



# "The Broken Wings" by Kahlil Gibran as an Inspiration in the Creation of Painting Artworks

<sup>1</sup> Retno Amalia Pratiwi\*, <sup>2</sup>Hamzah, <sup>3</sup>Jeki Aprisela

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Fine Arts Study Program, Faculty of Visual Arts and Design, Indonesian Institute of the Arts  
Padangpanjang  
Bahder Johan Street, Guguk Malintang, Padangpanjang City, 27128,  
West Sumatra, Indonesia

\*Corresponding author

Email: [retnoamalia133@gmail.com](mailto:retnoamalia133@gmail.com)

---

---

## ABSTRACT

---

---

The Broken Wings is a novel by Kahlil Gibran that portrays a tragic love story rich in symbolism and emotional depth. This literary work, which stimulates strong visual imagination, inspired the creation of a series of surrealist-style paintings. The central themes—unfulfilled love and irreversible loss—are reinterpreted visually through impasto techniques using oil paint on canvas. The creative process began with a deep reflection on the novel's emotional layers, followed by textual and visual research to develop symbolic compositions. A series of sketches explored various compositional possibilities before final realization on canvas. Each painting expresses aspects of the novel's narrative through metaphorical imagery, colour symbolism, and textured surfaces. The outcome consists of five paintings, each representing key moments or emotional states drawn from the novel. These artworks were exhibited as part of a curated presentation, demonstrating how literature can be transformed into a compelling visual language. This creation contributes to the discourse of interdisciplinary art by bridging literary and visual narratives, offering new insights into emotional storytelling through painting.

**Keywords:** the broken wings novel; kahlil gibran; painting; surrealism; visual translation.

---

---

## I. INTRODUCTION

Kahlil Gibran, a Lebanese artist, poet, and writer, was born on January 6, 1883, in the village of Bsharri, Lebanon, which at the time was part of the Ottoman Empire (Bushrui & Jenkins, 2014). Raised in a poor Maronite Christian family, Gibran was introduced to the world of art from an early age by his mother, who nurtured his interests in both writing and painting. In 1895, due to severe economic hardship and following his father's legal issues, the family emigrated to Boston, United States, where Gibran began developing his talents within the Lebanese-American immigrant community, later becoming active as both a visual artist and writer (Bushrui & Jenkins, 2014; Naimy, 2022).

One of his most renowned works is *The Broken Wings* (*Al-Ajniha al-Mutakassira*), first published in 1912 (Aljibori & ÖZTÜRK, 2021; Aslan, 2021). This semi-autobiographical novella narrates the tragic love story between the narrator; presumed to be Gibran himself; and a woman named Selma, set against the backdrop of early 20th-century Beirut under patriarchal and religious constraints. The novel explores universal themes such as love, suffering, freedom,



and social injustice, highlighting how human relationships were influenced by social status, egoism, and oppressive power structures (Aljibori & ÖZTÜRK, 2021; Qadri, n.d.). Gibran illustrates that true love, though deeply felt, is often constrained by societal conventions and familial obligations, and ultimately requires sacrifice. Through this narrative, he conveys that genuine affection entails suffering and may demand the courage to let go for the beloved's well-being.

Sumardjo (1986), in *Apresiasi Kesusastraan*, emphasizes that literature serves as a medium to document the writer's inner world, using language to express emotions and lived experience. Rahmanto (1986) adds that the novel as a literary form comprises interrelated elements; setting, plot, characterization, narrative technique, and theme; all of which collectively shape meaning and affect the reader's interpretation.

Inspired by the emotional and philosophical depth of *The Broken Wings*, the artist engaged in an intensive interpretive reading of the novel, allowing its lyrical language and symbolic imagery to guide a deeply personal artistic response. This aesthetic and intellectual engagement led to the aspiration of visually interpreting the novel's narrative through a series of two-dimensional paintings rendered in oil on canvas. The resulting works explore the recurring themes of heartbreak, solitude, and longing; universal human experiences that transcend temporal and cultural boundaries (Bedell, 2024).

The transformation of literature into visual art represents an interdisciplinary creative method that has been explored by various contemporary artists, including Bambang Nurdiansyah, who adapted the poetry of Widji Thukul, and Alfin Rizal, who visualized the works of Joko Pinurbo. This practice reflects a broader tradition in which literary texts; whether prose or poetry; serve as conceptual foundations for visual interpretation, as seen historically among landscape artists and impressionists (Mukherjee, 2023). Building on this approach, the artist engages in a dialogical process that positions narrative texts as frameworks for expressive visual storytelling. By translating emotional content into metaphor, colour, and composition, the resulting paintings aim to evoke affective resonance and offer fresh insights into the emotional power of visual language.

