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Art and Social Media:
Art Transformation in the Viral Era

Gozin Najah Rusyada[1,*] Sutiyono[2]

[1] *Graduate School of Arts Education, Yogyakarta State University, Yogyakarta 55281, Indonesia*
[2] *Faculty of Languages and Arts, Yogyakarta State University, Yogyakarta 55281, Indonesia*
[*]*Corresponding author. Email:* gozinnajah@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Social media is one of the products of the development of technology which initially serves as a platform for human interaction. At present, the function of social media is not limited to being the platform for interaction, as it has affected all aspects of human lives, including activities in the arts. This study aims to examine further the effects of social media on the art world. This study used the qualitative research method with a phenomenology approach. Each social phenomenon in the field was described in detail and analyzed using the existing theory. The research data were descriptions on the development of the art world in the era of technology and social media. The findings reveal that change in the arts in the era of technology and social media lies in the transformation of the medium of art, from conventional to modern, in addition to the emergence of new technology-integrated business sectors, as well as the viral social media phenomenon which allows the creating process to expand beyond the artists' ideology and lean toward a more commercial approach and follow the interest of the social media market.

Keywords: Art, Social Media, Viral

1. INTRODUCTION

Transformation or change always accompanies every side of life, including in the arts. Transformation is absolute for every generation and serves as a reflection of the renewal of science and the human intellect. Transformation is a part of the development of life; it occurs among the society in a continuous manner and becomes the mirror of the basic nature of human, which constantly evolves and is never fully satisfied by anything [1]. Nevertheless, transformation or change is not necessarily a sole result of human desire.

The development of Indonesian art is divided into five periods, namely: (1) The Prehistoric Period, 2) The Hindu Period, 3) The Buddhist Period, 4) The Islamic Period, and 5) The Modern Period [2]. The prehistoric period of art emerges as a reflection of the human needs to solve life's problems, the form of art created in this era is limited in its function as an object to meet the basic needs. Along with increasingly complex human needs, the world of art then develops towards the modern era.

The modern age is marked by the inevitable technological advances in life. One term that is commonly heard today is the Industrial Revolution 4.0. The most fundamental thing that happens in the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era is digitization in every line of human work and the gradual transition to leaving the conventional ways [3]. The industrial revolution 4.0 brings new ways in the industrial world such as the emergence of new business sectors, one of which is the emergence of new jobs that are integrated with social media. Humans as the main actors in the marketing world are beginning to understand the importance of using social media as part of a strategy to increase their level of success. Social media in this case specifically refers to websites or applications that are defined as community services for consumers or users, where users can create public files, connect with peers, and share personal experiences and ideas in a digital community [4].

The development of social media has become increasingly massive across all sectors. As a new media, social media creates a space in which the users can interact with each other online [5]. The need for technology has entered all aspects of human life,

including activities in the arts today. The most fundamental aspect that can be seen is the shift in the conventional visual or fine arts from using paper or canvas toward digital-based medium. Technology-integrated art (with computer, camera, smartphone, or video recorder) allows art to continuously evolves. With the support of technology, art is no longer an elite thing that is only exclusive to a number of people that are established as artists. Every person who masters technology has the same opportunity to create art in different forms of medium. Each person also has the same opportunity to enjoy works of art that are available in various social media platforms. The function of galleries has been replaced by the emergence of social media platforms which offer columns or feed for artists to display their works for the public. Everyone with an access to social media can easily be exposed to various works of art by different artists. The way appreciation is conveyed has also become easier—as easy as tapping the screen to give "like" to the posted art.

Based on the background of the problem, this study focuses on the current development in the world of art, including how the transformation of fine arts in the age of a massive technological development, as well as the fine arts development in the age of social media, whether the works or the artists, and finally, how the viral social media phenomenon also affects the world of art.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study used the qualitative research method with a phenomenology approach. The social phenomenon observed in the field was explained and analyzed with the existing theory. The research data was in the form of descriptions on the development in the world of art in the age of technology and social media. The research subjects were artists who actively utilized social media selected through the purposive sampling technique. The data analysis technique used was the Miles and Huberman's model involving data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions [6].

