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A Conceptual Approach to Perak Visual Art Mapping through Augmented Reality

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Abstract

The way cultural heritage is recorded, understood, and experienced has changed dramatically due to the quick development of digital technology. Nonetheless, the State of Perak's mapping and documentation of its visual art legacy are still disjointed, with little use of digital technologies that could improve public participation and long-term preservation. To create an interactive digital heritage ecosystem that promotes cultural preservation, education, tourism, and the creative economy, this study suggests transforming Perak State's visual art mapping through the incorporation of Augmented Reality (AR) technology. This paper proposes a conceptual Input-Process-Output-Impact framework for integrating Augmented Reality with the mapping of Perak's visual art heritage and illustrates the framework through a single case demonstration: an Augmented Reality treatment of a traditional hornbill linocut print. Users can access interactive digital content via smartphones and mobile devices, such as historical narratives, artist profiles, 3D visualisations, audio, video, and educational information, by integrating AR technology with geographic mapping of visual art venues. Building on this demonstration, future

work will extend the framework to a wider sample of Perak's murals, crafts, and sculptures, toward an interactive digital heritage ecosystem and digital library of the state's visual art. This research advances smart heritage initiatives, supports sustainable cultural tourism, and encourages the digital transformation of Malaysia's visual arts industry by fusing digital innovation with cultural heritage management. The results should contribute to the larger conversation on digital heritage preservation in the context of Industry 5.0 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and offer a scalable framework that other Malaysian governments can adopt.

Keywords Augmented Reality, Perak, Cultural Heritage Documentation, Traditional Printmaking, Digital Tourism

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Introduction

The state of Perak is one of the state's rich in diverse cultural heritage, history and visual arts, which are important identities in the development of the Malaysian tourism sector. Racial diversity, religious freedom, and a long history of colonialism have formed a unique and colourful cultural landscape. This uniqueness can be seen through various forms of visual artworks such as traditional crafts, mural paintings, sculptures and various forms of public art expressions found in several districts in the state of Perak. These works not only function as aesthetic elements in public spaces but also act as a medium of visual documentation that tells the history, customs, culture and daily life of the local community. However, in the era of globalisation and rapid digital development, the tourism sector needs a new approach to keep tourist destinations attractive and competitive. The development of the 5.0 Industrial Revolution, which emphasises the integration of humans and technology and the need to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), demands the use of digital technology across sectors, including tourism and cultural heritage. In this context, digital technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and artificial intelligence are increasingly being used to enhance the visitor experience through the delivery of more interactive, interesting and easily accessible information. However, systematic studies on mapping and documentation of public visual art works such as murals, craft art and sculpture in the state of Perak are still limited. Prior work has documented individual Perak murals in Batu Gajah and Teluk Intan (Merman et al., 2022; Abdul Razak et al., 2023); AR-based interpretation of these and other Perak visual art works, however, remains unexplored. Many works of art with high historical and cultural value are poorly documented digitally, making it difficult to disseminate information to the general public and tourists. The lack of interactive platforms limits visitors' experiences of these works of art to visual observation alone, preventing them from understanding the context, meaning, and cultural value contained in them.

In this regard, this study was conducted to develop an approach to mapping visual art in the state of Perak through the integration of augmented reality (AR) technology, which can be accessed using QR codes via smartphones. Through this approach, visitors can scan QR codes placed at the locations of selected works of art to obtain various additional information related to the works interactively. The information displayed includes three-dimensional (3D) animation, video documentation, audio explanation, location of the work, distance from the visitor's position, background of the work, date of production, medium used, size of the work and production technique. This approach not only enriches the visual experience of visitors but also allows them to witness the transformation of artworks from two-dimensional forms to a more immersive three-dimensional digital experience through 360-degree displays. These QR-code-triggered and 360-degree display features are conceptually distinct from the marker-based Augmented Reality demonstrated later in this paper via the Artivive application; the case demonstration presented in this study applies the latter. With the use of

AR technology, visitors have the opportunity to interact with artworks in greater depth, thus increasing their understanding of the aesthetic, historical and cultural values contained in the artworks. In addition, this study also has the potential to contribute to the development of the digital tourism ecosystem in the state of Perak by making visual art a new medium of tourism attraction. Most murals and public artworks in the state depict local cultural elements such as community customs, state history, traditional economic activities and the daily lives of residents. Therefore, digital mapping through AR technology can help introduce the cultural identity of the state of Perak to the local community and international tourists more effectively.

Overall, this study not only aims to document and map visual artworks in the state of Perak but also to introduce innovative approaches in delivering art information through digital technology. The use of augmented reality technology in this study is expected to enhance the visitor experience, strengthen the preservation of visual arts heritage and contribute to the development of a more competitive Perak tourism sector in line with the aspirations of the 5.0 industrial revolution and global sustainable development.

