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CREATIVITY AMONG VISUAL ARTISTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS: AN ANALYSIS THROUGH PIERRE BOURDIEU'S THEORY OF SOCIAL PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the creative practices of four visually impaired artists working at the Teratai Bali Foundation in Denpasar, utilizing Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practice as the analytical framework. This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, integrating in-depth interviews, observations of artistic processes, and visual analysis of artworks. The findings indicate that while the artists demonstrate diverse visual styles, two recurring tendencies emerge: the predominance of visual memory in forming initial sketches and the exploration of texture through fingers as the primary tool for applying color. The practice of "seeing through touch" suggests that the body functions simultaneously as a mechanism of artistic production and aesthetic evaluation. This study contributes to the discourse on disability aesthetics by demonstrating that visually impaired artists' visual art practices are diverse and profoundly embodied, while also challenging the dominance of vision as the basis for aesthetic legitimacy in visual art.

Keywords: Disability; visual art; Pierre Bourdieu; perception; sociology.

1. Introduction

Visual art plays an integral role in reflecting and shaping social realities, as artistic practices are always embedded within the values, norms, and cultural structures in which they are produced (Syah Sinaga et al., 2021). Developments in contemporary art have increasingly foregrounded diversity and inclusivity, as reflected in growing recognition of artistic practices grounded in the embodied experiences of people with disabilities. Disability art is no longer viewed merely as a therapeutic or social activity but also as a form of aesthetic production capable of challenging dominant assumptions about beauty, normative constructions of the normal body, and artistic legitimacy (Siebers, 2010).

At the global level, studies on disability emphasize that disabled bodily experiences, including sensory limitations, can serve as sources of aesthetic value and artistic innovation. Siebers (2010) argues that disability art reveals how what is conventionally considered a "defect" may instead become a generative source of form, meaning, and new artistic sensibility. Nevertheless, several studies also indicate that disability art often occupies an ambivalent position, where artworks are more readily appreciated as inspirational narratives or expressions of humanity than as artistic practices evaluated on equal footing within the field of visual art (Solvang, 2018).

Visual art of visually impaired artists presents a particular complexity, as the absence of sight is frequently perceived as a fundamental barrier to the creation of visual works. International research demonstrates that artists with visual impairments often develop creative strategies grounded in multisensory experience, including touching, hearing, bodily memory, and nonvisual meaning-making processes (Dubiel, 2022; Szubielska, 2018). Such practices should not be interpreted merely as compensatory mechanisms, but rather as artistic processes emerging from distinctive configurations of sensory, social, and cultural experience.

In Indonesia, discourse on inclusivity in visual art has gradually gained legitimacy through several institutional initiatives. One significant milestone was the exhibition *Festival Bebas Batas: Pokok di Ambang Batas*, held at the National Gallery of Indonesia in 2018 and initiated by the Directorate of Arts. The exhibition served as a public platform that demonstrated that artists with disabilities have the capacity to articulate ideas and experiences through visual media (Dartanto, 2018). Since that moment, the presence of artists with disabilities, including visually impaired artists, has become increasingly visible in public discourse and media representation.

Despite this growing visibility, critical examination of the position of visually impaired artists within the structure of the visual art field remains limited. Several existing studies in Indonesia continue to focus primarily on instructional media development, pedagogical approaches, or the therapeutic functions for art individuals with visual impairments (Fajrie, 2016; Hinelo et al., 2022; Setiawan et

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al., 2023). Studies investigating how the creative practices of visually impaired artists are negotiated within the power relations of the art field, particularly regarding access to recognition, symbolic capital, and aesthetic legitimacy, are relatively scarce.

This study addresses that research gap by exploring how visually impaired artists at the Teratai Bali Foundation develop and sustain their creative practices within an artistic field that often restricts access to symbolic recognition and legitimacy. The analysis draws on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practice, which enables an examination of the dynamics of multisensory habitus, configurations of capital, and the structural conditions of the visual art field. This theoretical approach provides a conceptual framework for understanding how disability art practices operate within complex social and cultural contexts.

This research offers three primary contributions. First, theoretically, it expands global discussions of disability aesthetics by presenting an empirical study of visually impaired artists in Bali, representing a Global South context that remains underrepresented in international literature. Second, it operationalized Bourdieu's theory of social practice within the context of blind visual art by mapping the concrete relationships among habitus, capital, and field in the creative trajectories of four visually impaired artists at the Teratai Bali Foundation. Third, both conceptually and practically, the study demonstrates that the principal challenges faced by visually impaired artists lie not in artistic competence but in structural deficits of symbolic capital within the art field. Consequently, a shift is needed from compassion-based appreciation toward more equitable forms of aesthetic legitimacy.

2. Literature Review

Studies on art and disability have generated a substantial body of knowledge at both conceptual and empirical levels. Disability aesthetics offers a new perspective on the relationship among the body, the experience of disability, and aesthetic value. Siebers (2010) argues that disability should be regarded as an aesthetic resource capable of disrupting idelas of the perfect body and established standards of beauty , rather than as a deficiency to be concealed. This perspective

provides an important foundation for interpreting the artworks of visually impaired artists as legitimate aesthetic rather than merely narratives of personal resilience.

