

The Application of Photography as an Art Medium in The Contemporary Era *BACAA 2019 Finalists' Works Analysis*

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ABSTRACT

Photography as an art medium in Indonesia started with the establishments of Perhimpunan Amatir Foto (PAF) and Forum Fotografi Bandung (FFB) which marked its rapid growth in Bandung. This study focuses on Terry Barrett's Selectivity, Instantaneity, and Credibility principle, particularly its application in the artworks of the Bandung Contemporary Art Awards #6 2019 finalists. Selectivity involves selecting a point of view, subject matter, visual quality, colors, paper, and the prints themselves. Instantaneity is one of the qualities that differentiates photography and other mediums, where photography is not faced with an empty canvas and doesn't require a long period of time to render an image. Credibility is how the object that is present within the photography and represents what was faced by the photographer and the lens. Bandung Contemporary Art Awards #6 2019 becomes the main focus because of its vision to accommodate artworks that are far from the traditional conventions, and this study is written to find out how the Selectivity, Instantaneity, and Credibility principle underlies the application of photography in art today. The artworks this study analyzes include "Luruh" by Susilo Nofriadi in cameraless photography "Space and Power" by Sandi Jaya Saputra in photojournalism, and "Don't Call Me Hero: Soejono" by Vincent Rumahloine in found photography. The Atlantis Press Proceedings article template has many predefined paragraph styles for you to use/apply as you write your paper. To format your abstract, use the Microsoft Word template style: [Abstract]. Each paper must include an abstract. Begin the abstract with the title "Abstract" in bold font, followed by a paragraph with normal 10-point font. Do not cite references in the abstract. Please do not place or cite tables and figures in the abstract either.

Keywords: *Photography, contemporary, Indonesia, Bandung, Selectivity, Instantaneity, and Credibility.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Realistic two-dimensional representations were originally produced from paintings and drawings before the advent of photography in 1839 by Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre and William Henry Fox Talbot, producing a more economical and instant substitute for portrait paintings [1]. What is written or embodied in a visual statement such as paintings is merely an interpretation, photography on the other hand is seen as a piece or miniature of reality rather than a statement. Whatever the impediment, be it amateurism or the pretensions of the individual doing it, photography is evidence whose accuracy exceeds

any other mimetic object [2] until artists started to display their personal expressions and made it an art form [3]. O.G. Rejlander with "The Two Ways of Life" (1857) and "Fading Away" (1858) by Henry Peach Robinson demonstrated the aesthetic possibilities of photography which were generally still rejected at the time [4]. Photography is currently defined as the practice of creating images by recording light either electronically with an image sensor or chemically with light sensitive paper [5]. Photography in the contemporary era is never static and always adapts to changes in values, social life, philosophy, living standards, technology, politics, and geopolitical realities. The relationship between art and

reality which has been getting closer since the postmodern era has turned photography into a combination of objects and ideas, references and symbols, and sight and perception. [6]. This gave birth to many techniques such as conceptual, microphotography, scientific, lensless, and collage [7].

Photography being considered as an art medium in Indonesia started from the oldest photography club, Perhimpunan Amatir Foto (PAF) which focused on technical skills and Forum Fotografi Bandung (FFB) which fitted photography in artists' personal narratives. The knowledge brought by A.D. Pirous after his education at the Rochester Institute of Technology formed a trend towards the use of photography in Indonesia at that time, precisely at the Bandung Institute of Technology. The practice of photography in the 1970s and 1980s had two approaches. Using the medium to record personal memories and using the medium to create art experimentations, such as collages and solarization. Artists who played a role in the development of photography in Bandung include Deden Hendan Durahman, Henrycus Napitsunargo, and Sari Asih with their works in the exhibition "A Certain Grace: Photography From Bandung" in Singapore, 2012.

This led to works like "Luruh" by Susilo Nofriadi, "Space and Power" by Sandi Jaya Saputra, and "Don't Call Me Hero: Soegeng Sujono" by Vincent Rumahloine in Bandung Contemporary Art Award (BaCAA) in 2019 that have left the old characteristics of photography by deconstructing it as a medium. BaCAA is an art competition organized by ArtSociates which since 2009 has aimed to bring young artists to represent the development of art in Bandung from installations, photographs, and paintings. This research was conducted to explore the differences in the structure of the artworks studied and to determine the effect of their visual elements on the selectivity, instantaneity, and credibility of photography using Feldman's method of art criticism. There is a tendency towards the use of photographic medium in Bandung which broadens the definition of the three principles and expands the possibilities of their use. These three things were chosen based on the three foundations used by Terry Barrett in his book "Interpreting Art".

