

THE INFLUENCE OF WESTERN ART DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS THE EMERGENCE OF NEW FINE ART MOVEMENT IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

New Fine Art Movement in Indonesia has been currently conducting resistance action against senior artists over the compartmentalizing tradition based on the media or its art medium, i.e. painting on canvas, sculpture, and graphics. The opportunities for renewing the art using any new media are not at least appreciated. In 1974 senior artists still emphasized painting as the highest art form that they did not provide any way for alternative media which highly developed at that time in the West. Abstract, cubical, and decorative paintings depicting nature, tradition, batik, and family life were such themes and content of paintings appreciated by Jakarta Arts Council. Those paintings look calm without any problems, but they mostly do not reflect what was actually happening in the community at that time. This unsatisfying situation experienced by young artists from ITB (Bandung Institute of Technology) students and Asri Yogya (Indonesia Fine Art Academy, now Indonesia Institute of Arts Yogyakarta) eventually exploded when the Jury of the Great Paintings Exhibition of Indonesia supervised by Jakarta Arts Council announced its five best paintings. The result caused some protests and led to the emergence of Black December 1974 statement.

Keywords: Black December, realism photo, paintings works, alternative media.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian New Art Movement occurred in 1975. This movement was elaborated in detail by the artists involved such as Jim Supangkat and FX Harsono along with the foreign observers of the movement such as Claire Holt. This New Art Movement started with a protest from 16 artists of ITB and ASRI Yogya over the final results of the Great Paintings Exhibition of Indonesia organized by Jakarta Arts Council held on December 18 – 31, 1974 in Taman Ismail Marzuki (Ismail Marzuki Park), Jakarta, Indonesia. Moreover, this exhibition event was then referred as the first Jakarta Biennale. The Judges Panel of this Great Indonesian Painting Exhibition consisted of Popo Iskandar, Affandi, Rusli, Fadjar Sidik, Sudjoko, Alex Papadimetru, and Umar Kayam. In addition, the panel chose Irsam's "*Matahari dari atas Taman*" (Sun from the Park), Widayat's "*Keluarga*" (Family), Abas Alibasjah's "*Lukisan Wajah*" (Face Painting), Aming Prayitno's "*Pohon*" (Tree), and Abdul Djalil Pirous's "*Tulisan Putih*" (White Writing) as the five best works (Janti, 2020).

The judging results caused protests from many artists, such as Muryotohartoyo, Juswar, F.X. Harsono, Bonyong Munni Ardhi, M. Sulebar, Ris Purwana, Daryono, Siti Adiyati, D.A. Peransi, Baharudin Narasutan, Ikranegara, Adri Darmadji, Hardi, and Abdul Hadi WM. They made a joint statement entitled 'Black December 1974 Statement'. The second point of the Black December statement mentioned their aspirations stating that painting art should "be oriented towards social life, cultural, political, and economic reality". Furthermore, the fifth point, a clearer statement was addressed to 'cultural art entrepreneurs' and 'established artists', i.e. "that what hinder the development of Indonesian painting are outdated concepts"

which are still hold by the judges of The Great Indonesian Painting Exhibition (@arsipIVAA, 2020).

ITB Artists mostly did 'hiding' themselves in the 1960s after their 1954 exhibition at Balai Budaya due to being strongly criticized by Trisno Sumardjo. The criticism was written in Siasat magazine entitled "*Bandung Mengabdikan laboratorium Barat*" (Bandung Serves Western Laboratory) and it was also immensely criticized by a sharp blow from Sitor Situmorang, the head of the left-leaning LKN (National Culture Institution). In post-1965, they held another exhibition again at Taman Ismail Marzuki in 1971. The artists were But Muchtar, Ahmad Sadali, Mochtar Apin, Abdul Djalil Pirous, Srihadi Soedarsono, Rita Widagdo, Gregorius Sidharta, Sanento Juliman, Harjadi Soeadi, Umi Dachlan, Samsudin Dajat, Kaboel Soeadi, Sunaryo, T. Sutanto, Jusuf Affendy, Erna Pirous, Roestam Arief and Surja Pernawa. They themselves named this group of artists as 'Group 18'. The works displayed in the form of paintings and sculptures which were almost entirely in abstract expressionism and cubism style became a breath of fresh air and antithesis of socialist realism that had been buried after 1965. Meanwhile, Umar Kayam as the Chairman of the Jakarta Arts Council stated in the catalogue introduction to the catalog that "we are awaiting their presence with great hopes that we will experience contemplating exciting art works" (Pirous, 1971:1).