Research Objectives

1. To propose a conceptual Input–Process–Output–Impact framework for integrating Augmented Reality with the mapping and interpretation of Perak’s public visual art.
2. To illustrate the application of this framework through an Augmented Reality case demonstration on a traditional linocut print artwork.
3. To identify the design considerations and feasibility factors for extending AR-based interpretation to Perak’s wider population of murals, crafts, and sculptures.

Literature Review

In recent times, Perak's artworks have received less attention and recognition nationwide. Visual art, such as craft art, mural art, sculpture art and so on, is a way of conveying information and is not an art that has just been introduced; it is one of the oldest arts in the world because this visual art actually dates back to prehistoric times (Zakaria et al., 2023). Visual arts such as murals, crafts and sculptures are important elements in preserving the cultural identity and history of a society. Public works of art exhibited in urban spaces not only function as an aesthetic element but also play a role as a medium of social communication that conveys the narrative of history, cultural values and the life of the local community. According to Ashworth (2011), cultural heritage presented through visual art can increase the value of a tourist destination because it provides an authentic experience to visitors.

In addition, a study by Smith (2016) states that public art, such as urban murals and sculptures, has become one of the important elements in the development of creative tourism. Visual art exhibited in public spaces can attract tourists to explore the cultural identity of a place more closely. This shows that the documentation and mapping of visual artworks is very important to ensure that the works can be accessed and appreciated by the wider community. Digital mapping is an increasingly used approach in documenting cultural heritage and visual arts. According to Niccolucci (2012), digital technologies such as geospatial mapping and visual documentation allow researchers to record and store information related to cultural heritage in a more systematic and easily accessible way for the community.

A study by Forte (2014) also explains that the use of digital technology in cultural heritage mapping enables the integration of visual data, audio, video and historical information in one interactive platform. This approach not only helps the documentation process but also improves the user experience through the presentation of more interesting and interactive information. Furthermore, digital mapping technology also helps in the conservation of art heritage as it allows visual records and information of works to be systematically stored for future reference. The development of digital technology has led to the use of Augmented Reality (AR) in various fields, including education, tourism and cultural heritage. AR is a technology that combines elements of the real world with digital objects to create an interactive experience for users.

According to Azuma (1997), AR allows users to see virtual objects combined with real-world environments in real time through digital devices such as smartphones or tablets. More recent systematic reviews (Ramtohul & Khedo, 2024) confirm AR's expanding application across heritage tourism, education, and interpretation contexts. This technology is increasingly used in the tourism sector to enrich the visitor's experience through the interactive visualization of digital information. A study by Chen and Tsai (2017) shows that the use of AR in visual learning can increase the level of understanding and user engagement because information can be presented in a more attractive three-dimensional visual form. This technology also allows users to interact directly with the displayed digital objects. As a result, educational institutions are beginning to adopt augmented reality tools to enhance classroom learning, fostering a more immersive and engaging environment for students. By incorporating AR into their curricula, teachers can provide hands-on experiences that deepen comprehension and retention of complex concepts.



Figure 1. (The Early Mercers) by Leonard Siaw.
Source: <https://360tour.asia/the-early-mercers-street-mural-at-india-street-kuching/>

Two notable international artists are Leon Keer and INSA. Leon Keer is widely recognized for integrating AR technology into large-scale mural art, enabling viewers to use mobile applications to animate and interact with painted surfaces through the Leon Keer App. This integration transforms traditional murals into immersive digital experiences, increasing audience engagement and storytelling beyond static artwork (Keer, 2018). Meanwhile, INSA is recognized for introducing the concept of GIF-ITI, a combination of street art, animation and digital technology. By using AR and a mobile application, INSA demonstrates how physical murals can evolve into dynamic digital experiences, allowing audiences to see murals as evolving and interactive visual narratives (Hall, 2019). This innovative approach has inspired numerous artists exploring the fusion of mural art with immersive technologies.

In Malaysia, two artists associated with augmented reality mural practices are Leonard Siaw and Cloakwork. Leonard Siaw is known for creating interactive and illusion-based murals across Malaysia, with works that encourage audience participation and digital sharing. Siaw mural 'The Early Mercers', located at India Street in Kuching, Sarawak, was officially recognized by the Malaysia Book of Records as the largest augmented reality mural that integrates local heritage and tourism experiences to be more engaging through interactive educational public art (DayakDaily, 2019). Another artist, Cloakwork, has a passion for graffiti and expanded into murals and other forms of public art. His style is drawn to bright colors, bold lines, and illustrative characters that tell stories. Even though Cloakwork is not an AR-based artist, his engagement with digital platforms and interactive public art aligns with current trends in AR-enhanced mural experiences. A Cloakwork mural in the area of Petaling Street, Kuala Lumpur, reworked to recreate images from the city's past, reflects a similar initiative. This

initiative is one of the four core programs under the Augmented Reality Festival Kuala Lumpur (AR Fest KL) to reimagine the rich heritage and turn it into a digital playground (Krishnan, 2024). Together, these artists represent the growing potential of integrating emerging technologies into Malaysian mural practices, reflecting a broader shift toward immersive and participatory forms of public art. Although these cases are drawn from other Malaysian states, a more directly relevant precedent exists in Perak itself: a 2025 exhibition at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Perak applied the same Artivive platform to traditional relief-print artworks by Juhari Said (Gaya Utusan & Mohd Radzuan Mohd Rafee, 2025), representing the closest existing Perak-based precedent for the case demonstration presented in this paper.

