

reflected persistent search to define aesthetic objects through thinking and the creation of work. Such search is reflected in the art history, which reveals tireless effort to find new paradigms, resting on the questions of “what is art” and “what is a work of art,” with the objective of finding a benchmark against which one can differentiate the aesthetic objects (art) from non-aesthetic objects (non-art) in life.

The two basic arguments of the *avant garde* art (i.e. modern art) were interlinked and revealed the relationship between the reasoning of art and the modern reasoning in its general sense, i.e. the basis of all modern thinking known as Modernism, with a capital ‘M.’ This link thus imparted significant influence to the reasoning of art which took on the label of ‘modernism’ (with lowercase ‘m’). In his book, *Art after Modernism*, Brian Wallis writes:

Modernism was the great dream of industrial capitalism, an idealistic ideology which placed its faith in progress and sought to create a new order. A self-consciously experimental movement covering well over a century, modernism encompasses a plenitude of positions. In the present context, however, modernism is taken to refer not to the terms of this historical program in its diversity, nor is it seen in terms of its original historical context, but rather as the aestheticized modernism which has been left at our doorstep: modernism as institution.³

This modern art thinking was also brought closer to science, which signified the triumph of the modern world. Like science, the modern art also recognized a form of authority, i.e. the institution (organization and people) that was seen as the one who mastered all the nooks and crannies of the thinking on art.

This authority had the “power” to determine which one was work of art, and which one was

not. It also decided on the “masterpieces” that were worthy of being displayed in a museum. This authority was seen as mastering the know-how to determine the cutting edge that revealed the vanguard of artistic development.

One can thus imagine the immense challenge that Andy Warhol must have faced when he included the matter of the popular culture in his work, *200 Campbell's Soup Cans*. The storm of “outrage” of the art authority was so fierce that not only Warhol who suffered the blow. The popular culture that prevailed among the Americans at the time also had to endure the hammering. The term ‘kitsch’ emerged, used initially by Clement Greenberg, an eminent modernist critic at the time. The term was used to revile the obsession among Americans for the world of popular imagery. The modernist critics saw the obsession—which ran parallel to symptoms of consumerism—as revealing a lowly taste that was reflective of a crisis of conscience among humans. This view was influential in shaping the public opinion as these modernist critics were also seen as intellectuals whose views would be widely respected.

The move to include the problems of the culture in artistic expressions still prevailed, however. In the seventies, Pop Art became a significant stream of art. It even grew to become a movement that raised the social issues in Germany and Italy. One of the proponents of this movement was Joseph Beuys.

One cannot detach Beuys’s rebellion from the condition of the art world in Germany, which until the sixties had been haunted by the dark Nazi history of the Second World War. The art world in Germany had been depoliticized. All German artists were wary of conveying social and political matters, and such aversion had provided a fertile ground for the abstract

Dasar kedua, *avant garde* mencerminkan pencarian terus menerus definisi objek estetik melalui pemikiran dan penciptaan karya. Pencarian ini tecermin pada sejarah seni yang memperlihatkan upaya terus menerus mencari paradigma baru. Upaya ini bertumpu pada pertanyaan “apakah seni” dan “apakah karya seni”. Tujuannya menemukan standar untuk membedakan obyek estetik (seni) dan bukan obyek estetik (bukan seni) dalam kehidupan.

Dua dasar seni *avant garde* (seni modern) yang berkaitan itu menunjukkan hubungan pemikiran seni dengan pemikiran modern dalam pengertian luas, yaitu dasar seluruh pemikiran modern yang dikenal sebagai Modernisme, dengan ‘M’ kapital. Hubungan ini membuat pemikiran seni yang menggunakan pula label ‘modernism’ (dengan huruf ‘m’ kecil) menjadi sangat berpengaruh. Dalam buku, *Art After Modernism*, Brian Wallis menulis,

Modernisme adalah cita-cita besar kapitalisme industrial, suatu ideologi idealistis yang mengimani kemajuan dan berusaha menciptakan suatu orde baru. Suatu gerakan eksperimental yang sadar diri dan mencakup lebih daripada satu abad, modernisme melingkupi berbagai posisi. Namun, dalam konteks yang kita bicarakan kini, modernisme bukanlah mengacu kepada program menyejarah ini dalam berbagai keberagamannya ataupun dipandang dalam kerangka konteks sejarah aslinya, melainkan sebagai modernisme terestetikkan yang ditinggalkan di muka pintu rumah kita: modernisme sebagai institusi.³

Pemikiran seni modern itu didekatkan pula dengan ilmu pengetahuan yang menandai kejayaan dunia modern. Seperti ilmu pengetahuan, seni modern mengenal otoritas yaitu institusi (lembaga dan orang-orang) yang

dipercaya menguasai seluk-beluk pemikiran seni.

Otoritas itu punya “kekuasaan” menentukan mana karya seni dan mana yang bukan karya seni. Menentukan pula mana “karya besar” yang layak ditempatkan di museum. Dipercaya punya kapasitas untuk menentukan *cutting edge* yang menunjukkan perkembangan paling *avant-garde*.

Bisa dibayangkan betapa besarnya tantangan yang dihadapi Andy Warhol ketika memasukkan persoalan budaya populer pada karyanya, *200 Campbell's Soup Cans*. Begitu besarnya badai serangan yang menandakan “kemarahan” otoritas seni sehingga bukan cuma Warhol yang kena bidas. Budaya populer yang muncul pada masyarakat Amerika waktu itu ikut kena hantaman. Muncullah istilah ‘*kitsch*’ (dikemukakan pada mulanya oleh Clement Greenberg, kritikus modernis paling diakui waktu itu). Istilah ini dimaksudkan untuk menghina kegilaan masyarakat Amerika pada dunia populer. Para kritikus modernis melihat kegilaan ini—paralel dengan gejala konsumerisme—menunjukkan cita rasa rendah yang mencerminkan terjadinya krisis kesadaran manusia. Pandangan kritikus modernis ini punya pengaruh besar dalam membangun pendapat umum karena mereka dikenal pula sebagai kaum intelektual yang didengar pendapatnya.

Akan tetapi, gerakan memasukkan persoalan budaya pada ekspresi seni tidak surut menghadapi hantaman itu. Pada dekade 1970-an, Pop Art menjadi arus besar. Gejala ini bahkan meluas menjadi gerakan mengangkat persoalan sosial di Jerman dan Italia. Salah satu perintis gerakan ini adalah Joseph Beuys.

Pemberontakan Beuys tidak bisa dilepaskan dari kondisi dunia seni di Jerman yang sampai dekade 1960-an dibayangi sejarah hitam Nazi

art, which was supportive of modernism, to take a dominant position in Germany until the sixties.

Joseph Beuys's banal art works reflected a reaction toward such depoliticized condition. The feeling of depression due to the burden history erupted as a form of rebellion that wished to change the situation. Alongside Beuys, the German Neo-expressionism movement, spearheaded by Georg Baselitz and Anselm Kiefer, also emerged.⁴ Beuys, however, did not present sociopolitical matters. Instead, his works reveal moralistic consideration that lay the emphasis on goodness. In his expressions—which were based on personal experiences—he inserted his political views.

Like Andy Warhol, Joseph Beuys showed an attitude that was contrary to the principles of modern art. Beuys's tendency to raise the issue of morality showed that he did not believe that artists were external to the prevailing conventions in the society and unbounded by morality.

The controversies that arose from such rebellions in the sixties grew to become full-fledged confrontations in the seventies. The modernist critics who tried to hold on to their position—as the authority—attacked the new development of the time. On July 9, 1972, the eminent critic Hilton Kramer lashed into Documenta 5 held in Kassel, Germany, that year, which opened its door to the new tendency. Kramer wrote:

Art may be employed in ideological task, but it had best be the sort of art that itself is diffident or ambiguous in its relation to “non-artistic” sources, whether these are drawn from nature, the hardware store, the movies, or the world of kitsch. But of course it is kitsch itself and art explicitly based on it that

are the most useful means for illustrating the dominant “non-artistic” component of “Today's Imagery”.

At *Documenta 5*, artists share the scene with non-artists. We are offered large displays of advertising art, political propaganda, science fiction, comics, popular religious art, and other form of kitsch, together with surveys of Sharp-Focus Realism, Pop art, Video art, Conceptual art, Process art, and all their various hybrids and amalgams. There are large tableaus (some with live performers), films, environments, “information” booths, and an unending stream of words and more words, spoken and printed, recorded and live—words that hang on the wall like political slogans and are shouted in one's ear like a threat.

