

# WEST SUMATERA'S CONTEMPORARY PAINTING IN SOCIOLOGY STUDIES

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## Abstract

West Sumatra is one of the regions that contribute many artists to the field of arts. One of the field of arts that gains so much attention is contemporary art. It is an art that is no longer bound to the rules of past works. Contemporary art has gained such a rapid growth that it intrigues many researchers to conduct studies on it. This present study attempts to investigate the factors that influence the development of contemporary art and how these factors determine the direction of its development. The study was conducted with descriptive qualitative methods. It involved interviews with several informants, and reading and comparing various related literatures. Based on the results, it can be concluded that contemporary art has undergone significant growth and development which are influenced by the social system such as the environment, the education in West Sumatra, the arts community and so on.

**Keywords:** Painting, Contemporary, Sociology.

## Introduction

West Sumatra is one of the places that contribute many artists to the field of arts including the arts of music, dance, drama and fine arts. For instance, one of the aforesaid fields, namely fine arts, has produced many potential artists such as Zaini, Effendi, Hamzah, and others. They all have participated in making West Sumatra proud and even actively involved in International arena. Usman in Erfahmi (2007: 1) states that:

in the last two centuries in West Sumatra, there were many artists who relied their works on oral tradition inherited from their predecessors. The artists have produced daily-use items such as pandanus, rattan, songket, wood carving, pottery, metal craft and others. The forms, functions, material properties, method of granting and the application of artistic values have been successfully combined in a harmonious way, making their works become beautiful and meaningful.

This explains the contribution of the people in West Sumatra in creating the artworks which not only have certain functions but also display their own aesthetic values. Although art did not experience rapid development in the previous decades, nowadays artists and other art activists have begun to reestablish the passion for artwork. This fact can be seen in various events and exhibitions that are often carried out.

Basically, the art that exists today can be categorized as contemporary or modern. The work produced is no longer bounded to the rules of the past work. In other words, artists create works according to the concept of the present. In the past, a West Sumatra artist, Agus Purwanto, produced works that were directed towards the contemporary realm. Yet, at that time the contemporary term was not familiar to the artists. It was not until 1993 in which the term contemporary began to be known as a form of art creations that are free of the existing rules or standards. As there is no type of flow underlying the work, thus it is known as contemporary art.

Contemporary art continues to develop. The development is obviously influenced by the existing social factors. Social life plays an active role in the creation of artwork. The turmoils or conditions that are happening may lead to the emergence of critical thinking. In addition, the presence of related institutions such as the educational institution which have given birth to many artists is also considered as one of the factors that greatly influences the growth of contemporary art in West Sumatra.

In West Sumatra, there is a lot of educational institutions that focus on the arts such as the Middle School of Fine Arts (SMSR), INS Kayu Tanam, Fine Arts UNP, ISI Padang Panjang and so on. Beside the education, the art community also becomes one of the determinant factors to the development of contemporary art in West Sumatra. There are many art communities established in West Sumatra such as the Belanak Community, Rumah Ada Seni (RAS), Villa A, Ladang Rupa and other communities. In West Sumatra, there is also a Cultural Park which is known as a place for harmony. The aforesaid things are factors that influence the development of contemporary art in West Sumatra.

Sociology of art, according to Wollf (1981: 5), "is a study (if it can be called scientific) which is not independent, but an interaction between sociological science and art history, which becomes an interdisciplinary scientific discourse". Art does not only examine how art is able to move the feeling of art lovers and/or how artists are able to express their feelings, but it also examines how the art develops from time to time. The history of art has always evolved from time to time towards the direction of semiotics that is focused on the mark produced in a work of art. If, in the past, the art frequently showed what appeared to be visible to the naked eye, today, along with the development of knowledge and an increasingly critical mindset, artists begins to come up with ideas through cultural symbols or signs. The signs present the existence of socio-cultural phenomena that occur in the social order of society. This situation is what has become the discipline of art history in a visual culture, and hence it cannot be separated from inter-discipline in the sociology of art. Sociology of art and art history become a unified scientific study or interdisciplinary that needs to be used in identifying the existing phenomena or cases.

Social and cultural studies are complex phenoma that always occur continuously or sustainably. Humans interact every day and experience social processes in life. These interactions will produce certain phenomena that are appropriate and interesting to be used as sources of ideas for the creation of an artwork. The developments in the artwork are set as artistic products in Indonesia. Complex phenomena that arise from the critical idea of the present are a form of contemporary painting. This case certainly cannot be separated from sociology studies.

## **Method**

The research entitled "Contemporary paintings in Sociological studies" can be categorized into the frame of qualitative research. It is because this study focuses on the tools and techniques in the fields which are oriented towards natural paradigms (Guba and Lingcoln in Moleong, 1989: vii). In connection with the statement, Nawawi (1983: 209) also explains that; "Qualitative research can be viewed as a series of activities or processes of capturing information from the normal conditions in the life of an object and the relationship with solving a problem, both from a theoretical and practical point of view".

