

The Ethnicity of Nias in the Creative Exploration of Art Painting of North Sumatera

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Abstract—This article studied the ethnicity expressions in the creation of art painting through the exploration of the visual culture of Nias. The exploration was realized creatively on rubber dimension formed by the heat conductor. The purpose of this study is to develop a peculiar and unique shape of fine arts in North Sumatera so that it can enrich the local and national treasure of visual culture. This study employed to survey and creative creation method. The testing of the result of the creation was conducted through the assessment of competent critics and the appreciative feedback of the observers and the community. The data analysis was done using the quantitative and qualitative descriptive method. The result of this study showed that the characteristic of Nias visual culture as the basis of art painting development, in general, was decorative and mythical. The rubber media as a “tafril” area with a heat conductor was quite effective to explore the real texture and relief image, as well as to present artistic effect when exposed by light. Based on the critics and the observers’ appreciative feedback, the creation had already had an intra-aesthetic and extra-aesthetic quality, uniqueness, and strong characteristic, so that it contributes to the enrichment of local and national culture.

Keywords— *ethnicity, creative exploration, art painting*

I. INTRODUCTION

The fast stream of modernization and globalization has a huge impact on the shifting of the cultural value of a nation. The values, which have been part of the life of the Indonesians for years, undergo ‘shock’ as the result of the foreign culture influence, which dominates the local/ethnic culture [1]. The ethnic culture now tends to be displayed only in ceremonial activities, which day by day is degraded by systemic value influenced by effective and efficient thinking that then develop to be rational and calculative thinking. In such condition, generally, the cultural values lose and tend to adjust to the nowadays’ demand. As a result, the ethnic cultural elements, which are full of noble values are neglected.

Such condition can also be seen clearly in the field of fine arts in north Sumatra. There have been many cultural heritages of past ethnic visual culture which no longer exist in the nowadays society. The practical function and the economic value are considered as less effective in supporting the demands of today. Regarding things related to practical needs, such condition can indeed be understood. However, related to the spiritual matter, the spirit of past noble values should be observed and reviewed. Observation and appreciation of its various potentials should be done so that it can be developed as a marker of identity, both for the

creation of its own products and as a marker of national identity.

Based on the study of socio-culture, Indonesia has hundreds of ethnicities. Each region in Indonesia has unique characteristics so art also develops raising the virtual treasure of each region [2]. This effort in raising the “virtual” of a region (ethnicity) is a policy to present artwork, which is expected to be able to counter or at least be a companion of popular art products that contain foreign cultural value elements.

In this era of pluralism, the forms of ethnic culture are able to present equally in term of the variety of world fine arts. In North Sumatera, products of past fine arts can be found in peculiar and unique forms. Some of them have been processed to be pure fine arts product, various crafts, and souvenir products. In the field of art painting, some forms of creative exploration have been expressed by artists as the main subject or companion in the form creation of a handful of paintings. However, the media that is commonly used is canvas with oil coloring material and brush as the forming device.

In research the writer had finished, it was done an exploration of art painting creation based on the form of Nias Ethnic fine arts, which is one of the ethnic in North Sumatera. Regarding this research, the creation of the painting was realized on rubber dimension using a heat conductor. The device is electric solder, live coal, and hot metal, which the tip was modified according to the needs to create peculiar visual effects.

As far as the literature observation, social media, as well as observation in the field related to the previous research, this kind of artwork is not known yet among society. The challenge is how to create art-painting work, which is original and is able to compete or at least be side by side with national or international art painting work. Related to that, specifically the purposes of this research are:

- To find out forms or visual culture of Nias ethnic which is unique and peculiar as a basis of expressing explorative art painting;
- To engineer the rubber material dimension to support the notion of creating a unique and original painting
- To engineer and manipulate the potency of various heat conducting device so that it can create elements of unique and specific form on painting dimension.
- To display processed principles of design which attract the attention of art painting appreciator.

- e. To filter the feedback from critics and art painting observer from the local, national and international seminar, as well as the appreciator feedback on the performed exhibitions;
- f. To predict the fairness of the aesthetic and economic value of the created works;
- g. To formulate the contribution of the result of the creation to the enrichment of the treasure of local visual culture;

As a literature review, it can be described that the spread of foreign visual culture in the lives of Indonesian society has emerged in various things that are less profitable. The values that have been established in the lives of Indonesians undergo shock. The domination of foreign culture is not easy to avoid. However, while positioning themselves in it, the cultural observers, including the fine artists should also put an effort in building competitiveness [1].

The improvement of competitiveness in art, including in the field of art painting is not an easy thing to do. Since Raden Saleh Syarif Bustaman (1807-1880), there have been many paintings contained with European style [2]. In any fine arts educational environment, the learning about modern western fine arts attracts more attention of the students than the national fine arts. This can be observed by looking at the curriculum of fine arts education in schools and art universities.

