



# Montage experimentation as pedagogical strategy: a practice-led and artistic research study of student films in Bandung, Indonesia



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## ABSTRACT

Film education in Indonesia, often prioritizing industry goals, forcing students to adapt to industry targets and serve the economic gains over artistic achievement. As Indonesian Film and Television Study Program Association (PROSFISI) stated, this industry-oriented view correlates to students who merely consume foreign film entertainment, causing them to become less active, creative, and connected to Indonesian culture and identity. An approach like this breeds a lack of critical thinking and a limited artistic imagination with montage as a contextual device. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that recreate montage in filmmaking education in Indonesia is an opportunity to renew freedom, cultural address, and critique. Through Practice-Led and Artistic Research, the research was conducted in the Film Study Program Bandung, analyzed the application of montage theories by Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Vertov, on student films. Findings suggest that narrative and symbolic montage facilitated deeper meaning around local topics and more straightforward and emotionally resonant narratives. Through a consideration of social-cultural issues the study shows the power of the montage as both an artistic and research tool. This study argues that the curriculum should approach film as a tool that promotes experimentation integrating montage and local culture to deepen student understanding of film beyond its commodified nature.

## Article History

Received 2025-09-28

Revised 2025-10-05

Accepted 2025-12-18

## Keywords

Montage  
Experimental film  
Academic filmmaking  
Practice-led research  
Artistic research



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## 1. Introduction

The dominance of Hollywood and foreign-cinema practices in Indonesia, focused on entertainment and commerce, has begun to exert excessive influence on national cinema industries and film academia [1], [2]. From the notes of the Indonesian Film and Television Study Program Association (PROSFISI) yearly meeting, which represents 28 study programs across Indonesia, it is clear that film students focus too much on commercially successful feature films. Adapting to market demands or popular film genres limits students' exploration of diverse artistic possibilities and creative freedom. It also restricts exploring new ideas, questioning film ownership as identity, and providing spaces for deeper, critical, and reflective discussion, the goals of education [3], [4]. A clear sign of this problem is the lack of use of montage, a basic film technique and powerful artistic communication tool, as a pedagogical language in Indonesian film education [5], [6], [7]. Montage is an integral part of both film history and theory. However, it is often treated as an editing technique that does not encourage creativity, semiotics, or contextual relevance [8]. The analysis of montage in Indonesian film studies is a hybrid method

of artistic and practice-led research that aims to fill gaps in film education [9], [10], [11]. This highlights the necessity of studying how classical montage theory aids the development of creative voices and culturally relevant films [12], [13], [14]. This article aims to reconceptualize montage tradition and its role in film pedagogy as an approach that incites narrative imagination and stimulates critical engagement [15]. This study aims to disentangle the nonlinear structure and intended time in film montage to inspire students of film to transcend popular style and culture through the art of montage, both as a liberating aesthetic force and as a means of inciting further expressive boundaries [16], [17]. And as a socio-political critique that dives beyond frontiers of common civilization in the prohibition of modern ideology. It offers theoretical and practical guidance to teachers on how to create more context-sensitive audiovisual production with an original montage-based pedagogical proposal. In addition, by providing qualitative evidence produced from student film projects, this article contributes to the national discourse on film theory and practice. In the end, this research decolonizes film education in Indonesia by demonstrating how classical theory can be applied creatively to establish a distinctive character of local cinema [18]. In this background, the present study attempts to address the following key question (s): (1) In what ways does classical montage theory redefine itself and function as a pedagogical tool in Indonesian film education to foster innovative artistic expression?; (2) How does this approach to pedagogy feature student-produced experimental films that explore new conceptions of montage as both an aesthetic and narrative function?; (3) In what ways do these student films engage with and address underrepresented socio-cultural issues through the artistic use of montage?

## 2. Method

This research employed a Practice-Led Research and Artistic Research design to investigate the pedagogical application and artistic outcomes of classical montage theory in film education [19]. This methodological approach was chosen to integrate theoretical inquiry with creative practice, allowing for an iterative process of experimentation, reflection, and analysis [20], [21], [22], [23]. The core of this design study involved film students actively reinterpreting principles of montage through filmmaking, with their creative process and resulting output used as primary data for theoretical and pedagogical development. The data were collected in a Film and Television Study program at Bandung University, Indonesia. The participants were eight film students, selected from 40 in the 2020 and 2021 cohorts, who self-identified as filmmakers [24], [25], [26]. After the researchers completed these procedures, participants were sampled to ensure a broad range of student viewpoints and approaches to cinema within the particular academic environment.

The purpose of this decision was to include as diverse an array of students as possible, to better understand the nature of the phenomena [27], [28]. Inclusion criteria stipulated that students were currently enrolled in the Film and Television Study Program, had a basic understanding of film and cultural theory, as well as production, and were passionate about using montage in their filmmaking and theoretical reflection [29]. Exclusion criteria were used to disqualify students with professional filmmaking experience outside academic projects or who could not stay for the entire period. This was to ensure that students in the study were developing their own artistic and theoretical understanding within an academic frame of reference, thus minimizing outside influences upon their Reading ability and creative process. The demographic details of the participating students and their respective film projects are summarized in Table 1.

