



The aesthetics of virtual wayang performances during the covid-19 pandemic



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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the aesthetics of virtual wayang performances by puppeteers. The problems studied are: (1) why puppeteers have a new tendency to perform virtual wayang; and (2) the aesthetic style of the virtual wayang performances. Data collection methods by interviews with puppeteers, literature studies about virtual wayang, and observations of wayang virtual performances by puppeteers were analyzed by aesthetic theory. The study results showed that puppeteers used digital platforms to maintain their profession's continuity and economic living conditions. The tendency of virtual wayang to give rise to an aesthetic style of digital puppets is known as aesthetics of taste, with the orientation of wayang performance to meet public tastes. The conclusion results state that the aesthetic style of the virtual wayang performance: (1) the camera as a representation of the audience's eyes; (2) puppeteers are required to be creative, innovative, and productive; (3) the audience has the freedom to determine their tastes; and (4) the importance of collaboration that must be carried out by the puppeteer.

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1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has hit the world with implications for human life in various fields, including health, economics, education, social, and arts and culture. One of the sectors seriously affected by covid-19 pandemic was creative economy in Indonesia [1]. One of the professions, the puppeteer, in cultural arts, feels a significant impact. During the pandemic's peak from 2020 to 2021, the puppeteers could not perform due to the ban on mass gatherings. As a result, they could not make ends meet because they did not have income from their profession. In addition, the lack of wayang performance activities can weaken the puppeteer's power of expression and creativity. This problem requires the puppeteers to be able to turn challenges into opportunities. They live in the industrial era 4.0 with the main characteristics of the internet of things. It becomes an opportunity for puppeteers to create wayang art that is adaptive to internet technology.

The Covid-19 pandemic time provides the widest possible space for puppeteers to perform wayang through the internet or social media without crowds. In addition, public interest, especially the millennial generation, is captured as an opportunity to develop Indonesian wayang. The strong relationship between economic needs, internet, the pandemic period, and millennial generation was the primarily/fundamental reason puppeteers create packaging for wayang performances using a digital platform known as virtual wayang kulit performances. The phenomenon of performing arts with digital platforms has also hit the theater arts around the world. Theater is realized in various forms, such as: live streaming, interactive shows via Zoom, video calls, and video conferences. Access to performances and viewing is provided by the

artists and audience themselves [2] studies on digital platforms as a vehicle for the development of wayang also occur in Singapore wayang performances.

Immersive media is seen as an opportunity in the preservation and development of art forms of relevance to modern audiences [3]. Wayang has the opportunity to become a creative industry for cultural arts tourism. The production of wayang kulit shows can foster entrepreneurship in students through show packages, merchandise, and wayang performance workshops [4]. Digital theater performances have been born through various theatrical experiments published via Twitter, Virtual Reality, Zoom. In essence, digital theater performances have the opportunity to expand the range of performances that take into account both artistic and philosophical aspects [5].

Virtual wayang performance during the Covid 19 pandemic can be traced from various studies. Result of research describes efforts to preserve wayang potehi at the Mojokerto Gubug Wayang Museum by digitizing them through the social media platforms YouTube, Instagram and Tiktok [6]. Sugihartono creates a wayang beber show with multi-platform technology in 4 cities (Mojokerto, Solo, Yogyakarta, Jakarta) known as vicolming (video conference live-streaming) [7]. In the Bali area there is a wayang ceng blonk as a vehicle for socializing the covid pandemic 19 [8]. Erandaru explore the potential use of technology within wayang performance as an act of preservation through innovation [9].

One of the virtual wayang performance pioneers is Ki Seno Nugroho, a popular puppeteer from Yogyakarta. Initially, the virtual wayang performance was meant to fill time and entertainment during the Covid-19 pandemic. Because it was packaged in such a short time, Seno Nugroho labelled wayang *climen*, which was broadcast through the Seno Nugroho Official. It received a positive response from the public. Furthermore, virtual wayang was used to raise funds donated to people affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The interesting thing about each play performed was the presence of the character Bagong as a representation of the puppeteer who voiced his concern about being unable to perform in society [10].