Research Method

This study adopts a practice-based research design, developing a conceptual framework and illustrating it through a single AR case demonstration; a mixed-methods evaluation (visitor questionnaire and stakeholder interviews) is proposed as a subsequent phase of the project. Research methods are needed in every study to get detailed information about a study being conducted. Because there are several methods used in this study as follows;

a) Study Design

Through types of research such as action research + development research to develop an AR mapping system and use the main objective to document mural artwork, craft art and sculpture in the state of Perak to integrate artwork with AR technology for interactive display. Evaluation of visitor experience using AR technology is proposed as a subsequent phase of the project, beyond the scope of the case demonstration reported here.

b) Population and Sample

The population comprises all the mural artworks, sculptures and crafts found in Perak, as well as local and foreign visitors. The samples of artworks are selected based on criteria such as cultural and historical significance, locations that are easily accessible and relevance for tourism. The case demonstration reported in this paper draws on a sample of one artwork, selected as a proof-of-concept; extension to a larger, defensible sample of Perak's murals, crafts, and sculptures is proposed as future work.

c) Study Instrument

Proposed instrumentation for the subsequent, future data-collection phase of this project includes mapping of artworks through photos, videos and animated 3D records, determination of geospatial location and visitor distance, and QR codes for links, together with a structured

questionnaire (Likert Scale) and semi-structured interviews with selected visitors to assess satisfaction, understanding and interactive experience. No questionnaire, interview, or visitor-evaluation data are reported in this paper.

As no interviews or visitor data collection were conducted for this case demonstration, no ethics approval was required for this phase of the project; ethical clearance and informed consent procedures will be established prior to the future data-collection phase described above.

Conceptual Framework

The following is a proposed framework that explains the relationship between the main elements of the study:

Input → Process → Output → Impact

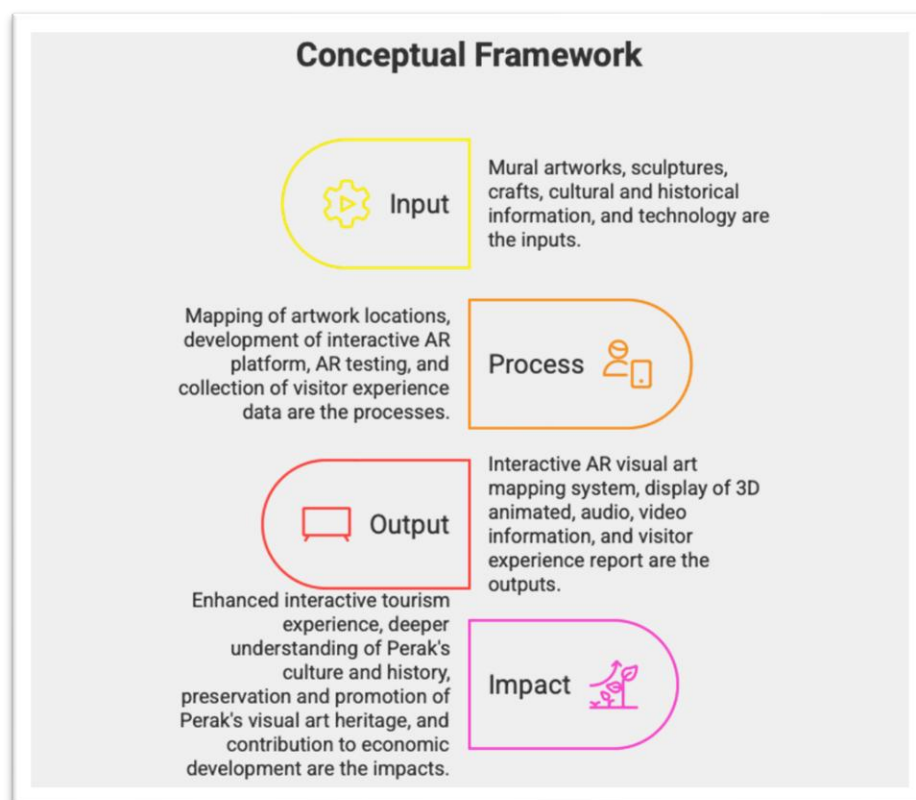


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework
Sources: Muhammad Salehuddin (2026)

This Input, Process, Output, and Impact framework structures the proposed approach as follows: artworks, cultural and historical information, and available technology form the Input; mapping artwork locations, developing the AR platform, and testing form the Process; the interactive AR mapping system

and its outputs form the Output; and enhanced visitor experience, heritage preservation, and economic contribution form the Impact. This structure is consistent with recent immersive XR framework studies in cultural heritage (Innocente et al., 2023), which similarly link technological input, implementation process, output artefacts, and heritage impact. The case demonstration presented in the following section illustrates the Process and Output stages of this framework for a single artwork.

