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Co-Creation Art as Curatorial Method: A Case Study of the Bin 2.0 Art Exhibition

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ABSTRACT

This study examines co-creation art as a curatorial method through a case study of *The Bin 2.0 Art Exhibition*, a community-based initiative involving youth participants from Kampung Muhibbah, Sarawak Malaysia community, curators, artists from FACA Art Gallery and Aftermath Thinker collective. Guided by the Value of Co-creation Model—co-experience, co-definition, co-elevation, and co-development—the research investigates collaborative dynamics in art-making and curatorial practice. Adopting a qualitative case study approach informed by phenomenological inquiry, data were collected through participatory observation, documentation, and reflective accounts of participants. The study aims to (1) extend current understandings of contemporary curatorial practice through co-creation; (2) critically examine the applicability of co-creation as a theoretical framework for sustainable community-art based practices; and (3) analyze the lived experiences of participants within collaborative curatorial processes. The project resulted in six co-created artworks, foregrounding process-based practice over object-based outcomes. Findings indicate that co-creation reconfigures conventional hierarchies between artist, curator, and community, fostering shared authorship, increased accessibility, and situated meaning-making. The study contributes to the discourse on socially engaged art by demonstrating how co-creation can function as a viable curatorial methodology that supports sustainability and cultural value production in community-driven contexts.

1 | Introduction

Museums and art galleries today have moved from conventional gallery practice to post-studio method, where art is no longer made within the four walls of a studio. Consequently, curators no longer limit themselves to gallery spaces for art exhibitions. An example of a post-studio practice was *Art Gym*, a participatory project by Tate Liverpool in the United Kingdom, where the gallery space was transformed into a space for interaction, debate, learning, and community engagement. In this practice, art objects are not considered 'exclusive' compared to other art forms (Birchall 2017). This shift has inspired curators to plan exhibitions around the audience's experience and participatory methods, merging learning, interaction, and collaboration. As

a result, visitors do not just become active participants in co-creating with the artists through interactions; in some cases, they would also co-curate the exhibitions alongside curators towards the same goals (Muller et al. 2006; Barnes and McPherson 2019).

Several art projects in Malaysia such as the *Projek Open Wall*, *The Monkey Project @ USM*, and *Projek Denai Sutera* at the *Muzium dan Galeri Tuanku Fauziah (MGTF)* have implemented similar approaches. While they were not truly classified as participatory art, these projects utilized co-creation as a method. Co-creation is a systematic, interaction-centred approach that involves the active collaboration of curators, artists, and the community to design the creative process from idea development to execution (Mat, Leong, and Al-Nahari 2023; Mat, Saidon,

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et al. 2023; Mat et al. 2024). Unlike participatory art, where the artist or curator has already decided on how the audience should engage with the art, co-creation emphasizes continuous collaboration, shared decision-making, and meaning-making, thus providing a profound change in curatorial practice that nurtures dialogues, inclusivity, and community empowerment (Edmundson and Haviland 2025). Co-creation also heightens participants' aesthetic experience through active engagement physically, mentally, and socially, and subsequently provides a thorough understanding of the artwork and its context (Campos et al. 2018).

The Bin 2.0 Art Project was held as a community-based co-creation project in Kampung Muhibbah, Sarawak, Malaysia. The project was conducted to study how co-creation art could collaborate with the local community in an artmaking project using recycled HDPE plastic, while also aiming to instill environmental awareness and social bonding among the participants. It was a collaboration of curators, local artists, university partners, youth, residents, and volunteers of the participating community. This article focuses on three objectives: (1) extend current understandings of contemporary curatorial practice through co-creation; (2) critically examine the applicability of co-creation as a theoretical framework for sustainable community-art based practices; and (3) analyze the lived experiences of participants within collaborative curatorial processes. To achieve these objectives, the article is structured as follows: first, a review of literature on co-creation and participatory curatorial practices is presented; second, the methodology of The Bin 2.0 Art Project is outlined; third, the discussion highlights the curatorial, social, and environmental outcomes of the project; and finally, the article concludes with reflections on the implications of co-creation art for future community-based practices.

1.1 | Museum Collaboration: From Passive to Active

Major museums and art galleries are no longer confined to conventional passive exhibitions; instead, museum experiences today involve active interactions between art and audience, where collaborative approaches are used in exhibition design or curatorial strategies. This is a shift from the passive traditional art exhibition to active collaboration, combining learning, entertainment, interactivity, play, and participation (Olesen et al. 2020; Wang and Lei 2016), and it is driven by the exhibition organizers' desire to improve the audience's museum experiences into a more engaging, participative experience, and at the same time following the trends in cultural policy that emphasize inclusiveness, community engagement, and democratization of the arts. This shift of exhibition strategy in museum practice is designed not only to display objects but also to allow dialogue, participation, and discourse with diverse audiences.

Collaborative design in exhibitions refers to approaches in which multiple collaborators, including curators, artists, and audiences, actively contribute to the planning and execution of the exhibition. It consists of (1) co-creative practices, where participants collectively generate ideas; (2) co-design, where audiences get together to plan and decide upon exhibition elements; or (3)

participatory exhibition development, where users engage in the meaning-making of the art (Mygind et al. 2015). These practices combine together to form collaborative design, where they highlight shared ownership and active participation in the exhibition planning and execution.