The research unfolded through a structured yet flexible experimental montage workshop, designed around eight interconnected phases, from Introduction montages, theoretical and pedagogical development, practical shots, planning to bridge theory with contextual relevance, production stage, editing phase, leading to written reflection. This cyclical process facilitated a dynamic interplay between creative practice and critical analysis [29]. The workshop itself was structured into an eight-phase studio sequence, progressively guiding students through theoretical foundations to practical application [30].

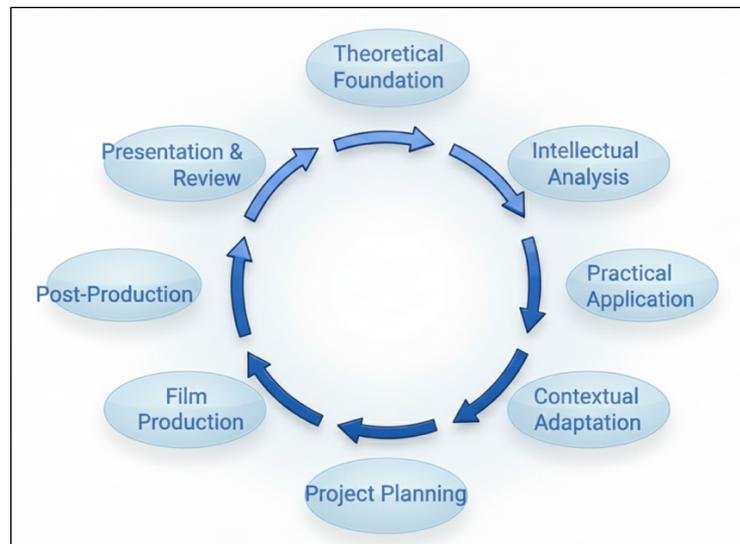
- Phase 1 commenced with contextualizing Eisenstein’s theories on dialectical and intellectual montage, establishing a historical and conceptual grounding, and deepening this understanding by exploring Pudovkin’s associative montage and Vertov’s “Kino-Eye” concept, expanding the students’ theoretical repertoire.
- Phase 2 analysis of intellectual cinema and journal references.
- Phase 3 transitioned into practical application through structured exercises focused on formal montage techniques, encouraging initial experimentation.
- Phase 4 then challenged students to develop montage ideas specifically tailored to local Indonesian socio-cultural issues, bridging theory with contextual relevance.
- Phase 5 involved the meticulous planning and pre-production of their individual experimental montage film projects, translating conceptual ideas into concrete plans.
- Phase 6 focused on the production stage, where students shot footage specifically designed to facilitate montage experimentation.
- Phase 7 comprised the post-production and editing phase, where students applied their theoretical understanding to assemble their montage films.
- Finally, Phase 8 concluded with a formal presentation and a critical peer review of the completed films, fostering constructive feedback and analytical discussion.

**Table 1.** Research Participant

Student Name	Cohort	Title / Montage Theme	Film Type	Thematic Focus / Key Description
Achmad Bhisma Ayudha Suwarna and Sabrina Maharani	2020 and 2021	Montage in a Short Film on Sexual Violence against Persons with Disabilities “ <i>Remedi</i> ”	Docudrama	Exploration of visual symbols of trauma, dramaturgy, and direction
Dean Ahadyan Dwahi Putra	2021	Montage of the Meaning of Lies in the Film “ <i>Hitam Yakin, Putih Benar!</i> ”	Poetic Fiction	Exploration of psychological fragmentation, manipulating image rhythm, interrogation sounds, and ambiguity
Syifa Chusnul Khotimah	2021	Montage of the Representation of Stigma of Early Marriage for Women in the Short Film “ <i>Kade Ahh!</i> ”	Fiction Film	Exploration of montage used as a sequence of visual cuts forming a slice-of-life rhythm
Aji Surya and Octavianus Dimas Dwiraharja	2021 and 2021	“ <i>Sasar</i> ” Montage in a Short Film on Sundanese Syncretism	Poetic Fiction	Exploring Montage in Sundanese-Islamic Spiritual Cinema.
Belva Atsil Rismayandi	2021	Montage of the Male Gaze in the short film “ <i>Barisan Jiwa Doraka</i> ”	Documentary	Exploration of visual montage through the lens of the male gaze in the objectification of a female body in Bajidoran art.
Halimah Mimi	2021	“ <i>Rampung</i> ” Montage of Shila’s mental experience	Horror Film	Exploration of the visual montage of psychological pressure