Analysis

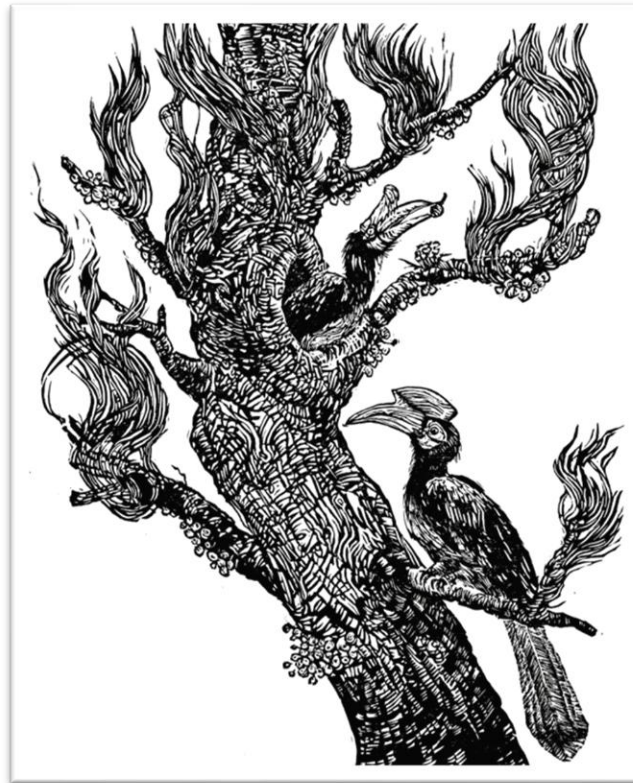


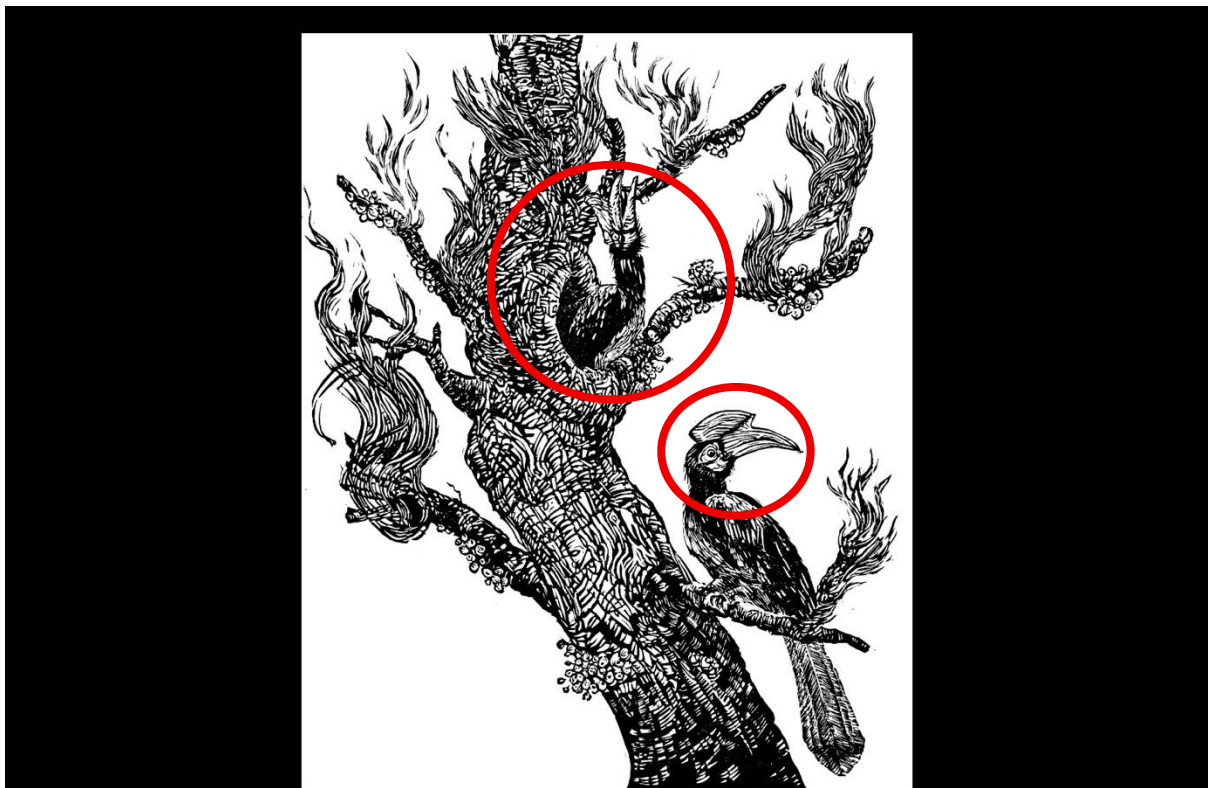
Figure 3. Linocut Print Artwork
Sources: ("Mohd Nafis Saad, 2023")

