

KOI FISH AS AN INSPIRATION FOR WALL DECORATION ARTWORK

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ABSTRACT

Koi fish breeding in Blitar City produces Koi with superior quality. Koi fish are also used as the mascot of this city. Koi fish from Blitar are widely marketed both nationally and internationally. This is inextricably linked to the shape and color attractiveness of koi fish. Accordingly, koi fish are an interesting source of inspiration for wall art creation. The creation of this ornamental artwork used an aesthetic approach. The three steps of the creative process were exploration, design, and embodiment. Tapestry and knitting techniques were used in the embodiment technique. This process produced three decorative artworks: (1) “Koi Fish Harmony”, which depicts a harmonious life; (2) “Meek Soft”, illustrates gentleness; and (3) “The King of Freshwater Fish”, which portrays charming luxury.

Keywords: Koi fish, wall decoration, crochet knitting, and tapestry.

ABSTRAK

Perkembangbiakan ikan koi di Kota Blitar menghasilkan Koi dengan kualitas juara. Ikan koi pun dijadikan sebagai maskot kota ini. Pemasaran ikan koi Blitar menyebar baik tingkat nasional maupun internasional. Hal itu tidak lepas karena keindahan ikan koi baik bentuk maupun warnanya. Untuk itu, ikan koi menarik untuk dijadikan sumber ide bagi penciptaan seni hias dinding. Penciptaan karya seni hias ini menggunakan pendekatan estetis. Proses kreasi melalui 3 tahapan yaitu eksplorasi, perancangan, dan perwujudan. Teknik perwujudan menggunakan teknik rajut dan tapestri. Karya seni hias sejumlah tiga buah yang dihasilkan dari penciptaan ini, meliputi: (1) “Harmoni Ikan Koi” menggambarkan kehidupan harmonis; (2) “Lemah Lembut” menggambarkan kelembutan; dan (3) “Si Raja Ikan Air Tawar” menggambarkan kemewahan yang menawan.

Kata kunci: Ikan koi, hiasan dinding, rajut crochet, dan tapestri

1. Introduction

Fish are aquatic animals that are very diverse. Fish can be found in almost all types of water, whether fresh water, brackish water or salt water. Fish can be

classified by knowing where they live. There are many species of fish known in Indonesia, one of which is the koi fish. Koi fish live in fresh water, but can also live in slightly salty water with a good supply of oxygen. There are so many koi fish hobbyists who keep it, because this koi fish is believed to give good luck or blessings to its owner. Another reason, the breeders or hobbyists of koi fish, because the beauty shape of the fish is so charming. There is often a competition event among koi fish lovers.

In Indonesia, koi fish have long been known to exist in the community. Koi has the Latin name 'Cyprinus carpio' and is related to goldfish. That said, goldfish are the ancestors of koi fish. In fact, it is said that koi are the result of genetic mutations that lasted hundreds of years from a type of gold fish or carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) (Esther & Sipayung, 2010). So, it is still a relative with gold fish, and basically almost all of koi organs are the same as gold fish.

The author's interest in koi as a theme in the creation of works has actually been around for a long time. This interest began to emerge when the author saw the koi statues located in several places in the city, namely Blitar City. Blitar City is a city located in the southern part of East Java Province (Provinsi Jawa Timur), Indonesia. The city is located about 167 km south of Surabaya. The city of Blitar is famous as the burial place of the first President of the Republic of Indonesia, Soekarno, so it is known as the City of Proclaimers. In addition, it is called the City of Patria (*Kota Patria*) and the City of PETA (*Pembela Tanah Air*/Defenders of the Homeland), because under the leadership of Supriyadi, squad (*Laskar*) PETA fought against Japan for the first time on February 14, 1945. This inspired fight to independence in other areas. Koi fish that are popular in Japan can be bred well in this city, so Blitar is given an additional nickname as Koi City (*Kota Koi*) (Wikipedia, 2022a).

