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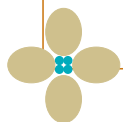
ISSN: 2087-1236

Volume 6 No. 3 Juli 2015



humaniora

Language, People, Art, and Communication Studies



humaniora	Vol. 6	No. 3	Hlm. 291-432	Jakarta Juli 2015	ISSN: 2087-1236
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HUMANIORA

Language, People, Art, and Communication Studies

Vol. 6 No. 3 Juli 2015

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Terbit & ISSN	Terbit 4 (empat) kali dalam setahun (Januari, April, Juli dan Oktober) ISSN: 2087-1236	

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PRACTICE AS 'RESEARCH' WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ART AND DESIGN ACADEMIA: A BRIEF EXCURSION INTO ITS PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS

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ABSTRACT

Integration of many fields of human endeavor including art and design into academic system is not at all surprising in our modern world that continues to modernize itself in the quest for ever increasing welfare of humanity. The backbone of modern welfare is unmistakably techno-scientific academic research, explaining current expansion of its 'standardized' paradigm, regulation and infrastructure without exception into the field of art and design. This is where the problem precisely arises, since their own nature, art and design as 'creative' fields, are incompatible with scientific paradigm which emphasizes a uniform reproducibility of research findings. 'The heart of the arts', in contrast, is its singularities. The industry actually has recognized the difference by assigning 'patents' to technological invention and 'copyright' to singular artworks. The question is then how to incorporate such creatively plural fields into uniform academic research system. Fortunately within the past 20 years, there were developments within international art and design academia that came up with a keystone principle called practice-based research. It relies upon philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology and hermeneutics which has been critically acclaimed in showing inadequacies of positivistic (natural science-based) paradigm in understanding cultural phenomena exemplified by art and design. It is the intention of this article to briefly explain this new principle and its philosophical underpinnings in order to let us appreciate its positive contribution for our understanding of art and design. This understanding in turn would allow us to cultivate those creative fields within academic context in a more appropriate way.

Keywords: *academic research, positivistic paradigm, the paradigm of hermeneutics/phenomenology, art and design, practice-based research*

ABSTRAK

Integrasi berbagai bidang usaha manusia termasuk seni dan desain ke sistem akademik sama sekali tidak mengherankan di dunia modern yang terus memodernisasi dirinya dalam upaya untuk meningkatkan kesejahteraan manusia. Tulang punggung kesejahteraan modern adalah penelitian akademik techno-ilmiah, menjelaskan ekspansi 'standar' paradigma saat ini, regulasi dan infrastruktur tanpa kecuali ke dalam bidang seni dan desain. Di sini masalah justru muncul karena pada dasarnya sifat seni dan desain sebagai bidang 'kreatif' tidak sesuai dengan paradigma ilmiah yang menekankan reproduktivitas seragam temuan penelitian. Inti dari seni yang berlawanan adalah singularitas. Industri telah benar-benar mengakui perbedaan dengan menetapkan 'paten' penemuan teknologi dan 'hak cipta' untuk karya seni tunggal. Pertanyaan kemudian adalah bagaimana menggabungkan bidang jamak seperti kreatif ke sistem penelitian akademik yang seragam. Untungnya, dalam 20 tahun terakhir ada perkembangan dalam seni internasional dan akademisi desain dengan prinsip dasar penelitian berbasis praktik. Ini bergantung pada dasar filosofis fenomenologi dan hermeneutika yang secara serius diakui dalam menunjukkan kekurangan paradigma positivistic (berbasis ilmu pengetahuan alam) dalam memahami fenomena budaya yang dicontohkan seni dan desain. Ini merupakan tujuan artikel ini: menjelaskan secara singkat prinsip baru tersebut dan dasar-dasar filosofis untuk menghargai kontribusi positif pemahaman tentang seni dan desain. Pemahaman ini, pada gilirannya, pada gilirannya memungkinkan kita untuk menumbuhkan bidang-bidang kreatif dalam konteks akademik dengan cara yang lebih tepat.

