

TRACING THE POWER OF WOMEN: KARTIKA AFFANDI'S ARTISTIC PRACTICE THROUGH THE LENS OF GENDER ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The author examines the dynamics of power relations and forms of resistance practiced by Indonesian female painter Kartika Affandi through an ethnographic methodological approach. This study highlights how gender identity and women's position in the art world are produced, constructed, and resisted within the Indonesian socio-cultural context. This research adopts the theoretical framework of gender performativity by Judith Butler, as well as Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Stuart Hall's theory of identity. Data collection in this study was conducted through field observations, in-depth interviews, and active participation in women's art communities to understand the social processes that shape their artistic practices and gender identities. The results show that female painters not only confront patriarchal power structures and cultural hegemony that marginalize them, but also assert their identities through artistic innovation and practices that reject these patriarchal norms. These findings emphasize that gender performativity, combined with an analysis of power and cultural identity, functions as a subversive tool and empowerment strategy within the local cultural context. Art serves as a crucial medium in the struggle for women's equality and empowerment in Indonesia, while also revealing the dynamics of power and resistance in the process of gender identity formation.

Keywords: Resistance; Female Painters; Kartika Affandi; Gender Analysis.

INTRODUCTION

In the post-modern era that is currently developing, we never miss the historical journey that occurred in Indonesia which covers various aspects, including social, educational, economic, political and many more. One aspect that is included in the development from history to post modern is works of art

such as paintings. One of the famous female painters in Indonesia is Kartika Affandi.

Kartika Affandi is the daughter of the famous painter Affandi Koesoema who was born in Jakarta on November 27, 1934. Kartika Affandi's interest in painting began when she was small when Kartika often accompanied her father to paint in various countries, then was strengthened again while studying at Santineketan Tagore University, India. Various painting exhibitions have also been started from 1969 to 2025, both domestically and abroad. Apart from solo exhibitions, Kartika Affandi is also active in various collaborative exhibitions, monuments art work, artist talk activities, workshops and even social activities. So that from 1977 to 2025 Kartika Affandi received many awards at home and abroad.

Kartika Affandi's paintings take many human objects, nature, parks, architectural buildings and various outdoor activities. This is based on the fact that since childhood he often accompanied his father, Affandi Koesoema, to paint outdoors, so that the characteristics of the paintings he made were in line with those found in nature and outdoors. Many of Kartika Affandi's paintings also raise feminist issues and gender equality. Kartika Affandi lived and began her career as a painter in the era before Indonesian independence & the beginning of Indonesian independence when most painters were dominated by men such as Djoko Pekik, Nasirun, Angki Purbandono, Butet Kartaredjasa and so on.

Kartika Affandi's paintings are expressionist. Matters regarding women's freedom to freely express themselves, create beautiful paintings, even paintings of naked women are no longer taboo for Kartika Affandi. However, because Indonesia still adheres to eastern culture, where nudity is still considered a taboo, Kartika Affandi feels that she does not have the freedom to work according to her conscience and creativity. On the other hand, many people think that Kartika Affandi is only using Affandi Koesoema's big name for the sake of her successful career in painting. Tracing the meaning of each of Kartika Affandi's paintings is interesting to study and is proof that women are able to work and prove themselves to appear in society.

Research questions

1. How Kartika Affandi, a female painter who began her career before Indonesia's independence, is able to maintain its existence to this day and facing the limitations for women in the male-dominated world of art?
2. How the expressionist style is used in Kartika Affandi's paintings as a form of expression of freedom and courage in expression?
3. What steps did Kartika Affandi take in facing the dilemma of gender issues in the shadow of the maestro Affandi Koesoema?

Review of literature

An academic study or conference on Kartika Affandi was carried out as a scientific research entitled Traditional Architecture and Contemporary Art – The Estate of Kartika Affandi in 2017. This research was part of a collaborative project between universities in Austria and Gadjah Mada University which discussed Kartika Affandi's workplace and art estate, including its relationship with traditional Javanese architecture and the contemporary context of the works of art exhibited there. This study is included in a project that connects *kartika*, her works of art and heritage with aspects of cultural and architectural heritage, especially at Affandi Estate which is also an exhibition space for Kartika's work.