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Photography as a Medium by Terry Barrett

In his book "Interpreting Art: Reflecting, Wondering, and Responding", art critic Terry Barrett is confronted with the use of the medium of photography in various works and approaches, such as the series "Immediate Family" by Sally Mann and "Pepper" by Edward Weston. The factors that differentiate these works are then categorized into three main essences that underlie the use of photography, namely selectivity, instantaneity, and credibility.

2.1.1 Selectivity

Photography is referred to as a subtracting medium, while drawing and painting are additive. Selectivity consists of choosing a point of view, subject matter, visual quality, printed colors, paper, and printouts. This involves stages such as adjusting the camera's altitude and light conditions to show what needs to be shown and eliminate what needs to be eliminated. Selectivity also exists in the use of the paper used for printing, where some artists choose to print their photography on textured paper with warm colors to produce images similar to painting or etching techniques. Selectivity can also take the form of selecting printouts; wasted and exhibited. Garry Winogrand shoots and spends ten rolls of negative film every day before finally selecting which ones to archive or showcase.

2.1.2 Instantaneity

The camera works by opening its diaphragm and exposing a negative film to light within an hour or even a thousandth of a second. Photography can record the flight speed of birds and freeze instantly with measurable time and record billions of light years. Photography stops an action or event and is closely related to time, so what happens before and after the picture is taken becomes an important part of the work. This immediacy started when polaroids became popular among the public. Harry Callahan argues that it would sound like anti-photography if one needed a dark room for an hour to produce a print, they might as well just make a painting instead. Instantaneity also exists in the use of effects, which in painting requires a remaking process to achieve other variations.

2.1.3 Credibility

Photography in its early years was used as evidence of a truth, there was almost no boundary between the original subject and the subject that was present in it and was considered a reality recorded by

the machine. Photography is considered more as a piece or miniature of reality than a statement before the emergence of subjectivity from the artist by being reduced, beautified, and manipulated as technology develops. The French philosopher Roland Barthes was interested in the significant difference between the human perception of a photograph and a painting or drawing, he called it "that which has been", where photography has no other choice but to capture what once had been in front of the lens Styles can be applied using the style palette available within the template. To activate it the press Ctrl+Shift+s. Apply the style as required based on the content and context. (Please don't highlight your text in yellow.)

3. DEVELOPMENT OF PHOTOGRAPHY AS AN ART MEDIUM IN BANDUNG

Cameras that were previously only owned by the bourgeoisie of Europeans and aristocrats have begun to be accessible through art teacher training centers, the predecessors of Bandung Institute of Technology. It was the beginning of the personal use of photography, far from its conventional function. The skill to master this was focused on by Perhimpunan Amatir Foto (PAF). Its technical accuracy has become a convention of all photo clubs in Indonesia. The term "art of photography" has also received a lot of attention, prompting photographers to explore its relationship with artistic aesthetics. A.D. Pirous began studying darkroom techniques at the Kodak Center during his education at the Rochester Institute of Technology in 1969 and introduced it to ITB. This led to the formation of Forum Fotografi Bandung (FFB) in 1986 with its first exhibition in the same year and a second exhibition in 1988 despite receiving criticism from PAF. Chaired by London architect and photographer Jirman D. Martha, FFB had 25 members from different backgrounds, including Sjuuibun Iljas, Ray Bachtiar, and Marintan. In the 2000s, communities and collectives emerged after FFB such as KOMVNI consisting of Deden Hendan Durahman, Henrycus Napitsunargo, and Sari Asih and the Blackmanray Project by Eric Setiawan, Budi Sukmana, and Dicky Juwono.