1.2 | Co-Creation Art as a Curatorial Method

The term co-creation was initially coined in marketing and consumer research to represent collaborative operations where the consumers play an active role in the process of shaping the value and meaning of a brand (Nonaka 1995; Ind and Coates 2013). In the arts, co-creation came from participatory art discourse, in which audiences can become 'co-artists' or collaborators in the creative workflow (Clift and Camic 2015). Nevertheless, it is crucial to know a key conceptual difference: participatory art generally offers the public the opportunity to engage with an existing work of art, or at least the outcome is already intended by the artist or the art institution (Matarasso 2019); while co-creation art offers involvement as early as from the development of idea to the final artwork production or exhibition (Mat, Saidon, et al. 2023). The differences between these two terms are not just linguistic, but they represent a bigger change in power dynamics between curators, artists, and audiences, where curators and artists are required to collectively negotiate control, decision-making, and authorship.

Although the term 'co-creation' has become increasingly popular these days, its pragmatic execution still remains contentious. For example, in the "Resonances: The Long Waves of Utopia", an interactive archive and exhibition by Mohr et al. (2018) proved that the users in this co-creation research project were continuously involved in the design process all throughout the exhibition, but in general, whose voice would be prioritized among the collaborators, how disputing interests are settled, and to what extent does co-creation truly change the traditional role of a curator remain unresolved. Similarly, Edmundson and Haviland (2025) asserted that co-creation is a systematic, relational, and transformative practice, but the existing studies on co-creation often presume the ideal conditions of collaborators, ignoring issues such as imbalanced participation, varied engagement, and limited resources.

In addition, co-creation is sometimes portrayed as essentially inclusive and empowering, yet critical discourses put forth potential flaws and issues in sustainability. Concerns such as resource dependency in the long term, power imbalance, and the community losing interest in sustaining the project suggest that co-creation is not always accessible or effective without consistent institutional support (Matarasso 2019; Bishop and Claire 2012). In this context, co-creation art possesses both potential and uncertainty, calling into ethical and practical inquiries about how inclusiveness, ownership, and social impact are fulfilled in community-based curatorial practice. Highlighting these concerns is the main point to this research, which investigates co-creation not only as a curatorial strategy but also as a methodological approach that is able to foster social interactions, environmental awareness, and empower the community (Mat et al. 2024). Through the investigation of the phenomenology of co-creation in practice, this study intends to shine light on both

its transformative potential and the systematic and relational issues that challenge its effectiveness.

2 | Method

This study investigates The Bin 2.0 Art Project, a community-centred co-creation art project that took place in Kampung Muhibbah, Sarawak which was held through the request from the community itself. Located on the island of Borneo, Kampung Muhibbah is a small residential village in Kuching, the capital city of the state of Sarawak, Malaysia. The project sought to explore co-creation as a strategy for curatorial practice, while mobilizing the local participants to engage in producing environmentally sustainable art. In this section, the participants, operational steps, and methods utilized to facilitate and record the project will be outlined, as well as the methodological approach used to observe co-creation in action.

Additionally, this study is conducted through an interpretative phenomenological method, an approach aimed to discover how meaning is created through practical and shared experiences. Phenomenology that is applied to investigate co-creation does not only serve as an operational or collaborative approach, but an experiential occurrence that came through the back-and-forth exchanges among curators, artists, and community participants. Focus is given to the views of the participants, lived experience and engagement, and reflections all through the process of co-creation, letting the study unravel how curatorial meaning and execution are negotiated collectively. Through this perspective, co-creation art as a curatorial approach is comprehended as a relational and experiential praxis located within particular social and cultural contexts. Interpretative phenomenology was selected to highlight participants' lived and shared experience through co-creation art, along with an established qualitative phenomenology investigation methodology (Larkin et al. 2006; Groenewald 2004).

2.1 | Participants

The participants of this study were selected through purposive sampling, rather than random selection, according to a pilot study of the community and the problems they were facing at the start of the research. The youth ($n = 30$) of Kampung Muhibbah, Kuching, Sarawak were chosen following a request from the village residential committee to address environmental pollution caused by improper waste disposal and to encourage recycling habits. The community, particularly the youth, demonstrated a high level of volunteerism and willingness to contribute, which made them ideal participants for the co-creation process. Purposive sampling ensured that participants were genuinely committed and could actively engage in the project, contributing ideas, skills, and effort throughout. This method allowed the researcher to select individuals who met specific criteria relevant to the study objectives (Black 2010; Ames et al. 2019). The target participants, aged 15–30, were also likely to be affected by social, environmental, mental, and physical challenges; thus, participation offered an opportunity for engagement, skill-building, and stress relief

through creative and social activities. All participants provided informed consent prior to the start of the project. By selecting motivated and contextually relevant participants, purposive sampling directly enhanced the quality, relevance, and inclusivity of the co-creation outcomes.

2.2 | Case Study Development

The Bin Art 2.0 Exhibition was organized by FACA Art Gallery, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak in collaboration with Aftermath Thinker—a collective art group with the expertise of producing art from recycled materials. The project collaborators involved two curators, five artists from FACA Art Gallery, four artists from Aftermath Thinker, and the selected youth participants of the Kampung Muhibbah community. The project adapted the Value of Co-creation model by (Galbrun and Kijima 2009) as a framework that consists of four phases: 1. Co-experience: ice-breaking, sharing session by the gallery team (artists, curators, and art collective) with the community, and understanding the environmental pollution issues faced by the community; 2. Co-definition: deciding project theme, artistic approach, and programme tentative with all project collaborators; 3. Co-elevation: project implementation through case study and observation of co-creation art project phenomena; 4. Co-development: reflection and project monitoring.