It is absorbing, exhausting, amusing, illuminating, and finally depressing and a little frightening—this unending and well-orchestrated effort to destroy our sense of art as disinterested and high-minded calling and to substitute for it a carnival of rubbish in which artistic merit is no more important than its most cynical and grotesque simulacrum.⁵

In this “art war,” the rebels whose works Hilton Kramer called “rubbish” turned out to be the winner. Other banal works mushroomed, boldly scoffing at the art authority. The victory was not merely due to the strength of the rebels against the authority, but also inextricably linked to the collapse of the exalted Modernism thinking that had been serving as the aegis for modernism.

One cannot be sure how Modernism—which was so influential in virtually all disciplines—

pada Perang Dunia II. Terjadi depolitisasi di dunia seni Jerman. Semua seniman Jerman berhati-hati dalam menampilkan persoalan sosial-politik dan ketakutan ini membuat karya-karya Jerman sampai 1960-an didominasi abstrakisme yang mengusung modernisme.

Karya-karya banal Joseph Beuys menunjukkan reaksi pada depolitisasi itu. Rasa tertekan karena beban sejarah meletup sebagai pemberontakan yang mau mengubah keadaan. Di samping Beuys, muncul gerakan Neo-Ekspresionisme Jerman yang diprakarsai Georg Baselitz dan Anselm Kiefer.⁴ Namun Beuys tidak menampilkan persoalan sosial-politik. Karya-karyanya menunjukkan pertimbangan moralistik yang mengutamakan kebaikan. Pada ekspresinya—yang didasarkan pengalaman personal—ia menyisipkan pandangan politik.

Seperti sikap Andy Warhol, sikap Joseph Beuys bertentangan dengan prinsip-prinsip seni modern. Kecenderungan Beuys mengangkat moralitas menunjukkan ia tidak percaya bahwa seniman berada di luar konvensi masyarakat dan tidak terikat pada moralitas.

Kontroversi yang muncul dari pemberontakan-pemberontakan 1960 itu marak menjadi konfrontasi pada dekade 1970-an. Kritikus modernis yang berusaha mempertahankan posisinya—sebagai otoritas—menyerang kecenderungan baru yang muncul waktu itu. Pada 9 Juli 1972, kritikus terkemuka Hilton Kramer mengkritik *Documenta 5*, 1972 di Kassel, Jerman, yang menampung kecenderungan baru tersebut. Kramer menulis,

Seni dapat digunakan dalam tugas ideologis, tapi sebaik-baiknya ia merupakan seni yang bersikap ragu atau ambigu dalam hubungannya dengan sumber “non-artistik”, apakah yang diambil dari alam, toko perkakas,

film, atau dunia *kitsch*. Tapi, tentu saja, *kitsch* dan seni yang secara eksplisit didasarkan pada *kitsch*-lah yang merupakan cara paling berguna untuk menggambarkan komponen “non-artistik” yang dominan dalam khazanah imaji masa kini.

Pada *Documenta 5*, seniman berbagi ruang dengan non-seniman. Disajikanlah bagi kita paparan luas seni iklan, propaganda politik, fiksi ilmiah, komik, seni religius populer, dan jenis *kitsch* lainnya, sekaligus dengan contoh-contoh Realisme *sharp-focus*, *pop art*, seni video, seni konseptual, seni proses, dan berbagai hibrida serta amalgamnya. Ada banyak pampangan besar (beberapa dengan pelakon hidup), film, lingkungan, gerai “informasi”, dan aliran kata tanpa henti, terucapkan dan tercetak, rekaman dan langsung—kata-kata yang bergantung di dinding seperti slogan-slogan politik dan diteriakkan di telinga kita seperti suatu ancaman.

Ini menenggelamkan, melelahkan, menyenangkan, menceraikan, dan akhirnya juga memuramkan dan sedikit menakutkan—segala usaha yang rapi dan tanpa akhir ini untuk menghancurkan pengertian kita tentang seni sebagai suatu panggilan agung dan tanpa kepentingan, dan menggantinya dengan karnaval sampah yang di dalamnya nilai artistik tak lebih penting daripada simulakrumnya yang paling sinis dan grotesk.⁵

Dalam “pertarungan seni” itu kelompok pemberontak yang karya-karyanya disebut “sampah” oleh Hilton Kramer ternyata memenangi “peperangan”. Karya-karya banal

⁴ Klaus Honeff. *Contemporary Art*. Taschen. Köln. 1992. pp.41-47.

⁵ Hilton Kramer. *The Age of Avant Garde. An Art Chronicle of 1956-1972*. Secker & Warburg. London. 1973. pp.546-549.

⁴ Klaus Honeff. *Contemporary Art*. Taschen. Köln. 1992. hal.41-47.

⁵ Hilton Kramer. *The Age of Avant Garde. An Art Chronicle of 1956-1972*. Secker & Warburg. London. 1973. hal.546-549.

could collapse. One can, however, analyze the views offered by the historical Theodore Roszak in his well known book, *The Coming of the Counter Culture*, which was published for the first time in 1968. Roszak noted how all over Europe people stood up against the modern system that had been designed and controlled by the modern institutions. Roszak predicted the return to culture in order to challenge the technocracy that had designed social lives by “locking” public opinions by means of scientific truths.⁶

Indeed, since the late sixties, a number of critical thinking in philosophy and social sciences have emerged simultaneously, each having its own point of departure and did not actually point at a certain conclusion. However, they developed in juxtapositions as they all challenged Modernism.

One of the important signs of the collapse of the modern thinking under the flag of Modernism has been the failure of the grand structuralism project. Structuralism constituted the idea that sought natural structural laws that were universally valid. The grand project sought to combine the entire text in the history of Anglo-American thinking since the nineteenth century. The objective was to find the essence of truth—the real presence of Being—by means of accumulating theories, juxtaposing opinions, appropriating discourses, and hybridizing philosophical texts.

Lévi Strauss and Heidegger believed that the project would bring together the essential experiences that might take the twentieth century thinking to the path of finding structured laws. These laws would be eternally valid and could be used to determine humans’ strategy for the future.⁷ This search could be read as constituting the grand plan to “conquer the Earth.”

One of the instrumental approaches of this project is the stripping off the codes of language (decoding) in order to discard the inessential differences in the combined texts. It turned out that it was this instrumental approach that lay at the root of the collapse of the grand project of structuralism. The decoding method in this approach had a fatal weakness: it could not survive the hammering of the deconstruction theory by Jacques Derrida.

The collapse thus began with an implosion, as the deconstruction theory actually resided on the same platform with structuralism. Both are modern theories as they both look into the context and system of ideas. Both believed that important events provided significant conclusions. Furthermore, both structuralism and deconstruction theories focused on the existence of humans that could point at their “beings.”⁸

Derridean deconstruction was a new theory that was contrary to the classic deconstruction theories. Derridean deconstruction thinking relativizes the understanding of ‘difference,’ which was the fundamental issue in the grand structuralism project. When Derrida was able to propound and confirm the understanding of the term ‘difference’ (or ‘différance’ in French, which could also be understood as ‘deferment’ in English), he unsettled the decoding method of structuralism. The structuralism project started to disintegrate thence.

In the seventies, the Derridean deconstruction theory developed parallel to radical cultural analyses from such thinkers as Michel Foucault, François Lyotard, and Daniel Buren. These juxtaposing thinking criticized the influence of the modern world system on the society—just as Theodore Roszak had noted—and in a relatively short period, they influenced the development of human sciences and social psychiatry.⁹

kemudian muncul seperti jamur di musim hujan, mengolok-olok otoritas seni dengan berani.

Kemenangan itu bukan melulu karena kekuatan para pemberontak melawan otoritas, melainkan tidak bisa dilepaskan dari runtuhnya pemikiran besar Modernisme yang menjadi payung modernisme.

Tidak bisa dipastikan secara persis mengapa Modernisme—yang berpengaruh di hampir semua bidang—bisa runtuh. Namun bisa dikaji pandangan sejarawan Theodore Roszak dalam bukunya yang terkenal *The Coming of The Counter Culture*—terbit pertama kali pada 1968. Ketika itu Roszak mencatat munculnya di seluruh Eropa perlawanan masyarakat pada sistem kehidupan modern yang dirancang dan dikendalikan institusi-institusi modern. Dalam bukunya, ia meramalkan kembalinya masyarakat pada kekuatan budaya untuk menentang teknokrasi yang merekayasa kehidupan masyarakat dengan cara “mengunci” pendapat masyarakat melalui kebenaran-kebenaran ilmu pengetahuan.⁶

Memang, sejak akhir dekade 1960-an, sejumlah pemikiran kritis di bidang filsafat, ilmu-ilmu sosial, dan budaya muncul secara bersamaan. Masing-masing pemikiran ini punya titik tolak sendiri-sendiri dan sebenarnya tidak menunjukkan suatu kesepakatan. Namun pemikiran-pemikiran ini berkembang paralel (*juxtaposed*) karena bersama-sama menentang Modernisme.