Other puppeteers followed the success of Seno Nugroho in various regions of Indonesia. Virtual wayang performance is necessary for puppeteers who want to survive in their profession and for audiences in the industrial era 4.0. and during the Covid-19 pandemic. The phenomenon of virtual wayang has made puppeteers compete to create personal channels as a means of broadcasting wayang performances. At least in the Central Java region, there are growing accounts of puppeteers, such as Purbo Asmoro Official, Kuntadi Channel, Sigit Chanel, DG Channel, Dalang Kangko, SU Channel, Bayu Aji SBA TV, and so on.

The puppeteer's account is a channel for communicating wayang performances and earning additional income as a YouTuber. The phenomenon of virtual wayang performances impacts the aesthetic style of wayang performances by puppeteers. They are creative by following the market share that gives rise to the aesthetic model of virtual wayang performances. Puppeteer artists try to create virtual wayang performances by following the tastes that are prevalent among the millennial generation. This is the basic reason for the puppeteers to perform wayang based on aesthetic taste. Therefore, the aesthetic style of virtual wayang performance is very urgent and relevant to study.

2. Method

This research used virtual wayang performance objects from puppeteers broadcast on the YouTube platform by live streaming and on-demand in 2020-2021. The method used is virtual ethnography, with online interactive interviews [11]. This method aims to reveal the reality, both visible and invisible from computer mediated communication between virtual internet communication members. Visual ethnography is concerned with space and time, identity and authenticity, and ethics. The internet is instantaneous so space and time are collapsing, identities are more playful, and ethics are becoming more tenuous. Understanding this aspect is important for studying online social groups [12]. Methods of data collection were done by interviews, literature study, and observation. In-depth interviews with the puppeteers revealed the basic reasons why they present virtual wayang kulit performances. Through the literature study,

various studies were found regarding virtual wayang, both in the form of books, scientific articles, and writing on social media. The urgent thing that researchers do is to observe virtual wayang performance from several puppeteers in the Central Java region.

Observation was carried out carefully to the puppeteer's accounts, both live streaming and delayed. Observations were intended to reveal the form of presentation of virtual wayang performances. In addition, the perceptions and tastes of the puppet audience were wayang performances. Data from interviews, literature studies and observations were analyzed using aesthetic theory. Aesthetics is the science of the beauty of art, so aesthetics is interpreted as a study of beauty or aesthetics, taste and art. Addison defined aesthetics as a theory of taste based on the tradition of empiricism and theories that refer to Platonic and Neoplatonic views. The structure of the taste theory is developed into five parts, namely: (1) perception; (2) faculty of taste; (3) mental products; (4) the kind of object in the perceived world; and (5) judgments of taste [13]. The aesthetics of virtual wayang performances can be analyzed based on the tastes of the puppeteer and the audience.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Reasons for the Puppeteer to Perform Virtual Wayang

Since the beginning of 2020 until now, the world has been hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. One of the sectors affected by the pandemic is arts and culture. Cultural arts activities are eliminated, thereby weakening the joints of the lives of artists and art activity managers. Specifically, what happens to the puppeteers, the performance crew, and wayang art that cannot be held in society can be observed. As a result, the sustainability of their economic life is disrupted. Their livelihood as artists cannot be fulfilled, so they have to find other income. The era of the industrial revolution 4.0 is both a challenge and an opportunity for the puppeteers and their performance crews. Challenges to mastering technological literacy must be mastered by those who want to survive as artists. Artists capture the internet of things to market art production and a vehicle for studying various phenomena worldwide. The internet of things has become a new vehicle for them to develop their creations and innovations in puppetry. This era provides opportunities for puppeteers to take advantage of the internet network with various platforms. Virtual wayang performance is one of the answers to the opportunities for the progress of the times. In addition, puppeteers and performance support crews can develop their potential to become YouTubers, editors, cameramen, and so on to bring wayang art to life globally.

