

# Sanggit Aesthetics

## The Meeting of Modernity and Tradition in the Work Paradigm of the Art of Painting

Dharsono

Department of Fine Art, Faculty of Fine Art and Design, Indonesian Institute of the Arts Surakarta, Indonesia

### Abstract

The research perspective focuses on discerning the field of traditional art development with a touch of modernity, which later is called *sanggit* aesthetics in the work paradigm of the art of painting to: (1) observe phenomena emerging as a work with symbolic revitalization, (2) observe phenomenon emerging as a work with symbolic reinterpretation, (3) observe phenomenon emerging as a work with symbolic abstraction and (4) observe phenomenon emerging as a work with symbolic expression. The research stages were accomplished using qualitative research model with cultural approach, referring to Javanese cultural precepts in accordance with Javanese cultural philosophies and ideologies. This approach centered on data interpretation in a case study. Reviews dealing with analysis in this study emphasized more on interaction model of qualitative data analysis, by using Javanese cultural approach. Interactive analysis was carried out to analyze qualitative, empirical data. The results of analysis were later examined using hermeneutic interpretative analysis. The existence of painting representing an expression of *sanggit* aesthetics is not merely a painting which utilizes *wayang* or puppets as the source of the idea of expression, but also an evidence of historical sustainable process. Puppets in several stages of figure transformation have opened historical pieces of the art of painting in Indonesia. *Sanggit* aesthetics is the meeting of modernity and tradition in the work paradigm of the art of painting, phenomenon to search for Indonesian cultural identity with Indonesian origin.

**Keywords:** *Sanggit* aesthetics, revitalization, reinterpretation, abstraction, and symbolic expression

### 1. Introduction

With the intention to welcome globalization era, local study (traditional art) exists as a global ideology because the more global an era is, the more local we should be. Hence, traditional art has to be well-maintained, as a form of cultural endurance. This effort can be defined as preservation, which includes activities of maintaining, taking care of, and protecting. Conservation is a preservation which takes form of developing and utilizing values. Conservation emphasizes more on alternative development in responding the global condition of art and culture. The research perspective focuses on discerning field of traditional art development with a touch of modernity, which later is called *sanggit* aesthetics in the work paradigm of the art of painting, including: (1) observing phenomena emerging as a work with symbolic revitalization, (2) observing phenomenon emerging as a work with symbolic reinterpretation, (3) observing phenomenon emerging as a work with symbolic abstraction and (4) observing phenomenon emerging as a work with symbolic expression.

### 2. Literature Review

The cultural condition of Indonesia has passed a process of cultural change since prehistoric era. The process reflects the development of some of ethnic cultures. The development of such cultures, particularly the development of the history of fine art in Indonesia, has important characteristics, which later reflect the cultural diversity, as one of identity and personality of Indonesian people.

Wiyoso (1996) states that essential characteristic of Indonesian fine arts is its pluralistic forms, spreading throughout *Nusantara*. This characteristic mirrors cultural diversity of a nation of which people live in separated areas. Each area has prehistoric cultural root as a base of tradition of Indonesian fine arts which is still maintained. A culture resulted from skillful hands of Indonesian people with different cultures and arts according to the places they come from is one of basic capital of development which requires study and examination as preservative efforts. The presence of traditional art needs to be preserved, particularly to provide a cultural asset in today's development. Efforts are required to recognize Javanese art and try to dig the cultural background of Javanese people. Javanese culture has ascended various forms of classical arts like *karawitan* (Javanese traditional music), dance, *keris* (double edged dagger), *batik*, architecture, interior, *wayang* or puppets, and so on (Wiyoso, 1996:1).

Wiyoso (1993) postulates that *wayang* in the last development of Hindu era with realistic style was in accordance with the interest of Hindu religion developed by the mastery of preachers (*wali*) in Islamic era in new aesthetic custom based on Islamic culture. Criteria of expression style of *wayang* shifted into non-realistic which were rich of symbolic meanings. The mastery of *wali* and kings in managing the elements of *wayang* forms resulted new puppets signaling the continuous process of puppetry tradition seen from the aspect of fine arts.

The art tradition continuity has been missed so that pioneering new art forms was hindered and even came into stop. As a result of imbalance, the development process of fine arts in Indonesia relied merely on the preservation of art tradition, without any efforts to develop and create the new one. It was the imbalance that happened at the culture slack in Hindies-Netherlands colonial era, when the popularity of culture in Indonesian-Islam kingdoms started to fade away. During that time, tradition awareness of colonized state was under-pressed, resulting in the lack of creativity to find new expression form reflecting the power of art tradition in the past (Wiyoso, 1993:41).

Haryoguritno (1993) points out that in addition to *wayang kulit purwa* (*purwa* shadow puppet, *wayang golek purwa* (*purwa golek* puppet) was also popular in West Java (Sunda). *Wayang kulit purwa* developed in Central Java, East Java and Bali. In Central Java (Surakarta), the development reached its peak in the end of nineteenth century. In some other areas like Cirebon, Banyumas, Kedu and Yogyakarta, *wayang kulit purwa* fine arts were also created and developed based on the creativity level and regional appreciation of each area. Also, the remains of paper roll puppets so-called *wayang beber* were found in Wonosari and Pacitan areas. In reference to the available theories, *wayang beber* was made or performed for the first time in Majapahit era. Though these theories can be considered reasonable, many things are equivocal. The comparison results show that the shape of *wayang beber* seems to indicate newer era than the shapes of other *wayang* with the same age in Majapahit era. Perhaps *wayang beber* was created in the fall of Majapahit (at the beginning of 16<sup>th</sup> century), before the cultural center moved to Demak (Central Java  $\pm$  1522 AD). As we know that at that time Islam started to be introduced in the area of the north coast of Java. Acculturation of Java-Hindu and Islam proceeded peacefully and compromisingly which later created new puppets. *Wayang kulit purwa* in the Islamic era developed in such way to avoid conflicts with Islam lesson dogma which did not describe human realistically (Haryoguritno, 1993:53-54).

