for the purpose of this artwork. Each bread tag was carefully broken and arranged using UHU glue to form the shape of the carrot, with the fragments reflecting the passage of time. The imprinted expiration dates on the tags serve as poignant reminders of our consumption habits, highlighting the overlooked traces of daily life and their cumulative impact on the environment.

As shown in Figure 1, the final composition retains the familiar silhouette of the carrot while revealing a surface constructed entirely from fragmented plastic elements. The process of manually breaking and assembling each tag was intentionally slow and repetitive, mirroring the gradual and often invisible nature of environmental degradation. The physical layering of materials also introduces texture and depth, reinforcing the sense of accumulation and historical residue embedded within the work. Through this hands-on method, the artwork transforms discarded objects into a tangible representation of time, waste, and ecological vulnerability.

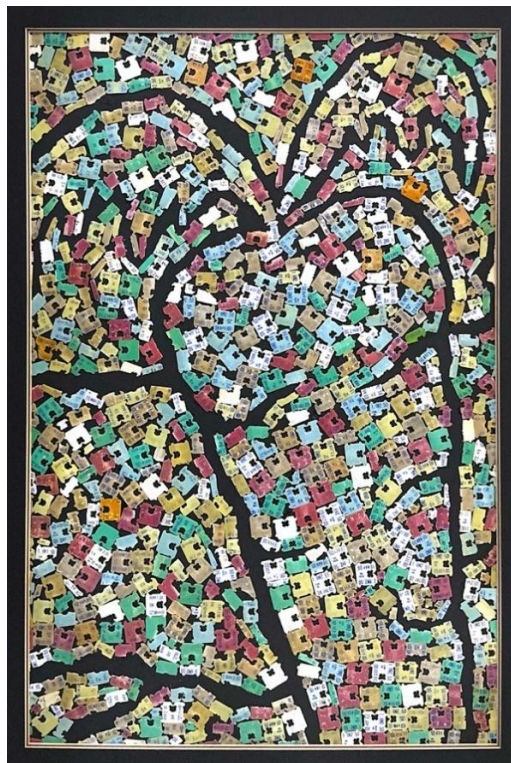


Figure 1. The Shattered Dates Physical Artwork

Conclusion

Shattered Dates is a reflection on the quiet consequences of daily habits and delayed action. Through the fragile form of a cracked carrot and the forgotten timestamps of discarded bread tags, the artwork transforms personal memory into collective warning. It serves as a reminder that what we ignore today, in waste, in time, in crisis, will eventually resurface, fractured and multiplied. Rooted in the spirit of *SUSTAINAISSANCE*, this piece invites a deeper reckoning with how we live, consume, and care for a world that is slowly shattering beneath our feet.

Beyond its symbolic message, the artwork also emphasises the role of creative practice as a form of environmental reflection and intervention. By reusing accumulated everyday materials, the work demonstrates how artistic processes can reframe waste into meaningful narratives that challenge passive consumption. In this sense, *Shattered Dates* positions art not merely as representation, but as an active space for questioning, reimagining, and cultivating more responsible relationships between humans, objects, and the environment.

References

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Acknowledgment

I would like to thank my Foundation Lecturer in the Faculty of Creative Multimedia, Multimedia University, who taught and guided me to make *Shattered Dates* come alive and provided the space to exhibit this artwork for the first time for this year's iNVENTX after 18 years. The acknowledgment is also extended to my parents for their countless support and preserving this artwork to this day.

Funding Information

The artist did not receive any funding from external parties for the creation or publication of this artwork.

Authors' Bio

Rubinden Kumar is a graphic design lead who specialises in branding, print, and digital design. He brings several years of industry experience from both in-house roles and creative agencies in Australia and Malaysia. Rubinden has collaborated with major brands such as RMIT University, Telstra Australia, and Astro Malaysia. After spending seven years in Melbourne, he returned to Malaysia to pursue a career in academia, driven by a desire to share his passion for graphic design with the next generation of creatives.