



# ***Tembang Macapat Maskumambang* Cultural Heritage of Javanese Society as a Medium for Conveying Moral and Ethical Messages Through *Mix Media* Artwork**

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**Abstract.** The values of life in Java, among others, are contained in Javanese *macapat* songs. *Tembang macapat* by the ancestors was used as a medium of da'wah to convey moral and ethical messages. The messages in *tembang macapat*, gradually, many people do not know, because of modernization. The dive into the idea of this creation is supported by the positive spirit of the values of Javanese life, which is contained in the *Maskumambang* song. The process of creating this *mixed media* work is based on research and supported by three stages of creation: observation, composing the object of observation, and realizing the results of the composition form into the form of artwork and *video mapping*. This creation aims to reintroduce local cultural heritage that is increasingly fading in the era of modernization. This work comes with a metaphor in the form of a fetus in the womb. The medium of this artwork utilizes zinc, multiplex and resin. The result of the creation is a mixed media artwork, as a medium to communicate the moral and ethical teachings implied in the *Maskumambang* song for the younger generation, as well as cultural preservation.

**Keywords:** *Tembang Macapat, Maskumambang, Mix media, Video mapping.*

## **1 Introduction**

One of Indonesia's main ethnic communities is Javanese. The Javanese tribe includes East Java, Central Java, and DIY Yogyakarta. Java has the largest share of Indonesia's population, accounting for 55.93% of the total as of September 2024. Given the ongoing population growth, it is hardly unexpected that Java has developed into a major hub for social, economic, and educational activities. Java is part of the central region of the development of the civilization of the forefathers and ancestors of the Indonesian population; therefore the island's fast pace of life is not abrupt. This can be linked to the numerous historical artifacts dispersed throughout Java.

The Javanese people are renowned for having very cultural lives. Every action taken in daily life is governed by ethics, norms, values, and manners, which gives it its characteristics. This is seen in the use of the Javanese language, which is classified into different categories based on age level. However, the ethics and good manners of Javanese society nowadays are slowly fading away. The Javanese people are currently dealing with the effects of globalization as they live on a heavily populated island that is one of Indonesia's technological

development centers. In this instance, Liah et al. (2023), emphasized how globalization has a significant impact on human existence, affecting social culture, politics, technology, and education, among other facets of life. In this instance, These impacts might be perceived as both positive and negative. The negative influence is moral degeneration caused by the introduction of a foreign culture that is incompatible with a society's values (Liah et al., 2023).

Particular consideration must be given to the fading Javanese cultural way of life. The situation of information overload experienced by the community makes the community itself unable to utilize information to build and construct a better social order (Apdilah et al., 2022). Nowadays, a lot of youngsters lack etiquette; for instance, kids refuse to follow their parent's advice. They have their own universe, are preoccupied with what is on their phones, and frequently disregard what is around them since today's teens seem to have been dominated by their phones. Children have their own universe, are preoccupied with what is on their phones, and frequently disregard what is around them since today's teens seem to have been dominated by their phones. What an irony: if the moral degradation of today's youth, particularly in Javanese society, is not addressed, the local cultural wisdom in which children are born would be disappeared.

In Javanese society, the values of human life are expressed in songs called the *tembang macapat*, which is a work of literature or traditional art. *Tembang Macapat* is a literary work left by Javanese cultural ancestors that contain wise advice or *wejangan*. In the past, *macapat* songs were used by parents as a means of advising their children, so that they would understand and understand the meaning of life. Javanese people think that *tembang macapat* adds aesthetic value to human life. In line with the opinion of (Teeuw, 1984: 184), the function of *utile et dulce* may be an essential aspect for children.

There are eleven songs or *tembang* in *macapat*, including Maskumambang, Mijil, Sinom, Kinanti, Asmaradhana, Gambuh, Dhandanggula, Durma, Pangkur, Megatruh, and Pucung (Poedjosoebroto, 1987-194-201). The Maskumambang Macapat Song is the main subject of the in-depth analysis of the song and the inspiration for this work of art. This song makes us think of being in a mother's womb, where the mother's struggles are particularly intense for nine months. Furthermore, not every human being has the option to be born by the ideal standards, some people are born into wealthy families, ordinary or low-income families. To help Javanese people remember their roots or place of birth, *Tembang macapat*

Maskumambang is regarded as a suitable substitute for traditional methods of communication. It is believed that Tembang macapat Maskumambang positive ideals will raise awareness of the issues facing Javanese society today.

