

YOGYAKARTA URBAN WOMEN: EXPRESSION OF CULTURAL VALUES THROUGH CONTEMPORARY JEWELRY IN EXPERIMENTAL INSTALLATIONS AND LIVE PERFORMANCES

DHYANI HENDRANTO

ABSTRACT *Women have been seen as being capable in maintaining a spiritual and physical balance allowing them to exist as part of the community. Their harmonious spiritual, moral, intellectual and psychological achievements are a form of true perfection, and are desirable by every woman as represented by symbols which are considered to represent the 'soul' of Java urban women. The selected inspirational objects are packed to have meanings as well as aesthetic values and to deliver motivational, inspiring messages. The creation process of generating forms, structures, selections of color and material, and also movement, is the visual language that communicates the artists' aspirations. This artwork shows the artist's creative characters; essentially every human being has creative potentials that could lead to the finding of his or her own original personal concepts that would eventually give birth to innovative and varied artworks. The theme of women who are members of our community possesses the potential to be expanded broadly, so that it will become a priority issue and that it will receive due attention, as women are a major stakeholder in the continuity of humanity. The way women struggle to achieve balance, in the midst of existing values and stereotyping is a remarkable feat, and the artist, as a woman, tries to visualize all their feelings in the creation of this work.*

ABSTRAK Perempuan dipandang mampu menjaga keseimbangan spiritual dan fisik, sehingga mereka dapat eksis sebagai bagian dari masyarakat. Pencapaian spiritual, moral, intelektual, dan psikologis mereka adalah se bentuk kesempurnaan yang nyata dan merupakan suatu hal yang diinginkan setiap perempuan sebagaimana ditampilkan dengan simbol-simbol yang dianggap merepresentasikan 'jiwa' perempuan urban Jawa. Obyek-obyek inspiratif yang dipilih dianggap memiliki makna serta nilai estetika, serta mampu menyampaikan pesan-pesan motivasional dan menginspirasi. Proses penciptaan bentuk dan struktur, pemilihan warna serta material, serta bentuk, adalah bahasa visual yang menyampaikan aspirasi sang seniman. Karya seni menampilkan sifat seorang seniman dengan sangat jelas. Pada dasarnya setiap manusia memiliki potensi kreatif yang mampu menciptakan karya seni yang inovatif dan berbeda-beda. Tema peran perempuan dalam masyarakat perlu diperluas agar menjadi isu prioritas dan mendapat perhatian yang diperlukan, karena perempuan adalah *stakeholder* besar dalam kelanjutan kemanusiaan. Cara perempuan menciptakan keseimbangan, di tengah-tengah nilai yang sudah ada dan *stereotyping*, sangat menakutkan dan sang seniman, sebagai seorang perempuan, mencoba untuk memvisualisasikan seluruh perasaannya dalam penciptaan karya ini.

Keywords: *Java urban woman, contemporary, exploration, therapy*

Java Urban Women

In urban communities throughout the world, one of the elements to be observed is that of gender; in this case, women as one of the genders within urban communities. The presence of women in urban culture has enriched the repertoire in the discourses of urban culture throughout the world, and Java is not an exception, notably the Special Region of Yogyakarta.

As a result of the phenomenon of global life, many urban women are susceptible to suffering from masked depression, which is a disease of the modern world today. Many suffer from this affection around the world. Women might fall in the realm of depression if they on their own are not able to cope with those factors that trigger tensions in their life, viz.

in the context of a highly dynamic urban community.

The women within the Javanese social strata are regarded as those people who possess the energy and the ability to uphold and carry her feminine dignity. Women are portrayed as struggling hard, personalities with power, or even a source of strength for her own existence and environment – these are all to achieve her own feminine harmony.

As part of a community system, a Javanese woman actually has a disguised authority. She must seek ways to achieve her wishes without upsetting the social harmony that may result from deviating from the established cultural order. Therefore, the total dedication and submission shown by Javanese women is a diplomatic strategy to gain authority and to get what they aspire (Handayani & Novianto, 2004). From a formal structure point of view, they look as if they have no influence. But informally, their influence is huge. A husband in the long run may even be dependent on his wife, especially emotionally. In this position, a Javanese woman may determine public decisions through her husband.

Javanese urban women are often faced with a dilemma: they are placed in a situation where they have to opt whether to follow the flow of dynamic globalization or to remain tradition-laden female figures who are gentle, submissive, and resigned. According to Emile Durkheim, post-Javanese women, is in a state of anomie. They hold high respect for their culture, but their lifestyle is universal and modern.