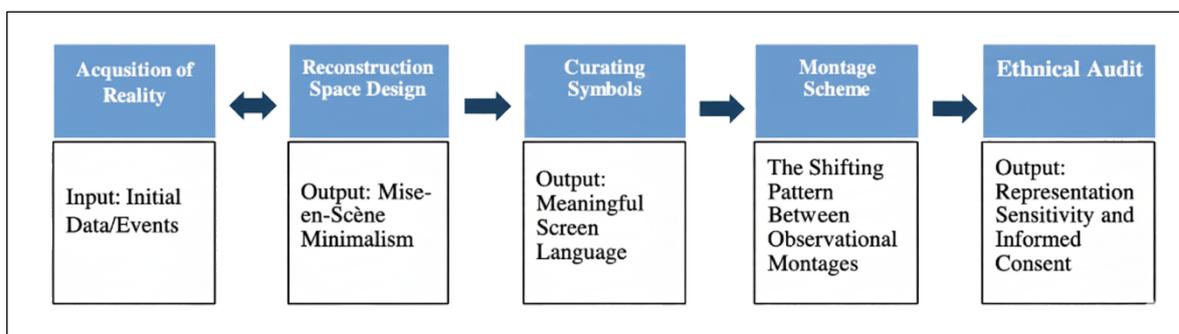
Data collection throughout the study employed a range of qualitative tools to capture the multi-faceted nature of practice-led and artistic research, Fig. 1. Participatory observation was conducted by the researcher throughout all workshop phases, providing direct insights into student engagement, creative challenges, and problem-solving processes [31], [32]. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with individual students at key junctures of the workshop to explore their evolving understanding of montage, creative decisions, and reflections on socio-cultural themes [33]. Focus group discussions facilitated broader peer-to-peer learning and provided collective insights into shared experiences and interpretations. Furthermore, document analysis was meticulously conducted on student-produced materials, including project proposals, scripts, and, crucially, their written reflections submitted after each phase [34]. These reflections served as vital qualitative data, articulating students’ internal

thought processes, theoretical breakthroughs, and personal engagement with the subject matter.



**Fig. 1.** Flowchart of the PLR and AR methodology in academic filmmaking production

The final experimental montage films themselves constituted a significant primary data source, directly showcasing the practical application and artistic interpretation of montage theories [35]. Two distinct analytical models were employed to interpret the films and associated documents. The analytical framework integrated two primary approaches to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the data. The Ethical Audit rigorously examined the students' work for its adherence to ethical considerations in representing local socio-cultural issues, ensuring sensitivity, authenticity, and respect in their creative interpretations. This involved evaluating the film narrative choices, visual representation, and thematic development against established ethical guidelines for research and artistic expression. Concurrently, the Montage Scheme analysis provided a detailed operational framework for dissecting the experimental montage films. This scheme, as shown in Fig. 2 (see figure Montage Advocacy for the visual representation), systematically analyzed the application of various montage principles (*e.g.*, metric, rhythmic, tonal, overtone, and intellectual) within each student film. It focused on identifying specific editing choices, the juxtaposition of images and sounds, and their intended and perceived effects on meaning-making and emotional resonance. This analytical approach allowed for a direct correlation between theoretical understanding and practical implementation, assessing how students translated abstract montage concepts into concrete cinematic language. The data derived from written reflections, interviews, and discussions were triangulated with the film analysis to validate interpretations and deepen the understanding of students' pedagogical and artistic growth throughout the study.



**Fig. 2.** Diagram Pipeline Montage Advocacy

### 3. Results and Discussion

The workshop successfully facilitated a pedagogical shift, moving students beyond a purely technical understanding of montage towards its conceptual and artistic potential. Students engaged directly with the foundational theories of Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Dziga Vertov, reinterpreting their principles to foster innovative artistic expression relevant to contemporary filmmaking. Students were deeply engaged with Eisenstein's theories, particularly collision and the synthesis of ideas through image juxtaposition. Rather than merely demonstrating his concepts, their films employed dialectical montage to provoke thought and communicate complex ideas through conflicting images. For example, *"Film Remedi"* used metric montage with equal cuts of empty chairs and red thread to symbolize trauma.

*"Hitam Yakin, Putih Benar!"* combined static interrogation shots with handheld first-person footage to emphasize the fluidity of truth and memory, applying Eisensteinian principles to create tension. *"Kade Ahh!"* used thematic editing, muted colors, and slow motion to portray resignation to an early marriage. *"Sasar"* employed additive, rhythmic, and symbolic montage to reflect Sundanese-Islamic syncretism. *"Barisan Jiwa Doraka"* contrasted images of *Bajidoran* performers with interviews to critique gender objectification and performance, demonstrating growing mastery of montage as an epistemic tool. Across six films, Eisenstein's schema helped analyze rhythm, emotion, and ideology, illustrating the role of montage in producing culturally resonant cinema and supporting practice-led research [36], [37].