Apart from being inspired by the positive values contained in Tembang macapat Maskumambang, the creation of this work aims to reintroduce local cultural heritage which is increasingly fading in this era of modernization. This work of art is exhibited using a variety of mediums, including zinc, multiplex, and resin. These three resources serve as a representation of Tembang macapat Maskumambang life values or as a way to convey concepts to Javanese society today so that people are reminded of their roots. The creation of works of art that utilize the Tembang macapat Maskumambang song is known to only be found in musical art, so the concept of Tembang macapat Maskumambang song has never been used to create mixed-media and video mapping artwork in a fine arts setting, it can be considered novel.

## **2 Method**

This is a practice-based study, meaning that the art practice itself is at the core of the research process. The objective of practice-based research is to generate new insights through imaginative inquiry and the growth of artistic production (Guntur, 2016). Directly observing ongoing artistic practices is a key component of this practice-based research, in which the artist also serves as the investigator and actively contributes to the artistic process. In order to develop both visual and non-visual concepts for mixed-media artworks that are motivated by the positive life values found in Tembang Macapat Maskumambang, the author carried out several literature studies and experiments, which include tools, materials, techniques, and supporting media that used in the artwork.

To find the ideal visual components and concept buildings, the data gathered from the literature study and practical applications is first analyzed. The ability to select and combine ordinary objects to produce a work of art is what gives this mixed media piece its impact. Furthermore, the use of technology in the form of video mapping is what makes this work unique and innovative. According to Berna Ekim (2010:11), the goal of video mapping is to combine audio-visual components to produce the physical appearance of images. According to Berna Ekim (2010:11), the goal of video mapping is to combine audio-visual components to produce the physical appearance of images. The presence of this video mapping is anticipated

to spark discussion, and imagination, and deepen the audience's interpretation of the good spirit contained in *Tembang Macapat Maskumambang*.

Regarding the process of producing the artworks, the methodical approach refers to Herbert Read's ideas, namely: 1). The observation, this step aims to identify the objects that will be used as creative inspiration. 2. After that, the observations are compiled into a design form that attempts to create a visual representation of the baby's development and rotation from one to nine months of age. 3. Using the compilation's results we create a piece of art that helps to visualize form that includes the baby's rotation from one to nine months of age as fetal development.

### 3 Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 The idea of *Maskumambang*

*Tembang macapat Maskumambang* tells of the first stage in the journey of human life. *Maskumambang* consists of two words, *mas* and *kumambang* often referred to as 'floating gold'. *Maskumambang* symbolizes a child who is still in the womb. When the spirit is blown in the womb of a mother. This shows that humans are helpless, so humans must always surrender to God the Almighty Creator. While in the womb or spirit realm, the baby-to-be cannot choose to be born or not to be born in the world. Therefore, this artwork aims to remind us of our ancestral cultural values, so that the meaning of life can be understood by many people. *Tembang macapat Maskumambang* contains advice for every human being to always live in harmony with the natural environment, social and devoted to God Almighty.

*Maskumambang* is interpreted as a baby who lives floating in the mother's womb for 9 months, who lives and grows in the womb of a mother. In the womb, the baby-to-be is considered a piece of jewelry that must be protected, guarded, and cared for, as it is very precious to the mother. In the *tembang macapat Maskumambang*, the baby-to-be is symbolized as a paper that is still pure and white. Therefore, the *tembang macapat Maskumambang* describes the feelings of *compassion*, anxiety, and anxiety of a mother when she is carrying a baby. In *tembang macapat Maskumambang*, the role of the mother is very large, the mother is always ready and risks her life for the safety of the baby born into this world.

