



Punk Fashion as a Wearable Art Mask

Anis Che Mat ¹, Nikfarhana Zuhir ², Mohd Fuad Md Arif ^{3*}

*Corresponding Author

¹Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR), Jalan Sungai Long, Bandar Sungai Long, 43000 Selangor Malaysia

²Postgraduate Research Student, College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi MARA Shah Alam 40450 Selangor Malaysia

³Fine Art Department, College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi MARA Shah Alam 40450 Selangor Malaysia

Email of All Authors: anisacm112@gmail.com, nickana1994@gmail.com, fuad5649@uitm.edu.my
Tel*: +6013-6963677

Abstract

This research analyses how punk fashion influenced wearable art masks, detailing their artistic characteristics. Investigating the use of punk style in creating masks, it explores its diverse role in spirituality, performance, and self-expression. Artists utilised masks as a means of self-representation outside of the punk subculture, using diverse materials and techniques. This study describes the integration of punk identity into wearable art, showcasing experiments with waste materials and ready-purchased materials. This discovery highlights the innovative use of materials and techniques in making mask sculptures, contributing to understanding the fusion of punk fashion with wearable art.

Keywords: Mask; Punk Fashion; Waste-material; Wearable Art

eISSN: 2398-4287 © 2024. The Authors. Published for AMER and cE-Bs by e-International Publishing House, Ltd., UK. This is an open-access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>). Peer-review under responsibility of AMER (Association of Malaysian Environment-Behaviour Researchers) and cE-Bs (Centre for Environment-Behaviour Studies), College of Built Environment, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21834/e-bpj.v9iS117.5433>

1.0 Introduction

Midway through the 1970s, punk rock's sounds inspired the emergence of the style (Crossley, 2015). It was all about standing out and going against the norm. Those who embraced punk fashion wanted to shake up the idea of what was considered 'normal' in society. It was a direct challenge to the lavish and materialistic culture prevalent at that time. Punk fashion was not just about clothes; it was a whole attitude that included unique clothing choices, bold and often unconventional hairstyles, distinct jewellery, experimental makeup, and alterations to one's body like piercings or tattoos. This style was a way for people to express their rebellion against the status quo and show their individuality in a world where conformity was the norm. Punk fashion draws inspiration from a diverse array of subcultures, notably taking cues from distinctive social clothing identities like glam rock, skinheads, greasers, and mods. This eclectic mix contributes to the unique and multifaceted nature of punk style. Additionally, popular culture has had a significant impact on the evolution of punk fashion, sustaining and redefining its aesthetic over time. Within the punk movement, individuals use clothing as a form of self-expression, creatively crafting their identities through unconventional and striking attire choices. Conversely, in recent times, wearable art masks have garnered increased attention, particularly in response to significant global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. These masks serve not only as protective gear but also as a canvas for artistic expression. They have become a means for individuals to showcase their creativity and individuality, merging functionality with aesthetic appeal. This contemporary phenomenon of wearable art masks signifies a convergence of necessity and artistic innovation, reflecting a shift towards redefining the role of everyday items as mediums for personal expression and societal commentary within a rapidly changing world.

Initially a utilitarian object for protection, the mask has evolved into a canvas for artistic expression. Artists and designers have seized the opportunity to transform masks into expressions of creativity, activism, and personal identity. Exploring punk fashion as a wearable art mask reveals the dynamic interplay between rebellion, function, artistic expression, identity, and ethical considerations. Understanding the implications of incorporating punk aesthetics into the mask of wearable art requires a nuanced approach that respects

the origins of punk culture while embracing the evolving landscape of fashion, art, and personal expression in contemporary society. Therefore, the importance of this study lies in exploring the various aspects of punk fashion as a wearable art mask, including artistic, cultural, and socio-psychological dimensions. It offers insight into the transformative power of fashion, the complexities of identity expression, the innovative use of materials, and the evolution of cultural influences in contemporary art forms.