One of the puppeteer artists trying to capture the phenomena of the times is Ki Seno Nugroho from Yogyakarta. Before the Covid-19 outbreak hit the world, Seno Nugroho had a private channel, Dalang Seno, to broadcast wayang performances by live streaming or on demand. The Dalang Seno channel has made significant progress, evidenced by the ever-increasing number of viewers for every performance aired on YouTube. Seno Nugroho's success in restoring the wayang performance tradition through live streaming on YouTube has made other puppeteers follow in his footsteps. The puppeteers opened up by holding virtual wayang kulit performances, such as Purbo Asmoro, Cahyo Kuntadi, Sigit Arianto, MPP Bayu Aji, and others. Puppeteers also carry out the phenomenon of performing virtual puppets in various regions. Emerson conducted studied virtual puppets broadcast on the YouTube channel during the Covid-19 pandemic, over 20 months, from March 2020 to October 2021, on seven popular puppeteers. The results of the study indicated that, on average, there were: (a) 22 virtual wayang performances every month, (b) 2 premiere plays every month, and (c) 1-2 shows about puppetry knowledge. This shows that during the Covid-19 pandemic, puppeteers could exist with virtual wayang performances to make the wayang life more lively [14].

There were at least three reasons for puppeteers to perform virtual wayang, namely: (1) having economic factors, (2) maintaining the existence of the puppeteer, (3) and following the dynamics of the times. First, the economic factor is the main reason because puppeteering is their job. Professional puppeteer honorarium in one stage can be used for living expenses for several months. This is why losing a mastermind opportunity is fatal to one's survival. During the Covid-19 pandemic, several professional puppeteers could survive by performing virtual

wayang. Second, efforts to maintain existence as a professional puppeteer must be carried out by performing virtual wayang. The professionalism of the puppeteers is wayang kulit because of their high experience performing wayang.

To realize the power of expression, creativity, and innovation, puppeteers must be able to present wayang performances through live streaming on YouTube channels or other social media. The more responses achieved, the higher the power of the puppeteer's expression so that his professionalism is well maintained. Purbo Asmoro is considered a professional puppeteer who always maintains his professionalism, which can be seen from his productivity in composing new plays, such as Ken Arok, Janaka Dagang, Banjaran Cakil, Dumadine Dina, Tamba Tekka Lara Lunga, and so on.

The third reason, the puppeteers tried to follow the dynamics of the times. In the era of the industrial revolution 4.0 and society 5.0, placing technological progress is a driver of world change. Professional puppeteers capture the phenomenon of the internet of things as a challenge and an opportunity to maintain the life of wayang art. Wayang can be enjoyed globally without knowing the boundaries of space and time. Virtual wayang performance in digital mode through the YouTube channel and other social media has become public consumption on a macro scale throughout the world. In addition, the era of society 5.0 places the position of super smart puppeteers in using technology to facilitate their daily needs, including their puppetry's creativity and artistic expression. To realize these three reasons, the puppeteers implemented a strategy of using a digital platform by (a) creating a personal account as a place to display their creations, (b) recruiting virtual wayang production crews, (c) following the trend of the creative arts industry; and (d) creating a new market share with the nuances of digital-based puppetry aesthetics.

The puppeteers created an account to broadcast virtual wayang performance, such as (1) Purbo Asmoro Official, an account owned by Ki Purbo Asmoro; (2) Kuntadi Channel, an account owned by Ki Cahyo Kuntadi; (3) Sigit Channel, an account owned by Ki Sigit Arianto; (4) Bayu Aji SBA TV, accounts owned by Ki MPP Bayu Aji and so on. In their efforts to perform virtual wayang, the puppeteers recruited workers for the production and screening processes. Workers are required to take responsibility and professionalism to ensure that the production results of virtual wayang performances are worthy of being enjoyed by viewers. One of the puppeteers, Ki Purbo Asmoro, has a working relative named Dewan Kinting Kintak in charge of broadcasting virtual wayang performances and various content created. Other puppeteers, such as Ki Cahyo Kuntadi, Ki Sigit Arianto, and Ki MPP Bayu Aji, also have work relatives covering and broadcasting virtual wayang.

The spread of virtual wayang performance has created a new market share. Virtual wayang performance with digital puppetry's aesthetic nuances gives puppet lovers an offer. The puppetry art market has been formed as evidenced by the great interest of the public, both domestic and overseas, in witnessing virtual wayang performances. Digital wayang gave rise to a new aesthetic tendency called digital wayang aesthetics by focusing on the tastes of the puppeteer and the wayang audience. This is why an aesthetic taste has emerged that has penetrated the world of the performing arts of wayang kulit today.

