

Visual Communication Design

Original Research

Mapping the Discourse of Gender Subordination in the Art World in Indonesia

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Program Studi Seni Intermedia, FSRD, ISI Surakarta Abstract: Instead of hastily trying to throw out a discourse that rarely or has never appeared in related discussions, what then becomes the breath of the analysis in this scientific article is an effort to mapping the position of women's gender subordination and the representation of women artists discourses in the dialogue of a special scope, namely Indonesian art world. The analysis was carried out using three theoretical concepts, namely subordination, symbolic violence and representation in the art world in Indonesia. By conducting a literature study on literature and art events, the results of this scientific research show that: (1) Collective awareness is believed to support the articulation of resistance to gender inequality; (2) This awareness extends to the involvement of male artists as well, but there are other articulation practices that are more reflective in nature, meaning the construction of the gender identity of the female artist; and (3) The condition of gender inequality is also voiced in-depth reflections aimed at erasing the gender dichotomy caused by stereotypes.

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Keywords: female arstists; subordination; symbolic violence; representation; art world

INTRODUCTION

This article does not attempt to offer the novelty of gender discourse, especially feminist studies, in the dynamics of the art field, especially in Indonesia. Instead of rushing to throw discourses that rarely or have never appeared in related discussions, what later became the breath of the analysis in this scientific article was an effort to map the position of women's gender subordination discourse and the representation of women artists in dialogue in a special scope, namely the field of Indonesian art. Admittedly, in the field of Indonesian art today, gender awareness of the position of women in society appears stronger, both in their presence in artworks, written texts or discussion forums. In a scientific article written by Ira Adriati Winarno (2007: 212-213), it was explained that there was a social shift, from a society based on bilineal concepts to adherents of patrilineal structures due to the institutionalization of semitic religious teachings (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) and the aristocratic system of government. This shift in social structure then has an impact on the presence and persistence of subordination to women in Indonesian society.

Only in the 1990s, still sourced from the same reference (Winarno, 2007: 215), the emergence of the discourse of women's gender subordination as the idea of creating works of art seemed to be increasingly thickened and intense. This can be seen in the artworks of female artists Dolorosa Sinaga, Astari Rasjid, Arahmaiani, Lucia Hartini, Iriantine Karnaya and IGAK Murniasih, who have been doing art work since the 1980s, but increasingly highlighted the issue of women's gender equality in their artworks in the 1990s. In this article, an argument is then built that the prominence of women's gender





subordination discourse in the 1990s is closely related to socio-political dynamics in Indonesia from the beginning of independence to the period of the New Order regime. There is still a legacy of perspectives that open the discussion of women's gender equality issues, the impact of doctrines in society that position women only as male companions, or called *konco wongking* (Adriati Wirnarno, 2007).

The condition then becomes more interesting because in the same decade, the 1990s, the global art public was also setting its eyes on contemporary art practices outside the European-American continent (Irianto et al., 2022: 361). The decade of the 1990s became a momentum for the widespread awareness of contemporary art in the art community in Asia, including Indonesia. Based on these two arguments, it can be understood that in the decade of the 1990s there was an intertwined event between the widespread awareness of the discourse of women's gender subordination in art and the global art public's attention to contemporary art practices, both, in Indonesia. The results of research by Adriati Winarno (2007) and Irianto et al. (2022) is very helpful for readers to understand and put the issue of women's gender subordination and the socio-political issues of art as issues that are firmly attached to the structure of Indonesian society today. What is the reason? The issue of gender equality and contemporary art is a reaction to the well-established discourse of modernity and the problem of development theories that continue to shape the shape of Indonesian society.

On the one hand, as an awareness born of a response to modernization and development, the discourse of women's gender subordination then found its momentum to be formulated in a work of art. On the other hand, the development of contemporary art in Indonesia, which is full of sensitivity to social issues, is like a "for tat" for the amplification of women's gender subordination discourse more broadly (reaching many appreciations / audiences) and deeply (based on the artist's self-reflection).

