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The Art of the Human Subject Materiality and Symbolism in Anthropomorphic Totem Series

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Abstract

This research study examines how assemblage artform employs the theory of Bricolage to generate symbolic meaning through totemic sculpture form making. Tracing the lineage of mixed materiality modern readaptation of tribal totemic art to the art language of twentieth-century modernism artist, this research paper investigates the anthropomorphism derived from the reuse and symbolic reinterpretation of urban found materials. The study adopts a art practice-based approach where tactile studio making serves as the primary mode of inquiry. This method is executed through material and object experimentation via the assemblage: specifically, the systematic integration of found readymades objects into vertically stacked, grid-based configurations. By structurally layering these foundational objects with mass-produced plastic molds, object resin casts, and cut-out typographic fonts, the physical artmaking process investigates the tension between materiality and meaning. Through these specific material interactions, the artworks offer a critical reinterpretation of the contemporary human condition and our subjection to urban consumerism culture. The resulting totemic sculptures findings reflect a personified industrial process, acting as a visual critique of detached, alienated human condition. This paper findings contribution demonstrates how totem art critical gaze influences and reevaluates our overconsumption and reclaims purposeful material culture in consumer society.

Keywords: Assemblage Art, Bricolage, Totemic Art, Found Readymades, Tactile Material

Introduction

Humanity's enduring drive to externalize the self through physical matter constitutes a primary mode of cultural interrogation. In contemporary urban life, this expressive impulse confronts a humanity's crisis: the total subsumption of everyday human existence by commodification, hyper consumerism, and the disembodying effects of screen-mediated culture. Living within contemporary capitalism, urban architecture, spatial planning, and commercial environments actively condition human subjectivity, slowly influencing and reducing active human agents into passive consumers regulated by corporate spectacles(Harvey, 2012; Debord,1967). Furthermore, the rapid transition toward remote telecommunication and digital interfaces has accelerated the displacement of sensory, tactile

engagement, fostering an acute alienation and aesthetic numbness warned against by Pallasmaa (2009).

While critical theorists have diagnosed this condition through sociopolitical and linguistic frameworks (Berger, 1972; Debord, 1967; McLuhan, 1964), an urgent research challenge persists within practice-based art inquiry. The emerging value that art research through its studio material handling disrupts this disembodied consumer spectacle and reclaim human agency from within the very detritus of commercial culture.

Although historical modernism pioneered the use of found elements (such as Dada assemblages and early twentieth -century sculptural bricolage), contemporary visual arts research frequently bifurcates – that either retreating into disembodied conceptual critiques or treating discarded matter merely as passive formal scraps. There remains an under-theorized and under-explored studio gap regarding how the structural reassembly of ubiquitous urban readymades-specifically packaging grids, discarded plastics, resin casts, and commercial typographic fonts can be mobilized as an anthropomorphic counter-spectacle.

This research addresses this central problem through a practice-based studio inquiry. By framing the artist not as an outsider, but as an embedded consumer-practitioner, the study investigates the phenomenon of material re-signification through Lévis-Strauss's (1966) anthropological concept of *bricolage*. The study articulates a tactile methodology in which found, mass-produced industrial refuse is repurposed into vertically stacked, grid-configured

Anthropomorphic Totems.
Reinterpreting the ancient archetype of the tribal totem, which historically an embodied vessel of communal identity and spiritual presence. This practice-based research study asks: In what ways can the physical reconstruction of urban detritus into figurative, totemic sculpture expose the ideological entrapment of consumerism while asserting tactile resistance and embodied subjectivity?

Through this framing, the investigation does not merely represent consumer alienation on a pictorial surface. The physical sculptural presence confronts the crisis of modern depersonalization by forcing commodified, rigid materials to register human presence, labour and critical consciousness.

Material Culture and Bricolage
Human Material Culture
In the modern state, humanity is continuously intoxicated by material excess that far exceeds essential necessity. This presented "abundance" acts as a perceptual strategy calculated lure designed to cultivate consumer loyalty and sustain a relentlessly profit-centric world. Consequently, genuine human "needs" are systematically buried beneath this commercial discourse. Ultimately, the material world functions as a highly operational apparatus, engineered to ensure makers and sellers seamlessly close deals while embedding consumerism into our foundational social and cultural underpinnings.

Across global cities, the material spectacle has become a standardized blueprint. At its center stands the ultimate modern Babel: the shopping mall. As David Harvey (2012) argues that the

metropolis has been re-engineered into a profit machine. As Marshall McLuhan (1964) suggested, this pervasive, man-made urbanization acts as a medium; it operates beyond mere utilitarian structure to fundamentally condition human behavior. Where John Berger exposed how image-based capitalism commodifies visual art, Harvey exposes how spatial design commodifies everyday urban life. Over time, these environments silently condition the people within them. As pedestrians meander through commercialized corridors, their habits, social ties, and worldview are reprogrammed without their consent. Urban space is never neutral—the spatial and the social continuously produce each other.

