NARRATIVES DISPLAYS AT MUSEUM PUSAKA, TAMAN MINI INDONESIA INDAH: BETWEEN DISCURSIVE AND IMMERSE DISPLAYS

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Received: 23rd March 2021/ Revised: 21st September 2021/ Accepted: 01st October 2021


ABSTRACT

The research discussed how museums could promote holistic learning, including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning, in a fun and effective way through narratives. By using narratives displayed in museums, visitors could learn and receive information more effectively. However, Indonesian museums, including Museum Pusaka, were still underestimated and did not clearly understand the power of narrative to enhance visitor learning with their priceless collection and strategic location. The research aimed to discuss further the use of narratives displayed in Museum Pusaka as a study case to achieve its primary mission to educate and learn through the qualitative method with qualitative content analysis method, including data collection, descriptive data analysis, design statement, and design proposal. The research results indicate that in a narrative display with a beginning, middle, and end in five sequences and a reverse plot. It begins with the mystical image of Kris in today’s society, continues to the past where Kris begins and history of Kris, the function of Kris and glory era of Kris, to the end and conclusion of the narratives, which show the shift of Kris as collection, study objects, and to complete traditional clothes rather than as weapons. The five masterpieces Kris and their story will be part of this narrative. Through a well-designed narrative display, museum visitors will learn something from their visit, cognitively and affectively.

Keywords: Museum Pusaka, exhibition display, narrative display, immersive display, discursive display

INTRODUCTION

There are many ways to educate and broaden knowledge; one of the easiest ways is by going to a museum where one can learn and experience knowledge uniquely and effectively. Education is the prime role of museums and the reason why museums exist. In the past, education in a museum was aimed only at schoolchildren, but nowadays, it includes services for a broader audience. Learning in museums has been defined in many ways. Sitzia (2016) has defined learning in a museum as lifelong, free-choice, and multiform. She has also mentioned that learning in the museum is a combination of learning cognitive information, learning effective information, and learning psychomotor information. Through this combination of learning, bodies and emotions are highly engaged in the learning process that occurs in museums (Sitzia, 2016).

To achieve this holistic learning, museum pedagogy needs to be structured through narratives because narratives have special effects on human beings. Human beings think in narratives and through narratives, remember in narratives, and construct their identities as well as realities (Sitzia, 2016). Education in museums can be achieved through exhibitions. It can be described as a form of mass communication, and educational programs involving face-to-face teaching, which can be described as a form of interpersonal communication. Story or narratives can be used for both models of communication. It is a communication method using a story, the qualities, and attributes that
make each object unique (Trinkoff, 2015). Narratives can be produced not only through display but also through the style in which these narratives are presented (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). To make education and to learn in museums more interesting and accessible for all ages, contemporary museums have started to apply two types of exhibitions in presenting their narratives; the discursive and immersive exhibition. The former uses a more conventional display, while the latter is multisensory, which embraces all the senses.

Presenting narratives through exhibition design will make learning and meaning-making in museums more attractive and fun, not only for school children but also for adults, families, and even the elderly. The potential of narrative approaches to learning has been explored more recently by museums. However, the understanding of the potential of a museum for life-long learning and the powerful pedagogic role of narratives as part of displays and exhibitions are still limited and seldom researched, especially in Indonesian museums.

As a case study for the research, the Heirloom Museum or widely known as Museum Pusaka, holds a collection of sacred objects, mostly weapons, from all over Indonesia. Located in Taman Mini Indonesia Indah in the East of Jakarta, Indonesia’s capital, it opened in 1993 with more than 5,000 collections. *Kris* or *Kris* is the museum’s main collection, a distinctive, asymmetrical dagger from Java and Bali. Functioning as both weapon and a spiritual object, the *Kris* is considered to possess magical powers. Like in any other museums in Taman Mini and most museums in Indonesia, although they hold numerous valuable collections, their display methods are still conventional and unattractive. Using the mass communication model, through a discursive exhibition, the separation between subject and object is obvious, producing an isolated subject and object that are spaced both physically and conceptually. Without any evidence of strong narrative displays, most objects are left out without explanation and proper display. There are no stories to tell, no strong messages or meanings in the exhibition, just a random display of objects in glass cases (Figure. 1). As a result, there is no engagement between subject and objects, but visitors will only walk around the exhibition space, look at objects, and exit the exhibition without any clue on what they have seen (Wulandari & Ruki, 2018). In this condition, most museums in Taman Mini, including Museum Pusaka, will not achieve its primary function, education. The research further discusses the use of narratives displayed in Museum Pusaka as a case study through exhibition design to achieve Museum Pusaka’s primary mission of education and learning.