Under such conditions, then does the discourse of women's gender subordination only stop at its position as an idea of creating works of art? Are there other spaces in the field of art in Indonesia that are also entered by the discourse? To open the analysis of this follow-up question, several explanations are needed about the discourse of women's gender and feminism, to the issue of identity, representation and symbolic violence against women, as well as its tension in the field of art in Indonesia.

METHODS

Describes the chronology of the research, including how to prepare research materials, research design, This research is a type of qualitative research called bibliographic research. The research method used is a bibliographic review method of textual data in the form of mass media articles, exhibition catalogs and research journal articles. This method is oriented towards the selection, analysis, interpretation and discussion of theoretical positions, results and conclusions contained in scientific articles or publications in recent years on selected topics," to obtain relevant information that contributes to solving a problem statement (Fernandez & Guillen, 2021). The purpose of the study of data in the form of mass media articles is to obtain information about the phenomenon of the existence of female artists and works of art that express the awareness of women's gender subordination in the field of art in Indonesia. Data in the form of exhibition catalogs are then analyzed to see the extent to which artworks, and at the same time exhibition events, become a medium for expressing awareness of women's gender subordination. Finally, data in the form of research journal articles were analyzed to obtain information on the extent of studies on women's gender subordination, both specifically in the field of fine arts and in general, which had been carried out previously by academics.

RESULTS

Referring to the results of Sri Djoharwinarlien's research (2012: 8), gender awareness rediscovered its amplification momentum after the 1960s. This condition emerged along with the development of post-feminist thought and movement. However, this condition actually also poses a dilemma because classical feminist thought and other ideological movements, such as liberal feminism and Marxist feminism, still exist. As a result, gender equality becomes a discourse that is not singular and not final.

In line with the argument above, Nancy A. Naples (2020: 3) writes that the decade of the late 1960s and 1970s became a significant moment for the amplification of women's and gender movements and studies, both inside and outside university circles in the West, Europe-America. However, in its development, there was an awareness that movements and studies that only used a Western/Northern perspective were felt to present incomplete, even misguided, readings and discourses. Therefore, in its development, the movement and studies of women and gender also began to see and take into account conditions outside the circle of the movement and academia in the West, European-American, as developed in South Korea and India.

Related to the decade of the 1970s, one record shows that in 1972-1977 there was an intense and widespread feminist movement. This is stated in the book entitled Wages for Housework A History of an International Feminist Movement, 1972–77 by Louise Toupin (2018), a Canadian academic of political science and feminist studies, and member of the Women's Liberation Front of Quebec. In this book, Toupin (2018: 17-130) describes the institutionalization process of The International Feminist Collective, starting with the activism movement Wages for Housework in 1972 to 1977.

Again referring to references from Naples (2020: 3-4), it was also explained that women's studies as an institutionalization of academic discourse began with the lack of representation of women in canonization of texts, strategies and interpretations of research findings, and classrooms. In addition, the development of women's and gender studies to a further level in the academic environment is a major contribution of the women's activism movement.

In the context of statehood in Indonesia, the idea and idea of gender equality are also built from various discourses on the subordination and marginalization of women which are reproduced continuously through the institutionalization of values, norms and behavioral systems by social agency agencies in daily practice (Djoharwinarlien, 2012: 4-7). As mentioned in the introduction, women's gender subordination in Indonesian society is, in one perspective, a legacy of social construction due to the practice of colonialism.

This discourse on women's gender subordination then did not escape the response of the women's movement in Indonesia. One of the historical symbols of the women's movement that is widely used in Indonesia is the life story of R.A. Kartini (see Aripurnami, 2013 and Jovani, 2014). In a social change due to the implementation of ethical politics in the Dutch East Indies, R.A. Kartini opened a correspondence with her Dutch colleague, the Abendanon Family. In her correspondence letters, Kartini's presentation of ideas on the condition of women's gender inequality in the social structure of society in Java was revealed. R.A. Kartini then became an Indonesian female figure who was positioned as a hero of emancipation by the state.