Within this saturated landscape, McLuhan identified artists as society's "sensitive antennae". Acting as vigilant guardians equipped with innate sensitivity and materially induced empathy, artists are the first to critically observe these environmental shifts. Through this critical awareness, artists boldly recognize that we are not merely existing but are being groomed by the commercialized image-identities and symbolic promises of a materially driven economy. This image-based publicity/persuasion—famously deconstructed by John Berger (1972)—conditions individuals to faithfully consume. By actively sustaining these mechanisms of mass consumerism, we ultimately replace our authentic, tactile connection to the physical world with superficial visual sensations, a profound detachment critically warned against by Juhani Pallasmaa (2009).

For this reason, human material culture is a perpetual record of our interactions with the environment that encompasses us. By reorganizing the resources at their disposal and engaging in physical activities, artists can articulate thoughts that would otherwise be intangible and inherent. These material portrayals, therefore, are vital documents, granting access to human critical attitudes and experiences recorded over time. Events and activities are logged into a compressed visual form.

Through a close, reflective reading of an artwork's material choices and processes, we can begin to unravel the nuances of how humans lived and interacted culturally within their specific time periods. More importantly perhaps in and through artist sensitivity – that emotional response through materiality as a deep critical inner voice.

In art, form and content are inseparable (Eisner, 2002). Consequently, the choice of medium and the physical handling of materials constitute a creative process that is fundamentally human in nature. Human complex inner states—such as emotion, anxiety, fear, and confusion—can be uncovered and understood by analyzing the artistic effects. This aspect of art production has shown to be an excellent medium to acquire knowledge exchange. As a creative art practitioner, my own experience with materiality experimentation in the studio, the process of adjusting the 'gaze' toward the marginalized value of discarded items that the material culture is seen as a process that can be challenged.

Artist as Consumer Perspective

Framed from the art practice-based research, this study explores material culture as both subject and resistance. Specifically, it argues that artists working from the margins create totemic sculptural forms behave through materiality fashioned as counter-position to modern material consumption. By the hands of the artist, the material waste transformed from the

thrown away found its usefulness again through the studio artmaking culture that set the motion in reclaiming the meaning of materiality.

In this context, material culture reframes the gaze from the artistic value. This recalibrated artist perspective shifts the viewer from a passive consumer to an active agent of creative material reframing. I draw here on Banash (2013), who argues that artists repurpose consumer goods and industrial readymades via culture of material collage and assemblage to reassert human agency. Similarly, Miller (2008) posits that identity is constructed through material culture, where the self is reclaimed through the objectification of materials.

Within contemporary consumerism, this framework validates assemblage artists as makers of critical, resistant art. While works by figures such as Pablo Picasso, Raoul Hausmann, and Eduardo Paolozzi often appear playful, their levity is deceptive. Through material thinking and the logic of assemblage, they articulate a rigorous critique of modern life.

The artwork adopts a critical and resistive stance through its materials, reflecting its specific cultural moment. Consequently, the artist emerges as a radical, subversive figure working from the margins of material culture. By employing bricolage, this assemblage turns critical thought into a direct material critique of modern life.

Material Remaking Through Bricolage

This paper investigates the art-based methodology of Bricolage, analyzing how within the studio setting that the material and handling is achieved through the playful synthesis of disparate(waste) materials for expressing personally affected meaning. Bricolage, moving beyond collage process demands the integration of artful assembly of object choice and selection (Miller, 2008). It is guided by conceptual intention and realized through active studio experimentation via cutting, gluing, and casting and inserting and rejoining process as active research and as participant in the studio making process. The iterative creative process of continuous material assemblage reclaims the meaning, at the same moment researching for emerging image identity.

Through the studio process, tactile material handling becomes the catalyst for meaning findings. By physically stirring up material assortments and reshaping them into varied mock-ups, the artist forces critical visual reading and reflection. This methodology stands in direct opposition to the fleeting, superficial imagery that mainstream consumers are accustomed to digesting within the comfort of common logic and predetermination. Within this studio playground, the artist operates much like a gardener; just as tilling and preparing the soil is as critical as the final harvest, the continuous, physical disruption of materials is essential to cultivating new meaning.

This material management strategy was initially proposed by anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss in his book *The Savage Mind*. In its original definition, Bricoleur is a personification of the individual person who employs any available instruments and materials to create. This method is a make-do process that is open-ended and combines and recombines diverse disparate components to determine their connectedness for the purpose of meaning creation flow. It selects, assembles, and evaluates its prospective meaning genesis.