Kata kunci: *penelitian akademis, paradigm positivistic, paradigma hermeneutika/fenomenologi, seni dan desain, penelitian berbasis praktik*

INTRODUCTION

Amidst the ‘awakening of research universities’ in Indonesia, the field of art and design are now facing an uneasy situation. Integration of art and design into higher education system creates pressure to adapt to uniform structure and regulation that refer to ‘scientific research standards,’ but in turn inflicting paradigmatic quandary and impediment among creative disciplines. The most prevalent cases are teaching and knowledge (in any discipline) are prone to be defined solely by techno-scientific ‘truth’ or ‘paradigm’ (positivism, post-positivism), perhaps unsurprisingly common in many developing countries seeking to achieve prosperity by means of techno-industrial advancements. Certainly there is nothing ill-advised within techno-scientific paradigm in itself, but not every human endeavor shares uniform technological ‘truth and rationality.’ At least since late 19th and early 20th centuries, key western intellectuals from Wilhelm Dilthey, Martin Heidegger to Hans-Georg Gadamer and so forth have argued and convincingly showed inadequacies of positivistic framework in understanding human historico-cultural nature, indicated by *singularities* (plurality of uniqueness) as epitomized in the arts.

Likewise, if art and design subsume themselves under techno-scientific research paradigm that assumes ‘universal’ and mechanical reproducibility of any research findings, the consequence would be very counter-productive. Since art and design endeavors, to paraphrase Klaus Krippendorf, primarily do not concern with objective fact findings and mechanical predictions of them, but with “making sense of things” (Krippendorf, 2007:69). Science normally studies existing facts such as physical phenomena of color, then comes up with causal explanation of its nature, hence mechanical prediction and controlled implementation of it would be possible. In contrast, art and design does not observe and predict existing facts mechanically but instead proposing new meaning and possibilities with respect to many things imaginable. Many movies even asked ‘what does it mean to be’ in a world where technological control is ever increasingly imposed on every aspect of human life. An important distinction should be stressed here, that is, between fact and meaning. Fact as understood by natural science is indeed causal-mechanically determined and predictable, but art and design are not merely inanimate objective facts. Art and design are intrinsically related to humanity’s own continual self-disclosure that makes possible ever-continuing self understanding and transformation. Doing art and design, hence, have to be distinguished from doing predictive /objective research. And in conjoining with the emergence of practice-based paradigm within international art and design academia in the past 20 years, there is now a strong rationale for our higher education not to indiscriminately subsuming art and design under one roof of scientific research paradigm. However, the idea of art and design as a ‘practice-based’ instead of ‘research-based’ inquiry is a relatively new within Indonesian academia wherein preliminary discourses are still much necessary.

Nevertheless, considering the importance of the issue and but the same time its depth and complexity comprising of philosophical underpinnings, this article constricted itself to the discussion of some fundamental aspects of art/design, in order to explain and justify its practice-based character as commensurate to research in higher education context. First aspect to be discussed is ontological basis of art/design works *vis a vis* natural facts, followed by showing their epistemic character in comparison to scientific knowledge. To meet academic requirements, it is also important to discuss the last aspect, that is, methodology. But as already stated by Guba in *Paradigm Dialog* (1990) and later adapted by Gray & Malins, methodology “should be a consequence of ontology and epistemology – that is, methodology is evolved in awareness of what the researcher considers“ reality, hence “knowable” (Gray & Malins, 2004:19). To put it in other words, methodology is a logical consequence of our most basic tenet of ‘reality’ and of ‘knowledge’ (or, paradigm is not consisted merely of methodology, but also of ontology and epistemology). If we consider ‘reality’ as consisting of merely inanimate atomic entities shaped by mechanical forces that could be represented in law-like equations, which in turn those laws could be applied back to predict or control that reality, our appropriate

method of inquiries should be of observations and controlled experiments. But in the case of art and design ‘reality’ which exhibit an ‘open’ (discovery-led) and ‘hermeneutical’ character (meaningful instead of mechanical), the appropriate paradigm would not be of objective-scientific research. It is the task of this paper to briefly show the paradigm behind the idea of practice-based nature of art and design inquiries.

