

“PUNAKAWAN” LOCAL CHARACTER AS A CREATIVITY IDEA IN DESIGNING VISUAL COMMUNICATION

Pujiyanto, Sarjono, Andy Pramono

Department of Art and Design, Faculty of Letters, Malang State University,
INDONESIA.

pujiyanto.msn@gmail.com, anihr91@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Creator is those creatively producing works enjoyable to society. Through his design, the society will be amused, fascinated, and surprised seeing his work having high esthetics as if reminiscent of other work they have ever seen. The work, among others, includes Visual Communication design by creators originating from idea of Archipelago's local cultural art. Punakawan familiar to the society's heart particularly Central Java as the legendary characters often becoming inspiration in creating visual communication design. Creative work is a visual communication design developing the preexisting work, Punakawan of leather puppet (wayang kulit). Through the soft hearth, Punakawan characters consisting of Semar, Petruk, Gareng, and Bagong were conjured into a new work making the audiences amazed. Whether or not this extension work is creative should be answered using Doyle Dane Bernbach's theory, stating that a creative work should contain ROI elements: relevant, original and impact. This research was conducted using purposive sample in poster, cartoon and animation works referring to Punakawan characters. The result showed that the extension work designed by creators informed and published in social media has high creative value with contemporary style and with themes of commonality, pleasure, cheerfulness, and seriousness different from previous traditional work.

Keywords: Archipelago's local culture, punakawan, creativity, visual communication design

INTRODUCTION

Media is an intermediary form used to disseminate idea by communicator (sender), so that the idea can be acceptable to the communicant (receiver). Media is channel, as essentially it has expanded human ability of tasting, hearing, and seeing at certain spatial and temporal borders. Media is a means used to deliver message from communicator to communicant (Rohani, 1997:2), because it can lead us to build moral solidarity relation imaginatively. Basically, media serves as the moral enlightening medium, because there is an in-depth dialogical relation between the signs in media and its audiences (Tester, 2009: 164). Everyone believes that media has power indeed (Burton, 2008: 2), because media can create what they know about world and can be the main source of various ideas and opinions. Basically media can affect our ways of thinking and acting.

One of them is social media recently becoming a means of inspiring and visualizing ideas freely into word, sentence and picture forms. Social media is a global collection of thousands networks managed freely. This media becomes popular because it is an appropriate media to acquire latest information with its variations quickly and accessible. To a creative communicator, this media is used as a means of expressing, producing and informing work to

the society. To communicate with Archipelago spirit, they create a work by raising their culture into the artwork expanding the preexisting one. It should be praised amid the borderless cultural transformation in globalization changing our culture into the new one. In dealing with this challenge, creators try to hamper the current by creating this contemporary visual communication design stemming from the Archipelago's local culture. This contemporary visual communication design work becomes a new soul despite the expansion of preexisting "Javanese" culture. Through the creators' creativity, a real work can be produced based on the local philosophy. The work can raise the Archipelago's local culture to global level either directly or indirectly.

Culture, in this case is considered as a thinking system, involving a shared idea system, concept system, rule and meaning underlying and expressed in human life order. The culture defined in such way refers to what the human beings learn, rather than what they do. Culture is the entire knowledge of human beings as social creature, used to understand and to interpret their experience and environment into the basic frame creating and encouraging the realization of beneficial behavior.

When culture is considered as concept, according to Koentjaraningrat (1987: 9), it is entire human idea and work that should be habituated by learning, along with all products of thinking and work. This argument confirms that: (1) culture is entire human idea and work, (2) culture should be habituated by learning or working process, (3) culture is entire product of mind and work. Therefore, it can be concluded that cultural concept is the complexity of idea exploration, working process, and work product through creativity.

Creativity is a general term for anything related to artistry, invention and problem solving. Quentin Newark (Concept, 2005: 53) said that there are two points in creativity: (1) making sense, thinking simply and clearly in idea and visualization, not making the audience confused in a complicated work, (2) creating difference, having spirit to make everything apparently different from others, and then stimulating the advent of original and innovative works. Creativity is an emphasis on a different process or producing something new and attractive from the previous idea. Creativity is something the human beings have in the form of ability of finding approaches, breakthrough, and thinking as well as new idea to deal with problem to solve it quickly and accurately in their own way to produce something new, unique, different, and better than the previous one.