This creative project seeks to spark reflection and dialogue on the humanistic values embedded in Gibran's narrative, while simultaneously expanding the boundaries of artistic interpretation. By bridging literature and visual art, this work affirms the relevance of interdisciplinary exploration as both a method and a mode of artistic knowledge production.

## II. NOVELTY OR INNOVATION

Sutomo Greg (2003:166) states that originality is a narrative in which forms of experience are not identical but share similarities. Therefore, originality is not only about creating something entirely new but also about discovering novelty within what has previously existed. With this understanding, artists strive to explore past works to identify similarities and elements of innovation that can be applied to new creations.



This study adopts an approach that transforms literary works into visual art. In the field of visual arts, this method integrates visual elements with literary narratives, resulting in artworks that not only prioritize aesthetic value but also embody deep meanings and literary messages. By bridging two disciplines; literature and visual art; this approach introduces a sense of novelty into contemporary painting practices through the creation of conceptual and emotionally resonant imagery. The strength of this method lies in its ability to translate textual symbols and emotional nuances into visual metaphors. Similar approaches can be observed in the works of Bambang Nurdiansyah, who interpreted the poetry of Widji Thukul through painting, and Alfin Rizal, who visually adapted the poetic expressions of Joko Pinurbo into a series of visual artworks.

From a technical perspective, this work introduces innovation by employing the impasto technique in a novel manner; specifically, through the exploration of texture and colour transparency. While traditional impasto methods are commonly used to produce thick, opaque layers of paint, this creation modifies the approach by layering cool colour washes to evoke more nuanced and emotionally complex effects. The use of predominantly cool tones; such as blues, greens, and purples; intentionally conveys feelings of sorrow, fear, and solitude, thereby reinforcing the emotional depth of the visual narrative.

The conceptual foundation of this work emerges from the artist's personal experiences, which are then articulated through symbolic visual language that is closely intertwined with literary elements. Human figures representing both male and female identities are combined with metaphorical symbols to communicate universal emotional states. This visual expression seeks to resonate with contemporary psychological conditions, allowing the artwork to speak across individual and cultural boundaries.

Through the deliberate exploration of ideas, techniques, concepts, and interdisciplinary approaches, this creative work aspires to contribute to the discourse of contemporary visual arts; particularly within the context of literary transformation; by offering a more expressive and innovative visual form.

### III. ARTISTIC APPROACH OR CONCEPT

#### 3.1 Artistic Approach

The creation of these paintings, inspired by Kahlil Gibran's *The Broken Wings*, is grounded in the understanding that art serves as a medium for conveying deep emotional experiences. In this context, Leo Tolstoy's Expression Theory serves as a primary foundation. Tolstoy argues that art is a human activity through which one person transmits emotions they have experienced to others using external symbols (Tolstoy, 2023). This project does not merely visualize the narrative of the novel but strives to communicate feelings of loss, sorrow, and longing through poetic and emotive visual forms that resonate with the viewer.



Beyond emotional expression, the artwork also operates through visual representation of symbolic elements drawn from the literary text. Stuart Hall's Representation Theory is particularly relevant here, wherein art is seen as a system of signs that construct meaning within a cultural context (Hall, 1997). Visual components such as birds, hearts, flowers, and the use of cool colour tones function not only as aesthetic choices but as signifiers of heartbreak, emotional isolation, and longing, echoing the novel's narrative. The paintings thus offer a symbolic reinterpretation of Gibran's story, allowing viewers to engage with its meaning through visual language.

Furthermore, the creative process can be viewed through the lens of intertextuality, a concept developed by Julia Kristeva, which posits that every work is shaped through dialogue with other texts and never exists in isolation (Kristeva, 1980). In this case, the paintings function as a visual re-reading of *The Broken Wings*, transforming literary narrative into visual metaphor. Through selection, interpretation, and transformation of narrative elements, the artist constructs a visual "translation" that remains connected to the emotional and symbolic essence of the original literary work.

Ultimately, the overall creative process is framed within the context of practice-based research, as described by Frayling (1993). This approach recognizes artistic creation as a valid mode of knowledge production, where the act of making; through idea exploration, symbolic construction, and visual realization; generates new insights both aesthetically and conceptually. Within this framework, the artworks are positioned not only as aesthetic objects but also as critical reflections on literature and human emotional experience.

### 3.2 Creation Concept

This creation employs a transformative approach by adapting literary works into visual art. This approach integrates visual elements with literary narratives, resulting in artworks that not only highlight aesthetic aspects but also convey profound meaning and literary messages.