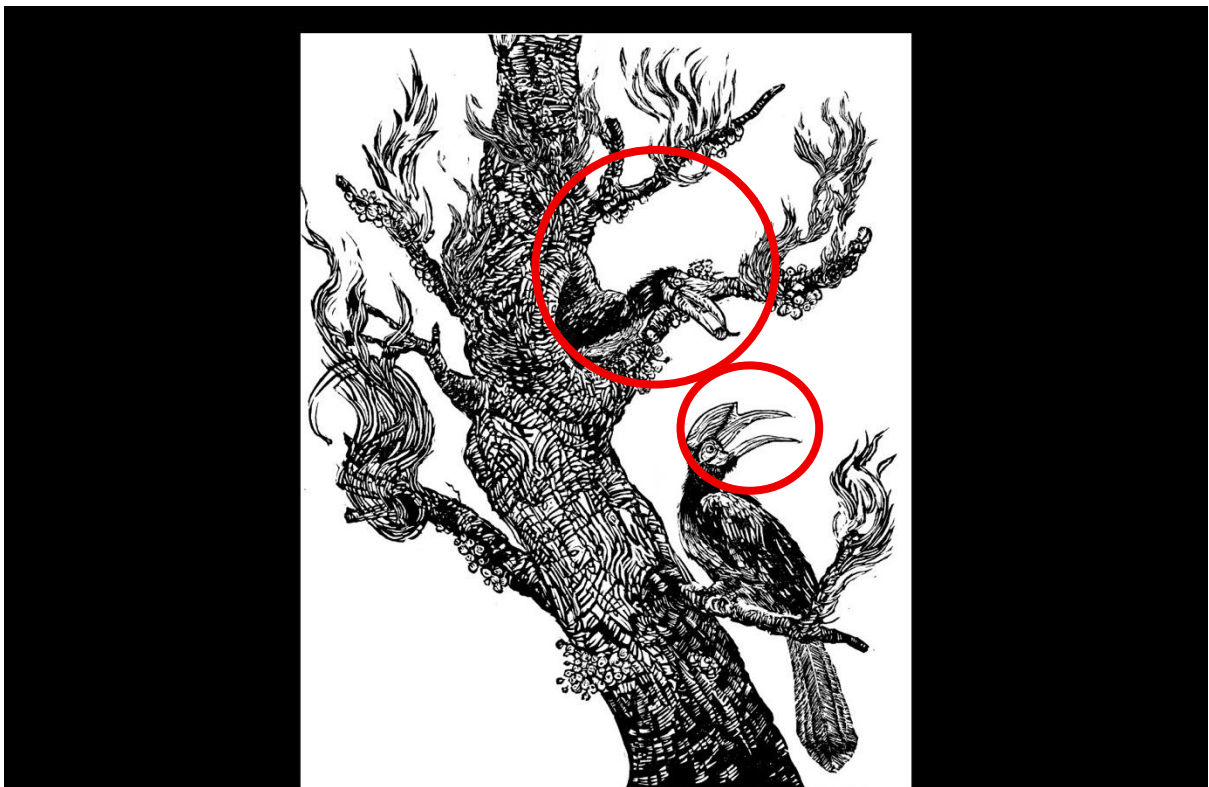
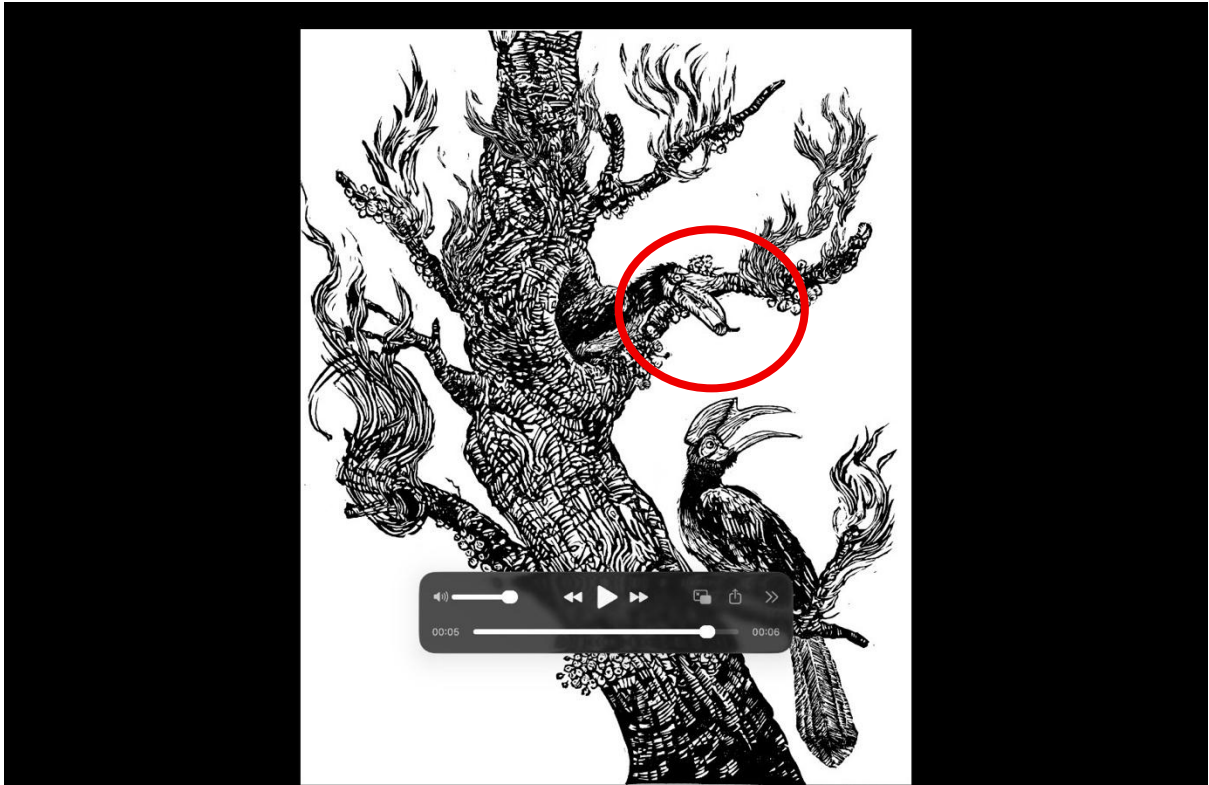
The following presents a single illustrative case demonstration of the proposed framework, rather than a representative sample of Perak's public visual art. Based on the observation of the image provided, this work is a conventional black-and-white print that displays the main subject of two hornbills perched on an old tree. From a visual aspect, this work has characteristics synonymous with the relief printing technique, namely linocut, due to the use of dominant lines, high black and white contrast, and interlacing built through shading and engraving techniques. However, without information on the original production process, the specific technique cannot be ascertained from the image alone.

