

MEDIA ARTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDONESIAN CONTEMPORARY ART: MANIFESTO VIII 2022 EXHIBITION STUDY

Citra Smara Dewi

Faculty of Arts and Design, Jakarta Institute of the Arts

e-mail: citradewi@ikj.ac.id

Abstract

*This study focuses on media art-based works in the development of Indonesian contemporary art, especially in the Transcultural era. The rapid development of science, technology and information has created a form of cultural communication "without barriers and boundaries" between countries. Mutual influence on one another in the creation of works of art is unavoidable, thus creating works of art that are cross-cultural. This phenomenon is the spirit of the transcultural era, so that it becomes a challenge for the Indonesian people, especially in the formation of identity. The case study in this article is the Manifesto VIII Art Exhibition, which will be held at the National Gallery of Indonesia (GNI) in 2022, which has the theme Transposition. The study will focus on 2 (two) contemporary female artists, namely Lenny Ratnasari Weichert, *Two Worlds, 2021* and Kartika Oktorina (Kae), *Pixelviridae, 2022*, Interactive video mapping, Various dimensions. The method used is the historical approach: heuristic, criticism, interpretation and historiography, with a Semiotic analysis approach, Charles Sanders Peirce. The results of the study show that the development of contemporary art cannot be separated from the development of science and technology, this can be seen in the works exhibited in Manifesto VIII. The works based on media art in the Manifesto exhibition are one of the strengths of the Manifesto VIII exhibition, as a form of adaptive and responsive a of women artists towards transcultural phenomena.*

Keywords: *Media Arts, Contemporary Art, Transcultural, Manifesto*

Introduction

New media as art in Indonesia has actually started individually and sporadically since 1990, but it was only in the beginning of 2000s that many artists were born who used new media as ideas for work and came from various disciplines. In the theme and media technology, there are at least three tendencies: (1) video art, namely media that becomes an extension of the body, (2) video as an expansion of narrative possibilities from biography to fantasy, (3) genre hybridization and media technology. (Murti, Krisna. 2012: 415).

New Media Art is a new cultural form. It is one of the most clearly positioned creative expressions because it appears "distant" from the mainstream practices that respond to media in a functional and/or fun way. Even though in practice it often incorporates elements of entertainment and lifestyle, it still places itself consciously as a cultural expression. New Media Art is essentially a hybrid art that was born from the meeting of human aesthetic expressions with the inventions of Information Technology and Media Technology. The phenomenon of new media art can be seen in the Manifesto VIII Exhibition, which was held by the Indonesian National Gallery (GNI) in 2022.

As a Cultural Institution, GNI carries out functions in the implementation of: (a) Study of works of art, (b) Collection and registration of works of art, (c) Care and security of works of art, (d) Exhibition of works of art, (e) Partnerships in the field of fine arts, (f) Educational services in the field of Fine Arts, (g) Documentation and publication of works of Fine Arts and (h) Administrative Affairs of the National Gallery of Indonesia. One of the important exhibitions held by GNI is the large art exhibition Manifesto which was initiated in 2008.

The Manifesto Exhibition is chosen as the research focus considering that this Manifesto Exhibition is a major exhibition that is held every two years and it represents the development of Indonesian contemporary art that is contextual with the social dynamics of society. This exhibition has been curated by the Indonesian National Gallery Curator Team, so that it can be accountable to the public. While the selection of the Indonesian National Gallery (GNI) was based on the consideration that GNI is a State Cultural Institution under the auspices of the Directorate General of Culture, Ministry of Education and Culture. GNI has a significant role in the development of Indonesian Contemporary Art, especially through its main duties and functions in the fields of exhibitions and publications.

The term Contemporary Art was used by Holt to refer to contemporary "Modern Art", which is an urban phenomenon that has developed mainly in Java. Its manifestations are separate from, but very strong in painting, and less strong in sculpture (Holt: 2000:xxix). Contemporary art in principle does not refer to a school or genre, but rather to an understanding of the

art form that was born and develops in a “present” context. According to Arthur Danto, as quoted by Saidi, contemporary art is formed from a postmodern conceptual paradigm, to show an art form that is completely different from modern art because it is produced by a production structure that has never existed before (Saidi, 2008:19).

Research Methods

Method is a way or how one acquires knowledge (how to know), while methodology is about knowledge to know how to know (to know how to know). Scientific methodology aims to invite all of us to an understanding of one truth that is generally accepted (the truth) or that can provide truth (a truth) in a specific context. Through this specific truth, it is hoped that it can provide a basis for values, assumptions, ethics and norms as standard rules in concluding research data and opening up space for interpretation.

According to Tosh, as quoted by Sjamsuddin, when a historian writes there are two main impulses that move him/her, namely (1) recreating, (2) interpreting and explaining, while the second urge requires him/her to make an analysis. Writing this history will use historical critical analysis, because of its orientation to problems and structures. The role of the writer is that of an analyst, but not that of a narrator. ¹(Helius Sjamsuddin. 2016: 150-151).