The concept of this final project stems from my personal engagement with the novel *The Broken Wings* by Kahlil Gibran, which I have owned and reread multiple times. The novel explores universal themes such as love, emptiness, alienation, and heartbreak; emotional experiences that remain profoundly relevant in human life today. These themes have had a significant impact on me as a visual artist, igniting the desire to express personal experiences through two-dimensional paintings. This intention is realized through the depiction of male and female figures, accompanied by symbolic visual elements.

The theme of this creation is materialized in the form of two-dimensional paintings on canvas, utilizing the *plakat* technique. This technique was chosen for its capacity to present colour in a bold and expressive manner. Cool tones are used predominantly and deliberately to evoke emotional atmospheres of sorrow, fear, and solitude, thereby reinforcing the visual narrative conveyed in the artwork.



Stylistically, this body of work demonstrates influences from emotional-symbolic approaches developed by several modern artists. A significant influence can be seen in the works of **Frida Kahlo**, particularly in her use of bodily imagery and biological symbols; such as hearts, flowers, and wounds; as representations of deep emotional experiences. Like Kahlo, this artwork transforms personal suffering and inner reflection into potent visual symbols.

The influence of **Marc Chagall** is also evident in the lyrical and imaginative composition of the works. The presence of floating figures, birds, and metaphorical relationships between humans and symbolic objects suggests a visual approach that prioritizes poetic and narrative expression over literal realism. The soft surrealist elements in Chagall's works serve as a reference point in establishing the melancholic and introspective atmosphere in these paintings.

Another notable influence comes from **Edvard Munch**, particularly through the use of dark tones, cool colour palettes, and forms that reflect psychological tension. Paintings such as *The Scream* and *The Dance of Life* explore inner turmoil and existential anxiety, which resonate with the emotional intensity of works like "Blank," "Unity in Sorrow," and "Love Lost and the Burial's Embrace."

Through the visual and conceptual absorption of these artistic influences, this project constructs a distinctive visual language to reinterpret Kahlil Gibran's literary narrative into poetic and affective symbolic forms. This approach enables a shift from literal representation toward a visual space that conveys universal emotional experiences.

#### IV. CREATION METHOD

In contemporary visual art practice, a creation method is not merely a technical procedure, but a conceptual and reflective process that shapes the realization of an artwork. Gustami (2004) emphasizes that artistic methodology consists of interrelated phases of exploration, experimentation, and formulation; serving as a framework through which artists develop ideas, engage with media, and transform concepts into authentic visual forms. In this context, the method is not only a tool for production, but also an epistemological strategy for generating artistic knowledge.

The use of a structured method becomes especially crucial when the creative process involves intertextual interpretation and personal reflection, as is the case in this project, which adapts literary narrative into visual form. Rajudin (2020) assert that artistic methods in fine art creation must support the translation of abstract ideas into representational, symbolic, or even experimental forms; forms that are conceptually connected to the artist's cultural, emotional, and psychological contexts.

With that understanding, this creative process was developed through four interconnected and reflective stages: exploration of ideas and references, visual planning and design, material realization, and final presentation. Each phase was conducted with a balance of structure and openness to improvisation, allowing for the integration of symbolic, emotional, and formal



elements. The following is a detailed description of each methodological stage undertaken in this project.

#### 4.1 Exploration Stage

In the first stage, the creative process began with an in-depth exploration of the literary text *The Broken Wings* by Kahlil Gibran. Repeated readings and reflection on the novel's central themes; such as love, emptiness, alienation, and heartbreak; formed the conceptual foundation for the visual ideas that would later be developed. This stage also involved identifying symbolic elements embedded within the narrative, such as images of hearts, birds, flowers, and white fabric, which represent suffering and deep emotional states. Based on theories of symbolic representation (Saidi, 2008; Susanto, 2011), these symbols were selected as visual devices to transform the emotional experience contained in the text into more expressive and meaningful visual forms.

#### 4.2 Design and Visualization Stage

Following the exploration phase, the design stage began with the development of several alternative sketches depicting selected figures and symbols. These sketches served to determine visual composition, figure placement, and symbolic elements to be used in the final artworks. In this stage, the artist experimented with layout and spatial relationships between elements to ensure that each image not only supports the narrative but also evokes an emotional response from the viewer. This process included the search for appropriate visual representations to convey themes such as heartbreak and loneliness. The selected final sketches were then used as the foundation for further realization in the form of two-dimensional paintings.

#### 4.3 Realization Stage

At this stage, the finalized designs were implemented onto canvas using the *plakat* technique with oil paints. This technique was chosen for its ability to produce dense and expressive layers of colour, allowing for the articulation of intense emotional atmospheres. Cool tones; such as blue, grey, and violet; were predominantly applied to construct a melancholic, sorrowful, and fearful mood. The process was experimental, allowing the artist to improvise in response to visual developments on the canvas, resulting in a stronger emotional bond with the emerging work. This phase was not only about technical execution but also involved the artist's inner experiences, poured into each brushstroke.