Several scientific works and academic books discuss Kartika Affandi in the context of Indonesian modern art and the position of women artists, namely Astri Wright's writing about Kartika Affandi entitled Undermining the Order of the Javanese Universe: Kartika Affandi-Köberl's self-portraits 1994 (ArtAsiaPacific / academic essay about Kartika's work in the context of cultural expression and identity). Astri Wright also wrote broader art studies of Kartika in books and conferences evaluating Kartika's position as an Indonesian female artist in the history of modern art.

In addition to the academic papers and documents mentioned above, there are also other art study documents about Kartika Affandi which were written in the context of art education, such as student theses or final assignments which were analyzed aesthetically and theoretically at fine arts institutions. Example: *Relief Pelukis Kartika* by M. Susanto, ISI Yogyakarta student in 2019 which discusses Kartika's painting techniques and visual style.

THEORIES

The object of study that we have chosen is suitable to be studied using gender performativity theory according to the ideas of Judith Butler. This theory is not a fixed or essential identity, but rather something that is created and maintained through the continuous repetition of a series of actions, behaviors and gender expressions in social space. So, gender exists and becomes real because of repeated performative actions, not because there is a biological essence behind it.

The theory of hegemony according to Antonio Gramsci is the idea that power is not only maintained through physical force or coercion, but especially through moral and intellectual leadership which makes the values, ideas and interests of the dominant class accepted as something natural, natural and benefits everyone, even though they actually benefit certain groups. Hegemony works through institutions such as schools, media, religion and culture which shape people's way of thinking, so that they voluntarily accept the existing social

order. Therefore, for Gramsci, social change is only possible if oppressed groups build "counter-hegemony", namely the production of alternative ideas, values and culture that can challenge the ideological domination of the ruling group.

Identity theory according to Stuart Hall emphasizes that identity is not something fixed, stable, or essential, but rather something that is formed socially, historically, and culturally through the process of representation. Hall argues that identity is always in a state of becoming, continually changing according to the context, discourse and power that surrounds it. Individuals form identities through the way they are represented in culture and how they identify themselves in the various subject positions offered by society such as belonging to a particular race, gender, class, or nation. Therefore, identity is fragmentary, multi-layered, and often contradictory, not something complete or single. Hall also emphasized that identity emerges through difference, namely by distinguishing oneself from "others" and is always negotiated in power relations.

METHOD

Respondents

The primary data source for this research is Kartika Affandi. Kartika Affandi is currently still alive and 91 years old. Kartika Affandi is considered capable of providing answers or responses to researchers' questions through direct interviews to produce factual and relevant information for research. Kartika Affandi has a very crucial role in ensuring the validity and accountability of the research results.

Instruments

Researchers used interview guides, stationery and cellphone cameras as documentation in collecting the data needed in the research. Interview guidelines are used when interviewing informants to obtain neatly arranged data, making it easier for researchers to obtain accurate answers. Stationery and notebooks are useful for recording information about data obtained during research. The camera is used to obtain image data from the research object being observed.

Procedures

First, observation. Observation is a step to obtain data carried out directly by researchers at the location where the research object is located. Observations in this research were carried out at the Affandi Museum Yogyakarta, which is where the main resource person, Kartika Affandi, lives. Observations were also

carried out in Gallery III of the Affandi Museum because this gallery displays Kartika Affandi's works which are open to museum visitors. *Second*, interview. This research uses in-depth interview techniques with stages (1) making an appointment with the informant, (2) preparing the research instrument, (3) conducting the interview according to the interview guide that has been created, (4) compiling the results of the interview. *Third*, document study. This research uses document study to collect information and support data obtained from observations and interviews by informants. Researchers collected data obtained from the library of the Affandi Museum Yogyakarta. *Fourth*, literature study. The library study technique is conducting a review of books, journals and previous research results to obtain information that is useful for research.