Figure 1 explains the activities that took place during the collaboration process in the co-creation art project in the following sequence: (1) co-experience; (2) co-definition; (3) co-elevation; and (4) co-development. These four phases also operate as phenomenological stages, where the lived experiences, perceptions, and understanding of co-creation among the participants developed through time. The co-experience and co-development phases highlighted moments of shared experience and reflection, allowing the study to document how curatorial meaning unfolds through collective engagement.

The co-creation process implemented in this study is structured into four key phases, namely co-experience, co-definition, co-elevation, and co-development. Each phase represents a progressive level of engagement between participants and the community, from initial interaction to reflective outcomes. As presented in Table 1, the process spans from October 2021 to January 2023 and includes a series of activities such as site visits, collaborative discussions, community clean-up initiatives, and the production and exhibition of artworks.

2.2.1 | Phase 1: Co-Experience (October to November 2021)

This phase involved ice-breaking and sharing sessions led by the gallery team (artists, curators, and Aftermath Thinker art collective), alongside discussions with the Kampung Muhibbah community about the environmental pollution issues they were experiencing. The project was initiated at the request of the residential committee, who sought support in addressing local waste management challenges. During co-experience, all participants contributed according to their knowledge and

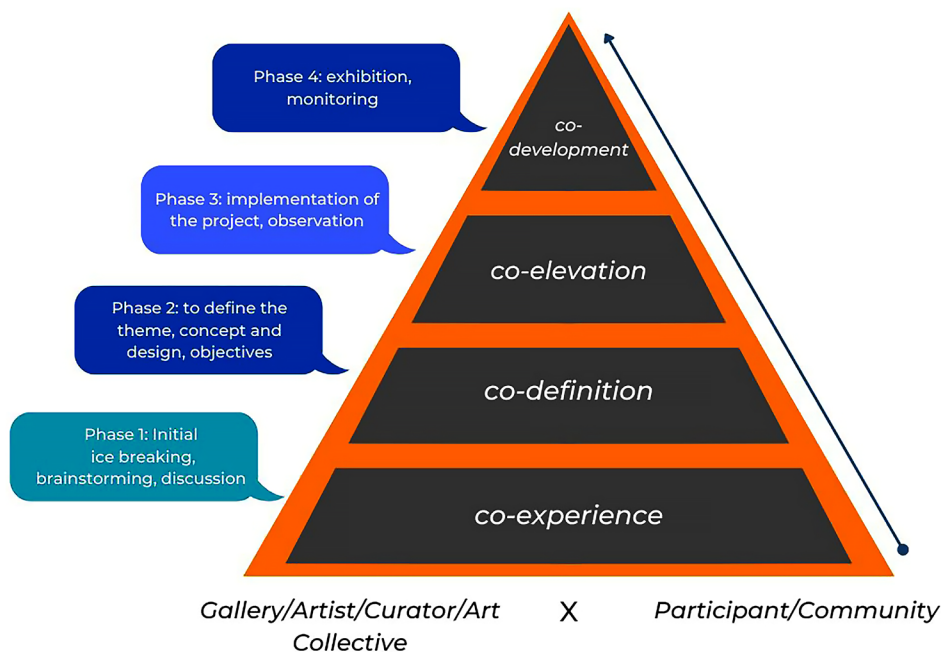


FIGURE 1 | Model of value co-creation by Galbrun and Kijima (2009). [Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]

TABLE 1 | The bin 2.0 art project timeline.

Model value of co-creation	Date	Item	Venue
Phase 1: Co-experience	October to November 2021	Site visits, meetings, discussions, interviews, sharing sessions, suggestions	Kpg Muhibbah, Kuching, Sarawak Malaysia
Phase 2: Co-definition	December 2021	Confirmation of ideas with the <i>Kampung Muhibbah</i> community, mass cleaning, and waste collection activity with the community	Kpg Muhibbah, Kuching, Sarawak Malaysia
Phase 3: Co-elevation	October 2022	Project Bin Art 2.0: collaborative plastic sculpture art production	Kpg Muhibbah, Kuching, Sarawak Malaysia
Phase 4: Co-development	January 2023	The Bin Art 2.0 Exhibition: monitoring & reflection	Saradise Gallery, Kuching Sarawak Malaysia & Kpg Muhibbah, Kuching, Sarawak Malaysia

capacities; however, it was acknowledged that levels of input varied among collaborators, reflecting the inherent asymmetries in community-based participatory projects (Bishop and Claire 2012; Arnstein 1969). The collaborative sessions allowed collaborators to share perspectives, identify concerns, and collectively propose an initial artistic approach, while recognizing that power dynamics and prior experience influenced participation.

2.2.2 | Phase 2: Co-Definition (December 2021)

In this phase, the project theme—a collaborative initiative creating artworks from recycled High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE) plastic, titled The Bin Art Project 2.0—was determined through negotiation among collaborators and community

participants. The name reflects local environmental concerns, particularly solid waste entering nearby rivers and affecting the village. In this study, co-definition is understood as a negotiated and dialogical process shaped by uneven participation, rather than a condition of equal consensus among all contributors. The project revealed systemic challenges, such as the distant waste disposal sites contributing to improper disposal practices. While all collaborators contributed to decision-making, their roles were differentiated, with curators and experienced artists guiding key technical and conceptual aspects, whereas youth participants offered contextual knowledge and practical insights. This reflects broader tensions in co-creation practices, where achieving full equality in participation is challenging, as noted in community-based art scholarship from both the Global South and critical participatory theory (Ulfe et al. 2024; Bishop 2012).