Salah satu tanda penting keruntuhan pemikiran modern dengan bendera Modernisme itu adalah gagalnya proyek besar strukturalisme. Strukturalisme merupakan pemikiran yang mencari hukum-hukum alam semesta yang bersifat universal (*structural laws*). Proyek besar ini merupakan upaya menggabungkan seluruh teks dalam sejarah pemikiran Anglo-Amerika (sejak abad ke-19). Tujuannya mencari esensi kebenaran—the *real*

presence of Being—melalui pengakumulasian pikiran, penyejajaran pandangan, apropriasi wacana, dan hibridisasi teks-teks pemikiran. Dalam keyakinan Lévi Strauss dan Heidegger, proyek itu akan menghimpun pengalaman esensial yang bisa membawa pemikiran abad ke-20 ke penemuan hukum-hukum terstruktur. Hukum-hukum ini akan berlaku sepanjang masa bila ditemukan dan bisa digunakan untuk menentukan strategi umat manusia menuju masa depan.⁷ Pencarian ini bisa dibaca sebagai rencana besar “menaklukkan planet bumi”.

Salah satu pendekatan instrumental proyek besar itu adalah penghilangan kode-kode bahasa (*decoding*) untuk membuang perbedaan (*differences*) yang tidak esensial pada teks-teks yang digabungkan. Ternyata pendekatan instrumental ini yang menjadi pangkal kehancuran proyek besar strukturalisme. Metode *decoding* pada pendekatan ini punya kelemahan fatal. Ia tidak bisa bertahan ketika dikritik melalui pemikiran dekonstruksi Jacques Derrida.

Awal keruntuhan itu merupakan penghancuran dari dalam karena pemikiran dekonstruksi sebenarnya berada pada *platform* yang sama dengan strukturalisme. Keduanya merupakan pemikiran modern karena keduanya mempersoalkan konteks dan sistem-sistem ide. Keduanya percaya bahwa peristiwa penting menyediakan kesimpulan besar. Selain itu, baik strukturalisme maupun pemikiran dekonstruksi memusatkan pemikiran pada keberadaan manusia yang bisa menunjukkan ‘being’.⁸

Dekonstruksi Derridan adalah pemikiran baru yang bertentangan dengan dekonstruksi klasik. Pemikiran dekonstruksi Derrida menisbikan pengertian ‘perbedaan’ (*difference*) yang merupakan persoalan mendasar pada proyek besar strukturalisme. Ketika Derrida berhasil menegakkan pengertian ‘perbedaan’ tidak tetap

6 Theodore Roszak. *Opkomst van een Tegencultuur* (Dutch translation). Meulenhoff bv. Amsterdam.1976

7 “Deconstruction Deconstructed” John Griffiths in Andrea C. Papadakis [ed.]. *The New Modernism, Deconstructionist Tendencies in Art, Art & Design (series)*. Volume 4 ¾. 1988. pp. 9-18

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

6 Theodore Roszak. *Opkomst van een Tegencultuur* (versi Bahasa Belanda). Meulenhoff bv. Amsterdam.1976.

7 “Deconstruction Deconstructed” John Griffiths dalam Andrea C. Papadakis [ed.]. *The New Modernism, Deconstructionist Tendencies in Art, Art & Design (series)*. Volume 4 ¾. 1988. hal. 9-18

8 Ibid.

Michel Foucault, François Lyotard, and Daniel Buren looked into various aspects of life and culture which they thought had not merely been ignored by the modern thinking, but also betrayed. Their criticism, therefore, was akin to opening a Pandora Box. An array of “evils” of the modern thinking were revealed. The signs of the collapse of Modernism became real. Some thinkers then went on to speculate and combine those critical thinking of the seventies—which had actually departed from different premises—as the ‘postmodern thinking.’

The rebellions in the artworld and the seething cultural thinking simultaneously entered the realm of the culture which Modernism had long ignored. The cultural analyses that the rebels developed were not analyses on the “culture” that looked into “things.” Rather, the culture was seen as the drive for the society, which Modernism had snubbed as unimportant. An example of this was the popular culture in the United States of America, which had originated from the society itself. As Stuart Hall posited, the culture is a set of practices instead of a set of things.

The relationship between the simmering art and cultural analyses shows how art has returned to culture ever since Warhol created his *200 Campbell's Soup Cans*. The truth is, in the history of human civilization—prior to the emergence of modern thinking—art has always been a part of the culture.

There was, however, a problem in identifying the culture. At the time, the term ‘culture’ was very much influenced by anthropological analyses (of the past). The culture was invariably linked with ethnic culture and the effort to create an image of the “traditional culture.” Because modern thinking saw the “traditional culture” as contradicting the

modern world, the term ‘culture’ then created an image of “all things past.”

With such a looming view, there was then an effort to differentiate the “culture” that had such a dominant image from the “culture” that the rebels were questioning. It is logical, therefore, that this effort then arrived at the term of ‘contemporary culture’ which implied that by that term, one is talking about the ‘culture of today.’

The art in the contemporary culture—with juxtaposed signs of emergence—is the contemporary art. Although there are many opinions on the contemporary art, one cannot deny the fact that the contemporary art and contemporary culture have a causal relationship, in their terms as well as in their context.

Contemporary art, contemporary culture

Considering the causal relationship between the contemporary art and the contemporary culture, one can view the contemporary art as facing two seemingly contrasting schemes: First, the matter of looking into the process of cultural “uniformity” in the world due to the globalization—which the modern thinking has actually predicted. The second agenda consists of examining the “diversity” of cultures, because ethnic cultures have not been completely wiped out in our lives today, especially outside Europe and United States.

In the contemporary art development in the eighties, the two matters colored the thinking and practice of the contemporary art, especially the agenda of looking into diversity. Streams of cultural analyses such as multi-culturalism, cultural studies, post-colonial studies, cultural politics of difference, and

ini (*différance* dalam bahasa Prancis atau bisa disebut ‘*deferment*’ dalam bahasa Inggris) ia menggoyahkan metode *decoding* proyek besar strukturalisme. Dari sini proyek strukturalisme rontok.

Pada dekade 1970-an pemikiran dekonstruksi Derridan itu berkembang paralel dengan pemikiran radikal analisis budaya seperti Michel Foucault, François Lyotard, dan Daniel Buren. Pemikiran-pemikiran yang *juxtaposed* ini mengkritik pengaruh sistem dunia modern pada kehidupan masyarakat—seperti dicatat Theodore Roszak—dan dalam waktu relatif singkat pemikiran-pemikiran ini memengaruhi perkembangan *human sciences* dan psikiatri sosial.⁹

Michel Foucault, François Lyotard, dan Daniel Buren mengkaji berbagai aspek kehidupan dan budaya yang dalam pandangan mereka bukan hanya diabaikan pemikiran modern, tapi dikhianati. Maka kritik mereka seperti membuka Kotak Pandora. Berbagai “kebusukan” pemikiran modern muncul ke permukaan tanpa bisa dicegah. Tanda-tanda keruntuhan Modernisme pun menjadi nyata. Sejumlah spekulasi kemudian mencoba merangkum pemikiran-pemikiran kritis pada 1970 ini—yang sebetulnya berangkat dari premis berbeda-beda—sebagai pemikiran postmodern.

Pemberontakan di dunia seni dan pergolakan pemikiran budaya itu bersama-sama memasuki persoalan budaya yang dilupakan Modernisme. Pemikiran budaya yang dikembangkan para pemberontak ini bukan pemikiran tentang “kebudayaan” yang mengkaji “*things*”. Budaya ini penggerak (*drive*) bagi masyarakat yang oleh Modernisme dianggap tidak penting—seperti budaya populer di Amerika Serikat yang tumbuh dari masyarakat. Seperti dikemukakan Stuart Hall budaya ini adalah *set of practices* dan bukan *set of things*.

Kaitan pergolakan seni dan pergolakan budaya itu menunjukkan bahwa sejak Warhol membuat *200 Campbell's Soup Cans*, seni kembali ke budaya. Soalnya, dalam sejarah peradaban manusia—sebelum munculnya pemikiran modern—seni memang selalu bagian dari budaya.