In Museum Pusaka, more than 4,800 *Kris* with various *dhapur*, *pamor*, and *tangguh* serves as the collection as well as historical studies objects. Due to their limited space, from this huge collection, the museum is only able to display a limited number of *Kris*, including the 12 masterpieces and other weapons from around Indonesia, which are also in limited number. However limited, their display is far from attractive. There is no engagement between objects and subjects through discursive exhibitions, creating obvious space between them. The ambiance is flat, and there is no clear message of the exhibition, only objects display in glass classes with a minimal information label.
Museum Pusaka itself is located inside Taman Mini Indonesia Indah, built in 1992 and officially opened on 20 April 1993 by the late President Soeharto. The collections were once stored in Jl. Kwitang 13, Central Jakarta, which then moved and displayed in the museum. The architecture is pentagonal in shape (Figure 2). The shape refers to five principles from Pancasila, Indonesia's philosophical foundation. Taken from Sanskrit, Panca means five, and Sila means principle, thus the five principles.

Museum Pusaka is open to the public every day, Saturday and Sunday included. At present, the visitors are mostly Kris' collectors or members of Kris' community, and the number of visitations is quite low, with an average of only 300 visitors per month. Besides exhibition as the museum's main attraction, the museum also offers other services, including bathing of a Kris or Jamas and production of Kris cover or Warangka. These services are popular among collectors of Kris from around the Jakarta area. In addition, the museum is also able to provide a certificate of authenticity of a Kris.

The museum management feels the need to introduce Kris to the younger audience; thus, they start to look at the younger visitor of 17-30 years old as their new target market, which consist of students, the public, and their original market Kris' collector and community. These younger audiences are only aware of Kris as old, antique, and mystical objects which belong to their parents or grandparents. The museum wants to eliminate the strong mystical and negative image of a Kris and introduce it as an object of art with high aesthetic and historical value, especially to the younger audience.

METHODS

There are three approaches commonly used in art and design studies: qualitative, quantitative, and multi-methods approach. To achieve the aim of the research, which is designing an exhibition with narratives displayed in Museum Pusaka as an educational role through a combination of discursive and immersive design, a qualitative method with qualitative content analysis method that shares many of the unique attributes associated with all qualitative research methods (Roller, 2019).

Based on the determined approach, data collecting is done qualitatively in two stages. The first stage is collecting secondary data or desk research. In this stage, all relevant data from various sources, such as books, journal articles, websites, and other previous studies related to Kris, museums in general, Museum Pusaka in particular, and narrative displays are studied and analyzed. The purpose of this stage includes giving general information about the topic, analyzing previous studies, knowing what other writers think, and having a basic understanding of this topic. The next stage is the primary data collection through observations to Museum Pusaka and interview sessions with the Head of Museum Pusaka. Data collected includes the architecture and existing layout and circulation, the exhibition design such as furniture, lighting, and so on, and collections and visitors numbers and characteristics. Primary and secondary data are analyzed using descriptive analysis about the architectural and existing exhibition design, continued with the design process, including space programming, design statement, and concept analysis. Then, a new design using a narrative display is created and proposed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Keris or Kris makes up most of the Museum Pusaka collection, with more than 4,800 pieces of Kris that 12 of them are considered masterpieces (Figure 3). Other collection includes weapons from around Indonesia, such as Remcong from Aceh, Kujang from West Java, Mandau from Kalimantan, and other weapons such as blades and spears.