Data analysis

In this research, data analysis was carried out using qualitative descriptive and interpretive models. The steps taken in the data analysis process are; (1) data collection, collecting the data needed for research according to data collection guidelines, (2) reducing data, namely by sorting and converting data that appears in the field, (3) presenting data, namely by assembling and arranging information in the form of one unit, selectively and understandably, (4) formulating conclusions, namely by conducting a review in the field to test the truth and validity of the meaning that emerges.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. How Kartika Affandi, a female painter who began her career before Indonesia's independence, is able to maintain its existence to this day and facing the limitations for women in the male-dominated world of art?

We know that Kartika Affandi is a female painting artist who is well known nationally and internationally, but if we look at the history of her career as a painter from before independence to post-independence, if we examine it using the concepts of Judith Butler's Performativity theory, Gramsci's Hegemony, and Stuart Hall's Identity. Kartika Affandi is known as a female painting artist who has had a career since before Indonesian independence, who apparently has been able to prove and maintain her existence through repeated practice which indirectly confirms that her identity and competence as a female painter is true and has been proven.

Based on Judith Butler's Performativity concept, her identity is formed and maintained through consistent actions and work, so that her existence as a quality female painter is internalized and socially recognized. She shows that women are able to compete and contribute significantly in the world of art, despite facing gender norms and stereotypes that tend to limit women's space in this field. Meanwhile, if viewed through the lens of Gramsci's Hegemony, Kartika's struggle against patriarchal power structures and male-dominated

cultural norms becomes very important. She actively challenges hegemonic norms by proving that women are also capable of creating and have an important role in the world of art. On the other hand, Stuart Hall's concept of identity emphasizes that Kartika's identity is not static, but continues to develop and be constructed through her experiences and struggles.



(Painting "*Taman Rembrandt*" 2003, Acrylic on Canvas 100x130cm, source: researcher documentation)

The painting above is a painting by Kartika Affandi created in 2003 entitled "*Taman Rembrandt*" which is located in the Netherlands, precisely in the city of Amsterdam, in the Nieuw-West district, and is named after the famous Dutch painter, Rembrandt van Rijn, who also has a museum and square of the same name in the city. The painting "*Taman Rembrandt*" is related to the search for identity. Kartika Affandi wants to find her own unique style, does not want to be "the second Affandi". Kartika wanted to have her own identity, not just follow in the footsteps of her father, Affandi. This led her to see art from a different perspective. Her father, Affandi, never praised her paintings directly. This was done so that Kartika would not feel limited and would continue to be motivated to create further, an unusual form of "education" from the maestro. The story behind Kartika Affandi's paintings, such as "*Taman Rembrandt*" reflects her struggle to find her own characteristics in painting and in an effort to escape from the shadow of Affandi Koesoema.

Thus, Kartika Affandi's success in maintaining and strengthening her existence as an Indonesian female painter is the result of a social process that runs dynamically and is full of struggle and is able to negate the gender boundaries that have limited women in the world of art where so far the ones who develop in society are male painters. Kartika Affandi lived and started his career as a painter in the era before Indonesian independence and the beginning of Indonesian independence, when most painting artists were dominated by men such as Djoko Pekik, Nasirun, Angki Purbandono, Butet Kartaredjasa and so on, and she is able to prove her existence to this day.

2. How the expressionist style is used in Kartika Affandi's paintings as a form of expression of freedom and courage in expression?

The use of expressionist style in Kartika Affandi's paintings can be analyzed as a manifestation of freedom and courage in self-expression, which is in line with Judith Butler's concept of performativity. According to Judith Butler, identity construction and self-expression are formed through repeated and consistent performative practices, thus confirming the existence of individual subjectivity.