Method is a way or how one acquires knowledge, while methodology is about knowledge to know how to know. Scientific methodology aims to invite us all to an understanding of one truth that is generally accepted (the truth) or that can provide truth (a truth) in a specific context. Through this specific truth, it is hoped that it can provide a basis for values, assumptions, ethics and norms as standard rules in concluding research data and opening up space for interpretation.

Considering that this research focuses on works of contemporary art as research material, a visual semiotic approach is used. Visual semiotics is basically a semiotic study that is specifically interested in investigating all kinds of meaning conveyed through the sense of sight with an emphasis on fine arts such as painting, sculpture but also architecture.²

Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics approach is used in this research. Peirce emphasized that a sign or representamen is something that for someone represents something else in some way or capacity. Something else is called the interpretant of the first sign and in turn refers to the object (object). Furthermore, the focus of Charles Sanders Peirce's

¹ Helius Sjamsuddin. (2016: 150-151). *Metodologi Sejarah*, cetakan ke 3. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak

² Budiman, Kris. (2004:13). *Kosa Semiotika*. LKis, Yogyakarta

analysis is on the form of classification based on the object, namely the icon sign, index, and symbol. According to him, an icon is a sign that has a resemblance to the original object so that the sign is easily recognized by the wearer, for example a face that resembles a real face. While the Index is a sign that has a phenomenal or existential relationship between representamen and objects. Then the symbol is interpreted as a type of sign that is arbitrary and conventional in accordance with certain agreements or conventions of the sign user.

Discussion

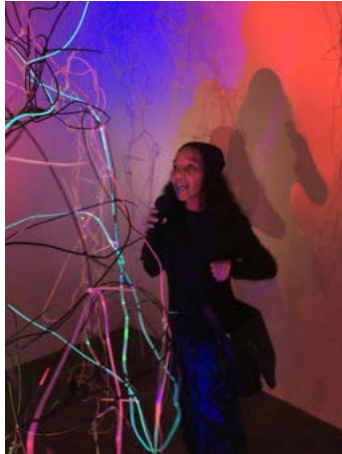
This study will focus on the new media works exhibited in Manifesto VIII, namely the works by two women artists: Lenny Ratnasari Weichert, with her work "Two Worlds" (2021) and Kartika Oktorina (Kae), with her work "Pixelyviridae" (2022), an interactive video mapping. The selection of the two artists was based on the consideration that they have the strength of their work and are consistent as artists. Lenny Ratnasari Weichert was born in Bandung on June 3, 1970. Before studying at the Indonesian Art Institute (ISI) Yogyakarta, in the Sculpture Program, she was a student of Fine Arts and Crafts Education at IKIP Yogyakarta (now UNY). Lenny is a multimedia artist whose work stems from multiple identities that fit from a deep-rooted curiosity to explore conflicting aspects of human uniqueness. Having always been at the crossroads of the 'glocal' system of reference his art contemplates multiple layers of personality, spirit and gender in this context. By linking the typical journey between East and West, it investigates religion, subcultures, taboos and the position of women in society. Her art contemplates diverse views of communicating identities, by drawing on aspects of cultural clashes and finding dialogue between them.

Meanwhile, artist Kartika Oktorina (Kae) was born in Bandung in 1983. In 2007 she completed her Master of Arts in Media Art Studies, Maastricht University, the Netherlands. Currently working and living in Jakarta. As a new media artist, his art practice focuses on using the latest technology to interpret the complex relationship between humans and technology and nature. Kae has participated in several collective exhibitions in the country and was one of the finalists at the 2022 Erlangga Art Awards in the installation art category.

The semiotic analysis of Lenny's work, as an icon analysis, is to depict a human figure in an outline using iron and wires as material, with shadows coming from the play of LED lights. The index in this case shows that the shadow is present because of the aspect of light shining on the sculptural figures.

In Lenny Ratnasari Weichert's installation work, Two Worlds (2022), you can find a selection of new media in the sculpture installation, such as the use of LED lighting technology and elements of motion as part of the creative concept. According to Lenny, the work of Two

Words was inspired by the world which continues to move along with the development of technology which has many benefits, and produces modernity in people's mobility, expansion, expansion of culture and economic growth.



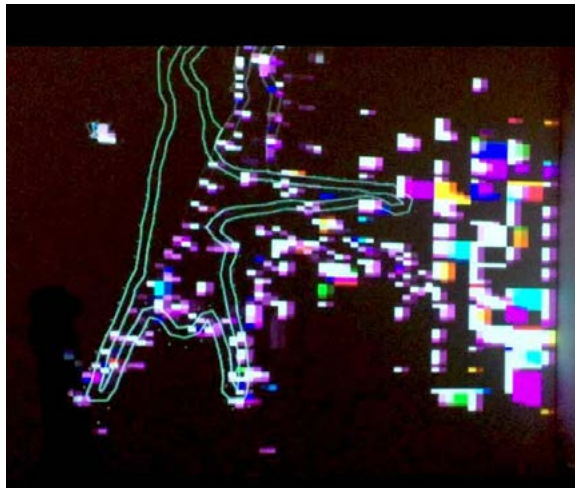
Picture 1. Lenny Ratnasari Weichert, "Two Worlds", 2021
Source: Author's Personal Documentation