As seen in the overview of the tradition of past assemblage artforms, numerous modern artists have leveraged this approach to bridge material symbolic meaning. The practice of "making do" with readily available materials became a defining feature of early twentieth-century art material experimentation and expansion. This shift marked a pivotal evolution in art construction, progressing from the tactile surfaces of mixed-media collages to the structural complexity of three-dimensional assemblages. Moving to aim my reflective material critique towards hyper communication aligned well with Bricolage thinking. The flexibility and adaptability prowess in this formative thinking conveyed the state of current human condition. In a way, making Totemic Assemblages invites a new reading into the human subject.

Totem Art and the Critical Gaze

Totem Art Form

Throughout the history of modern art, artists have frequently engaged historical and non-Western paradigms to construct new visual vocabularies. A prominent archetype within this lineage is the tribal totem. Long predating modernism, traditional totems functioned within their indigenous communities as physical conduits for spiritual life, sacred lineage, and collective guardianship.

Modern and avant-garde practitioners reinterpreted this archetype by isolating and repurposing its expressive materiality, stylized abstraction, and imposing verticality. Rather than adopting the form for its original sacred rites, they adapted its commanding presence into an aesthetic vehicle for critical commentary. By recontextualizing these ancestral structures, artists turned ancient monumental devices into potent formal interrogations of modern alienation.

This inquiry synthesizes the verticality of the totem with the material politics of collage and assemblage. As Banash (2013) observes, collage and assemblage represent quintessential practices of modern culture, fundamentally defined by working with discarded consumer readymades. Through the deliberate application of handcraft and tactile manipulation, working with refuse becomes a gesture of critical resistance, positioning the artist's tactile gaze in direct friction with commodity culture.

Situated within this framework, the totemic artforms developed in this research reconfigure the *human subject* through a Situationist lens. Rather than presenting a passive human likeness, these anthropomorphic totemic structures redeploy the waste products of contemporary materialism as raw pictorial and sculptural resources. Operating through strategies akin to *détournement* (Debord, 1967), the work repurposes industrial and consumer ephemera to jam the perceived stability of corporate imagery. The resulting totems confront the pervasive spectacle of consumer society: by resurrecting the human figure out of commodified detritus, the work generates a critical counter-spectacle, compelling viewers to confront the ideological delusions embedded in everyday consumer culture.

Anthropomorphic Totem Art

Modern artists apply the concept of bricolage to anthropomorphized Totem art as a tool for depicting the human image and form as to critique human condition. This human artistic vision serves as a vital antidote to the superficial, material culture of consumerism. Engaging

the material world as *critical consumers*, the artistic visions convert the material into human form (formation) through personalized handling into representation which reveals human condition through the personified embodiment of line, shape and form reverting the familiar into new treatments. Art language seen in this light, act as mediator to express impacted emotions what language could not. Many studio practices of early modern art developed expressionistic quality for this unique material treatment.

Pablo Picasso and the Totem Art Form

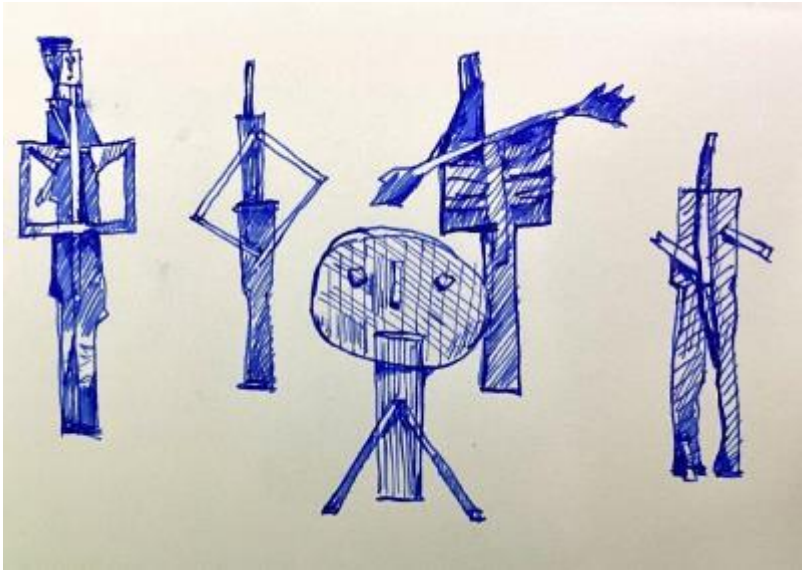


Figure 1**.** The Bathers (Les Baigneurs). (1956). Constructed from bits of timber, picture frames, a broomstick and furniture parts A hand sketch by the author.