Post-1965 was a euphoria period of independence and freedom in creating art. There were previously other groups consisting of Agus Djaja, Otto Djaja and Affandi holding an exhibition at Gedung Pola Jakarta in 1968. It was then followed by younger artists, such as Kusnadi, Suparto, Zaini, Oesman Effendi, Mustika and Mulyadi. A year later, ASRI lecturers held the same exhibition in Jakarta. They were Bagong Kussodiardjo, Budiani, Edhi Sunarso, Widayat, Fadjar Sidik, Abas Alibasjah and Mujitha (Dermawan, 1991:124). Their paintings were mostly decorative in motif, displaying tradition elements, traditional batik patterns, natural images or folk art. Thus, it is clear what is meant by 'cultural art entrepreneurs' and 'established artists' in Black December statement, i.e. the artists who at that time gained a spacious place in the post-1965 fine art competition arena whose most of their works were in abstract expressionism, cubism, decorativism styles, and brought up tradition, nature and regionalism themes. Such background became the reason when the works won in the Great Paintings Exhibition of Indonesian were the artists who were risingly famous and enjoying freedom of exploration without being overshadowed by the spirit to uplift the reality of life happening at that time. On the other hand, the protesters in Black December voiced the aspirations stating that painting "is oriented to the reality of social, cultural, political, and economic life." Although Black December statement did not indicate any new other alternatives of paintings art works, there was, in the next action, a tendency for a New Art Movement to present new media or medium which came beyond painting. This issue is the main focus of the study and the discussion in this research.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research method based on literature study data was used to reconstruct the origin of thought which sparked the emergence of the New Fine Art Movement. Moreover, social and historical contexts of the early 70s from related books or literature were used to connect the situation occurring before Black December and the New Fine Art Movement. Then, the phenomena of the fine art world in America in the 1960s which influenced the way of thinking of artists and works in the New Fine Art Movement were taken as the reference for the research analysis.

This study describes the existence of post-1965 art, i.e. when there was not any place for the flow of social realism school in Indonesian paintings. Socialist realism was adopted and used

by Lekra (peoples' cultural association, a left wing literary and cultural organization until the mid-1960s) since the late 1950s onwards. This school perpetuated art as the reflection of the labors' and farmers workers (peasantry)'s struggle towards socialist society. However, in the world of painting, the group committed to this genre was Sanggar Bumi Tarung (SBT), which was pioneered by Amrus Natalsja. According to Amrus Natalsja, socialist realism is relevant to the Marxist aesthetic understanding which cannot simply detach art from the whole history evolution, and places art as an integral part of the continuity of society history. Moreover, Misbach Tamrin stated that Sanggar Bumi Tarung was determined to wage 'resistance art' through the visual language of 'revolutionary realism'. The most important element is no longer merely describing the sufferings due to class oppression, it instead rather provided the only solution, i.e. 'resisting'. Meanwhile, the depiction of 'resisting' attitude was illustrated by the confrontation between the oppressor and the oppressed sides (Hajriansyah, 2015:34-37). According to Misbach, painting "*Peristiwa Djengkol*" (The Event of Djengkol) (1961) by Amrus Natalsja, depicted a bloody clash between the authorities along with armed military forces and tractors to confront the peasantry who were forced to fight. After the suppression of September 30, 1965 Movement, the political domination of Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) which subordinately formed such art institutions as Lekra, LKN (National Cultural Institute) and its underbouw like SBT that placed politics above art became lost. This led to the negation of painting tendency as a means of political propaganda and after 1965 Indonesia has lost lots of such powerful talented painters as Trubus, Hendra Gunawan and Djoko Pekik as a result of military cleansing on artists affiliated with any activities under the PKI. Hence, this period is used as a problem analysis in the discussion.

DISCUSSION

At the beginning of the period when Suharto became the President of Indonesia, politics and power of the New Order was not stable yet. There were several students strikes in Jakarta and Bandung in December 1973 and January 1974 which ended to arson and riots and caused the army to occupy the campus to maintain the security. This incident was popularly known as Malari incident (incident which happened on Januari 15th, Malari stands for Lima belas Januari-January 15th). Students were worried about the increasing foreign capital influx and the dominance of Japanese investment at that time. Some other things highlighted by the students at that time were the large amount of Indonesia's foreign debt, military dominance that increasingly interfered people's lives, besides the students' dislike on how Suharto managed the government by having non-structural personal assistants who all of them were active military personnels. Those personal assistants possessed an authority which exceeded the official power of the ministers in the cabinet. After the students' movement in Malari incident was suppressed, the students were then silent for a while, but soon the signs of unrest reappeared. The desire of the New Order government for the students no longer did any political actions was done by banning any strikes or demonstrations for students. However, it did not seem to succeed (Arifin, 1974:121-137). In mid – 1976, the criticisms they launched were even much sharper than it had been before. This was totally different from the 1970s where the students' movement was commonly more concerned with corruptive actions done by government officials. At first, their criticism was about "moral invitation and almost apolitical ones." After Malari incident, the scope of students concern greatly expanded, including highlighting economic nationalism and the behavior of Suharto's assistants. At the time, Suharto himself became the target of attacks. The strike actions carried out on campus mostly mocked corruption and the greed of high-ranking state officials, especially President Suharto's family. Student leaders questioned the entire basis of the President's development strategy (Jenkins, 1984:107).