#### 4.4 Presentation Stage

The final stage was the presentation of the completed artworks in an exhibition setting. In this phase, the artist carefully considered the spatial arrangement and lighting to enhance the symbolic meanings conveyed through the works. The presentation was executed through a structured display layout, creating an immersive spatial experience for the audience. Each





artwork was positioned in such a way as to invite viewers into the emotional world embodied within the paintings. With thoughtful curatorial arrangement, this stage aimed to facilitate deeper symbolic interpretation and to enrich both the aesthetic and intellectual experience of the exhibition's visitors.

## V. WORK CREATION PROCESS

The creation of this visual artwork was carried out through a structured and reflective process, beginning with conceptual preparation and culminating in final presentation within an exhibition space. Each stage was approached methodically, integrating conceptual, symbolic, and technical strategies to realize a series of two-dimensional works infused with emotional and narrative depth.

### 5.1 Preparation and Idea Exploration Stage

The initial stage began with an in-depth reading and analysis of Kahlil Gibran's novel *The Broken Wings*, which served as the primary source of inspiration. This process involved identifying key themes such as love, heartbreak, alienation, and loss, as well as extracting symbolic elements found in the text. Symbols like birds, hearts, flowers, and white fabric were interpreted as visual representations of emotional states. Additionally, visual references and artistic studies were collected to support the development of appropriate forms, colours, and compositions aligned with the symbolic nature of the concept.

### 5.2 Visual Design Stage

Following idea exploration, the next phase involved developing visual compositions through the creation of multiple sketch alternatives. These sketches were used to explore spatial arrangements, symbolic relationships, and figure placements that would effectively communicate the intended narrative. Particular attention was paid to the emotional tone, with cool colour schemes selected to enhance the atmosphere. One final sketch was chosen as the basis for the full-scale painting, serving as a visual blueprint for the realization process.

### 5.3 Realization Stage

In this stage, the finalized design was transferred onto medium- to large-scale canvas. The chosen technique was *plakat* using oil paint, selected for its capacity to produce bold, expressive colour layers that effectively convey emotional atmosphere. The painting process began with background development, followed by the main figures and visual symbols. Cool tones such as blue, gray, and violet were applied predominantly to establish a melancholic, reflective, and somber mood. The artist allowed room for improvisation throughout the painting process, particularly in the handling of texture and brush gesture, to strengthen the emotional connection with the work.



#### 5.4 Completion and Evaluation Stage

Upon completion of the painting, a finalization phase was undertaken, involving refinement of details, contrast adjustments, and application of a protective varnish layer. The finished work was then critically reviewed by the artist and peers to assess coherence between concept, symbol, and execution. This evaluative process ensured that all visual elements were in harmony with the intended meaning and expressive goals of the artwork.

#### 5.5 Exhibition and Presentation Stage

The final stage was the presentation of the artwork in an indoor exhibition space. The works were curated and arranged to form a visual and emotional narrative sequence. Each painting was accompanied by a short curatorial text and descriptive label (title, size, medium, year), while lighting was carefully adjusted to enhance the symbolic focus of each piece. The exhibition served not only as a platform for public appreciation but also as a medium for dialogue between the artwork, the artist, and the audience. Through this presentation, the symbolic meanings embedded in the work were expected to be interpreted and emotionally experienced by viewers on a deeper level.

### VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the outcomes of the artistic creation process in the form of a series of two-dimensional paintings inspired by Kahlil Gibran's novel *The Broken Wings*. The artworks serve as visual interpretations of the novel's central themes; love, heartbreak, solitude, and existential struggle; translated into symbolic and expressive imagery. Each painting embodies a narrative fragment that reflects not only the emotional tone of the source text but also the artist's personal experiences and introspections. The discussion will elaborate on the visual elements, symbolic content, and conceptual foundations of each piece, highlighting the dialogue between literature and visual art. Through this analysis, the artistic choices made throughout the creation process; ranging from composition, colour selection, and technique to metaphorical representation; will be examined in relation to the intended emotional impact and interpretative depth of the work.





## 6.1 Painting 1



**Figure 1.** “Blank”, Oil on Canvas, 170 x 130 cm, 2024  
(Source: Retno Amalia Pratiwi, 2024)

The artwork titled *Blank*, created in 2024 using oil on canvas with dimensions of 170 x 130 cm, presents a surrealistic composition that visualizes emotional fragmentation and the symbolism of grief. The central figure is a headless human torso dressed in a formal dark blue suit, replaced by a white vase filled with blooming white lilies. A soft, cloud-like form appears to flow into or emerge from the chest cavity. Several birds are shown flying around the vase, while fallen lily petals scatter on the ground. The background depicts a tranquil mountain landscape beneath a fading sun.