The process of exploring idea starts with concentration on the problem of brainstorming, selection, alternative, incubation, inventing, verifying or producing. In exploring ideas, let brainstorming runs smoothly; therefore when an idea arises, please do not hamper it although it is less interesting, too shallow or too foolish. Develop the less interesting idea into the interesting one. Ideas should be explored and developed continuously until the selected final product is found. Large companies always look for new ideas such as Shell Oil Company has a unique way. They provide 1.8 millions dollar to look for new ideas. Everyone successfully providing new idea is given 10 minutes to explain it. Then, audience will pose some questions about the new ideas.

To generate creativity, the creator's self-motivation and external (environment) factors are needed. The creator's self-motivation, is the one built in individual earlier. It can be done by introducing an individual to creative activities, aiming to generate curiosity, and to do something new. The requirement for the creator's self motivation to arise, according to Beakley (1974: 59), is: (1) interest in a problem and wish to solve problem, (2) no big problem inhibiting, (3) mastering information relevant to the problem, (4) information obtained can be absorbed and processed systematically, (5) the soul feels composed and pleasant, (6) feeling to be free from pressure, (7) no constraint with thinking function, such as

anxiety, (8) using stimulation helping its settlement such as reading, discussion, lecturing, and etc, (9) attempt the quiet opportunity in order to generate inspiration. External motivation is an external condition (environment). Creativity is indeed not compellable, but should be allowed to grow. Individual needs external condition that can develop its potency. Therefore, it is important to utilize environment (external condition) that can cultivate encouragement inside individual to develop his creativity.

Creativity is an emphasis on a different process or producing something new and unique from the product of previous idea. Most people consider that creativity can be assessed through an individual or group's idea. The creative one of course has original idea using new way different from others' way, seeing something from unique perspective. Creativity results in repeated work process through finding the idea produced. Creativity is something owned by human being in the form of ability of finding approaches, breakthrough and thinking and new idea to deal with the most urgent problem to be solved quickly and accurately to produce something new and unique, different from and better than previous one.

The presence of good visual communication design work can be accepted by all communities, because in its production idea is explored sincerely. Idea is explored continuously through combining all ideas that can be seen from its idea process and product to result in new form through ongoing thinking and reflection (evolution). In the beginning of process, we look for and find new idea despite Archipelago's local cultural art origin. Some ideas found are then sorted and selected through execution to find out its weakness and its strength from different perspectives in order to achieve the quality of archipelago esthetics.

Indonesia as an eastern country rich of culture distributed throughout Archipelago inherent to regions, areas, and islands. So many cultures distributed throughout Indonesia facilitate us in creating a creative visual communication design work with archipelago character. A visual communication design work considered as having local Archipelago cultural element is the one that can feature a local original cultural expression touch in Indonesia, such as the character of puppetry "Punakawan". One ways of informing the work and popularize the local-based visual communication design work is, among others, through social media. In what extent the creative local works of creators can be familiar and often informed and published in social media.

METHOD

Punakawan is the character of puppetry consisting of Semar, Petruk, Gareng, and Bagong. These characters are very familiar in Java Island, particularly in Central Java. These four figures have different characters. In its application, the name of these figures are often used in people name, shop name, brand name, and etc, while visually they are often featured as park adornment, caricature, animation, and poster design. The work is communicated in some ways, including through television, printed media, and social media. For the research to be more focused, the problem is limited to visual communication design work, in which Punakawan object idea is communication and published in social media.

The data was collected using conventional observation not including emotional relation with the creator of work (Rohidi, 2011: 184), but reflecting the object focusing on visual communication design works informed and published in social media originating from idea of punakawan character. The observation on the data of visual communication design works in social media was conducted directly and freely from various different perspectives to obtain an accurate data. Sampling technique used was purposive sampling one to obtain the sample representing the data to be explored according to its work type. The sample was taken from three groups of visual communication design work: poster, cartoon and animation. The data collected was then analyzed based on creativity. Doyle Dae Berncbach (DDB) agency

from New York said that the creative and effective visual communication is the one relevant and meaningful to audience, original, new, and attracting attention, and impacting or generating impression in the audiences (Moriarty, Nancy & Wells, 2000: 433-455).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The result of exploration and discussion in this research is divided into three parts to obtain a good design product based on ROI: relevant creativity and meaningful to the audience seeing. The original creativity means new, fresh, unexpected, uncommon, surprising, and attractive idea to the audience. The impacting creativity means the one generating positive value in the audience usually opening social media.