Kartika (2012) mentions that news written by Ma Huan ( $\pm$  1414 M) set straight the existence of *wayang beber* in Majapahit, but the form of painting and stylization were not explained, and therefore, it is likely that the style was different from *wayang beber* heritage from Pacitan and Gunung Kidul (Groeneveldt in Kartika, 2012: 10). However, seen from the physical aspect, it can be simultaneously concluded that the characterizations in *wayang beber* (see Figure1) must have been improved because Islam forbid the slight depiction of face, neck or whole body just like *wayang purwa* in general (Kartika, 2012: 10).



Figure 1. *Wayang beber* with Pacitan style with the scene of conversation at Karangtalun Market (Picture by Bagyo Suharyono), made as instructed by Mangkurat II.

The conversation was taken from *wayang beber* roll of Mangkunegaran real estate (home), which was painted with *Chandra Sengkala* or lunar chronogram of *Gawe Srabi Jinawah ing Wong* or in 1614. In reference to Sastramiruda book, Pacitanese *wayang beber* with the story of *Joko Kembang Kuning* (Yellow Flower Man) was made as instructed by Mangkurat II (1677-1678) which is now kept by the family of Samen Gonocarita from Karangtalun village, Donorejo sub-district, Pacitan regency, East Java. Wonosarian *wayang beber* with the story of Remeng Mangunjaya was made as instructed by Pakubuwana II (1727-1749) which now is preserved by the family of Sapar Ronosentono from Gelaran village, Karangmojo sub-district, Gunung Kidul (Kartika, 2012:11).

Soedarso (1986) mentions the depiction of *wayang beber* painting: the style of both Pacitanese *wayang beber* with the story of *Jaka Kembang Kuning* and Wonosarian *wayang beber* with the story of Remeng Mangunjaya is non-realistic composed by the masters (*Empu*) and preachers or (*wali*) in Islamic culture. *Wayang beber* was obviously not made in Majapahit era, but in a period when the influence of Islam had touched puppet show arts in Indonesia. Here, it has to be underlined that there was the transformation of Indonesian culture in the continuity of *wayang* in the development of fine arts in Indonesia during Hindu and Islam period (Sularto in Soedarso 1986:22).

Kempers (1959) explains: (1) the relief of Jago temple is closer to the stylization form of Balinese puppet (and Javanese puppet during that time) than the relief of Ramayana in Panataran temple. Even though, in fact,

Jago temple is older than Panataran temple, East Java. In line with the evolution of inspiring stylization form, the last pattern should be taken, (2) on Panataran temple, there are two types of relief styles, namely realistic style with relief panels of Kresnayana story, and decorative style resembling those in the panels of Ramayana relief, and hence, public have assumed that realistic style on Prambanan relief gradually changed into decorative style just like on the relief of temples in East Java which is later made, and (3) on the relief of Jago temple, it was depicted that to indicate the transition between scenes, the motifs of *gunungan* or *kayon* like what are available on *wayang kulit*, were used to begin and end scenes by putting *gunungan* in the middle of the screen. Without that influence, it seems impossible for people to use *gunungan* or *kayon* to show the transition between scenes. On the other hands, there are some other ways to pause scenes like on the relief of Surawana temple; using straight connected curls (Kempers, 1959:84-92).

Kempers' opinion shows us that *wayang kulit* performance has existed and even has been popular among people. Hence, it is understandable that when people needed to decorate the walls of temples, they chose the well-known *wayang kulit* to be included as volume. Moreover, various shadow puppet stories were suitable to be related to the establishment of a temple, for example the story of Sudamala, a story about *ruwatan* (a ceremony to protect the household), and the form matched with the space to decorate. It has been known that the walls of temple were full of horizontal lines, dividing temples into head, body, and feet which later were divided within frames having various types. Hence, the horizontal, longitudinal shape of the *kelir* of *wayang kulit* was proper as basic idea to fill spaces of temple (Kartika, 2012: 14).

Claire Holt (1967) makes an analog that *wayang kulit* existed in the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century, one of the oldest *wayang* found on the relief of Prambanan temple, as stated in Haryonoguritno's script on the previous page, exactly emerging prediction that *wayang* prototype had appeared long time before. This prediction is supported with many clues on various charters from earlier eras. For example, *aringgit* in *Tembaga Jaha* Charter (840 AD), besides other words like *atapukan* (mask player), *abanyol* (comedian), etc.). As well, *macarita* and *mawayang* with *Bhimmaya* story were also found in *Piagam Tembaga* (Tembaga Charter) from Central Java (Holt, 1967: 281-282).

According to Tabrani (1993), transformation process of culture kept continuing, not only from the development of the art of painting in Indonesia with Hindu/Buddha culture to Islam culture. *Wayang* then became the source of idea and inspiration of art activities of Indonesian painters. Besides *wayang kulit purwa*, various puppets were also sources of expression, including *wayang beber*, *wayang kulit*, *wayang golek*, and *wayang orang*, all of which were in the limelight and taken from root of tradition which were developed innovatively and produced sculptures, paintings, and crafts. Approximately in 1244, *wayang gelar* existed, and developed into *wayang beber* ( $\pm$ 1361) and later *wayang beber sunggingan* ( $\pm$ 1397), *wayang beber* with the story of Panji ( $\pm$ 1562) and *wayang beber* Remeng Mangunjaya ( $\pm$ 1735). *Wayang beber* existed as performing media. Later, it reappeared as a form of imitation (instead of as performing media) around 1939 (Tabrani, 1993:6).