Although the notion of "bricolage" methodology was not yet recognized in the art world at his time, Picasso's employment of this method was visionary and materially inventive. *The Bathers* (see Figure 1) form-making challenged the tradition of human sculpture. These free-standing wooden sculptures projected a vertical effect unlike the human portrayed by the artists before. Traditional depiction of human form by mass, weight and volume is replaced by alternative methods and material. The deployment of line construction became the newfound materiality depiction for his ideal expressive three-dimensional human figures.

Picasso's promiscuous attitude towards materiality is prominent to many of his artistic output. He exhibited play and freedom in his unique "material thinking" (Carter, 2004) acting as a bold material explorer and pioneer of modern art. For Picasso, creativity necessitated relentless studio experimentation with the tactile materials at hand.

In a move synonymous with the spirit of modern art, he dismantled the conventional criteria of the 'finish form' and abandoned familiar sculptural tradition. Where in the past the human subject was defined by meticulous crafted, accurate formal image representation. Picasso's unique formal take on representation reorientated the figure through playful assemblage of all found wood materials. In *The Bathers,* the creative value lies in his mode in figurative forms transformed through material rediscovery, and at the same time breathing in fresh symbolic visual vocabulary.

Human subjects become premises for material rethinking and rediscovery of new symbolic forms and meanings. Through tactile material interactions, the human subject extends thoughts and insightful ideas about life conditional existence through different times. Picasso's creative value has many lessons we can unpack and learn. Through his wide range of materially engaged human forms, he pointed to us that creative forming process can effectively explore form representation as a form of visual attitude for projecting reflective criticism. That human identity can be critical towards its own condition in consumer culture (Miller, 2008).

The value is in the creative process, which inspires and invites us to acknowledge the possibility of slowing down and pausing to meander in material engagement. *The Bathers*, a totem art, encourages us to contemplate the meaningful pursuit of material into artforms and to recognize the production value of its transformational quality in human material culture. It is important to avoid being ensnared in the fast-paced mindset of consumerism.

The actual creative value showed us the newfound attitude in modern art (and contemporary art) that the form invites society to stay longer and be challenged to reflect and reinterpret in context via bricolage method.

Eduardo Paolozzi and the Totem Art Form



Figure 2. 1956. Cyclop by Eduardo Paolozzi. A hand sketch by the author.

The Totem form took a radical depiction for the vision of Eduardo Paolozzi. Here the texture imprinted onto the bodily plaster material became his central manipulation process. Simply devoid of any colour and disparate materials. The variations come from the imprinted texture from many different industrial parts

Imperfect fractured humanoids evolved into a materiality process that transformed the material and materiality into a very evocative texture onto the materiality made of plastic. It

transformed shape into a state of new perception and interpretation. Human shape as if signaling discomfort from the inside out, bringing out into the naked body a violent and blatant emotional register, revealing the inner as feelings of isolation, fragility, insecurity, and despair from the stratification impressions of textures acquired from industrial pieces.

The ensuing transmitted marks reveal the mental state that human suppression resulted in. The result of Totem human art form generated a visual register that communicates the inner suppression (anxiety) within Paolozzi into an expressionism visual quality in sculptural treatment. This invention of visuality recreates the material culture from being wasteful machinery parts into art to scoring onto the sculptural body as statement on human affected condition.

Raoul Hausmann and the Assemblage Head



Figure 3. 1920. Mechanical Head (Spirit of Our Time). Note From Mechanical Head (The Spirit of Our Time), by Raoul Hausmann, 1920. Hand sketch by the author. Medium: Assemblage (wood, leather, metal, cardboard). Musèe National ďArt Moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris.

Throughout the European Wars (I & II), artists, particularly those from Germany like Raoul Hausmann, concentrated on human subject matter. The utilization of the bricolage art was shaped by an individual's feelings of personal insecurity, lack of resources, psychological effects, and a total erosion of faith in the material (industrial) assurances of contemporary existence. Assemblage, the therapeutic amalgamation of fragmented and industrial elements, was employed to choose materials and communicate a forceful message via the artistic medium. Materials transformed into media (an expressive new material voice), leading to a total neglect of conventional sculptural criteria of skill and esthetics.

The portrayal of the *Mechanical Head* as a type of assemblage uses an unconventional material addition (The Museum of Modern Art, 2015). The ready-made mannequin is fitted with different industrial pieces, changing the new human head shape into a statement of time

and occasion. Therefore, the head was an idea turned into fact. Such methods are playful, but they are serious visual indictments of the progress of materialism. Art of assemblage turned human subject into form of criticism signaling significance outside of itself toward change of human individuality and bold commentary gesturing toward mechanization of human identity. The human conflicts of the great war in Europe injured countless human souls and spirits. Inventions and machines promise have gone to extreme violence; many lives have been lost. Humans are depicted as cold, plastic and lifeless and almost looked hybrid between organic and artificial machinery.