One area in Blitar Regency, precisely in Kemloko Village, quoted from Kompas.com revealed that the koi fish in Blitar have been cultivated well by Mr. Roziq since 1988, the koi fish he produces are good quality koi fish with a high

selling price (Pribadi, 2012). Koi originating from Blitar Regency are quite well known and in demand by ornamental fish enthusiasts in local, national and foreign markets. Starting from that, the interest in koi began as a theme for the creation of art craft.

Previously, there have been several coursework assignments made by the author by taking the theme of koi and visualizing them in different media, such as batik and metal. Departing from the koi theme, the author wants to make a renewal in artwork, but still stick to the koi theme. The author got new knowledge about knitting techniques and had previously taken tapestry courses. So, the author wants to make a artwork with knitting and tapestry techniques in the form of wall decoration.

“Knitting” in Bahasa Indonesia is called *“Merajut”*, is a method of making cloth, clothing or fashion accessories from knitting thread. Different from weaving which crosses two rows of threads and perpendicular to each other, knitting uses only one thread. A row of finished stitches is held on one of the knitting needles until the start of a new stitch (Wikipedia, 2022b).

Actually there are many creations of knitting techniques in the world, but the popular ones in Indonesia are crochet (*‘merenda’* or lace) and knitting (*‘merajut’*). Crochet is a knitting technique using a needle with a hook at the end. This knitting technique produces stitches with holes resembling lace. Knitting is a technique of knitting using a pair of needles. This technique produces tighter stitches, so knitting products are not suitable for clothing use in tropical areas such as Indonesia, unless using lace motifs or using materials that are not hot and can absorb sweat (Bonita & Arie, 2011).

Currently the use of crochet has been able to produce various kinds of motifs on knitting, especially with the development of the times the motifs that develop in society are increasing, including flora and fauna motifs, as is the case in the manufacture of clothing and accessories with motifs such as flowers, fruit, butterflies and so on. Seeing this, the author tries to make a different shape, namely in the form

of wall decoration with crochet knitting techniques mixed with tapestry techniques. Tapestry is a textile art form in the form of traditional weaving which is usually done on a vertical loom, but can also be done on the floor. This weaving process consists of two crossing thread directions, which are parallel to the length called warp (*benang lungsin*) and parallel to the width called weft (*benang pakan*) (Edupaint, 2015).



Figure 1. Koi monument in Blitar city
(Source: Fachri Dwi Dermawan)

Based on the explanation above, the writer considers that knitting is a very fun activity because we are busy with repeated calculations and various techniques, so this technique is suitable to be combined with tapestry. Art craft is divided into three major groups, namely groups of functional (*kagunan*), *lengkapan* (decorative objects, art objects), and figurative (*menjenis*), statues, jewelry replicas as well as expressions (Soegeng Toekio, Guntur, & Sjafi'i, 2007). So, the author chose the creation of works of art for *lengkapan* (decorative objects), namely wall decorations. The author focuses on making wall decoration using crochet knitting and tapestry techniques with koi fish as a source of ideas.

2. Literature Review

The process of creating this artwork begins with a literature study in order to obtain supporting data for the development of creative ideas, the formulation of the concept of creation, and a technical plan for the embodiment of the work. The literature review is carried out by tracing sources of information in the form of books, scientific articles and reports on the creation of craft works.

Thata Pang and Dynamic Crochet (2011) in the book "*Rajutan Inspirasi (Knitted Inspiration)*". The book contains various forms of knitting works and their formulas, explaining various techniques and variations of the Hakken stitch and the Breien stitch. This book helps in understanding the various types of stitches and explains in detail the methods and formulas for various techniques.

Fransisca Esther and Hendra Sipayung (2010) in the book "*Panduan Praktis Memelihara Koi (Practical Guide to Keeping Koi)*". This book contains a guide to maintaining koi and the history and uniqueness of koi fish.

Heru Susanto (1991) in the book "*Koi.*" This book provides practical information about koi. Various types of koi and the uniqueness of koi are discussed in this book as well as the history of koi fish.