The differences describe a cultural shift happened significantly, a shift of the function of *wayang beber* as performing art media and reappeared as *wayang beber* imitation. The imitation in the next development was not only painted on canvas, but also on glass. The copy of *wayang beber* on canvas was later so-called *wayang beber* painting. In the latest stage of development, *wayang* painting (*wayang beber* or other puppets) was no longer as a copy by source of inspiration and expression media. *Wayang kulit* (particularly *wayang kulit purwa*) also keeps existing as a preservative effort of traditional art. However, *wayang* also appears with different existence and essence. Form and style changes appear on artworks which embrace freedom. It is freedom to express through new interpretation of *wayang* figures which he uses as a framework of the process of creation of Indonesian artists of fine arts. *Wayang* is later an artist's reference; source of inspiration and expression media (Kartika 2012:15).

Kartika (2012) explains that cultural transformation gets going and artists start to observe and make use of *wayang* as art creating medium, as well as efforts to preserve traditional arts and innovation creatively. The use of *wayang* as a source of idea for artwork creation by modern painters is blooming. Therefore, various patterns and styles of *wayang kulit* appear on the development of fine arts in Indonesia. The life of culture is faced with two perspectives, conservative and progressive. Conservative perspective wishes orientation of efforts to maintain cultural heritage completely, efforts to span golden needle which can connect culture in the past time and today. On the contrary, progressive perspective wishes a change through modernization process. Those two powers walk along each other and frictions possibly happen, which result in the emergence of art forms orientated with those perspectives. Afterwards, there appeared artworks as a result of revitalization, which belong to classical study works in today's work concept, and artworks resulted from reinterpretation of works which make use of traditional art idioms as the sources of idea of modern art creation. The model is later made for developing traditional art in Indonesia as one of modern arts with traditional root. Such traditional art is later called modern or contemporary traditional art. Both contemporary traditional art and modern art conceptually are based on creativity. The creativity level depends on the capabilities of the professional artists in their specialties and abilities to understand and explore diverse problems, as well as abilities to conquer their era. The form and

direction of the development of traditional art today are varied, starting from tradition in creative innovation, which uses traditional concept creatively with stocks of tradition which has passed vital phase and becomes a traditional art that is more creative with the touch of latest tradition (Kartika 2012:52).

Kusnadi (1977) reveals the existence of art among Indonesian people today in which artists occupy their position as style shapers in creating artworks, reflected on the cultural image and the personality color of the people. In order to build the image of Indonesian culture, Indonesian paintings are realized in various themes by sensitizing old or new style with the media of painting. To begin with, Indonesian artists draw everything based on its obvious form, meaning that its existence employs realistic style. The next development is making an abstract of its form and sense, as well as creating through form stylization or form and rhyme management, crystallization of symbolic idea and making the symbols as the symbols in the art of painting. The use of line and color elements within the process of creating form genuinely serves as the base of painting creation by Indonesian artists (Kusnadi 1977: 146). The history of the art of modern painting in Indonesia has come to the presence of various colors and types of styles attributable to the development of ways of thinking of academicians today. The works of academic artists with various alternative experiment types, keep proceeding along with non-academic works with conventional color, each of which is rich with phenomena and alternative proposals which enrich the history of the art of painting in Indonesia today. Contextually, the development of the art of *wayang* painting is not directly influenced by the color and style of certain period of painting history in Indonesia. However, conceptually, there is an indirect relationship between the styles of *wayang* painting art in Indonesia and the development of ways of thinking in the history of painting in Indonesia. The presence of art among Indonesian people today in which artists occupy their style in shaper position when creating artworks reflects the cultural image and the personality color of the people.

In order to build the image of Indonesian culture, Indonesian paintings are realized in various themes by sensitizing old or new style with the media of painting. In the beginning, Indonesian artists draw everything based on its obvious form, meaning that its existence employs realistic style. The next development is making an abstract of its form and sense, as well as creating through form stylization or form and rhyme management, crystallization of symbolic idea and making the symbols as the symbols in the art of painting. The use of line and color elements within the process of creating form genuinely serves as the base of painting creation by Indonesian artists (Kusnadi 1977: 146). Relating to a painter Agus Djaya in PERSAGI and Revolution Era, Kusnadi in his research on the history of Indonesian fine arts reported that artworks with decoratively arranged figure composition invite us to appreciate beauty through nature decoratively, and color, as well as monumental impression of the composition of figures. Mystical situation is depicted through the works, as strong as sensuality of the female characters/figures. Figure depiction on the works of Agus Djaya are inspired by characters in shadow puppet and relief on temple (Kusnadi, 1977: 165). Sudjojono, in his collection of writing entitled *Seni Lukis, Kesenian dan Seniman* (Painting, Arts and Artist), provides consideration and direction of arts, so that it can be an exemplar of generation at that time. It is stated that each artist is demanded to have an artistic sense to be an artist. It is courage to come up with an idea to the world even without any public responses. With this sort of character, an artist will be braver to struggle for what is called 'truth' and love what he believes as 'beauty'. It is a beauty that is aesthetically to artist's point of view, instead of to public's opinion. Artworks are created only when the motivation comes from the heart which later forces artist to create (Kusnadi, 1977: 169).