Students also explored Pudovkin's associative montage, linking shots not by conflict but by their emotional and thematic cumulative power. Their projects, such as the film *"Film Remedi"*, used seemingly disconnected yet thematically linked shots, like a solitary figure, to evoke feelings of isolation and uncertainty. This demonstrated a nuanced understanding of how associative editing influences viewer perception and emotions. Their ability to construct emotional arcs made Pudovkin's theory operationally relevant to their creative work, reflecting an advanced grasp of the aesthetic potential of montage.

The workshop further encouraged exploration of Vertov's "Kino-Eye" philosophy, prompting students to experiment with observational and experimental documentary styles. This led to projects that used montage to reveal hidden truths or alternative perspectives. For example, *"Barisan Jiwa Doraka"* employed a rapid, fragmented montage of traditional dance scenes to disorient viewers and critique the male-female gaze, thus challenging conventional documentary storytelling. This operationalization of Vertov's idea demonstrated how cinema could expose life "unseen by the human eye," fostering a critical approach to image-making and illustrating montage as a tool for documentary innovation and artistic realism within their expressive frameworks [38], [39], [40].

The debate on montage then evolved. Building on this, Roland Barthes challenged the original notion of montage by introducing its semiotic dimension through the idea of "the third meaning" (Barthes 1968, a meaning that appears beyond denotative and connotative signs). Aby Warburg illustrated this in his *Mnemosyne Atlas*, where montage serves as a visual practice of bridging images across time and space. Derived from the estrangement effect of Bertolt Brecht, montage functioned as a political and aesthetic strategy against bourgeois cinema in the hands of Jean-Luc Godard [41].

Elsewhere in the world, especially in Asian and Southeast Asian cinema, the principles of montage were adapted and evolved in response to cultural and narrative contexts well beyond Western traditions. This study will draw upon these theoretical lenses to examine how students engage not just with canonical theories, but how they adapt and locate such theories in relation to local issues and alternative narrative forms (including even deconstructing dominant narratives of course, e.g., the male gaze) [42], [43], [44]. Montage studies have expanded globally from technical and theoretical discussions to include their application as a research method and pedagogical tool. In Indonesia, this development is still limited, making research essential, see Fig. 3.

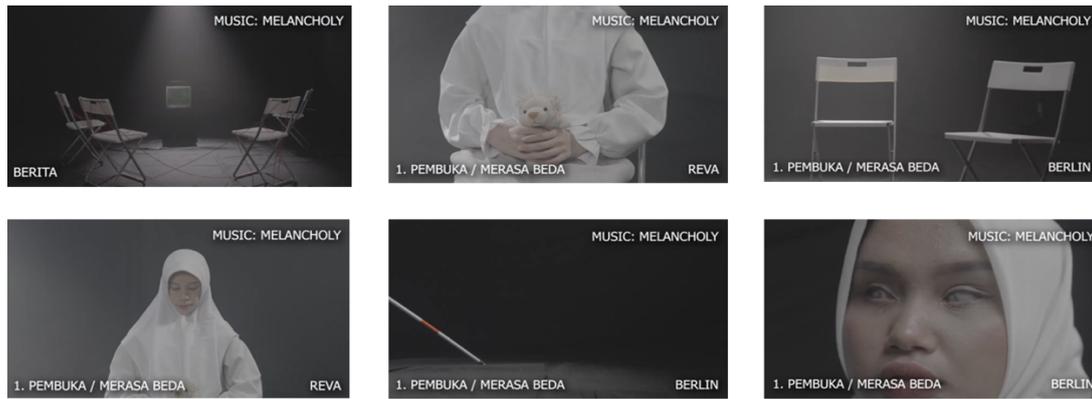


Fig. 3. Diagram of the dialectical model of global montage theory and the local Indonesian context

In the visual arts, montage enhances visual memory and connections, arranging events non-linearly. In experimental film, artists such as Bill Morrison and Nicola Provost use montage to delve into archives and memory, challenging cinematic conventions and often making the artwork itself a form of research. In education, international journals associate montage with critical thinking and non-linear storytelling. Despite its global recognition as an artistic and pedagogical strategy, Indonesian literature on montage remains scarce, mainly focusing on technical aspects rather than its role in artistic research. This study addresses this gap by demonstrating that Practice-led Research (PLR) and Artistic Research (AR) are appropriate frameworks for examining these questions. PLR considers artistic practice a research space in which creation is research itself and the artwork is a research outcome, thereby integrating practice with research. Examples include using personal archive montages to explore intergenerational trauma or digital glitches to examine online identity. AR, which emerged in Europe in the late 20th century, emphasizes embodied knowledge, process, and context, treating film as a research tool. For example, Bill Morrison's *Decasia* uses archival film as a site of cinematic memory and explores the ephemeral nature of film [45].

