

Printmaking Expansion by The Other Form of Presentation

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ABSTRACT

Printmaking is one of the traditional techniques that an artist can choose to create art. By doing a whole printmaking process, there are so many values and meanings that we can take, which is very intense and meticulous. There are many reasons why printmaking is not as popular as painting, ceramics, or sculpture in Indonesia. Limited material, tools, and machines for working on printmaking make this technique challenging to find and do the practice. Printmaking has made much history, so it has the right to be introduced to people. New media art expressions (installation and performance) have replaced the position or status of printmaking with their sophisticated technology, which can offer more stimulating aesthetic values. Because of that, the printmakers have to challenge themselves to criticize and respond to these conditions so that printmaking will constantly exist, evolve, and contribute to the art scene, which is increasingly dynamic and progressive. Using literature and case study as a method, we can see how far these printmakers can preserve, explore and bring up printmaking to the next level without losing the principle. In the practice of contemporary art in this present time, there are no longer any restrictions on discourse, technique, and medium in the making of art; there will always be an artist or printmaker who seeks a newness on printmaking and look for any potentials value in printmaking. It can open any possibilities of how printmaking could be present.

Keywords: *Contemporary, Expansion, Printmaking, Presentation*

1. INTRODUCTION

Printmaking is one of the disciplines in the art that has the principle of transferring an image from a matrix called a plate onto a surface. Using a press machine can transfer ink from matrix to medium surface; usually, the prints are print on paper or fabric. There are many choices of techniques in printmaking that an artist can choose to create prints, like relief print, intaglio, lithography, and silkscreen print. Each of these techniques has its specification, including material, tool, and process. They have their struggles within the technique. Heavy work, complicated, and requires perseverance and patience, will be pay off by the print results. Unfortunately, limited material, tools, and machines for printmaking make this technique challenging to find and do practice, so printmaking tends to rarely use as a medium for doing works by artists or art students. The fact that printmaking has made much history means printmaking has an essential role in the history of printing.

New media art expressions (installation and performance) in the contemporary art scene, successfully progressed with their sophisticated technology, which can offer more stimulating aesthetic values. Because of that, the printmakers are challenged to criticize and respond to these conditions so that printmaking will constantly exist, evolve, and contribute to the contemporary art scene, which is increasingly dynamic and progressive. In the practice of contemporary art in the 21st century, there are no longer any restrictions on discourse, technique, and medium in the making of art; there will always be an artist or printmaker who seeks a newness on printmaking and look for any potentials value in printmaking. For example, Tisna Sanjaya is an artist from Indonesia that combined printmaking and performance art as a whole work of art, or Tromarama is an art collective based in Bandung that transformed woodcut ply-woods matrix into stop motion animation.

Several printmakers take the challenge and try to find a way or strategy so that printmaking will constantly exist and be known by the larger public. They add and customize some part of the whole process to find newness in printmaking and look for any potentials value in printmaking. It can open any possibilities of how printmaking could be present. This article will explain printmaking and the creative method to produce the visual agenda that connects with other mediums such as sculpture, performance, installation, and video.

2. METHOD

Using literature and case study as a method, we can see how far these artists can preserve, explore and bring up printmaking to the next level without losing the principle. Showing several artists that indicate as a form of experimental printmaking, also observing their approaches and development of printmaking. The visual of their work use to disclose the possibility of printmaking today as the process of creation in contemporary culture.

3. DEFINITION OF PRINTMAKING

Printmaking is an art activity that uses print media in the process of creating a work of art. The result from all of these processes is usually called prints, often referred directly by the name of the technique used, such as woodcut, etching, lithography. There are four main principles of printing in it: high-printing (woodcut, linocut, wood engraving), in-printing (intaglio: etching, aquatint, engraving, drypoint), flat-printing (planography, lithography), and screen printing (serigraphy, screen printing) [1].

According to an article from the Met Museum website, printmaking is an artistic method based on the principle of transferring images from a matrix onto another surface, most people use paper or fabric as the medium. A matrix is essentially a template and can be made of wood, metal, or glass. The design is creating on the matrix by working its flat surface with either tools or chemicals. The matrix is then inked in order to transfer it onto the desired surface. To print from a matrix requires the application of controlled pressure from a press machine. One of the great benefits of printmaking is that multiple impressions of the same design can be printed from a single matrix [2].

3.1. Printmaking Conventions

In an article published on the website from

American printmaker Daniel Gonzalez: *Printmaking 101 Series: A Guide to Editioning and Signing Fine Art Prints*, print by definition is a reproduction of an artwork, such as giclee, sometimes called an archival print or archival ink print, which is a digitally produced print from an original photograph or scan of original artwork. Print could mean the product of a printmaking process, such as intaglio, serigraph, stone lithography, or relief, among others. Printmakers usually produced original artwork that they create with their hands [3].



Figure 1 Linocut prints from Dan Howden "*Jacksons *Cobweb Emoji**", 2016, published on his personal website and Instagram.

