

Expression of Faith in the Work of *Syahdu Ramadhan* Calligraphy Abay D. Subarna

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Abstract—Calligraphy painting as a work of art is not only seen as a physical thing but also non-physical. Calligraphy which is seen as non-physical, aesthetic understanding is used to interpret it. Therefore, Abay D. Subarna's calligraphy should be seen not only as physical work but also as a non-physical to reveal the meaning and message that were conveyed. This research was examined through visual Semiotics and using descriptive method and qualitative approach. The results of the study show that Abay D. Subarna's calligraphy exhibition in the serene Ramadan was expressed through visual signs with geometric patterns and crack textures. Geometric patterns are taken from mosque architectural elements, while crack textures are taken from natural forms. The conclusion of this research is the visual expression that synergizes with calligraphic content in each work as a unity that has the meaning of religious items, namely the spirit of monotheism and makes calligraphy as part of the development of Islamic art in Indonesia which returns the nature of Islamic art in its corridors., but also how the essence of God appears in every work.

Keywords: *Abay D. Subarna, calligraphy, Islamic art*

I. INTRODUCTION

Islamic calligraphy has elevated value as a masterpiece. It was not only seen as beautiful writing ever but also the result of art from expression a Muslim towards religion and God. Saeed states that ‘The Islamic calligraphy has a metaphysical basis due to which it is well thought-out as, Sacred Art’ in Islamic culture [1]. It has a distinctive spiritual message to convey. Therefore, the manufacturing process, ideas, or the ideas of the artist in creating calligraphy usually inseparable from the relationship with God, a relationship with fellow human beings and his interpretation of themselves and their surroundings. Based on this, it is a process, aesthetics, and the background of calligraphy artwork is influenced by factors from within an artist. Besides, the culture and the environment became the next factor. Thus, every work of calligraphy has meaning and messages of the worship of God and the philosophy of life according to Gustami explains that ‘if art as a visual language is not able to tell something to the audience, it cannot convey the messages to its audience, its presence becomes meaningless, it is not functioning properly, useless, it has lost the message and the essential urgency [2]. Michon states that ‘Another characteristic of artistic creativity in Islam

is that it is never exercised “gratuitously,” by which we are to understand that it always answers to well-defined ends [3].

Calligraphy has growth until the term "calligraphy painting" and a new chapter in categorizing the art of calligraphy for many different types of calligraphy in terms of both his writings and his style. Kandinsky states that 'the works there is exist or present and it has the power to create a spiritual atmosphere, and from the perspective of the inside of someone can judge whether the work is it is good or bad [4]. If the "form" of its ugly this means that the form was too weak in the sense to cause tremors united with the soul.' Calligraphy painting is the work that began with the spiritual whim that it has values that are conveyed.

Some of the figures and the artists who indicated the equity of Indonesian Islamic art such as AD. Pirous, Amir Yahya, Agus Nugroho, and others. Besides, there are many other artists are mending in the realm of Islamic art to concentrate on calligraphy paintings, one of which is Abay D. Subarna. Abay D. Subarna appears with decorative calligraphy style and distinctive geometric patterns that it has become one of the artists who color the realm of Islamic art in Indonesia. Abay D. Subarna produces calligraphy paintings with a unique character in terms of both aesthetics, techniques, and philosophical meaning. The works of Abay D. Subarna has its uniqueness because it is produced by certain techniques that are not owned by other artists. The technique is a technique of cracks created on purpose and arranged. Additionally, messages monotheism often appears in every work in the form of visual signs. According to Rosenberg explains that 'the artist as long as he creates a legitimate work of art, he has a good understanding of the outside world magical objective and of itself ... I agree with Baudelaire that the purpose of art is supposed to try to see the outside world and formulated the subjective experience of the artist at the same time [5].

Research on the method of understanding a painting through semiotics was carried out by Piliang and Tridjata with the title “Semiotics of Awareness in Residual Scizophrenia Painting Works”. In this study, researchers revealed that the interpretation of the original symbolic meaning contained in schizophrenic painting is possible through open or prospective interpretation [6].

Calligraphy paintings Abay D. Subarna be the one part that should be explored in the development of Islamic calligraphy art in Indonesia. Calligraphy has meaning and virtue, of course, not only the contents and themes into consideration in an appreciation and study of the arts but also how to structure involving visual signs. The study explored the meaning through a process of symbolization an aesthetic object, including calligraphy as an art. According to Langer Sachari revealed the symbol "presentational" as a symbol derived from the intuition that can be degenerated into its elements but still within a unified whole [7]. Therefore, Abay D. Subarna's calligraphy painting needs to be researched and studied based on the knowledge of signs and meanings to reveal the philosophical and religious essence of artists as part of the development of Islamic art in Indonesia today.