Another perspective on disability art emphasizes its relationship with broader social and institutional structures. Solvang (2012) identifies ambigouos position of disability art, which is often recognized simultaneously as an expression of identity and as a form of advocacy, yet remains insufficiently integrated into mainstream aesthetic discourse. Further analysis underscores the importance of sociological approaches in examining the intersections among artistic practice, disability discourse, and the distribution of symbolic capital within the art field (Solvang, 2018). These contributions open theoretical possibilities for linking disability aesthetics with Bourdieu's analytical framework of the artistic field. Explicit applications of the concepts of habitus, capital, and field to the context of visually impaired artists remain limited, suggesting the need for further investigation.

At the empirical level, several international studies have explored the participation of individuals with visual impairments in the visual arts. Szubielska (2018) demonstrates that people with visual impairments can actively engage with visual art both as audiences and as creators, through perceptual modes different from those of viewers but equally rich in aesthetic potential. Dubiel (2022) further interprets blindness as a creative resource that encourages artists to develop nonvisual strategies for understanding space, form, and material. Such studies challenge the assumption that direct visual perception is an essential prerequisite for artistic creation within the visual arts.

Methodological contributions have also emerged from studies emphasizing multisensory approaches to art and accessibility. Cavazos Quero et al. (2021) compared the effectiveness of tactile graphics and multimodal approaches as means of enabling visually impaired individuals to access visual artworks, and found that combining touch, audio and narrative enhaces aesthetic experience while expanding opportunities for creative engagement. Jonauskaite et al. (2025) demonstrate that concepts of color can be understood, remembered, and utilized by visually impaired individuals through language and social construction, even in the absence of direct visual experience. These findings are significant in showing that

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cultural capital related to color and spatial understanding does not depend solely on visual perception.

Several studies have also reflected on artistic practice from the perspective of artists with vision loss. McPeake (2018), in reflecting on his sculptural practice, describes how the label "visually impaired artist" influences the interpretation and evaluation of his work. Artworks are frequently reduced to evidence of perseverance or rehabilitation rather than assessed on their aesthetic quality. Cheng et al. (2024) further note that the experience of visual art for individuals with visual impairments is strongly shaped by spatial design, interactions with facilitators, and institutional support. Both studies highlight that the aesthetic experience of visually impaired individuals is always situated within broader social and institutional relationships rather than existing solely as an interaction between body and artwork.

In Indonesia, studies on blind visual art have largely focused on educational media development, pedagogical approaches, and psychosocial functions. Setiawan et al. (2023) demonstrate the effectiveness of tactile clay-based books in helping visually impaired children recognize animal forms in engaging ways. Hinelo et al. (2022) developed multimedia-based intructional media for special education schools and found that such approaches provide visually impaired students with greater autonomy in selecting learning materials while exploring creative expression. Fajrie (2016) highlights that the use of three-dimensional media in art activities can enhance tactile sensitivity and self-confidence among visually impaired children, although the process requires considerable time. Warni and Damajanti (2019) identify a tendency toward abstract aesthetics in the paintings of the Balvi blind artist community, characterized by the dominance of vertical and horizontal lines as a distinctive visual language emerging from embodied experience without sight.

In terms of their theoretical and methodological contributions, these international and national studies provide important insights into the creativity and aesthetic experiences of visually impaired people. However, this research has several limitations. First, much of the international literature does not explicitly address contexts in the Global South, including Indonesia, where cultural and

institutional structures of the art field differ significantly from those in Europe and North America. Second, both internationally and nationally, relatively few studies explicitly integrate disability aesthetics with Bourdieu's theory of social practice to analyze how habitus, capital, and the art field shape the creative trajectories of visually impaired artists. Third, many studies in Indonesia continue to position visually impaired individuals primarily as subjects of education or therapy rather than as agents negotiating their position within the power structures of the art world and the distribution of symbolic legitimacy.

This current study situates itself within this underexplored area by examining the case of four visually impaired artists at the Teratai bali Foundation. The study focuses on how their creativity is produced and negotiated through the dynamics of social practice. The primary contribution lies in operationalizing Bourdieu's categories of habitus, capital, and field to interpret the visual art practices of visually impaired artists in Indonesia, while also connecting empirical findings to broader global debates on disability aesthetics and symbolic exclusion within the field of visual art.

3. Method

This study employs a qualitative research design grounded in an interpretive paradigm and informed by the sociology of art. The interpretive paradigm is adopted because the study seeks to understand the meanings, experiences, and creative practices of visually impaired artists as constructed by the participants within their social contexts, rather than to test hypotheses or measure variables quantitatively. The data were analyzed using an interpretive thematic analysis to identify patterns in sensory experience, creative strategies, and social structures shaping the participants' artistic practices.