The painting adopts a symbolic representation approach, using visual metaphors to reflect fragile psychological states. The absence of a head signifies the loss of identity or a disconnection from the self; representing emotional distress. White lilies are culturally associated with purity, mourning, and transience. Their placement, both inside the torso and scattered on the ground, symbolizes the tension between internal sorrow and unspoken outward expression.

The birds in motion suggest the restlessness of the soul, spiritual transition, or a yearning for freedom; mirroring the character Selma in *The Broken Wings*, who is confined by societal and patriarchal constraints. The cloud-like or fabric-like white form intensifies the surreal atmosphere, hinting at the intangible and undefinable nature of pain.

Visually, the artist combines elements of realism and surreal distortion. The use of cool tones such as blue, white, and gray reinforces a melancholic and reflective mood. The open composition and diagonal visual flow guide the viewer's gaze along a contemplative path. This work is a manifestation of the artist's attempt to transform a literary experience; specifically Gibran's *The Broken Wings*; into a symbolic visual language capable of expressing universal sorrow and spiritual longing.



## 6.2 Painting 2



**Figure 2.** "Unity in Sorrow", Oil on Canvas, 170 x 130 cm, 2024  
(Source: Retno Amalia Pratiwi, 2024)

The artwork titled *Unity in Sorrow*, created in 2024 using oil on canvas with dimensions of 170 x 130 cm and executed with the impasto technique, depicts a man and a woman embracing, connected by a realistic human heart placed between them. Their bodies appear suspended within a narrow, arched corridor composed of dark, stone-like textures, evoking a space that is both enclosed and sacred. The application of impasto in selected areas enhances visual depth and tactile quality, intensifying the emotional presence through the thickness and materiality of the paint surface.

This painting adopts a symbolic representation approach to express emotional entanglement, sorrow, and unified longing. The heart that connects the two figures is not merely a biological organ, but a visual metaphor for shared suffering. Inspired by Khalil Gibran's line, "*Sorrow binds his soul and mine... separation is merely a bitter suffering,*" the artwork portrays love not as harmony, but as an emotional bond that endures through pain and separation.

The dark, corridor-like background deepens the atmosphere of silence, mystery, and an uncertain inner journey. The embrace between the two figures holds an ambiguity: it may represent warmth and consolation, yet also a helpless attachment born of unresolved grief. The arteries branching from the heart reinforce their inseparability, as if sorrow has become an intrinsic part of their being.

Visually, the work juxtaposes the softness of the human form with the rigidity of architectural structure. The impasto technique; especially in the rendering of the heart and arteries; adds a visceral effect, strengthening the symbolic weight of emotion within the composition. Dominated by grayscale and black tones, the work allows the vivid red of the heart to stand out as a focal point, guiding the viewer toward its emotional axis. Through its restrained palette, precise composition, and layered symbolism, *Unity in Sorrow* becomes a visual interpretation of Gibran's philosophy: that true love often exists alongside profound sorrow.



### 6.3 Painting 3



**Figure 3.** "Love Lost and the Burial's Embrace," Oil on Canvas, 170 x 130 cm, 2024  
(Source: Retno Amalia Pratiwi, 2024)

"*Love Lost and the Burial's Embrace*" is a two-dimensional oil painting on canvas, measuring 170 x 130 cm and executed using the **plakat technique**. The work portrays a floating female figure whose face is veiled by white cloth, embracing a gravestone adorned with red roses. Surrounding her are drifting feathers, creating a poetic and melancholic atmosphere. Dominated by dark green and cool tones, the colour palette evokes a silent, introspective mood filled with emotional detachment.

The painting emerges from a deeply emotional and reflective engagement with Kahlil Gibran's novel *The Broken Wings*, especially the quote: "*The loss of love leads a woman to her grave, like despair enveloping the inhabitants of the earth.*" This quote forms the foundation for the visual theme of lost love and the act of letting go. The veiled figure, gravestone, and roses serve as symbolic elements that construct a narrative of unfulfilled affection and profound emotional pain.

Drawing on **Leo Tolstoy's expression theory** (Tolstoy, 2023), the work transmits emotional states through symbolic composition and intense colour. The sorrow, loss, and helplessness experienced by the artist are conveyed through the floating gesture and the vast, empty pictorial space. For Tolstoy, art is the transmission of feeling, and this work serves as a visual vehicle for shared emotional resonance.

From **Stuart Hall's representation theory** (1997), symbolic elements like the white cloth represent death or spiritual peace, while the gravestone and red roses signify memory and unfinished love. The faceless woman becomes a universal figure, evoking collective emotional suffering beyond individual identity.