METHOD

Since paradigm is not in itself an empirical object but instead ‘conceptual framework’ through which any empirical research is made possible, inquiry into it employs literary research and reflective methods. Inasmuch as this inquiry proposes art and design as a discrete discipline in contrast to natural sciences, it also includes brief comparative analysis. Inquiry proceeded from the discussion of ontological aspect, followed by epistemology and finally methodology of art and design.

DISCUSSION

Ontology of Art and Design Work

To achieve credible footing of art/design practice as commensurate to ‘mainstream’ research in academic setting, the first route taken here was posing an ontological problem. “What is the nature of the object, of the subject matter, in research,” or more precisely, practice “in the arts? (Borgdorff, 2012:45). Are art and design works exactly the ‘same reality’ as natural things? To what kind of ‘reality’ does the inquiry within the arts address itself? In positivist and post-positivist paradigm commonly employed in mainstream science, research assumes reality exists ‘out there’ as an ‘objective’ mechanical facts where human ‘subjects’ (researchers) could occupy a detached observational position, as it were, ‘outside that reality,’ free from any cultural beliefs. This ‘dualistic’ ontology (clear-cut separation between ‘subject and object’ or ‘mind and matter’) originated from 16th century Cartesianism (but now is still widely assumed) has been heavily criticized by contemporary Western Intellectuals, whether from phenomenological tradition (Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty), hermeneutics (Heidegger, Gadamer), critical theory (Marcuse, Habermas), or post-structuralism (Baudrillard, Derrida). These contemporary critiques (where Heidegger indeed plays a central role) should not be understood as some “crass and vaguely ‘postmodern’ notions that all knowledge are ‘merely relative,’” or as a mutual “attack on the natural sciences. The main target was *scientism*” (Clark, 2011:11, 21), that is, the belief that only the natural sciences (based on Cartesian ontology) could reach the truest understanding of all reality, and ought to be the ultimate ground of any other. Scientific objectivity here remains intact, but as the paradigmatic standard appropriate for some kinds of inquiry, not as the sole measure of legitimate knowledge of all things (ibid.: 21).

Most of contemporary critiques to *scientism* above share a view that emphasizes the primacy of socio-cultural or historico-linguistical context in every human endeavor and understanding. There is no privilege for any form of knowledge, even for natural science, to ‘escape’ from this basic social and linguistical character embodied in all human praxis. Habermas from critical theory perspective have already spoken about value-ladenness of natural sciences, which is to ‘manipulate’ or ‘control’ reality it scrutinizes. Even the ‘critical sciences’ he proposed himself in *theory of communicative action* was admittedly laden with interest, that is, ‘to emancipate humanity.’ Meanwhile, speaking of our linguistical nature, Gadamer and Heidegger from hermeneutical perspective has been convincingly argued that it is through language that reality becomes intelligible to us. We learn to know the world by learning to practically master some language in it. It follows that we cannot really understand

human endeavor (including science) unless we understand ourselves as situated within a linguistically mediated, historical culture. Language is our ‘second nature’ (Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2013). But by putting language in the center of all human understanding of reality, doesn’t hermeneutics fall back into crude relativism?