The research design follows a qualitative case study approach. A case study was selected because it enables an in-depth exploration of the visual art practices of visually impaired artists within a specific social context, namely the Teratai Bali Foundation and also traces the relationship between individual experience, institutional structures, and the broader field of visual art. The analytical framework of this research is grounded in Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social

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practice, particularly the concepts of habitus, forms of capital (cultural, social, economic, and symbolic), and field. These concepts function as analytic lenses for interpreting empirical data rather than as variables to be measured statistically.

The object of this research is the creative practice of visually impaired artists, encompassing the processes of artistic production, sensory and embodied experiences during art-making, social relations that sustain artistic activities, and the positioning of their artworks within the visual art field. The research participants consist of three visually impaired artists who actively produce artwork at the Teratai Bali Foundation. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on the following criteria: 1) experiencing total blindness or serving visual impairment; 2) actively producing paintings regularly for at least the past two years; 3) consistently creating artworks even outside formal exhibition contexts; and 4) willingness to participate in interviews, observations, and documentation of their artworks.

The research was conducted at the Teratai Bali Foundation located in Sesetan, Denpasar, Bali Province. The foundation serves as a space for learning, artistic production, and social interaction for individuals with visual impairments enabling them to develop skills in both art and literature. The study focuses on everyday artistic activities within the foundation's working space rather than on specific exhibitions or art events.

The primary artistic medium examined in this research is painting produced by artists with impaired vision. These artworks are generally created on canvas, with techniques adapted to the artists' sensory experiences, such as emphasis on surface texture, paint layer thickness, and tactile gestures. Most artworks do not have formal titles, as the artists do not consistently assign names to their works. Consequently, the artworks are identified based on their visual and textural characteristics as well as the contextual circumstances of their creation.

The research instruments include a semi-structured interview guide, an observation sheet for documenting the artistic process, and documentation tools such as a camera and field notes. The interview guide was designed to explore participants' creative experiences, habitual practices in art-making, personal meanings associated with painting, and their perspectives on the appreciation and

recognition of their artworks. Data were collected through three primary techniques: in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation.

In-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face with the three visually impaired artists at the Teratai Bali Foundation. The interviews were semi-structured to allow participants to narrate their experiences freely while ensuring that key themes relevant to the research focus were addressed. All interviews were recorded with the participants' consent and transcribed verbatim. Observation was conducted during painting process, including how artists interact with the canvas and artistic media, their use of tactile and auditory senses, the organization of their work space, and interactions with instructors or facilitators. The observation was non-participatory, with the researcher not directly involved in the creation of artworks. Field note were systematically written following each observation session.

The documentation study included the collection of photographs of artworks, documentation of artistic processes and foundation's internal archives related to artistic activities among visually impaired participants. These materials served as visual and contextual data supporting both descriptive and interpretive analysis. Data analysis was conducted thematically with reference to Bourdieu's framework of social practice. The analytical process consisted of several interconnected stages. The first stage involved data organization, including the compilation of interview transcripts, observation notes, and visual documentation of artworks. The second stage involved initial coding to identify units of meaning related to sensory experience, artistic habit, sources of capital, as well as challenges and strategies within artistic practice. The third stage consisted of grouping these codes into broader thematic categories such as rmultisensory habitus, cultural and social capital, limitations in symbolic capital, and the relationship between artists and the field of visual art. At this stage, the concepts of habitus, capital, and field were used as analytical categories to interpret empirical data. The final stage involved thematic interpretation, linking empirical findings with the theoretical framework in order to understand how the artistic practice of visually impaired visual artists is produced and negotiated within particular social structures. The analysis was

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conducted iteratively, with the data repeatedly reviewed to maintain analytical consistency and depth of interpretation.

This study adheres to the ethical principles of qualitative research. All participants received explanations of the study's objectives, the data collection procedures, and their right to withdraw from the research at any time. Informed consent was obtained prior to participation. The credibility of the data was maintained through triangulation of sources and methods by comparing information obtained from interviews, observations, and artwork documentation. In addition, analytical consistency was ensured by systematically linking empirical findings with the theoretical framework guiding the study.

4. Discussion

4.1. Art/Design Work Description

This study analyzes the artworks of four visually impaired artists who create under the Teratai Bali Foundation. The works examined are part of the foundation's collection and are not always displayed in formal exhibitions. Most of these artworks do not include identifying information such as the artist's name, year of production, location, title, dimensions, or material. Based on these conditions, the artworks were identified using visual characteristics and available documentation.



Figure 1. Painting by the artist Didon Kajeng
(Source: Collection of the Teratai Bali Foundation, 2019)

The first artwork was created by the late artist Didon Kajeng, the founder of the Teratai Bali Foundation. Visually, the painting depicts two white swans facing each other on the water's surface, with a blue sky and vegetation on the right. The composition is horizontal and relatively balanced, with the swan figures positioned as the center of attention. The swans are rendered in simplified forms with clear silhouettes, emphasizing the curves of their necks and the contrast between their white bodies and the blue background.