Methods are not just about representing after reality observed on the sensational level. Heartfelt feeling and personal voice that speaks against traumatic events occur. This made the personal view a way of recovering an empathetic human voice in human creativity against societal mechanized (indifferent) attitudes. Through creation of his sculpture, he expressed freedom to say what is upsetting and depressing as much as praising beauty by proclaiming from inside. This burdensome was shared within many in individuals but artists like Hausmann conversed via materiality and art making culture for projecting the truthful inner vision.

Materialization of the Critical Gaze in Human Art

As seen by the art creations created by the assemblage artists, material experimentation was intentional. Their creative attitudes toward matter and material are characterized by a strong sense of purpose, reorientation, and the ability to cut, build, and rejoin bits of things to criticize the social context. Many critical writers on art and vision have long examined the artist's relationship with material culture. Material thinking is defined here as an attitude toward recreating material waste and suspending the immediate categorization of objects and their original practical utility.

The artist's gaze is distinctive in its quality and contribution to society. The stretched durational engagement, in contrast to the fast-paced consumerism culture. The materiality of the consumer world to the artist's gaze provides a wealth of resources for creating and disassembling their distinctive prototypes. The appreciation and desire to create formalism result in their own tiny creatively recreated symbolic worldviews.

Assemblage Art, viewed as critical instruments, contributes essential framing. Analyzing artistic object forms and presenting them as assemblage objects offers a viable alternative to remote commercial production. The critical worldviews provided by the artist's vision (aided by proactive hands) resulted in a place-making that is both humanly intimate and deeply personal. This process of personification is regarded as vital to the humanization of material culture and the world, with art functioning as a means of regaining our common human nature.

Literary material about culture is equally crucial to read and incorporate into my own work for the creation of found rematerialized Anthropomorphic Totem Art. Drawing on the work of theorists such as Debord (1967) in *The Society of the Spectacle* and Berger (1972) on *Ways of Seeing*, they have analyzed and challenged us to go beyond skin-deep in understanding the visual consumer culture of modernity's complex lifestyle. Both observe the humanization of materialism through a structured visual publicity mechanism.

Debord argues that images in commercialized culture influence human relations in society. Individuality in human identity development is supplanted by the profile of having, and the depiction of appearance by profiling in identity materialism. Humans' individual identities served as a circular picture for capitalist exploitation. It subsequently evolved into a passive consumer, operating as part of the visual spectacle. This waking thought that humans are exploited in and through predetermined picture representation has a significant impact on my own material practice.

With this ideological concept in the public eye and in the subconscious of society's consciousness, continuous manufacturing is poised to sustain its previously established commerce ethos. With so many useless goods being circulated, a quick cycle of material production and consumption has been established to maintain this basic capitalist-consumerist society ideal.

McLuhan (1964/2002) exposed the medium of communication as nothing more than continuous persuasion. Assemblage art, which creates meaningful material effects, is vital for materializing critical gaze. Art inherently engages us from within to feel and imagine again, resulting in important expressions of the tangible from within, abstract sentiments, and the entire sensitive and sensing being (Pallasmaa, 2009).

In today's material universe, the resensitizing process of creating materials rehumanizes humanity. What we have turned into a spectacle can be fundamentally reversed through art. The primary premise to attack is humanity's faulty belief in life behind a curtain. These critical writings carried on what Paul Klee had just said about creativity in the visual arena, which many artists discussed and understood. Making, in his words, strikes at the heart of making visible the new path to creative form when viewed as materials that offer up new ways of experiencing the world (Eisner, 2002; Dewey, 1934).

However, in the critical literature on consumer spectacle and identity programming, we began to realize how human identity is established and used in the bigger picture of capitalism's control and sustainability. These stated theories are key lenses to review and confront in my own studio practice. They dissected consumerism's consequences on behavior and identity beings. They construct their observation of the humanization of materialism using a systematic symbolic publicity visual mechanism and a critical gaze in writing theories. Their rapid cycle of material production and consumption is intended to support a capitalist-consumerist society. Situatedness for materiality is the criticality that assemblage provided. The leadership to revealing the true human condition is portrayed in a delicate and beautiful manner. This is the creative leadership that distinguishes the art of assemblage and is critical in a material culture dominated by the corporate ruler of commerce and profit.

