

The Biennale Trend and the Lost Surabaya

When a big city holds any celebration, it is a must for them to celebrate it in magnifies way. Even for unpopular celebration, like art exhibition. At least by showing an art exhibition to public, they able to speak their art development, recently and Art Biennale is one thing could be proud to

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Taufik A.K.A "Monyong" Hidayat look like a mad man when he rides on his scooter around the city. In the side of his scooter stand a big Merah Putih flag. While in the other side stand a huge banner with the vote "Biennale Jatim III - 2009". This ex- reformist activist from Faculty of Art in Unesa was doing his road show by him self in order to promote and socialize Jatim Biennale III - 2009. He volunteered him self to do his road show for a week. It start three days before and after the Jatim Biennale III - 2009 in the mid of December 2009.

Taufik stop his scooter's engine in every crowd. Then he parked his old and ugly scooter with a lot of messages on it. Meanwhile, he spent his time in a "warung" (pedestrian stall shop) by enjoying the coffee near the park area.

For sure, his outrage scooter was hypnotizes the crowd. "What is Biennale actually, Sir?" asked the vegetable seller as Taufik was parking his scooter in Keputran Traditional Market. Believe it or not, that typical question was asked by another people around the crowd over and over. The funny is Taufik never bored answering with those questions and explained it very well.

The outcome of Taufik Monyong road show, he was succeed by socialize it to the crowd that Biennale as the art exhibition which held in every two years even it is strange to the Surabaya citizen's ear, especially for the marginal people. It is so ironic, that Surabaya as

the second biggest city in Indonesia is outrage with the "Biennale" language. Actually, Jatim Biennale is inspired by the oldest art exhibition Venice Biennale which born in 1895. In Indonesia, Biennale was started and popular in the early of eighties.

The fact, Surabaya is not known as the city that used to hold an Art Biennale. The other city who used to hold an Art Biennale is Bali, Jakarta, Jogja. A big city is not always guaranteed to have a tradition on Art Biennale, especially for Surabaya. When a big city holds any celebration, logically, it is a must for them to celebrate it in magnifies way. Even for unpopular celebration, like art exhibition for example. At least by showing an art exhibition to public, they able to speak their recent art development and hold an Art Biennale is one thing could be proud to.

Here it is Surabaya....We can understand that Surabaya society is strange with Art Biennale. Who knows that many of their art show lately was never recognized by their society. This reality is reminding us to Structuralism Theory by the sociologist from England Anthony Giddens. Giddens said "There is a power structure and human is straight on it". This explaining, a big city always has a big power structure to obey to. And Surabaya has a power structure that it is not giving any space for art and culture development. We can see it clearly by their uncertainty of their huge city development.

Against the Mainstream

Surabaya is known as the Hero City, but today it is not looks like the real hero city anymore. It is happen, because, the Surabaya government only increase their city development and forgetting the fundamental historic aspect. That is why for the last twenty years; Surabaya is changing their image as city of hero along the urbanization. And the urbanization takes over the Surabaya native citizen for 60 %.

According the scientist of Civilization from Institut Teknologi 10 November (ITS) Surabaya, Prof. Ir. Johan Silas, noted that in the past time Surabaya have typically civilization which hard to find in another city. In every village, we can found the grave yard of the heroic local people. And the symbol of the Surabaya revolution is recognized by many grave yards of heroic people around those villages. That is why, Surabaya called city of hero. But then in 1974, the Surabaya Government decides to move out all those grave yard into one place. The government move the grave yard in in Mayjend Sungkono Street near by the fast food restaurant from America, McDonald. This action is truly changing and disposal the soul of Surabaya as City of the Hero.

The disposal of Surabaya's soul as city of hero was increasing along the broken Netherlands Colonialism historic buildings which have high historic and art values. We can see the broken

historic building in Hotel Centrum building in Bubutan Street and Center Building in Tunjungan Street. The worst, some of historic building is rebuild and change into new building, like in Semut Railway Station, Mardi Santoso Hospital and Nam Store.