Ada masalah dalam mengidentifikasi budaya itu. Ketika itu istilah “budaya” sangat dipengaruhi kajian-kajian antropologi (masa lalu). Budaya hampir selalu dikaitkan dengan budaya etnik dan upaya membangun *image* “kebudayaan tradisional”. Karena dalam pemikiran modern “kebudayaan tradisional” merupakan kontradiksi dunia modern, istilah “budaya” ini membangun pula *image* “masa lalu”.

Dibayangi pandangan dominan itu muncul upaya untuk membedakan “budaya” dengan *image* dominan itu dengan “budaya” yang dipersoalkan para pemberontak. Masuk akal bila upaya ini kemudian sampai pada istilah “budaya kontemporer” (*contemporary culture*) dengan konotasi arti “budaya masa kini”. Seni pada budaya kontemporer itu—yang tanda-tanda kemunculannya *juxtaposed*—adalah seni kontemporer (*contemporary art*). Kendati ada banyak pandangan tentang seni kontemporer, tidak bisa disangkal *contemporary art* dan *contemporary culture* punya hubungan kausal, sebagai istilah maupun sebagai persoalan.

Seni kontemporer, budaya kontemporer

Melihat hubungan kausal seni kontemporer dengan budaya kontemporer, seni kontemporer bisa dikaji menghadapi dua agenda pemikiran budaya kontemporer yang sekilas bisa terkesan bertentangan. Agenda pertama, mempersoalkan proses ‘penyeragaman’ budaya dunia akibat

⁹ Ibid.

cultural translations have given rise to a variety of issues in the world of contemporary art.

During the eighties, analyses and thinking on art as well as on culture were still examining the peculiarities of the modern thinking, which had just been left behind. At the time, contemporary art and cultural thinking could not avoid the international scope “bequeathed” by modern thinking (which originated in the belief in universalism).

The “bequest” turned out to be full of peculiarities, misunderstanding, and disparity. The modern art, which was believed as having a universal character, evolved only in Europe and United States. Outside Europe and the US, one could not see all of its aspects. Therefore, the modern art, which had been viewed as homogeneous all over the world, turned out to be a mere concept that one could not find in reality. The modern thinking had refused to acknowledge this “mistake” and nonchalantly saw the symptoms that existed outside Europe and the US as the signs of the marginal world that was yet to attain its modern status, or even one that was not a part of the modern world at all.

The contemporary art in the eighties explored such peculiarity and disparity. The contemporary art thinking seemed to try to discover the reality of the ‘international world,’ which had been a problematic part of the modern thinking. Therefore, one could sense in this development an effort to reconcile the world art, in essence turning the fragmented art world of the modern thinking into the art world in which all parties were equal and trying to understand one another—its slogan being the popular slogan of “think globally, act locally.”

Egalitarian thinking emerged, trying to raise the issues about the cultures of the

marginalized societies—which had been considered as constituting “the Third World.” There was also radical thinking which analyzed the symptoms of marginalization—giving rise to identity politics among societies in the world whose members felt that they had been sidelined.

The reconciliatory spirit lead to new biennales in Latin America, Asia Pacific, and Africa, all trying to present the regional signs within the global context. As a result, contemporary art thinking and practices spread all across the world—spanning a greater expanse than that attained by the modern art. Art development in Asia Pacific, Latin America, and Africa, which had been unknown, started to catch attention. A number of biennales and triennials in Asia Pacific even grew to become respectable biennales and triennials.

Such contemporary art expansion created an impression that the problem of inequality in the world art had been resolved; that the world art was no longer fragmented, and the problems of marginalization, identity politics, and reconciliation were no longer important issues in the development of contemporary art. An opinion was then formed seeing the problems of the eighties as “outdated” and it would be better for us all if we leave them behind.

Such a view spread and turned the idea of diversity into a closed case during the subsequent development of contemporary art. It has been wrapped up without having reached a thorough conclusion. As a result, the agenda of looking into the uniformity of cultures due to the globalization seemed to slide smoothly “without a partner.” This, however, is a naïve take on the issue. The effort to reconcile the world art should not stop at recognizing others, especially if the recognition rested merely upon the basis of

terjadinya globalisasi—yang sebenarnya sudah diprediksi pemikiran modern. Agenda kedua, mempersoalkan ‘keragaman’ budaya karena budaya-budaya etnik tidak sepenuhnya hilang dalam kehidupan masa kini, khususnya di luar Eropa dan Amerika.

Pada perkembangan seni kontemporer dekade 1980-an agenda itu mewarnai pemikiran dan praktek seni kontemporer. Khususnya agenda mempersoalkan keragaman. Pemikiran budaya seperti multi-kulturalisme, *cultural studies*, *post-colonial studies*, *cultural politics of difference*, dan *cultural translation* melahirkan berbagai isu pada percaturan seni kontemporer.

Pada dekade 1980-an itu baik pemikiran di dunia seni maupun pemikiran budaya masih menggali kejanggalan-kejanggalan pemikiran modern yang baru saja ditinggalkan. Ketika itu pemikiran seni kontemporer dan budaya kontemporer tidak bisa menghindari dari lingkup dunia yang “diwariskan” pemikiran modern (berpangkal pada keyakinan universalisme).

“Warisan” itu ternyata penuh dengan kejanggalan, kesalahpahaman, dan kepincangan. Seni modern yang dipercaya bersifat universal berkembang cuma di Eropa dan Amerika. Tidak seluruh aspeknya bisa ditemukan di luar Eropa dan Amerika. Maka seni modern yang diyakini homogen di seluruh dunia cuma konsep berdasarkan asumsi yang tidak bisa ditemukan pada kenyataan. Pemikiran modern tidak mau mengakui “kesalahan” ini dan secara gampang melihat gejala di luar Eropa dan Amerika sebagai tanda dunia modern marginal yang belum modern atau bahkan bukan bagian dunia modern sama sekali.

Kejanggalan dan kepincangan itu digali pada perkembangan seni kontemporer

1980-an. Pemikiran seni kontemporer seakan-akan mencoba menemukan realitas “dunia internasional” yang bermasalah pada pemikiran modern. Maka, pada perkembangan ini terasa ada upaya rekonsiliasi seni dunia (*world art*). Intinya adalah mengubah dunia seni (*artworld*) yang terfragmentasi pada pemikiran modern menjadi dunia seni yang saling memahami dalam posisi sederajat. Slogannya mengikuti slogan populer, “*think global, act local*”.

Muncul pemikiran-pemikiran egaliter yang berusaha mengangkat budaya masyarakat-masyarakat yang dimarginalkan—pernah disebut sebagai Dunia Ketiga. Muncul juga pemikiran-pemikiran lebih radikal yang mengkaji gejala marginalisasi—memunculkan *identity politics* pada masyarakat-masyarakat dunia yang merasa disisihkan.

Spirit rekonsiliasi itu melahirkan biennale-biennale baru di Amerika Latin, Asia-Pasifik, dan Afrika yang mencoba menampilkan tanda-tanda regional dalam konteks global. Dampaknya, pemikiran dan praktek seni kontemporer meluas ke seluruh dunia—lebih daripada keluasan seni modern. Perkembangan seni di Asia-Pasifik, Amerika Latin, dan Afrika yang tadinya sama sekali tidak dikenal, menarik perhatian. Sejumlah biennale dan triennale di Asia-Pasifik berkembang bahkan menjadi biennale dan triennale yang diperhitungkan.

Peluasan seni kontemporer itu membangun kesan bahwa kepincangan pada seni dunia sudah terselesaikan. Seni dunia tidak lagi terfragmentasi dan karena itu masalah marginalisasi, politik identitas, dan rekonsiliasi bukan lagi isu penting pada perkembangan seni kontemporer. Muncul kemudian pandangan yang menganggap persoalan-persoalan dekade 1980-an itu sudah “kuno” dan selayaknya ditinggalkan.

the expansion of art events to all corners of the world. The fundamental issue of reconciliation was how one should understand diversity within the context of the world art. Is it true that the inequalities that had been going on for a century could be solved in merely two decades?

In reality, the slogan of “think globally, act locally” which had been the cornerstone of the view was merely that: a slogan. There was no cultural politics of difference that gave rise to, for example, multicultural studies that explore the multicultural condition of the world in order to discover diversity within the context of the world art.

In such a situation, the harmonious condition which many believed to have been attained in the nineties was actually a form of expansion of the Anglo-American art tradition to the world, albeit surreptitiously so. To prove it, one would need to pierce through the history of the Anglo-American art tradition.