Studio Experiments and Artwork Analysis

The idea for the three-dimensional Totem Artform emerged while creating the *Encountering Mass Man series*, which comprised of a succession of collage-based paintings that began in 2021. The collage painting's robust and crusty textured surface was pushed to the limit of two dimensions by extremely densely layering and collaged printed materials. The texture and impasto painting techniques were significant developments in the artmaking process.

Life experience is characterized by ongoing movement and change. Along with that, my artmaking approach naturally adapts to three dimensions in order to depict the various stages of experience and circumstance. Painted during a period of movement restrictions caused by the Covid epidemic, which swept the world by storm; physical human communication was abruptly disrupted. To contain the spread of the Covid virus, the use of remote digital communication became commonplace. In that time, impromptu communication was the quick cure, but it came with a humanitarian cost.

Art material culture registered living moments. Through observation of time, art material creation, which through time, revealed the impact on human inner being. The collage painting method mirrors the state of human condition from the inside. The creation process evolved with the appropriate with each new expression on human subject. The use (or progression) towards spatial expression finds revealing commentary on the effect of remote online telecommunication towards the destabilizing of the human identity. The detached emotions and lack of physical contact found it into the new form of cubistic and highly objectified assemblage totem formation.

The state of mental health has been affected adversely because of the widespread adoption of the culture of visual remote learning, which has resulted in feelings of isolation and a lack of satisfaction in social connections. The regular social relationships were disrupted because of such a big rise. This signals the beginning of a new path during my artistic development.

A fresh idea concerning the limits of human physical presence in a method of communication that is predominately digital was developed because of the recent spatial study that was conducted. Context, rather than a choice based on formalistic principles, is the driving force behind the transition from collage painting to cubistic-tactile spatial expression.

From Collage Painting to Tactile Assemblage

My studio art creation has evolved with life in time and unforeseen events that happen. Art process is an extension of my ideas and feelings from inside. The production of content cannot be separated from the shifting formal visual effects (Eisner, 2002). The employment of readymade materiality and juxtaposition for assemblage structure conveys a great desire to communicate the unease I feel within myself (Banash, 2013).

Eisner considers art production a special kind of communication using materials and techniques in creative expression. Each material is a medium that contains certain stock properties expressing certain materiality quality. Hence art processes like collage and assemblage stress on selection and reuse material quality according to my abstract objective. Banash (2013) contended that form making(manipulating) is connected. In the expression of material collecting, appropriating, moving and recreating culture, found technological repertoire in collage and assemblage are of major meaning inside the modernity society culture. In that collage painting I found a new tactility and object making that represented what the old materiality could not. While creating a collage painting itself, there seemed to be expressive restrictions within the medium. More relevant with the molding of cast resin items and the typographic texts appropriated transformed into spatial feeling evoking strong sense of spatial interaction employed by the constructivist art making process.

They are unmonumental trophy-like figurines with abstract geometrical impressions across these new sculptural forms. Mini-semi abstraction of forms, with an implicit sense of the presence of human beings. I perceive these forms anthropomorphic, that the molds, forms and components manufactured industrially, are meant to imitate the human head and torso suggestive portrayal.

Typographic Man I

I began creating three-dimensional Totem artforms after the *Encountering Mass Man series* concluded in 2021-2022. The concept for the structure was not predetermined. I appreciated the variety of casing and plastic holders from businesses offering pocket-sized lighters. Underneath, all mass-produced lighters are organized in a grid supported by a molded grid-like material. This design drew my attention because of its grid structure in a palm-size scale. It is the ideal object for describing the situation of consumerism culture.

My creative use of readymade plastic materials is a familiar process in the studio; the decision to branch out into sculpture making with readymade materials coincided with my ongoing research into the assemblages of Surrealist and Dada experimental ideas into mixed media art that defied strict definition.

Changing Identity Series, 2022–23



Figure 4. Typographic Man I, (2022) by the author. Found Plastic, wood, cut-outs typography, cast resin and wood; 37 cm (H) x 20 cm (W) x 11 cm (D). Private collection.

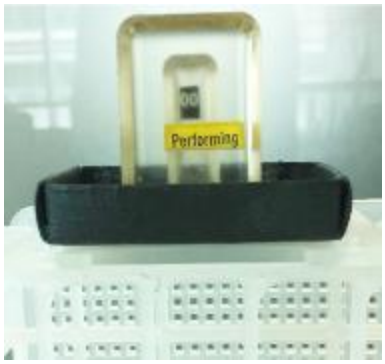


Figure 5. Typographic Man I, (2022). Close-up view on top section of sculpture taken by the author. Found Plastic, wood, cut-outs typography, cast resin and wood; 37 cm (H) x 20 cm (W) x 11 cm (D). Private collection.