Along with several historical events that have a national scope, the women's movement in Indonesia also moves dynamically, commensurate with the development of the issues of its time. In its journey, the women's movement in Indonesia transformed into an influential collective movement, as quoted from Susan Blackburn (2004: 11) in Anne Lockley et al. (2019) the following:

"Aksi kolektif perempuan bukan hal yang baru di Indonesia, karena sejak abad ke-20 praktik ini sudah terjadi di berbagai daerah. Menurut Susan Blackburn, dalam konteks sejarah Indonesia, gerakan perempuan telah berjuang untuk mengartikulasikan keprihatinan tentang status mereka, pengalaman diskriminasi, dan penindasan dengan cara mengorganisasikan diri ke dalam organisasi perempuan dan terlibat dalam politik. Menurut Blackburn gerakan perempuan melalui organisasi lebih memiliki kekuatan dan berkelanjutan daripada upaya-upaya individual" (Lokley et al., 2019).

In the quote above, it can be seen the emergence of collective consciousness among activists of the women's movement in Indonesia which departs from the belief that communal movements will have more impact on existing social entities, when compared to individual statements. In a follow-up presentation, based on research on eight locality-based women's collective movements in Indonesia, Lockley et al.(2019: 15) mapping six thematic issues that are the focus of the women's movement in addition to issues that have been widely discussed, namely: (1) increasing women's access to social protection from the state; (2) increased access to employment opportunities and elimination of discrimination in the workplace; (3) improving the conditions of women migrant workers abroad; (4) improve women's leadership in the context of maternal and reproductive health; and (5) strengthen women's leadership in eliminating violence against women.

Discourse on the Subordination of Women's Gender Identity in Fine Art Works

Discourse in the current of the women's movement in Indonesia in such a way, then also seeped into the field of art. In a scientific article on the research report of Ira Adriati Winarno (2007: 215), in Table 1. The trend of themes in the work of Indonesian women artists is explained that the lively emergence of women's issues in women's artworks in Indonesia was seen significantly in the 1990s and 2000s. In Winarno's presentation (2007: 215) it was mentioned that the artworks of Indonesian women artists, consisting of "Dolorosa Sinaga, Astari Rasjid, Arahmaiani, Lucia Hartini, Iriantine Karnaya dan IGK Murniasih, mengangkat beragam tema "persoalan sosial, banyak yang mengangkat persoalan gender – visualisasi surealis, figuratif, simbolis".



Figure 1. Fear No Power, sculpture by Dolorosa Sinaga, 2003. Source: IVAA online, 2023



Figure 2. Perempuan, painting by Arahmaiani, 2009. Source: IVAA online, 2023

The frequent emergence of women's issues, especially gender equality, in the artworks of women artists in Indonesia in the 1990s, according to Winarno (2007: 216-217) was caused by several pre-conditions, namely:

(1) munculnya kesadaran akan pentingnya isu gender dalam dunia akademis di Indonesia (didirikannya Program Magister Kajian Wanita oleh Universitas Indoensia tahun 1990); (2) derasnya arus posmodern dalam seni rupa kontemporer Indonesia; dan (3) mulai populernya penggunaan idiom-idiom seperti plural, etnik, multikulturalisme, gender dan marginal oleh perupa perempuan Indonesia (Winarno, 2007: 216-217).

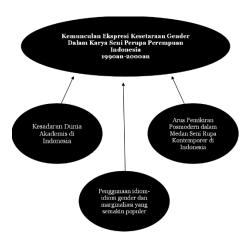


Figure 3. Causality of the emergence of gender issues in the artworks of Indonesian women artists in the 1990s-2000s.

Source: Winarno, 2007

Furthermore, in this scientific article on the results of his research, Winarno (2007) wrote as follows:

"Para perupa perempuan tersebut juga berbicara tentang beratnya tugas sebagai perempuan yang telah menjadi ibu. Mereka takkan pernah hanya memikirkan dirinya sendiri, karena mereka akan seantiasa dibebani oleh tugas mengurus anak-anak mereka. Di sisi lain, seorang bapak hampir tak pernah merasakan tugas tersebut. Dengan demikian,

sebenarnya para perupa itu membicarakan persoalan kesetaraan gender pula" (Winarno, 2007: 221).