### 3.2 Artwork Creation

The creation of this work begins with exploring the object of ideas through observation, then composing the object of observation, and then realizing it into an artwork. Finally, the artwork is described. This is the description:

#### a. Observation

Observation is made of the objects that become the idea of creation, namely the fetus aged 1 month to 9 months, which when born is accompanied by *kakang kawah adhi ari-ari*. In Javanese philosophy, it is philosophical, related to the *tembang macapat Maskumambang*, namely: *sedulur papat limo pancer* (four brothers, five centers). *Sedulur papat lima pancer* is one of the guidelines for life in the world for Javanese people (Ibda et al, 2019). *Sedulur papat limo pancer* is commonly referred to by Javanese as a harmonious relationship between nature, humans, and God. It also relates to the cardinal directions that are often encountered in everyday life, including: north, east, south, and west. The creation of artworks involves several things such as preparation, planning, and creating the work. The ideas of creation are not only obtained through observation but also based on the creator's childhood memory. The creator's childhood memory as a trigger and also as a source in creating mixed media artworks.

Puppeteer Ki Sigit Arianto (2017) has interpreted *Sedulur Papat* in great detail, namely: first, *watman*, which means a sense of worry or anxiety as a prospective mother who is about to give birth to her child. *Watman* means the eldest sibling which implies the importance of respect, bowing down to parents, especially mothers. The love of parents, especially the mother, is as a force that flows continuously without breaking accompanying the journey of a child's life. Second, *wahman* is the crater or amniotic fluid. Its function is to keep the fetus in the womb safe from shocks. At the time of child birth the amniotic fluid breaks and perishes so that it merges into one with nature, but metaphysically the amniotic fluid remains as a protective and guardian brother. Third, *rahman* or the blood of childbirth is offered as an image of life, life, and spirit. There is still a brother who gives life and physical health in an invisible or metaphysical form. Fourth, *Ariman* or ari-ari or placenta which has a function as a food channel for the fetus. Ari-ari or placenta is an invisible brother who provides the impetus to move a person to make a living and maintain life. Fifth, *panceratau* or the center, which is the baby itself, is also interpreted as the spirit that exists in humans, controlling one's *self-awareness* to remain *eling lan waspada* or remember and be vigilant. Remember the creator and become a wise person (Ibda et al, 2019:4).

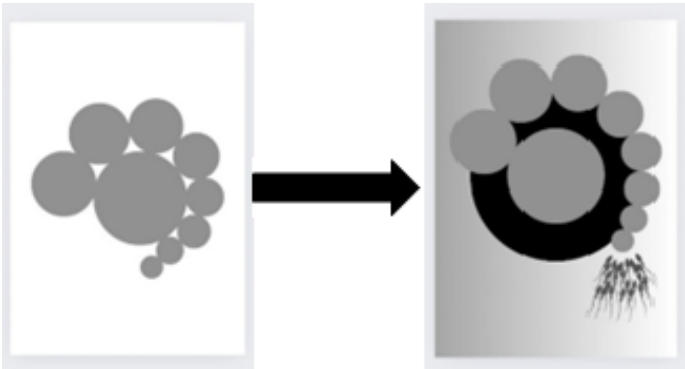


**Fig 1.** *Sedulur Papat Limo Pancer*

(Source: <https://www.kompasiana.com/nabilla2002/6354c3815e09f539305c1082/sadulur-papat-lima-pancer>)

**b      Compilation of observations**

The stage of compiling the results of observations is the process of designing visual forms, from the development of the fetus and the rotation of the baby from the age of 1 to 9 months. This design process is an important process to follow up the work to the next stage, which is executing it into a mixed media artwork.



**Fig 2.** Composition 1 and 2  
(Photo: Noniek, 2024)

**c      Utilization of Arrangement for Expression**

This stage is the most important stage in the creative process, where the artist sorts and combines one idea with another into a work of art. Here, the experimenter uses the *assembling* technique to create the form. The technique is applied to obtain a unified form of work between

zinc basin, multiplex, and resin with the shape of a fetus aged 1 month to 9 months. The *assembling* technique, according to Sugiharto, is a technique in making sculptures by assembling sculptural materials from several objects into a new composition (Sugiharto, 2015).