Dharsono (1999) reports that the era of PERSAGI and Revolution (1937-1945) in Indonesia was a period in which nation's aspiration grew strongly in the heart of all Indonesians. It was an era to raise social status and prestige of the state and expel colonials. The birth of *Persatuan Ahli Gambar Indonesia* (PERSAGI) or an arts organization of Indonesia (1937) was the missing link of the birth of Budi Utomo (1908), Pendidikan Taman Nasional (1922), Sumpah Pemuda or Youth Pledge (1928) and Pujangga Baru with the hopes on Indonesian new literature. PERSAGI was intended to develop the art of painting among Indonesian people by creating new Indonesian color. Sudjojono and artists in his era were influenced by the presence of personal aspiration which was on the ground of cultural environment; namely the power of *wayang* traditional culture or motifs painted on traditional houses. Besides, the aforementioned statement also signalizes that painters in the past have already been influenced by themes and modern painting techniques (Western). This indicates the presence of form and style of modern painting in Indonesia with Indonesian root (Dharsono, 1999:53-54).

Sanento Yuliman (1990) in the discussion notes that there are at least two eras that have to be recorded in the last few years. The first era is new fine arts movement in which creative freedom reached its peak of idealism from young artists who had to keep up the times and changes of situation. This movement emerged around 1970 and was a significant art event to record. The second era is globalization issue of post 1980 the art of painting, in which artists were faced with global economic situation or, in other words, artists were the properties of conglomerates. This era was often called the Boom of Indonesian Painting Art.

All of the periods were marked by an increase in the number of saleable paintings proved by an increase in the number and frequency of exhibition, development of commercial gallery, an increase in the number of



exhibition sponsors, and in the number of painting collectors in addition to an increase in the number of painters involved, an increase in price of paintings, and expansion of exhibitions (exhibitions are held not only in particular venues, but also in hotels, banks, and shopping centers). Others include auction of paintings, art forgery, and re-release of ancient or old paintings (Yuliman, 1990:1-2).

I.W. Suarta (1993) depicts the history of the art of painting in Bali. During 1930-1970s era in Bali, the art of painting happened to develop with the presence of painters like R. Bonnet, Walter Spies and Cokorde Agung Sukawati through Pita Maha body. Among New Balinese artists were Gede Mregeg, Gusti Ketut Kobot, Gusti Molog, Ida Bagus Made, and Ida Bagus Rai. *Wayang* painting artists made a physical change of works; dynamic, anatomic, sensitive to perspective, and concentrated to use light composition with various colors. Further, the works were mostly well-known as modern Balinese *Wayang* Painting Art with Pita Maha style (I.W. Suarta, 1993:14-15).

Figure 2. I Gusti Ketut Kobot, *the Battle at Kuru Setra*, (141 x 70 cm), Tempera on Canvas,



Painting Art of Modern Balinese Puppet with Pita Maha Style (Picture by Kartika, 1998)

Painting with Pita Maha style used *wayang* theme as a source of inspiration of artists to create the works. The shape of *wayang* is obvious, as well as the technique of painting *wayang* which has given plastic anatomic impression. Thematic shift happened from the theme taken from Sutasoma book and religious books to themes of everyday life. Color simplicity and composition consideration were influenced by modern aesthetic concept of R. Bonet and Walter Spies. However, those two painters kept applying traditional and characteristic coloring technique and painting style. Western aesthetic concept was still limited on anatomy and the change of theme. However, the modern *wayang* painting appeared to undergo some innovations to be recorded as a leap of Balinese modern painting history (Kartika, 2012:49)

The presence of painters like R. Bonnet, Walter Spies and Cokorde Agung Sukawati was able to change traditional Balinese painting style with *wayang* style of some painters in Bali, into Balinese painting style providing realistic impression with simplified composition. The use of primary colors developed into various derivative colors to create a painting with Pita Maha style. Basically, the style of Pita Maha painting occupied a foundation which combined two bases, Balinese traditional aesthetics and modern aesthetic directed by Bonnet, with consideration to physical realism to express daily life of Balinese people, without leaving the image of traditional Balinese painting.

### 3. Research Method

The research stages were done using qualitative research model with cultural approach, referring to the Javanese cultural precepts in accordance with Javanese cultural philosophies and ideologies. This approach emphasizes on data interpretation in a case study (Denzin, 1980:100).

Data were collected using in-depth interview which was chosen because it was flexible and open, did not use strict and formal structures, and could be repeated to the same informants. The questions address could be more focused, and therefore more detailed and in-depth information was collected. This structure was meant to be sufficiently deep. The flexibility of this way was its ability to dig informant's honesty to provide true information, especially dealing with feeling, attitude, and perspective on the existence of classical art artifacts. This interview technique was implemented to all informants or resource persons selectively, by considering theoretical concepts applied. This technique was more purposive and this was called criterion-based sampling, selecting informants based on criteria (those who were considered capable and reliable as data sources). However, other informants or resource persons considered providing more accurate information and understanding the problems more deeply would also be chosen, and therefore, the selection informants or resource persons selected might be developed based on the need and reliability in obtaining data.

Reviews dealing with analysis in this study emphasized more on interaction model of qualitative data analysis, by using Javanese cultural approach. Interaction of analysis was carried out to analyze qualitative data obtained from empirical data collecting. This is so in order to obtain accurate results from sorting, both with

classification and identification. This model was selected because it enables many more characterizations which can capture information and explanation in a summary of data reduction and conclusion. The model applied to analyze qualitative data was implementing cycle system, meaning that a researcher always keeps moving and exploring objects during the process (Rohidi, 1992:19-20).