Based on the research conducted, it can be seen that there is a prominent focus from Winarno's (2007) writing to voice the issue of female domestication in works of art as a figure who by nature has more burden than men regarding matters of taking care of children and households. What is seen as the domestication of women in Winarno's (2007) research is still relevant if it is positioned in the context of gender identity subordination. Related to subordination, Imam Syafe'i (2015) in his scientific article entitled Subordination of Women and Its Implications for the Household wrote as follows:

Subordinasi perempuan diartikan sebagai 'penomorduaan' perempuan, bahwa perempuan lebih lemah/rendah dari lakilaki sehingga kedudukan, fungsi dan peran perempuan seakanakan menjadi lebih rendah dibanding laki-laki. Contoh dalam perbedaan fungsi dan peran itu antara lain: perempuan itu harus lemah lembut, emosional, cantik, sabar, penyayang, mendidik anak, memasak, mencuci, kepasar, membereskan rumah, dan melakukan kegiatan domestik lainnya (Syafe'i, 2015: 144).

In another scientific journal, written by Agus Afandi (2019) entitled Forms of Gender Bias Behavior, it is written that this condition of subordination is present as an excesses of gender-based role sorting and stereotyping. This is written as follows:

Nilai-nilai sosial dan budaya di masyarakat telah memilah-milah peran-peran laki-laki dan perempuan. Perempuan dianggap bertanggung jawab dan memiliki peran dalam urusan domestik atau reproduksi, sementara laki-laki dalam urusan publik atau produksi (Afandi, 2019: 5).

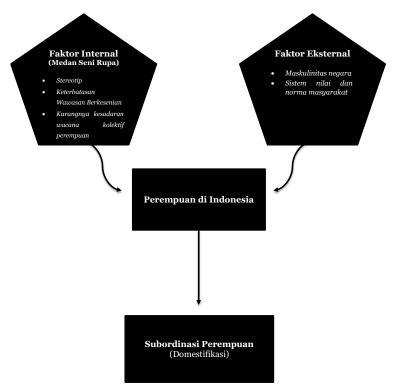


Figure 4. Configuration of factor causing the subordination of women in the field of art. Source: Wicaksono., et al, 2003

Similar things later also appeared in the work of female graphic artist, Theresia Agustina Sitompul. In her solo exhibition entitled In Every House There Is Only a Mother, the artist who is familiarly called Tere voiced the depth of her reflection on her personal experience as a graphic and housewife. Quoted in the

exhibition written by Hendro Wiyanto (2014), what Tere did in this exhibition was an effort to manifest the construction of the artist's female identity as a mother.

Citra baju menjelma sebagai penanda tak sadar yang membentuk identitas (ke) perempuan(an) pada karya Tere. Sosok Tere muncul atau eksis melalui (bayangan) pakaian, barang personal yang melekat pada tubuhnya, ke mana pun dan di mana pun, setiap hari. Itulah bayang-bayang seorang perempuan, seorang ibu (Wiyanto, 2014: 10).

Furthermore, Hendro Wiyanto (2014) conveyed his interpretation regarding Tere's statement implied in the non-visual concept of his carbon printed artwork. According to Hendro Wiyanto (2014: 11-12), in this work, Tere is rejecting the "normative" nature of awareness of gender equality theories. Tere chose to examine gender equality practices in everyday households, rather than articulating them as discourses that only reach the conversational level. Hendro Wiyanto (2014: 12-13) then put the focus of his interpretation on the ambiguity behind Tere's concept of work, between voicing the experience of subordination of a mother and efforts to break away from the issue of gender equality to simply seek subjective happiness.



Figure 5. One of Theresia Sitompul's carbon printing artworks in the exhibition "There is Only a Mother" entitled Until the Sun Sets and Rises Again #02 (From Dusk till Down), Bentara Budaya Jakarta, 2014.