The painting can also be understood through **Julia Kristeva's concept of intertextuality** (1980), where the visual work is not merely an illustration but a symbolic transformation of



Gibran's literary text. The visual metaphors; such as the levitating body, feathers, and ethereal atmosphere; function as visual translations of the novel's poetic and emotional essence.

Technically, the *plakat* technique allows for bold, expressive layering of colour, emphasizing texture and emotional atmosphere. The use of cool tones; deep greens, blues, and grays; reflects sadness, solitude, and introspection, aligning with the emotional palette found in Edvard Munch's expressionist paintings. Additionally, the floating figure and symbolic interactions echo the poetic surrealism found in the works of Marc Chagall, one of the project's acknowledged visual influences.

Ultimately, the painting stands not merely as an aesthetic object, but as a **conceptual proposition that reinterprets literature through visual form**. Within the discourse of contemporary art, it becomes an emotionally driven narrative that bridges literature and painting through deeply symbolic visual storytelling.

#### 6.4 Painting 4



**Figure 4.** "Lie Down," Oil Colour on Canvas, 170 x 130 cm, 2024  
(Source: Retno Amalia Pratiwi, 2024)

The painting titled "*Lie Down*", created in **2024**, measures 170 x 130 cm and is executed using oil paint on canvas with the *plakat* technique. This technique allows the artist to apply bold, opaque layers of colour to create emotionally charged visual depth. The composition presents a surreal and symbolically rich scene: at the center of the canvas lies a small, lifeless bird, its eyes closed, its posture still. From the center of its chest, a single red rose blooms upward, defying the stillness of death. To the lower right of the canvas, two white dice lie scattered on a dark, textured surface, appearing as if randomly thrown. The background reveals a barren desert landscape bathed in orange and brown gradients, evoking the emotional gravity of a desolate, burning sunset. Together, these elements form a visual poem of silence, pain, and quiet resilience.



Symbolically, *“Lie Down”* conveys the cyclical tension between death and regeneration. The dead bird represents destruction and sacrifice, while the blooming rose becomes a metaphor for love born out of suffering. Within **Stuart Hall’s theory of representation**, the painting functions as a system of visual signs that construct meaning within a cultural and emotional context. Each element; bird, rose, dice; acts as a signifier encoded with affective and existential resonance. The dice symbolize uncertainty and the uncontrollable nature of fate, emphasizing that life, love, and loss often unfold within unpredictable frameworks. The work’s alignment with Hall’s theory is evident in how visual elements function not merely as aesthetic choices but as cultural and symbolic messages embedded with deeper meaning.

Emotionally, the painting radiates a profound intensity, reflecting the artist’s internal experience of grief, uncertainty, and transcendence. **Leo Tolstoy’s expression theory** finds strong resonance here, as the painting becomes a conduit for the artist’s emotional transmission to the viewer. Inspired by the character Selma in *The Broken Wings*; described by Kahlil Gibran as “a wounded bird fallen, enduring pain”; the image of the dead bird directly embodies this poetic metaphor. Yet, the painting transcends mere victimhood by transforming the bird into a vessel of rebirth: the rose that grows from its body becomes a symbol of resilience, hope, and unyielding love. In this way, *“Lie Down”* does not simply illustrate narrative emotion but channels raw feeling into a symbolically expressive visual language.

The painting also aligns closely with **Julia Kristeva’s theory of intertextuality**, wherein every text; or in this case, artwork; exists in dialogue with others. *“Lie Down”* is not a literal transcription of Gibran’s novella but a visual re-reading that constructs a new set of meanings. The dead bird and blooming rose act as visual translations of literary motifs, reinterpreting the emotional landscape of the novel through metaphor rather than narration. By bridging the verbal and visual, the painting engages in a cross-media dialogue that produces a layered, reflective experience for the viewer. This process of visual transformation is not only interpretive but also creative, generating original emotional insight from an established literary foundation.

The creative process behind *“Lie Down”* is deeply rooted in **practice-based research**, as outlined by **Christopher Frayling**, where artistic creation itself becomes a form of knowledge production. From literary exploration and conceptual sketching to symbolic composition and technical execution, the artwork embodies a research inquiry expressed through form, texture, and colour. The artist’s reflection on the emotional themes of love, loss, and existential struggle; paired with an experimental approach to composition and colour palette; produces not only a finished aesthetic object but also a visual argument about human emotion and narrative transformation.

Dramatically, the painting plays with tension between beauty and despair, serenity and suffering. The palette; dominated by warm oranges and deep browns; creates an ambiguous emotional field: both inviting and somber. The dead bird is not only a sign of physical death but a metaphor for emotional collapse and existential fatigue. The rose is not merely beautiful; it is a defiance of tragedy, a manifestation of dignity in the face of despair. The dice, resting on the





ground without clear logic, serve as existential punctuation marks, reminding viewers that life unfolds not as a plan but as a gamble. These layered visual metaphors turn the painting into a silent meditation on pain, perseverance, and the courage to love despite knowing the risks.