## **Discussion**

The part comprises summary, explanation, and interpretation of the findings from the collected data. Overall, it consists of aspects related to the research questions that have been asked in this study, namely the Factors Affecting West Sumatra Contemporary Art.

Based on the review conducted from time to time, the development and growth of West Sumatra contemporary paintings cannot be separated from various influential factors. The studies of such art phenomena often include the sociological theory proposed by Vera L. Zolberg as the main theoretical foundation, and are supported by other theories and interviews related to the problems.

According to Zolberg (1990: ix), scholars have found an art construction, namely social institutions, artists, and society. The assumption is confirmed by the concept that the occurring art phenomena need to be united with the complexity of art invention, the creation of tradition, evaluation, and history.

One influential aspect mentioned is social/educational institution. The institutions in question are the ones, either managed by the government or private sector, that deal with art. Such institution certainly has an influence on growth or the development of art in West Sumatra.

In West Sumatra, there are several institutions of arts such as Fine Arts Middle School (SMSR), INS Kayu Tanam, ISI Padang Panjang and UNP Fine Arts and so on. These institutions have given birth to artists who have extraordinary potential and talents. Private Vocational School 4 Padang is one of the art institutions which was founded on September 25, 1965 and has undergone several changes. It was originally known as the Indonesian Art School (SSRI), but later in 1977 it was changed to the Fine Arts Middle School (SMSR). In 1994 the school changed again into Private Vocational School 4 Padang, and it continues up until now.

The school has produced many potential graduates who work in various regions from the country to abroad. Some of them work as Sculptors, Graphic Designers, Photographers, Illustrators, Painters, Artists,

Journalists, Entrepreneurs, Craftsmen, Teachers, Lecturers and so on. Moreover, some other graduates have become famous painters including Yunizar, Rudi Mantovani, Handiwirman, Stefan Buana and many more.

In regard to previous discussion related to West Sumatra contemporary painting in sociology study, SMSR or Private Vocational School 4 Padang has contributed to the birth of many great painters including Stefan Buana and Rudi Mantofani, a contemporary painter who has been active in the international arena. From many programs such multimedia, sales, accounting, animation, DKV, DPIL, DPKT and Painting, Painting department has contributed the development of contemporary painting in West Sumatra.

In addition to that school, there is also the Department of Fine Arts of UNP which was originally a Department of Fine Arts at the Andalas University's which now becomes FBS Department of Fine Arts, Padang State University (UNP). In this department, there are many compulsory and elective courses. One of which is a basic painting course, compulsory subject, that must be taken by every student of fine art program. After taking this compulsory course, students can take advanced courses including painting 1, painting 2 and painting 3. In its development, this course is able to explore the potential of students, making the students be able to work realistically and develop potential in the external environments. In fact, with the knowledge and skills obtained by the graduates UNP Department of Fine Arts has an influence on the development of contemporary painting in West Sumatra. One of the contemporary artists that graduated from the institution is Erianto who is famously known as Mak Etek.

The next influential factor is artists. Artists are the determining factors that play direct roles in the continuation of West Sumatra's contemporary art. True artists, according to Becker (1984: 229), are completely ready to produce and fully capable of producing artworks that are in accordance with the rules. Such artists will be fully drawn into the world of art. They will not cause problems to anyone who has to cooperate with them, and their work will get a large and responsive audience. Such artists can be said as professional artists

One of West Sumatra artists who has produced a lot of works and is well known in the international arena is Rudi Mantofani. Rudi often presents objects that are considered trivial but rich in spirit and meaning, making them stand out from other. His paintings are representations of natural objects in a way that is perfect, absurd and full of irony. His deep understanding of religion does not become a constraint for his creativity and work. He does not depict animate creature, but he is able to present the surrounding objects into a more sensational work.

It is different from Stefan Buana who is also a contemporary artist from West Sumatra. Stefan is one of many artists who take political themes as a source of inspiration. This case clearly indicates that social life has contributed to the thinking of the artists. It is evident in one of his works "the Buron" which has a message related to the chaos caused by the struggle for power.

## **Conclusion**

It can be concluded that the development and growth of West Sumatra contemporary art are influenced by several factors, namely artists, the community and also institutions both public and private. The first factor is artist. The works produced by the artists are certainly significant, making the contemporary art in West Sumatra continue to develop. The second factor is community as the supporters. They contribute to the development by appreciating the artworks. The third factor is institution. The institutions have given a lot of influence. Many institutions in West Sumatra have produce many contemporary artists who are even active in the international arena.

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