

Social Criticism in Mukhlis Lugis' Surrealism on His Work on Siri Culture

Arif Dwi Kurnia Aji*·Kasiyan

Faculty of Arts and Language, Yogyakarta State University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

*Corresponding author. Email: arif0060pasca.2019@student.uny.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study aims to (1) describe the background that underlies Mukhlis Lugis' work in choosing surrealism as a visual context (2) Describe the aesthetic value and examine the semiotic aspects of Mukhlis Lugis' work (3) Describe the meaning of Siri cultural value in the context of modern phenomena. The qualitative descriptive research method aims to reveal various phenomena captured and encountered in the field by expressing the meaning of objects with verbal expressions. This research was conducted by collecting data in its natural state, then the data obtained were described to make its meaning clearer. The data collection technique used was a literature study using references to related articles and documentation. Data analysis techniques include data collection, data reduction, data presentation and drawing conclusions. The conclusions of this study include (1) The background of the study that is intended to describe the biography of Mukhlis Lugis in choosing surrealism as a visualization of Siri culture, which is a reference for the Bugis community and describes as well as introducing the whole Siri culture from an artistic perspective. (2) Aesthetic value discusses visual aspects such as color as a visual characteristic enhancer, while in the semiotic study aspect, it discusses signs and the relationship between the philosophical meaning of works and social reality. Social criticism causes ideas to exist, strengthens these cultural characteristics, and presents ideas on local wisdom concepts. (3) underlining Siri culture's role in social reality by promoting the the use of visuals and surrealism as a way to interpret modern phenomena.

Keywords: Social Criticism, Surrealism, Siri.

1. INTRODUCTION

Humans who are intelligent and have ideas tend to assess existing phenomena or objects, which is shown by differences in the way of looking at aesthetics. Social criticism becomes a representation of human views on social phenomena, which also affect their perspective. Aesthetics is always related to art, especially graphic arts, which have their own techniques. Aesthetics is also related to the thought processes that arise in seeing whether a work of art is attractive or not. One of the artists known is Mukhlis Lugis, a surrealist artist who always conveys his ideas about social phenomena that develop in the community by using graphic techniques in his work. The flow of surrealism that is taken also has its own influence in each of his works. This is because by using surrealism, objects can be developed according to the imagination without considering real forms' limitations.

The work that he made tells more about the restraint and oppression that occurs in everyday life. Visually, the objects presented use various forms of the human body, although many animals can strengthen their characters. The creation of works uses

woodcut graphic techniques that require high accuracy and patience to realize its ideas. Although, in general, the work is dominated by social criticism, on the other hand, his work also expresses humane feelings. Mukhlis Lugis' strong character in the strokes within the woodcut work gives its own character in art, especially woodcut works, which always give new forms to every visualized work.

By using deformation, this technique gives its own color in the graphic art, especially in the art of printing. The black color that dominates each of his works is the hallmark of Mukhlis Lugis in expressing the darkness felt by the oppressed. Sometimes brown is also used as a character reinforcement in his artwork variations. His work seems to have made him an inspiration for many people, especially those who like graphic arts.

In developing his work, this artist presents many concepts of social phenomena that occur in everyday life. Critical thinking is also a part of his various works so that the aesthetics of his works are not only limited to the visual forms but also have a purpose and meaning so that his works emphasize many aspects of arts and social criticism.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Hamid, et. al. [1], the Siri culture means shame and becomes a philosophical reference for the Bugis - Makassar community, which must be used as a guide in society, especially in the Maros region, which considers Siri as a form of morality. Modernism culture provides changes in all aspects of life, especially in social structures. This is of particular concern to the community because it is related to the phenomena they face. Various conceptions related to the viewpoint of phenomena as social realities also arise. According to the Indonesian dictionary, criticism is an assumption about, description of, and consideration for a piece of work or opinion, whether it is good or not [2]. Criticism is always in the context of a different understanding about things that are considered insufficient and even inconsistent with the reality and should happen. There are many ways that humans or artists criticize the work as the main medium. One of them is through a work of graphic art. As stated by Dharsono [3], graphic art is an art that focuses on printing techniques to be able to reproduce or multiply both images and writing in certain ways and uses basic principles about the printing process such as engraved printing, flat print, and filter print. Surrealism can be manifested using the woodcut technique, which is a form of relief printing, which means that the printing plate is processed in such a way based on the surface of the relief which consists of higher and lower parts.