The practice of photography in the 1970s and 1980s had two tendencies. First, using the medium for personal memories related to specific times and places. Second, using the medium to create art experiments such as collages and solarization. Deden Hendan Durahman, ITB graduate who continued his studies in Germany used digital manipulation in his "After the War" series in 2010, in which archives from World War II photos are combined with

advertisements in the same place yet different eras. The reconstruction processes reflect postmodern and contemporary thinking that has continued to develop, creating something more layered, reflective, and analytical. "Afterimage" is a ten year project by Henrycus Napitsunargo in which the images are randomly presented to eliminate their time aspect and explicit meaning, showing how the domestic environment of the artist creates a new world with a personal narrative. Deden Hendan Durahman, Henrycus Napitsunargo Sari Asih brought their works to the 2012 exhibition "A Certain Grace: Photography From Bandung" in Singapore, which was curated by Zhuang Wubin as works that represent the diversity of photography developments in Bandung. The approach taken by the three artists was then passed on to illustrator Ari Syahrazad who brought him to the Angkor Photo Festival Workshop, Cambodia in 2008. The knowledge he gained at the festival was then passed on to Sandi Jaya Saputra, Arif Setiawan, and Tandia B. Permadi as a factor driving the rapid development of Bandung photography in the contemporary era. [8]

4. DESCRIPTION AND FORMAL ANALYSIS

4.1 Description and Formal Analysis of the work "Luruh" by Susilo Nofriadi



Image 4.1.1 "Luruh". Source: BaCAA #6 Catalog

"Luruh" in 2017 is an installation work with a height of 15 cm and a length of 494 cm, which features 86 acrylic boards. Boards measuring 15 x 6 cm are lined up parallel and stretched over the wall in pairs placed perpendicularly. Each acrylic board frames chromogenic photographic paper with abstract tones and various color compositions. Colors include lilac, sienna red, white, and golden yellow which come in varying degrees of thickness and darkness in the form of liquid droplets, speckled, and wavy, which are not evenly distributed. The color composition on the

paper involves Sodium Hydroxide (NaOH) and Hydrogen Peroxide (H₂O₂) which gives a chemical reaction with the light and temperature involved. C-print is where a negative film is transferred onto chromogenic photographic paper (wet process paper) which has three primary color layers. Each layer responds to a chemical bath which is sensitive to water, temperature, and light and can continue to react even after the print is complete. This results in a visual that is present in the work "Luruh". The white color seen on the paper shows a transparent impression, in some parts there are lumps, unevenly distributed, dripping, thin, and invisible, resulting in an abstract composition and does not show any repetition or rhythm. The color faded from the chemical leaving a text wrapped in the chat bubble of an online messenger message in the center of the paper which is one-way from the sender.

4.2 Description and Formal Analysis of the work "Space and Power" by Sandi Jaya Saputra



Image 4.2.1 "Space and Power". Source: BaCAA #6 Catalog

"Space and Power" is an installation made in 2019 with video projected on an LCD screen and six different-sized C-prints placed around it. The print on the left of the screen shows a small section of an electric pole and tree trunk standing upright, almost completely covered by the shadow of leaves with the light source coming from the right. The image on the right side of the screen shows a battered-looking metal box with its color faded and streaked. This image is taken in close alignment, leaving little information about the context of the location and time due to the almost completely obscured setting. To the left of the installation is a rusty black fence with barbed wires on top. The fence is also shot parallel and flat in perspective, not showing any depth. The shadows of trees on the white wall behind it are sharp, indicating that the space is open and directly exposed to the sun. In the upper right print there is a building overlooking

a red brick floored yard. The point of view of the image is taking the building wall up close, so that the half of the image contains its dimensions and attributes. The print on the lower left of the installation also contains an iron box with the same color and condition as before, but printed in a much smaller size and there is a door with its padlock. On the lower right of the installation there is a picture of a red roof with light brown walls with a harsh shadow from the afternoon sun. Taking pictures that are in line with the frame both transversely and longitudinally presents precise and flat geometric shapes.