2.0 Literature Review

The mask is analogous to looking at one's face in the mirror, but instead of seeing oneself, one sees a world that can be interpreted differently. This is because the mask can reflect the image we present to others and disguise who we are behind it. As Baharudin (2002) described, masks are a natural occurrence that can be found worldwide. Every tribe and nation has a unique mask culture. Masks have been used since the Stone Age, which can be seen in the remains of cave drawings depicting people wearing animal-shaped masks in caverns like Altamira (Spain), Lascaux, and Dodogone (France). Despite changing forms over the last 30,000 years, the mask still survives. The longevity of mask culture demonstrates that the importance of this cultural material should be highlighted. From a cultural perspective, people in Asia have made wearing a mask a cultural norm for several decades. The mask is typically worn on the face or the head with clothes that entirely or partially enclose the body. Masks can also be worn on different body areas, such as the pectoral masks of Benin made of brass or ivory. In some situations, uniforms or costumes, spectacles, and hoods can serve as "masks" since they can hide the wearer while projecting a different identity. The mask's primary function is to conceal the wearer's identity and establish a new one.

Based on Arus et al. (2016), the mask and the figurative sculpture will sometimes share the same name, even though they serve distinct purposes throughout the ceremonial performances. Carving wood into sculptures and masks was a cultural practice among the people of Peninsula Malaysia; however, specific communities need to learn more about sculpture or masks due to the taboo associated with the belief that sculpture is associated with demons, evil beings, and ghosts. As Tilden (2003) mentioned, Shamanistic practices were most likely the first to use masks in Asia. Historically, sorcerers may have used the "Primitive-Shamanic" approach to healing, oracle augury, and life crisis initiations. The art of mask-making explores cultural elements that are timeless in their appearance. People worldwide have a long history of organically using masks daily. From the East to the West, and from the most primitive people to modern society, every nation and country has its own distinct culture of masks. Masks have been used for their functions since the Stone Age (Arus, 2002). In the Malaysian community, masks serve various purposes and are worn for various occasions. First, the mask as history reveals where it is entertainment and, in this dance, reveals many historical stories, teaches lessons and reminders about the roots of lineage, location, language, and so forth, and anyone can observe. Next, masks as an educational medium, i.e., mask performance, can act as an instructional medium in which students can acquire the techniques of making and playing them while also learning about the local community's figures, religion, art, and culture. The mask is also created as an entertaining performance, especially with hilarious language that makes the audience laugh. Komala and Bava (2022) supported and portrayed this statement, mentioning that masks are necessary for a full Mak Yong performance. When playing the part of Mak Yong, the mask or face covering is essential to the act. Mak Yong is a traditional Malay performing art from the east coast of Malaysia, particularly the state of Kelantan, that combines ritual, dance, music, and singing. It was conducted for entertainment, as a royal ruling ceremony, and as a treatment procedure for the sick. The Mak Yong masks used to be made of leaves, paper, or clay, but today, they are more likely to be made of wood, rubber, or plastic.

On the other hand, Wahab et al. (2020) and Sidaywati et al. (2020) said the Mah Meri tribe is a sub-ethnic group of indigenous people living on Selangor's coast who make a mask to show reverence for their ancestors. The size ranges from a few centimetres to nearly half a metre in height. The mask is worn during funerals (tiwah), fertility rituals, and as a grave watcher. In the 19th century, wealthy women in Paris used lace veils when scientists detected germs on dust particles. They wore masks to protect themselves from debris circling in the bustling streets. However, many used fashionable face masks when cholera outbreaks were occurring. Many Americans used masks in 1918 during the Spanish flu pandemic and World War I. Many soldiers wore them as a sign of their patriotism rather than solely to stop the spread of the disease because they were designed to protect soldiers preparing to join the battlefield. However, certain societies are more accepting of face mask design than others. People in Asia have used masks as a customary tradition for many years. In part because the area has been more severely affected by recent pandemics, including SARS in 2003, and growing air pollution levels. Masks are used as a means of self-expression and safety in these nations.