The results of interactive analysis were later examined with interpretative analysis using hermeneutic approach. Hermeneutics points to interpretation of meaningful expression which can be carried out intentionally by human. It involves elucidating interpretation as if the works were recreated with new meaning, based on the theory of culture used (Sutopo, 1996:29). Hermeneutics emphasizes on a problem and how it is expressed. Thus, hermeneutics is formulated as a theory of operations of understanding in relation to cultural interpretation—as a text. Interpretation is asserted as a distinction of a hidden meaning behind obvious meaning. The task of hermeneutics then is identifying or recognizing the nature of text and textual world or reality spoken by a text, instead of the soul of its creature (Poespoprodjo, 1991:117-118).

## 5. Discussion

*Sanggit* aesthetics is the meeting of tradition and modernity, an art paradigm with a touch of tradition, and a phenomenon in searching for Indonesian cultural identity. To face the globalization era, gaining control of modernity with a touch of tradition in conformity with society perspectives is highly required. Javanese perspectives are inseparable with development and developing cultural system in society. The developing culture is sustainable and *ajeg* (continuous) in nature, or so-called *alon-alon waton kelakon*<sup>1</sup> in Javanese language. The development is in accordance with Javanese way of life which points up the inner peace. This gives an overview of the society's perspectives which refer to a harmony of inseparable relationships among individual self, environment (societies), universe, and God. Javanese societies apply *paugeran* as a system which is based on both written and unwritten (customary laws) cultural precepts. Life in the world, as well as in a society, has been mapped and written in such regulations as Javanese ethics which aim at regulating interindividual behavior, customary laws which function to create harmonious relationship among societies, regulations for worship which deal with formal relationship with God, and moral rules which are associated with such attitudes as *narima* (accepting according to prevailing regulations), patience, *waspada-eling* (introspection), *andap asor* (humility), and *prasaaja* (simplicity) and which control personal forces and emotions (Mulder, 1984: 13).

Mulder's argument provides connotation on the society's way of life to control themselves in a cultural bond, between an individual and society (interhuman) including a harmonious relationship with society (as well as nature), and to regulate worship practices (including obedience to God—*sikap manembah*). The relationship harmony in Javanese philosophy is termed vertical-horizontal relationships between *jagad besar* (macrocosm) dan *jagad kecil* (microcosm). The philosophy denotes the relationship between living system and the aforementioned cosmoses. The argument also implies that the highest wisdom, the peak of the philosophy, is knowledge on God, the Absolute Truth. The relationship between God and humans is the core of mystical philosophy (Kartika, 2016:184).

Javanese perspectives on the upper and lower parts of the universe are often integrated with those on the middle part of the universe which is known as *dwitunggal* ('monistic dualism'). This principle is in accordance with such Javanese terms as *loro-loroning hatunggal* (freely, 'unity in duality'), *rwa bhineda* (the two adverse supernatural forces standing on different sides), *kiwo tengen* (which literally means left and right), and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (unity in diversity). In Javanese perspectives, the principle of combining two things into one is called syncretism. I Kuntara Wiryamartana regards the Javanese cosmic perspectives as micro-macro-metacosms. The former refers to human, the middle includes the universe, while the latter covers *alam niskala* (the indivisible), *alam sakala-niskala* (the divisible and indivisible), and *alam sakala* (the divisible) (Sumardjo in Kartika 2016: 185).

Metacosm is associated with a concept of *mandala*. *Mandala* is, by definition, a circle which represents perfection, flawlessness, wholeness, completeness, and cosmic fullness which is essential and central in nature—the invisible energy which exists in a square with four gates containing a circle (representing essence in existence). The circular figure symbolizes the cosmos, the regularity and order of the universe, perfect harmony existing in the four sections from which the original chaotic unity is broken down. The perfect exist in imperfect world, the light in the dark world, the supreme in the relative world, the orderly in the chaotic world, the male in the female world, and the indivisible in the divisible world. *Mandala* is described as a totality of components of dualities of the existence. The upper world is integrated with the lower through the middle (Sumardjo, 2003:87). Javanese traditional arts did not accidentally yield high arts (*adiluhung*), and Borobudur was not by chance as a historical monumental artwork. Traditional, classical batik art did not coincidentally appear as a product. They had taken a long process to deal with Javanese dialects and previous culture of power.

<sup>1</sup> *Alon-alon waton kelakon* or "slowly but sure" is a Javanese phrase emphasizing on the word *kelakon* or a certainty that something will be accomplished. This means that the Javanese always have faith in reaching something in proportion with the purpose, plan, and careful thought (instead of slow thought) (Dharsono, 2007:29).

Cultural dialectics cannot be separated from a system of culture of power. A system may occur 'within a framework' and it may emerge due to a disappointment of the presence of culture of power. Indonesian artists are expected not only to stand out in their own country, but also to find their national identity and to perform as artists and/or designers who, with their modern insights, are able to represent Indonesia. This implies that to face globalization era, they must master modern (Western) theory and give a touch of tradition (or vice versa) in addition to learning it, unless they like to be considered as small-scale artists. Dealing with globalization means being able to find the national identity as Indonesians (Kartika, 2016:84).

Insights on modern art paradigm must be improved. The concepts of modern art should not only be learned as a course alternative, but also be mastered as a means of studying past traditions. This will result in a new phenomenon which allows to portray the dynamics of life of modern art to solve problems in the search for national identity. Thus, Indonesian designers and/or artists will not only to stand out in their own country, but also to find their national identity and to perform as artists and/or designers who, with their modern insights, are able to represent Indonesia. This implies that to face globalization era, they must master modern (western) theory in addition to learning it, unless they like to be considered as small-scale artists. In order to face globalization, they must be able to find their national identity as Indonesians (how to master modernity with a touch of tradition). This issue is in line with the new paradigm of higher education in the arts in Indonesia: digging for, examining, and cultivating the potentials of the local cultural plurality an asset to compete in global world. To cope with globalization, therefore, studying about local culture is required; the more global an era is, the more local we have to act (Kartika, 2016:85).