This work conveys a message that nothing is static and certain; objects, human thoughts, speed of progress, shifts in meaning etcetera will continue to change and increase, space becomes dependent on technology which has become part of human life and its dynamics. The space of "Two Worlds" represents the symptoms of acceleration and movement, changes which are increasing, decreasing, changing and even moving. (Picture 2)



Picture 2. The space of "Two Worlds" represents the phenomena of acceleration and movement
Source: Author's Personal Documentation

From the analysis of Lenny Kartika Weichert's work we continue to delve into Kartika Oktorina's , which is inspired by technological developments, especially art sensors and pixels. Pixels are image elements or representations of the smallest point in a graphic image that are calculated per inch. Pixel itself comes from the English acronym Picture Element which is shortened to Pixel. According to Kartika, the pandemic, which has been going on for two years, has brought a big change in life. Technology is a basic tool that must be owned by all people in all walks of life. Meetings have been replaced with zoom meetings, gatherings with whatsapp messages and even the metaverse world is considered to be a new vacation spot. The individual representations change to graphic images that appear on the screen. The representation of humans, which used to be in the form of gestures and manners, has changed to how many pixels and gigabytes technology can deliver. (Picture 3)



Picture 3. Work by Kartika Oktorina (Kae), Pixelyviridae, 2022
The technological element, namely sensor art, is very strong in interactive works

Source: Author's Personal Documentation.

This work tries to describe what will happen when pixel, which is very important at the present time, is transformed into a virus that moves through our bodies. When interacting with the work, the pixel virus moves through motion and gestures. The physical image of the body is converted into a digital form which is processed directly in a programming language which is then read as a small colour dot or connected pixels. This media art installation received attention from visitors, because it is interactive, that is, every visitor's movement is immediately responded to by the sensor technology which is very interesting and interactive. The elements of motion and light are the strength of Kartika's work based on this new media. (Picture 4)



Picture 4. The elements of motion and light are the strengths of new media-based works

Source: Author's Personal Documentation

The phenomenon of media art at the GNI Manifesto VIII exhibition proves that the development of art in one nation has crossed geographical boundaries, influencing each other as Spanjaard said,

“Nowadays, art cannot be separated geographically. Today's fine arts are transcultural in nature and contain elements from many cultures.” This cross-cultural is part of the multicultural itself which is a meeting of various cultures, through enculturation and acculturation. The fact is that all of this goes hand in hand and side by side, although in the process resistance, rejection, neglect, controversy and the like can occur. (Spanjaard, 2018: 278).

On the other hand, the new media creations created by Indonesian women artists at the Manifesto VIII exhibition at GNI are a form of GNI's policy in accommodating the dynamics of contemporary art, especially those inspired by technological advancement. As a state cultural institution, GNI's role in this regard is very significant because it is one of the barometers of the development of contemporary art in the country.

Conclusion

The development of science, technology and communication has changed the pattern of human interaction, including artists. The concept of artist's work which was previously limited to fine art elements such as shape, line, color, texture, plane, has now developed further by incorporating elements of light, motion and sound which are categorized as new media-based works of art or media art. The works exhibited in Manifesto VIII have proven that the transcultural phenomenon is one of the markers of the development of contemporary art today. Through the Manifesto VIII Exhibition organized by GNI, we can see GNI's policy in accommodating the development of art that has a new media spirit. As a state cultural institution, the existence of GNI is very important because it shows partiality to artists who work with a new media approach.

References

- Burke, Peter. (1991). *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State Press.
- Clark, Ian Clark. (2014). *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations* (Editor(s) John Baylis, Steve Smith, Patricia Owens). Oxford University Press: Oxford.
- Gerritsen, Anne and Giorgio Riello. (2015). *Writing Material Culture History*. London, New Dehli, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury.
- Lifschitz, Mikhail & Salamini, Leonardo. (2003). *Praxis Seni: Marx & Gramsci*. Yogyakarta: Alinea.
- Murti, Krisna. (2012). *Seni Rupa Indonesia dalam Kritik dan Essai* (Ed. Bambang Budjono dan Wicaksono Adi). Jakarta: Dewan Kesenian Jakarta, Semarak Tata Warna.
- Saidi, Acep Iwan. (2008). *Narasi Simbolik Seni Rupa Kontemporer Indonesia*. Yogyakarta : Isacbook.
- Spanjaard, Helena. (2018). *Cita-Cita Seni Lukis Indonesia Modern 1900-1995: Sebuah Kreasi Identitas Kultural Nasional*. Yogyakarta : Penerbit Ombak.
- Sugiharto, Bambang. (2015). *Apa itu Seni?*. Bandung: Pustaka Matahari.
- Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan. (2022). *Katalog Pameran Manifesto VIII*. Jakarta: GNI.