This tense situation experienced by students was not at all illustrated in Indonesian painting which seems 'comfortable' with his skill in making decorative paintings that were calming and not involved in the ongoing social and political life, and this did not conform with Black December aspirations. Harsono said that the loneliness of art creation which raised social problems in painting, or in other words, artists were no longer interested in social problems, could be caused by several things including political trauma and depoliticization. Depoliticization on life activities including art aimed to create political stabilization to succeed economic development plan during the New Order government. As a result, artists were afraid to talk politics or participate in political parties and they even had a fear feeling to paint the real community condition. Painting the people or the community could be interpreted as artistic activities which have political correlations with socialist or communist (Harsono, 2013).

Harsono explained that they did not understand the concepts of Western art due to the lack of English language skills as well as the lack of textual information. However, it could be seen that there were traces of pop art in the works of the New Fine Art Movement. We could compare what was written in point three of the Black December statement stating, "that creativity is the nature of a painter, who takes various ways to reach new perspectives for Indonesian painting." It was then continued on point four, "that hence identity of Indonesian painting is clearly evident." We later could see whether the aspirations of Black December which desired the existence of Indonesian painting identity would be fulfilled by the works of the New Fine Art Movement by reviewing the ideas of what happened in the world of world fine art, especially pop art, at a decade before the Black December and the emergence of the New Fine Art Movement as elaborated in the followings (@arsipIVAA, 2020). The symptoms of mixed canvas media in painting with other media, such as sculpture and graphics, have been seen in America and Europe since the early 1960s. Art works created by pop art artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns have shown that the boundaries between canvas and objects become mixed (looked blurred). Robert Rauschenberg's work entitled "Bed" (1955), and Jasper Johns's "Flag" (1954-1955) showed that the strict separation between canvas, sculpture and graphics media no longer applied. In "Bed", Rauschenberg painted a bed sheet of a mattress pinned to a wall. Likewise, Johns painted "Flag", an American flag on a rectangular piled objects.

Andy Warhol was a famous artist who actively performed screen printing techniques. At his inaugural exhibition in Los Angeles in 1962, Warhol displayed 32 paintings of Campbell soup cans using screen printing techniques. The paintings were lined up on the wall of the exhibition room. With a combination of different colors on each panel of the 32 paintings, Warhol used commodity objects around him as the ideas for his works. In addition to soup cans, he also duplicated coca-cola, discount stamps, and also money on the panels of his screen printing paintings. One of the messages to be conveyed in that work was that art could not be separated from commodities, as well as what happened with cans of Campbell soup and Coca Cola. Moreover, he likened his studio as a 'factory' which duplicated his screen printing by using the images he has chosen. This, according to him, was no different from the production line. This such perspective was an expression of rejection on abstract expressionism works which place itself as a unique, the one and only, and cannot be duplicated high art work (Archer, 1997: 8-12, 14-18).

One of Pop Art symptoms is the reappearance of realism style with some improved techniques. There were at least three pioneering artists who used photography techniques as a reference in creating their work, Chuck Close, Ralph Goings and Richard Estes. Chuck Close painted many faces with large canvases based on the results of photography made in his

studio. Chuck Close's "Self Portrait" (1969) became an iconic achievement in detailed facial painting on a large canvas (Grenspan, 1998:23). Meanwhile, Ralph Goings depicted a pick-up truck and flavoring accessories on restaurant tables, such as chili sauce, salt and pepper bottles based on photo techniques designed with tight lighting. Ralph Goings "Market Pick-up" (1969), depicting a multi-purpose transport vehicle which was a lifestyle in California at the time, was a memory for Americans who lived in the 60s (Lucie-Smith, 2003:195-196). Besides, Richard Estes actively painted the corners of New York's city skyscrapers complete with the glow and shine. His work entitled "Car Reflection" (1969) depicted tall buildings reflected off the hood of a shiny car. Estes emphasized the use of photography in his art works. However, for him, the most important thing was the people behind the art work, while photos were only tools, not the main role of the work (Arthur, 2007: 72).