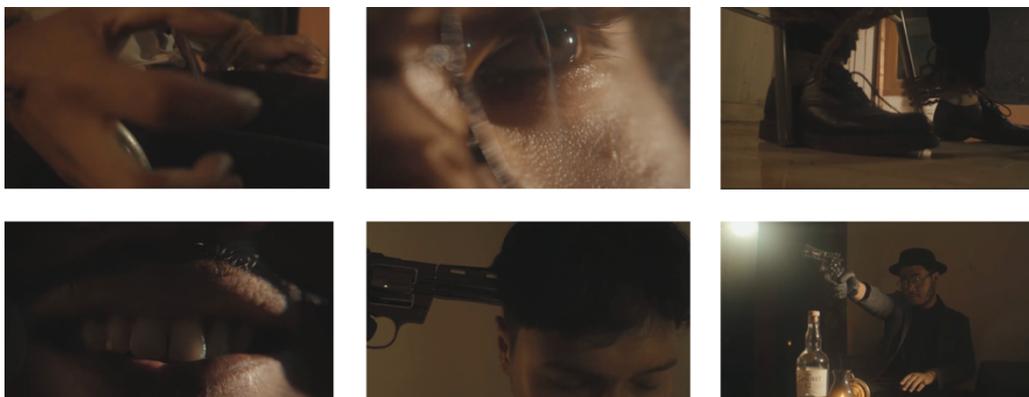
This research combines PLR and AR to address gaps in Indonesian film studies, positioning montage within this framework to challenge dominant approaches to communication and media. It highlights montage as a tool for reflection and artistic experimentation, informing curricula that encourage students to explore montage locally and recognize it as a vital film language. Using Indonesian case studies, it contributes to the global PLR/AR discourse from a non-Eurocentric perspective, demonstrating how montage can reflect Nusantara oral cultures and address foreign issues. Analyzing six student films, we identified recurring themes in how traditional montage principles were adapted for social or political advocacy and critique, for psychological representation, and for cultural identity and narrative deconstruction. Quantitative data show students repurposing traditional montage theories to reinforce signs, clarify narratives, and evoke emotional and psychological engagement with local issues.

Using the Montage Function and Results, it functions by phasing documentary material into a construction as the montage develops, a kind of retrospective representation that, when archival facts are lacking, attempts to "represent the emotive truth." It enables a transition between reality and reconstruction, conveying memory as something more affective. Similarly, across suspensions, heterogeneous testimony, montage functions as a dramaturgical architecture organizing sequences of interviews, reenactments, and iconographic inserts to create multi-layered meanings that cycle from event continuity toward conceptual and "vertical" montage. Scenes are marked as memory fragments due to reconstruction *mise-en-scène*, which "empties the space", and stage-like blocking. For example, four semi-circular chairs are constructed, three wrapped in red thread (a non-scenic property that conveys resistance and evokes an associative montage) and one empty, hinting at the audience's moral opposition to the practice. The blending of observational and intellectual montage strength allows "*Remedi*" to serve as a docudrama, supporting advocacy and embodying reconstruction in an aesthetic umbrella, Fig. 4. The relationship between Barthes' theory and communication design offers a rationale for symbolic inserts that facilitate the transition from affect to idea. Strictly treating montage preserves the boundaries between reality and reconstruction. Testing whether non-academic audiences perceive aspects for additional investigation. "Re-anchoring" could explore Barthes' (1977) "third meaning" in symbolic montage [46].



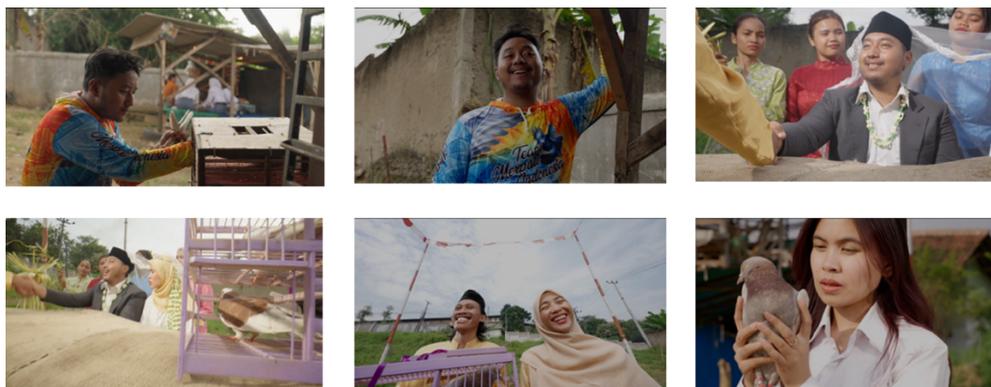
**Fig. 4.** A still from the film “*Remedi*,” which features a series of images that illustrate sexual violence against people with intellectual, visual, or speech disabilities (*figure Remedies*)

Montage work and results describe using montage for psychological representation and as a visual device that organizes time and space. Montage can displace reality to depict deception and torture rhetoric. Screenwriting devices such as abrupt transitions, fades to black, and nonchronological memories reveal a character’s broken memory. Slow cuts create interrogation rhythm, building pressure and tension, using *mise-en-scène* and fragmented editing to signal transitions between reality and memory or illusion, Fig. 5. The thematic consistency is confirmed through disjointedness. Sound, as in vertical montage, heightens psychological intensity, illustrating the effects between reality and memory. Montage acts as visual rhetoric, representing deception through confusing effects. Future research might explore recall-reframe sequences with a single shot after symbols to clarify audience re-anchoring, with well-documented cuts based on scientific reasoning.