II. METHOD

The method used in this research is descriptive method with qualitative approach. While using the semiotic analysis of Charles S. Pierce. Smith and Moriarty states that 'visual are more susceptible to varied interpretations because of their open systems of meaning; more so than are words whose meaning is more likely to be fixed through dictionaries and conventional, agreed on uses' [8]. Semiotic analysis is thus confided as an intense subjective experience calling for conceptual and emotive resources of the individuals and not as a distribution of verbal labels [9]. Sampling techniques in qualitative research based on the elucidation Arikunto there are two sampling techniques, which are the internal sampling and sampling time. Sampling internal concerning what is observed, the informant (interview with), and the observation time will do [10]. Sampling related to the length of time researchers will conduct interviews with the subject. Therefore, the researchers have a very important role in doing a live interview that the study can be considered as a case study.

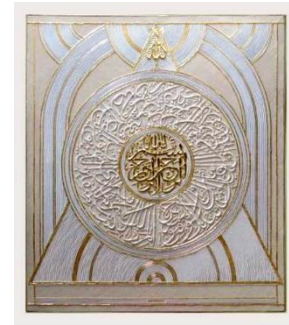
Descriptive research studies broad and comprehensive nature of the case, therefore, there are several locations in this study because the object under study at the same time the required primary data located in several places, the University Computer Indonesia (UNIKOM) and Abay D. Subarna painting exhibition on Halal bi halal ITB and Exhibition KAA to 64 years. The object of the research is the Calligraphy painting of Abay D. Subarna in the *Syahdu Ramadan* exhibitions in 2018.

The study population includes the total number in the object to be researched. The population in this study includes the overall amount of calligraphy paintings of Abay D. Subarna in the exhibition *Syahdu Ramadan* in 2018, its amount of 21 work. In the sampling unit, the elements are taken as samples to be analyzed based on the sampling frame. The sampling frame is good according to Triyono includes five requirements, namely 'covering all elements of the sample, there is no element samples are counted twice, up to date, clearly demarcated, and can be tracked in the field' [11]. Based on that and the degree of uniformity, the sampling unit in this study is based on the similarity title because of the repetition, although with a different shape. However, to find out how the analysis is carried out on the work to obtain the desired objectives, it will

present an example of the analysis in one work with the discussion.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Meaning analysis on calligraphy painting titled *Al-Baqarah* verse 1-5:



(Source: Personal documentation)

Fig. 1. Calligraphy painting: *Al-Baqarah* verse 1-5.

A. The First Meaning Based on Representamen Perspective

The paintings when viewed through a semiosis process will have broader meaning because in it some signs may be deliberately raised by the artist. Caivano states that 'when an observer sees a texture, it produces equivalent signs or interpretants in his mind (signs of other characteristics — e.g., tactile concepts such as rough, smooth, etc.)' [12]. According to the principles of the semiotics of Charles S. Pierce, there are three components of the sign, namely *representamen*, objects and interpretation which have a nature of the relationship indefinitely. When viewed from the standpoint of trichotomy *representamen* at first, then it can be identified that are intended qualisign in this work is a work of calligraphy painting taken from the Al-Quran Surah *Al-Baqarah* verse 1 to 5. The painting is composed of vertical lines and horizontal symmetric has shades of white and gold and rich in geometric shapes such as circles and triangles. Visually, this painting featuring verses made with a circular style. The middle part is to put sentences in Arabic "*Bismillahirrahmanirohim*" as the point of the view. *Bismillairrahmanirohim* means "In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, the Most Merciful" is the opening sentence or prayer that it is used by every Muslim when they would do worship rituals or nonritual. When it viewed from the techniques of manufacture and selection of media in the work, the artist chose ink Prada (gold) on the sentence and some certain lines. Gold on the first level of representation only be interpreted as an object that is precious and it has value. Besides, based on empirical experience, the geometry of the lines shown is a representation of another form, one of which is a form of the *mihrab*. This form is very close to the religious activities of the Islamic religion, therefore the most likely form of deliberately raised as one of the relation between the two, namely calligraphy as a product that is closely related to the word of God and *mihrab* as a product of Islamic culture. Overall, the atmosphere was arrested on first impression calligraphy painting is admiration, luxury, and a strong religious atmosphere. The atmosphere was caught not only because of the significance of calligraphy or geometric shapes,

but also the selection of natural colors that dominate. luxury and strong religious atmosphere. The atmosphere was caught not only because of the significance of calligraphy or geometric shapes, but also the selection of natural colors that dominate. luxury and strong religious atmosphere. The atmosphere was caught not only because of the significance of calligraphy or geometric shapes, but also the selection of natural colors that dominate.