Through all these elements, *"Lie Down"* emerges as a visual narrative that bridges literary inspiration and personal expression in a poetic and emotionally resonant language. With the integration of theoretical approaches; representation, expression, intertextuality, and practice-based research; the work successfully transforms literary affect into symbolic visual form. It does not merely echo the voice of the artist, but invites viewers into a shared space of reflection, where loss and beauty coexist, and where silence becomes the most eloquent form of storytelling.

## 6.5 Painting 5



**Figure 5.** "Fragile," Oil on Canvas, 170 x 130 cm, 2024  
(Source: Retno Amalia Pratiwi, 2024)

The painting titled *"Fragile"*, created in **2024**, measures 170 x 130 cm and is executed in oil on canvas using the *plakat* technique. This method enables the application of dense, expressive layers of colour that enhance the emotional depth and surface texture of the artwork. The central focus is a heart; not anatomically depicted; but reimagined as a **fragment of decaying wood**, standing upright in a barren desert-like landscape. The heart is supported by several **bamboo stalks**, inserted from the sides and front, seemingly keeping it from collapsing. From its weathered surface, **green sprouts and young leaves** emerge, while others have already yellowed and fallen to the ground. The background sky, heavy with muted blue and gray tones, contributes to an atmosphere of emotional stillness and contemplation. The composition relies on an **asymmetrical balance**; where visual elements are not mirrored or evenly distributed, but achieve harmony through intuitive placement and expressive flow; creating a sense of quiet tension and existential weight.





Symbolically, "*Fragile*" evokes a visual discourse on **fragility and resilience**, on human vulnerability and the strength that comes from external sources. The heart, rendered as decayed and brittle wood, speaks to the frailty of human existence; particularly emotional fragility. In contrast, the bamboo stalks, known for their flexibility and resilience, represent **supportive forces** that come from beyond the self. In the framework of **Stuart Hall's theory of representation**, this painting functions as a system of signs in which objects are encoded with cultural and emotional meaning. Bamboo, often associated with regeneration and endurance, becomes a metaphor for nature, community, or spiritual values that uphold what is internally broken.

This tension between disintegration and support becomes deeply moving when examined through **Leo Tolstoy's theory of expression**. This work is not simply an arrangement of surreal forms, but an emotional truth rendered visible: a sense of inner collapse held together by something stronger, something sustaining. The fallen leaves signify impermanence, while the emerging shoots suggest that life continues despite decay. In line with Tolstoy's belief that art should transmit emotion from artist to viewer, "*Fragile*" succeeds in conveying a quiet intensity that resonates universally; a personal confession transformed into a shared experience.

The conceptual basis of the work is drawn from **Kahlil Gibran's** philosophical inquiry: why did God create the heart to be so easily wounded? "*Fragile*" becomes a **visual response** to this existential question. Through the lens of **Julia Kristeva's intertextuality**, the painting acts in dialogue with Gibran's prose. The decaying heart becomes a symbolic terrain where sorrow and growth coexist. Much like Gibran's literary style; fusing sorrow with beauty; this painting juxtaposes **decay and renewal**, collapse and hope. It is not merely an illustration but a reflective visual continuation of a literary idea, transmuting poetic language into symbolic imagery.

From a methodological perspective, the painting exemplifies **practice-based research** as described by **Christopher Frayling**, in which artistic practice is a mode of knowledge production. Here, emotional exploration, symbolic construction, and visual experimentation form an introspective process that investigates human endurance. The use of cool colour palettes and material contrasts; between the rough, cracked wood and the smooth, upright bamboo; constructs a layered experiential field. The question the work poses is not just "what sustains us?" but "how do we remain upright when we are fractured from within?"

Dramatically, the composition is both quiet and tense. The angled bamboo stalks create a dynamic rhythm, framing the heart's form without rigid structure. The heart itself leans slightly, heavy with symbolic weight, reinforcing its dependence on external support. Its interior, carved like hollow roots or fibrous veins, suggests a deep emotional emptiness. The bamboo may be seen as healing or gently invasive; as if nature has intervened to uphold what can no longer sustain itself. This **asymmetrical balance** emphasizes that emotional harmony does not always arise from symmetry or stability, but from the honest tension between strength and vulnerability.



