

THE AESTHETIC OF PITA MAHA PAINTING: SOURCES OF CREATION IN CONTEMPORARY ART

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ABSTRACT

The creator, born in Padangtegal, Ubud, has appreciated Pita Maha artwork. Pita Maha painting is a genre that emerged in 1936, characterized by the fusion of classical Balinese and Western painting styles. The creator believes that the aesthetics of Pita Maha painting can serve as a foundation for artistic creation. This study employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing data collection techniques such as observation, documentation, interviews, and supplemented with library resources. The gathered data undergoes two phases: analysis to identify the concept, followed by the creation phase. The outcome of the study is a painting titled "Wayang Wong". This contemporary artwork is created employing the techniques and aesthetics of Pita Maha painting, allowing it to resonate within the context of modern life.

Keywords: Pita Maha; art painting; wayang wong; Bali

ABSTRAK

Pencipta yang berasal dari Padangtegal Ubud, sejak kecil sudah sering menikmati lukis Pita Maha. Seni lukis Pita Maha merupakan aliran seni lukis yang ditemukan tahun 1936 ketika terjadinya pencampuran budaya antara seni lukis klasik Bali dengan seni lukis Barat. Pencipta meyakini estetika seni lukis Pita Maha dapat dipakai pijakan dalam menciptakan karya seni lukis. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, dengan metode pengumpulan data berupa: observasi, dokumentasi, wawancara, serta ditunjang dengan sumber pustaka. Kemudian data yang terkumpul diolah melalui dua tahapan: analisis untuk menemukan konsep, dan tahap penciptaan karya. Hasil penelitian yaitu karya seni lukis yang berjudul "Wayang Wong". lukisan ini menggunakan teknik dan estetika seni lukis Pita Maha dalam menciptakannya, sehingga karya seni lukis baru ini dapat masuk kedalam konteks kehidupan masa kini.

Kata kunci: Pita Maha; seni lukis; wayang wong; Bali

1. Introduction

As a creator, inspiration can be found anywhere, even in everyday life. The creator, who grew up in the village of Padangtegal Tengah, Ubud, has been familiar after seeing and practicing traditional Balinese painting, or often known as the Pita

Maha painting, since a child. Pita Maha is a style of painting in the 1930s in Bali, its roots is classical Balinese painting which was influenced by western painting that entered Bali during the colonial era. Classical Balinese painting is a painting that developed in the 15th century when Bali was ruled by King Dalem Waturenggong (Zulianti, 2016). Classical Balinese painting is in the form of "Wayang", namely narrative illustrations that are directly derived from wayang art. Meanwhile, western painting is a painting introduced by western artists Wallter Spies and Rudolf Bonnet who came to Bali in 1929 (Couteau, 1999). Western painting, brings novelty techniques and new painting concepts to Balinese artists who have basic Balinese classical painting skills. This cultural contact continues to produce a new genre of painting that has its own pattern and style, this new genre of painting is known as the Pita Maha Painting.

The creator knows this painting of Pita Maha after often seeing the work of his own grandfather, Anak Agung Gede Sobrat. Later when 10 years old, the creator learned the Pita Maha painting from his maternal grandfather, Anak Agung Gede Raka Pudja. Since childhood, when making stroke or painting, it is very influenced and can never be separated from the painting of Pita Maha. The creator believes that the aesthetics of Pita Maha's painting can be used as a basis for exploration in creating new art painting or contemporary painting.

Based on these problems, this study was analyzed through two stages: analysis to find the concept, and the stage of creating the work. In the analysis phase, the creator selects several samples of the most prominent painting works who echoing the aesthetic peculiarities of Pita Maha painting such as Anak Agung Gede Sobrat, Anak Agung Gede Meregeg and Ida Bagus Made Poleng. These three works of art are dissected using Herbert Read's aesthetic theory which examines line, object, composition, color, and texture. In the practice of creating paintings, Hawkins' approach is used, explaining that every creation of good art always goes through three stages: first exploration, second improvisation, and third formation or composition. The results of the conceptual analysis of the painting by Pita Maha are

used as a basic technique or source of ideas in the creation of contemporary works of art.

2. Literature Review

The literature studied in this study, such as book references, research reports, articles, and exhibition catalogs that can help or as a source of information about this research. Jean Couteau, through the book *Museum Puri Paintings*, explains the chronology of the development of Balinese painting starting from the pre-colonial period, the period of intervention by Western artists, Pita Maha, until after World War II (Couteau, 1999). Apart from that, Couteau also explained some of the works of the artist Pita Maha.