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Art Transformation in the Digital Age

Technology brings change in art. In regard to the development of art in the modern age, various new forms of art, such as installations, videography, web art, digital art, and other technology-based art forms [7].

The development of technology also indirectly gives birth to new trends in the world of visual art; one of which is the gradual depart from conventional ways in making art toward the all-digital modern fashion. Painters who used to use a canvas and paint now slowly shift to digital painting application on smartphones or

other technological devices although certainly there are still many artists who maintain the old ways. However, it must be noted that the productivity of modern media may be higher than conventional media.

Technological development also occurs in the art appreciation media. In the past, when artists want to exhibit their works, they have to organize an exhibition with its extensive process. Presently, social media is available and offers a new way to deliver the works to the public instantly, only by posting photos of their works to the social media of their choice, and anyone from across the world will have access to the works.

3.2 Social Media as the Latest Trend in the Arts

Two of the most attractive platforms as the media for art appreciation are Instagram and YouTube. Instagram becomes the solution to share works of art. This is a current phenomenon in which the presentation room or space for art pieces is no longer limited to art galleries. The strict segmentation has become much more flexible. The smartphone era provides the convenience of video recording feature and social media applications. This is the era where the audience may be present and experiencing in the same moment regardless of where they live. This is made possible by the real-time posting feature of the social media. Artists have become aware that social media is now their best option to 'sell' their art pieces to the public. They have made their respective social media account as a platform to exhibit their works to the public, especially the social media users.
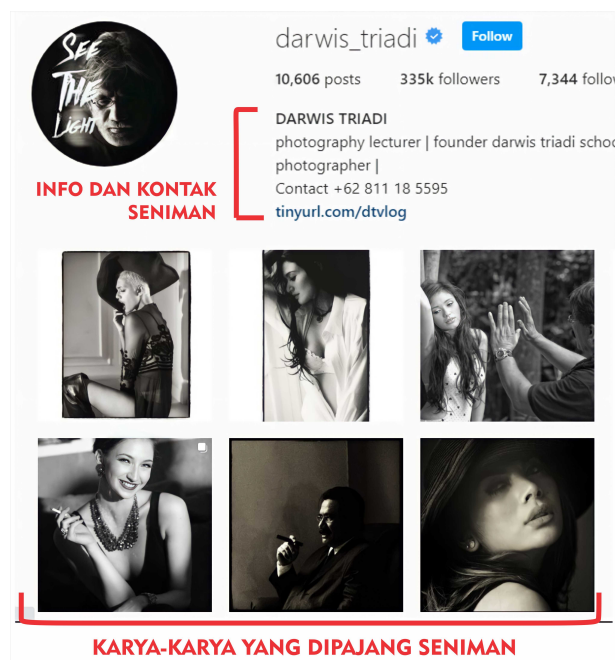

Figure 1 The Social Media Account of a Photographer [8]

In figure 1, Darwis Triadi, one of the well-known photographers in Indonesia, posts his works on Instagram. He also puts his contact for the public in case people who see his works are interested in working with him. To attract the interest of social media users, he also assembles his works strategically, whether in composing the colors which tend to be dark or black and white, or mostly posting photos of models. The strategy of carefully assembling the photographs on Instagram results in a unique trend of designing the Instagram feed, which can be done by sorting the Instagram posts based on themes, colors, or objects. Instagram users may select and create the display of their feed as attractive as possible as if it has become a requirement in the current age of social media.

The objective of making art or content in the age of social media has shifted, as well. Art is no longer merely an explosive expression of an artist or a commodity that is ready to trade, as there is also a sense of retaining existence to gain recognition from social media. The more viral and popular the work, the better known the artist will be. These two aspects go hand in hand and are inseparable in the age of social media. Some artists even make art today not to sell the physical form, but to offer the content within the art.