Ultimately, “*Fragile*” is a profound visual meditation on the **paradox of strength within weakness**. It illustrates how human beings continue to stand; not because of inner strength alone; but because of unseen forces that lift and sustain them: love, faith, environment, or memory. By integrating emotional expression, cultural symbolism, literary intertext, and artistic research, this work stands not merely as a painting but as a **visual statement**; poetic and reflective. It invites the viewer to recognize their own wounds, and to understand that even in fragility, beauty and resilience endure, quietly but powerfully.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The process of **art creation** inspired by Kahlil Gibran’s *The Broken Wings* has successfully transformed literary narrative into symbolic and emotionally resonant two-dimensional paintings. Through the integration of personal reflection, intertextual interpretation, and symbolic visual language, these works express themes of heartbreak, longing, fragility, and resilience in a powerful visual form.

This art creation is grounded in **Leo Tolstoy’s Expression Theory**, which emphasizes the transmission of emotion from artist to viewer. **Stuart Hall’s Representation Theory** is also applied to construct emotional and cultural meaning through visual signs. Furthermore, the paintings serve as a **visual re-reading** of Gibran’s text, in line with **Julia Kristeva’s theory of intertextuality**, demonstrating how literary work can evolve into an affective and poetic visual language. Methodologically, the creation applies the principles of **practice-based research**, in which the artistic process itself becomes a means of generating knowledge through reflective making.

Technically, the use of the **plakat technique** with oil on canvas, along with the dominance of cool tones, effectively builds psychological depth and emotional atmosphere. Compositions are constructed using expressive **asymmetrical balance**, while symbolic elements such as birds, hearts, bamboo, and flowers are used to embody abstract emotional states.

Overall, this **art creation** contributes to the discourse on **interdisciplinary artistic practice**, particularly in bridging literature and visual art. These works demonstrate that literary narratives can be transformed into moving visual forms, and that personal emotional experiences can be communicated through metaphor, form, and colour. This creation not only expands the possibilities of narrative translation in painting but also affirms the importance of emotional and symbolic depth in contemporary visual art.

## References:

- Aljibori, A., & ÖZTÜRK, A. S. (2021). Patriarchal Oppression of Love in William Shakespeare’s *Romeo & Juliet* and Khalil Gibran’s *Broken Wings*: A Feminist Reading. *Rigeo*, 11(12).
- Aslan, M. (2021). *True love in the Broken Wings and Rosa-Al Hani in Kahlil Gibran*. Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü. <https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=c9240254-5b66-3aff-8a6f-a012898ef682>
- Bedell, R. (2024). Love Rising: The Transformation of Emotions in Contemporary Art. *Arts*,



- 13(2), 41.
- Bushrui, S., & Jenkins, J. (2014). *Kahlil Gibran: Man and Poet*. Simon and Schuster.
- Frayling, C. (1993). *Research in art and design* (Vol. 1, Issue 1). Royal College of Art London.
- Greg Soetomo, S. J. (2003). *Krisis Seni Krisis Kesadaran*. Kanisius.
- Gustami. (2004). *Proses Penciptaan Seni Kriya "Untaian Metodologis."* Program Penciptaan Seni Pascasarjana Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta.
- Hall, S. (1997). Other. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, 2, 223.
- Hartoko, D., & Rahmanto, B. (1986). *Pemandu di dunia sastra*. Kanisius.
- Kristeva, J. (1980). *Desire in language: A semiotic approach to literature and art*. Columbia University Press.
- Mukherjee, P. (2023). *TURNING ART INTO VISION: PROSE, POETRY, PAINTING INTERFACE OF LANDSCAPE ARTISTS, AND IMPRESSIONISTS*.
- Naimy, M. (2022). *Kahlil Gibran: A Biography*. Philosophical Library/Open Road.  
<https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=7a28d701-6b65-3a83-ad77-6bfbd091c3d1>
- Qadri, S. (n.d.). *THE CONCEPT OF PLATONIC LOVE IN KHALIL GIBRAN'S THE BROKEN WINGS*.
- Rajudin, R., Miswar, M., & Muler, Y. (2020). Metode Penciptaan Bentuk Representasional, Simbolik, Dan Abstrak (Studi Penciptaan Karya Seni Murni Di Sumatera Barat, Indonesia). *Gorga : Jurnal Seni Rupa*, 9(2), 261. <https://doi.org/10.24114/gr.v9i2.19950>
- Saidi, A. I. (2008). *Narasi Simbolik Seni Rupa Kontemporer Indonesia* (1st ed.). ISACBOOK.
- Saini, K. M., & Sumardjo, J. (1986). Apresiasi kesusastraan. *Jakarta: Gramedia*, 14.
- Susanto, M. (2011). *Diksi rupa: Kumpulan istilah dan gerakan seni rupa (Edisi revisi)*. Dicti Art dan Djagat Art House.
- Tolstoy, L. (2023). *What is art?* BoD-Books on Demand.