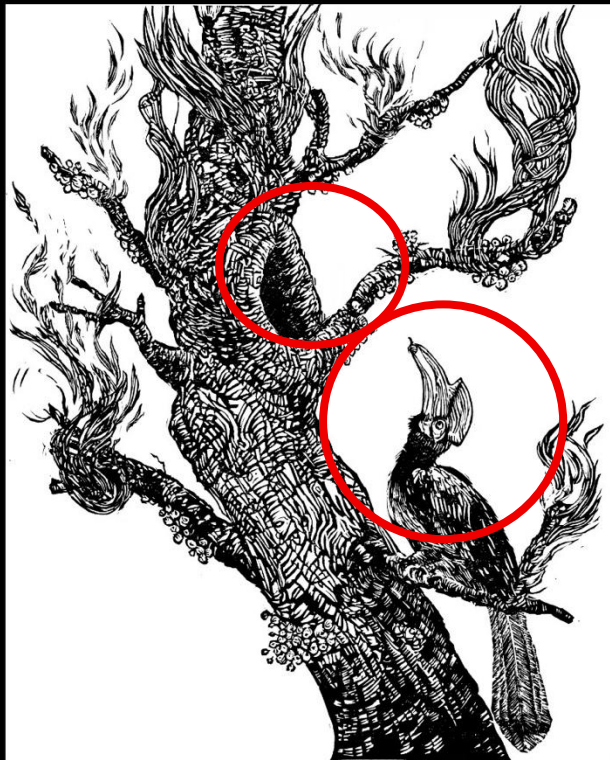
If this work is presented using Augmented Reality (AR), the viewer's experience is no longer just seeing a static image, but can interact with the work visually, audio and animation. Based on the work that displays two hornbills on a tree, the following is a detailed explanation of how this work can

be brought to life through AR. Based on the description of the AR concept, when the smartphone or tablet camera is pointed at this work, the AR system will detect the image as a marker. After being detected, various digital elements will appear on the actual work, making the illustration seem to come alive in real space, such as the hornbill animation starting to move its head and eyes as if observing the environment. Meanwhile, the bird's wings will flutter slowly. Additionally, birds at the top of the tree can jump to another branch or fly around the tree before returning to perch. Birds at the bottom make real hornbill sounds, providing a more realistic experience.

