

Research Article

The Context of Murals as Youth Media in the Aesthetic Perspective of Marxism

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ORCIDJoni Agung Sudarmanto: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6340-0077>**Abstract.**

Murals are often found as a medium to express what lies in the imagination of their artists. Talks and murals are often discussed, primarily related to social issues, which are often the central theme when young people are the artists. This research explores murals from another point of view, namely from youth-media activism through the aesthetic perspective of Marxism. The aim is to find the contextual relations of social issues with the phenomenon of youth media in the aesthetics of Marxism. The research method is grounded in theory by exploring how the aesthetics of Marxism sees the mural phenomenon, which has played an essential role in the social movement of young people. In this study, it is known that apart from choosing the place, the material to be depicted, and the message to be conveyed, this activist mural artist also illustrates how interrelated the current protests are with the phenomena that emerged during the time of Marx. This shows the existence of a hermeneutic role in framing phenomena that are contextualized to the present.

Keywords: mural, activism, hermeneutic, youth media, Marxist aesthetics

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1. Introduction

Art is one of the multifunctional media that is always readily accepted by society with various kinds of efforts [1]. With its freedom of expression, art has always received interest in society [2]. This is because art is free, cannot be judged, and can hide behind bushes that are no man's land. Like a tiger that wants to pounce on prey in front of it, it cannot be noticed, even by potential prey that is clearly in front of it. Art provides enormous opportunities for artists to contribute to harmony and humanity fully [3].

On the other hand, "activism" is the actions of activists who actively encourage the implementation of something or various activities within their. Artists become visual activists whose role is to "sound out" visually [4]–[6]. Art and activism are intertwined,

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especially with Banksy's popularity as a street artist and a well-known protest artist. Similar to what Banksy does, murals are familiar and often found in Indonesia, which have a social role rather than beauty [7]. The mural is the art of painting on walls in various sizes, including mosaic art and mounted panels. Mural intends to communicate and involve the broader public in the experience and creation of works in public space. Talks and murals are often discussed, primarily related to social issues, which are often the central theme with young people as artists. This research wants to explore murals from another point of view, namely from youth-media activism in the aesthetic perspective of Marxism. The aim is to find out the contextual relations of social issues with the phenomenon of youth media in the aesthetics of Marxism.

2. Method

The research method is grounded in theory by exploring how the aesthetics of Marxism sees the mural phenomenon, which has played an essential role in the social movement of young people. In addition, a hermeneutic approach is also used, which acts as an interpreter. The hermeneutic approach makes this research limited to visual texts from "murals" and a general method of interpretation.

3. Discussion

The dominance of murals that appear in Indonesia tends to convey visual and social messages related to the conditions of the surrounding community. These visual messages are usually made to beautify a location or to show self-existence to the community and society. In this case, various elements in a mural can produce their aesthetic form in communication to build a relationship between the maker and the audience. This is because there are three visual aesthetics elements: object, artist, and audience/society [8]. These three elements mutually influence each other, which in turn forms feedback and feedback on the visuality of the mural.

Meanwhile, murals are a form of subculture in society, a subversion of what is considered normal. Subcultures may be perceived as unfavorable because of their critical nature of the dominant societal standards [9], [10]. Subcultures are brought together by groups of individuals who feel neglected by societal standards, causing

them to develop a good sense of identity for themselves. Murals also emerge through their ambivalent or hostile relationship with class.

The main characteristic of all subcultures is that the members of the subculture are separate or detached at various levels from what is considered the dominant culture [11], [12]. This division can be in total isolation or limited to work, school, fun, marriage, friendship, religion, or place of residence. In addition, such separation may occur voluntarily because of geographic location or freedom. This is what happened to the mural subculture, which eventually became youth media by separating itself from society by forming its own identity based on the agreements and rules adhered to within the group. In forming this identity, the mural subculture as youth media also brings expressions of resistance that accompany its social movements. On the one hand, this position is still closely related to rejection, which considers it a destruction of public facilities [13]. On the other hand, it is accepted because of its effectiveness in criticizing the social condition of society [14].

The mural is a technology for responses that question the relationship between human existence and technological existence [15]. The phenomenon of the mural as a technology is seen from hermeneutics as an effort to show oneself so that the horizon and limits are revealed. This perspective focuses on understanding the intentionality of the relationship of human existence, which is interpreted existentially so that the best intentional is as an existential intentional in a mural context. The revelation of technology must be separated from the framework of interpretation or, in this case, namely instrumental (invention/technology in Latin) or the definition of technology in anthropology [16]–[18].