In 2008, Kris was listed as UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity from Indonesia together with Batik and Angklung. As been mentioned before, Kris is an asymmetrical and wavy dagger with distinctive blade patterning achieved through alternating laminations of iron as known as pamor. Even though famous for its distinctive wavy blade, usually in odd numbers 3, 5, 7, many Kris have straight blades as well. A Kris can be divided into three parts: the blade or bilah, the hilt or hilu, and sheath or warangka. These parts of the Kris are objects of art, usually crafted in meticulous detail and made from various materials, metal, precious or rare types of wood, complete with gold or ivory. A Kris' aesthetic value covers the dhapur (the form and design of the blade with some 40 variants), the pamor (the pattern of metal around 120 variants), and tangan referring to the age and origin of a Kris. A bladesmith or empu makes the blade in layers of different iron ores and meteorite nickel. In high-quality Kris blades, the metal is folded dozens or hundreds of times and handled.
with utmost precision. Empus are highly respected craftsmen with additional knowledge in literature, history, and occult science.

It was used to function as both weapon and a spiritual object. In the past, Kris was worn every day, including special ceremonies and heirloom blades that were handed down through successive generations. As a spiritual object, Kris is often considered to have essence or presence, possess magical powers, and used as weapons, sanctified heirlooms, auxiliary equipment for court soldiers, accessories for ceremonial dress, an indicator of social status, a symbol of heroism, and others. However, it was important and considered a primary object among Javanese during the 16th to 19th century; Kris today has lost some of its prominent social and spiritual meaning. At the beginning of the 20th century, the function of Kris as weapons started to be replaced with lighter and more effective weapons, such as swords and firearms. Today, the function of Kris is no longer as a weapon but rather as objects to complement traditional clothing, as antique object collections, and objects for historical studies (Endrawati, 2015). Furthermore, Kris, which was originally used as a bond in socio-cultural values, turned into individual-cultural bonds that could be used as assets in business alternatives (Dharsono, 2020).

Stories are an integral part of the experience as human beings. The narrative is always present, in all places, in all societies (Sitzia, 2016). It is recognized that humans are natural storytellers; since ancient times, humans have been using stories that represent an event or series of events as ways to learn (Abbott, 2008). Ideas about narratives have been developed and applied in a museum context. Narrative tools can be used for visitors in the meaning-making process into a more personal perspective, involving a series of events that contain emotional content and are authentic in origin; unfortunately, the power of narrative to enhance visitor learning is still not clearly understood within the museum sector.

The use of story and storytelling has been around in museums for some time. The Deutsches Museum has pioneered the foundation of storytelling in museums with working exhibits. The Deutsches Museum’s working exhibit in 2009 on science and technology demonstrated several characteristics of storytelling used in museums today. It presented history using artifacts and combined them with stories and memories of the past. Museums are shifting away from solely using labels to communicate this history. As a result, museum visits feel more personal and offer a captivating experience (Trinkoff, 2015). If the Deutsches Museum uses a story verbally by telling the story to visitors, a story can also be used through displays. Here, the narrative displays will tell stories surrounding the objects. Storytelling in museums today aims to impact visitors’ personal experience. It is used to further engage and connect the viewer to the history and memories of an object.

As has been mentioned before, those narratives have a special effect on human beings. There are three main principles in narrative theories; the first principle found in most theories is that human beings think in narratives and through narratives by using and understanding specific patterns, structures, motifs, etc. Therefore, museum visitors, just as readers, expect a certain structure. The structure depends on the genre or type of narrative; for example, according to Aristotle, a narrative is expected to have a beginning, a middle, and an end, which means that in a narrative, there will be an exposition, a development, a complication, a climax, and a final resolution. The second is that human beings remember in narratives, which means that narratives are the key process of memorizing and retrieving or retelling knowledge. The final principle and a consequence of the two previous elements are that narratives construct the identity (or identities) as well as the realities (Sitzia, 2016). These three principles, of course, will have an impact on how to present the collection through an exhibition and is particularly important for the learning process in a museum.