Sinsign which organized over one or several qualisigns in this work is realized through an expression of its experienced by the appreciators when he captured the mood or impression in the painting. The capture impression is the impression that occurs as a result of empirical experience. Therefore, the impression or interpretation creates the meaning that it has a very large potential difference for each appreciator who saw and enjoyed the work. But, if we look at the work is based on conventions, rules, norms and social structures in society, in general, it can be concluded that the work is the work of Islamic calligraphy that has its magnificence and its position. An arch that covers calligraphy by social convention of Muslims associated with the *mihrab*, which is an object that is usually used for priests to deliver sermons in the mosque and pray in congregation. If we continue at the next level of representation in the process of semiosis, gold is a symbol of luxury, wealth, glory and splendor.

B. The Second Meaning Based on Representamen Perspective with its Object (Overrides Object with Something Else)

1) *The icons*: Painting calligraphy *Al-Baqarah* verses 1-5 if we pull its basic form then we will get the three forms is a sign that is circles, triangles, and arches resembling a mihrab. According to Pierce explains that 'a sign that replaces (stands for) something solely because it looks like its, as a sign that took part in the code object or as a sign that quality is reflected object, and generate analog sensations in the mind because of the resemblance' [13]. When analyzed by concepts, norms, knowledge, and science conventions, the shape is a sign that each represents something else.

a) *Triangle*: The triangular shapes appear in the works is icons because it has resemblance circuitry that represents something, that the mountains in the puppet taken from the original shape of the mountain. According to Subarna in an interview said that the form is deliberately displayed as a phrase or expression of man's relationship to the Creator. Triangle is a form that represents the mountains in the puppet. Wright states that 'the mountain is a symbol that has existed long before Islam came, even before the Hindu Buddha [14]. The mountain is a symbol of cosmic relationship in Hindu mythology, as well as a source of inspiration where temples allegorized. 'Mountains do not have a special significance in Islam that is related to the meaning of Hindu mythology. Quran revealed that mountains as pegs or pillars to carry the earth. Al-Quran in surah An-Naba verses 6-7 states that 'Have We not made the earth a resting place and the mountains as stakes?'. In social conventions in the Muslim community, the mountain is only construed following the verse of the Qur'an.

Therefore, the presence of a triangle as a symbol of the mountain is something new in Islamic culture as a result of mixing a symbol of interfaith. Therefore, the meaning of the mountain and then adjusted to the Islamic viewpoint, namely spiritual transcendence, meaning that the relationship between creature and creator are visualized with horizontal and vertical lines. Benent explains that 'the mountain is perceived as a mysterious reality, which is often mythologized as the gods and ancestors, as well as the border between the human world and the people who have died' [15]. Calligraphy Allah placed the right top of the mountain, then if it is pulled correlation means that this is something elevated. Based on Hindu thought, Mountain represents the concept of human existence through three stages, namely Yamaloka, Svarloka, and Bramaloka. Three stages of the world this is a level called the Three Realms. Yamaloka refers it to the world or human nature that is dead, Svarloka is a natural paradise which is the area between the sun and Dhruwa and Brahmaloaka is the world of truth where the reign of Brahma as divine, the highest reality divine nature.

The concept of Hindu thoughts affect how artists interpret their inner experiences. Hindu symbol on the triangle representing the mound is not only borrowing its symbolic form, but also the philosophical meaning behind it. If the concept of the ultimate truth of Hinduism obtained when the world reaches the third level (Brahmaloka), then the concept of truth in Islam is the source of God's truth and written in the Quran. Therefore, consciously the artists put the word 'Allah' in the highest peak to convey philosophical messages to be conveyed that God is the center of truth and the truth guide is in the Qur'an. This is following the interpretation of verses *Al-Baqarah* 1-5 which explains the book of the Qur'an as a guide from God and whoever believes it will get salvation in the world and the hereafter.