FIGURE 2 | Co-elevation: Group brainstorming session for HDPE plastic art production (Source: Personal Photograph, 2022). [Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cura.20053)]

2.2.3 | Phase 3: Co-Elevation (October 2022)

The Bin Art Project 2.0 project commenced from October 30, 2022 to November 6, 2022 and involved a total of 30 youth of Kampung Muhibbah as participants. The project's tentative is as follows:

After more than a year of learning about the community and subjects of the study, The Bin Art Project finally commenced on October 30, 2022, through co-creation art method. The project began with knowledge sharing sessions and presentation about plastic art from the Aftermath Thinker art collective. Next, a basic drawing and sketches lesson was facilitated by five artists from the FACA Art Gallery, UNIMAS for the project participants. A HDPE plastic art workshop was carried out on second half of the programme by the Aftermath Thinker to introduce the types of plastic materials and processing techniques such as pressing, heating, ironing, molding, and others. 30 participants were divided into 6 groups and each of them then collaborated to produce an artwork out of HDPE plastic materials facilitated by the art collective and artists from FACA Art Gallery. The collective art-making process by the community and gallery team took about 1 week, that ended on November 6, 2022.

Figure 2 shows the group brainstorming activity led by the facilitators (artists) to collectively decide upon a subject matter and selection of HDPE plastic processing techniques which are suitable for the final artwork production. Ultimately, the participants had chosen to create functional pieces such as bedside lamps, hand mirrors, kitchen linings, and others. This activity demonstrated the co-elevation phase of the project where ideas were negotiated, refined, and transformed into tangible creative products.

Figure 3 illustrates participants engaging in hands-on learning during the co-creation workshop, specifically in the process of HDPE plastic transformation. The image documents key activities such as the use of an oven to melt the plastic material and ironing techniques applied to reshape it, highlighting the practical and experiential nature of the workshop. Participants were led through processes such as melting, molding, extrusion, layering, collaging, sculpting, coloring, texturing, and combination with other materials. The facilitators focused on safety measures all through the activity, making sure the participants understood the necessary skills to produce their own art pieces. This practical engagement not only allows the development of skills but also encourages lifelong learning, enabling participants to apply and utilize these skills after the project ends.

2.3 | Critical Engagement and Challenges

The Bin Art Project was met with several real-world challenges that needed adaptive approaches. First, securing sufficient financial assistance to mobilize the project was a key limitation, where materials and scope of the project were affected by this constraint; facilitators had to maximize the usage of recycled materials creatively and made the activities flexible to boost participation. Second, navigating the different characters of the participants can be quite a challenge, as some were initially timid or shy. Facilitators addressed this through ice-breaking activities, organizing small group activities, as well as offering mentorship and support to encourage active participation. Third, the location of the project made logistical coordination difficult, due to small roads and limited access to activity space. This required flexible scheduling and continuing the activities in any available space in the residential village. Fourth, the sudden withdrawal



FIGURE 3 | Participants learning and practicing HDPE plastic processing techniques during the co-creation workshop, including oven melting and ironing processes (Source: Personal Photograph, 2022). [Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]

from the project by a community leader, which was largely due to financial issues, inevitably created tension. The facilitators quickly mediated discussions and reminded them of the project's shared vision, which eventually allowed the project to continue as planned. Finally, keeping the momentum of volunteer participation over time was challenging, as initial enthusiasm slowly diminished. Strategies to maintain consistent engagement to the project including reinforcing sense of project ownership among the participants, give awareness on the social and environmental impact of the project, and encouraging collaborative problem-solving. These experiences show that co-creation as a methodology is essentially dynamic, iterative, and context sensitive. The participants responded to these challenges by negotiating, adapting, and collaborating, which not only ensured the continuity of the project but also reinforced the participatory and reflective essences of the co-creation process. This critical engagement spotlights the flexibility and feasibility of co-creation in community-based curatorial practice.

Although the exhibition was eventually held at Saradise Art Gallery, Kuching, Sarawak. The FACA Art Gallery of

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak had played an important role in mobilizing and materializing The Bin 2.0 Art Project. FACA Art Gallery served as the organizer and centre of coordination, bringing together the artists, curators, and community collaborators, while also offering institutional endorsement in the form of official record and administrative assistance. Most importantly, the university gallery did not interfere with the curatorial planning or impose any ideological constraints upon the project, as the project goal aligned with the FACA Art Gallery's public responsibility to support community engagement, encourage experimental curatorial practices, and promote socially responsive art. Nevertheless, the lack of financial assistance from the gallery had caused a practical limitation, requiring the project team to secure funding from other resources and depending heavily on recycled materials and voluntary participation. The community's volunteering spirit was initially strong, but keeping participants committed to the project over time can be challenging, especially when there were no financial incentives for participation. These constraints did not necessarily come from institutional restrictions, but rather structural and logistical realities that typically occur in community-based projects, while co-creation art projects operate within academic frameworks. Recognizing these tensions and limitations underscores how much co-creation projects depended on external funding, the community's goodwill, and flexible institutional support, reiterating the need to consider the project's sustainability beyond its curatorial purpose alone.