Various researches have been done concerning exhibition design. One research result is in a map of key interpretive design considerations of concepts, contexts, and narratives as a guide to the exhibition design process in contemporary museums (Wigley, 2016). Han and Xu (2017) have pointed out in constructing narrative exhibition space, museums should determine the specific story clues to guide the visitor in accordance with the main exhibition line, to expand in a given linear narrative sequence. In using narratives, two types of exhibitions can be applied, discursive and immersive exhibitions. Even though not opposed to each other, they have a different impact on visitors. A discursive exhibition might look like a more conventional exhibition, where the cognitive learning process mostly takes place. In contrast, an immersive exhibition is a multisensory experience that removes all the words instead of the discursive exhibition, which usually puts more words into the exhibition. In an immersive space, words are unacceptable, and affective and psychomotor learning mostly occur here. The immersive exhibition or installation represents a loss of subject/object spacing, which is usually produced in a discursive exhibition, by using the language of the multisensory as opposed to the language of vision. It embraces all the senses, creating a space where any gap or sense of separateness that usually happen in the discursive exhibition are lost. Visitors are no longer treated as a subject detached from an object. The immersive exhibition is an opportunity to give visitors a sense of being detached enough from the world to reflect upon the world (Lake-Hammond & Waite, 2010).

The modern approach indeed evolves modern museums as dialogue centers that make close contact with visitors (Çıldır & Karadeniz, 2014); however, through the immersive exhibition with all the technology and multisensory display will definitely seem more attractive to contemporary visitors.
However, since they remove all the discursive elements away or even remove the whole museum system away, including the floor, the ceiling, the lights, and even the guards, often it is no longer clear what is going on. Sitzia (2016) has concluded that there is a significant difference between immersive and discursive exhibitions in the way the narrative impacts visitors; however, to use only one type of exhibition is also imprudent. Both discursive and immersive exhibition modes seem equivalent and complementary in the way they promote learning; thus, narrative display through a hybrid exhibition environment with some immersive and discursive parts seems to be an ideal museum learning environment (Sitzia, 2016).

In relation to Museum Pusaka’s aim to attract the younger and broader audiences and support the learning process in Museum Pusaka, narratives display, which combined both discursive and immersive display, will be used to design the exhibition. The concept of the exhibition design is inspired by both the architecture as well as the collection of the museum itself. The concept of Panca Babad is taken from Sanskrit. Panca means five, and Babad means story or the Five Stories will be used for the narrative display and overall design.

The number five is chosen for two reasons; first, in relation to the architectural shape, the building is pentagonal, referring to the five Sila or Pancasila, the nation’s foundation, and second, from the shape of the Kris. As been mentioned before that Kris has a distinctive wavy blade known as luk, which is usually in odd numbers. In Javanese philosophy, as opposed to even numbers, which mean already finish, odd numbers mean unfinished, ambition to continue, need to be finished, and so on. Thus, odd numbers are used more frequently in Javanese culture, whether in architecture, objects, and others. Furthermore, it is five because every luk has its philosophical meaning, and luk five means the ability to talk smoothly and easily fascinate others. This philosophy corresponds with the museum and exhibition goals, which can share knowledge smoothly with visitors and attract more visitors. Thus, number 5 will be used frequently throughout the exhibition design.

Following the museum’s goal, the whole concept of the exhibition is also to change Kris’s image among younger audiences that it is mystical and possesses some magical powers in a negative way. In the modern era, it should be appreciated as art with its high aesthetic and historical value. This message will be narrated in reverse flow plot through five sequences that begin with the Kris today as the beginning of the story, which contemporary visitors still regard as mystical and magical weapons, especially the younger audience. The story is continued from the past to the beginning of Kris; the history, how it is made, the functions, stories famous Kris from time to time as the middle part of the story, and back to the modern era where the function of Kris has shifted in the modern era, as the end part and conclusion of the story. These sequences will make up the five exhibitions room, the preliminary room, the introduction and history of the Kris room, the function of the Kris room, the glory era of the Kris room, and the modern-day Kris room as the last area.

Out of 12 masterpieces in the museum’s collection, five Kris is chosen to represent each sequence, except for the glory era of the Kris area; even though only one masterpiece is highlighted, more masterpieces are displayed in this room. These Kris are chosen not only to introduce Kris to visitors as ancestors’ legacy but also because they have interesting stories surrounding them related to the whole narrative sequence. The five masterpieces are Sajen Kris, Jalak Buda Kris, Nagasasra Kris, Sabuk Inten Kris, and Arjuna Pasopati Kris.