Such phenomenon widely takes place in the Youtube platforms. There have been many videography artists make films not for sale (to the cinema), but to be uploaded on Youtube for free. They offer a range of contents or stories, and not limited to films. The popularity rate of a Youtube video is based on the number of viewers. The more viewers, the more popular a video is. Youtube is a part of technological advancement and has a place in the development of art in the world. It is a means for showcasing or promoting many forms of artistic works in the video format, which can be enjoyed by all users [9]. Youtube does not merely play a role as a medium for the user's creativity, as it also offers the users the opportunity to earn money. Youtube users may earn a profit based on the number of their "viewers" and "subscribers". The income earned is directly proportional with the number of viewers and subscribers. The more viewers, the higher the income earned.

3.3. The Viral Social Media Phenomenon

Viral can be defined as the massive spread of information in the internet [10]. Similar to a virus, the spread of information is incredibly rapid and has the ability to make a copy of itself or transform other objects into copies. In other words, viral refers to the way information (an image, photo, or video) is massively spread from one social media user to another. The spread of information is directly proportional to how much it is discussed by the public, especially the

social media users. The bigger the spread, the more it is discussed and known by the public.

The notion of virality changes the art world as artists compete to create works which attract the public or can become viral by following the trend development of the Instagram users' interest, instead of based on ideology or their personal desire. This is what prompts the term "instagrammable", referring to content which is suitable to be posted on the social media platform. The term first becomes popular among the young generation, which then spreads in the internet, and has now become commonly used.

The latest viral video is a music video from music group Weird Genius featuring singer Sara Fajira entitled "Lathi" on Youtube. The song combines modern and traditional aspects in the musical, lyrical and visualization aspects. The number of viewers had reached 87 million. Social media users, both artists and non-artists, are competing to make art videos which represent the song "Lathi" and post the video on their respective social media account with a hashtag #LathiChallenge, as shown in Figure 2.
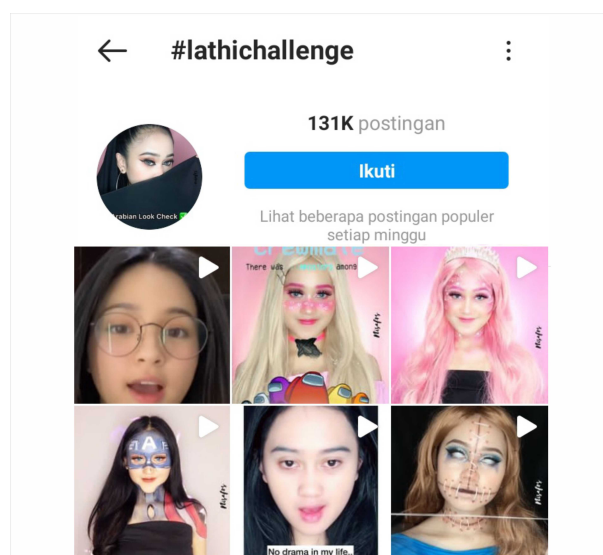

Figure 2 #LathiChallenge in Social media [11]

When this paper was written, the posts tagged #lathichallenge on Instagram had reached 131,000 posts. This shows that the song and hashtag has become incredibly viral and attracted many social media users. These posts range from photographs, lip-sync video, and make-up tutorial with transitions which resemble the original video. A digital painting artist even made an innovation by creating an art video by editing the Western outfit digital work into a traditional Indonesian outfit. The progress of his work was recorded and posted with a unique transition effect and the song Lathi in the background.

This shows that seemingly small things may be transformed into a unique, out of the box, and

innovative medium of art in the era of technology and social media. The viral level of a content can serve as a point of attraction for artists or other non-artists to create art. Ultimately, viral social media trends can give birth to modern artists who work with technology.

4. CONCLUSION

The development of social media creates changes in the world of art. Artists are competing to create interesting or viral works of art following the development of social media trends and users' interests. As such, the reason for creating art during the social media period has also changed. Art is no longer merely a form of expression of the artist and/or a commodity that are ready for the market. It has now become a platform for signifying the existence of artists to gain worldwide recognition through social media. The more viral and popular the artwork they make, the more well known the creators are. These two things go hand in hand and are two inseparable things in the era of social media.

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