Contemporary science-sociologist Bruno Latour agreed with the view and helped us understand the plausibility of hermeneutic stance through his own thesis called ‘constructivist-realism:’ *Reality* precisely becomes *more real* through our linguistic interpretation of it (Borgdorff, 2012:11). Science too presupposes certain language and theoretical constructs. At first glance, it seems like a self-referential scenario which leads to stark relativism. But in actual fact, this is not self-referential at all since what we call ‘linguistical construct’ does not consist of ‘merely subjective’ subjects standing over-against an objective world, but instead a ‘holistic network of socio-linguistical praxis’ constituted by “dynamic chain of interactions, transformations, and articulations that may ultimately produce more reality” (ibid.: 11). According to hermeneutics and phenomenology, mastering particular language has already ‘stretched’ one into socio-historical fabric instead of enclosing her/him in some kind of subjectivistic mind. The problem of relativism (and skepticism) precisely emerges when we fall back into the strict subject-object (or mental-material) ontological separation, through which the whole human culture was conceived as an aggregate of ‘merely subjective mental preferences’ (Palmer, 1969:144–145). It is because Cartesian ‘logic’ begins by positing human ‘essence’ as a mental entity or ‘thinking thing’ (*cogito*), an ‘anchor’ or ‘master’ of material reality but hovering uprootedly above it in an absolute geometrical space-time. In such ‘geometrical reality,’ human history is consequentially ‘a non-sense.’ However, Heidegger has shown that even Cartesian dualism has already been a historico-linguistical interpretation of ‘Being’ (reality as a whole) which has its root in Platonic dualism (intelligible-sensible dichotomy). In contrast to Platonic-Cartesian binary, hermeneutics and phenomenology begin from concrete *lifeworld* or *Being-in-the-World*, roughly holistic ‘web’ of *lived life* before any dualistic interpretation of it.

Here hermeneutical view has brought deep yet ‘brighter’ consequences in our understanding of human, art and culture. Being ‘inside’ our own or praxical-linguistical lifeworld all the time (and could never possibly be ‘outside’), art and design works do not primarily present themselves to us some kind of ‘value-free’ objects of scientific scrutiny. Art and design works initially and for the most part ‘have always already done their work’ within the closest proximity to us, that is, in and through our own wardrobes, buildings, ceremonies, graphical signs, audio-visuals, stories of our ‘heroes and villain,’ and so on. All that have just been mentioned have a deep historical character, that is, transmitted and gets reinterpreted through generational praxis prior to any explicit theorizations. Hence, they rather tacitly constitute our cultural ‘horizons’ in which we live, and through which our outlook gets shaped, before we get a chance to approach them with a detached objectivizing gaze (Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2013). The world’s greatest works emerge prior to any scientific research objectivication. There was certainly no ‘universal causal law’ of Sphinx before Sphinx materially built, of Javanese wayang before Javanese wayang made, of Baroque music before Baroque music composed, of Cubism before Cubism emerged (objective science indeed had not been appeared until the 17th-19th century), and so on. Of course after those ‘historic works’ have been produced, scientific research could approach them as isolated and ‘objective facts.’ But as already mentioned, they initially don’t borne out of disinterested mechanical objectivication of ‘neutral’ facts. Art and design works in fact are so laden with, or more precisely embodying and manifesting aesthetical and ethical values (e.g. what is worthy-unworthy) of communal *lifeworlds* they emerged from.

Speaking of how it was possible for indigenous works to originate at all prior to theoretical objectivications, Heidegger (1975) begun by showing an important distinction between ‘originary works’ and ‘already familiar’ works. For the sake of simplicity, we firstly discuss the latter. Our capacity to ‘almost spontaneously’ grasp many ‘familiar’ works are in fact made possible not by objective-theoretical gaze, but by prior yet tacit familiarity of repertoire of works that bear ‘family resemblances.’ In other words, familiar works had already manifested within our own socio-cultural

environment, and consequently had already shaped our own outlook; therefore we ‘resonate consonantly’ in front of each one of them. On the other hand, it is very difficult for people without any background familiarity with 17th century English literature for example, to decipher the meaning of *Hamlet*, which for them appears as strange or ‘dissonant.’ But what is truly a breakthrough with respect to ontological understanding of art is Heidegger’s account of ‘originary works.’ As a holistic outlook instead of atomistic one, Heideggerian phenomenology understands artworks as emerging out of ‘co-creation’ between ‘tacit’ communal praxis with their ‘natural materiality,’ rather than derived solely from ‘conscious mental imagination’ of some ‘creative geniuses’ (Heidegger, 1975:62–63, 76)