This work is done with engraving technique using linoleum as the medium. Multi-plate and reduction are applied on this print, allowing more than one color in the image. The signing format on all of the editions is written right under the image. On the left side of the paper, it has written 1/6, which means this print is the first edition of six editions, the title of the work is written in the middle followed by the year, and then on the right side of the paper is written the artist's signature, name and year. A signing format like this has become a requirement for a printmaker to certify the authenticity of the prints, and ensuring that each print made is exactly just like the rest in quality. There are some different marks to distinguish certain prints as being different from the edition format, such as A/P, T/P, etc.

3.2. Experimental Printmaking

These times, the approach to make art taken by artists is increasingly diverse. This thing becomes a

topic discussed by a modern printmaker about the boundaries and the definition of prints getting blurry. The alternative result and the invention in printmaking that come out of the convention are increasingly emerging as the art scene's development. Art disciplines in the past were pigeon-holed, and printmaking was always seen as closer to the craft traditions, based on the technique: clean edges, flat paper and usually shown framed and hung on the wall behind the glass [4]. To make a work of art feel present in a gallery, the need for a frame is important in this case. The frame becomes the object that separates the work from the space around it, creates a barrier between the work and the surrounding environment, and protects the work in it. In the *Rhetoric of Frame* by Paul Duro, he described the purpose of framing: to frame is to create a site – at once a physical locus and a metaphysical locale – for the work of art, and thereby to establish a specific context in which it is to be experienced [5].

In the 1960s, art discipline started to merge from one discipline to another. The rise of criticism towards movements, educational systems, consumerism and culture. It tends to create a new style and aesthetic language among the artists. Richard Hamilton and Robert Rauschenberg used the screen-printing technique on canvas. Then Andy Warhol, with his Brillo Box, used the screen-printing technique on plywood, and he changed the physicality into three-dimensional or sculptural.



Figure 2 Work from Robert Rauschenberg “*Tideline*”, 1963, Made with oil and silkscreen on canvas, rauschenbergfoundation.org

As explained on the Tate Museum website, Rauschenberg began working on screen printing on canvas in 1962. He took the visuals in books and magazines and his photography and added some brushstrokes to his works that were reminiscent of the Abstract Expressionism movement. This method was a novelty form where generally, silkscreen prints used paper as a medium. Rauschenberg chose to use a medium that printmakers did not commonly use at that time. Regarding to the characteristic of his work, he often combined some artistic process in order to create a new thing. Quoted in *The Symbolist Roots of Modern Art* by Michelle Facos, Rauschenberg said “I wanted something other than what I could make myself and I wanted to use the surprise and the collectiveness and the generosity of finding surprises. So, the object itself was change by its context and therefore it became a new thing” [Facos, 2015].

Currently, the characteristics of contemporary art practice encompass all disciplines until finally blurring the boundaries of conceptions and conventions. A contemporary artist doing their traditional printmaking work that comes out of its conventions may change the physicality into three-dimensional, installation, and even moving images. They are allowed to leave the conventions of printmaking behind and have dared to do the unthinkable work, which has resulted in their work developing in different ways. When artist show their work today, they do not intend to technically educate; they want to communicate their ideas and to highlight their concerns [4].

4. PRINTMAKING AND SCULPTURE

Printmaking has the concept of image transfer from a matrix to a surface. The surface can be some sheet of paper, a fabric, or any other surface that can accept the ink. This surface or medium usually will be presented using a frame and covered with glass. However, there is a chance these mediums could be treated in different ways to find their potentials; hence the prints can be present out of its frame limitations. These mediums have the natural characteristic that their potentials can be utilized, such as folding the paper or forming the plywood into a new shape.

In this case, we can see how Warhol making the prints and changing the physicality into something new, and we still call it was a print, but it also a sculpture. Andy Warhol is an artist known as a figure

in the pop art movement at the end of the modern art era. His works talk about pop culture, advertisement, and celebrity culture that grew in the 1960s. Various media were used by Warhol in his work, including painting, screen printing, photography, film, and sculpture. Some of Warhol's famous works using screen printing are Campbell's Soup Cans (1962), Marilyn Diptych (1962), and Brillo Box (1964).



Figure 3 Work from Andy Warhol “Brillo Box (Soap Pads)”, 1964, Made with Synthetic polymer paint and silkscreen ink on wood, published on moma.org

Brillo Box is an imitation of commercial product packaging. He printed the visuals from the original object into a flat plywood surface using the screen-printing method. After that, he packed all of the surfaces until they turned into a box shape. When there is an argument that art imitates life, the question arises of how we identify the value of an everyday object as a work of art. If Warhol turns the value of an everyday object into a work of art, how can that transformation happen? Watching Warhol make many Brillo boxes and will them to art collectors and museums, then this work can also be considered as a mass-produced consumer item in the art scene. Warhol's strategy in this work coincidentally runs parallel with the character of printmaking that is a reproduction of the original work.

5. PRINTMAKING AND PERFORMANCE

Several methods can be drawn in detail, from working on printmaking practice to become the central discourse in creating works. Doing printmaking is an activity that involves technique and movements, the way we treat the paper, mixing the ink, walking around the studio from table to machine, and how our body is moving while operating the machine. We can all agree that this action is also a performance inside the whole printmaking process.