### 5.1 *Sanggar Aesthetics in Art Innovations*

*Sanggar* aesthetics is the meeting of tradition and modernity, an art paradigm with a touch of tradition, and a phenomenon in searching for Indonesian cultural identity. The works of *sanggar* aesthetic, as forms of reproduction with innovations, are the works with revitalization concept. These works are intended to preserve traditional arts by providing alternative works with reproduction technique of innovations. This attempt technically reduces the processing through some aspects, including: counter line, coloring technique, display of space volumes, and the thematic story engineering. Such works are mostly created by artists involved in traditional art conservation.

### 5.2 *Symbolic Revitalization*

The works created by the artists are study-tradition works attempted to find alternatives for conservation by representing or imitating cultural heritage. The works of *sanggar* are regarded forms of reproduction with innovation since the artists employ reproduction technique by imitating and adjusting the volumes with innovation or by imitating some models, while the volumes are selected from *jagong* (acts) which are then arranged based on story ideas.



Figure 3: Karmin (1993), *Dewi Sekartaji sayembara*, a glass painting of *wayang beber*

Designed with symbolic revitalization concept (Repro photo by Kartika 1985). This work, which is painted with revitalization, refers to an art tradition (*wayang beber* from Pacitan). The picture above shows the repainting of *wayang beber* with acrylic paint, as the medium, on a canvas in *jagong*: *Dewi Sekartaji* or *Candra Kirana* with the nursemaids (*emban*), the royal apparatus (*abdi dalem*), and the royal family (*sentana praja*). One of the scenes of *Panji* describes the sorrow of the servants watching the tragic fate faced by their princess *Sang Dyah Ayu Dewi Sekartaji*. The princess is painted as a woman figure holding traditional blade (*keris*) as a reflection of a woman who commits suicide due to the sorrow she felt. The servants are then able to amuse the princess so that she cancels her plan (Kartika, 2012:58).



The main basis of art of revitalization is traditional art. Thus, the strategy of its creation is conducted using concepts of conservation or conservation with *mutrani* (*nunggak semi*) (imitating the tradition based on the basic rules). However, the processing of the technique and the materials should be in accordance with the current needs.



Figure 4: Sumadi (1993), *Pertemuan Panji Asmarabangun dengan Para Pengawalnya* (*The Meeting of Panji Asmarabangun with His Guards*): glass painting of wayang beber painted with revitalization concept (Repro photo by Kartika 1985).

The result of reproduction of wayang beber in one of the scenes (*jagong*) from Panji story painted with decorative style belongs to reproduction of innovation made on glass. The figures and volumes of wayang have experienced innovation on medium, adjustment of technique of portraying wayang figures, volume reduction, and change in coloring technique from *sungging* to color gradation (Kartika, 2012:72).

The paintings of Karmin or Sumadi (1993) above are composed with decorative style and romantic theme. Based on the composition, figures and volumes of wayang are the works of reproduction. However, they have experienced medium innovation, adjustment of technique of portraying wayang figures, volume reduction, and change in coloring technique from *sungging* (intricate design painting) to color gradation. Visually, indeed, there is no significant change on painting innovation. Karmin's painting can be interpreted as a work of reproduction dominated by the basic concepts. In other words, no significant innovation is found. Innovation with medium reduction on wayang figures does not seem to develop. Decoration and the volumes look more apparent even there are no empty spaces on the paintings. In order to create a unity in form, the reduction of the medium emphasizes on the composition with informal balance in addition to courage to change colors of *sungging* (in accordance with rules of patterns). Therefore, the intensity of the works does not reduce the depiction of the thematic scene portrayed.

### 5.3 Symbolic Reinterpretation

The works of *sanggit* make use of a story theme with symbolic reinterpretation concept. The story theme is the source of the idea. The use of traditional idioms, structurally, refers to use modern art technique. In other words, artists who belong to this group try to define traditional idioms in expressive manners within the frame of thematic story.

Traditional idioms as the results of reinterpretation present as a combination structure with modern technique of elaboration. Therefore, there will be variation in style depending on the reduction done by the artists. Although the works portray manipulation of certain story, the story idea is merely a result of stimulation in revealing the artist's feeling (Kartika, 2016:90).



Figure 5: Abay D. Subarna (1993), *Fragment 1*, oil paint on a canvas (photo repro by Kartika, 2016).



The above painting takes the theme of *Ramayana* in the scene of the fight (*perang tanding*) between R. Sugriwo and R. Subali to decide which one is older. It is painted with decoration (similar to the painting of *batik*). The composition constructed in a whole is a three-color-area composition: upper, middle, lower. These three colors remind us to the colors of *wayang purwa*. They symbolize the unity of the upper world, middle world, and under world representing *Manunggaling Kawulo Gusti*. This is the reason why *wayang* is considered as the reflection of life philosophy. Thus, it seems that reinterpretation allows us to think about life through the depiction served by the works. This guidance can be seen in the painting of Abay Subarna (Kartika, 2012:102).

The works of symbolic reinterpretation are developed with a concept revealing private concept seeing life through humans' behaviors. The behaviors are mostly reflected from the figures or the stories in *wayang*. It creates assumption that *wayang* has a very deep dimension reflecting attitudes and behaviors in life. Through paintings, the artists ask the viewers to reflect their life through their works. In other words, it is assumed that their works belong to subjective impression painted with one thematic scene in a story, instead of works reflecting scene as a means of conveying meaning (Kartika, 2012:79).



Figure 6: Wayan Suartha (1993), *Hanoman Duta*, oil paint on a canvas, size 95 X 75 cm  
(Repro photo by Kartika 2016).