3.2. Forms of Virtual Wayang Performance

In the virtual wayang performance studied, there were several types and sources of plays. The type of play is defined as a typology of play based on the story theme. The source of the play is the story baboon referred to by the puppeteer [15]. Ken Arok's play by Purbo Asmoro is classified as a *banjaran* play [16] because it tells the twists and turns of Ken Arok's life journey. This play came from chronicles or legends. Anggeguru's play by Cahyo Kuntadi is a type of *lebet* play, telling about the journey of humans to reach oneness with God [17], [18]. The Gathutkaca Wisudha play by Sigit Arianto, categorized as the type of *wisudhan* play, tells the story of the main character being appointed king [19]. These two plays originated from the Mahabharata cycle.

The play Anggada Balik presented by MPP Bayu Aji is a type of *kraman* play, which tells of someone wanting to seize power [19]. If you look closely, this play originated from the

Ramayana story cycle. The narrative aspect is observed through the structure of the wayang play, which contains an overview of the overall story from the beginning to the end. Generally, the structure of wayang plays contains three parts: *pathet nem*, *pathet sanga*, and *pathet manyura* [20]. Each pathet consists of various scenes intertwined with the scene before and after. There are two kinds of entanglement of scenes, namely linear entanglement, where the next scene continues one scene, and there is a causal relationship, that is, one scene causes another scene to appear.

If you look closely, there are at least two categories of narration systems used by the puppeteers, namely tight groove patterns and loose groove patterns [21]. A tight plot pattern means that the plot has a very tight weave that requires a lot of action. In a loose plot pattern, the interweaving of scenes is arranged loosely, thus requiring several scenes to form a story. Ken Arok's play applies a dense plot structure with the characteristics of the sequence of scenes not following conventional patterns. The number of scenes shown follows the need to work on the play. The plays of Anggeguru, Narayana Ratu, Gathutkaca Winisudha, and Anggada Balik follow the conventional plot structure with the sequence of scenes in each pathet. However, almost all plays add an opening scene or prologue as an introduction to the story's main issue.

Characterizations in wayang performances are the work of wayang characters by the puppeteer. How to animate the characters through *garap* of the wayang movements and the wayang characters' narration. Characterization refers to the figures that liven up the storyline. In general, the main character becomes the key figure who builds the conflict and plot structure of the play. The main character is often used as the title of the play, such as "Ken Arok" refers to the main character, namely Ken Arok; "Gathutkaca Winisudha" takes the name of the main character Gathutkaca; and "Anggada Balik" implies the main character Anggada. The title of the play "Anggeguru" does not refer to the main character, but rather to the events of the play, namely a student named Bima. The main character is always present in every plot, directly or through conversations with other characters.

Wayang plays, in which plots and characterizations are reflected, are visualized in the work on wayang into wayang movements (*sabetan*), wayang dramatization (*catur*), and wayang vocal-instrumental (*pakeliran* music) [22][23]. *Sabetan* has several elements, such as *cepengan* (the technique of holding the puppet), *tancepan* (the technique of arranging the floor pattern), *bedholan* (the technique of removing the puppet and its sequence), *solah* (the technique and entry words of wayang movement), and *entas-entasan* (the technique of removing the puppet from the screen (*kelir*)). *Catur* in wayang performance is defined as the language and pronunciation techniques performed by the puppeteer [15]. The puppeteers apply several *catur* variants, such as *ginem* (dialogue between characters), *ngudarasa* (character's dialogue with him/herself), and *janturan-pocapan* (narrations about events and/or wayang characters). The three *catur* variants are presented by the puppeteer in each wayang performance. To present dialogues, monologues, and narrations, puppeteers must master wayang or *antawecana* voicing techniques.