The tendency that still strongly prevailed within the development of contemporary art after five decades of development was still the same with the tendency which Hilton Kramer had criticized in 1972 when he wrote about Documenta 5. The symptom showed the opposing views within the Anglo-American art tradition, which was indirectly related to the matter of the diversity in the world art.

At the time, Kramer saw the emerging tendency of contemporary art as anti-art symptoms that destroyed the understanding of art which had prevailed since the nineteenth century.¹⁰ In his criticism, Kramer called the tendencies of the contemporary art as constituting “well orchestrated effort to destroy our sense of art as disinterested and high-minded calling...”

In his criticism, Hilton Kramer mentioned the disinterestedness theory, which formed the red thread in the Anglo-American thinking on art. The theory had already taken shape in Kant’s views (in the nineteenth century). In the twentieth century, Monroe Beardsley, and later Jerome Stolnitz, developed the theory further.

The origin of the theory was the question on beauty as aesthetic object in the philosophy of aesthetics (the tradition of thinking about the sense of beauty which one obtains when one encounters natural symptoms or art works). Disinterestedness is an “aesthetic attitude” taken when someone stands face to face with an aesthetic object. Such an aesthetic attitude is necessary if one wishes to have an aesthetic experience.

Jerome Stolnitz called such an aesthetic attitude as “a profound attention” toward the aesthetic object according to the standards of the object itself; this is thus the “perceptive sense”—related to one’s mindset—that is sharply directed at the object without the desire to pose questions on the function (of the object).¹¹ This is the root of the view that would later become popular—i.e. the view of “art for art’s sake”—and show the “purification” of art from other aspects of life.

Through Clive Bell, the disinterestedness theory developed further in the philosophy of art (the thinking tradition that focused on art works as aesthetic objects). This development would later give rise to efforts to build on the definitions of art and art works by means of art theories. Through these definitions, art works were “cleansed” of other aspects of life.¹²

In modernism, the disinterestedness theory created a greater distance between the art and art works and all other aspects of life. The belief that aesthetic objects have autonomous standards gave rise to the search

Pandangan itu ternyata meluas dan membuat persoalan keragaman pada seni kontemporer menjadi *closed case*—ditutup tanpa kesimpulan tuntas—pada perkembangan seni kontemporer selanjutnya. Dampaknya, agenda yang mempersoalkan proses penyeragaman akibat globalisasi seperti meluncur “tanpa pasangan”.

Pandangan itu naif. Rekonsiliasi seni dunia tidak seharusnya berhenti pada persoalan pengakuan, apalagi pengakuan ini cuma didasarkan pada peluasan kegiatan ke seluruh dunia. Hal mendasar pada rekonsiliasi adalah bagaimana sesungguhnya memahami “keragaman dengan konteks seni dunia”. Benarkah kepincangan yang berlangsung satu abad sebelumnya bisa selesai dalam waktu dua dekade?

Pada kenyataannya, “*Think global, act local*” yang diandalkan pandangan itu ternyata berhenti sebagai slogan. Tidak ada *cultural politics of difference* yang sampai menghasilkan, misalnya, *multicultural studies* yang menggali kondisi multikultur dunia untuk menemukan keragaman dengan konteks seni dunia itu.

Dalam keadaan semacam itu, kondisi harmonis yang diyakini telah muncul pada dekade 1990-an sebenarnya merupakan peluasan tradisi seni Anglo-Amerika ke lingkup dunia. Gejala ini tentu tidak disadari. Pembuktiannya pun memerlukan analisis yang menyuruk masuk ke dalam perkembangan tradisi seni Anglo-Amerika.

Kecenderungan yang mapan pada perkembangan seni kontemporer setelah lima dekade masih sama dengan kecenderungan yang dijabarkan Hilton Kramer pada tulisannya pada 1972 ketika ia mengkritik *Documenta 5*. Gejala ini menunjukkan pertentangan pandangan pada tradisi seni Anglo-Amerika yang tidak secara langsung punya kaitan dengan persoalan keragaman seni dunia.

Waktu itu Kramer melihat kecenderungan seni kontemporer yang tengah muncul sebagai gejala *anti-art* yang menghancurkan pemahaman seni yang sudah mentradisi sejak abad ke-19.¹⁰ Dalam kritiknya Kramer menyebut kecenderungan-kecenderungan seni kontemporer ini sebagai “segala usaha yang rapi dan tanpa akhir untuk menghancurkan pengertian kita tentang seni sebagai suatu panggilan agung dan tanpa kepentingan...”

Pada kritik itu Hilton Kramer menyinggung teori *disinterestedness*. Teori ini benang merah pemikiran seni Anglo-Amerika. Dasar teori ini sudah tampil pada pemikiran Kant (abad ke-19). Pada abad ke-20 pemikiran ini dikembangkan Monroe Beardsley dan paling akhir oleh Jerome Stolnitz.

Awal teori itu adalah mempertanyakan keindahan (*beauty*) sebagai obyek estetik dalam *philosophy of aesthetics* (tradisi pemikiran tentang rasa keindahan yang didapat ketika seseorang berhadapan dengan gejala alam atau karya seni). *Disinterestedness* adalah ‘sikap estetik’ (*aesthetic attitude*) ketika seseorang menghadapi obyek estetik. Sikap estetik ini diperlukan untuk merasakan pengalaman estetik.

Jerome Stolnitz menyebut sikap estetik itu sebagai “perhatian yang mendalam” tentang obyek estetik menurut ukuran-ukuran obyek estetik ini sendiri; merupakan ‘persepsi’—berkaitan dengan *mind set*—yang terarah secara tajam tanpa keinginan melontarkan pertanyaan-pertanyaan tentang fungsi.¹¹ Ini pangkal keyakinan yang kemudian menjadi populer, yaitu ‘seni untuk seni’ dan menunjukkan “pembersihan” seni dari semua aspek kehidupan lain.

Melalui Clive Bell, teori *disinterestedness* itu berkembang pada *philosophy of art* (tradisi pemikiran yang memusatkan perhatian

10 The anti-art symptom in the contemporary art in Kramer’s view cannot be taken as similar to the anti-art symptom within the Dada Movement. The Dada Group presented intellectual nihilistic attitude as it emerged between two world wars, which could be interpreted as the destruction of culture due to the progress in the modern world.

11 “The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude”. George Dickie. In Philip Alperson [ed.], *The Philosophy of the Visual Arts*. Oxford University Press. NY. 1992. pp.30-39.

12 The philosophy of aesthetics (also called aesthetics) is often taken as the same with philosophy of art as both are in the category of art thinking or art theory. The two, however, have their differences. The philosophy of aesthetics looks into the experience of beauty and does not differentiate aesthetic objects found in nature and reality from the aesthetic objects in the form of art works. The philosophy of art reduces philosophy of aesthetics, as it looks into merely artworks. In its further development, there is an emphasis on the visual aesthetic objects, which is a confirmation on the view that had taken shape in the nineteenth century when the term ‘art’ (following the concept of ‘fine arts’) emerged in the English language. Therefore, the term ‘art’ in English reflects the perception of art in the Anglo-American art tradition and refers to the “visual art constructs.”

10 Gejala *anti-art* pada seni kontemporer dalam pandangan Kramer tidak bisa disamakan dengan gejala *anti-art* pada Gerakan Dada. Gerakan Dada menampilkan sikap nihilistik yang intelektualistis karena gerakan ini muncul di antara dua perang dunia yang bisa ditafsirkan sebagai gejala penghancuran budaya manusia oleh kemajuan dunia modern.

11 “The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude”. George Dickie. Dalam Philip Alperson..[ed.], *The Philosophy of The Visual Arts*. Oxford University Press. NY. 1992. hal.30-39.

for the “essence of art,” which formed the characteristic feature of modernism. One could thus notice how the disinterestedness theory linked Kant’s view of the nineteenth century with Modernism and how this red thread reflected the thinking and understanding of art within the Anglo-American tradition that kept on trying to detach art from other matters.

With such extreme take, the thinking moved philosophy of art gradually away from philosophy itself as it distanced itself with the problem of representation. In philosophy, ‘representation’ (the artificial construct of reality) is a fundamental problem because in epistemology (or the logic of thinking) it forms the basis of all thinking.

The modernistic philosophy of art—which grew in parallel with the philosophy of language or philosophy of mathematics—views ‘the real’ as not necessarily reflected in reality. Like in science, signs of truth are not always visible and present in the reality that is bounded with the narratives of life. Based on such a view, the modernist philosophy of art seeks “the unrepresentable real” in modernist art works.