Mukhlis Lugi is a graphic artist who uses the woodcut technique as his characteristic. Mukhlis Lugi is an artist who was born in Ulo, South Sulawesi province 34 years ago and is a native of Bugis. The work displayed is in the form of social criticism related to modern phenomena by taking the shape of the body as a visual form, one of which is Siri.

The Siri culture in the surrealist work of Mukhlis Lugi has been recognized as a work of art that emphasizes cultural aspects and has proven to have led Mukhlis Lugi himself to become the third winner in the Indonesian Graphic Art Triennale V, which was held precisely at the Yogyakarta cultural show in 2015. At least several works were on display entitled seducing justice, looking for targets, and losing responsibility. Each of the works tells about social problems in society, such as the loss of shame as a human being with eastern culture, the perceived lack of law, and searching for deep truth.

In semiotics, Mukhlis Lugi's work emphasizes more on impressions and messages by using spectacular visuals. According to Saussure [4], semiotics is a study of the sign or marking of decisions' meaning. Something is highlighted between the relationship between phenomena and visual forms in the work so that the work is able to provide a different visual using surrealism so that deformations

in the visual aspect are better conveyed. The principle of emphasizing the visual aspects of Mukhlis Lugi's work emphasizes the harmony between the philosophical aspects of marking and aesthetics.

The aesthetics of Mukhlis Lugi's works of art can also be seen, such as selecting the color and shape aspects of his visual works, which look harmonious and give a deep impression. According to Shipley [5], the word 'aesthetics; comes from Greek, namely: aestheta, which is also derived from aisthe (things that the senses, sensory responses, can capture) related to the visual aspects of color, which mostly use dark colors. Philosophically, dark colors are perceived as bad. That means the work is used as a medium of criticism. Taking the shape of the body with an emphasis on woodcut techniques is very influential in developing one's mind. This is because there are many meanings contained therein, both in terms of visual and color.

Mukhlis Lugi's restlessness can be seen in his work on interpreting Siri culture, which is currently being eroded among the younger generation. This aroused his attention, especially in social phenomena. The younger generation certainly must uphold their dignity and also prioritize a sense of humanism. Since the colonial period, Siri culture seems to have been eroded by the interests of the colonial culture, so that we are accustomed to cultural acculturation. In general, according to Berry [6], acculturation is a process of cultural and psychological change that occurs as a result of contact between two or more members of each culture. The colonial government's existence certainly changed the local culture into a mixed culture that is still deeply rooted in indigenous life. Therefore, Mukhlis Lugi's visual work criticizes that Indonesia is not yet fully independent at the individual level and is still being colonized by foreign cultures that have entered and changed the social life of the people of the archipelago, especially the Bugis.

Modern culture in Mukhlis Lugi's works of art is characterized by hand holding a cellphone as one of the social phenomena in the modern era. In general, culture is a way of life that comes from human reason, which is then used as identity and property rights and is passed down from generation to generation in society. Meanwhile, in the modern sense, culture is a movement for renewal.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1. Method

Based on the discussion regarding social criticism in Mukhlis Lugi's Siri cultural surrealism, which examines the Siri culture, current phenomena can be correlated with visual surrealism. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method that emphasizes the aesthetic and semiotic aspects as references in the research description. The social reality aspect is an

additional form of data to seek truth in works of art as a contextual research data source. This research was conducted by linking several related source literature so that it has the right data accuracy.

3.2. Research Object

The research object is social criticism in Mukhlis Lugis's artwork through surrealism on his work on Siri culture.

3.3. Research Subjects

According to Arikunto [7] a research subject holds a significant position in research. The research subjects must be identified before the researcher is ready to collect data. In this study, the research subject is the philosophical values of Siri culture in Mukhlis Lugis's surrealist artwork.

3.4. Reserach Setting

This research was conducted in Makassar, Sulawesi. The focus of the research is Mukhlis Lugis's surrealist artwork depicting the Siri culture phenomena within Bugis community in the Maros region.

3.5. Data Collection Technique

In this research, data were collected through direct observations and references. This qualitative research thoroughly examined the existing social phenomena within the community by corroborating the data from a range of literature, in-depth interviews, and documentation.

3.6. Data Analysis

The descriptive qualitative data analysis was employed in this research. From the data collection, the data were used to form a hypothesis. Researchers searched for a repeated patterns from the data which were continuously collected within the research period. Following the data analysis, a hypothesis was presented and determined to be accepted or rejected.