The urgency of the virtual wayang performances is the presence of *pakeliran* music to provide aesthetic reinforcement, including *gending*, *sulukan-tembang*, and *dhodhogan-keprakan*. *Gending* provides support to strengthen the atmosphere of the scene and the mood of the characters in a play. *Gending* (music) gives life to wayang performances. There are several typologies of *gending*: *gending* to accompany scenes, ending to accompany war, *gending* to accompany the soldiers' departure, and *gending* presented specifically for the *Limbuk-Cangik* and *Gara-gara* scenes, namely the *dolanan* music. In addition to *gending*, there are *sulukan* and *tembang*, both sung by puppeteers and *pesinden* (singers), and *penggerong*.

The puppeteer usually presents *kombangan* and *sulukan* at certain events and depicts the wayang characters' moods. *Kombangan* is sung at the same time as the piece being presented, while the *sulukan* is sung by the puppeteer after the piece ends. Sometimes the puppeteer sings the *sulukan* and then joins the *pesinden* (female singers) or *penggerong* (male singers). The presentation of the song is usually sung by the *pesinden* or *penggerong*, depending on the request from the puppeteer. *Tembang* that is sung is presented specifically to strengthen certain events or scenes. In the *Limbuk-Cangik* or *Gara-gara* scenes, the presence of *tembang*, especially

dolanan songs, dominates the scene. The cinematic aspect is defined as matters related to the technical aspects of filmmaking, namely: mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing, and sound. In this case, mise-en-scene includes a film's visual aspects, such as setting, lighting, acting, and props. Mise-en-scene is said to be all aspects contained in the frame in front of the camera taken during the production process of a film. Mise-en-scene is also interpreted as a language that functions to convey a message contained in a film [24].

In a virtual wayang performance, mise-en-scene is interpreted as things that can be seen in each puppet scene, such as where the setting is, how the lighting is, how the puppeteer moves the puppet acts, and what properties are used. If it is studied in depth, the background setting in a virtual wayang performance is a white screen or screen which has the meaning of any background setting, be it a kingdom, sea, hermitage, forest, and so on. The actual setting for the Ken Arok play, the virtual wayang performances, includes villages, forests, roads, mountains, duchies, kingdoms, and so on. In Anggeguru's play, the setting is a hermitage, forest, ocean, and so on. Gathutkaca Winisudha's play uses settings in the kingdom, duchy, space, and so on. The play Anggada Balik takes settings in the kingdom, bedrooms, squares and so on.

Like filmmaking, a virtual wayang performance requires lighting, with a single light from a *blencong* lamp. Purbo Asmoro and Cahyo Kuntadi choose to apply a single light from the *blencong* for lighting their wayang performance. Meanwhile, other puppeteers such as Sigit Arianto and MPP Bayu Aji use colorful lights to strengthen the scene, in addition to using *blencong* lights as the main light. Actors in virtual wayang performance are categorized into two. First, actors in the sense of wayang characters in a play; and secondly, actors in the sense of the main characters who present wayang.

The first understanding shows that wayang is said to be an actor in a play, because wayang puppets are inanimate objects, so a puppeteer is needed to give life force. In the second sense, the actor designates the players who play a role in the virtual wayang kulit: the puppeteer, *pesinden*, *penggerong*, and *pengrawit*. The puppeteer is the main actor as the driving force behind the wayang performance [25]. In virtual wayang performance, often the dalang presents other actors, namely jokes or comedians and guest stars.

The virtual wayang performance of Ken Arok's play by Purbo Asmoro, apart from featuring wayang puppets as actors, is also supported by puppeteers, *pesinden*, *penggerong*, and *pengrawit* (musicians). This actor appears on the audio-visual packaging created by the production team via live streaming. This also applies to the virtual wayang kulit performance, the Anggeguru play, presented by Cahyo Kuntadi. Two other plays, namely Gathutkaca Winisudha by Sigit Arianto, and Anggada Balik by MPP Bayu Aji, have added other actors, namely comedians and guest stars. Sigit Arianto adds actors, namely comedians Cak Percil and Hanafi. The MPP Bayu Aji adds a comedian and *pesinden* actor, Eka Uget-ugget. Another cinematic element is the cinematography.

In a virtual wayang performance, the cinematography is the camera's treatment of the object it takes. Cinematography type of shots used when shooting consists of camera angle, camera movement, and shot size. In a virtual wayang performance, the shooting process uses an eye-level camera viewpoint, a neutral or normal angle of view. Camera movement with zoom: the camera optically approaches or moves away from objects. The distance between the object and the camera applies the wide shot technique, which can be identified clearly because it has filled the image frame, in addition to several shooting techniques, adjusting to the needs of the image that the production team wants.