3 | Results

At the end of the project, the youth participants have produced a total of 6 artworks with the help of the gallery team. This community-based project, which had employed the Value of Co-creation model by Galbrun and Kijima (2009) resulted in an exhibition named The Bin 2.0 Art Exhibition that highlighted the art-making process rather than the final artworks. The analysis of the study was done through phases in the said model where each phase had allowed creative collaboration for artistic production, as shown in Figure 1. The study had clearly shown that artistic production and exhibition can be made possible through a collaborative process with the community, and co-creation art had also provided an opportunity for the community to be artists as they were involved in the artistic production from start to finish.

As shown in Figure 4, the HDPE plastic artworks produced by participants during The Bin Art Exhibition demonstrate the outcomes of the co-creation process. These works not only highlight the transformation of recycled materials into art but also reflect participants' creative agency and collaborative learning throughout the project. From a curatorial perspective, co-creation art methods enabled meaningful creative collaboration between artists and community participants, which process will be further demonstrated and analyzed through the following sub-sections (Co-experience, Co-definition, Co-elevation, and Co-development), discussing how collective decision-making, knowledge exchange, and collaborative artistic production unraveled throughout the project. To prove this curatorial claim, the results are structured based



FIGURE 4 | HDPE plastic artworks co-created by community participants during *The Bin Art Exhibition*, showcasing outcomes of the co-creation process (Source: Personal Photograph, 2023). [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

on the Value of Co-creation model (Galbrun and Kijima 2009), showing how creative collaboration between artists and community participants developed across all four interconnected phases of co-experience, co-definition, co-elevation, and co-development.

3.1 | The Application of the Value of Co-Creation Model by Galbrun and Kijima (2009) Into the Bin Art Project

3.1.1 | Co-Experience: Initial Phase

Co-experience phase in the Value of Co-creation model is reflected through the initial phase in this case study where it involved curators doing an in-depth study about the subjects, issues, people, and the potential community. It is also important to note that the selection of curators and artists for the project was based on their experience and expertise in community involvement. Although the very idea of resolving the environmental waste pollution problem came from the community or youth of Kampung Muhibbah themselves, the community still needed the curators and artists to think of a creative solution to the said problem and ways to execute them. Hence, the curators saw an opportunity to bring forth the idea of turning recyclable waste into art. Critical exchanges such as dialogues, knowledge sharing, and ideas brainstorming between the gallery team and the community in this phase were crucial for the purpose of gaining a full understanding of the community's needs. Furthermore, the project theme was not solely decided by curators, but it was upon taking views and everyday experience of the community into consideration that took place in this phase. In the Value of Co-creation model by Galbrun & Kijima, the initial phase was for knowledge

sharing of experience and expertise, ideas, and thoughts from both gallery team and the community.

Bagi pihak kami, sangat berharap program sebegini dapat membantu kami dalam menyelesaikan permasalahan sampah plastik tok, jadi dengan penglibatan bersama pemuda, selain daripada menyelesaikan cara macam ni plastic tok boleh diatur, aspek kreativiti pun boleh juak disemai
(Ketua Kampung Muhibbah: Interviewee 2).

On behalf of our community, we sincerely hope that this program can help us address the issue of plastic waste. By involving the youth, not only can we find solutions for managing plastic waste, but we can also foster creativity
(Chief of Kampung Muhibbah: Interviewee 2).

The statement by the Chief of Kampung Muhibbah highlights the expectation from the community that this project would not only function as an initiative to address the environmental issue in the residential village but also as a platform for youth engagement and creative development. This shows that the community viewed plastic waste mismanagement as a social and cultural issue rather than a purely technical problem. By emphasizing on youth engagement, the statement aligned with the project's goal to apply co-creation as a tool for nurturing shared responsibility, creative innovation, and community empowerment in the long term. The involvement of youth was suggested by the community itself, and the idea was welcomed positively by the curators, further shows a collaborative decision-making process, an essential criterion

TABLE 2 | The bin art project 2.0 programme tentative.

The Bin 2.0 co-creation Art Project: 30 October 2022		
Item	Time	Panel
Ice breaking	9.00–9.30 am	All Participants
Breakfast	9.30–10.00 am	All
Talk and presentation on plastic arts	10.00–11.00 am	Aftermath Thinker Art Collective
Drawing and sketches	11.00 am–12.00 pm	Artist & Participants
Lunch	12.00–1.00 pm	Participants
Plastic arts workshop	1.00–3.30 pm	Participants
Short group presentation	3.30–4.00 pm	Participants
Reflection	4.00–4.30 pm	Participants

for co-creation practice. Main aspects of the projects such as core themes, participation, and division of labour were all discussed and decided collectively through a series of meetings with the community, rather than being predetermined by the curatorial team. This approach reflects the frameworks for participatory art that emphasize on dialogues, mutual learning, and redistribution of creative control between the artists and the community (Bishop 2022; Vargo and Lusch 2016). Furthermore, the community members expressing their frustration over the environmental pollution in their residential village positioned the project as a response to an ongoing social issue. In this context, the co-creation art process served as both an intervention to the existing environmental issue and as a creative strategy in empowering the community members through collaborative artistic production.

3.1.2 | Co-Definition: Concept and Design Phase

At the beginning of this phase, the curators, artists, and community decided upon a project theme—co-creation art from recyclable waste materials from the village residential area. All artworks were produced by the community with the help of the artists. The role of artists as facilitators provided assistance from initial sketches to the production of the final artwork.

