

Urban Art in Surakarta

Sigit Purnomo Adi*

Fine Art and Design Faculty, Universitas Sebelas Maret Surakarta

Abstract. This research's purpose is to formulate a clear depiction on the urban artwork's background and its symbolic significance. It focused on urban artworks in the qualitative data form that were collected and analyzed using hermeneutic approach. Urban art was born from the challenges and demands from urban art lovers who want artistic renewal, thus many artists of Surakarta show up to answer this. It characterizes the city development, which gives birth to a system in society that is structurally and culturally different from rural. Art is no longer a traditional background, it responds new traditions, especially urban areas that are populated by heterogeneous society. It was born due the desire to respond urban people's creativity with all of their problems. Its symbolic meaning can be evaluated from the symbols expressed in the mural and graffiti that exist in youth communities, conveying the values derived from their existence toward the physical reality and social environment. This phenomenon in Indonesian urban areas mark the term "urban art" development as a valid art field, both in terms of its cultural discourse, as a discipline and the aesthetics that it offers. Urban artworks are creative responses created as the public reaction toward their environment.

Keywords: *Urban Art, Artwork, Surakarta*

1 Introduction

People who engage in urban art are people who have the desire to change their environment/neighborhood. The emergence of urban art is related to people's threats and desires for something ideal. The ideals in this context are closely related to the social environment and people's inner desires regarding to their existence.

Urban art can be observed in a variety of expressions. It shows a new symptom that a creator's role in the work of urban art is significant. Art, in general, is limited by the established patterns, whereas the urban artworks change so flexibly that complex dynamics occur; free movements with orientations on atmosphere and character expressions.

* Corresponding author: denytri@staff.uns.ac.id

Urban art was started from the changes in naturalist human form, especially in the shape of the human body and its parts. The urban art forms differ greatly from the original naturalistic forms. Seeing the existing reality, the artists in Surakarta city express their anxiety as the pioneers to answer to the challenges and demands for renewal among art community in Surakarta. The pioneering artists are young people who live in Surakarta and create urban art based on the existing work development to add their own version of artistic value, especially in the visual form. Urban art is a relatively young form of art, whose development is creative and innovative, which needs to be developed further because it is more closely related to young generation. Urban art is interesting to discuss especially in Surakarta because the art in Surakarta has been developing rapidly, especially in the forms of murals and graffiti.

2 Literature Review

Art has various meanings. One is more traditional, which has the tendency to conform to the existing standards referred to as the traditional art. The other form of art demands innovation and creation, always looking for novelty, which is better known as the contemporary art. According to Mikke Susanto, contemporary art is the art that is developing nowadays, because the word "contemporary" itself means the present era where the writer or observer currently lives [1].

Urbanization has dual functions; on one hand as an attraction for people to come to the city, on the other hand as a disseminator of lifestyle influence. In other words, urbanization has centripetal and centrifugal properties or force [2].

Urban art is an art that characterizes the development of a city, in which this development then gives birth to a system in society that is structurally and culturally different from the structure and culture of those in rural communities. Urban art or in Indonesian language "*seni urban*" was born of a longing to respond to the creativity of the urban community with all its problems. From this, a group of people emerged to showcase and present art in the midst of the society. The way is by presenting freedom of expression in the public space [3].

The widespread phenomenon of variations in art explorations in urban areas in Indonesia mark the development of the term "urban art" as a valid field of art, both in terms of its cultural discourse and as a discipline and the aesthetics that it offers. From the mapping of the existing trends, especially from the creative process of the artists' generation after the 1990s, in general, the urban art area in Indonesia can be mapped as follows [4].

The urban art are activities or artworks or creative responses created as reactions to urban / public / community events happening at the community's environment. The process and artwork are usually presented with a visual style that brings the street lingo (street art). There are several forms of urban art included as the creative products of subculture industry and 'indie' generation but the author limits the discussion on 2 kinds only, namely :

2.1 Graffiti

Graffiti (grafitty or graffiti) is an art activity that uses composition of color, line, shape and volume to write certain sentences on the walls.