Also, Timoticin Kwanda, the Principle of Architecture Faculty of Petra University Surabaya observes the architecture of the historic buildings in Surabaya. He found that Surabaya historic buildings have unique and rich style such as, *Neo-Gothic*, *Neo-Renaissance*, *Neo-Classic*, *Nieuwe Kunst* (*Art Nouveau* Dutch version), *Amsterdam School* and *Destijl*. These architectures are unique and different from the other Europe classic building. Timoticin said the colonialism building in Indonesia even for public building and living house are accustomed to local social life, local culture and local climate. If we compare it with today modern building architecture, the old colonialism building architecture is more suitable to the Indonesian climate.

On the contrary, the architecture buildings from the property company –which popular today- build improper Europe architecture according to Surabaya climate. Also, they were using the name of their real estate area in English. This situation wills disposal the image of Surabaya as the City of Hero. For example the Citra Raya real estate in West Surabaya –near Unesa Campus- has a motto as The City of Singapore. It also has a colonialism symbol

statue of the Hindis Governor Sir Stamford Raffles about five meters high.

In Laguna Indah real estate of Pakuwon Group near ITS campus also having outrages name for their places, for example San Antonio, San Diego, Sorrento, Westwood, Riviera, Royal, Virginia and many more. While in Villa Bukit Mas real estate—behind the Hero Grave Yard in Mayjend Sungkono Street, fast food restaurant McDonald and Carrefour Golden City Mall- is using French name for their blocks.

The ironic more, that we can not find the street with the name of the important mans in Proclamation of Indonesia Independence - Soekarno-Hatta- in Surabaya. According to the Indonesia government, Indonesia have 159 name of heroes which 109 national heroes and 50 local heroes. Surabaya as the city of hero using only 39 names of heroes for the street name; there are 29 for national heroes and 10 local heroes.

For the last decades, the western naming is not only dominated in the real estate. It also happens to the Mall in every edge the city. The funny is those western naming are hard to pronounce by the local people. For example Wonokromo traditional market is change to Darmo Trade Center, Royal Plaza, BG Junction (Carrefour), City of Tomorrow, Surabaya Town Square and many more. It noted that there are 160 modern markets which consist of 70 % mini markets and 30 % supermarkets /

hypermarkets and malls with their outrages name.

Meanwhile, Surabaya has only 81 traditional markets under the Local Company, Pasar Surya. According to the Surabaya Market Seller Organization Association (Asosiasi Himpunan Pedagang Pasar Kota Surabaya), there are 65 non-active markets. Even for book corner, library, or museum is harder to find than looking traditional market in Surabaya.

If we are not concern to those situations, then it will happen over and over. In the end, the rest of Street with the heroes name will aborted by the western naming which has no relation with the Indonesia's revolution history. All of those conditions are the government fault, because they did not have any political in our culture policies improperly.

Back to the Structuralism by Giddens; a huge mainstream society structure does not means can not be changed. Because, human as the executor is possible to change the improper society structure even it will against the mainstream society structure. Meanwhile, the Surabaya artists are pioneering to fight it. Through their artworks, they have to take over the space, fulfill the city corner and neutralize the city growth which in the eye of the culture aspect is being alienated.

Learning the Culture's Concept

Most of the art Biennale have a certain theme and it often reflecting the background of the certain city that hold it. Implicitly, in the Jatim Biennale III – 2009 is using a theme “Exploring the Concrete of Culture” because; it is reflecting how Surabaya starts to lose their identity as the city of hero along the massive growth citizen. After all, this theme is free to each interpretation, especially for the artists who participate on this exhibition –Jatim Biennale III 2009.

In the other hand, still, according to Jakob Soemarjo that each artist should learn the art concept of their society's culture. The art culture made of the artwork which exists long before the artist was born. Each artwork is the masterpiece in their society. At first, it was the idea of creativity and it was new artwork in their time. But it start to changed by the human itself in their dynamically culture.