Contemporary Works as Women's Self-Expression

Therapy through art has significant value as it may cause major psychological impacts on those who are experiencing problems and pressures of life. Such has been observed in the case of urban women in Java, including Yogyakarta. An artwork – the skills in selecting media, the techniques, the exploration and the materials used, the creative concept, and the displayed themes – makes an artist's identity, which may not be visible to the naked eye. The purpose of capturing the identity of an artist is to obtain a full picture of his or her personality that would eventually affect the physical characters of a creation.

Following these thoughts, in the area of contemporary art, absolute separation between a work of fine arts and performing arts is no longer necessary. The idea for a creation can come from any direction, which is then processed into something called a new creation, which will produce a new product with a new culture as well. This particular work is an embodiment of the cultural perceptions and attitudes of the urban society itself, as seen by the writer who herself is an artist.

The work is executed with different technical approaches and utilizing new media, including the merging of symbols which are bodily attached on Javanese urban women, forming an expressive language that allows the creator to tell the story – as seen from her personal point of view – about the complexity of the problems of urban Javanese women. When addressing the complexity of contemporary issues, the author attempts to provide spacious room for improvisation and freedom of imagination by means of

expressions, which can narrate and poke fun while at the same time carrying a depth of meanings.

Problem Formulation

Based on the description above, the artist (author) in this experiment wishes to emphasize the aspects of explorations in shapes, textures, lines, colors, materials, composition and harmony of movements. Can the techniques and explorations in this work of art represent the aspirations of the author, that is, to carry messages that contain symbolic contents?

Can the techniques and explorations provide fresh ideas to enrich the variety of techniques in the creation of artworks, particularly that of fine art in the arena of mixed media and installations?

How to make creative processes to work as healing treatment or some kind of practical psychological therapy processes within a simple therapy context (moral and psychological effects).

Objectives and Benefits

a. Objectives

The purpose of creating this art is to respond and represent a critical attitude toward the phenomena occurring around us through 'jewelry artworks in a performing art'; the latter is expected to inspire the extraction of aesthetic values and contribute to the substance in awareness towards humanist existentialism. Additionally it also has the objective to recover the space of spiritual humanistic values/quality in the discourse of simple therapy in a wider psychological context and perspective, especially for women.

The technical objective for

the author is to conduct, intensely, the explorations of forms, techniques, movements, and the inventorization of problems and their solutions.

b. Benefit

1. The direct benefit to the author is an intellectual maturation process and emotional sensitivity towards social phenomena, which is part of the society that is actualized in the process of artistic creation.

2. Another benefit is the promotion of critical collective awareness in restoring a substance in human healing, especially in women, finding spiritual space and new contemplations within the broader public.

Assessment and the Platform of Creation Sources

An artwork carries meaning, or, it tells something. Therefore, we (readers) are required to interpret to give it any significance. A good interpretation can be reached when a description is given in advance. Basic creation of works of art refer to the theory of *The Symbol in Art* (Suzzane K.Langer), which defines art as '... the creation of forms symbolic of human feeling' (Art is a form of creation which is the symbols of manifestation of human feelings - Djelantik, 1999; 128).

An artwork is attractive if it is conveyed in an imaginative way. In other words, a work of art is interesting if it has gone through a process of creative incubation and is imaginatively visualized (also known as "figurative metaphor"). Metaphor is a play in language, identical to a game. Aristotle described metaphor as the application of something from a name to belong to

something else, a transfer that occurs from genus to species, from species to genus, from species to species proportionally (Ricoeur, 2002:106); in this context, metaphor becomes synonymous with comparison. The meaning of an artwork is diverse and never final. Metaphor is merely of emotive values but it has something new to say about the reality.

The idea of creating the artworks described in this writing was inspired and drawn from the authors' own life experiences. The resulting experimental works are therefore result of personal observation, learning and contemplation by the artist who has experienced living the profile of an urban woman and as a member of urban communities in several countries (Asia, Australia and Europe). Currently her artworks tell the story about Javanese urban women, particularly those in Yogyakarta.

With a multitude of definitions of urban, it is necessary to find an aesthetic language of urban art. The languages used are no longer urban specific languages. It is rather a language that describes the problems of urban women. In conjunction with the creation process of this work, the author elaborates how a woman as a wife, mother and as part of the community, sees herself through her bodily expressions (body artifacts).

In the artworks, women are allowed to liberate their soul from sufferings and stress; the works of art are part of their "personal life experience". Where there are private spaces in women, the choice of materials, the form and shape of the jewelry worn by the performers, their bodily movements are in accordance with their personality. They are encouraged to witness a replay of the drama or tragedy

of their lives. This process is also a deep understanding of their personal-self; the selection of jewelry created by the artisans becomes a meaningful treatment for their psyche, and the movements, which spring from within themselves forming its own composition. Submission follows involuntary spontaneous motions when one is freed from the influence of passion and mind.