The paint application on the swans appears thicker than that of the background, producing a strong visual distinction in texture. The water and sky backgrounds are treated with thinner, blending strokes. The vegetation on the right side exhibits vertical, repetitive paint application. This work demonstrates a clear dominance of figurative representation and a visual memory recall of animal forms and aquatic landscapes. Textual exploration emerges through differences in paint thickness and bold brushstrokes on the main object.

The presence of swans and plants in the painting is inspired by the everyday life of the late artist Didon Kajeng, who worked as a florist. According to the statement of one of the artists in an interview: "Mas Didon liked painting flora and fauna because his daily life was very close to nature, both before and after experiencing blindness. He was very active in the world of history. The interview shows that what the artist 's work summons of bodily memories from his daily.

The second artwork presents a portrait of a woman with long dark brown hair that occupies most of the canvas. The composition is frontal and highly focused on the figure. The face is constructed from relatively flat skin-toned color fields without complex gradation, while black lines define the contours of the eyes, eyebrows, and jawline. The background, rendered in a reddish-purple hue, is treated with freer and layered brushstrokes, creating a coarse texture that contrasts with the comparatively smoother surface of the face. The eyes are depicted symbolically rather than realistically, with emphasis placed on simplified lines and shapes. The contrasting use of colors red lips, dark hair, and a purple background, demonstrates a bold exploration of color.

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Figure 2. Painting by the artist I Putu Yogantara
(Source: Collection of the Teratai Bali Foundation, 2019)

Yogantara's work reflects visual memory related to the fundamental structure of the human face, preserved in a simplified form. Texture is particularly evidentin the hair and the background, where repeated, layered brushstrokes create depth.



Figure 3. Painting by the artist I Wayan Mudrayana
(Source: Collection of the Teratai Bali Foundation, 2019)

The third artwork features an expressive facial figure with large eyes and prominent teeth. The dominant colors, dark brown and black, form both the

background and the figure, blurring the boundary between object and space. The composition is centralized, with the figure occupying nearly the entire surface.

The color strokes appear thick, uneven, and layered. Texture is the primary element in the formation of form. Lines are not precise, but rather constructed through layers of color and strong brushstrokes. The eyes and teeth are colored lighter, creating a focal point that contrasts with the dark background. This work demonstrates a more expressive approach than that of other artists. The visual memory of the face is not presented realistically, but through deformation and emphasis on certain elements. Texture here is not merely an accent, but rather the main structure that forms the figure. Based on confirmation from the artist, it is stated that the figure is a mask painting. Artist Mudyayana stated in an interview:"All the paintings I create are cultural experiences I had when I could still see. Cultural experiences of ceremonies, bearing, and masks inform the paintings as train my calm. Painting became psychological therapy for me when I first experienced blindness".

Artist Mudyana consciously needed painting as a therapy while blind. Murdyana seemed to rediscover his memories of Balinese nature and culture, transforming them into two-dimensional works.



Figure 4. Painting by the artist Iwan Cahyadi
(Source: Collection of the Teratai Bali Foundation, 2019)

The fourth artwork is non-figurative or abstract in nature. The canva is covered with splashes and strokes of green, yellow, white, and small traces of red.

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The composition has no single center, instead, visual elements are distributed relatively evenly across the entire surface.

The paint application technique appears spontaneous and layered, with certain areas exhibiting noticeably thicker. Splattered color and accumulations of paint layers create a surface rich in textural dynamism. There is no clear representation of objects, but a rhythm of color and movement emerging from the interaction between layers of color. This work demonstrates the most dominant exploration of texture among the four artists. While other artists still maintain a representational visual memory, this artist emphasizes gestural experience and surface as the primary arena of expresion.

4.2. Creative Process and Tactile Navigation

All four artists begin their creative process by producing an initial sketch with a pencil to establish the compositional framework. Following the preliminary stage, the artist relies on their fingers and palms to identify specific areas of the canvas, revisit the boundaries of forms, and map spatial relationships across the surface.



Figure 5. The process of sketching on paper
(Source: Collection of the Teratai Bali Foundation, 2024)

The use of fingers is deliberate, following direct interaction with the artistic medium. Both before and during the coloring process, the artists repeatedly engage in tactile exploration to verify the position of forms, the thickness of paint layers,

and the balance of the overall composition. Aesthetic evaluation is thus conducted through tactile sensation until the artists perceive the work as sufficiently resolved. The artists stated that they "seeing through touch" a system of tactile navigation effectively repleaces visual perception.

Figure 5 illustrates the sketching process. In addition to working on canvas, several artworks by a visually impaired artist are produced on paper as the primary medium. The sketching process shown in Figure 5 is carried out on paper using a pencil. The form of the sketch is analyzed through tactile exploration using the fingers of the left hand. Meanwhile, the right hand presses the pencil firmly against the paper, creating concave textures. To achieve this texture, the artists select paper with relatively high thickness.



Figure 6. The coloring process using fingers and palms
(Source: Documentation of the Teratai Bali Foundation, 2024)

Figure 6 shows the coloring process of painting on canvas. Although brushes are occasionally used to accelerate the application of paint in certain areas, detailed control and final evaluation of the artwork are primarily carried out through direct tactile interaction using the sensitivity of the fingers and palms.