On the Figure 6 we can see the story of *Ramayana* in the scene of *The Meeting of Shinta and Hanoman*. This scene tells that when *Shinta* was kidnapped by *Rahwana*, *Rama* asked *Hanoman* to bring *Shinta* back. The painting is designed in expressive manners with figurative composition reflected from such figures as *Hanoman*, *Dewi Shinta* and *Trijata*. The style of the painting is Balinese contemporary painting style. The painting is a form of painting art reinterpretation as the realization of the artist's engineering in delivering his ideas. The composition is arranged as a whole as if it reminds us to the form of *pakeliran* in *wayang kulit purwa*. The typical characteristic of artworks with concepts of reinterpretation is transformation of inspiration to aspiration (Kartika, 2012:110).



Figure 7. I Made Sudibia (1993), *Dialog di Padang Kurusetra (A Dialogue in Kurusetra Field)*, oil paint on a canvas, size 110 X 90cm (Photo repro by Kartika 2015).

The theme of the painting above is *Mahabharata* in scene of *The Dialogue between Arjuna and Dewi Durga Kurusetra Field*. The decorative painting was expressively done with figurative composition reflected from the two figures: *Arjuna* and *Dewi Durga*, and with expressionism, a style in Balinese contemporary painting art. The painting in concept includes reinterpretation of art of painting as a manifestation of the artist's engineering in expressing his ideas. The overall composition is established as if it belongs to that of Balinese contemporary style. The inspiration brought by the artist on the scene of *Aruna* and *Batari Dorga*, is still apparent, meaning that the inspiration or the idea is an aspiration in the art of painting of reinterpretation (Kartika, 2012:107).

#### 5.4 Symbolic Abstraction

The works of *sanggit* in the form of symbolic abstraction are conceptually a form of modern arts making use of

traditional idioms as elements as the basis of the construction. The use of idioms is contextually reduced due to the processing made by the artists in interpreting forms symbolically. The traditional idioms no longer present as media in delivering idea thematically, but rather as textual symbols offered by artists in order to let the viewers interpret their works.

Traditional idioms portrayed do not only represent particular idioms, but also serve as a form of life symbolism. *Semar* and *Arjuna*, for example, are not only main figures, but idioms reflecting the artist's ideas through the symbolism in life. The artist tries to express the idea through idioms as one of symbols conveyed to viewers.



Figure 8. Oedijono (1993), *Cobaan*, acrylic on a canvass, size 100 X 100 cm, (Repro photo by Kartika, 1998).

In the Figure 8, Oedijono used *wayang* symbol as a medium to express his artistic feeling. The above *wayang* art of painting with symbolic abstraction is conceptually a form of modern art painting making use of a *wayang golek purwa* figure, *Harjuna*, as the basic element of its composition. The artist borrows the traditional idiom portrayed by *Raden Arjuna* painted as *wayang golek* surrounded with masks. Conceptually, it is a form of symbolic abstraction. The use of *Harjuna* figure has conceptually experienced reduction as the artist interprets the form of *wayang* symbolically. The appearance of *Harjuna* is no longer as thematically idea realization but as textual symbol presented by the artist in order to provide free interpretation for viewers (Kartika, 2012:147).

The art of painting with symbolic abstraction is conceptually a form of modern painting arts making use of *wayang* figure as the basic element of its composition. The use of *wayang* has contextually experienced reduction as the artist interprets the form of *wayang* symbolically. The appearance of *wayang* figures is no longer as thematically idea realization but as textual symbol presented by the artist in order to provide free interpretation for the viewers.



Figure 9: Ivan Hariyanto (1993), *Mengibas Awan (Flicking the Cloud)* oil paint on a canvas, size 90X70 cm (Photo repro by Kartika,1998).

This artist uses *wayang* symbol as a medium to deliver his feeling. The artist uses interpretative symbol of a *wayang golek* flicking the cloud which is painted with surrealism style. Conceptually, it is a form of symbolic abstraction. The presence of *Harjuna* in this Ivan Haryanto's painting is no longer as thematically idea realization but as textual symbol presented by the artist in order to provide free interpretation for viewers (Kartika, 2012:131).

### 5.5 Symbolic Expression

The art of painting with symbolic expression is conceptually a modern art of painting making use of main forms of traditional arts as the basic elements of its composition. The use of the main forms emphasizes more on the abstract elements of *wayang*. The main forms understood by the artist are then processed and translated in an expression through elements of fine arts. Painting is a result of interpretation yielding a combination or composition which refers to composition-oriented basic elements in the artist's mind. It is a form of creativity of artists in creating their artworks.

The main characteristic of this group's works is the indirect expression of the artists in showing their feeling through their works. In expressing their mind, artists tend to show the relationship between forms and main meanings symbolically. Visually, the forms shown by some members of this group directly need interpretation. Meanwhile, some others show the forms that need to be thought first in order to give clear meanings. The works of this group emphasize more on the combination of aspects initiated by traditional idiom so that the works provide full opportunities to viewers.



Figure 10: Nunung WS (1991), *Gunungan*, acrylic and collage on a canvas, size 100 X 100 cm (photo repro by Kartika 1998).

The above painting is made with yellowish color that tries to provide *wayang gunungan* as the basis of the work. The intensity of the work is made through the black color and the dominant color of yellow. As a result, it seems that the artist wants to show a particular energy, about the importance of the *gunungan*, through the painting. The complexity is made through simplicity (as in the philosophy of water: there is energy with superpower within the calmness of water). Nunung WS states that *wayang* has sacred values and attractive forms and lines, particularly color which symbolizes characterization/ characters. The color does not mean nothing, but rather it gives color, meaning that it has spirit intended to be delivered by the artist on a canvas (Kartika, 2012:146).