After watching the show the audience is expected to experience catharsis (*khataros*, pure, holy). Catharsis is the outflow of emotion, the feeling that one gets after watching a tragedy drama. Catharsis is regarded as a surge of unexpected emotions and surprises while the emotion peaks and subsides. Catharsis is considered to provide relief to the human soul from pain and pressure. Catharsis touches our feeling. A cathartic experience is a deep understanding of the human as well, and is a meaningful treatment of the soul (therapeutic). Catharsis also possesses a meaning of repentance from sin or mistakes (Aristotle).

They are ushered to witness a replay of the drama of the problems or tragedies in their lives by means of exploring the material worn by the woman. This process is also a deep process of understanding themselves and is a meaningful treatment of the soul. Following this they might usually feel relieved and experience a reduced feeling of anxiety brought about by the fact that they could see the problem in the right proportion and they do not feel alone any longer.

Themes / Ideas / Title

The themes, ideas and the title of this work of art are the spirit of women's struggles

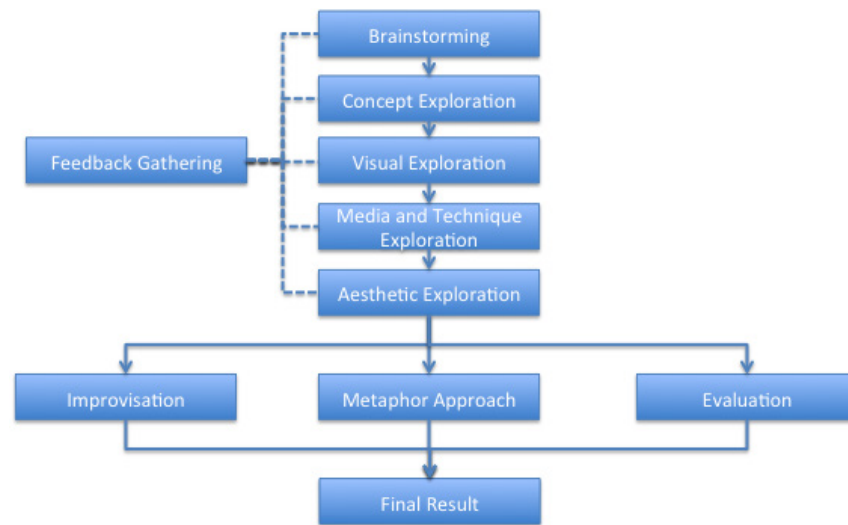


Chart 1.
Prototyping Methods in A Creation Process

in defending their personal existence and in attaining her feminine harmony. A process of combining the basic spirit of the urban women of Java especially that of Yogyakarta, which eventually leads to a concept of a workmanship that reflects the body artifacts of women (body artifact). This is then visualized through a work in monumental three-dimensional contemporary jewelry art and a multimedia show which is packed in the form of installations.

Material concept and development

The material of the artwork refers to the basic forms found in the everyday's life of Javanese urban women in Yogyakarta; some materials worn by these women makes part of the realities of urban Javanese women's life. They are regarded as objects of art that can tell much about the philosophy of womanhood in the Javanese context. Forms of harmony, beauty, serenity, peace and solidness of the whole work pursued by the author through the play of space, lines,

forms, shapes, motions and sound in this work is an attempt to visualize, symbolize – in an elegant way – all the complexity of problems of urban women.

The creation process by the author is prioritized based on novelty, depth, and certain type of actualization such as degree of contemplation, tenacity in exploring imaginary spaces to search for and find new ideas, the courage to try new things, exploring in the wildest unlimited sense so as to reap creative and fresh ideas.

Prototyping Methods

Prototyping here refers to that which can be used to assist in the analysis and design of works; this process helps the author to describe how systematic decisions are made during the creation of the artwork from its initial concept to the end.

The process involves numerous uses of diagrams/sketches to help thinking in a concrete way (Maulsby, 1993). The process makes it possible for the author to revise, change, modify and improve the systems needed to assure the quality of the work.



Figure 1.
Artwork "Crossed Missedlead Civilization"

In this prototyping method, the author in general adapts several methods which are commonly practiced in approaching the different creation processes. These approaches are among others: exploration (brainstorming), which includes among others the exploration of concepts (observation and aesthetic experience in aesthetic structure), exploration through analysis of visual forms, and aesthetic exploration. These are followed by improvisation; the formation and extraction of various aspects of visual-artistic and aesthetic refinements utilizing technical and intuitive analytical skills. Then there are the stages of evaluation; evaluation of the various aspects in the relations of ideas, artistic execution and others which are related to depth of impression and expression; these are presented as a kind of emotional control and settlement which are synchronized with or comprehensively enveloping vibrating intellectual capacity of the creation process. Explorations among others are the exploration of conception (observation and aesthetic experience in aesthetic structure), visual form exploration and aesthetic exploration.

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