Both exhibition types, discursive and immersive, are used to gain a higher narrative impact and support visitors in their learning and meaning-making process. As Sitzia (2016) has pointed out, a hybrid exhibition environment with a combination of immersive and discursive parts will be an ideal museum learning environment; thus, the design will include both types of exhibitions.

The first room, the preliminary room, is a closed-space area that tells Kris’ image today, where it is regarded as mystical and possesses magical power. The masterpiece displayed in this area is Sajen Kris, which function as a complementary object for offerings in a traditional ritual, such as cleaning the village ceremony. The Kris originated from 13th century Majapahit, with 80 gr in weight and 27 cm long with a human-like hilt shape connected directly to the blade.

![Figure 4 The Preliminary Area Mood Board](image)

Source: Khairana, 2019

The room is designed to bring up the mystical and mysterious aura similar to the traditional ceremony, which is usually held complete with offerings (Figure 4). Hybrid exhibition in this area is inspired by the offerings itself, which usually consists of rice, fruits, flowers, cakes, and so on, that are placed in a rattan or bamboo weavings, with strong smell and smoke come from incenses burning and offered to the spirits, mystical creatures, or other supernatural beings. This mystical atmosphere of offering ceremony is going to be applied in this area using interactive projection in
the form of smokes from incense burning. In contrast, the overall area will be covered in black with limited lighting. The Sajen Kris will be placed in the center of the room, with some information about the surrounding Kris (Figure 5). The whole space atmosphere and the hybrid exhibition model will not only impact visitors’ cognitive learning but affective learning as well. Here visitors will also feel the mystical feelings and emotions of an offering ceremony process.

The next room, the second room, is the introduction room and the history of Kris room. This area will tell the story about the beginning and history of Kris, how it is made, and the parts of it. The masterpiece presented in this sequence is Jalak Budha Kris, the oldest Kris in the museum’s collection, originated from the 8th century and is considered the elder of other Kris in the collections. The Kris is 250 gr in weight and 26 cm long. Since it is the first and oldest Kris, the Empu who made this still uses simple tools, thus the blade is not as smooth as the other Kris.

Like the previous area, this sequence still uses a combination of immersive and discursive displays. However, since so much information is going to be delivered to the audience, the discursive model will be the main model supported by the immersive model. In this exhibition, the impression of raw and rough (Figure 6) will be used, inspired by the story of the Kris itself, which function as overlap Kris or Keris Tindih. This type of Kris is usually used to neutralize bad and negative aura. In addition, this Kris is considered as the elder Kris, which is respected by another Kris. In Javanese philosophy, the elders are the most respected people, and one way to show respect to the elders is by bowing if meeting or walking past them. This philosophy inspires the shape of the panel and partition in this room, which uses raw and rough texture finishes in response to the concept (Figure 7).

Following the introduction and history of Kris’s room is the third room, the function room. This area will describe the function of Kris in the past as well

Figure 5 The Preliminary Area Design Studies  
(Source: Khairana, 2019)

Figure 6 The Introduction Area Mood Board  
(Source: Khairana, 2019)

Figure 7 The Introduction Area Design Studies  
(Source: Khairana, 2019)
as the introduction of heirlooms, mostly weapons of 27 provinces from the year 1976-1999, which include spears, blades, and kujang. The Kris chosen to represent this sequence is Sabuk Inten Kris. Although there is no certain meaning and connection between this Kris and the room, this Kris is the most famous one. Sabuk Inten Kris has 11 luk, originated from the 15th century, 180 gr in weight and 35 cm long, with tangguh Mataram Senopati. This Kris is believed to smoothen one fortune and able to make the owner receive the high rank. This credence made this Kris is famous.

This room will bring up the fun and playful image inspired by the pamor in Sabuk Inten Kris, which is Beras Wutah pamor, with an organic shape (Figure 8). This ambiance supports the function of the area where visitors can directly interact with the collection. In this area, visitors are invited to touch and feel a Kris. They can try and learn to remove and install a Kris according to instructions. Here visitors can also see bathing or penjamasan of a Kris. By seeing this activity, visitors will gain more insight that penjamasan only uses ordinary material such as coconut oil. There is no need to put certain offerings or mantra (spell) during penjamasan. The jamas room relates to the area to produce the cover of a Kris or warangka. Visitors can freely observe both activities through glass windows, unlike the original Museum Pusaka, where both spaces are close to the public and only staff can enter the rooms.