However as common understanding, phenomenology do regards artworks by its originality or ‘singularity.’ The difference between phenomenological and too common-sensical Cartesian-dualistic account of art is in the latter, singularity of a work could only be ‘logically’ attributed to ‘subjectivistic mental imagination,’ while phenomenology precisely realizes the role of ‘materiality’ (Palmer, 1969:160). The reason is this. Imagine for example, the past moment when Javanese art and culture began to originate. The question is how it could possibly began at all from arbitrary ideas of ‘generic thinking things,’ who were *should be so* since they were ‘yet to be materially Javanese’ at the time Javanese culture were still only ‘subjective ideas inside those things’ heads!’ In creating Javanese art, the whole people should have been already ‘materially Javanese’ at the same time, despite of being still in ‘embryonic’ form. It means that it should be some ‘non-subjective nor objective’ or ‘unthought’ materiality that contributed to Javanese, or any cultural identity which are surely more than merely aggregate of arbitrary ideas and conventions (the consequence of accepting this cartesian scientism is people should abandon all of their cultural beliefs including religion, since they are ‘merely subjective and conventional non-sense’). That ‘subjective-mental’ idea must be behind of any sort of ‘objective-material’ manifestation is in fact a very ‘illogical’ and ‘non-sensical’ consequence of Cartesian dualism.

However Cartesianism and its Platonic roots did influence us with some kind of ‘intellectualism’ or ‘theoreticism,’ that is, a belief that there must be a prior ‘mental concept’ or ‘theory’ for anything material ‘to be’ or exist at all. For phenomenology, as we have seen, this is ridiculously impossible. It is not that phenomenology denies the existence of anything mental, intellectual or theoretical, but all of it is impossible without simultaneous presence of its materiality. We are not some kind of a ‘ghost,’ pure spirit or intellect severed from our bodies and enviring materiality (subject-object dualism assumes that we as subject, are essentially that ‘ghost’). We are indeed *our own body* with all of its singularity, which we never choose freely and carry it around as it was a bag (who carries the body, ‘the ghost?’). Hence materiality (including the body) do contributes a great deal in manifesting art’s singularity. But being materially congested, artworks (including ourselves) resist total theoretical transparency (Dreyfus, 2005:411–412). In a more Heideggerian term, art ‘discloses’ material reality in a many distinct or singular ways compared to natural science which reveals it as uniform objects of quantitative magnitudes. In other words, art could never be ‘objective,’ that is, completely uniform and mechanically predictable all over the world, and exists to be accessed primarily in a scientifically-detached manner.

At the same time, artworks once again are not ‘merely subjective’ upshots, precisely because they are closely intertwined with their materiality. And to recall above paragraphs that art/design works are always embedded in socio-historical context, here too materiality means ‘matter insofar embodied in socio-historical praxis,’ not an abstract concept of matter as in physical science. A community of well-trained musicians, for example, is capable of ‘collectively hear’ material timbres ‘musically,’ not merely ‘thinking it intellectually’ as ‘universally measured’ wavelengths. We are indeed experiences more than we can say. And it is precisely on this ground of ‘material-practice’ within particular culture that any originary and singular artwork is possible at all. In many musical traditions, compulsory training indeed takes form of ‘familiarizing’ its learner to many of previous repertoire, that is, by ‘materially’ reinterpreting them through ‘concrete’ performances. On the other hand, objective research has to be ‘neutral,’ uniform, theoretically driven and detached instead of

being involved. The question is how is it possible at all for a pure ‘universal detached information’ without any ‘particular material involvement’ yielding innovative artifacts? Being well informed with neuroscientific research results that tells our brain has dual hemispheres which is said to be the ‘universal-mechanistic cause’ of creative and logical thinking doesn’t automatically transform one into a novel thinking savvy! Thinking is even a practice! Here art is closely tied with what is called bodily or ‘embodied’ knowledge.