Augmented Reality (AR) Artworks







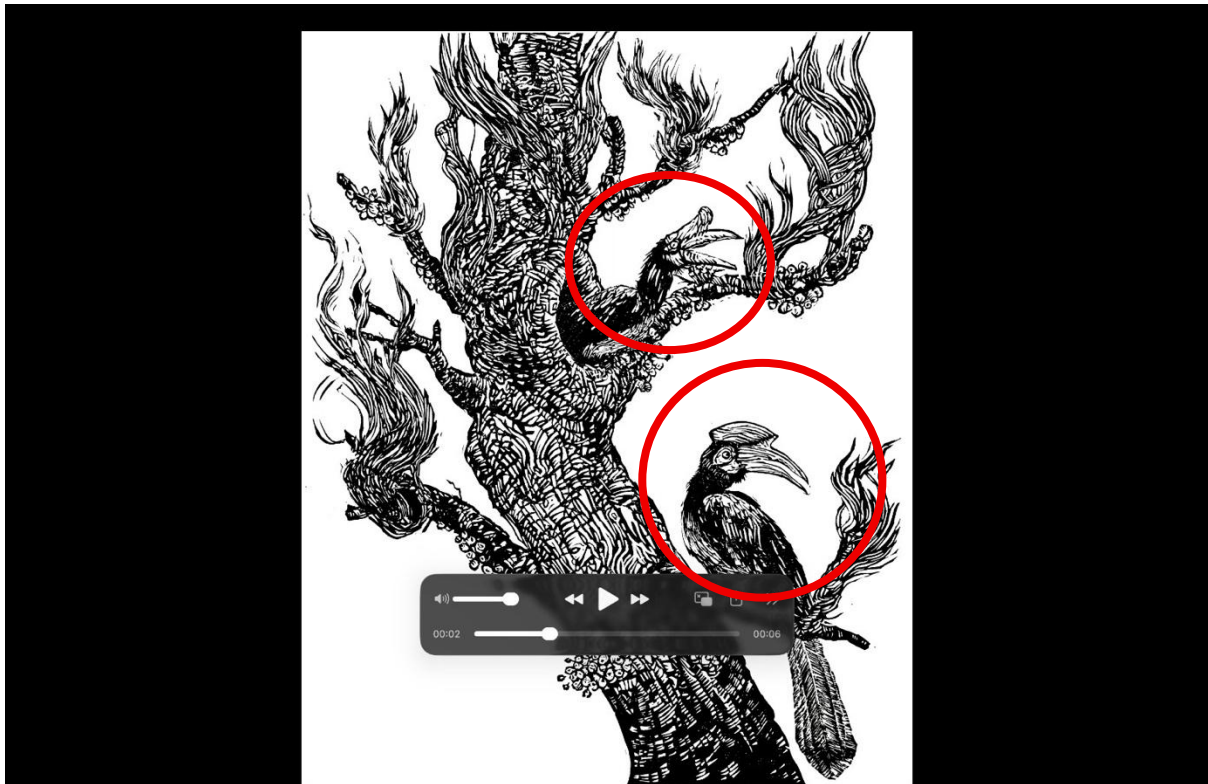


Figure 4. The Linocut Print Rendered as an Interactive 3D Augmented Reality Animation via the Artivive Application
Sources: Mohd Nafis Saad (2024)

This work is a linocut print that highlights the image of two hornbills perched on a tree. The original work was produced using the relief print technique, which features the use of organic lines, dense interlacing and black-and-white contrasts that are the main identity of linocut print art. Through this production, the aesthetic value of traditional print art is maintained, but is enhanced by the integration of Augmented Reality (AR) technology to create a more interactive appreciation experience.

In this AR application, the linocut print works function as image markers. Visitors or audiences only need to open the Artivive application on a smartphone or tablet, then scan the original print work. After the system successfully identifies the image, the digital content will be automatically displayed on the surface of the physical work, creating the illusion that the illustration is alive in real space. The animation displayed focuses on the movement of the hornbills, which previously only appeared as static images. The hornbills began to move their heads, open and close their beaks and slowly spread their wings. One of the birds also shows movements as if communicating through the opening of its beak, while the other reacts by moving its head and body naturally. This simple movement maintains the original visual identity of the work without losing the artistic characteristics of the linocut print.