Recently, masks have rapidly become an essential part of our daily lives, and many of us choose to express our sense of style through these accessories. According to Bruno (2020), it has come to symbolise modern healthcare, which means that masks are currently being used to control the spread of COVID-19. At the same time, they are rapidly becoming an everyday fashion accessory that will remain relevant. The manufacturing and consumption of modern, technologically advanced masks serve two primary functions: emotional and practical expression. Before the pandemic happened, the positioning of the face mask was a fashion item. Some international designers produce face masks for celebrities, such as Lance Victor Moore, who produces many face masks for the famous American singer Lady Gaga as accessories at various events. In addition, there are also other face mask designers such as Rein Vollenga, Manish Arora, James Merry, Maison Martin Margiela, and Alexander McQueen. Each designer brings their own production concept and identity.

3.0 Methodology

This study has extensively reviewed existing literature, academic papers, and related sources on punk fashion, wearable art, masks, subcultures, and identity expression. The literature review will establish a foundation and provide insight into previous research, key

concepts, and trends in the field. In addition, this research method involves experimenting with materials and testing techniques to create wearable art masks inspired by punk fashion. This hands-on approach allows researchers to gain practical insight into the challenges, possibilities, and innovations involved in the creative process. This approach comprehensively explores punk fashion as a wearable art mask, considering its artistic, cultural, social, and personal dimensions.

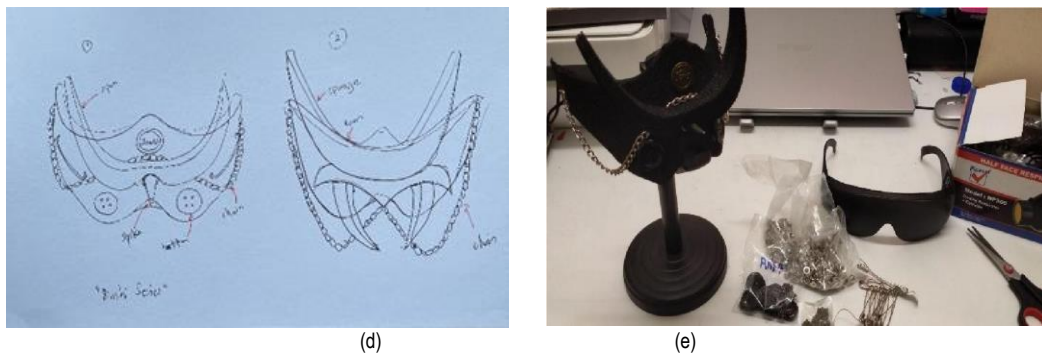
4.0 Results and Discussion

This section will provide a comprehensive breakdown of the step-by-step processes for creating a fashion mask sculpture. Each phase, from theme selection and ideation to procuring materials and necessary equipment, will be extensively elucidated to explain the meticulous craftsmanship behind producing these artistic pieces.

4.1 Process Sketches and Idea Development



(a) (b) (c)
Fig. 1: (a, b, c) References of Wearable Art Mask



(d) (e)
Fig. 2: Sketches of ideation, (e) Mask-Making Process

The artist's concept originated from punk attire and was further developed in the film *Mad Max*. From that point on, the first beginning was sketching concepts with a pen, utilising a variety of compositions, and working on ideas, as seen in Figure 1. The work of Alexander McQueen serves as an artist's inspiration and point of reference. Subsequently, the artist selects the most outstanding sketch from various options to transform into a sculpture. He is particularly interested in the punk style, a subculture category. Punk fashion is distinct in that it is harsh and brutal, contrary to our culture. In addition, he makes use of punk fashion and transforms it into something more intriguing, such as the utilisation of materials that have been discarded. He uses these materials to experiment with elements and concepts such as form, shape, angle, texture, and symmetry.