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The findings of this study indicate that the visual art practices of visually impaired artists do not produce a single unified visual style. Instead, they demonstrate a plurality of aesthetic strategies. The variation in styles ranging from representational figurative works to expressive deformation and non-figurative abstraction, suggests that no homogeneous aesthetic category can be attributed to visually impaired visual art.

Nevertheless, two consistent tendencies emerge from the analysis: the dominance of visual memory and the exploration of texture through direct tactile engagement. The initial sketches indicate that visual structure continues to play a conceptual role in the artistic process. However, the realization of form and the evaluation of the completed work are mediated through tactile navigation. The repeated re-touching of the surface demonstrates that the boy functions simultaneously as a tool of production and as a mechanism of aesthetic evaluation.

From the perspective of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practice, habitus is understood as a system of embodied dispositions, that becomes manifested in touch-based painting practices. Bodily dispositions shaped by the experience of vision loss generate artistic production strategies that differ from the visually dominant practices typically found within the field of visual art. Creativity thus emerges from a dialectical relationship between stored visual memory, social experience, and bodily dispositions that have adapted.

Within the framework of disability aesthetics, the practice of "seeing through touch" offers a new perspective on the production of visual art as an embodied practice. Aesthetic evaluation is not exclusively grounded in visual perception but is instead mediated through structured sensory experience. This perspective broadens the understanding of aesthetic legitimacy and challenges the assumption that visual art must necessarily be based on visual dominance.

Despite these posibillities, visually impaired artists continue to face limitations in terms of symbolic capital within the artistic field. Appreciation of their works is often framed through sympathy rather than through equal aesthetic recognition. In Bourdieu's terms, the incomplete accumulation of symbolic capital influences the bargaining position of these actors within the contestation of the visual art field.

4.2. Discussion

4.2.1. Habitus in the Creativity of Visually Impaired Artists as a Response to the Loss of Sight

Based on the history of vision loss experienced by the visually impaired artists at the Teratai Bali Foundation, the artists have undergone several psychologically significant phases. The onset of acquired blindness during adolescence generated profound disruptions in identity and compelled them to reframe their lives fundamentally. Former habits that relied heavily on visual perception were gradually replaced by new patterns of living adapted to life with sight loss. The body, together with the remaining senses, particularly touch and hearing was progressively trained until these senses became the primary means for recognizing the surrounding environment and organizing everyday experiences. This situation resonates with Bourdieu's concept of habitus as a system of embodied dispositions formed through repeated experiences within specific social contexts (Bourdieu, 1990, 1993).

The first major finding related to habitus concerns the emergence of alternative sensory experiences as the basis of expressing personal experience. Interviews with visually impaired artists revealed that alternative sensory modalities constitute their primary means of understanding and responding to the world around them. The artists explained that when vision could no longer be relied upon, they consciously cultivated heightened sensitivity to other senses, particularly touch, hearing, and smell, in order to recognize their surrondings and the objects that later translate into artistic form. One artist noted that the creative process often begins with tactile exploration of the drawing surface, sensing the medium's texture, and recalling sensory experiences.

The artists also emphasized that living as visually impaired individuals has shaped an aesthetic perspective that differs from that of many sighted artists. They recognize the multiplicity of sensory experiences that extend beyond the visual to include tactile and auditory dimensions. Sensitivity to subtle variations in touch, differences in texture, and memories of form and spatial relations become essential sources within the process of artistic creation. Creativity is understood not merely

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as technical proficiency in painting but as a medium for expressing personal experiences, emotions, and worldwide shaped through the lived experience of being visually impaired.

This multisensory pattern of perception is reflected in artworks that emphasize texture, paint thickness, rhythmic brushstrokes, and relationships between color fields rather than realistic visual representation. This finding aligns with the study by Dubiel (2022) which demonstrates that visually impaired artists in Mexico utilize visual impairment as a "creative resource" that situmlates non-oculocentric imagination and generates new interpretations of space and material within artistic practice. The interview findings indicate that the artworks produced by visually impaired artists are not merely the outcome of artistic activity but also reflections of their sensory experiences and life journeys as visually impaired individuals.

The second finding concerns the intensive use of the remaining senses within the creative process. The act of painting requires artists to systematically identify artistic media and visual elements through tactile exploration and, in some cases, through smell. Based on the interview data, the artists explained that touch serves as the primary means for understanding the visual compostion they are constructing. One artist stated that before applying color, he first explores the entire surface of the drawing by touch to confirm the position of the sketch and the available empty spaces. Another artist remarked: "I have to fell the lines first so I know their boundaries. Once I can sense the shape, then I start adding color"(S1).