4.3 Description and Formal Analysis of "Don't Call Me Hero: Soegeng Soejono" by Vincent Rumahloine



Image 4.3.1 "Don't Call Me Hero: Soegeng Soejono". Source: BaCAA #6 Catalog

"Don't Call Me Hero: Soegeng Soejono" is a mixed media installation created in 2019 by Vincent Rumahloine with the support of Soegeng Soejono in its production. On the wall there is a monochromatic picture of Soejono which is bigger than the three wooden tables in front of it and has crease marks. On the left side of the image there is a screen projecting a video of Soejono reading a letter he wrote to his family in 1963 from the Czech Republic. On top of the three wooden tables are glass frames that frame several pictures from the early 1960s, featuring figures in groups of various races in grayscale and colored prints. On the left side of the table, monochromatic prints of uniformed figures are displayed, accompanied by writing in blue ink on two postcards. The paper was handwritten in 1963 with the old Indonesian spelling which was sent from abroad to the country. In the center of the table there are more monochromatic prints with more dense placement, showing figures in uniform and groups with a more crowded quantity. On the table to the right of the

installation are seven larger colored prints. Each picture is arranged tightly and aligned so that only empty space is left on the outside of the table. The low saturation present in all the images on the three tables, both colored and monochromatic, gives a worn impression indicating that the images have long been printed and a part of an archive.

5. ARTWORK ANALYSIS

5.1 Analysis of the work "Luruh" by Susilo Nofriadi

The absence of a conclusive surface layer, its formally dynamic nature, and the luminous impression on the work can be interpreted as urgent, closed, and intimate, quoted from the opinion of critic Donald Kuspit on Sean Scully's abstract works which have similar characteristics. The artist uses the principle of a camera from seeing, capturing, storing, to printing and associates it with the process of forming memories and feelings in humans. Human memories and feelings that in this work are related to relationships are shed because of the social stigma that demands a feeling to be covered up or even removed. Looking at the interpretations supported by the artist's statement, it can be seen that the selectivity within the work is not shown by conventional steps such as setting the lens, but rather in the form of choosing compositions and materials like H₂O₂ and NaOH to create an organic form that represents these feelings of deconstruction, concept wise and visual wise. The instant nature of photography is found in how the artist captures a moment that was previously present in a certain space and time, a feeling or a relationship that is shed in a written online conversation. The immediacy is then undermined by the melting colors that once were present as a concrete form on paper using chemicals. Knowing this, it can be concluded that the value of immediacy is not the focus of the work, but still plays an important role as part of the process. The immediacy is in how the artist captures the conversation, but not in the printing process. The credible quality is not shown explicitly in the work, cameraless photography is an invention that has been associated with abstract painting since the beginning and is a bridge between photography and the cubism movement, so that the boundaries between photography and other mediums are narrowed in this work. Credibility or compatibility between the representamen and the object, even though it is not present directly, is one of the qualities of photography that underlies the artist's creation process to deconstruct it as an art medium.

5.2 Analysis of the work "Space and Power" by Sandi Jaya Saputra

Flat angle shot or eye level shot is a technique where the subject is shot at the same height as the eye and results in one-point perspective or not showing any perspective at all. A similar technique can be seen in the work of Pop artist David Hockney entitled "A Bigger Splash", in which the rigid and static nature of the building in the work is used to emphasize the dynamism of the water flowing over the pool. These techniques are to highlight the dynamic movement of the shady tree leaves as well as their shadows. Quoting from the artist's explanation, the work "Space and Power" captures space and what happens in it simultaneously. A working space where power is present as a spectacle and humans are victims of human politics itself. The space in this work is shown as it should be, where in the end humans will only be part of history with a destiny that is not right or appropriate in that space. The selectivity in the work focuses on taking this "ironic" side of space by minimizing perspective, choosing a background that is familiar to the public, and sufficient sunlight to produce sharp black shadows and emphasize objects. Selectivity in the work is also done by eliminating other elements that are not able to represent the purity of a space, namely the figures of humans themselves. The instant quality possessed by the camera, in contrast to the work of "Luruh", is seen in the final result of the work of "Space and Power". The imaging process in the work does not start from a blank canvas and is not formed by individual paint strokes, but emerges from the light captured by the camera in under one second. The short duration is then able to capture the movement of objects such as leaves from trees and the momentary light of the sun. These characteristics are similar to the Impressionist movement of the 1860s, in which artists tried to emphasize the accurate depiction of light and rely on the transience of the impression of light being captured. Both show instantaneity in capturing a moment in space and time. Similar to what is captured by the lens, the observer can know that in the process of shooting, the artist is confronted by wired fences, shady trees, blue skies, and roofs of buildings. Credibility is an important value of journalistic photography because of the purpose to represent and publish a truth, used as a bridge between the source and those who cannot see it directly. This is reinforced by the idea of the artist wanting to show a place where humans and living space coexist, which is seen in the installation as a perfect replica or piece of what is present in the real world.