This newfound material tactility is not a mere formalism experiment. It is my reflexive expression came out from pandemic movement restriction. The *New Normal* digital communication landscape recreates the once familiar environment. Coping with the new sense of remoteness in digital screen communication, the environment felt artificial only suppressed by efficiency. Over time, the missing of human bodily presence became sterile and reduced to just screen-based talking heads.

My inner concern is focused on my own experience of communication, that connection with people and isolated locations. Strongly felt and touched, especially as a design/drawing educator limited to remote instructions via online screen-based contact. Questions about the human condition began to emerge, and the Covid scenario heightened my concern about the new gap between everyone in society. Thus, a new interest in human subjects arose, which led to the construction of an assemblage for the *Changing Identity series* of art formation.

Adapting to human communication in everyday life has led to my conceptual understanding of space and interactions. What is sensed is suppressed. How things are becoming my inner burning desire to resolve but suppressed, for practical application remains the focus and solution to preserve my role as educator, artist, and father to a family in daily life during this coping moment. As a result of this multifaceted experience, the human subject became the primary focus of critique.

This fresh urge and consciousness have never been more evident in introducing this new direction and series. Social connection has had a significant impact throughout human history. Many adverse effects are discovered, with the majority being extremely inner and intangible. Never has art been so significant in its illuminating character that it is frequently dismissed as useless in its utility. At the core, it is an experiential circumstance as described in my response to the curator, Sarah NH Vogeler's interview for my e-catalogue for the *Changing Identity series* back in April 2023:
The bricolage method for the assemblage of many different material things, ranging from the found to the made (cast) and embedded (in resin cast). The overall structure is a readymade found plastic taken from the laboratory tubes holder. The tactile projection of assortment of resins, fragmented plastics, and wooden pieces are causally slotted into the larger form of grid-mesh holder turning them into a fragments holder that resembles a geometrical human-

like torso after adding the rectilinear cast form over the top end with two cut out typography '0' as symbolic human eyes.

Miller (2008) argument for identity construct in the material world culture of things matched the artistic conception I wanted to make, to impress the viewers. The emphasis on form and its spatial assemblage quality with structure within a structure impression. These slotted forms (resin cast with Typography) made into totem figurine have been the main reason creative criticism to emerge. The strength for this assemblage is not the assembling skills but the humor and the doubling meaning for spectacle objectivity and its expressivity through the geometrical symbolism for portraying conditioned being within us as the expressive human form.

The flatness accustomed to typographic letterforms were retranslated into concrete and tactile, representing a stronger physical structural presence, giving the overall impression of objectified forms. This transcribes the communication in language into spatial and touch-based tectonic expression. As communication experienced in digital remoteness, this feeling of lacking in tactile and haptic communication is truly the subconscious driver in the process making it in spatially three dimensional, and physically robust in its presentation(spectacle) and expressionistic (inner world) content on world symbolism and suppression.

Many printed laboring words are symbolically tied to/embedded in the spatial framework surrounding the grid-like plasticity structure. These newly discovered readymades are more than just bricolage items; they are expressions of fragmented ideals and perfection in communication from and to every human being who exists within the visual sphere of what Guy Debord described as the set image identity in the cyclical visual spectacle of the consumerism effect.

Many designed items from plastic forms to the printed words are put together as unified human-like Anthropomorphic totem form are mirror showcasing the becoming of us in this sphere of consumerism symbolic promise, image ready to use and image for circulation are structurally designed and made for the currency of consumerism economy, watched over by the corporate capitalists. The human's identity as portrayed in my totem bricolage reflected that our identity is faceless, and "performing" within this structural system made to be effective for the sustenance.

I was very conscious about depicting human form. Form is crucial, it is content. I've been drawing figures since College days, and subsequently forayed to collage, abstraction, textures and symbolism. *Encountering Mass Man* made me look at human forms via a pictographic way. After that, it was the desire to see that projecting out into space. Forms can be manipulated and become my portrayal of the human condition. If you look closely at some of the works, the packaging grids, the plastic which holds the objects – those patterns, to me, are lines of human heads, but it is only so when you perceive it as such. (p. 4-5)

Typographic Babel
Changing Identity Series, 2022–23



Figure 6. Typographic Babel, (2022) by author. Found Plastic, wood, cut-outs typography, cast resin and wood; 45 cm (H) x 2.5 cm (W) x 18 cm (D). Private collection.

Typographic Babel (Figure 6) was inspired by the *Typographic Man* concept where the character is a man of the current times affected by the printing technology as suggested by McLuhan (1962). This implication of technology effects on the construction of identity within and outside people. And that technology is active and humans contribute to innovation and build came around and affect the mentality and outlook of humans in return. The totem is designed in the shape of a bigger base and narrowing to a narrow peak at the top creating a stacked totem like composition. The complete body structure is only cast resin parts with writing words. A part of the industrial basis incorporated into the supporting "legs" at the bottom, which is only closer in metaphorical likeness.