In this mask, there are also aesthetic values where the artist tries to apply elements of Malay culture, such as gentleness and politeness, combined with subculture punk. Curran (2017) mentioned that punk is a subculture that is a collection of cultures whose followers share particular marginal interests. From its 1970s origins through its various present-day incarnations, punk is commonly rooted in the powerlessness of society. There is a punk stereotype that represents rebellious people who enjoy what they do without conforming to the oppressive policies imposed by the authorities. They are outspoken people, being themselves without pretending, risk-takers who stand by their opinions and decisions. Based on the investigation by Sklar (2013), they identify that, although not entirely, the image of punk looks precisely based on the mohawked, tartan-wearing spikes and chains adorned. Initially, punk-styled apparel was

self-made or pieced together by something constructed or created from a diverse range of things. Punk remains, as do esoteric and amorphous concepts.

4.2 Selection of Tools and Materials

According to Asogwa et al. (2013), any undesired materials that must be disposed of as unwanted include waste and junk. These materials are no longer suitable for preservation. Recent years have seen the discovery and modification of these things by visual artists, who have used these things to inspire new creative projects. At the same time, Sharma and Malik (2022) said that the improper management of solid waste contributes to environmental degradation. This topic is currently attracting attention on a global scale. Sculpture and installation, in particular, can creatively combine solid waste materials to create aesthetic products. In this project, researchers explore various materials, including shoulder pads as the primary material and some small items such as spikes, nails, chains, and buttons, to create the work from discarded materials and existing items. Each material has its own strength and purpose. A shoulder sponge was selected because this waste material has interesting characteristics: a unique structure and a flexible and malleable material. Sharp things were employed to create the punk fashion style because the term "punk fashion" is connected with iron surfaces and lightning.

4.3 Mask-Making Process and Techniques

This project has created 3D artwork in three forms with the same characteristics and ideas. It usually takes about two weeks to develop a single piece of work. The process of creating the work necessitates the completion of multiple stages, beginning with the selection of materials and continuing to the process of sketching, the process of joining, and the process of finishing. All fashion mask measurements are 26 cm x 23 cm x 14 cm. The colour black predominates the sculpture; this choice reflects the punk aesthetic, in which the colour plays an essential role. Silver and gold were chosen to provide an appropriate counterpoint to the black, giving the impression that the piece is of premium quality. The sculpture's symmetry and balance demonstrate this work's artistic worth. In addition to its sharp, aggressive design, the shoulder sponge shows a gentle, polite Malay nature.

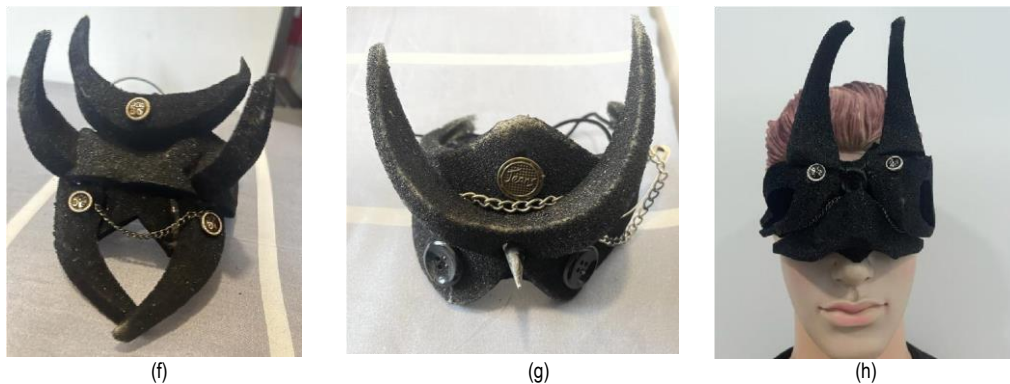


Fig. 3: (f) Mask Sculpture design 1, (g) Mask Sculpture design 2, (h) Mask Sculpture design 3