The journal of aesthetic study of painting in the Pita Maha style explains that the most prominent things that characterize the painting of Pita Maha are: lines, objects, colors, textures and composition (Pastika, I Dewa Made; Yugus, AA Gde; Suasmini, 2009). So the opinion above is used to dissect or know the aesthetics of Pita Maha's painting.

Darmawan T (2006) in his book entitled *Bali Bravo* explains the history of the start of the development of painting in Bali, including the painting of Pita Maha. This book also discloses the function of the Pita Maha paintings at that time apart from being sold, namely to decorate temples, religious rituals, and to decorate the king's residence. The themes in the paintings are the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. This book also describes classical Balinese painting which does not close itself off from Western influences. So that there is friction between Balinese culture and Western culture, Balinese painters come with a variety of styles (Dermawan T., 2006).

I. M. Purnata in the book *Development of Fine Arts in Bali [Sekitar perkembangan seni rupa di Bali]* says that painting in Bali has changed into several styles, such as *Kamasan* style, *Batuan* style, *Ubud/Pita Maha* style, and *Young Artist* style paintings. . In addition, it explains that *Walter Spies* and *R. Bonnet*, who settled

in Ubud, influenced Balinese artists. The function of their works undergoes a religious change, then leads to a change in commercial economic function. In this case, the wayang theme changes to a theme that expresses everyday life, as well as changes in terms of form and technique, resulting in knowledge of composition and perspective, which gives rise to a number of schools or styles of its own (Purnata, 1976).

The book *Pita Maha Maha, the Balinese Painting Social Movement of the 1930s* [*Pita Maha Gerakan Sosial Seni Lukis Bali 1930-an*], I Wayan Adnyana (2018) states that Balinese art in the Pita Maha era and earlier was colored by art practices based on traditional cultural and symbolic capital represented by the king. The development of Balinese painting never stands still, where since the Dutch invasion on the island of Bali and when foreign artists entered Bali, painting in Bali has been increasingly developing (Adnyana, 2018). This book also describes classical Balinese painting techniques, namely the Sigar Mangsi technique, and Pita Maha painting techniques such as nyeket, nyawi, ngorten, ngampad, ngeskes, ngabur and nyenter. So this book is very relevant to this research.

3. Creation Methodology

This study uses qualitative research methods, with data presentation in the form of descriptive narrative. There are two types of data used in this study, namely primary data and secondary data. The primary data is direct observation to the field. Where to do direct observation at the Puri Paintings Museum in Ubud and the Arma Museum. For secondary data, researchers obtain data from documentation, journals, exhibition catalogs, books and other documents that support research. The instrument in this study was the researcher himself as the key instrument. In collecting data, researchers need tools as additional instruments. The instruments in question are cameras, cell phones for recorders, stationery, and notebooks.

The creation practice refers to Hawkins' opinion, that every good work of art always goes through three stages: first exploration, second improvisation, and third

formation or composition (Soedarsono, 2001). The first stage is processing the analysis of the basis idea in this creation “The aesthetics of Pita Maha Painting”, sketching on the canvas. The second stage is explore the techniques and materials used (oil color). And the next stage is the finishing stage of the work.

4. Discussion

4.1. The Aesthetics of Pita Maha Painting

Aesthetics is a science that studies everything related to beauty (Djelantik, 1999). Herbert Read defines that aesthetics is the unity and relationship of forms that exist between sensory perceptions. The uniqueness of a work of art can be known by looking at the object carefully by looking at the forming elements in the work, such as lines, objects, colors, composition and texture.

The aesthetic peculiarities of Pita Maha's paintings can be identified by analyzing several samples of works of art that most prominently echo the distinctiveness of Pita Maha's paintings. As for the works of the paintings Anak Agung Gede Sobrat, Anak Agung Gede Meregge and Ida Bagus Made Poleng. The sample paintings from the three artists were discussed on a representative basis and revealed the aesthetic value contained in the physical form of the paintings. The elements studied are: lines, objects, color, texture, composition, balance, complexity, and contrast.

Anak Agung Gede Sobrat or often known as Sobrat was born in the Banjar Padangtegal Tengah, Ubud in 1921. Sobrat, like many others growing up in a family of traditional puppeteers and craftsmen, had absorbed the principles of Balinese art from an early age (Vickers, 2019). The aesthetic of this painting, object is displayed large and dominates the entire canvas, which aims to attract the center of attention of the viewer, while other objects are used as backgrounds. The background is combined with a natural landscape. Then the empty canvas area is usually filled with white clouds. The full composition and color gradations are one of the characteristics of Sobrat's paintings. "Tari Baris" which is on display at the Neka

Museum featuring a Baris Dance performance in the countryside with composition on a full canvas. To balance this fullness with the game of color gradations, there is a near and far perspective in the painting. The figure in the painting of the Baris Dance is depicted naturally.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