In North Sumatera, art product known as non-traditional art painting was already known around 1983, with the coming of painters from West Sumatera such as Nawi Butun, Ismail Sulaiman and Sutan Buyung to Medan. Next, the activity of painting using non-traditional style has been developing since the existence of *Angkatan Seni Rupa Indonesia* (ASRI'45) on 30 November 1945 in Medan [3]. This western-style art painting gets an appreciation as a new culture and a symbol of advancement as well as the entrance to the international culture level. From around 110 reproduction result on the book "Maestro Seni Rupa Modern Indonesia" written by Agus Dermawan T and Mike Susanto, it can easily be seen there are paintings with style adapted from the western painter style, however, some of the paintings are still based on local visual culture form (ethnic), such as painting from Abas Alibasyah, Anak Agung Gde Sobrat, I Gusti Ketut Kobot, I Gusti Nyoman Lempad, Ida Bagus Nadera, Ida Bagus Made Polong, and Ida Bagus Made Wija [2]. Besides the works by the painters, of course, many others are not included in the book. The other works by other painters display the local and national characteristics only on the subject of the painting, but the painting style is still adapting the style from the west.

Next, Pelly stated that national culture should root on the ethnic cultures, not on the imported culture (western culture) [4]. Related to this, Atmojo stated that the ability to study the local culture that contains various traditional symbols gives the opportunity to build the ground creation that does not merely change what has already existed but also considers local uptake with global nuance [5]. Therefore, there will be creative and innovative findings.

II. METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted with the combination of survey and special method of creation, structured in the preparation, incubation, illumination, execution,

confirmation and the validation stage. The survey method covers the data collecting of the Nias visual art data from several chosen data source locations in Medan city and Nias district, data of appreciative feedback of digital images as the reference of paintings on rubber media, and the feedback of painting's observers when the exhibition was performed. The data of the creation process was gathered through a daily journal. After that, the creation method was done with special method through processes and steps starting from: (1) Data collecting of forms of Nias ethnic artefacts; (2) discussion for determining unique and interesting artefacts; (3) designing 60 digital images as references; (4) FGD for filtering the appreciative feedbacks of the artist; (5) engineering the variation of rubber material and heat conducting device; (6) moving the image pattern to the rubber sheets; g) performing the process of painting creation gradually; (7) Internal aesthetic evaluation by the researchers; and i) performing local and regional exhibition in Medan (North Sumatera) and Indonesian Institute of Arts (ISI) Padang Panjang (North Sumatera), as well as the critic evaluation by the observers of art painting.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this research, entitled "Painting Creation Based on the Form of Ethnic Art of Nias in the Rubber Dimension Formed with Heat Conducting Device" 10 painting works had been explored as shown below.



Fig. 1. Nias Ethnicity in the Exploration of Creative Art Painting

The artworks produced by this creative exploration were discussed based on the characteristics of ethnic art, the effectivity of rubber tafiril, the potency of heat conducting device, aesthetic process or artistic creation, aesthetic and economic values, and its contribution to the enrichment of contemporary culture.

A. The character of Ethnic Visual Art of Nias

To find and understand how the character of Nias ethnic art that will be used as a reference base so that it becomes a complete form of painting that is able to attract appreciator's attention, it was done through observation and identification of artifacts and visual cultural products of Nias ethnic culture. Furthermore, it was discussed to get attractive forms of choice and to have characteristics and characteristics. Based on the selected forms 30 digital images were designed as an alternative visualization reference for a painting. To ensure that the design of digital images had an aesthetic quality, filtering of appreciative responses was conducted through the FGD forum. These processes and stages replicated the creation method, namely: preparation, incubation, illumination, execution, and confirmation.

Nias ethnic art characters found as a basis for the development of painting were generally decorative and

mythical. Below are the processed digital images as referral alternative of visualization of art painting formulated in theme (title), namely: : “*ina mbanua*”, “*nio-bae*”, *laso sohagu*”, “*inada larise*”, etc.

B. The Effectivity of Rubber Tafril

To realize the idea of creation through tafril media that is different from canvas, the potential of rubber material (silicon rubber) was engineered. Based on the exploration carried out, rubber material has good potential as tafril media for painting, because it is easy to form and maintain shape. Using rubber material is also easy to explore the possibilities of the desired texture. The size of tafril paintings can be made in various possibilities, large or small. The rubber material is also available on the market with a thick or thin thickness. Based on this size and thickness, it is possible to realize non-square shapes, unusual shapes. So that the tafril field is stable and does not shake when painted, rubber material is attached to plywood sheets.

Something unique about the exploration of this idea of creation is by engineering the potential of a rubber material; it makes it have real texture and has a relief image. These textures and reliefs were created with scratches or incisions of heated objects. Electrical devices can also be used, such as solder. The uniqueness and artistic potential of texture can be developed through variations in line gradations, variations in the shape and direction of the line, the density or texture of the line, the depth of the line, which allows more relief to arise. Another uniqueness is this texture will create an artistic effect when exposed by the light, for example, light in the exhibition hall.