3.7. Data Validity

Triangulation was used in this research. The data collected were sourced from varied sources and using different data collection techniques. Triangulation was used to ensure that the data were valid and consistent.

This study included instrument and source validity to ensure that the collected data can be compared by interviewing more than one source and using observation. This is done to obtain valid data. The researchers conducted interviews and observations and compared the results of both methods.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. The Profile of Mukhlis Lugis



Figure 1. Mukhlis Lugis

Mukhlis Lugis (depicted in Figure 1 above) is an artist who was born in Ulo, South Sulawesi province 34 years ago. His artistic talent began to be honed when he was in college by taking a concentration of painting at a state university in Makassar. His strong enthusiasm in pursuing the world of painting made him persistent in studying and occasionally look for his own character so that he constantly learned to look for shapes and patterns as characteristics of his work. This artist finally graduated from an undergraduate program and continued his education to a higher level, a master program at a different institution. At that stage, he started taking a different concentration, namely graphic arts. Although this field is different from Mukhlis Lugis' previous background, this does not make it difficult for him to adapt to the surrounding environment. He discovered his newest interest so he kept trying to use woodcut technique in making visual print works and started trying to participate in exhibitions outside his campus and received high appreciation. His silent character but pouring many spectacular ideas makes him regarded as one of the artists. Mukhlis Lugis has chosen surrealism to reinforce ideas and express emotions in his work using woodcut with black and white characters. Mukhlis Lugis' greatest success was when he became the third best winner in an international exhibition entitled 'the International Triennale of Indonesian Graphic Arts in 2015 which was held by Bentara Budaya as the organizer. The work on display can represent the ideas of millennials that are in accordance with the problems and cultural phenomena that are happening today. All the ideas that arise in everyday life as well as the anxiety of Mukhlis Lugis in responding to social phenomena and social change are expressed through his work.

Mukhlis Lugis is strongly influenced by Siri culture and Bugis background that makes him consistent and totally in his work. He raises social criticism in each of his works. His ability to direct a wood carving knife accompanied by clever ideas in

his art always attracts many art observers and at the same time fellow graphic artists always wait for the release of his work. The work on display always invites admiration and urges viewers to think about the meaning contained in his art. The viewers are invited to appreciate his art. Muhklis Lugis' work is inseparable from the idea of presenting skills and hard work. In his participation in the arts events, especially in the exhibitions, mukhlis lugis has been heavily involved both locally, nationally and internationally. Therefore, it is not surprising that Muhklis Lugis is widely known and has wide network. Another ability of Muhklis Lugis is painting, although his work is rarely exhibited. With the ability to paint, he is able to provide a new form in the development of his art using woodcut.

4.2 Surrealism in Mukhlis Lugis's Work

Muhklis Lugis embodies surrealism in his work which signs the emergence of a graphic artist whose work is relevant to the current development. Through his work he highlights Siri culture and his works which include visualisation of human body parts to express his ideas about Siri culture have strong meanings as those notions are expressed in his woodcut work. His imagination is presented visually and emphasized through his art by referring to the cultural phenomena that exist around him.

In one of his papers, Muhklis Lugis wrote:

'The perfection of humans in the eye of Bugis community in Makassar is seen through their sense of modesty and dignity.'

This writing can be interpreted through understanding that being a human who upholds modesty is part of the identity and character of the Indonesian nation, especially the Makassar Bugis community. For Mukhlis Lugis, Siri culture is not only a social concept and this concept must be applied in everyday life.



Figure 2. Mukhlis Lugis's Painting, 'Penoda Keadilan' (Injustice), 125 x 125 cm, woodcut, 2013

The painting shown in Figure 2 above conveys a legal concept in which a nationalist attitude is also presented. In the visual work, the object in it

looks contemplating by hugging its knees while holding the symbol that is interpreted as law. However, there is something interesting about this work that uses body shapes as an expression of Siri culture and existing social phenomena. In the work, a human's feet are chained to reveal that man can see the truth but he is influenced by factors in acting and tolerates the existing error. The shapes of the legs symbolize the imbalance that occurs and is left unchecked.

Using a sitting figure, the visual depicts that men can only contemplate if an error or mistake has occurred and becomes a long-term regret. This is to encourage humans to be aware of acting more wisely for the second chance that is given. The space that is present reveals that humans also need space, and it also represents the idea that a person can be in the spotlight of public attention when a life event happens to him/her.