5.0 Conclusion

This comprehensive research underscores the profound influence of punk fashion on the creation of wearable art masks, delineating their distinct artistic features. The investigation delves into the multifaceted role of punk aesthetics in mask design, illuminating its significance in spiritual expression, performance art, and individual self-assertion. Artists have adeptly employed masks as a canvas for personal representation, extending beyond the boundaries of punk subculture by employing various materials and innovative techniques. The study showcases the seamless integration of punk identity into wearable art, showcasing a spectrum of experimental approaches involving discarded and procured materials. These insightful revelations underscore the pioneering use of varied materials and methodologies in sculpting mask art, enriching our understanding of the intricate fusion between punk fashion sensibilities and the realm of wearable art. However, due to the study's time limitations, it is not possible for this research to fully evaluate the long-term cultural, identity, and societal impact of punk-inspired wearable art masks. Future research should explore the psychological and emotional effects of wearing such wearable art masks, investigating how these masks shape the wearer's perceptions, increase confidence, and facilitate self-expression across various social contexts.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia, for their assistance and ReNeU UiTM for the publication incentive provided through the PYPB Programme.

References

- Arus, B. M., Yahaya, A., & Pua'd Bebit, M. (2016). The Aesthetic of Orang Asli (Indigenous People) Sculpture of Peninsula Malaysia. Proceedings of ADVED 2016 2nd International Conference on Advances in Education and Social Sciences. Istanbul, Turkey.
- Arus, B. M. (2002). Seni topeng sebagai manifestasi seni yang unggul: mewarnai tamadun serta budaya manusia secara global. *Wacana Seni (Journal of Arts Discourse)*, 1, 71-78.
- Asogwa, O., Olajide, M., Jide, A., & Fajuyigbe, M. (2013). Beauty from detritus: Aestheticizing discards in the visual arts. *Art Design Studies*.
- Baharudin Mohd Arus. (2002). Seni Topeng sebagai Manifestasi Seni yang Unggul: Mewarnai Tamadun serta Budaya Manusia secara Global. *Wacana Seni*, 1, 71–78. Retrieved from <https://ejournal.usm.my/wacanaseni/article/view/ws-vol1-2002-7>
- Bruno J Strasser (2022). A history of the medical mask and the rise of throwaway culture. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)31207-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)31207-1)
- Curran, N. (2017). *Queercore: Queer punk media subculture*. Routledge.
- Crossley, N. (2015). Networks of sound, style and subversion: The punk and post-punk worlds of Manchester, London, Liverpool and Sheffield, 1975–80. In *Networks of sound, style and subversion*. Manchester University Press.
- Komala, A. N. E., & Bava, S. (2022). The Existence of Mak Yong Mask Performance as Mantang Island Tourism Attraction. *International Journal of Performing Arts (IJPA)*, 1(1), 1-12.
- Sharma, S., & Mallik, R. K. (2022). The Utilisation of Waste Material in Visual Arts: Relevance and Aesthetic Appeal. *ECS Transactions*, 107(1), 10199.
- Sidaywati, L., Sudarmanto, J. A., & Berahim, E. M. H. B. (2020). Development of Infographic Character Design of Malaysian Mah Meri Tribe'S Animal Masks as Learning Media of Traditional Masks. *KnE Social Sciences*, 14-29.
- Spener, M. (2022). Naive Introspection in the Philosophy of Perception. *Review of Philosophy and Psychology*, 13(1), 29–45.
- Tilden, J. (2003, February 1). *Asian Art*. In *The Second Hali Annual*. <https://doi.org/10.1604/9781898113157>
- Wahab, N. A., Abdullah, R., Astuti, S. I., & Akmal Rohaizad, N. A. (2020). Indigenous knowledge and cultural tourism among the Mah Meri people in Malaysia. *Eurasian Journal of BioSciences*, 14(2).