Kamek orang memerlukan bantuan untuk memproses sampah atau plastik tersebut dan menjadikannya art, harap ada bantuan dari pihak galeri

(Ketua Belia Pemuda: Interviewee 1).

We need assistance to process the waste or plastic and turn it into art. We hope to receive support from the gallery

(Youth Leader: Interviewee 1).

The type of art activities that took place in this project and production of final artwork were also decided upon this phase. Additionally, the name of the co-creation art project, Project Bin 2.0 were generated in this phase through the views and

suggestions from the community. The fundamentals of sculpture were taught to the youth from such as introduction to basic sketching, artwork design, the application of techniques in plastic materials handling such as compress, ironing, assembling, shredding, melting, remolding, and others. The processing techniques were first refined by the curators to ensure that they can be easily followed and safe to be used by the community. The curators had also ensured that the early to final artwork sketches were done collectively. The community were given opportunity to produce early sketches and then it was highlighted in the co-elevation phase, or in this case study, the implementation phase. In a nutshell, curators, artists, and community had decided upon producing sculptures from recyclable waste materials such as HDPE plastic. These HDPE plastic materials were first collected by the community through cleanup activity; the plastics were then processed through plastic processing workshop; and finally preparing them for the final exhibition. This phase is important as the discourse and dialogues that took place were to ensure that all decision-making was always done collectively.

3.1.3 | Co-Elevation: Implementation Phase

The co-elevation phase, or implementation phase, was carried out on the co-creation art project (Table 2) on October 30, 2022. The implementation phase was the peak of the project case study where all artists, curators, and community came together to experience the co-creation art phenomenon that led to the sharing of aesthetic experience. There were two major aspects in this phase: First, the co-creation art activities that took place served as conceptualization and development of ideas that would lead to an art exhibition. Second, by witnessing the co-creation phenomenon, the curators had already started to have a gist of ideas on how the final art exhibition would look like. Concept development for exhibition design, initial sketches, and administrative and logistics planning were also established through this phase. The participants (community) were divided into groups, and each had a unique story, content, and backgrounds for their artworks. All communication, interactions, dialogues, and discussions that occurred in each group were then analyzed as findings in the exhibition.

Kumpulan kamek orang akan menghasilkan cermin yang menjadikan haiwan sebagai subject-matter, cermin ya kelak boleh dipake di rumah atau untuk jual

(Peserta Kumpulan 1).

Our group will create mirrors featuring animals as the subject matter. These mirrors can be used at home or sold

(Participant of Group 1).

The subject matters of the artworks were chosen by the participants themselves, while artists as facilitators were only there to supervise the sketching process, plastic processing, and other technical aspects. Social cohesion, bonding, and engagement between participants can also be seen in the implementation phase. At the end of this phase, there were a total of six artworks made from recyclable waste materials produced collectively by the participants which will be featured in the final exhibition.

3.1.4 | Co-Development: Monitoring Phase Through Exhibition

The artworks produced in the implementation phase were exhibited in The Bin Art Exhibition at Saradise Gallery, Kuching, Sarawak Malaysia from February 11 to 25, 2023 featuring more than 20 artworks through the collaboration of artists and community. In this phase, the art exhibition was held for the purpose of monitoring the development of the community artists involved. Monitoring was done through observation and short interview with the community artists where several aspects were taken into consideration such as advocating for future community projects, development of artistic skills, allegiance/loyalty towards future community projects, the interests to continue making art, and the effectiveness of co-creation art project in community involvement activities. The community artists' feedback are as follows:

Kumpulan kamek akan terus cuba untuk menghasilkan karya berdasarkan kemahiran yang telah diajar oleh fasilitator. Selain dari ya, kamek orang akan ajak sidak lain untuk join lah'.

Our group will keep trying to produce artwork based on the skills taught by the facilitator. Besides that, we'll invite others to join too

(Participant Group 2).

Based on the above statement, participant group 2 expressed that they will continue to make art in the future with the skills that were learned through the co-creation art project even without the facilitators' supervision. Additionally, they have also advocated for co-creation art projects by inviting new friends to participate in the future projects. Notably, throughout the course of the entire case study, there were groups of community artists that had shown confidence through art-making process as well as in the exhibition.

'Kamek orang rasa mudah jak untuk hasilkan karya seni dan polah pameran tok. Rasa best juak bah bila kita pamer dan orang harga hasil kerja kita'.

We feel it's quite easy to create artwork and organize this exhibition. It also feels great when people appreciate our artworks

(Participant Group 3).

These responses show that the exhibition served not only as a public display site, but also as monitoring and a phase of transition in the co-creation process. Through observations and post-exhibition interviews, participants had demonstrated an increase in confidence, retention of skills, and willingness to continue making art after the project ends. Rather than guaranteeing whether what was learned through the co-creation initiative would continue to be applied outside of the project, these findings indicate early signs of sustainability, including peer support, informal knowledge transfer to others, and self-initiated planning for future creative endeavors. In this sense, the exhibition operated as a platform for reflection where learning outcomes, motivation, and community initiatives could be assessed in practice.

As shown in Figure 5, participants expanded their material exploration by incorporating mixed-media approaches, combining HDPE plastic with wooden elements such as chairs. This integration reflects a deeper level of creative experimentation and problem-solving, illustrating how participants translated co-creation experiences into innovative artistic outcomes. In summary, monitoring during the exhibition phase indicates that most participants were motivated to continue engaging with artmaking after the completion of the project. Advocacy emerged organically as participants expressed interest in inviting others to join future initiatives, while confidence in artistic skills and collaborative processes increased. Although outcomes varied among individuals, the exhibition revealed strengthened social networks, emerging leadership, and early-stage planning for future creative projects. These findings suggest that co-creation functions as a catalyst for continued community engagement rather than a definitive endpoint, highlighting both its potential and contextual limitations.