**Fig. 5.** Scenes from the mystery and illusion film “*Hitam Yakin, Putih Benar!*” Dean Ahadyan Dwahi Putra (*figure Hitam Yakin, Putih Benar!*)

Montage functions as a subjective and social critique device, creating a space where humor and tension balance. It links traditional montage to gendered appearances in local contexts through visual cuts such as vignettes, stop-motion, and symbolic inserts. This approach connects narrative monologue with visual montage via sonic and visual condensation of character subjectivity. The film provides empirical evidence that montage can serve as a social argument, with stop-motion and dream sequences blending reality and fears, reinforced by audio to highlight domain differences. Fig. 6, symbolic and metaphorical connections recur.



**Fig. 6.** The montage for the film is inspired by anecdotes from local female characters and humor in the short film “Kade Ahh!” Syifa Chusnul Khotimah (*figure Kade Ahh*)

**Fig. 7,** the film examines the syncretic cinema of Sundanese and Islamic cultures through montage, contrasting the outside world with the realm of dreams using formalist techniques. In the real world, long shots and slow pacing establish a peaceful tone. In contrast, in the dream realm, handheld cameras, unusual angles, and vibrant characters create a more energetic and contrasting space. The tonal differences clearly distinguish these realms, with auditory motifs providing continuity and aiding comprehension. Benefits include a distinct separation of domains through multiple modalities and the use of symbolic associative montage in place of dialogue, linking emotions and ideas. The spiritual rhythm and inter-ritual cuts contribute to an overarching tone, while recurring sounds and spatial arrangement support narrative coherence. The montage respects ritual dignity without sensationalism. To refine the flow, sound-based transition markers could better highlight associative shifts, and adding b-roll of sacred objects inspired by Pudovkin might unify the scenes more effectively.



**Fig. 7.** A montage of imagery from the film on tradition and spiritual ritual, “Sasar.” Aji Surya and Octavianus Dimas Dwiraharja (*Figure Sasar*)

The montage in this ethnographic-participatory documentary serves both as a function and as a result, critiquing the objectification of Bajidoran art and deconstructing the male gaze. Often used to highlight contradictions, it pairs body framing, which represents the male gaze, with sounds of resistance, thereby transforming objects into subjects. The film alternates between stage and private spaces to reveal dancers’ inner struggles, **Fig. 8.** This intellectual montage combines ancient archives with current footage to emphasize core values amid cultural disintegration. Sounds from folk, electro, gana, and kurta create a moody, critical dramaturgy. The film highlights montage as a unified tool for visual critique, blending theory with practice. It deconstructs the male gaze by juxtaposing dancers’ bodies with the voices of interviewed women, shifting from object to subject. Inner reflections and the transition from transcendence to tradition deepen the narrative. Audio design functions as both dramaturgy and ideological critique, while the participatory approach ensures space for female voices. Opportunities for improvement include enhancing transitions and clarifying visual symbols.

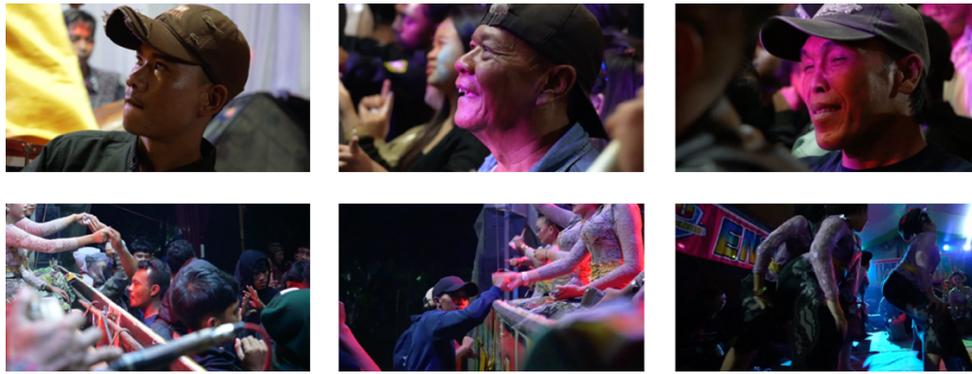


Fig. 8. The Male Gaze Montage Image Elements in the Film "Barisan Jiwa Doraka." Belva Atsil Rismayandi (Figure Barisan Jiwa Doraka)