Figure 4 Performance by Tisna Sanjaya “Potret Diri Sebagai Kaum Munafik” (Self Portrait as The Hypocrites), 2017, Performed at Museum Macan ‘First Sight’, published on museummacan.org

Tisna Sanjaya is an artist and printmaker from Bandung, Indonesia, who is taking the performance side within printmaking practice became the main characteristic of his works. He utilizes the principle of print in printmaking. He uses his body as a matrix and uses natural materials as ink. Tisna's work technique is known as *Cetak Tubuh*, or we could say in English is *Body Prints*. Emerging through printmaking works, Tisna's ways of depicting reality and imagined ideal realms keep finding their way through interstices and moments in time – whether inspired by dramaturgy or actual events, nature, and the quotidian. His works continue to grow with things large and small in the society, framing moral paradoxes, one which is embedded within [6].

He even makes his body print performance in a larger space and sometimes involves the audience to help him create works. He tried to bring printmaking from a different point of view and make another way of seeing. With this strategy, he succeeded in making printmaking steal the attention of many people with his massive work so that printmaking could be known and touched various layers of the audience.



Figure 5 Tisna asked audiences to help him spreading the natural materials to his body and it traced on prayer

rug. Performed at Museum Macan in 2017, published on [instagram.com/museummacan](https://www.instagram.com/museummacan)

5. PRINTMAKING AND INSTALLATION

When we think a printmaking work is printed into an edition, it is finished at the very last stage of the process, but some artists choose to extend the processing of the final print. As explained in the experimental printmaking section, printmakers are allowed to leave the conventions of printmaking behind and have dared to do the unthinkable work, which has resulted in their work developing in different ways. The form of presentation of printmaking works could follow the intention of the artist in conveying his ideas. This alternative method is considered quite proper, and in line with the ideas they want to convey.



Figure 6 Work from John Hitchcock, “*They’re Moving Their Feet-But Nobody’s Dancing*”, 2007, 24 hour screenprint action at The School of Art & Design Coyne Gallery, New York. Published on hybridpress.net

They’re Moving Their Feet-But Nobody’s Dancing is a large-scale variable-size 24-hour screen-print action at The School of Art & Design Coyne Gallery, Syracuse University, New York. He worked with his students and faculty to create a print installation in 24 hours. Printing and installation of artwork began at 5 pm on April 12 and was completed by 5 pm on April 13, 2007. This printmaking work involves many participants, and the presentation also involves time and space.



Figure 7 Work from John Hitchcock, “*They’re Moving Their Feet-But Nobody’s Dancing*”, 2007, 24-hour screen-print installation. Published on hybridpress.net

6. PRINTMAKING AND VIDEO

All aspects contained in printmaking have the potentials to be explored in work. Sometimes a finished work is not always about the final phase. Some printmakers often include the matrix along with their prints in one exhibition. Matrix is usually interpreted as an artifact as well as proof of the origin of a printed work. However, some artists make the matrix become a prominent role in their work.



Figure 8 Music Video by Tromarama for Seringai - Serigala Militia, stop motion animation from woodcut plywood boards, 2006, 4 min. 22 sec. Published on tromarama.com
Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJP-sUMgZzI>

Here is an example of Tromarama, an art collective founded in 2006 making their first project on Seringai’s track ‘Serigala Militia’ music video.

Tromarama created this video using a hundred woodcut plywood boards, then compiled them into stop motion animation. This work is fascinating because it presents the characteristic of woodcuts (i.e., scratches) and the movement from one frame to the next frame. This combination creates an illusion of movement, and the images feel pretty alive.

CONCLUSION

Nowadays, when we talk about the development of fine art in the art scene, artists are competing to reach their respective best limits. Seeking novelty, sophistication, and breakthrough in every exploration they undertake. Printmaking in this discourse cannot be separated from the printmaker who finally finds his creative strategies. They try to combine conventional printmaking with fresh approaches. This discussion does not mean that this experimental printmaking work is superior to conventional printmaking works but that the two only differ in presentation. Conventional printmaking works feel more *auratic* than experimental one. The more complex the printing technique adopted by them, the higher the appreciation value of their work because it contains the values and perseverance of the printmaker. This different presentation is presented to give fresh air to the art and printmaking scene. They are providing knowledge with different presentations so that they can touch and attract more people.

There are so many aspects and values in printmaking that can be developed into new works. These efforts are considered capable of preserving and maintaining printmaking, which has an important role in the history of the printing world. The more sophisticated today's inventions make traditional things increasingly decline in existence. Everyone ends up being offered many choices, and most opt for something easy and quick. This article contains a new form of presentation of printmaking work presented with new physicality by several artists. The aesthetic decision they chose because, according to the artists, this method was suitable for them to convey their ideas about printmaking and other disciplines as a whole in one work. Their work may be considered new in presenting the final form. The different formats in their work are no longer under the established conventions of printmaking. However, a printmaker can follow the current flow of contemporary art so that printmaking can continue to exist and thrive. It is suitable for young printmakers to explore new steps like this, eager to explore the potentials of print arts

with their creative approaches.

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