4 | Discussion

While Galbrun and Kijima (2009) provided valuable insights into experiential engagement, this study is more closely aligned with participatory art and social practice discourse, as suggested by Kester (2011), Bishop (2022), and Lacy (1995). These frameworks offer a humanities-centered view that provides better representation of the collaborative, social engagement, and community-oriented nature of the Bin Art Project. In parallel, this study adopts an interdisciplinary approach that combines curatorial practice, participatory art, and environmental sustainability. Instead of placing the project into a single disciplinary framework, The Bin 2.0 Exhibition fuses artistic methodology with social engagement and environmental stewardship, demonstrating the complex, real-world situation of how community-centered art operates. Such an approach aligns with participatory art discourse which views artistic practice as a part



FIGURE 5 | Mixed-media artworks combining HDPE plastic and wood, co-created by participants during The Bin Art Exhibition (2023), demonstrating material experimentation and creative integration (Source: Personal Photograph, 2023). [Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cura.20053)]

of society and its surroundings (Lacy 1995; Kester 2011; Mat, Leong, and Al-Nahari 2023).

4.1 | Curatorial Format

The co-creation art concept in The Bin Art Exhibition not only opened an opportunity to produce artwork collaboratively, but it also created an experience that transversed the boundaries of conventional art. The curatorial format that applies the co-creation method with the community is not merely collaborative but also provides a space and opportunity for an inclusive, meaningful, hands-on aesthetic experience of the art-making process itself. This curatorial method is in line with Kester's (2011) concept of dialogical aesthetics, where meaning is created through continuous interactions, collaborative authorship, and mutual exchange between artists and community participants, instead of being created independently. The thorough involvement has indeed created an extensive impact on all parties involved. Furthermore, art exhibitions such as this have also given the community a platform to express views, share stories, and feel the importance of their contribution. This will not only increase the potential for community involvement in art but also establish a sense of ownership, whereby the collective identity and local culture are reflected through the final produced artworks. The co-creation method that was adapted in the art exhibition served as a medium to strengthen the bond within the community, establish a wider and stronger social network, and encourage appreciation towards the environment in their daily life (Mat 2021). Other than that, for the community that has less exposure to the art scene, such as people living in the rural area, the co-creation curatorial format has the potential to eliminate boundaries between professional artists and the public. The curatorial aspect such as such helped to reduce barriers for people to take part in art, making art accessible and relevant to all levels of society. In the long term, the audience/community

involvement may potentially increase social awareness towards environmental sustainability, local culture, and nurture unity through collaborative artworks.

4.2 | Co-Creation Art as Creative Collaboration

Co-creation in art refers to collaborative processes where artists and participants that are usually from the same community work together to generate ideas, to create and to complete an artwork. This approach goes beyond the conventional boundaries between artists and audiences by nurturing a sense of ownership and involvement in the creative process. Co-creation art has become increasingly popular as a strategy to democratize art, making it accessible and meaningful to all levels of society through the issues brought forward or shared values that were reflected in the art. This understanding of co-creation reflects Bishop's (2012) discussion of participatory art, where the value of artistic practice lies not only in its aesthetic outcome but in its capacity to generate social relations, shared responsibility, and critical engagement. Similarly, Kester (2011) argues that collaborative art practices foster empathy and trust by privileging collective dialogue over individual authorship. In The Bin Exhibition 2.0, co-creation emphasized balanced contribution where exchange between artists and community was done constantly, and each voice was equally important. This is different from the conventional method where artists usually decide upon the final artwork, and the community was not involved in the earlier stage of ideas exchange. The involvement in co-creation as creative collaboration encourages empathy, building trust, and bridging the gap between different backgrounds including social, environment, culture, or economy.

There were several main elements of co-creation that were highlighted in The Bin 2.0 art exhibition project: (1) Inclusivity—the project had invited participants from various

levels of artistic knowledge and skills; (2) Collective shared vision—all collaborators of The Bin 2.0 project shared a collective vision of organizing a sustainable art project through the usage of plastic waste materials collected in the residential village area. At the same time, it was also done to raise awareness on issues pertaining to environmental sustainability; (3) Co-ownership—co-creation art encourages participants to feel a sense of ownership towards the produced artworks. This is not just to increase sense of responsibility but also to nurture a sense of pride towards the co-created artwork. In The Bin 2.0 art exhibition, each member of the involved community feels that the artworks produced are co-owned by them because of the equal contribution made throughout the project and, most importantly, all efforts were seen and appreciated; (4) Contextual sensitivity—the application of contextual sensitivity in the curatorial aspects of The Bin 2.0 art exhibition took not only cultural and social values but also environmental issues of the involved community into consideration. The critical environmental issues of plastic waste pollution are very relevant to the daily life of the local community; (5) Community empowerment—the curators of The Bin 2.0 art exhibition had witnessed the importance of co-creation art in empowerment, giving the community the opportunity to voice their thoughts and opinions and to learn and develop new skills through active participation in the artistic process.