When Warhol returned art to culture and Joseph Beuys brought art back to the social realm, they broke down the modernistic philosophy of art. Their views—although they were not necessarily aware of it—challenged the entire thinking of art within the Anglo-American tradition that had evolved since the nineteenth century. This is what Kramer meant with ‘anti-art.’

The anti-art symptom revealed signs of opposition against the entire fine arts tradition along with its long history. Although the contemporary art contains matters of the culture, seen within the context of such development, the anti-art symptoms in

contemporary art reflected a “large scale” opposition against the Anglo-American tradition of art.

It is such signs that are now emerging in the contemporary art development today. The basic problem stays almost the same. So far, we can still detect the signs of rebellions that we have seen in the early period of contemporary art. Cynicism and banality are still present as the main trend after its five decades of development—it is almost like a never-ending puberty. Meanwhile, modernism itself, the “rules” and the authority that the contemporary art was initially challenging, has long lost its power.

The search for new media is reflected in the use of objects as the medium of expression and still constitutes the mainstream in contemporary art today. One cannot extricate the tendency from the symptom of challenging the “purity” of the conventional media—especially painting—which since the time of Kant had been considered as the chief media to present artistic expressions.

Arthur Danto, who became famous with his proposition of “the end of Art,” defended this tendency by analyzing the development of Anglo-American art tradition. Danto wrote:

What set my book *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* apart from philosophical tradition was its recognition that the distinction between works of art and ordinary things could no longer be taken for granted. The question with which the book wrestled was, “Given two things which resemble one another to any chosen degree, but one of which is a work of art and the other an ordinary object, what accounts for this difference in status?” This would not have been a question

pada karya seni sebagai obyek estetik). Dari perkembangan ini muncul upaya membangun definisi seni dan definisi karya seni melalui teori-teori seni. Melalui definisi-definisi ini karya seni “dibersihkan” dari semua aspek kehidupan lain.¹²

Pada modernisme, teori *disinterestedness* membuat seni dan karya seni semakin jauh dari semua aspek kehidupan lain. Dari kepercayaan bahwa obyek estetik punya ukuran-ukuran otonom, lahir pencarian ‘esensi seni’ yang menjadi ciri modernisme. Maka bisa dilihat, teori *disinterestedness* menghubungkan pemikiran Kant pada abad ke-19 dengan Modernisme dan benang merah ini menunjukkan pemikiran dan pemahaman seni pada tradisi Anglo-Amerika, yang terus menerus berusaha memisahkan seni dari semua persoalan lain.

Pengekstremasi pemikiran itu membuat filsafat seni (*philosophy of art*) secara bertahap menjadi berjarak dengan filsafat karena menjauhi ‘representasi’. Representasi (konstruk artifisial realitas) pada filsafat merupakan persoalan mendasar karena dalam epistemologi (logika berpikir) merupakan awal semua pemikiran.

Pada *philosophy of art* modernis—berkembang paralel dengan filsafat bahasa atau filsafat matematika—kebenaran (*the real*) diyakini tidak selalu tecermin pada realitas. Seperti pada ilmu pengetahuan tanda-tanda kebenaran tidak selalu bersifat kasat mata dan tidak selalu hadir pada realitas yang terikat pada narasi kehidupan. Berdasarkan keyakinan ini, *philosophy of art* modernis mencari *the unrepresentable real* pada karya-karya seni modernis.

Ketika Warhol mengembalikan seni ke budaya dan Joseph Beuys mengembalikan seni ke persoalan sosial, mereka membubarkan filsafat

seni modernis itu. Pandangan mereka—walau tak mereka sadari—menentang seluruh pemikiran seni pada tradisi Anglo-Amerika yang berkembang sejak abad ke-19. Ini yang dimaksud Kramer dengan *anti-art*.

Gejala *anti-art* itu memperlihatkan penentangan seluruh tradisi *fine arts* bersama sejarahnya. Kendati seni kontemporer membawa-bawa persoalan budaya, dilihat dari perkembangan ini, gejala *anti-art* pada seni kontemporer mencerminkan pertentangan “berskala besar” pada tradisi seni Anglo-Amerika.

Tanda-tanda pertentangan itu yang muncul ke permukaan pada perkembangan seni kontemporer sekarang ini. Persoalannya yang mendasar nyaris tidak bergeser. Sampai sekarang gejala pemberontakan pada awal kemunculan seni kontemporer masih bisa dirasakan. Sinisme dan banalisme masih tampil sebagai tren utama setelah berkembang lima dekade—terkesan sebagai pubertas yang tak kunjung berakhir. Padahal modernisme, “aturan-aturan,” dan otoritas yang ditentang sudah lama tidak punya gigi lagi.

Pencarian media baru yang tecermin pada penggunaan benda-benda sebagai media ekspresi (media membangun tanda-tanda) masih menjadi arus utama pada seni kontemporer hari ini. Kecenderungan ini tidak bisa dilepaskan dari gejala menentang “kesucian” media konvensional—khususnya seni lukis—yang sejak era Kant dianggap utama dalam menampilkan ekspresi seni.

Arthur Danto yang menjadi terkenal karena pernyataannya, “*the end of Art*,” membela kecenderungan itu dengan mengkaji perkembangan seni Anglo-Amerika. Danto menulis,

Apa yang membedakan buku saya, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, dari

12 *Philosophy of Aesthetics* (disebut juga estetika atau *aesthetics*) sering disamakan dengan *philosophy of art* karena keduanya terkategori pemikiran seni atau teori seni. Namun keduanya punya perbedaan. *Philosophy of Aesthetics* yang mempersoalkan pengalaman merasakan keindahan tidak membedakan obyek estetik pada alam, realitas, dan obyek estetik dalam bentuk karya seni. *Philosophy of Art* mereduksi *philosophy of aesthetics*. Pada pemikiran ini obyek estetik yang dipersoalkan hanya karya seni. Pada perkembangan *philosophy of art* terjadi penegasan pengutamakan obyek estetik yang bersifat visual. Ini merupakan penguatan pemahaman yang sudah muncul pada abad ke-19 ketika istilah ‘art’ (mengikuti konsep *fine arts*) muncul dalam bahasa Inggris. Karena itu ‘art’ dalam bahasa Inggris mencerminkan persepsi seni pada tradisi Anglo-Amerika dan punya pengertian “konstruk seni yang bersifat visual”.

philosophers could have asked when the difference between artworks and ordinary objects seemed for the most part obvious and uncontroversial. They would not have asked it, I think, because the issue had never arisen. In the twentieth century, however, through certain transformations in the history of art, works of art began to appear which either were, or appear to be, objects of daily life and use. Duchamp's ready-mades (1915-17) were ordinary snow shovels, bottle racks, grooming combs, and, in one famous case, urinal, and these, before Duchamp, would certainly have been considered as entirely outside the scope of art.¹³

Whether one realizes it or not, the five decade development of the contemporary art will certainly create a frame for the contemporary art, or even give rise to paradigms—although they might not be proposed outrightly. This possibility is starting to become increasingly obvious as the anti-art symptom in the contemporary art has been consolidated along with the strengthening in contemporary criticism, which looks into art works as texts. Such contemporary criticism has survived also for around five decades and it might give rise to paradigms.

The basis for the contemporary criticism approach—also known as semiotic approach—can be analyzed from Roland Barthes's essay, "From Work to Text."

[...] The work is a fragment of substance, occupying a portion of the space of books (in library, for example). The text on the other hand is a methodological field. The opposition may recall (without at all reproducing term for term) Lacan's distinction between "reality" and "the real": the one is displayed, the other

demonstrated; likewise, the work can be seen (in bookshops, in catalogues, in exam syllabuses), the text is a process of demonstration, speaks according to certain rules (or against certain rules); the work can be held in the hand, the text is held in language, only exists in the movement of a discourse (or rather, it is Text for the very reason that it knows itself as text); the Text is not the decomposition of the work, it is the work that is the imaginary tail of the text.¹⁴

Such semiotic approach can actually help us in our reading of the various new symptoms in the contemporary art. With this approach, texts are viewed as radically symbolic in nature. The philosophy of aesthetics and Jungian psychology have long believed that art expressions constitute the process of creating symbols by means of cultural institutions or personal experiences.

Such semiotic approach, however, is not a new development that enriches our reading of art expressions. This approach (in line with the structure of language) undeniably constitutes an effort to construct postmodernism theory amid the context of modernism-postmodernism tension. Again, this shows how contemporary criticism is strongly linked to the Anglo-American art tradition. Contemporary criticism forms a part of the mainstream of effort to bring down Modernism along with its long history of development.