Epistemology: Knowledge Embodied in Art/Design Works

Hermeneutico-phenomenological perspective has shown us the ontological character of art and design works, that is, non-subjective nor objective, but manifested holistically within socio-cultural web of praxis and embodied in its materiality. This implies a particular kind of knowledge and of ‘truth’ which now puts the issue within epistemological territory. And for the sake of clarity, we would contrast this knowledge and truth implied in art with knowledge and truth presupposed in science. Knowledge in mainstream science generally exhibits a ‘propositional’ and/or ‘representational’ character, that is, consisting of some sets of statements that should conform to observable facts (Borgdorff, 2012:162). Consequently, ‘true’ in science means conformity between statements and facts, and it follows that false means non-conformity between them (Heidegger, 1975: xx). Philosophically speaking, it is called ‘correspondence truth.’ The case will be different in pure or exact science as mathematics or logic. Mathematical or logical truth doesn’t have to conform to empirical facts but to its own sets of premises and formal rules. Hence truth that prevails in pure science is ‘coherence truth.’ In general scientific practice, both of concepts of truth prevail and complement each other in particular way, since not only all scientific statements should conform to facts, but language used in them must cohere to grammatical logic, and mathematics employed must cohere to certain formal rules. How is it then in the case of art?

First thing to note is that art and design have broad range of forms. Some involves words or statements such as literature and drama, but others as visual and performing arts exhibit much less involvement with them. However in some ‘traditional’ forms of art e.g. ‘realist’ painting or sculpture, we can find what was explained by classical aesthetics as ‘mimetic’ works, which at first glance seems to ‘copy’ or representing material reality. Somehow, long and various studies within the history of the arts as well as in aesthetics found that it is impossible for art to come up with ‘a perfect copy’ of reality, since visions and manifestations of it are indeed always ‘perspectival’ and laden with cultural values. Some other forms of art were not even exhibiting mimetic or representational character such as music, dance or abstract visual art, in which ‘expressive’ and/or ‘formal’ character were much more prominent. We may now skip this long history of aesthetics and return to epistemology.

As shown in previous phenomenological critique of Cartesian ontology, art and design works were no longer seen as isolated objects but rather manifesting our own holistic and historical existence. In other words, they disclose ‘the whole historical-material lifeworld’ that encompass both art ‘objects,’ and us, ‘the subjects.’ In watching good movies for example, we did not act as some kind of a detached *cogito* in front of a neutral objects. Rather we were ‘transported’ altogether into ‘another world,’ through which we see ourselves and reality in a new light or perspective. Another relevant example; we often understand historical matter from novels, paintings or musical works better than just from merely textual information. Traditional concepts to describe this state of ‘understanding’ is ‘sympathy’ or ‘empathy,’ in which we experience ourselves what the others have experienced. This kind of experiential understanding for many occasion precisely do not require any explicit proposition at all, as when we silently partake in sorrow or joy of our fellows.

Hence we may briefly conclude that art bears knowledge and truth of its own, that is, ‘historical’ and ‘experiential truth’ about *who* we are, *how* the world is, and what both of them *could* or *should* be. And artworks disclose this ‘truth’ precisely through its material presence that experienced in bodily or ‘subliminal’ way rather than in analytical way, i.e., through explicit propositional

statements. Once again, this embodied experience does not have to be interpreted atomistically (or subjectivistically), since it exactly ‘brings us back to the holistic primal connection’ with others and with nature that has been conceptually segregated by Cartesian-atomistic ontology. In fact there has never been a completely isolated, subjective mental experience of art at all, for example, in music listening and playing. Even the most unique music we listen alone certainly has already been ‘materially’ played by others (group of its players / producer), and very likely enjoyed by others too in some other places more than ours (socio-spatial holistic relation). And those who played and enjoyed the music also had already been influenced by others, even from ‘far away’ and different period (historico-temporal holistic relation, e.g. diatonic music has been played since the era of Ancient Greek, but even still projecting musical possibilities for future generations). These are the ‘holistic aspects of bodily experience’ carried by ‘materiality of the artworks’ that has been spoken about by phenomenology, in which there are certainly some knowledge and truth ‘at work,’ but in an implicit or inconspicuous form, not in an explicit-propositional one.