Another artist explained that the act of touching does not occur only at the initial stage but continues repeatedly throughout the coloring process. He stated: "When I add color, I often touch the areas that have already been painted. From there I know whether the paint is thick enough or whether it needs to be added" (S2). This findings aligns with research by Fajrie on the process of clay artwork creation among individuals with low vision in Indonesia, which demonstrates that aesthetic experience and the structural organization of artworks are constructed through directed tactile exploration rather than through visual perception (Fajrie et al., 2020, 2025). In some cases, identification of artistic media is also conducted by smell to distinguish specific materials or colors. One artist explained:

“Sometimes I recognize a color or material from its smell, so I know which paint I am using”

The third finding relates to adaptation to the environment through techniques and media. Visual limitations encourage artists to develop particular habits in movement, workspace organization, and interaction with artistic materials. All remaining senses are mobilized to analyze body position, the boundaries of the canvas, and the distribution of paint, enabling the artists to work effectively within the spatial conditions. The tendency to apply thick layers of paint, to explore textured surfaces, and to produce abstract compositions can be interpreted as manifestations of an internalized creative habitus. Other international studies similarly show that artistic practice among individuals with vision loss is strongly supported by adaptive strategies toward space and medium rather than merely by technical compensation (Cheng et al., 2024; Li et al., 2023).

Based on the interview results with the artists, adaptation to the working environment forms an important part of the creative process. The artists described gradually developing specific ways of recognizing their bodily position, the boundaries of the canvas, and the distribution of paint across the pictorial surface. One artist explained that before beginning to paint, he first explores the entire surface of the canvas through touch to ensure spatial orientation. He stated: “ I have to know first where the boundaries of the canvas are. I usually feel all the edges so I know my position when painting” (S1). Another artist added that the process of creation always involves coordination between bodily movement and tactile contact in order to maintain the work’s composition. He explained “If I move too far from my starting position, I can lose the direction of the painting. So my hand aftern returns to feel the parts that have already been made so I know where the colors and shapes are" (S3). Another artist emphasized that the habit of touching the painted surface helps him understand the thickness of the paint and the texture that has formed. According to him:” By touching it, I can tell which parts are already thick and which are still thin. Form there I decide whether I need to add more” (S2). These statements demonstrates that adaptation to space and medium is not merely a technical strategy but a creative habit formed through embodied experience during the artistic process.

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The fourth finding concerns strehgthening of social awareness through participation in disability art communities. Living with blindness shapes distinctive patterns of social interaction, in which visually impaired artists often develop heightened sensitivity toward issues of stigma, accessibility, and representation. Participation in disability communities and within the environment of the Teratai Bali foundation reinforces practices of mutual support, shared inspiration, and the development of self-confidence as artists. This finding corresponds with the study by Potocnik (Potočnik et al., 2025) which indicates that visual art activities among individuals with visual impairments not only cultivate aesthetic abillites but also challenge social prejudices suggesting that artistic engagement is "unsuitable" for people with visual limitations. The creative habitus of visually impaired artists thus emerges at the intersection of embodied experience, social relations, and the institutional structures that support them.

Based on the interview results, the artists also emphasized that involvement in the disabled arts community provided an important social space for developing their identities as artists. Participants explained that the Teratai Bali Foundation functions not only as a place for artistic production but also as a space for sharing experiences, providing mutual support, and strengthening self-confidence. One artist stated that before joining the community, he felt hesitant to present his work to the public. He explained: "Before, I lacked confidence because people often saw us as only people who cannot see. After meeting friends, here, I began to feel that I could be an artist (S2). Another artist emphasized that interaction with fellow disabled artists helped him realize that the experience of blindness does not necessarily prevent artistic creation. He sataed: "We share experience about how to paint without seeing. From that I learn new ways and feel more confident to try" (S3). Besides, several participants noted that community support helps them confront the social stigma that still surrounds disabled artists. One artist explained: "Sometimes people look at our work only because we are blind, not because of the painting itself. But in this community we encourage each other to keep creating" (S1). The stamen indicates that disability art communities function not only as spaces for artistic production but also as social arenas that shape collective habitus and strengthen the artists' position in negotiating broader social structures.

4.2.2. Analysis of the Concept of Capital in the Creativity of Artists with Visual Disabilities

Bourdieu's perspective emphasizes that artistic practices are always related to the distribution of various forms of capital, including cultural, social, economic, and symbolic (Bourdieu, 1984, 1993). In this case, artists with visual disabilities demonstrate a distinctive configuration of capital. Their social capital is primarly formed through networks centered within the realm of disability. Stigma and stereotypes attached to disability identities often limit interactions beyond this community, resulting in stronger relationships developing within circles of fellow persons with disabilities, volunteers, and foundation managers. Workshops and small-scale exhibitions facilitated by the Teratai Bali Foundation become important spcaes for expanding social networks and building relationship with art enthusiasts who offer substantive support rather than mere sympathy.

The economic capital of these artists is relatively limited, making structural support from foundations and patrons a crucial sustaining factor. Institutional support from foundations opens broader opportunities for artists to conduct workshops, produce artworks continuously, and occasionally market their work. This configuration aligns with the findings of Castle et al. (2024) and Špinarová et al. (2025) which indicate that art projects involving individuals with visual impairments frequently depend on intermediary institutions that provide resources, networks, and structured activities enabling creative practices to be sustained.