b) *The circle*: The circles on the work above was found as a jar that surrounds calligraphy '*Bismillahirrahmanirohim*' and *Al-Baqarah* verses 1 - 5. The shape of the circle is the forms that are easily found in the universe, such as the moon, sun, earth, fruits, and others. The circle has a center nature and it has no end, for example, circular shape in the universe is the sun. The sun is the center of the solar energy system so that the planets revolve around it. Earth is the center of life, therefore the properties of the Earth surround the sun as an energy source. The rotation forming a circular pattern. Therefore, forms a circle in Islamic art is often found as a reflection of the universe. The circles in this work are iconic, which has a resemblance to the object to which it refers to the object that does not necessarily have in common with the object intended by artists. Therefore, it appears the potential for a variety of interpretations, but researchers will take the object of interpretation most commonly known as truth by science that forms the moon, earth, and sun. All three have the same shape and have the same knowledge and perception in the community. Placement calligraphy on this work indirectly has similarities with the concepts and laws of nature (sunatullah) that happens. One circle placed at the center (center) is the phrase "*Bismillahirrahmanirohim*" and surrounded by the *Al-Baqarah* verse 1-5 follows the circular

pattern. Visually, this circular pattern centered in the middle and it has no beginning and no end. The word of Allah SWT who is placed at the top describes that Allah is the controller of the universe because everything is centered on Him.

The phrase "*Bismillahirrahmanirohim* (In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful)" that is placed in the middle of a sentence indicates that it has its position. When it observed from the meaning of the sentence, the name Ar-Rahman and Ar-Rahim (the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful) for Muslims is a great name. Both of the names is the trait of Allah in the name of His Gracious and His Merciful makes man, the earth, and the universe in order and move according to His will. Two names of Allah are the trait in which God always pour His mercy to the universe so preserve and harmonious life.

c) *The arch*: The form is an icon for representing the shape of the mihrab in the mosque. Mihrab is a special place for priests in carrying out the congregational prayers. Mihrab shape largely have the uniformity in the various corners of the world, namely the arch at the top. This form is to be part of the social conventions and is not directly attached to the body of the Muslims as a tradition in the construction of the mosque. Syamsiyah explains that 'Mihrab in Islamic Sharia in Arabic grammar means a closed, secret places, and meaningful include: room, a mosque with the total, the home front, where the most noble, the seat of the most front, where the king, the ruler and the people are great to sit down, all the high places, buildings and lofty palace, residence, which functions as a place of worship (not only prayer) [16].

'According to the function, the *mihrab* is intended for a priest. Priest is a nickname for a leader in the Islamic religion. Hence this *mihrab* interpretation should be regarded as something special and high as correlated against a leader who have confidence, social level, and a high position in society. The presence of the *mihrab* in the works of Abay D. Subarna not only shown for the sanctuary has become a tradition of Muslims or characteristic in Islamic art, but also there is another meaning behind it, namely monotheism message to be conveyed through the philosophy *mihrab*.

The correlation between the shape of triangles that represent mountains and the arch (*mihrab*) which covers the entire paragraph is a form of expression of visual when interpreted as part of a unified message of monotheism, i.e. how raise Allah as the only one worthy of worship and exalt the word of the divine in the form of calligraphy.

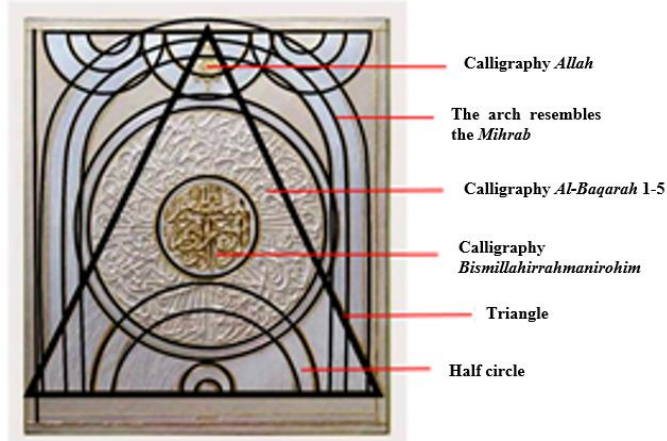
2) *The index*: The index is a casualty, therefore, to detect the index on the work of D. Subarna Abay required accuracy for the painting tends to decorative and abstract. Calligraphy is an index of identity of Muslim while painting calligraphy is an index of the artists Muslim or Islamic art. The presence of an index based on the inherent trait of the object is interpreted according to the common knowledge and practices that occur in society. Therefore, the object is identified as an index can also be a symbol and icon. Similarly, the presence of gold ink on paper is an index of the high value of the painting and a

symbol of glory. Calligraphy Allah who is at the top is an index and a symbol of monotheism.