R.G. Collingwood is one of the aestheticists who systematically formulated the distinction between art and craft. In 1938, Collingwood drew a clear distinctive line between both. Craft is only a technical application of certain rules in producing a product, while art is an expression of the surging soul. Martin Heidegger also has like opinion; he separates the notion of *tekhne*, a Greek term for art, from technique which refers to a craft. Nevertheless, such distinction of art and craft did not cause any problems since in 1917 Marcel Duchamp placed an urinal at the Society of Independent Artists exhibition at the Grand Central Palace in New York as an art work. Urinal which is an industrial product raises the pros and cons at that time whether the work can be said to be feasible or unfeasible to be exhibited. In this issue, Richard Bradley proposed a thesis that certain artifacts for Modern people can obtain an 'artwork' status when they have been separated from their original state or when they lost their context. Loss of context means loss of functionality. The more an artifact loses its function due to being separated from its original context, the more the artifact can be seen as an 'artwork'. The object which was originally a craft in the Duchamp case became an art work since the urinal no longer became the artist's latrine (Suryajaya, 2016:15). In modern times, the habit of identifying an item as an art work is precisely because of its disfunctionality. In other words, the item does not function properly (Juliman, 2012:333). In short, when the urinal is placed in a toilet as its original functions, it is not identified as an art work. However, once the urinal is placed in a gallery and given a different context by the artist, the urinal turns into an art. The use of mass production objects in art works which started by Duchamp continued to occur until Pop Art era.

An exhibition of 70 art works entitled "Pameran Seni Rupa Baru Indonesia" (The New Fine Art Exhibition of Indonesia) was held on August 2 – 7, 1975 as a follow up of Black December statement issued on December 31, 1974. The title was created by Jim Supangkat. In addition, it was admitted by Jim that there was no any of his intention to give the word 'New' to the exhibition. The word 'New' was simply used by Jim as a response to the title "Great Painting Exhibition of Indonesia" which was held at the same place the previous year which caused Black December controversy. Furthermore, the word 'Movement' in the New Fine Art Movement was given after the group wanted to disperse in 1979 (Supangkat, 2012:320). In the exhibition catalog, Sanento Juliman wrote an introduction which essentially rejected the image of paintings as the only possibility in creating art works. Moreover, the introduction was expanded to be "Lima Jurus Gebrakan Seni Rupa Baru Indonesia" (Five Moves in New Fine Art of Indonesia) (Supangkat, 1979). There are further interesting issues although the New Fine Art Movement was declared to be disbanded in 1979. However, another exhibition of the New Fine Art Movement, driven by F.X. Harsono, was held entitled "New Fine Art Exhibition of Project 1: Fantasy World Market" (*Pameran Seni Rupa Baru Proyek 1 Pasaraya Dunia*) in 1987. The exhibition also resulted in a manifesto called 'Manifesto of the 1987 new fine art movement' and was given a subtitle "Liberation of Fine

Arts, Liberation of Fine Arts.” Harsono mentioned the exhibition as a post-New Fine Art Movement. In addition, Harsono said, “This exhibition was marked by a high spirit of exploration along with a desire to leave elitist art and to emphasize more plural fine art. The findings of objects which could be identified as urban culture were duplicated in large sizes. Advertising and printed media were reproduced in a puns or wordplay or in postmodern term it is called appropriation. Besides reaffirming that there was no longer any separation between painting, graphics and sculpture in the 1987 New Art Movement manifesto, the manifesto firmly rejected High Art and Modern Art. Furthermore, they wanted a redefinition of fine arts without using existing references which were fixated on modern art styles (Priatna, 2020).

The works displayed in the New Fine Art Movement have now become classic art works which are partly collected by the National Gallery of Indonesia. F.X. Harsono’s work entitled “Paling Top 75” (The Top 75) was in the form of an AK-47 rifle made of plastic, and indeed can be bought in stores as children's toys, mounted vertically with a white cloth as its base. The base and the rifle were then given a cage in the form of iron wire which was occasionally used as a temporary fence for a house yard. In addition, on the white cloth base was written “Paling Top 75” as the title. The work was a reflection of military power which increasingly gripped the people at that time. The word ‘top’ means famous, or in above position, it can also be referred to as ‘the most powerful’. For those who lived at the time it is actually understood that they did recognize the military as the ruler of the country.