Based on the interview results, the artists acknowledge the important role of the foundation in maintaining the continuity of their artisitc practice. Several participants stated that without the space and facilities provided by the Teratai Bali Foundation, their opportunities to continue painting would be significantly more limited. One artist explained that the foundation provides access to painting materials, studio space, and opportunities to participate in exhibitions or workshops. As one participant notes, "At the foundation we can paint more comfortably because all the tools are prepared. Without a place like this, I might not be able to continue painting" (S1). Another artist added that the foundation also creates opportunities to interact with the broader public and art communities that

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support their work. As a participant explained, “Sometimes there are exhibitions or workshops organized together with external partners. Through these events we can present our work and people begin to recognize our paintings” (S3). Another artist emphasized that such support is not merely material but also provides psychological encouragement to continue producing artworks: “Here we feel supported to keep creating. Even though our abilities are different, we are still given opportunities to develop as artists” (S2). These statements indicate that intermediary institutions such as foundations function as important sources of social and economic capital that enable the artistic practices of visually impaired artists to be sustained.

The cultural capital of artists with visual disabilities is formed through acombinatiaon of visual memory (particularly for those who ahve experienced acquired blindeness) environmental perceptions stored in memory, and artistic skills developed through practice and workshops. Memories of form, space, and color- derived either from visual experiences before blindness or from social and verbal constructions after the loss of sight- become sources of inspiration in constructing slef-representation through artistic practice. Studies examining artistic experiences among individuals with visual impairments across various contexts show that such cultural capital does not rely solely on direct vision but is built through language, narrative, and shared practices (Fajrie et al., 2020; Li et al., 2023). The findings of the present study reinforce this perspective by demonstrating how the abstract and textual painting practices of visually impaired artists in Bali develop through the intensity of artistic engagement rather than merely as a rehabilitative effect

Interview data reveal that visual memory and environmental experiences stored in memory serve as important resources in the process of artistic creation. Several participants explained that visual experiences prior to the onset of blindness remain in their memory and frequently re-emerge during the painting process. One artist described, “I still remember the shapes of trees, houses, or roads that I saw in the past. Sometimes those memories come back when I paint” (S1). Another artist explained that memories of color and spatial relations remain important references in the creative process even though direct visual perceptions

are no longer possible. He said: “Even though I can no longer see colors now, I still remember how those colors used to look. From that memory I try to place colors in the painting” (S3). In addition to visual memory, participants emphasized that workshops and artistic training have gradually strengthened their artistic skills. One artist explained: Through training and workshops I learned to recognize materails and how to create textures. The more I panit, the more I understand how to shape the work I want” (S2). These statements indicate that the cultural capital of visually impaired artists emerges not only from past visual experiences but also from processes of learning, social interaction, and repeated artistic practice.

In contrast, the symbolic capital these artists process remains highly limited. Within the field of visual arts, recognition of artworks produced by visually impaired artists as “fine art” has not yet been firmly established. Their works are often positioned as disability art, social activities, or inclusion programs rather than as part of the mainstream discourse of aesthetic production. This condition reinforces the findings of Leahy and Ferri (2024) and Solvang (2012, 2018) which show that disability art often occupies an ambiguous position: socially recognized yet not fully legitimized aesthetically. Reflections on the study of disability aesthetics show that the work of disabled artists is often read through a moral framework such as inspiration, courage, or therapy, so that attention to the aesthetic quality of the work is marginalized (Siebers, 2010). From Bourdieu’s perspective, the absence of symbolic capital implies that the creativity of a visually impaired artist has not yet been consolidated as artistic prestige recognized by art institutions, curators, or critics (Bourdieu, 1984, 1993).

Interview findings indicate that this limited aesthetic recognition is also directly experienced by the artists in their interactions with the public. Several participants reported that their artworks are often appreciated not solely for their artistic quality but rather because of their disability background. One artist explained that when people look at their paintings, attention is often directed more toward the condition of blindness than toward the artwork itself:” sometimes people praise my painting because I cannot see. They say it is extraordinary because a visually impaired person made it, not because of the painting itself” (S2).

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Other artists also expressed similar experiences, where their work was more often placed in the context of social activities or inclusion programs rather than as part of an equal art practice with other artists. He stated: “Often we are invited to events with a disability theme. It is rare for us to be exhibited together with other artists without that label” (S3). Despite these conditions, the artists continue to view artistic practice as a means of strengthening their position within the field of visual arts. The participant expressed the hope that, through continuous production of artworks, the public may eventually recognize their paintings as works of intrinsic aesthetic value. He said: “I want people to see my painting, not just because I am blind” (S1). These statements demonstrate that the limitation of symbolic capital is not merely a structural condition within the art field but also a lived experience directly encountered by visually impaired artists in their everyday artistic practice.