Figure 1. Anak Agung Gede Sobrat, "Taksu Baris", 120 x 100 cm, Museum Neka collection; Figure 2. Ida Bagus Made Poleng, "Upacara di Laut", 111 x 140 cm. Museum Puri Lukisan collection; Figure 3. Anak Agung Gede Meregeg, "Sita Kependung", 49x79 cm, 1968. Meregeg family collection

Ida Bagus Made Poleng, who is often called Gus Made, is a painter who was born in 1915 in Banjar Tebesaya, Ubud, Bali. Gus Made never stops studying 'sensory compounds'. Through his sense of hearing and imagination, he tries to transfer the rhythm of gong kebyar music onto his canvas (Hartanto, 1988). The aesthetic of Gus Made's paintings is the capture of human figures that are presented in a realistic, having plasticity like the human body and dynamically arranging the composition of the painting. In his paintings, they are generally made in dark tones, human figures are arranged evenly on the canvas, and there are views of the horizon in his paintings. The colors of the sky, human figures, nature are made in dark tones, even though the painting tells about the situation during the day, as in the painting entitled "Legong Dance" (1950).

Anak Agung Gede Meregeg, who is often called Meregeg, was born in Padangtegal Tengah, Ubud in 1908. The specialty on Meregeg's painting is creating wayang with human plastic anatomy. The male and female puppet figures are

depicted showing the athletic muscles. The coloring in Meregeg's paintings usually makes the main object contrast with the background with neat color gradations. It can be seen in the painting entitled “Sita Kependung” the anatomy of the puppet figures is realistically made to approach the anatomy of a human. Anak Agung Gede Meregeg's paintings are very philosophical. He is very prominent in taking stories from the Ramayana epic and then giving them new interpretations (Bentarabudaya, n.d.).

In general, “line” are very dominant in Pita Maha's paintings, usually contour lines can be dimensional from thick or thin. Contour lines are used to highlight the main object against the background. such as thick contour lines are used as the main object work, while lines with thin contours are used to dcreate the background. The coloring technique in Pita Maha’s painting is the prominence of color which is indicated by the placement of color on the part of the object that is considered more important with a higher intensity. The application of color is done using the *Ngabur-Nyenter* technique, which means lighting from a mixture of white and yellow gives a prominent impression on the bright parts exposed to the light. The object Pita Maha paintings usually perform stylization which changes the shape of an object from its original form by stylizing it into new forms that are decorative but do not lose the essence of the original form. For example, such as stylizing the shape of trees to make them decorative with their own style. The texture that is displayed is a pseudo texture, the area looks rough but is actually smooth. Texture appears from the application of the *sigar mangsi* technique or the *Ngabur-Nyenter* technique.

4.2. Art Work Description

Figure 4 is a painting resulting from this creative process. This painting displays the main object of the *wayang wong* dance. Lines are created to contours and detailed motifs. Objects of this painting such as: dancers, ceremonial means, nature, and the motifs of ornaments are all detailed with flirtation of thick and thin

contour lines. The lines in this painting are not only black, but many lines are combined with various colors, such as the line on green plants.



Figure 4. "Wayang Wong" by A.A. Gede Bayu Paramarta Krisna Prabu, oil on canvas, 160 x 100 cm, 2020

The object displayed is large, which aims to attract the attention of the viewer, while other objects such as: dancers behind and ceremonial equipment combined with village scenery are used as backgrounds. Then the blank canvas area filled with white clouds. Texture in this painting uses a pseudo texture, the texture of human skin, offerings, and so on looks rough, but when you touch, it has a smooth texture. The composition in this painting is achieved through the processing of the main object and background. It can be seen that there is a close and far perspective work done through the play of colors and shapes. In this painting the full composition and color gradations are one of the characteristics of Pita Maha's painting, we can clearly see the influence of the aesthetics of Pita Maha's painting is strong. Pita Maha

painting and its influence to the painting world of Bali (Adnyana, 2015), it can be seen in the painting "Wayang Wong" above.

5. Conclusion

Creators who grew up in a traditional artist environment use the Pita Maha painting aesthetics as a source of inspiration. The uniqueness of Pita Maha's painting is the ability to capture objects in a decorative realist, the flirtation of various lines, the processing of compositions is more dynamic, and the perceptive cultivation of shapes and colors. Based on the results of this study, it is used by creators to creating contemporary painting.

The process of creating begins by combining concept analysis, the imagination stage, the artistic and technical exploration stage, the sketching stage, and the finishing stage. From this process created a painting entitled "Wayang Wong". Where is the influence of the aesthetics of Pita Maha painting is very strong.

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