Viewed in greater details, it transpires that contemporary criticism is an effort to overthrow the art authority. In this criticism, the art works are no longer seen as the problem of the artistic phenomena signified by means of art criticism and theories. Rather, the problem analyzed in works of art is that of the "general sign" within the scope of

tradisi filosofis adalah pengakuannya bahwa perbedaan antara karya seni dan benda sehari-hari tak lagi dapat dipahami begitu saja. Pertanyaan yang dialami oleh buku ini adalah, "Bila ada dua benda yang menyerupai satu sama lain sampai suatu tingkat tertentu, tapi yang satu adalah karya seni dan yang lain obyek sehari-hari, apa yang menjadikan perbedaan status tersebut?" Ini tak bakal jadi pertanyaan yang akan diajukan oleh para filsuf saat perbedaan antara karya seni dan benda sehari-hari sebagian besar tampak jelas dan tak kontroversial. Para filsuf tak akan bertanya soal ini menurut saya karena masalah ini tak pernah muncul sebelumnya. Namun, pada abad ke-20, lewat transformasi tertentu dalam sejarah seni, mulai muncullah karya-karya seni yang sebelumnya merupakan obyek-obyek dari kehidupan dan kegunaan sehari-hari, atau tampak seperti itu. Karya-karya *readymades* Duchamp (1915 – 1917) adalah penyauk salju, rak botol, sisir, dan, dalam suatu kasus yang terkenal, urinoar; dan sebelum Duchamp, benda-benda ini pasti dianggap sebagai berada sama sekali di luar lingkup seni.¹³

Disadari atau tidak, perkembangan seni kontemporer selama lima dekade akan membentuk bingkai seni kontemporer atau bahkan memunculkan paradigma-paradigma—walau tidak akan terang-terangan dikemukakan. Kemungkinan itu sudah mulai tampak karena gejala *anti-art* pada seni kontemporer menjadi kukuh dengan menguatnya *contemporary criticism* yang melihat karya seni sebagai teks. Kritisisme kontemporer ini sudah bertahan sekitar lima dekade juga dan sangat mungkin menelurkan paradigma.

Dasar pendekatan *contemporary criticism* itu—dikenal juga sebagai pendekatan semiotik—dapat dikaji pada tulisan Roland Barthes

berjudul, *From Work to Text*.

Karya adalah serpihan substansi, menempati sebagian ruangan buku-buku (di perpustakaan, misalnya). Teks, di sisi lain, adalah suatu medan metodologis. Pihak oposisi dapat mengingat (sama sekali tanpa mengulangi istilah demi istilah) pembedaan Lacan antara 'kenyataan' dan 'yang nyata': yang satu dipajang, yang lain dipertunjukkan; demikian pula, karya dapat dilihat (di toko-toko buku, di katalog, di silabus ujian), dan teks adalah proses peragaan, berbicara menurut peraturan tertentu (atau menentang peraturan tertentu); karya dapat digenggam, teks dipegang dalam bahasa, hanya berada dalam pergerakan wacana (atau, ia Teks persis karena ia mengetahui dirinya sebagai teks); Teks bukanlah dekomposisi karya, karyalah yang merupakan ekor imajiner sang teks.¹⁴

Pendekatan semiotik itu sebenarnya bisa mengisi pembacaan berbagai gejala baru pada seni kontemporer. Pada pendekatan ini, teks diyakini secara radikal bersifat simbolik. Pada *philosophy of aesthetics* dan psikologi Jungian sudah sejak lama diyakini bahwa ekspresi seni merupakan proses simbolisasi melalui institusi budaya atau pengalaman personal. Akan tetapi, pendekatan semiotik itu bukan suatu perkembangan baru yang memperkaya pembacaan ekspresi seni. Pendekatan semiotik ini (mengikuti struktur bahasa) tidak bisa disangkal merupakan upaya membangun teori postmodernisme pada tegangan modernisme-postmodernisme. Gejala ini kembali menunjukkan terikatnya *contemporary criticism* pada tradisi Anglo-American. *Contemporary criticism* adalah bagian dari arus besar upaya meruntuhkan Modernisme bersama seluruh sejarahnya.

Melihat pada rincinya, kritisisme kontemporer merupakan upaya meruntuhkan otoritas seni. Dalam kritisisme ini persoalan pada karya seni bukan lagi fenomena artistik yang

13 "Art and Meaning" Arthur C. Danto. In *Theories of Art Today*. Noël Carroll. [ed.]. The University of Wisconsin Press. Madison, Wisconsin. 2000. p.131.

14 "From Work to Text". Roland Barthes. In *Art after Modernism*. Opcit. p.179

13 "Art and Meaning" Arthur C. Danto. Dalam *Theories of Art Today*. Noël Carroll. [ed.]. The University of Wisconsin Press. Madison, Wisconsin. 2000. hal.131.

14 "From Work to Text". Roland Barthes. Dalam *Art After Modernism*. Opcit. Hal.179

hermeneutics, which has an array of signifiers as one can read it by means of a variety of (other) disciplines—psychoanalysis, sociology, anthropology, political sciences, and even ideologies.

Contemporary criticism also eliminates the authority of the artists over their works (remember that in the Anglo-American tradition of art, the artists were seen as geniuses). The artist's expression is no longer an important part of a work of art; more important are the signs which one can read according to the institutional category of the civilization of the Sign.¹⁵

If the contemporary criticism would one day give rise to contemporary art paradigms, one can be sure that one of them would be the announcement about the end of all art traditions, whether in terms of its theories, practices, criticism, or appreciation.

In fact, the art tradition that is seen as having been concluded is the "fine arts tradition," which ran parallel to the anti-art symptom in contemporary art—which consequently must also be viewed as the anti-fine art symptom. Contemporary criticism actually wishes to expunge the entire fine arts tradition, but calls the effort as the "erasure of the *art tradition*" instead of the *fine art tradition*. This is the old misidentification.

This mistake arose during the development of modern art. The view that considers 'fine art' and 'art' in the world scope are the same is incorrect because the concept of fine arts (the emphasis on visual art) reflects the perception of art within the Anglo-American tradition, which cannot be taken as universally valid. Outside the Anglo-American tradition, there are an array of views on art that are not the same with those held within the Anglo-American tradition.

One can view the contemporary criticism as well as the fine art tradition it challenged as being interlinked with such understanding on art. The semiotic approach, which explores visual signs with open (general) narratives, is the opposite of the modernist disinterestedness theory, which sought to find the essence of art in the visual aesthetic objects by eliminating all narratives possible. Both the semiotic approach and the modernist disinterestedness theory do not concern themselves with music and dances (exploring the relationship between emotions and bodily movements).

If contemporary criticism actually gives rise to paradigms, the assumption of contemporary art's being the expansion of the Anglo-American tradition to the international scope would be confirmed. This would prove that the development of contemporary art follows on the development of modern art.

Signs of disparity that had come to being within the development of modern art would emerge again. How well can one understand the Anglo-American tradition (with its long and complicated history) culturally (instead of in cognitive means) outside Europe and United States? Cultural understanding requires actual presence—the experience of living in Europe and United States—and the relevant cultural background.

Here the "paradigm" of contemporary art—like the paradigms of the modern art previously—would provide a pattern for the development of contemporary art in the world, whose history of development is not thoroughly understood outside Europe and United States.

Signs of the development of the contemporary art "paradigm" can already be felt outside Europe and United States, reflected in the often mentioned view which maintained that one should no longer question the issue of art

signified melalui kritik seni dan teori-teori seni. Persoalan yang diamati pada karya seni adalah "tanda umum" (*general sign*) dalam lingkup *hermeneutics* yang punya banyak *signifiers* karena bisa dibaca melalui berbagai bidang (lain)—psikoanalisa, sosiologi, antropologi, *political sciences*, bahkan ideologi-ideologi.

Kritisisme kontemporer menghapus pula otoritas seniman atas karyanya sendiri (pada tradisi seni Anglo-Amerika, seniman dirayakan sebagai orang-orang genius). Pada karya seni bukan lagi ekspresi seniman yang penting tapi tanda-tanda yang pembacaannya mengikuti *institutional category of the civilization of the Sign*.¹⁵

Bila suatu kali kritisisme kontemporer melahirkan paradigma-paradigma seni kontemporer bisa dipastikan salah satunya adalah pernyataan berhentinya seluruh tradisi seni, baik praktek, teori, kritik, maupun apresiasinya.

Sebenarnya tradisi seni yang dianggap berhenti itu harus dibaca sebagai 'tradisi *fine arts*' yang paralel dengan gejala *anti-art* pada seni kontemporer—harus dibaca sebagai *anti-fine art* juga. *Contemporary criticism* sebenarnya ingin menghapus seluruh tradisi *fine arts*. Namun penghapusan ini disebutkan 'penghapusan tradisi seni'. Ini kesalahan identifikasi lama.