Rubiyar (2010) in the book "*Bunga dari Benang Woll (Flowers of Woll Yarn)*". This book describes 22 flower creations and is accompanied by step-by-step instructions that are easy to understand so that anyone can practice it as a spare time filler. The described technique inspires the author to combine it with knitting techniques.

Yohana Bonita (2011) in the book "*Kreasi Rajutan Cantik untuk Bayi (Beautiful Knitted Creations for Babies)*". This book explains the meaning of knitting and the use of materials as well as the thickness of knitting according to its use and temperature.

3. Creation Method

The creation of artwork uses an aesthetic approach through activities by viewing and searching for data on koi fish and crochet knitting. Aesthetics is a form

of beauty that arises from creative imagination and gives inner satisfaction (Sachari, 1989). This creation was carried out on the basis of creative imagination with the sources idea of koi fish.

The creation of a artwork can be done by imitating or changing from a pre-existing work. In addition, the environment can also inspire the creation of works. Experience is very influential in the process of doing something new (creative) and something tangible (innovative) (Suryana, 2001). As according to Susanne K. Langer's principle of artistic creation, art is creation which means doing something that did not exist before. Indeed, the materials used in the creation already exist, but the form as a result of the creation has not existed before (Soegeng Toekio et al., 2007). The technical creations carried out in the creation of koi fish-themed wall decorations are combining techniques crochet knitting and tapestry. Meanwhile, the form or embodiment is in accordance with the author's creative imagination.

Methodologically (scientific) there are three stages in the creation of artworks, namely: the stages of exploration, design, and embodiment (Sugeng Toekio, 2003). Exploration begins with data collection through literature studies, field studies, documentation and interpretation. The design is done by making sketches and models. The design stage is to visualize ideas and concepts into a sketch or initial design, then the selected design is determined (Nafisah & Marwati, 2022). Finally, realizing the work with the actual medium and size and then exhibiting the artwork to the public.

4. Artwork Description

According to Dharsono Sony Kartika, there are three basic foundation components in creating works, namely the theme (subject matter), shape (form), and content (meaning) in his book “*Seni Rupa Modern (Modern Art)*” (Kartika, 2004). Meanwhile, Monroe Beardsley in Dharsono Sony Kartika's book explains that there are 3 characteristics that make aesthetic objects good/beautiful, namely: unity, complexity and intensity (Dharsono, 2007). These three aesthetic characteristics and foundations form the basis for the creation of this wall decoration artwork.

Visually, all of these artworks adopt forms that already exist in real life. These

forms include; koi fish shape, lotus flower, lotus leaf, water flow and splash shape, frog, butterfly, spider, snail, turtle, rock. The form of this work depicts the habitat of koi fish in real life, so that the overall shape is made almost the same to make it seem alive and real. The finished wall decoration art, then described, includes a picture of the work, title, size, etc.

4.1. The 1st Artwork

The 1st artwork entitled " *Harmoni Ikan Koi* (Harmony of Koi Fish)" with a size of 95 x 55 cm, wall decoration using a combination of knitting techniques for the koi fish, water stylization and small insects, tapestry on the background and with the addition of spiral wire technique for the part of leaves and flowers. All of these objects describe the state of the fish in real life.



Figure 2. "Harmoni Ikan Koi"
(Design: Rengga Kusuma N.S., 2015)

The combination of leaves, flowers, water style, and fish shapes that have curved elements give the impression of rhythm and motion in the whole form. The combination of contrasting colors in processing dark and light colors gives a three-dimensional impression of the artworks. Harmony or balance is a close combination of different elements. If aesthetic elements are combined side by side, certain

combinations will arise and then harmony will arise so that it looks more attractive (Dharsono, 2007).

The combination of light blue, dark blue, and black of the backgrounds depicts water that has different depths, also the flow of water which is realized by knitting shaped like a water flow and splashes of water formed from knitting in a spiral shape. Kindai Showa koi which has a white color is more dominant on the body, clustered with the shape of the swinging movement also illustrates harmony. To make this work more interesting overall, a purple lotus flower is added to represent tenderness.