The advancement of consumption in current society of spectacle (Debord, 1962) and materialist identity (Miller, 2008) have become us in our contemporary terrain obsessed with profile and image. This graphic depicts the constant buildup of image resources through human labor and a network inside social communication. Incorporated isolated words like *Style, Network,* and *Utility* are signposts that suggest how and what this being will become. The telling of this human-object identity is quite recognizable, just like the city's buildings, streets, and how people interact with them. The deliberate feature in and form the cubistic forms echoes the structure in the buildings and cityscape tectonic spaces.

The word-name Babel in this concept of the depiction, as a figurative human form, is meant to stand for aggressive human desire to amplify its own extravagant existence via the tectonic.

That individual has done all he could to achieve material success through the thoughtful use of work and intelligence.

Typographic Man V and VI
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Figure 7. Typographic man – 5 & 6 (2022) by the author. Found Plastic, wood, cut-outs typography, cast resin and wood; 41 cm (H) x 21 cm (W) x 16 cm (D). Private collection.

In *Typographic Man V* and *VI*, the human form is dissected and reconstructed through the logic of Guy Debord's concept of human society as the idea of spectacle, where authentic existence is subjugated by the imperative of appearance. Constructed through an assemblage of typographic fragments, contrasting glass curvilinear forms, packaging and rigid industrial armatures, these figures exist exclusively within the sphere of external communication.

Their silhouettes appeared flamboyant yet locked in an unyielding objective stillness—exaggerate anatomical design while denying internal agency. The absence of facial features strips away personal psychology, leaving only the exterior contour: a body fabricated from the very signs, media, and consumer languages that delineate contemporary identity. Here, the studio process of bricolage functions as an inquiry into passivity. By using materials intrinsic to public messaging and graphic reproduction, the sculptures do not merely represent the spectacle; they are trapped inside it. They stand frozen in an eternal pose of display, confronting the audience not as living beings, but as commodified entities designed solely to appease and reflect the consumer gaze.

Through their physical construction, these assembled figures function as a tactile critique of how human subjectivity is engineered in an outwardly focused world. Our bodily expressions,

postures, and self-perceptions are no longer self-determined; they are systematically shaped by communication channels programmed around corporate agendas. These networks are architected to keep us fundamentally passive as agents while driving us into an endless, hyper-active consumption of images—trapping us in a manufactured state of inadequacy designed to sustain the spectacle.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates how the Totem artwork functions as an emancipatory tool within today's spectacle material culture. It provides the courage and freedom to reclaim individuality in a deeper personal manner, awakening our capacity to think critically *with* and *alongside* the physical world.

By observing everyday materials through human-sensed qualities, the physical traces of these readymade objects are reclaimed as a profound meaningful resource for making, echoing David Banash's (2013) perspective on assemblage art process, while simultaneously subverting Guy Debord's (as discussed in Walker, 2012) concept of spectacle for good reflection to society. Through the liberating art making practice, mindless consumption behaviors are effectively countered.

Research into art history, humans have long been subject matter of art. All art was concerned with how human origin is diverted from its natural function, and, curiously enough, every cause was connected back to human beings themselves, to their own behavior. The artist as consumer. The artists' works aim to bring our attention back to this derailment and realign what has been horribly misaligned.

Through investigating and making, art functions as an active critical tool within hyper-consumer material culture. The Bricolage method of assemblage introduces a different kind of criticality-one that constructs a critical gaze not merely through passive observation, but directly though the hands -on act of making and engaging with physical materials. By interacting tactility with these elements, our mindless consumption habits are counter-checked.

Look around, walking about what we see with total disbelief how rigid and confined in today's human nature is across all ages. Society looked suppressed naturally once we human beings free from the shackles of technology and consumer desire. Humans are always the subject of art.

This material methodology serves as a vital antidote to unfulfilled materialistic desire, restoring the *depth of our being* and grounding us, rather than leaving us stranded on the *thin ice* of the present state of contemporary society, as Steven Holl boldly cautions us in his foreword to Pallassmaa's work (Holl, 2005).

All art was concerned with how human origin is diverted from its natural function, and, strangely enough, every reason was traced back to human beings themselves, to their own behavior. The artist as consumer. The Totem artworks are intended to redirect our attention back to this derailment and strive to realign what has been severely misplaced. The totemic forms produced in this practice-based research are surely significant. The readymades object

that once *dead* brought alive with creative hands with thoughtful and meaningful bricolage objectivity.

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