Jim Supangkat created a statue of half-body made of gypsum. The shape of the statue was taken from the mythology of a beautiful Javanese queen named “Ken Dedes” which became the title of the art work. However, the other half of the body, from breast to toe, is a caricature painting in the form of a woman who does not use a bra on the breast and uses tight jeans which are removed from her belt and not covered with zippers so that her pubic hair is still visible. We can feel that what Jim wanted to convey is a paradox of the definition of beauty occurring to women in 1975. Ken Dedes's white face was given a bright red lipstick symbolizing the now Ken Dedes who is flirty and wild for exposing out his half-naked body.

Harsono's other work is “The Relaxed Chain” consisting of a mattress on which is given a pair of bolsters stacked by a pillow. The pillow and bolster were arranged in such a way that impressively showed the pair of bolsters as human legs and the pillow as the head. The pillow and bolster were then tied and held together by chains and the chains were left stretched down. This installation work suggested that the human being seemed to be sleeping in a relaxed manner but in fact he was in a bound condition without even realizing it. Paintings were also exhibited there, i.e. Dede Eri Supria's work entitled “Urbanisasi” (Urbanization). The painter was seen standing on the porch of a house on the edge of a dirty river, and on his right side were seen makeshift houses made from fragile pieces of bamboo. It was clearly described that the houses occupied almost half portion of the river body. The river was full of rubbish coming from the makeshift houses and also rubbish from other places carried by the river flow. The painting was made using photo realism techniques that we can feel the shape of the houses along with the river in great detail. The purpose of Dede to paint such picture was certainly a satire to the city government which did not concern on the lives of the people living in the slum area. Moreover, the people were actually migrants from outside Jakarta who made a living in the informal sector.

Hardi created a painting using a screen printing technique entitled “Presiden 2001”. The painting consisted of 21 panels lined up on the wall in 3 rows. Then, each row consisted of 7 painting panels. The one becoming ‘president’ on the panel was himself by wearing a military uniform. Such painting certainly invited reaction from the authorities not to mention

that the issue of leadership replacement was abundantly rife in that year as there was a bunch of many people's dissatisfaction towards Suharto's leadership. From these 5 examples of works created by the New Art Movement, we can see that the message or narration conveyed in the art works was a satire of the social and political situation occurring in the community around 1974 – 75. Harsono's work satired militarism that controlled the people ('Paling Top 75' – translated "The Top 75") and the people who were lulled by the chains shackling them (The Relaxed Chain). Furthermore, Hardi who was dressed in military and appointed himself as the President in 2001 certainly raised suspicions over the succession efforts which were coveted by students at that period of time. Moreover, Dede, who painted the reality of the slum urban life, and Jim, who satirized the lives of flirty and wild women. The message conveyed in the works of the New Fine Art Movement was sharply different from the 5 best works produced by the Great Painting Exhibition of Indonesia in the previous year which did not reflect the reality of the community. Viewed from the message conveyed, it is the antithesis of their seniors' art works in the Great Painting Exhibition of Indonesia.

As the determination of the New Fine Art Movement artists was not to compartmentalize the medium and display of their art works in alternative media, it was then realized by providing new forms which blend among the media. We see in "Ken Dedes", Jim Supangkat mixed the statue on the head with a graphic painting on the statue body. Such media mixing is the influence of Pop Art as done by Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns in America. The use of industrial objects and commodities was carried out by Harsono, such as mattresses, pillows, toy guns, and fence wire. This has been commonly done in the Western art since the Duchamp era. However, it has never been applied in Indonesia due to the still strength of the 'painting regime' which dominated the Indonesian art constellation. Meanwhile, Richard Bradley has made a thesis on the disfunctionality of industrial objects to be ratified into art works. This same thing also happened to Hardi's art work as we can see the strong influence of Andy Warhol in "Presiden 2001". Similarly at Dede Eri Supria's art work, he acknowledged that photographic technique which became the instruments in designing his paintings was influenced by Richard Estes (Dermawan, 1999:14).

CONCLUSION

New Fine Art Movement has succeeded to fulfill the intention to blend the differences in the medium of fine art. Thus, there is no further compartmentalization in executing art works. They, likewise, introduced the use of alternative media so that painting no longer became the highest manifestation of art. Furthermore, the use of alternative media has currently become immensely popular in Indonesia due to the introduction made by the New Fine Art Movement, and along with the progress made in the West, Indonesian artists have also been skilled to engage with video and electronic media, as well as other various kinds of mixing materials in creating art work. Besides bringing down the 'painting regime', New Fine Art Movement has also been meritorious and creditable in diverting messages and styles contained in painting. Realism style which in post-1965 was avoided was later exceedingly surpassed by making greatly detailed and accurate realism photographs. Likewise in the messages, paintings were once sterile from political narratives. Nevertheless, they are now the main menu in many contemporary Indonesian paintings.

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