C. The Potency of Heat Conducting Device

There are many possible tools that can be used, as a means of conducting heat to engineer the texture and relief images on the rubber dimension, of course, according to the need for the development of the creation concept. The potential of this tool can be classified into two types. First, free tools in the form of everything around us, which can immediately be used, usually tend to be irregular. Secondly, a tool that was formed specifically in accordance with the desire to develop the concept of creation usually has a regularity because it was formed specifically.

Basically, the potency of this heat conducting device, whether the ones specially formed or the ones that already exist us, is located on the tip, or the part that will be scratched into the rubber matrix area. The characters can be thick or thin, pointed or blunt, flat or round, and so on. In its use, it can be distinguished whether it is hotter or medium, drawn strongly or slowly, drawn straight or circular, scratched or printed, and so on. Besides creating texture effects and relief images, in fact, this heat conductor device will give birth to the object image, which is a sketch form by emphasizing the contours of the object that is the theme of the painting. Based on the results of exploration, the engineering of heat conducting devices used produces unique and unique images and effects, which are not easily obtained in the usual way.

D. Aesthetic Process/ Artistic Creation

The aesthetic or artistic quality of creation was expressed through the exploration of the elements and

principles of visual art. In the creative creation method, this activity was emphasized in the stages of execution, confirmation, and validation. This stage began when moving the image pattern to the rubber sheet, then proceeded with the process of creating works 1 to 5. After this stage, the research team carried out an internal aesthetic evaluation. The results of this aesthetic evaluation were used to refine the process of creating work 6 to 10. After that, the research team conducted an internal aesthetic evaluation.

To measure the aesthetic quality of creation, it was supported by data collected through the diary of the creation process. In transferring image patterns, in fact, it only kept proportional comparisons of small-sized digital image references to actual size, as was the rubber dimension. The aesthetic quality here could be applied when making improvements to the application of visual elements and composition principles. The most decisive thing of the aesthetic quality of creation was when the work was done on the rubber dimension with a heat conductor and during the coloring process. Aesthetic quality was revealed through the processing of lines, fields, shapes, colors, and textures, through the principle of composition: the unity of balance, rhythm, the center of attention or pressure, and so on. From the results of exploration, various forms of digital shapes and lines were revealed as expressions of creative creation concepts, which are partly decorative. To compensate for the magical impression of ethnic art, a combination of bright and contrasting colors was applied. Based on the results of the internal aesthetic evaluation, the work created had aesthetic qualities, both intra-aesthetically, and extra-aesthetically.

E. Aesthetic and Economic Value

Especially the aesthetic value of creation, it was obtained through appreciative responses from critics, observers, and the public. This data was obtained through surveys on exhibitions and held national seminars, which were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The assessment of aesthetic quality by competent critics showed very positive results, an average score of 42 (84%). This means, the works of painting produced by Nia's ethnic art forms on rubber media were considered good by the critics, worthy of being aligned with other types of developmental works of art that had already been established, and have economic potential. The results of this assessment included aspects of originality of creation, the effectiveness of the use of rubber dimensions and heat conductor devices, organizing elements and principles of visual arts, personal style clarity, and some additional items from the concerned critics.

In addition, the results of the assessment in the framework of aesthetic and economic quality testing by appreciators and the public also showed positive results. This was also evident from the number of visitors to the exhibition and the enthusiasm of visitors who were appreciators of the exhibition, as well as appreciative responses during the national held seminar. Appreciators considered the work with the title “*ina mbanua I*” and “*kreasi neo-bae*” as the best or the most preferred work, as the appreciative response.

F. The contribution of the Enrichment of Visual Culture

In line with the results of aesthetic assessments of development result of the painting, appreciative responses

from critics, observers and the public stated that painting based on ethnic Nias's art forms have a contribution to the enrichment of local and national visual culture, and can be promoted on an international level. This is a contribution to improving the dignity of contemporary culture. This statement is supported by the reality of the quality, uniqueness, and peculiarity of the paintings produced.

Local content in painting based on ethnic art creates a strong identity, which distinguishes it from a Western painting that has long worked on naturalistic, realistic forms, to the expressive and abstract forms that develop in the format of Western modern art. Rubber dimension as a field of tafril painting instead of the ordinary canvas is also something new, thus enriching the variety of repertoire in the field of tafril painting and contemporary cultural values. The existence of heat conductors that were not commonly used in painting so far also gives a strong contribution, which can be manipulated to produce a unique and peculiar texture and relief images.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the survey, the forms of visual culture of Nias Ethnic Heritage are very rich, have unique characteristics, decorative and magical, and are interesting to be the basis of the referral creation of today's art painting. Creative exploration of the use of heat conducting device and pieces of foam rubber as the media of the painting is able to present new visual effects, which are in form of line relief and unique dimension, which are in accordance with the concept of the creation. The feedback of the critics and art-painting observers of the quality of the creations are very positive, related to originality, the effect of the use of new media, the organization of the visual element and the principle of composition, and the clarity of personal style. The result of this research also has a contribution in the

enrichment of local and national visual culture with a strong identity that distinguishes it from western art painting, and this enriches the treasure of the variety of tafril media and the media that forms texture image.

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