Relevant to Local Archipelago Cultural Art

The word relevant or “compatible” means that visual communication design produced by creators should be consistent with local Archipelago culture-based message. Through creator, the audience opening social media has understood the message delivered. Visual communication design work is one of cultural manifestation. The work, according to Widagdo (1993:1) is the work product from prevailing values in certain period of time. As the cultural work product, design work is inseparable from abstract and spiritual cultural phenomena always related to economic and social systems. Basically, the presence of every design work has its own general character as seen from its shape and intrinsic and extrinsic properties it has. The application of intrinsic and extrinsic properties in every design can be perceived as the distinguishing attempt that can be divided into style appearance or distinctive pattern. To help the creative shaping process, according to Safanayong (2006: 37), organization guidance is required, it can be achieved by applying the visual organization principles to organize the relationship between shape, composition, and message components intended. The creative process can be largely divided into: (a) the presence of same characteristics in every design regardless its media; this symptom appears because nearly all design work always uses main topic, and (b) the presence of esthetic experience analogy; this symptom can be seen from appreciation and reward to be assessed.

The work produced by creators has Javanese local Archipelago cultural art value intended to Javanese community so that dialectics occur between communicator (creator) and communicant (audience). They are equally familiar to the Punakawan puppetry character often seen, heard, and held on. The figure is often seen in puppet show demonstrated by narrator (*dalang*), or picture featured in batik brand, jewelry shop name, sale property, and interior esthetic adornment. The society often hears about funniness, ridicule, concord, and compactness of Punakawan characters and their guidance containing advises about human life as His directive. This condition is favorable to the creators in designing visual communication design in any form and style will be received by the audiences as it is relevant to its condition and life.

Puppetry character has a relaxed but serious delivery method so that what is delivered is absorbable and acceptable to the community. Similarly, the creators follow the style of characters so that the message delivered is acceptable to the audience often opening social media. The delivery method adjusted with *empan* (informed) *papan* (the place of delivery method), and *adepan* (who the audience is). *Empan* is adjusted with condition and hot issue in the society, *papan* is consistent with social media informed globally, but keep paying attention to ethical code and law prevailing in Indonesia, *adepan* is the target audience as the target of message receiver, in this case, Javanese community, so that the delivery method used should be modest and not discriminating by Ethnic, Custom, Race, and Religion (SARA), and maintaining *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity).

The Novelty Compared Previous Cultural Art

The work is original meaning that it is a new design work despite originating from the idea of preexisting work, such as the old archipelago cultural art. Designing inspired by the ancient work is a way of exploring idea quickly in creating visual communication design. It is confirmed by Kelly and Littman (2001: 88) in *The Art Innovation* underlining that an individual innovating successfully does not always do the “right” thing by means of making certain leap to bridge the gap between new habit and idea done. The use of incubation method often takes a long time. The smart process is to shorten the cycle by making significant transformation to yield a different work, through local Archipelago culture-based design revolution to be developed into new design work. Buzan (2001: 53), in *The Power of Creative Intelligence* stated that imitating is the first essential tool in learning process, how the brain works in building knowledge foundation so that creators can develop themselves creatively.

The work designed by creators is the development design work can be stated as a new one because based on shape, style, work type, characteristic, and function, it has different meaning from the previous one. Through formerly two-dimension visual form that can be seen laterally, it then develops into three-dimension shape that can be seen from the right-the left and the front-the back and apparent alive. Similarly, the traditional design style develops into the contemporary and modern one because it is worked on with technology aid and creator’s vision. They are so creative that do not want to create one type of work only as they want to improve their existence to produce other work type, by changing leather puppet into cartoon, comic, and animation movie.

The type of works develops as the old story develops into new one, for example Ramayana story develops into Universe story, meaning the puppetry story changes into the story of daily reality existing in the world as if not exhausted to be told through Punakawan visualization. The formerly serious story about the condition of kingdom develops into cheerfulness about life in general society. The story of Punakawan formerly serving to accompany and to entertain the King in fighting against the enemy and eradicating the crime, now develops into the story about fighting against human’s passion. Such the condition changes the visual form from philosophical message to moral message, to change the society’s attitude into the better one in order to undertake life straightly and correctly.