The montage function serves as a semantic device, connecting prosthetic forms to an actor's experience of their prosthetic self. It uses montage to explore psychological pressure and trauma. Editing manipulates time with techniques like close cutting and wet clay inserts, showing an incomplete prosthetic, then a flash cut of a "living" being, before returning to the creation process. This creates a visual logic where "unfinished work" is perceived as a risk. Montage operates multimodally, intertwining spatial, temporal, tonal, and sonic elements to produce a psychological effect. Strengths include effective combinations of Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Vertov. The result is an intellectual montage of images of monsters (not just prosthetics, but internal phenomena) confronting material. Audiolayering and lighting bring Eisenstein's tonal and overtone principles into focus. Pudovkin's linking technique maintains psychological spatiotemporal continuity. Vertov's kino-eye emphasizes studio ambiance, tool sounds, and hand movements that reveal the "truth" of work practices traumatic in themselves, becoming an undeniable element of the bodies subjected to them. The visual effect will support the narration and reinforce it through mise-en-scène, forming the story's identity, Fig. 9. Suggested Additional Testing includes empirical perception studies to determine if non-academic audiences interpret the montage as intended; documenting each cut in future tests to improve analytical transparency. This section presents a detailed discussion and analysis of the findings from the six student films, situating them within the theoretical framework and addressing the research questions. In comparison, montage serves not just a narrative function but also acts as a mechanism of critique, psychological exploration, and cultural expression. This is confirmation that montage is not a simple technique but a profound artistic research method.

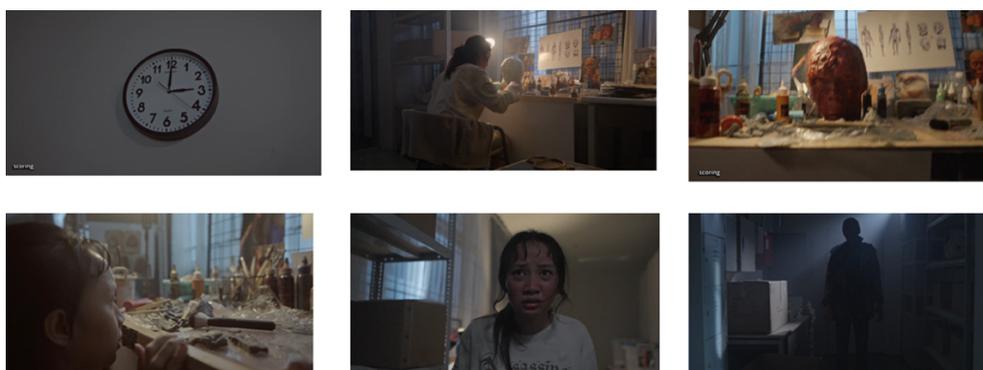


Fig. 9. A horror film visual montage of narrative, delving into psychological pressure and trauma, in the film "Rampung." Mimi Halimah (Figure Rampung)

Montages were collected in this student works collection, a social commentary and critique using the tool "Remedi" and Kade Ahh! show montage as a means to address societal issues and advocate for change. Instead of "Barisan Jiwa Doraka," they employ montage to deconstruct the male gaze and challenge objectification. "Hitam Yakin, Putih Benar!" and both montages in

*"Rampung"* depict fragmented audio-visual sequences that portray psychological confusion and trauma, mirroring a mental state through a series of emphatic images. Regarding cultural-spiritual identity, a non-verbal approach is used to express Sundanese-Islam syncretism and local spirituality through montage, exemplified by the work *"Sasar."* The examination of student works in this forum highlights an evolving conversation between experimental practice and montage theory, revealing ways that student interpretations add vibrancy, complicate, or push the boundaries of these theories.

Eisenstein's Dialectics and Intellectual Montage involves much work that juxtaposes images to create meaning. Some of this should be seen not as applying theory but as reconfiguring it locally. Through the idea of reconstructed factuality, *"Remedi"* and *"Barisan Jiwa Doraka"* contrast the reconstruction of homes with commodified gazes, in opposition to objectifying looks, and offer resistance. It raises questions about moral and political ideologies. The use of real or symbolic image collisions in *"Sasar"* and *"Rampung"* carries spiritual or psychological significance, broadening the understanding of intellectual montage by linking it with non-Western culture and psychology. While many works utilize fragmentation, Pudovkin's principle of linkage remains effective in creating a precise narrative flow, primarily through psychological or thematic arcs. In *"Remedi,"* interview segments and reenactments are linked effectively, while *"Sasar"* maintains continuity of realist space-time through sonorous motifs.