The fourth room is the Glory era of Kris’s room. Here, not only one masterpiece will be showcased, but the seven remaining masterpieces will also be displayed, with one masterpiece, Nagasasra Kris has chosen to represent this room. Nagasasra Kris is chosen because it is one of the most famous 11 luk Kris with naga (dragon) crafting and gold inlay all over the naga (dragon) body through the end of it. Like the previous one, this Kris is also believed to bring prosperity and high rank to the owner. Nagasasra Kris with Mataram Sultan Agung tangguh is originated in the 16th century with Ilining Warih pamor, which means prosperity and broad social life. Furthermore, this Kris is used to be owned only by kings and aristocrats, thus becoming exclusive.

In this room, Nagasasra Kris as a highlight...
will be displayed surrounded by an art installation in a special room, while other masterpieces will be displayed in glass cases (Figure 9). For the application of hybrid exhibition, the immersive exhibition is designed especially for the highlighted Kris and discursive exhibition for the other masterpieces (Figure 10).

The fifth room, or the last room, is the end and the conclusion area, which will discuss the swift between Kris’ function in the past and present. In the past, Kris was used as self-defense equipment, whereas now, the function of Kris has changed as heirlooms for collection, to be studied, and to complete traditional clothes, especially for Javanese wedding costumes. The Kris presented in this area is Pasopati Arjuna Kris. This Kris originated from the 20th century and is the newest of all Kris in the collection. This Kris has straight blades with watermelon skin pamor. This Kris is received by Arjuna from his meditation and kills the Niwatakaca giant in heaven. He is succeeded in receiving this Kris because of his patience and willingness to destroy evil. Another story has said that Arjuna succeeded in receiving this Kris because he has shown to the Gods that he is humble.

To bring up the atmosphere related to the messages and the needs of the room that is the swift of Kris function in the past and present; thus ambiance of the room will be a combination between old style and modern look with minimal and sleek furniture design to represent modern look. A gold accent will be added, taken from the gold inlay in the Pasopati Arjuna Kris (Figure 11).

![Figure 11 The Modern-day Kris Room Mood Board](Source: Khairana, 2019)

**CONCLUSIONS**

Museums can promote holistic learning, including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning, in a fun and effective way through narratives. Narratives are a communication strategy extensively used by museums because it has an impact on the way humans think, remember, and perceive themselves and the world. By using narratives displayed in museums, visitors can learn and receive information more effectively. However, for Indonesian museums, including Museum Pusaka, the power of narrative to enhance visitor learning is still underestimated and not clearly understood.

The exhibition design proposed for Museum Pusaka will use narrative displays with a beginning, middle, and end in five sequences and reverse plots. It begins with the mystical image of Kris today; then the story continues from the past to the beginning of the history of Kris, its function, and its glory era as the middle part of the narratives, then continues to the end and conclusion of the narratives which will display the transition of Kris’s function today. Today, Kris no longer functions as weapons or mystical objects but as a collection, study objects, and complete traditional clothes. The five masterpieces and their story will be part of these narratives. A combination of immersive and discursive will be used to enhance visitors’ learning process as it suggests that a hybrid exhibition environment with some immersive parts and discursive parts seems to be an ideal museum learning environment. Based on narrative theory, visitors in museums always reconstruct a narrative and that this narrative is essential in the meaning-making, understanding, and remembering the process of the museum material; thus, museums need to start to use narratives as part of their display and exhibition in order to achieve museum’s goal in education. Through a well-designed narrative display, museum visitors will learn something from their visit, cognitively and affectively.

The very limited research on exhibition design and narrative display in museums in Indonesia has become the limitation of the research. This might be because of the limited number of museums in Indonesia that have narrative displays. For further research, more in-depth research about narrative displays for Indonesian museums is needed, together with a more developed design in relation to the research.

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https://doi.org/10.22158/wjssr.v4n2p114.