In addition to animation, audio elements are also added to enhance the user experience. The sound of the hornbill chirping and the sounds of the forest atmosphere can be played simultaneously

with the animation, making the visual experience more immersive and giving the impression that the audience is witnessing the hornbill's real habitat. The combination of these moving visual elements and audio enriches the interpretation of the work and strengthens the emotional connection between the audience and the presented subject. In terms of interactivity, the use of the Artivive application allows the audience to interact directly with the work without having to use special equipment other than a smartphone. This method makes the process of art appreciation more accessible to various levels of society. The audience not only sees the printed result but also experiences the transformation of the work from a two-dimensional form to a dynamic digital experience. This approach increases the level of user engagement because they need to actively interact through the scanning process before the AR content is displayed.

The integration of AR also shows how digital technology can expand the functions of printed artwork. If previously linocut works only served as static visual objects, now they can be a medium for delivering information, storytelling and multimedia experiences. This technology opens up space for artists to convey narratives related to the hornbill habitat, its importance in the tropical forest ecosystem and its symbolic value in local cultural heritage through a more attractive and contemporary medium. From a research perspective, the results of this AR development prove that digital technology can increase the added value of visual artworks without affecting the authenticity of the traditional medium. On the contrary, AR technology acts as a complement that enriches the appreciation experience, expands the audience's reach and makes the work more relevant to the development of the 4.0 Industrial Revolution and the era of digitalization of cultural heritage.

Overall, the integration of Augmented Reality technology using the Artivive application has successfully transformed linocut print works from a static work into an interactive, immersive and informative art experience. This approach shows that traditional print art still has great potential to develop through digital innovation, thus supporting efforts to preserve, document and disseminate visual art heritage to current and future generations. This result also proves that the use of AR can increase the appeal of art exhibitions, strengthen the user experience and create a more innovative digital visual art ecosystem, in line with the objective of the study "A Conceptual Approach to Perak Visual Art Mapping through Augmented Reality."

This case demonstration is limited to a single artwork and does not report visitor questionnaire, interview, or thematic-analysis data; these remain proposed future work, as noted in the Research Method section above. The findings should therefore be read as an illustration of technical feasibility rather than as evidence of visitor outcomes or a representative mapping of Perak's visual art.

Conclusion

This case demonstration shows that Augmented Reality can transform a single work of traditional Perak print art from a static object into an interactive, multi-sensory experience, offering initial evidence for the feasibility of the proposed framework. This approach not only converts static artworks into interactive digital experiences but also enriches user appreciation through a combination of visual, audio, animation and real-time information elements. In addition to improving user experience, AR technology also functions as an effective educational medium in introducing the history, cultural identity, aesthetic values and meanings behind Perak visual artworks. Users can interact directly with the digital content displayed, thus increasing the level of understanding, involvement and appreciation of local artistic heritage.

This case demonstration suggests that the development of digital visual art mapping can support efforts to digitize cultural heritage in line with the development of the 4.0 Industrial Revolution and Malaysia's aspirations towards digital transformation. AR integration opens up opportunities for artists, cultural institutions, art galleries, museums and local authorities to promote artworks in a more innovative, accessible and competitive way at the national and international levels. In addition, the proposed digital heritage ecosystem has the potential to become a platform that connects researchers, creators, students, tourists and the general public through a more immersive learning experience. This approach can increase the attractiveness of cultural tourism, stimulate the creative economy and support efforts to conserve the artistic heritage of the State of Perak for future generations. Overall, this case demonstration suggests that the integration of Augmented Reality technology in mapping the visual arts of the State of Perak is a relevant and promising approach, warranting further development and evaluation. If extended as proposed, it has the potential to strengthen the preservation and documentation of the visual arts heritage and contribute to an interactive, inclusive digital heritage ecosystem, in line with the national digitalization agenda and the development of global creative technology. The results of this study are expected to be a reference for researchers, creative industry practitioners and policymakers in planning more sustainable digital cultural heritage development strategies in the future.

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Dr. Khairunnisa binti Mohd Abdul Ghani (often known as Nisha) is an academic, researcher, and Senior Lecturer at the School of Creative Industry Management and Performing Arts (SCIMPA) within Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). Hailing from Seremban, Negeri Sembilan, her work primarily bridges the gaps between Malaysian contemporary art, public spaces, and urban policy

Muhammad Hafiz Hassan as a lecturer under the Faculty of Art & Design, Kenyalan UiTM. His academic/research profile shows a Doctor of Education from UiTM and publications related to creative arts, visual-spatial abilities, inclusion and autism. ResearchGate. One notable 2024 publication is “Leveraging visual-spatial abilities to unlock speech: an arts-based interdisciplinary approach to promoting inclusion and equity for children with Autism”, published with colleagues from UiTM. UiTM Institutional Repository. He was also involved in the “Mapping Sarawak to the World: International Arts Exchange & Exhibition Jakarta, Indonesia” publication in 2024, contributing Nature: Capturing Sarawak's Visual Heritage. UiTM Institutional Repository. Another documented research collaboration involved visual communication and sustainability, with researchers from UiTM Sarawak and UiTM Malaysia.