Michael Polanyi called this ‘materially embodied’ or ‘bodily’ knowledge “tacit knowledge” (Borgdorff, 2012:163). In fact this inconspicuous knowledge is presupposed in any human activity including the sciences. A person who engages in laboratory science for example, does not ever need to explicate every single complex laboratory apparatuses into propositional statements before he/she could start and be adept in using them. Tacit ‘experiential’ acquaintance plays a big role. Another example might come from sport, where an avid racer like Valentino Rossi or footballer like David Beckham didn’t have to get a degree in physics to be able to masterfully handle high-speed cornering or bending a ball from 35 meters into a corner of goal. In daily life, we do million things like taking care of our house, picking groceries, driving a car and so on that we don’t consciously think of in explicit propositional statements, and most likely will never have to. If we ‘spell out’ every single levers, panels and moves we make when driving, we most likely are going to ruin the drive, or even ending up crashing our car.

This doesn’t mean that we never interrupt or modify our tacit capabilities with any help of explicit concepts or conscious modifications. In fact it happens many times. But the basic idea of tacit knowledge here is that human being *never* begins with ‘not knowing’ in the sense of ‘not able’ to do something. Initially and for the most part, we have always already began with being able to do many things that are common to our culture, though it is sure that all are not done in an excellent manner. A very unexperienced novice does have to think over many things she/he has been doing, but it never means that she/he doesn’t know at all. The fact is, when we successfully manage to improve our prior tacit capacity consciously, that new ‘consciously modified capacity’ immediately recedes back into new tacit capacity that keeps growing larger and larger. A very proficient doctor does not ever need to spell out millions of medical informations she/he has gained when diagnosing patients. A very competent person is indeed one with a very excellent embodied knowledge. Hence tacit knowledge is not merely ‘an inferior addition’ to explicit or propositional knowledge, but instead a very basic one in any human endeavor. And precisely in the field of art and design that this kind of knowledge plays a very distinct role. Artists and designers should possess broad yet deep material/bodily experiences in *first hand* concerning repertoire, styles, medium, equipment, places, values, subject matter and so forth in order to be able to transfigure it all anew into fresh artifacts. Fields that prioritize verbal analysis or merely reporting and incapable of bringing forth *new meaningful bodily/material experiences* through images, sounds, performances or narratives, do not deserve to be called creative arts and design at all.

Methodology in Art and Design: ‘Research’ *Through* Practice

Having discussed the ontology and epistemology of art and design, it is now ‘natural’ to discuss its methodology. But given their ontologically holistic and epistemologically tacit character, we must be wary that their intrinsic ‘research methodology’ could never be separated from their practice, as in clear cut separation between intelligible-sensible, mental-material, subject-object or theory-practice. One more thing to clarify is the term ‘research’ itself within the context of the arts.

Christopher Frayling identified three kind of research that might be employed with respect to art and design which later adopted by Henk Borgdorff (his version is in parentheses below). First is research *into* art (or research *on* the arts), second is research *for* art (or research *for* the arts), and finally the third is research *through* art (or research *in* arts) (Borgdorff, 2012:37).