The residents of Kampung Muhibbah that were involved in The Bin 2.0 Project were trained to understand creative recycling, at the same time giving them knowledge and awareness on environmental issues. Co-creation is a curatorial approach that nurtures collaboration spirit, openness, and empowerment. Through the active involvement of all parties in the co-creation process, it is not only capable of producing meaningful art but it can also strengthen social connections, raise awareness, and provide possible solutions for critical issues faced by the community.

4.3 | Reflections on Challenges and Adaptation

The co-creation process in The Bin Art Project also unraveled several challenges that influenced both the methodology and the experience of the participants. Limited funding had affected the selection of materials and project scope, requiring the facilitating team to make creative adjustments and maximize the use of recycled materials. Participant engagement was uneven at first, where some were timid or shy; after building their trust, having small group mentorship, and some peer support, their active participation gradually increased. Limited access to the activity space demanded flexible scheduling and adaptive activities. Conflicts such as when a community leader withdrew from the project due to financial issues, facilitators then reminded them of the shared vision and collaborative decision-making, and the project eventually continued as planned. Finally, the issue where volunteer participation decreased over time required the facilitating team to reinforce a sense of ownership among the participants, while reminding them of the positive impact of the project on the environment and social bonding. These challenges and adaptive measures show that the co-creation curatorial approach is iterative, relational, and context sensitive. It evolves through negotiation, reflection, and mutual

learning, rather than a linear process. This enables participants to actively influence the creative processes and the final exhibition outcomes. Navigating these challenges critically not only allows the continuity of the project, but it also strengthens the participants' understanding of the arts, empowering the community, nurturing a sense of responsibility to the project, and highlighting the transformative potential of co-creation in contemporary curatorial practice.

4.4 | Nature and Sustainability

The Bin 2.0 Art Exhibition highlighted the interdependence relationship between art, nature, and sustainability by situating artistic practice as both a learning and transformative tool. Instead of simply focusing on artwork production, the project also aimed to nurture environmental consciousness through creative practice by turning discarded plastic waste into sculptures. High-density polyethylene (HDPE), an easily obtainable material that is also widely known for its durability and resistance to natural deterioration, was repurposed as the main material for the artistic project. This curatorial strategy not only lessens the amount of plastic waste being irresponsibly discarded into the environment but also rethinks waste materials as a medium of aesthetic and educational value. Aside from transforming waste materials into useful, creative products, the exhibition held at the end of the project served as a platform to raise public awareness of environmental issues. The curatorial approach employed art as a medium of communication to shine light upon issues pertaining to plastic waste pollution and environmental harm. The active involvement of waste collection, cleaning up activities, and the production of artwork among the community members allows the concept of sustainability to be experienced in practice rather than conceptually. The project made environmental learning through active participation, reiterating the importance of recycling, conservation, and care for the environment. The core theme and final artworks in the form of artistic sculptures further inspired the goal for humans and nature to co-exist harmoniously.

Additionally, the artworks were not made solely for aesthetic use; instead, they brought about visual narratives that informed the public about shared responsibility for environmental protection. By highlighting nature as a common heritage, the exhibition calls to encourage collective reflection on long-term environmental care and responsibility. Furthermore, the Bin 2.0 project had also contributed to social sustainability through co-creation and community engagement. The creative process that was done collaboratively fostered mutual learning, social bonding among the project collaborators, mutual learning, and a shared sense of responsibility among the participants. It is important to note that the involvement of youth from Kampung Muhibbah was an intentional curatorial strategy, acknowledging young people as the agents that would shape the attitudes and practices on environmental care in the future. In this project, the participants were encouraged to address environmental issues innovatively through creative problem-solving and practical engagement, making them not only beneficiaries of the project but also actively contributing to sustainable community practices.

5 | Conclusion

The Bin 2.0 Art Exhibition shows how co-creation art can serve as a constructive curatorial approach to engage communities with issues such as environmental sustainability. It has also enabled meaningful collaboration between artists and the local community by highlighting inclusivity, co-ownership, and contextual sensitivity that eventually transformed into an art project based on collective shared experience and responsibility. The process of transforming HDPE plastic waste into creative sculptures demonstrated collective creativity and provided a hands-on, art-centered response to environmental issues. Furthermore, sustainability values that were integrated in The Bin 2.0 Art Exhibition illuminate the interdependence between art, nature, and society. Participants have developed much awareness on sustainability issues such as waste reduction and creative recycling through active participation in the collaborative activities and creative processes of the co-creation art project. This shows that art has functioned as both a learning tool and a platform for social engagement, inspiring the community to be responsible for the environment through practice.

The study further emphasizes the significance of curatorial methodology in transforming community engagement. Shifting away from the conventional way of exhibition approach where the art piece is displayed as a completed object with a fixed interpretation, the co-creation method requires the participants to be actively involved in all of the creative processes, from the development to the execution of the idea. The participatory criteria helped to reduce the hierarchical gap between the artists and community participants by allowing meaning to be created through collective shared processes, dialogue exchange, and lived experience. In result, art became more accessible and relevant through the integration of issues relatable to the community. Nevertheless, the findings do not cause any permanent or major impact, but they have rather shown the potential of co-creation art being able to create conditions for continuous engagement, transfer of skills, and community-led practices beyond the project. In conclusion, The Bin 2.0 Art Exhibition has proved that co-creation art as a curatorial method can foster social awareness, responsibility over the environment, and continuous community participation, providing a feasible framework for community-centered and sustainability-oriented art projects in the future with a similar contextual background.

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Data Availability Statement

The authors have nothing to report.

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