5.3 Analysis of the work "Don't Call Me Hero: Soegeng Soejono" by Vincent Rumahloine

Some of the pictures placed on the three tables were part of the MAHID program in 1963 which sent undergraduate students to study in several countries to study science, social studies, language, and psychology. The program started when the G30SPKI incident occurred and the shift in government from Ir. Sukarno to Suharto. Soegeng Soejono or Bung Yono was one of the many students who rejected the new government and had their passports taken away. Soejono became a laborer and a teacher at Charles University before finally getting his residence with a Czech woman and two children. The work shows the daily life of Soejono as a resident of Prague who was exiled for 30 years and how the abuse of power affects the life of an individual. Knowing the intentions expressed in the work, it can be seen that there is an agenda to select relevant and appropriate photos to describe Soejono's life, there is an image selection process that brings together three important points in one narrative timeline and arranges them to be read from left to right, starting from photos taken at the beginning of the student exchange until he was married with two children. Selectivity also lies in the material used to print Soejono's image on the installation wall, where he uses HVS which tends to be thin, mass-produced, inexpensive, and brittle. Quoting from the artist's statement, Soejono's face was printed on HVS paper with the intention of showing that everyday items can be meaningful if a value is instilled. The immediacy in the work, if the images are analyzed one by one, is in the events that are instantly captured by the lens which is then printed in a dark room and finished for about an hour. Looking at the work as a whole, the photography of the findings cannot be said to be instant because of the process of collecting images for nearly 60 years. It can be concluded that it was instantaneous for the photographer who prints and saves the images, but not for the artist who collects them to be combined in a work. The work has the aim of retelling an event and raising issues that occurred in the past, so credibility is heavily emphasized. The work not only shows a group of students on an exchange student or someone starting a family in the Czech Republic, but also shows the impact of a political policy on the smallest of an individual's life. Through this installation, the artist wants to show his appreciation for Bung Yono and bring attention to what really happened in Indonesia in 1956-1967.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

6.1. Conclusions

Research that has been conducted on the analysis of the works "Luruh" by Susilo Nofriadi, "Space and Power" by Sandi Jaya Saputra, and "Don't Call Me Hero: Soegeng Soejono" by Vincent Rumahloine found the following conclusions:

1. This research was confronted by Bandung's current use of photography which goes beyond the process of capturing images with lenses and printing, being innovative while at the same time keeping the already existing techniques. This is in line with Claire Holt's description of Indonesian artists who are always developing but not completely abandoning tradition.
2. It can be seen that the value of selectivity, instantaneity, and credibility is present in a new form that has never been determined before. This expands the meaning of the three values and the tendency to use the medium in general. The value of selectivity in the work is no longer about framing or lighting arrangements, instantaneity is not directly present in found photography, and also not seen directly in works that deconstruct shapes in an extended process after printing. The value of credibility no longer has to be representative if there is an intention to remodel the reality captured by the lens, this indicates an integration between photography and other media that were previously considered contradictory, namely pictures and paintings.
3. It can be said that the use of the photography in Bandung today can still be compartmentalized or based on principles, but there is a tendency to disengage it from what is already established and begin to mix with other media.

6.2 Suggestions

According to the research that has been done, several suggestions were found that can be used in subsequent studies related to this research, these suggestions include:

1. Use primary data sources that include the stages and processes of working as part of the data. The research so far has used secondary data obtained from artist statements in a catalog as well as information from internet

pages, leaving many details that are not covered and can still be explored further.

2. Do research on works using a photographic medium that breaks the boundaries of established principles, where the medium is composed by artists to find out how far a work of art can be called photography. This study analyzes several works that can still be based on book principles, so that this paper is made to show how these works can still be read and categorized.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Ismi Nabilah to draft and finish the paper and Dr. Kiki Rizky Soetisna Putri, S.Sn.,M.Sn. to outline, revise and give source suggestions.

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