The art culture starts become a habitual and it ask the society to understand what is exactly “art” talking about? Meanwhile, when the artwork are dominated by the monotony visual art and hesitated by their generation at that time, contrary, it might be appreciated by the young generation as the masterpiece. Jacob Soemardi also claimed that art compound of simultaneous norms in the eye of modern society's concept.

For instance, let us see how Damar Kurung style –who presented by some artist in Jatim Biennale III – 2009 were evaluated from time to time. Since Sunan Prapen era –the third Sunan after Sunan Giri in the sixteen century, The Damar Kurung styles was developing and have their own style even it inspired by the Damar Kurung style. It means, the Damar Kurung style is growth and accustoms to each era. In the Sunan Prapen Era, Damar Kurung style was the mediator to widen Islam religion, no wonder most of the picture with Damar Kurung style describing the Islam propaganda.

Another Damar Kurung style by the Mbah Masmundari R.I.P. was also different. At first time, he painted the certain moments of Islam religion for example the holy month Ramadhan and Idul Fitri. But he also painted Damar Kurung in folk stories; Angling Dharma, Rengganis, etc.

Recently, Damar Kurung style by Masmundari was emerging into daily activities. He painted the pedestrian seller with their pushcart, the becak (tricycle taxi), traditional market crowd, the Independence Day on August party, wedding party, the train, the cavalries of garbage truck and komidi putar (an entertainment performed by monkey dance). All of those daily activities were translated on Damar Kurung's wallpaper horizontally. Also, the dresses of the people on the painting were changing too. It was not using any traditional dress –Kebaya- anymore but turning into

modern custom like skirt. For the additional backdrop, Masmundari putted modern symbol like ship, car, even Superman.

All those changing were followed by another artist after Mundari and it also display on the Jatim Biennale III – 2009 in House of Sampoerna Gallery. At least, the Damar kurung style symbolizing Indonesia's visual art have own style with the unique philosophy inside of it.

Some of the artists are presenting their creativity by reviving the spirit of local culture. For example, Suyono with his artwork "Save Our Generation". Through his painting, Suyono ask the public to see how the Indonesian children were creative children. Long time ago, this children was able to creating their toys. They recycled the garbage into many toys, like; a car made of orange's rind. Today, the ironic is that Indonesian children creativity is discarding into modern western toys like Play Station.

Another artist who criticizes the proud native people to consume import product is Elza Fahrurozi. Fahrurozi took a theme "Terkontaminasi/Contaminated". He criticizes, even to smoking a cigarette, native people prefer import cigarette than local cigarette. Also, Andi Prayitno is agreeing to Fahrurozi idea. He chooses a theme "Amnesia Lokal/Native Amnesia" on his artwork. He painted a pose of Indonesian human's brain which contain jeans which blend into a wash

machine. In the middle of it, also stand a batik clothes. Hendra Wahyu is also presenting the same ironic situation in the native society. Through his artwork "Song for You", Wahyu criticizes the youth generation who prefer listening western music than local music and still many more artwork of 110 artists from East Java inspired by local culture in the Jatim Biennale III -2009.

Jatim Biennale III – 2009 is also presenting the young artists who improve their creativity and quality. Two of them are Iwan Yusuf and Mufi Mubarakh. Iwan Yusuf, one of the young artists who participate in this Biennale, displaying his artwork with the theme "Suara Alam". And in Orasis Gallery, Mufi Mubarakh is improving his drawing technique through his three artworks.

The committee of Jatim Biennale III – 2009 is maximizing their energy to this the Art Fair (esp. Visual Art) which suitable for everyone even the artists, galleries, art lovers and publics. To blend all those peoples, the committee placing the venue in five different places in Surabaya. They expect everyone would like to visit the exhibition in those five venues, because it placed in five different area and suitable for everyone to visit. Somehow, if there are many people still wondering "What is Biennale actually?" then this question should be asked by the committee and it is a sign that they have to force their creativity more in the next Jatim Biennale two years later. This could be a stressfully dateline for the committee,

because it is not easy to ask the citizen who living in a big city but did not offering a chance for art to live.

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