3) *The symbol*: The signs on Abay D. Subarna's work entitled *Al-Baqarah* verses 1-5 is a symbolic work. Mihrab said symbol because it represents Islamic identity. Sartini explains that the 'hierarchy of semiotic systems or system of signs covering element (1) social culture, both in the context of social and situational, (2) human beings as subjects who create, (3) symbol as a symbolic world that accompanies the process and realize the culture, (4) the world pragmatics or use, (5) the meaning of the region' [17] Therefore, culture or tradition that is inherent in a society, group, or class to create a mark that reflects their identity. Islamic identity is seen in the works of Abay D. Subarna, as it emerged from the experience as a Muslim causing Islamic works. If examined deeper, Islamic identity is emerging as something intact, from the concept, the perspective of artists, to visual works produced. Calligraphy paintings contained in a paragraph taken from the Qur'an. Directly, the Qur'an ran is not only a symbol for Islamic identity but also the spirit and soul of a Muslim by the Qur'an is a guide of life for every Muslim. Its the same thing as Al-Kitab which is a symbol of Christians.

In addition to the *mihrab* and calligraphy, another symbol appears instead of the visual form but of use and choice of media in the work. This calligraphy painting is made not only with acrylic paint in general but also using gold ink (*prada*). The symbolic gold is an object to represent a certain identity and social levels in society. Gold is a precious and special thing because it will never rust and have a limited amount in the world. In content and the inherent properties of gold to deliver gold into something of high value in society. The entire world agrees that gold is a precious thing. Therefore, there is a correlation between gold and its use in calligraphy. Calligraphy, *mihrab*, and the mountains that emerge form is an expression of high standing, admiration, privilege, and respect. Gold is a symbol of luxury and splendor. Here also is metaphorical gold, i.e. gold as interpreted not have the same shape as the symbol of the triumph. Basically, glory is the adjective abstract so as to represent the required symbol. By convention, the gold is the exclusive object because it is used for something that is finite, precious and has a high value. For example, it is used for a wedding dowry, jewelry, even deposits or savings. Gold properties of high value and exclusive of this led to speculation that the use of gold in paintings have similarities in terms of nature, namely how artists create the impression of an exclusive, luxurious, precious, valuable, even noble to describe the phrase "*Bismillahirrahmanirohim*" "God" and in certain lines. The layout of the placement of calligraphy displayed by computation. It is seen from calligraphy "God" is placed on the tip of the triangle at the top, while verses 1-5 deliberately made to circulate around the word "*bismillahirrahmanirohim*". Its literal meaning, the phrase "*bismillahirrahmanirohim*" a phrase that has always placed when starting something that is devotion to God. Specifically, again, this phrase became common use for each initial reading of the Koran. In fact, every *Mushaf* Al-Quran at the beginning of almost every letter begins with this sentence. while verses 1-5 deliberately made to circulate around the word

"*bismillahirrahmanirohim*". Its literal meaning, the phrase "*bismillahirrahmanirohim*" a phrase that has always placed when starting something that is devotion to God. Specifically, again, this phrase became common use for each initial reading of the Koran. In fact, every *Mushaf* Al-Quran at the beginning of almost every letter begins with this sentence. while verses 1-5 deliberately made to circulate around the word "*bismillahirrahmanirohim*". Its literal meaning, the phrase "*bismillahirrahmanirohim*" a phrase that has always placed when starting something that is devotion to God. Specifically, again, this phrase became common use for each initial reading of the Qur'an. In fact, every Al-Quran at the beginning of almost every surah begins with this sentence.



(Source: Personal documentation)

Fig. 2. Signs found on the calligraphy painting: *Al-Baqarah* verse 1-5.

IV. CONCLUSION

The calligraphy paintings of Abay D. Subarna in the exhibition *Syahdu Ramadan* in 2018 is a work of art that results from the manifestation of the experience, knowledge, ideas, notions, intuition, and thinking thus forming a work that would benefit not only aesthetic, but also consider the contents, concepts, and the message to be conveyed through the verses of the Qur'an in the form of painting. The work was influenced by social factors and cultural artists in the community includes experience as an artist in the field of Islamic art, academic experience, cultural Sunda, as well as the experience and culture as a Muslim to be factors behind the formation of the thoughts that produce concept in the works. Therefore, visual signs displayed in the works are the artists' expressions and expressions of themselves, the environment and their experiences.

Calligraphy painting using geometric patterns take elements of architecture that has become the identity of Muslims. Architectural elements used are elements of the mosque.

Selected verses in the painting are indirectly correlated to the visual signs that these visual signs other than as a medium of expressing the expression of monotheism but also the medium for containing the essence of the verses in the calligraphy painting. This visual expression in synergy with calligraphy content of each work as a unit that has a religious significance, namely the spirit of monotheism.

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