In the live streaming virtual wayang performance, the editing process is carried out directly during the screening. Therefore, the production team uses several live cameras that the broadcast controller or the editor can select. In film, editing is defined as the work of cutting and assembling images into a complete and understandable film. Editing is divided into two: transitions and effects [26]. The next cinematic element is sound which is a very important technical element. The existence of sound becomes significant because the atmosphere or event built in the packaging of a virtual wayang performance involves sound elements, such as *gending*, *sulukan*, *gerongan*, *tembang*, *sinden*, *keprakan*, and *dhodhogan*. In essence, editing of

virtual wayang performances is done directly at the time of the performance, so it requires the creative power of the production team. Fig 1 shows the four covers of the Wayang Kulit performances that took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, featuring puppeteers including Ki Purbo Asmoro, Ki Cahyo Kuntadi, Ki MPP Bayu Aji, and Ki Sigit Arianto.



Fig. 1. The covers of the Wayang Kulit performances that took place during the Covid-19 pandemic

3.3. Aesthetic Pattern of Virtual Wayang Performances

The dynamics of the life of wayang performances give rise to a new trend in aesthetics, referred to as the aesthetics of digital puppets. The aesthetics of digital wayang is formed from the aesthetic tastes of the puppeteer and the audience. The combination of the tastes of the puppeteer and the audience makes the aesthetic style of taste the basic spirit of digital wayang aesthetics. The taste of the puppeteer artist gives a distinctive color to the aesthetic expression of the virtual wayang performance that is presented. Purbo Asmoro has an aesthetic nuance according to his taste, as well as other puppeteers who rely on taste to achieve their aesthetic nuance. The taste of each puppeteer is different according to the power of expression and creative ability.

The aesthetic expression of the puppeteer is captured by wayang audiences relying on the depth of their taste. Thus, the tastes of the audience have differences from each other depending on the strength of each appreciation. The aesthetic structure of taste includes (1) perception; (2) faculty of taste; (3) mental products; (4) the kind of object in the perceived world; and (5) consideration of taste [13]. Art perception is compiling, recognizing and interpreting sensory information to provide an overview and understanding of art. Taste is a person's experience or feeling when creating and living art or known as taste. Mental product in aesthetics can be interpreted as a result of inner experience when creating or experiencing art. The object of observation is the object of art created by the artist or observed by the audience. Taste considerations influence the emergence of one's tastes when creating and living art.

The puppeteers have an aesthetic ideology in performing wayang, which can be interpreted as their taste [27]. Each puppeteer has a different taste depending on the power of expression and power of innovation. The taste of the puppeteer in performing wayang plays shows the strength of his ideology as a puppeteer. Purbo Asmoro places the concept of *nuksma* and *mungguh* in each of his wayang performances. The power of expression and consideration of harmony in presenting virtual wayang performance produce aesthetic nuances that reflect personal style. Purbo Asmoro's taste is embodied in the aesthetics of a virtual wayang performance. The foundation of *garap pakeliran padat*, which is applied to virtual wayang

performance produces a form of presentation that is different from other puppeteers. Cahyo Kuntadi used his personal tastes to perform virtual wayang. The power of expression becomes the starting point in his wayang performance creations. The concept of *garap pakeliran padat* and traditional folklore is carried out in every wayang performance.