Source: Catalogue on "Pada Setiap Rumah Hanya Ada Seorang Ibu, 2014

Departing from Hendro Wiyanto's (2014) interpretation of Tere's work, there is another formulation that arises from the idea of creating works of art that make the issue of gender equality as a veil for his ideas. There have been attempts by Tere to articulate the issue more personally in her works. Tere is not playing the role of a feminist armed with sharp and critical views as a "weapon" to combat subordination and symbolic violence against women. What Tere does is negotiate her past (her mother's figure), her present (her position as a mother) and her future (her daughter Blora). Tere is examining the gender constructs she is going through herself. In the cross-section of the identity conflict, Tere is playing around in carbon printed artworks at the exhibition entitled In Every Home There Is Only One Mother.

Based on observations of the various references above, it can be mapped several discourses that arise related to works of art with issues of identity, representation and symbolic violence. Fine art works with the basic idea of gender awareness that emerged after the 1990s accommodate several ideas, namely:

1. Subordination in the relationship of men to women.

- 2. The condition of the lack of representation of women in works of art.
- 3. Symbolic violence in the domestication of women's roles
- 4. Attempts to play around with artwork to achieve happiness as a woman

In addition to the four things above, there are actually many other ideas that want to be accommodated from the practice of creating works of art based on gender awareness. However, some of the literature and artworks that have been reviewed are selected on the basis of conformity with the framework of concepts applied in this analysis, namely: subordination, representation and symbolic violence. The symbolic violence referred to here refers to what is widely reproduced from the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu. The explanation can be quoted from the journal written by Ita Musarrofa (2015) as follows:

Memahami kekuasaan dan kekerasan simbolik meniscayakan pemahaman kita akan peran bahasa sebagai sistem simbol. Selain berperan sebagai alat komunikasi dalam memahami dan menyampaikan pikiran serta perasaan antar manusia, bahasa memiliki peran laten yang seringkali tidak disadari, yaitu sebagai praktik kekuasaan. [...] Dominasi terhadap simbol merupakan kekuasaan yang dapat membuat orang mengenali dan mempercayai, memperkuat dan mengubah pandangan mengenai dunia. (Musarrofa, 2015: 470)

Symbolic violence works latently or hegemonically. This is also often found in art works, where power relations (including gender-based symbolic violence) work hegemonically, unconscious but continuously reproduced.

Representation of Women Artists in the Field of Art in Indonesia

Moving on from the observation of works of art, the discussion in this subsection will try to examine the state of discussion around gender awareness in a more abstract scope, the field of fine art. The concept of the field of fine art, in several different writings or discourses, appears with different terms. Art critic Sanento Yuliman often uses the term field of painting to refer to the concept. However, according to Agung Hujatnikajenong (2013), the use of the term field of painting, which is then widely written as the social field of art, actually narrows the breadth of the discourse to be developed. Hujatnikajennong (2013), referring to the concept of art world popularized by Howard Becker (1982), writes that the field that is the realm of art practice is not only limited to the sociological approach of art practice. More than that. The field of art in the context of Art World also penetrates other discourse spaces such as aesthetic experience and art criticism. Therefore, still referring to Hujatnikajennong (2013), the use of the term Medan Seni Rupa becomes more appropriate to describe the breadth of its discourse.

In different references, written by Albertus Rusputranto P.A. (2021), the field of fine art can be identified through a fierce cross between the interests of institutions, theories, conventions, organizations, professions, capital and economic mechanisms, all of which are related to art. So, this cross-changing condition certainly indicates a gamble, including a bet on gender identity. In the context of its relevance to gender equality discourse, in the field of fine arts there are several topics of discussion that often arise. Artist Dolorosa Sinaga once wrote about gender discourse in the field of art, in her writing entitled Discourse of Women's Art: Between Concept and Context (2003). In this paper, Dolorosa questions the significant difference between the number of female artists who come to the surface is very much less than male artists.

There are three things that later became the initial argument of Dolorosa Sinaga (2003:110) as the cause of the problem, namely stereotypes against women, weak artistic insight that is used as the basis for female artists and mental and cultural restrictions that are still widely affirmed by women. In its development, Dolorosa (2003: 120) then saw a change in field conditions on the issue. She saw that female artists at that time had also brought in gender equality issues, one of which was the subordination of women, into her artwork. In fact, based on the findings in Dolorosa Sinaga's writing, the

issue of women in works of art is not only expressed by female artists themselves, but also male artists, such as Semsar Siahaan and F.X. Harsono (Sinaga, D., 2003: 121).