The lotus flower is a flower that needs water to grow and develop, but the lotus will not sink into it. This flower lives in calm water, where many insects. The large leaves float on the water and are often used as a place for frogs to bask and shelter for small insects, such as butterflies, spiders and other animals (Melissa, 2014).

In this work, the harmony is very strong, this is manifested by the rhythmic swaying of the koi that always go hand in hand in groups, depicted living side by side with small animals such as frogs, butterflies and spiders that always perch on the lotus plant in the pond where the koi fish live. Thus the title "*Harmoni Ikan Koi* (Koi Fish Harmony)" is sufficient to represent the meaning of the harmony of koi fish in real life that live in groups and side by side with other animals. In this work, harmony can be seen from the arrangement of elements that have closeness in form (similarity), color combinations, and role elements (function).

This work contains a message that it is not difficult to create harmony in life. Even though we live side by side with various kinds of differences around us, by creating peace, harmony, complement each other, it can make life more colorful. Because they complement each other, so there will be harmony in the whole.

4.2. The 2nd Artwork

The 2nd artwork is entitled "*Lemah Lembut* (Softness)" with a size of 80 x 50

cm. The wall decoration works using a combination of knitting techniques for the koi fish, water stylization and small insects, and tapestry on the background and with the addition of spiral wire techniques for the leaves and flowers.

The work depicts koi which are gentle, because koi are soft and tame, especially if the owner is having problems, koi can melt the situation, koi can be joked with, koi can also give calm and comfort to the owner. Even koi will follow and approach the owner if they are called (Agus & Asmara, 2006).



Figure 3. “*Lemah Lembut*”
(Design: Rengga Kusuma N.S., 2015)

Although koi are gentle fish, they are not afraid of anything until they are slaughtered. Therefore, koi in Japan are also called as samurai fish (Agus & Asmara, 2006). The depiction of the gentle nature of the koi can be seen from the calm curve of the koi's body. As a support is the background color and leaves that use calm colors, so that the color harmony of the work can also represent the nature of the koi fish. And, the contrasting colors on the koi give this work a non-monotonous impression.

The supporting element in this work is the addition of small insects, such as frogs that are often in the pond. In real life, these animals coexist with fish in ponds

and in nature. Small turtles in the leaves, because turtles live in water and often fish lovers put these animals in their ponds and snails are often seen in lotus leaves. Thus, the embodiment of this work describes the actual habitat of the koi fish in the pond and makes these forms a perfect unity. And, unity is the main principle in which the elements of art support each other in forming a good and harmonious composition.

Each form of the elements of the work always has its own complexity. In this work the complexity is in making the shape of the lotus leaf and grass. For the shape of the lotus leaf because it is very large, a large wire is needed to help the shaping process so that it is not flexible. In the manufacture of grass, shaping must also be done slowly, because the shape is easy to change if the thread is too strong to pull it. Seriousness is seen in the finishing process, namely when attaching leaf shapes, fish, stone to make it look alive, and the addition of frog and snail is considered to make this work more realistic.

This wall art work entitled “*Lemah Lembut (Softness)*” is manifested by swaying the body of a koi fish between lotus leaves and water grass with a background that has a calm color. The form of the work is sufficient to represent the intent of the fourth work. Meanwhile, the message of this work is that the beauty and gentle nature of a person will make others feel calm and peaceful.

4.3. The 3rd Artwork

The 3rd artwork is entitled “*Si Raja Ikan Air Tawar (The King of Freshwater Fish)*” with a size of 95 x 55 cm. This wall decoration work uses a combination of knitting techniques for the koi fish, water stylization and small insects, and tapestry techniques on the background and with the addition of spiral wire techniques for the leaves and flowers.

This artwork depicts a very large and yellow koi commonly called Kigo, so it looks luxurious. This describes the koi as the king of freshwater fish. Koi is the largest freshwater ornamental fish and is a prestigious fish.