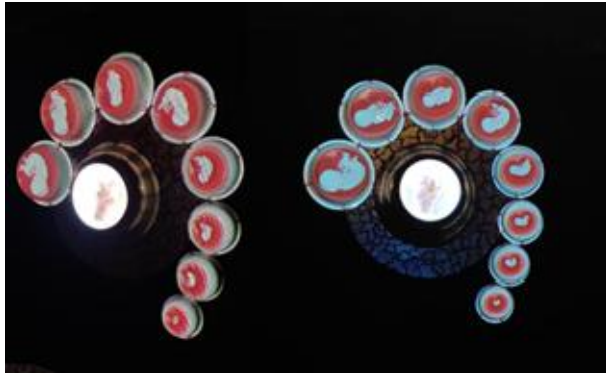


**Fig 3.** Installation of objects into a single unit  
(Photo: Noniek, 2024)

The first process at this stage is that the artist combines zinc and multiplex materials to find out the position of the previously designed composition as in the design stage to the embodiment of the work form. The second process is the process of giving color using gold *prodo* color material as a metaphor of the *song Maskumambang* which means floating gold. The next color uses red, white and black as a metaphor of *sedulur papat lima pancer* as a harmonious relationship between nature, humans and God. The third stage is casting resin and dolls into a large basin that has been prepared, the basin has previously been cut on the bottom side to replace the resin cast. This casting technique aims to create the illusion of a fetus in the womb. After the resin casting stage, the next step is to combine all the previous circuits, and add lights in the basin containing the resin cast so that when on display for the exhibition the inside of the fetus looks vaguely like in the womb filled with amniotic water.

### 3.3 Result and Work Description

The mixed media work titled “*Camikara Garba*” is inspired by the *tembang macapat Maskumambang*. *Tembang macapat Maskumambang* is the first stage of human life journey. Many life values are taken from the *Maskumambang song*, such as advice to children to always be devoted to their parents. The result of this work is a visual metaphor of a gold-colored womb. The meaning of the gold color can be interpreted from the *song Maskumambang* which comes from the word *mas* and *kumambang*, in Indonesian it means “floating gold”. It symbolizes a child who is still in the womb.



**Fig 4.** “Camikara Garba”, 150 x 175 cm, Mix Media  
(Photo: Noniek, 2024)

The color philosophy used in the work uses the symbol of *sedulur papat limo pancer* (four-five central brothers). The white-colored crater, located in the east (*wetan, witan*) begins the birth, he opens the way. *Getih* or red-colored blood is in the south, *puser* or umbilical cord is black in the west, and *adhi ari-ari* or placenta is yellow in the north. *Pancer* in the middle is *Mar* and *Marti* who come out of the *margahina*, outwardly. *Mar* and *Marti* will become soul mates. So in the work the dominant colors appear gold or yellow, red, black, white to illustrate the meaning of color philosophy in *sedulur papat limo pancer*. The visual form presented, which is a fetus from 1 month to 9 months old, uses mixed media. This work presents a visual of a fetus while still in the womb, to remind us, especially to today's young people who often disobey orders and dare to go against their parents. This work illustrates the many struggles to become a mother, such as having to lose the smoothness of the skin, because during pregnancy there are many *stretch marks* or *stretch marks* due to the enlargement of the pregnant mother-to-be's abdomen. The dominant color of this work is gold to depict the metaphor of a mother's womb which is very special and precious; and the red color depicts the spirit of courage, spirit in the sense of daring to risk their lives to give birth to their future baby. The white color depicts the metaphor of purity and sincerity, that the mother takes care of her future child while still in the womb until adulthood, full of sincerity and affection. The black color is an invisible metaphor for preserving life.

The message to be conveyed in the mix media work is the journey of a mother when carrying her child for 9 months and risking her life so that her child can be born safely into the world. There are many sacrifices to achieve the title of being a mother. Through this work, I invite young people to instill respect for parents, especially mothers. A mother's love is the strength that accompanies a child's life.

## 4 Conclusion

The basic idea for creating this mix media work is based on the feeling of dilemma that occurs today, amidst the acceleration of increasingly sophisticated technology. Javanese society is currently considered to have experienced a decline in their understanding of morals and ethics in living life as Javanese people. Inspired by the positive values contained in the Tembang Macapat Maskumambang, namely life in a mother's womb. It is hoped that it will be able to become a medium for raising awareness and remembering their origins or where they were born. The power of creating mixed media works lies in selecting and combining simple objects to form a work of art. More than that, the unique and innovative value of this work lies in the application of technology in the form of video mapping. The process of creating a work is based on research, with stages of creation, including observation, compiling the results of observations into a design, and expressing the results of the preparation in the form of a work of art. The creation of this work of art reintroduces local cultural heritage which is increasingly fading in the era of modernization, which expects to convey the moral and ethical teachings contained in the Macapat song to the younger generation.

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