Kesalahan itu muncul pada perkembangan seni modern. Penyamaan 'fine arts' dan 'art' dalam *scope* dunia ini *incorrect* karena konsep *fine arts* (pengutamakan seni yang bersifat visual) mencerminkan persepsi seni pada tradisi Anglo-Amerika yang tidak bisa diuniversalkan. Di luar tradisi Anglo-Amerika ada banyak pemahaman seni lain yang tidak sama dengan pemahaman seni ini.

Kritisisme kontemporer maupun tradisi *fine art* yang ditentanginya bisa dilihat terikat pada

pemahaman seni itu. Pendekatan semiotik, yang menggali tanda-tanda visual dengan narasi terbuka (umum), merupakan kebalikan teori *disinterestedness* modernis yang mencari esensi seni pada obyek estetik visual dengan menghilangkan narasi dalam semua pengertian. Baik pendekatan semiotik maupun teori *disinterestedness* modernis sama-sama tidak tertarik pada musik dan tari (menggali hubungan emosi dengan gerak tubuh).

Bila kritisisme kontemporer sesungguhnya melahirkan paradigma, asumsi seni kontemporer merupakan peluasan tradisi Anglo-Amerika ke lingkup dunia akan menjadi tegas. Gejala ini menunjukkan bahwa perkembangan seni kontemporer meneruskan perkembangan seni modern.

Tanda-tanda kepincangan pada perkembangan seni modern akan muncul kembali. Seberapa jauh tradisi Anglo-Amerika (yang punya sejarah panjang dan rumit) bisa dipahami secara kultural (bukan secara kognitif) di luar Eropa dan Amerika Utara? Pemahaman secara kultural memerlukan kehadiran aktual—hidup di Eropa atau Amerika Utara—dan latar belakang budaya.

Dalam perkembangan seperti itu "paradigma" seni kontemporer—seperti paradigma-paradigma seni modern—akan menjadi pola perkembangan seni kontemporer dunia yang tidak sepenuhnya dipahami sejarah pemikirannya di luar Eropa dan Amerika.

Tanda-tanda terbentuknya "paradigma" seni kontemporer itu sudah bisa dirasakan di luar Eropa dan Amerika. Tecermin pada pandangan yang semakin sering dikemukakan yaitu seni sudah tidak perlu dipersoalkan pada seni kontemporer karena—lagi-lagi—sudah "kuno". Kecil kemungkinan pandangan naif ini didasari pengetahuan bahwa gejala yang dianggap

in the contemporary art because—again—it is a “thing of the past,” something outdated. There is only a slight possibility that such naïve view has been based on the knowledge of how such symptom, which is taken as “outdated”—actually constitutes a long and complicated history of opposing views in art.

This peculiarity has been lying hidden because the contemporary art has found its “home” in the world biennales and triennials, and fortuitously linked to the development of the city. Almost all world biennales and triennials present signs of metropolitanism—not in terms of the issue presented in the exhibition, but in terms of the execution.

In the development of international relationship today, cities have been playing a bigger role—and received the greatest advantage of this relationship—compared to the states, which cannot extricate themselves from the diplomatic rules of foreign politics. This is obvious in the increasing number of economic cooperation among world cities.

It is therefore understandable that the funds-gulping biennales and triennials have been sponsored by city governments. The mission is clear: to present the city on a par with other world metropolises. With such a mission, the content of the biennale or triennial itself is not truly important. A greater emphasis is given to the fact that the holding of contemporary art biennales and triennials has become one of the signs of accomplishment of an international metropolis.

The issue of the contemporary art in these biennales and triennials is not about the expansion of the Anglo-American tradition. Here the problem lies in the celebration of the uniformizing process due to globalization—which since 1990 has been sailing on without its old partner, i.e. the issue of diversity.

Cosmopolitanism that lies at the basis of the world biennales and triennials present the urban culture. The view that maintains that the contemporary art basically presents cities on the move and the culture of the middle class urbanites, as reflected in the cosmopolitan lifestyle, has become increasingly stronger. This view tends to ignore the issue of diversity in the metropolis.

The world biennales and triennials, therefore, show signs that are similar to the internationalizing of the Anglo-American tradition. Both the cosmopolitanism in the world biennales and triennials and the world scope of the Anglo-American tradition are ignoring the problem of diversity in the world art that is parallel to the issue of diversity in the contemporary culture.

Art with an accent

The world biennale and triennial turn out not to be the only sign of contemporary art development today. Another sign that provides us with materials for analyses is the development of the art market in Asia since 2000. Its main sign is the price hike among the works of the Asian contemporary artists in the art auctions in Hong Kong, Singapore, Beijing, and at the art fairs in Taipei, Shanghai, and Seoul. The development of the art market has become an international issue. A number of prominent art galleries and art fair organizers from Europe and North America have also made their mark in Asia and involved in the profitable business.

The development of the Asian art markets do not come about all of a sudden. It has been inextricable from the development of the art market in the United States in the mid-eighties. The development, which was marked by a price hike, also gave rise to negative

“kuno” adalah pertentangan pandangan tentang seni yang punya sejarah panjang dan rumit.

Kejanggalan itu tersembunyi sampai sekarang karena seni kontemporer menemukan “rumahnya” di biennale dan triennale dunia dan secara kebetulan berkaitan dengan perkembangan kota. Hampir semua biennale dan triennale dunia ini menampilkan metropolitanisme—bukan sebagai isu pamerannya tapi dalam penyelenggaraannya.

Dalam perkembangan hubungan internasional sekarang ini kota telah menjadi lebih berperan—dan mendapat keuntungan paling besar dari hubungan ini—dibandingkan negara, yang tidak bisa lepas dari diplomasi politik luar negeri. Gejala ini tecermin pada meningkatnya jumlah kerja sama ekonomi antarkota besar dunia.

Maka tidak aneh bila biennale dan triennale yang menyerap dana besar dibiayai pemerintahan kota. Tujuannya cukup jelas untuk menampilkan suatu kota pada jajaran kota-kota metropolitan dunia. Pada misi semacam ini tidak penting benar isi biennale atau triennale yang ditampilkan. Pertimbangan lebih penting adalah penyelenggaraan biennale dan triennale seni kontemporer sudah menjadi salah satu tanda kejayaan kota besar dalam lingkaran internasional.

Persoalan seni kontemporer pada biennale dan triennale itu bukan soal peluasan tradisi Anglo-Amerika. Di sini masalahnya adalah perayaan proses penyeragaman akibat globalisasi—yang sejak 1990 meluncur tanpa pasangannya yaitu persoalan keragaman. Kosmopolitanisme yang mendasari biennale dan triennale kaliber dunia menampilkan budaya urban. Sudah mulai santer terdengar pandangan yang melihat seni kontemporer pada dasarnya menampilkan

cities on the move dan budaya kelas menengah kota besar yang tecermin pada gaya hidup kosmopolitan. Pandangan yang sekarang semakin diyakini ini melupakan keragaman di kota besar,

Maka biennale dan triennale kelas dunia itu memperlihatkan gejala paralel dengan penduniaan tradisi Anglo-Amerika. Baik kosmopolitanisme pada biennale dan triennale dunia ini maupun penduniaan tradisi Anglo-Amerika sama-sama melupakan persoalan keragaman pada seni dunia yang paralel dengan persoalan keragaman pada budaya kontemporer.

Art with an accent

Biennale dan triennale dengan *scope* dunia ternyata bukan satu-satunya tanda perkembangan seni kontemporer sekarang ini. Tanda lainnya yang menyediakan bahan pembacaan adalah perkembangan pasar seni di Asia sejak tahun 2000. Tanda utamanya adalah lonjakan harga karya seni kontemporer serupa Asia di balai-balai lelang Hongkong, Singapura, Beijing, dan *Art Fair* di Taipei, Shanghai, dan Seoul.

Perkembangan pasar seni ini sudah menjadi isu internasional. Sejumlah galeri dan penyelenggara *art fair* terkemuka Eropa dan Amerika masuk ke Asia dan terlibat dalam bisnis yang menguntungkan ini.

Perkembangan pasar seni di Asia itu tidak terjadi tiba-tiba. Perkembangan ini tidak bisa dilepaskan dari perkembangan pasar di Amerika Serikat pada pertengahan 1980.

Perkembangan yang ditandai lonjakan harga juga memunculkan isu negatif yaitu komodifikasi karya seni yang menggunakan