Its head is large and decorated with a pair of mustaches. This mustache is what distinguishes it from the goldfish, *Carassius auratus*. They swam like a king and

would occasionally jump out of the water to show off their charming features. Koi is the king of freshwater ornamental fish. Like a tree, koi are very big trees, while goldfish are stunted trees (Susanto, 1991).

Koi is the king of freshwater fish that has authority and prestige which can be seen from its charming beauty. If someone puts koi in their garden pond, they believe they will get great success (Susanto, 1991). As a supporting element in this artwork, the shape of a butterfly perched on a lotus flower, a snail and a turtle on a leaf is added. Thus, making this work more realistic, depicts the real life of koi fish in a pond living side by side with small insects on the water. It is supported by the shape of the wide leaves with lotus flowers on it with the right proportion, thus making a perfect unity.



Figure 4. “*Si Raja Ikan Air Tawar*”
(Design: Rengga Kusuma N.S., 2015)

Perfection can also be seen from the choice of colors used in this artwork. Contrasting colors are obtained due to the presence of two opposite elements, the striking difference in color gives the impression of not being monotonous in this artwork.

The complexity appears in finding the shape of a large koi fish and forming the tail using a knitting technique, as well as leaf shapes using a spiral wire technique.

The larger the leaf shape, the more difficult the process will be. Seriousness is seen in the process of making koi, because the shape is very large and takes a long time, even patience in this process is also needed. Likewise with the manufacture of large leaves, patience is also needed in this process.

Thus, the third artwork entitled “*Si Raja Ikan Air Tawar* (The King of Freshwater Fish)” can represent the intention, with the depiction of a large koi fish in yellow and looks luxurious and prestigious. Meanwhile, the message in this work is that someone will judge other people more from the outside and the quality of themselves. The more interesting they are, the more they will be appreciated.

5. Conclusion

Artwork is the result of exploring themes related to ideas, reviewing themes, media to the final result in the form of a work. With all that exists, it can be underlined as a conclusion:

Koi fish is an icon of Blitar City that is interesting to be re-appreciated so that people will know more and know the ins and outs of koi fish. Koi fish are the king of freshwater fish that are beautiful when viewed and make calm/ peace for the audience. Koi fish are also believed to bring good luck to their owners. There are many interesting things about koi fish, so the idea of making art with knitting techniques emerged, creating decorative art for wall hangings with crochet knitting techniques with the theme of koi fish. Knitting a koi shape is very easy, with hakken in a certain size, cotton thread and patience and tenacity in the manufacturing process, so this artwork can be realized.

Technically, the form of this wall decoration art work uses wool, cotton thread and other materials which are combined and manifested into a wall decoration in a unity harmonious. The use of knitting techniques that have been often used by craftsmen and knitting lovers can also be developed with a combination of techniques between knitting and tapestry. In addition, the spiral wire technique was added. With this combination of techniques, innovative and interesting works are created to be enjoyed. Overall, there are three koi fish-themed works with two-

dimensional forms that are processed with elements, namely; shape, line, color, texture, dark light etc.

The three wall decoration art works are: (1) “*Harmoni Ikan Koi* (Koi Fish Harmony)” depicting the life of koi in groups, and coexistence with other aquatic animals; (2) “*Lemah Lembut* (Softness)” describes the nature of the koi fish; and (3) “*Si Raja Ikan Air Tawar* (The King of Freshwater Fish)” describes the beauty of the koi swaying its charming body and looks luxurious, so it deserves to be called the king of freshwater fish.

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ARTISTIC : International Journal of Creation and Innovation

Publisher:
Program Pascasarjana
Institut Seni Indonesia (ISI) Surakarta

Available online at:
<https://jurnal.isi-ska.ac.id/index.php/artistic>

How to Cite:
Sari, Rengga Kusuma Nawala; Wuryani, Sri; Ranangsari, Kosalalita Anggiyumna. (2022). Koi Fish as An Inspiration for Wall Decoration Artwork. *ARTISTIC : International Journal of Creation and Innovation*, 3(2), 115-128.