From its function aspect, originally, Punakawan character serves as the complement or core of leather puppet show, as it is put in the middle of performance. In its development, Punakawan character is designed in other forms, thereby serving as the complement of interior esthetic to make the room beauty and to give “bourgeoisie” image as the lifestyle in the society. Punakawan in puppetry serves as the message sender when there is a leather puppet show intended to the society, but in its development, the message can be delivered through social media to the public.

Positive Effect on Cultural Art Development

Creating work is to create a visual communication design work useful to ourselves or others. The word “useful” is emphasized not only on benefit but also on the satisfaction of audience enjoying it. The process of creating work is the process of visualizing idea into real work. For example, in the process of creating visual communication design, according to Budiman (2008: 85-87), the creators should understand: (1) the problem starting with data collection as the basic material to be analyzed. The data can be written (verbally) and pictorial (visual) ones that were then inventoried and analyzed so that an integral understanding is obtained. (2) Basic concept of design is the stage of looking for basic idea becoming the most appropriate solution and the preference of communication language is dependent on audience

objectives, the output of which is creative brief. (3) The selection of appropriate visual object to represent direct message with audience's perception on the message delivered. The selection of appropriate object will determine the effectiveness level of message delivery. (4) In creative execution, there should be a reliable concept maker to master graphic software to be published in mass media. (5) The placement of media is the implementation of creative output in media selected based on the compatibility to purpose, objective, and target message in order to be efficient, effective, and communicative. (b) The final stage is evaluation conducted before and before the design work is delivered to target audience. Evaluation conducted before the show in mass media is intended to find out the representation of audience's reception and refusal to the design work made. Evaluation conducted after the publication process in mass media is intended to find out the audience's response to the design work.

The appearance of new creators in producing design work based on Archipelago cultural art leads to many more types of work produced by the nation's generation. From puppetry art becomes the comic work so that animation movie that can be watched by the public. The creators formerly creating a work using a group of Punakawan character, now develop into visual communication design work that can be enjoyed by society. Somehow, the creators can feature a work making the people fascinated. People sometimes do not expect that the simple idea comes from daily life, and daily life can result in a great work. A great work will generate reaction among the observers (watchers), while the idea presented has never been found or seen in our surrounding life. The simplicity and precision in catching an object results in the work that can be communicated again through design work that is acceptable and understandable to the society.

The visual communication design work designed by creator can affect the audience as the message receiver. The good visual communication design can communicate interactively with the message receiver (audience) so that they take action on the message delivered visually or verbally. The creator delivering message not only for a group of Javanese people but has been delivered in social media. Geographically, only certain people could see the puppet performance, but now every one can see it. Formerly those enjoying puppet are mostly adult as it contains life philosophy, but now they are dominated with the youths because the message pertains directly to the occurrence existing based on the condition and situation experienced.

CONCLUSION

When observed closely, the visual communication design work informed and published is the contemporary-style work referring to local archipelago cultural art. A design work is stated as having local cultural element when it can feature a local archipelago cultural expression touch existing in Indonesia. Innovative work developed from the past cultural art can be used as the means of hampering the Western Culture to enter into Indonesia continuously. Creating a work with archipelago spirit can be done through developing the existing cultural art into the new one.

Punakawan as the characters in leather puppet inspires the creator to design a work. The creators create contemporary design in a visual communication design originating from the idea of Punakawan puppetry characters. These characters always appear in "goro-goro" story in the puppet performance. Their appearance is always waited for because of their funniness in delivering moral message becoming the hot issue in the society. These character as if become the icon of Javanese culture particularly Central Java inherent to the community's hear.

The members of society have been so familiar with these idolized puppetry characters, that the characters find no difficulty in delivering message through visual communication design work in social media. The visual enrichment with the appearance not changing the characteristics of figure really helps the audience understand the message delivered.

Creativity in designing visual communication design not only changes its “cloths” but also leads more to the local archipelago character viewed based on relevant, original, and impact. The visual communication design work designed by creators is informed and communicated to social media familiar with the society as it is based on local archipelago cultural art that has been familiar with their environment, although the different visual images have been developed to express cheerfulness, seriousness, and funniness.



Figure 1. Punakawan Characters in leather puppet as the inspiration in creating visual communication design work. through this work, the local archipelago cultural art-based work is no longer strange to Central Java people.

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