Fig. 1. Graffiti in Purwosari, Surakarta (photo: Agustinus S.)

2.2 Mural

Murals are relatively wide paintings on walls, roofs of buildings or other media with striking and graded colors.



Fig. 2. Mural in Ngarsopuro Market, Surakarta (photo: Putra).



Fig. 3. Mural in Slamet Riyadi Street, Surakarta (photo: SuratKabar.id)

3 Problem Statement

The problem to be analysed regarding to urban art in Surakarta is how are the transformation of form, the occurrence of innovation of art forms into urban art in

Surakarta? And what is the symbolic meaning and interaction contained in urban art in Surakarta.

4 Methodology

This research on urban art in Surakarta used a qualitative method. Thus the following sections of this research reflect on the area of meaning and interaction of symbols in the field of art (fine arts). Urban art is the world of symbol exchange presented by the actors and all supporting communities. In this regard, the research on the meaning and interaction of art symbols in urban art was conducted using grounded research method. Even though this research was based on the meaning and interaction of symbols, the approach could be multi-disciplinary as commonly applied in art research. This means that several approaches of hermeneutic and phenomenological approaches were needed to analyze the phenomenon.

This research was a subjective qualitative research because a research on meaning and symbolic interaction of urban art that reveals the meaning of cultural symbols in fine arts is a study that must be observed rather than just obtaining various research data such as observation data, interviews, mass media writings, lectures / seminars which is recorded in a different context. Furthermore, the data were analyzed with the appropriate approaches, because one of the data characteristics were contents that is rich in meanings. Audio-visual data were also recorded for the needs of detailed observation and non-verbal and verbal analysis in a show, because the object of this research cannot only be observed with the naked eye but there are values and meanings behind the form of the art work.

The meaning of cultural symbols is the focus of research on interpretation process in street art media, namely how to give meaning to a symbol in art as a small universe that lives in a society. In other words, the focus of the research was on how meaning is revealed by people in their cultural environment. This is closely related to how meaning process occurs in certain contexts. As a qualitative research, this research was phenomenological, that is, this research viewed various problems always in their unity of events, space and time and not as independently separated single events. The reality of urban art cannot be understood without taking the inner meaning of the text and the context as a whole. The study included objects surrounding the supporters of urban art, because the interrelatedness of the text and the context as a whole shapes the meaning of cultural symbols in the urban art. Fine art considers the importance of the work's reality as text, and in the context of art, its meaning needs to be understood as a system of values and beliefs. This is related to urban art, in which its appearance is a complement to the identity of the community. This understanding can be seen in symbol interactions that reflect how a meaning of an artwork is encircled by a circular line as a world view, defined as a set of attitudes, beliefs, and values adopted by a person or group of people in certain culture. The world view is an important aspect of cultural life that gives color of an individual's view on his position and in relation to the surrounding cultural environment. Based on the problem presented in this study, which emphasizes on the background, development process, and meaning (perception and participation), the best form for this research is a holistic qualitative research, using the Symbol Interaction method with Phenomenological foundation, and Hermeneutic approach for meaning interpretation, and the result on Description of urban art, formal analysis of urban art, interpretation of urban art were then

compiled. Finally, a conclusion that is filled with synthesis activities is presented in a report.

Because the focus of the research had been determined before the implementation of data collection, this study was classified as an embedded case study. As for the qualitative approach in use was: Having a "natural setting" of data collected from the source directly and the researcher as the main instrument. It was descriptive because the data collected were in the form of words in sentences or images that have more than just numbers or figures. It had more emphasis on processes than products. And it tended to analyze data inductively and consider the meaning "as the main concern" [5].

5 Results of Analysis

Based on the results of the analysis, urban art in Surakarta city is more focused on murals and graffiti. Mural and graffiti will inevitably invite pros and contras, negative and positive response from the society. Fine arts in Surakarta used to emphasize on the traditional and naturalistic fine art. Since urban art emerged, art has become more creative, innovative and full of unlimited symbols and etc. The symbolic meaning and interaction contained in urban art are very interesting and needs to be studied in more depth.