Art of painting conceptually with symbolic expression belongs to a modern art of painting making use of the essence of idioms of traditional art as the basic element. The creation of an art work, sometimes, can be considered surprising since surveying does not match creating process. Regarding the fact, artists have a special quality or characteristic under his or her creativity and benefit from the meeting of the message and adaptation. Image or message attached to an artwork will be strongly determined by artists' skillfulness, carefulness, and the certainty in defining the forms as the language which delivers the meaning of the works.

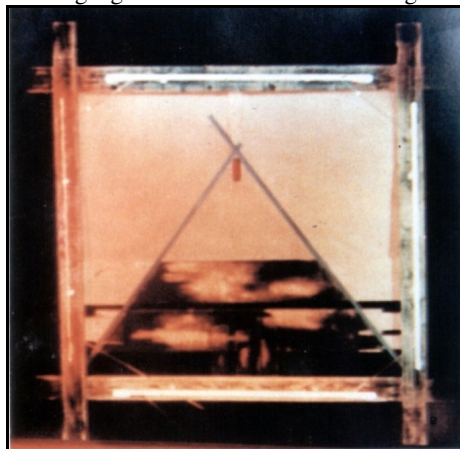


Figure 11. M. Sulebar S (1993), *Lukisan 9 (Painting 9)*, oil paint on a glass, size 100 X 100 cm.

The work of symbolic expression (abstractionist) is no longer informing a particular life. It is a symbol of the artist's feeling portrayed through *wayang* figures. The symbols presented still use *wayang* as their objects by composing the basic elements of fine arts (Kartika, 2012:147)

The process of creation emphasizes more on the creativity while the attempt of revealing the meaning depends on the techniques, carefulness, skillfulness, and decision to determine elements of design, and therefore the artwork may provide textual definition filled with interpretation. The art of painting offer various symbolic meanings and interpretative meanings. Hermeneutically, observers emphasize on the composition of the fine art elements offering serious interpretation and comprehension.

## 6. Conclusions

It can be concluded that the development of traditional arts with a touch of modernity, or *sanggit* aesthetic, in the paradigm of art of painting involves:

1. A phenomenon emerging as a work with symbolic revitalization. The main basis of art of revitalization is traditional art. Thus, the strategy of its creation is conducted using concepts of conservation or conservation with *mutrani (nunggak semi)* (imitating the tradition based on the basic rules). However, the processing of the technique and the materials should be in accordance with the current needs.
2. A phenomenon emerging as a work with symbolic reinterpretation. Traditional idioms as the results of reinterpretation present as a combination structure with modern technique of elaboration. Therefore, there will be variation in style depending on the reduction done by the artists. Although the works portray manipulation of certain story, the story idea is merely a result of stimulation in revealing the artist's feeling
3. A phenomenon emerging as a work with symbolic abstraction. Traditional idioms portrayed do not only represent particular idioms, but also serve as a form of life symbolism. The artist tries to express the idea through idioms as one of symbols conveyed to viewers.
4. A phenomenon emerging as a work with symbolic expression. Traditional idioms are portrayed in abstract. The main forms understood by the artist are then processed and translated in an expression through elements of fine arts. Painting is a result of interpretation yielding a combination or composition which refers to composition-oriented basic elements in the artist's mind. It is a form of creativity of artists in creating their artworks.

## References

- Denzin, N.K. Lincoln, Yvorna, S, (1980), "Handbook of Qualitative Research (Ed)", California: SAGE Publication, Inc.
- Haryoguritno, H. (1993). "Wayang Purwa Gagrak Surakarta Ditinjau dari Aspek Rupanya". In Introductory paper of Rupa Wayang dalam Seni Kontemporer as a part of Pekan Wayang Indonesia VI.
- Holt, C. (1973). "Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change". New York Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Dharsono. (1999). "Seni Lukis Wayang Indonesia (Sebuah Pemahaman secara Holistik)". Thesis. Bandung: ITB.
- Kartika, D. S. (2016). "Kreasi Artistik, Perjumpaan Tradisi Modern dalam Paradigma Kekaryaannya Seni." Surakarta: Citra Sain LPKBN.
- Kartika, D. S. (2012). "Seni Lukis Wayang". Surakarta: Penerbit ISI Press.
- Kartika, D. S. (2007). "Estetika". Bandung: Rekayasa Sains.
- Kusnadi. (1976/1977). "Sejarah Seni Rupa Indonesia". Jakarta: Proyek Penelitian dan Pencatatan Kebudayaan Daerah, Pusat Penelitian Sejarah dan Budaya Depdikbud.
- Kempers, B. (1959). "Ancient Indonesian Art.. Cambridge Massachussetts: Harvard University Press.
- Mulder, N. (1984). "*Kepribadian Jawa dan Pembangunan Nasional*". Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press.
- Poespoprodjo, W. (1991). "Hermeneutik Kebudayaan". Bandung: Fakultas Ilmu Komunikasi Universitas Padjadjaran.
- Rohidi, T. R. (2000). "Kesenian dalam Pendekatan Kebudayaan". Bandung: STSI Press.
- Yuliman, S. (1990). "Boom Kemana Seni Lukis Kita?" Discussion paper. Surakarta: Taman Budaya Surakarta.
- Soedarso, S.P. (1986). "Wanda: Suatu Studi Tentang Resep Pembuatan Wanda-Wanda Wayang Kulit Purwa Dan Hubungannya Dengan Presentasi Realisi". Penelitian, Proyek Penelitian dan Pengkajian Kebudayaan Nusantara (Javanologi), Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan Depdikbud.