This approach can be consistent even without direct, fixed linkage, instead being associative or emotional, thus expanding Pudovkin's idea of linkage. A key feature of Vertov's approach is attention to sensory detail and life's rhythms. In *"Rampung,"* layered studio sounds blend with the noise of handwriting and hand movements, affirming the "reality" of work practices. *"Barisan Jiwa Doraka,"* named after a Bajidoran performance from South Kalimantan, records *Bajidoran's* sounds amid ambient voyeuristic noises. These elements deepen Kino-Eye by showing that, even in pure observation, as in Vertov's concept, it remains subjective and critical. Although student works interpret original theories, they go beyond mere repetition, integrating ideas from Barthes (the third meaning), Warburg (Mnemosyne Atlas), and Godard (political montage). They develop new, locally-oriented interpretations, such as deconstructing the male gaze or exploring psychological trauma. These works demonstrate that montage is more than a formalist tradition. It's an artistic research method capable of "decolonizing" Western theory with local content and contexts. In an assessment framed by criteria of clarity in domain demarcation, strength of symbolic association, ethical audit of montage, and narrative and dramatic rhythms, montage in the works of students, by and large, and only sometimes reluctantly (although some repetition is unavoidable).

Almost all works effectively use audio-visual cues to separate domains. *"Hitam Yakin, Putih Benar!"* is firm in this aspect, while *"Sasar"* employs multimodality to layer diegetic domains. Symbols (such as chairs in *"Remedi"* and pigeons in *"KadeAhh!"*). Costumes (like earrings and tattoos in *"Sasar"*, prosthetics in *"Rampung"*) are effectively used to create metaphorical links and ideas, often without explicit exposition. These associations enable what Barthes describes as the "third meaning." In *"Remedi"* and *"Barisan Jiwa Doraka,"* montage intentionally includes an ethical audit, maintaining sensitivity in representation and giving voice to subjects, an essential feature of advocacy cinema. Montage controls the film's rhythm and dramatic flow, from the everyday pacing in *"Kade Ahh!"* to the turmoil in *"Hitam Yakin, Putih Benar!"* The *"Sasar"* film reflects spiritual rhythm. These rhythmic techniques are an extension of Eisenstein's concepts of metric and rhythmic montage.

This research highlights several strengths relevant to film education and cinema studies. It identifies a crucial research and pedagogical gap in Indonesian film studies, particularly noting the industry's focus that overlooks experimental montage practices. The study's innovative methodology, combining PLR and AR, emphasizes the importance of creative practice as a mode of knowing, offering new perspectives. It connects classical montage theory with contemporary issues in Indonesia and the rich oral cultures of Nusantara, making the research more relatable. The argument that this work can challenge Hollywood dominance and promote diverse representations of Indonesian society is compelling, inspiring potential contributions to decolonising film education. Additionally, the three-tiered analysis provides a comprehensive

view of student work, considering both technique and meaning. Finally, the research aims to strengthen film education curricula, encouraging more reflective and exploratory teaching approaches.

While the study design offers certain advantages, this research also has unavoidable limitations. Although the small sample size is acceptable for exploratory qualitative research, it may limit the generalizability of the results, especially to the broader field of film education across different parts of Indonesia or other universities. Conversely, for AR and PLR, a few instances are typically analyzed in depth rather than broadly generalized, and are thus highly valued. Artistic Research emphasizes embodied knowledge and process-oriented approaches over objectivity and verifiability, which can create tension with scientific aims. This limitation is mitigated through data triangulation (observation, film documentation, reflective journals, group discussions) and a systematic analytical framework. PLR and AR, and as PLR remains relatively new in Indonesian film education, challenges in implementing or measuring it within traditional academic frameworks may be a weakness. Since PLR and AR have recently been introduced at the university level, this research can be seen as an initial case study of their application. The research mainly relies on student experiments, reflective journals, and group discussions, which can be biased through interpretation. This is mitigated by cross-validation within group discussions and work critiques.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that classical montage, when reinterpreted through practice-led and artistic research, serves as an effective pedagogical technique in film education, empowering students to critically engage with their local contexts and articulate diverse socio-cultural issues through cinematic expression. The analysis of six student films reveals how montage functions not merely as an editing tool but as a comprehensive aesthetic research program for social advocacy, psychological representation, and cultural identity. Despite the inherent limitations of a small, single-institutional sample, these findings offer a foundational framework for developing reflexive learning and culturally resonant filmic practices within Indonesian cinema, challenging Western-centric pedagogies. Future research should expand this inquiry through multi-institutional, larger-scale case studies and cross-cultural comparisons to further solidify montage's role as an academic creative research method and its contribution to decolonizing film education and fostering distinctive local cinematic identities.

#### Acknowledgment

The authors would like to express their sincere appreciation to Film Studio, Film and Television Study Program, Faculty of Art, Design, and Education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, for their institutional support throughout the research process.

#### Declarations

- Author contribution** : EMP research idea, analysed the data, and wrote the article; DW, ER, HS, DA: analysed the data and wrote the article.
- Funding statement** : The research is funded under the Agreement on the Implementation of Community Service in 2025 Between The Dean of The Faculty Of Arts and Design Education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia and The Faculty Member Responsible for Community Service at The Faculty of Arts and Design Education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. Project No. UN40.A8/PT.01.03/2025
- Conflict of interest** : The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.
- Additional information** : No additional information is available for this paper.

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