However, the important thing in Dolorosa Sinaga's writing is her asking questions about women's issues expressed in the artwork. According to Dolorosa (2003: 121-125), women's issues expressed have not voiced a common concern, but these issues depart from individual experiences. This is what causes the discourse of women artists in the field of art in Indonesia to still sound faint. Dolorosa (2003: 125) sees that only political consciousness is able to uphold the identity of female artists' expressions based on the ideology of women's discourse. In other words, the trend of beginning to express women's issues in artwork actually gave rise to many follow-up works and at the same time opportunities to shape and respond further to the discourse of women's subordination in the field of art in Indonesia.

In a different reference, in the form of an interview transcript, Toeti Heraty Noerhadi (2003) expressed her views regarding gender discourse as a social construction (fabricated). In the Indonesian context, women according to Toeti Heraty Noerhadi (2003: 126-127) are in two conditions, namely as figures who have multiple roles and equal partners. That is, on the one hand, opportunities for women's progress in Indonesia are slowly opening up, either initiated by the women's movement itself or the state. However, at the same time there is a tendency for the image of women to also be frozen and redomesticated as wives and housewives (Noerhadi, 2003: 127-128).

Such a condition is then referred to by Noerhadi (2003: 127) as pendulum motion (one point is emancipation, the other point is domestication). The emergence of this condition is an accumulation of a complex situation involving the state, culture, values and norms, and social class (Noerhadi, 2003: 127-132). In the complexity of these conditions, Noerhadi (2003: 133) then conveyed a crucial sentence, namely "Karena itu, jangan seperti hendak menyaingi patriarki, tetapi hendaklah memakai strategi matriarki untuk memperoleh tempat di mana dia merasa bisa berperan secara lebih efektif".

Therefore, based on the texts in this section, women's gender representation in the field of art in Indonesia is still relevant to read the map through the lens of a wider academic public, as in the following quote:

"Representasi itu biasanya berhubungan dengan stereotip, tetapi tidak sekadar menyangkut hal ini. Lebih penting lagi, penggambaran itu tidak hanya berkenan dengan tampilan fisik atau tampilan yang kelihatan dari luar saja, tetapi juga yang lebih penting adalah makna yang sesungguhnya ada di balik tampilan luar tersebut" (Irawan, 2014: 2).

In addition, in different scientific articles that discuss visual representations of women in magazines, Wiratmo (2015) stated the results of his similar research, namely:

"[Representasi visual perempuan] masih bergerak di seputar persoalan domestik seperti kecantikan, mode, kuliner, pengasuhan anak, dan sebagainya, meskipun ada beberapa artikel yang mengupas mengenai wilayah publik, yaitu pekerjaan dan profesi, peristiwa aktual, dan sebagainya" (Wiratmo, 2015: 114).

From the interpretation of the references and research results above, several conditions can be identified that perpetuate the subordination of women in the field of Indonesian art. These conditions are: (1) The influence of stereotypical views on women; (2) limited artistic insight among women; (3) lack of awareness of the formation of women's collective discourse; (4) the influence of masculinity on women; and (5) value systems and norms in society that still restrain women.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions of the entire discussion from the beginning to the previous final subsection are summarized as follows: (1) The gender equality movement, including the feminist movement, in Indonesia has a collective consciousness that is believed to support the articulation of resistance to conditions of gender inequality; (2) In the context of works of art, collective awareness in voicing gender inequality extends to the involvement of male artists as well, but there are other articulation practices that are more reflective in nature, meaning the construction of gender identity of female artists; (3) Subordination, symbolic violence and unequal representation do occur in practices and discussions in the field of art in Indonesia. However, the response to this condition is not only shown by heroic practice, but also voiced into reflections aimed at eroding the gender dichotomy caused by stereotypes.

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