In the context of Kartika's work, an expressionist style full of emotion and spontaneity functions as a performative act that affirms artistic courage and autonomy, while simultaneously challenging social norms and gender stereotypes that have limited women in the world of art. In this way, this work becomes a medium for asserting an authentic identity that is free from social restrictions and patriarchal norms.



(Painting "Kekecewaan" by Kartika Affandi)

Kartika Affandi expressed her anxiety regarding freedom of expression in the painting above. The painting above depicts the face of Kartika Affandi who is in prison. As Indonesians who are synonymous with eastern customs, human nudity is still considered a taboo. "Nude" is something beautiful and artistic for Kartika Affandi because it depicts something that is experienced and what is. Kartika feels that she is still trapped and cannot freely create works according to the expressions she feels honestly. The rules of society, which are still not fully open regarding art, restrict her from being able to create works with ideas that are considered inhumane.

Apart from Nude, the expressionist style used by Kartika Affandi can also be interpreted as a form of expression of "freedom and courage" because expressionism places more emphasis on the emotional elements of the subject as well as the element of spontaneity which allows an artist to channel freer feelings and thoughts related to an objective representation of reality, which can be a strength for a female artist in society.

“Nude” is something beautiful and artistic for Kartika Affandi because it depicts something that is experienced and what is. Some of Kartika's paintings contain feminist themes and raise her concerns about gender inequality.



(Kartika's Self Portrait Painting: 2019)

Becoming a mother is a journey full of love and sacrifice experienced by Kartika Affandi. On the right side of the painting, there is a painting of a dog breastfeeding its puppies. This painting depicts Kartika as a dog breastfeeding baby dogs. At that time Kartika married an artist named Sapto Hudoyo and had 9 children. Even though her body is tired, a mother's love will never wane. Kartika finds deep meaning in nursing animal mothers, she also sees a touching similarity between pain and unconditional love. A mother's love, whether human or animal, is rooted in the instinct to give, protect, love unconditionally. This self-portrait work is a story of a mother's celebration which is manifested through every stroke of the brush. Kartika is a female painting artist. This evidence refers to Kartika's works that male painters were unable to do, such as works entitled "*Terbelenggu*" (1997), "*Potret Diri & Kambing*" (1989), "*Kelahiran Kembali*" (1981) and "*The Beginning*" (1982) which imply the context of women's struggle as professional painters. The theme of paintings about women is clearly a nature that cannot be owned by male painters because men do not experience the process of pregnancy & giving birth to a child.

In Gramsci's theory of hegemony, the use of this expressionist style can be seen as a form of resistance to hegemonic power structures that curb women's emotional expression and creativity. Kartika's paintings full of expression are a symbol of resistance to hegemonic cultural norms, which tend to place women

in a passive position and are limited in their expression. From Stuart Hall's perspective, the construction of Kartika's identity as an expressionist painter is the result of a dynamic social process, where this identity continues to develop as a form of affirmation of freedom of expression and rejection of patriarchal norms.

Thus, the expressionist style in Kartika's work not only reflects her artistic personality, but also contains symbolic meaning as a form of resistance to power structures and social norms that limit women's space for expression.

3. What steps did Kartika Affandi take in facing the dilemma of gender issues in the shadow of the maestro Affandi Koesoema?

In facing the dilemma of gender issues related to the shadow of the maestro, Affandi Koesoema, Kartika Affandi took strategic steps that can be analyzed through the framework of Judith Butler's performativity theory, Gramsci's hegemony, and Stuart Hall's identity construction. Performatively, Kartika consciously and consistently asserts her identity as an independent and brave female artist, through her work and attitude.

According to Butler, this repeated act of expressing identity is a process that shapes and confirms its existence amidst patriarchal domination and the shadow of the maestro's power. He does not just follow existing norms, but carries out performances that actively emphasize the uniqueness and autonomy of his identity in the world of art.