The visual work which is influenced by Siri culture was made in 2013 by depicting a law in which humans cannot easily act freely and must obey legal ties that govern both on a regional and national scale. The work is made using black and white as a supporting color representation for the ideas expressed.

In his woodcut work produced in the same year, Muhklis Lugis seems to convey that humans always point to each other in all matters relating to social, legal, and existential aspects. This point of view is often found in everyday life, when humans face a difficult problem. Basically, it is difficult for humans to admit mistakes because humans are creatures who refuse to be blamed even though they have made mistakes. Therefore, Muhklis Lugis reflects on the phenomena that occur and humans always experience into a visual work with high aesthetic values. However, the work that depicts an object that is on the side of a beach shows that the mistakes of other people in places that are far away appear more obvious than the mistakes that humans do themselves. Humans tend to look for objects for all their actions.



Figure 3. Mukhlis Lugis's Painting, '*Mencari Target*', (Looking for a Target) Woodcut and hand painted, 110x150cm, 2013

The painting in Figure 3 above work is a little different from his previous work, where this one mostly uses yellow-brown as an affirmation that skin tones tend to be in the yellow and brown color spectrum. From the color aspect of the work, there is an intensity of color that depicts and influences the human view of aesthetics. Humans act as social creatures and are choosy by applying specific standard criteria according to the phenomena. This has been entrenched until this moment. The difference in color intensity shows the choices according to the standards taken. If a standard is considered correct, then there will be an indication that the standard will be used in the conflict or phenomenon at hand. Using pointers about a phenomenon in his work, he uses many signs displayed in his artwork. These signs play an important role in conveying social criticism. Mukhlis Lugis wants to convey that humans are always governed by one strong and powerful hand so that even though the person described has a greater number of legs, he will still look weak. This is due to different social positions, and this problem becomes a major problem from a social perspective. The current power and regulations influence this.



Figure 4. Mukhlis Lugis, '*Kehilangan Tanggung Jawab*', (Denying Responsibility) Woodcut 150x110cm, 2014

Humans are obliged to have a sense of responsibility, but the current social phenomenon has shown that many people seem to have lost the nature of their responsibility. The visual form used in Mukhlis Lugis' works related to Siri culture is represented by the shape of a pair of shoes (see Figure 4). These forms illustrate that humans tend to always give hollow promises and when they have a certain need at a later time, they will forget to hold the promise.

It can be observed that the siri culture is part of the efforts of the Bugis people in Sulawesi to continue to uphold their customs and traditions. In matters relating to humanity, self-defense is needed when there are gaps in the principles adopted and obstacles to implementing social order and performing the roles of the individuals.

4.3. Siri Culture in the Modern Era

In the past, Siri culture became the benchmark for Bugis society in terms of ethics and all matters relating to decency. Standard values influence the development of the mindset of the Bugis people to become a cultured society. In the past, there was a custom called Siri, which was better known as modesty in the Bugis community. These values are manifested and intended for oneself and customs with variations in other regions. However, these values are eroded by foreign culture's influence, which causes modesty to decline. This problem can be seen in social ethics change in a society marked by less modest clothes worn by some women. This phenomenon is against the cultural values of Siri. The influence of technology in social life also impacts the ease of establishing relationships between women and men and it seems as if there are no distances and boundaries.

5. CONCLUSION

The siri culture is a major parameter in visual development as well as the affirmation of the identity of the work and the characteristics of Lugis Mukhlis who indeed came from a Buginese ethnic environment. The many social phenomena today such as political manifestations, slander, and loss of justice indicate that the erosion of siri culture in the national cultural system is slow.

Thus, one of the actions that can be done in humane manner is to carry out a social criticism activity, namely through the media of graphic arts with surrealist chisel techniques in Lugis Mukhlis. In this context, it is hoped that it can target art connoisseurs and the general public to be influenced and to develop full awareness in re-applying the siri culture to everyday life. Lugis Mukhlis social criticism is an effort to act democratically as an artistic and social actor. Surrealism take objects that are commonly used, such as shoes, cellphones, and a combination of human bodies which has semiotic meaning.

Art and social actors really uphold the aspects of siri culture, as they should be, with the intention of being maintained and properly applied so that in the future, through artworks we can express and respond to something that is wrong as a form of aesthetic concern.

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