Another thing that concerns Cahyo Kuntadi is placing wayang stories in the context of the time. Sigit Arianto also applied the concept of working on solid usage to color the aesthetic style of his wayang performances. He even incorporated elements outside conventional puppetry traditions, such as colorful lights, artificial smoke, and so on, to add to their aesthetic appeal. On the other hand, MPP Bayu Aji departed from the conventional concept of *pakeliran* to create the aesthetic color of a virtual wayang kulit performance that reflects his taste. The aesthetic style of MPP Bayu Aji is heavily influenced by the traditions of his parents, Ki Anom Suroto. The virtual wayang performance as an aesthetic object received a response from the audience. From a taste perspective, audiences have their tastes [27]. If we look closely at the number of viewers in the virtual wayang performance by the four puppeteers, it shows that the tastes of the audience have significant differences from each other. The audience's aesthetic taste showed their interest in the wayang performance performed by the puppeteers. Fans of the puppeteer Purbo Asmoro were different from fans of other puppeteers. Each wayang audience has different tastes and experiences. In essence, the audience's taste becomes a barometer for the puppeteer to deliver the wayang performance with the right target. The integration between the puppeteer's tastes and the audience's tastes gives rise to an aesthetic tendency in virtual wayang kulit performance. Puppeteers could produce wayang plays by considering public tastes. In this case, the taste of the puppeteer can shape the taste of the audience so that the taste of the puppeteer can influence the taste.

The aesthetic style of the virtual wayang kulit performances could be observed from several things, namely: (1) the dramatization of the wayang performance, (2) the quality of the puppeteer, and (3) the audience [23]. The discussion on the dramatization of wayang performance is focused on the staging system and characterization. The study of the quality of the puppeteer indicated the strength of the puppeteer's expression in performing the wayang play. The audience's problems aimed at discussing their perceptions and tastes in watching wayang performances. Based on the analysis of virtual wayang performance from the puppeteers, an understanding can be drawn regarding their aesthetic characteristics, namely: (1) the camera became a representation of the audience's eyes; (2) puppeteers were required to be creative, innovative, and productive; (3) the audience had the freedom to choose the puppeteer according to taste; and (4) the importance of collaboration between various parties and various supporting aspects of wayang performance. Impressions of virtual wayang performances on various digital platforms are produced by cameras. In this case, the cameraman is required to have a strong sense of wayang, so that the shooting results are not counterproductive. Wayang show broadcasts, both live streaming, and on-demand, require the cameraman's intelligence to produce quality products. The camera angel represents the eyes of the audience, meaning that the impressions produced by the camera have framed the wayang audience. In a virtual wayang performance, the puppeteer is required to be creative, namely to process his reasoning and expression to produce an interesting wayang play. Purbo Asmoro is an example of a creative mastermind by presenting various new and unexpected plays to his audience, as did Cahyo Kuntadi and other puppeteers. The puppeteer also has the power to be innovative, that is, to update his wayang performances continuously. The significant thing that becomes a measure of the power of the puppeteer is his productivity. Apart from performing wayang, puppeteers can also create content that attracts viewers.

In a virtual wayang performance, because it is broadcast on the YouTube channel, the audience has many choices to experience it. The audience's taste will determine the reputation of the puppeteers on social media. In this case, the audience can follow all the wayang performances from one puppeteer or can join several channels that broadcast wayang performances. The audience has unlimited choices of various virtual wayang performances that are currently being broadcast, both live streaming and on demand. The important thing that should be the concern of puppeteers is collaboration. The puppeteers can collaborate with other artists, such as musicians, singers, dancers, and comedians to enliven their wayang

performances. Collaboration is also carried out with experts competent in digital technology, such as production crews, artistic directors, sound engineers, cameramen, and so on. Collaboration in the virtual wayang kulit performance production process can occur from pre-production, during production, and post-production.

4. Conclusion

Virtual wayang performances have become a new phenomenon in puppetry due to various reasons, including: (1) the Covid-19 pandemic, which has limited community activities in crowds; (2) the era of the industrial revolution 4.0, which requires puppeteers to be able to use the internet of things; and (3) the era of society 5.0, which requires puppeteers to become super-intelligent individuals to utilize information technology in the creation and innovation of wayang performances. The challenges of these three things were used as stimulants to generate better opportunities, namely puppeteers to create and innovate through digital platforms to broadcast virtual wayang performance by live streaming or on demand. Virtual wayang performance requires a vehicle, namely YouTube or other social media, to broadcast. The puppeteers already have YouTube accounts for the media to present wayang and create content that generates finances to meet daily economic needs. If observed, virtual wayang performances have an aesthetic style according to the tastes of the puppeteer artist as well as the tastes of the puppet audience community. Thus, the aesthetics of digital puppet emphasizes aesthetic taste.

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