From the perspective of Gramsci's hegemony, Kartika's steps can be understood as a form of resistance to hegemonic power which seeks to limit and marginalize the role of women in the world of art, as well as placing them in an inferior position to male figures such as Affandi. By continuing to work and showing her quality and identity authentically, Kartika seeks to disrupt the power structure that places women as subordinates and emphasizes that patriarchal power can be questioned and resisted.

From Stuart Hall's perspective, Kartika's identity as a female artist with strong character is the result of dynamic and meaningful social construction. She asserts her identity through works and attitudes that reject gender stereotypes, while reflecting ongoing social processes. This step is part of the process of affirming women's empowerment in the arts and culture space, as well as a form of resistance to dominant patriarchal norms.

The steps taken by Kartika Affandi in dealing with the gender problems she felt herself, where her father's name was always a shadow, became something that Kartika Affandi could not avoid. Gender problems became the main thing. Several strategic and symbolic steps to be able to emphasize her identity and courage in becoming an Indonesian female painter. Kartika Affandi tries to present works that are different from the styles and themes known from her father, Affandi. Kartika Affandi developed a unique and personal style and artistic expression, so that she not only continued in the maestro's footsteps, but also emphasized her existence as a unique and independent individual in the world of art.

In her works, Kartika Affandi often displays themes and styles that are more feminine and personal, which may be different from Affandi's masculine and strong image. This is a step to confirm that her identity is not tied to the shadow of her father, but rather as a woman who dares to express herself authentically.



(Painting entitled "*Potret Diri Menjual Ikan*" 2020, Acrylic on Canvas 90cm x 105cm)

One of the striking differences in the paintings made by Affandi and Kartika lies in the use of paint and coloring. Affandi's paintings have a dark theme, with paint colors often used are black, brown, green, red, and yellow. This is also influenced by the era of his life. Affandi Koesoema lived during the Dutch and Japanese colonial era. This influenced the dark colors that depict that era. Meanwhile, Kartika Affandi often uses bright colors such as pink, blue, purple, orange, cream which produce more colorful and bold colors in her paintings. Kartika lived in the war era before and after Indonesian independence which influenced the color variations in her paintings. Paintings made in the pre-independence period tended to be dark, Kartika also developed a black and white painting technique that depicted the conditions in Indonesia at that time which was still struggling against the colonizers. When Indonesia became independent, Kartika used more colorful, bright, and charismatic paint colors with the concept of her joy and worry as a woman. The dark and light images in her paintings have the meaning that Kartika sees the world as not only dark but also the bright color of love that surrounds it. Kartika Affandi establishes herself as a woman in a male-dominated art field and is often seen through the lens of comparison with her father. Kartika shows courage by continuing to work and presenting high quality work. She also plays an active role in various exhibitions and art activities, building an independent reputation and recognition in building her branding as a Female Painter in Indonesia.

Kartika Affandi strives to change society's stereotypes and perceptions

regarding the role of women in the world of art through the success and consistency of her work. She is an inspiration for other women to appear and create without fear of the shadows of gender or family that have always developed in society. It can also be seen in interviews, exhibitions and publications, Kartika Affandi actively conveys the message that she is an artist who has her own identity and vision. She emphasized that her success was not solely due to her blood relationship with Affandi, but due to the quality and courage in her work.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, several steps were taken by Kartika Affandi in dealing with several dilemma issues discussed regarding gender and the shadow of her maestro father Affandi. It can be concluded that Judith Butler's concept of performativity shows that Kartika Affandi's identity as a woman and painter is formed through repeated practices and actions that emphasize her role and existence in the world of art. Meanwhile, Gramsci's theory of hegemony reveals that the position of women in the world of art in Indonesia remains influenced by cultural forces and patriarchal norms that maintain a certain dominance. On the other hand, Stuart Hall's view emphasizes that Kartika's identity is the result of a dynamic and continuously developing social construction process, influenced by cultural context and personal struggles. Overall, Kartika Affandi's identity as a female painter in Indonesia is the result of a social construction process that is full of dynamics, as well as a struggle against hegemonic forces that limit her space in the world of art.

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