The conjunction *into* or *on* in the first type of research indicates ‘distance’ from the field of art and design practice itself. Indeed research *into* or *on* the arts are usually conducted by disciplines from the humanities such as qualitative social sciences, history, media studies or cultural studies to name a few (ibid.: 37–38), including philosophy. Their research might be empirical and non-empirical (textual studies), which are approached with reflective or interpretive methodologies. The end results would be descriptive, critical or analytical (theoretical) texts. Reflective or interpretive approach is inevitable since the discipline is well aware that its research ‘objects’ are the same as the researching ‘subject,’ namely human being itself (there is no possible ‘real’ or ‘ontological gap’ between ‘man as the researcher’ and ‘man as the researched’). Some social-research school called this ‘action research,’ while Donald Schon used the expression ‘reflection *on* action’ to refer to this kind of approach (Borgdorff, 2012:50). However since the result of this research is ‘text *on* art’ rather than the artwork itself, this is not an appropriate research methodology for the discipline of creative arts itself. Nevertheless, results from the research *on* the arts are invaluable for art / design practice.

The second type of art-related research is marked by conjunction *for*, which also indicates an ‘outside position’ but in the service of art and design practice. A typical examples of this research are Research and Development of instruments which might directly serve artistic productions, e.g. art materials, computer aided devices, musical instruments, lighting equipments and so on (ibid.: 38). This type of technological or instrumental research to be sure employs positivistic and post-positivistic methodologies, i.e. conforming to nature’s causal law in order to predict and control its outcome. In contrasts, artwork’s creative process are open to unexpected possibilities. And in case of Indonesia as mentioned in the opening of this paper, misconceptions that commonly occurred here were confusing this objective-instrumental research as ‘the sole academic standard’ for many fields of inquiry, including the humanities and creative arts (as if it is proper to instrumentalize human being or ourselves).

Finally in the third type, the conjunction *through* or *in* shows that this research is conducted within the creative practice of art and design themselves. Here, as in the first type of research, research *through* or *in* the arts does not regard a sharp ontological break between the observing subject and the observed object, or between ‘the research’ and ‘the practice’ of the arts. When there is no such gap exist, the character of the research once again becomes naturally reflective. But the main distinction between the first type and this third type of research is in the former, the end result would be a descriptive or theoretical distantiation (e.g. textual description or explanation), where in the latter are the artworks and its material process. Put simply, the research *through* or *in* the arts is a research performed by creative working artists, not by a qualitative sociologist or cultural analyst. Donald Schon termed this approach as ‘reflection *in* action’ (Borgdorff, 2012:50; Waks, 2001:40, 42) and the research performers ‘reflective practitioners’ (Borgdorff, 2012:81; Waks, 2001:42). As reflective practice, research *through* or *in* art and design does not have any one distinct, rigid and exclusive methodology. However, there is one qualifying condition: it emerges from its communal-material practice of making, playing, creating, designing and performing, where some of its knowledge are embodied in new artifacts/performances, and some have already been preserved in museums, interpreted in art and design publications, etc. This process is very natural for the artistic/designerly practice since much of their efforts are “conducted not with the aim of producing knowledge, but in order to enhance what would be called artistic universe; as we know, this involves producing new images, narratives, sounds, or experiences...” (Borgdorff, 2012:80). However to further discuss this methodological implication in a more detailed manner is impossible within the very limited scope of this paper. The writer suggests dear readers to further refer to provided references.

CONCLUSION

As historical praxis alongside science and technology, art and design has its own ontological and epistemological character as shown in the article with the aid of hermeneutico-phenomenological perspective. The next step is to come up with methodological insight of art and design practice, which is invaluable within the context of academic research. But as the whole article has shown, objectivist methodologies are inappropriate in art and design practice since no ontological and epistemological gap exist between the observing subject and the observed object, or between ‘the research’ and ‘the practice.’ The outcome of practice-based research are not findings that can be exactly duplicated by everyone, but in contrast new experiences, meaning and self-understanding embodied in the singularity of each works and their process. As a consequence, the appropriate methodology would be reflective material-practice, where the primary contribution of research is concrete enhancements of artistic universe. Concepts and theories are of course invaluable, insofar they are embodied in the works or functioning as ‘interlocutor,’ and not to be ‘imposed’ in hypotetico-deductive, atomistically-linear or mechanically-predictive manner. Since the latter will ironically suffocate creativity in the arts itself.

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