6 Discussion

Urban art in Surakarta city is more focused on murals and graffiti because many of the young people in Surakarta have joined in urban art groups from junior high school, senior high school, and university. This is also supported by the many mural and graffiti competitions held in the city. The murals on Gatot Subroto and Slamet Riyadi streets made by Choirul Hidayat in Surakarta also contribute to the rapid development of murals. Art form transformation and innovations into urban art form in Surakarta is no longer a representation of works displayed in galleries, but a media of expression that struggles in public facilities. The urban art media expressions dominate almost every public facility. Urban art has succeeded in cutting the distant relationship between the public as appreciators with the works of art, replacing the function of art that was formerly grand, classic, pure, high and traditional. Urban art has also succeeded in breaking down the values of Art which was once positioned as something that is conservative and loaded with the admiration value by presenting it to the public through media that are closely related to the daily life of the urban community. The symbolic meaning and interaction displayed in mural and graffiti works in the city of Surakarta have various forms and messages, for example when there are themes of political problems such as the mural located on Kusuma Sari restaurant walls on the side of Slamet Riyadi street Surakarta which feature a mural of Susi Pujiastuti's face, the current minister of maritime affairs and fisheries, that is described as a fierce figure wearing the typical accessories of Wonder Woman superheroine which add to the uniqueness of the picture. Susi's hand is depicted pointing towards the pirate character in the film 'Pirates of the Caribbean' movie. This mural is quite phenomenal because it is full of meaning and symbol of a super hero in the modern era. There are many people in Surakarta now who willingly give their walls as media for graffiti art. This shows that graffiti art has been appreciated as one

of the contributors to the beauty of the city. Interesting images can lure people, and can even attract tourists to visit a city. In addition, graffiti can be used as an alternative medium to develop youth creativity in art. In addition, the ability to create a form of beauty can give pleasure to the young generation themselves and to others, and they can also make more friends among fellow art lovers. However, there are also negative impacts that arise from the phenomenon of urban art: Some teenagers often abuse their ability to draw on other people's wall or public facilities carelessly without any significant meaning. Murals and graffiti are also often used for gambling events (battle bombing with money) and so on.

7 Conclusion

The urban art in Surakarta city is more focused on murals and graffiti because many of the young people in Surakarta have joined urban art groups from junior high school, senior high school, and university. This is also supported by the many mural and graffiti competitions held in the city. The murals on Gatot Subroto and Slamet Riyadi streets made by Choirul Hidayat in Surakarta also contribute to the rapid development of murals. Urban art has succeeded in cutting the distant relationship between the public as appreciators with the works of art, replacing the function of art that was formerly grand, classic, pure, high and traditional. Urban art has also succeeded in breaking down the values of Art which was once positioned as something that is conservative and loaded with the admiration value by presenting it to the public through media that are closely related to the daily life of the urban community. The symbolic meaning and interaction displayed in mural and graffiti works in the city of Surakarta have various forms and messages depending on the purpose and theme of which the art work is created for.

Acknowledgement

This article is the result of Fundamental Research entitled Symbolic Interaction of Urban Art in Surakarta that was implemented smoothly and well and will be continued further. The author would like to express his gratitude to the Faculty of Fine Arts and Designs and Universitas Sebelas Maret Surakarta for providing research funding.

References

1. M. Susanto, *Diksi Rupa :Kumpulan Istilah dan Gerakan Seni Rupa* (DictiArt Lab.Yogyakarta, 2011)
2. R. Bintarto, *Interaksi Desa – Kota dan Permasalahannya* (Ghalia Indonesia, Jakarta Timur, 1983)
3. B. Mulyono, *Galeri Urban: Narasi Kota Dalam Labirin Seni* (Ekspresi Buku, Yogyakarta, 2009)
4. S.P. Adi, *Seni Urban di Surakarta* (UNS Press, Surakarta, 2017)
5. H.B. Sutopo, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif: Dasar Teori dan Terapannya dalam Penelitian* (Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, 2006)