4.2.3. Dialectics of the Field in the Creativity of Artists with Visual Disabilities

Within Bourdieu’s framework, the field of visual art constitutes a space of symbolic struggle in which various actors and artworks compete for legitimacy, recognition, and symbolic value. Artworks produced by visually impaired artists enter this field from an asymmetrical position. Although some of these works may be aesthetically comparable to those of sighted artists, the label of disability often places them in a separate, less prestigious category. These works are frequently appreciated primarily for the life stories and moral values associated with their creators rather than for their formal qualities or aesthetic exploration. This situation resonates with Siebers’ critique (Siebers, 2010) of how disability aesthetics are often marginalized within the canon of modern art, despite the significant role disability has played in the history of visual representation.

The broader art field represents a site of contestation among diverse artistic ideals and aesthetic practices. The presence of visually impaired artists whose works emphasize abstract and multisensory aesthetics actually offers an important alternative to dominant visual norms grounded in conventional sight-based perception. However, for their works to fully “live” within this field, the cultural and social capital they possess must be converted into symbolic capital recognized

by art institutions. Recent studies on disability and arts organizations in Europe similarly emphasize that without symbolic recognition from institutions and key actors within the art field, efforts toward inclusion tend to remain limited to social programs rather than producing structural transformation within the field itself (Leahy & Ferri, 2024)

The main challenges faced by visually impaired artists within this artistic field include issues of physical and sensory accessibility, as well as the ways their works are framed within exhibition and curatorial discourse. Inclusivity initiatives promoted by governments and certain galleries, such as providing access for visually impaired visitors or developing educational programs that are more sensitive to disability represent important steps forward. However, these measures do not automatically produce equality in terms of aesthetic recognition. This is reflected in patterns of appreciation that are still frequently grounded in sympathy or empathy rather than in critical evaluation of artistic quality. Such findings resonate with international studies indicating that physical access to art spaces does not necessarily lead to a transformation in the way disabled people's work is valued and incorporated into established art narratives (Cheng et al., 2024; Li et al., 2023).

The visual art practices of visually impaired artists at the Teratai Bali Foundation can therefore be interpreted as part of a dialectical process between the reproduction of existing structures and the potential transformation of the visual art field. Existing structures continue to reproduce hierarchies between mainstream art and disability art through unequal distributions of symbolic capital. The continued presence and artistic productivity of visually impaired artists gradually challenge and shift the boundaries of who is recognized as a legitimate artist and what forms of aesthetic experience are considered worthy of recognition. Interpreting blindness as a creative resource rather than merely as a deficit positions their artistic practice as contributing to the expansion of disability aesthetic discourse while simultaneously opening possibilityof a more inclusive visual art field.

5. Conclusion

Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practice emphasizes that the creativity of visually impaired artists cannot be understood merely as an individual expression

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but rather as the outcome of interactions between personal habitus, the forms of capital they possess, and their position within the artistic field. The artists' creative habitus develops through embodied experiences following the loss of sight, the utilization of remaining sensory capacities, and visual memories retained in recollection. Painting practices involving repeated tactile exploration, the use of fingers in the coloring process, and the exploration of surface textures demonstrate how alternative sensory experiences shape new ways of constructing the visual structure of artworks. These findings indicate that the creative process of visually impaired artists is grounded in practices of embodied perception, in which the body functions as the primary medium for interpreting, constructing, and evaluating visual composition.

This study also demonstrates that the artistic practices of visually impaired artists are inseparable from the social structures surrounding them. Participation in disability art community and institutional support from the Teratai Bali Foundation play a crucial role in providing social space, resources, and networks that enable creative practices to be sustained. Such support strengthens the artists' social and economic capital. However, their symbolic capital within the broader field of visual art remains relatively limited. Artworks produced by visually impaired artists are often interpreted within the framework of social initiatives or inclusion programs, meaning that aesthetic recognition within the mainstream art field continues to be shaped by aesthetic norms centered on visual experience. This condition illustrates how the distribution of symbolic capital in the art field is still influenced by aesthetic norms centered on visual experience.

The artistic practices of visually impaired artists function not only as forms of artistic expression but also as processes of social negotiation within the art field. The works produced by these artists do not merely reproduce established aesthetic values but also hold the potential to transform society's perspective on creativity for people with disabilities. The exploration of texture, the use of touch as a visual analysis tool, and the role of visual memory in compositional formation open up new possibilities for understanding aesthetics that are not solely dependent on sight.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the sociology of art and disability aesthetics by demonstrating that the visual art practices of visually impaired artists possess distinctive aesthetic and social logics. This study shows that the creativity of visually impaired artists is not simply an adaptation to sensory limitation but also an artistic practice capable of expanding understanding of aesthetic experience as embodied and multisensory. The analysis of the creative practices of four visually impaired artists at the Teratai Bali Foundation positions disability art experiences from the Global South as a significant contribution to international disability aesthetics discourse. The findings demonstrate that the practice of "seeing through touch", along with the exploration of texture and visual memory, opens new perspectives on how aesthetic experience can be constructed through interactions between the body, social environments, and institutional structures. This research not only enriches the study of disability art in Indonesia but also offers conceptual contributions toward developing of a more inclusive understanding of aesthetics in contemporary art studies.

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