Defining technology from a certain point of view is truth in a limited sense (correctness/partial truth), although correctness does not necessarily indicate truth. So that someone has to go through correctness to reveal the truth. Since correctness is based on a framework that brings it into existence, this way of working is called ontic [19]. Only through ontics can ontology be understood, but in turn, it is an ontology that establishes ontics [19], [20]. This view is applied by young mural artists who, together with youth media, see it from an anthropological-instrumental perspective. This anthropological-instrumental view (murals as a technology from an anthropological point of view) is ontic, correct, but partial depending on context conditions [5], [21]. Regarding technology, murals in youth media can receive different definitions or perspectives regarding message delivery technology, political issues, and even sensitive issues.

The mural is essential to find the truth behind the mural as "a work of art." The view of murals as a technology that reduces the vast and rich art world also expands and produces new knowledge [22], [23]. Small cells and bacteria that are invisible to the human eye can be seen with the help of a microscope. Microbiology and DNA modification could develop from the disclosure of technology. The earth that appears without technology does not show the content of rocks from within the structure of the earth; through technology, the earth reveals itself, which has various rocks that are beneficial to humans. Furthermore, the view that nature controls humans can change into humans controlling nature through technology. Things like this show that murals as a youth media technology are placed in the method of disclosure (expressing variance within invariance).

Departing from the above thoughts, the mural reveals that phenomenological hermeneutics depends on the mural as the technology itself [24], [25]. Phenomenological epistemology is materialist and focuses on the action and manifestation of perception. On the other hand, technology is also material in a broader context. So it can be said that the hardware of technology is a characteristic of "the body". This is an analogy of the human body that extends hermeneutics in murals. On the other hand, murals also have ambiguity. The ambiguity of space comes from culture. This is due to cultural changes that are open to the definition or perspective of the mural as a different technology (which can have multiple meanings) or multistability.

Mural in art does not articulate that art represents, copies, or falsifies a particular world but instead allows what is in the world to represent or articulate itself more fully [26], [27]. When we see a work, we are not disappointed because the work brings us to understand the world better. On the other hand, a mural must be understood as a discussion of a question. Murals offer a visual response to something that has developed historically. Hermeneutical interaction not only seeks to interpret but also opens up what must be expressed in it, thereby opening up other paths of understanding in the future.

The proper understanding of murals rests on expressive historicity. Hermeneutics broadly combines two theses. First, the Kantian view holds that we are immersed in the world and express ourselves based on a cognitive framework and shared expression [28]. Second, the Hegelian view that views such as the Kantian emerge and develop over time [29]. To the extent that art externalizes our implicit framework of meaning and values, over time, we can tap into more of our inner capacities. However, because art is a historical artifact, a work of art may or may not express universal rationality. In

addition, Gadamer also believes that different interpretations are acceptable because these differences broaden the horizons of knowledge [30]. Thus, a mural as a work of art cannot be separated from the totality of its interpretation. This feature shows that the mural is an interpretation. As Gadamer said, a work of art may look beautiful but never be finished. The work will always be seen differently.

Art's rejection of theoretical appropriation reminds us of the limits of our understanding and thus opens up the possibility of understanding much more about the dimensions of murals and audiences. Marx did not specifically discuss aesthetics, but the theory of being that Marx proposed has enormous meaning for understanding sensory and aesthetic experiences. The universal mural is reminiscent of their theory of being from Marx, which says that humans are species creatures because he views himself as a universal being [31]. The human world is created where we see the work of others and where human intervention is to speak to others. Based on this understanding of species-being, Marx's view of the mural as youth media is not produced in response to an immediate need like animals [32]. For Marx, a mural is an expression of species-being.

The developing Marxist aesthetic thought is the aesthetic thought of realism brought about by the youth media in murals. Marxist aesthetic thinking does come from not only the thoughts of Karl Marx but also the thoughts of other figures before Karl Marx who have the same ideas as well as other figures whom the thoughts of Karl Marx have influenced [31], [33]. Pre-Marxist aesthetic realism thinkers such as Ludwig Chernyshevsky have an opinion that stems from his rejection of Hegelian realism aesthetic thought [1]. For Hegel, a mural is the physical embodiment of an idea, or art is an idea embodied in an object, "a spirit that becomes flesh" [29], [32]. Therefore, according to Hegel, a statue occupies a higher position than a stone because it manifests consciousness in a material form, whereas a stone is a matter without consciousness. Murals do not imitate material reality but imitate ideas or consciousness.

The aesthetics of Marxism in the mural, as in youth media, is a modern representation of the classical aesthetic tradition, which believes that art must be mimetic, functional, and rational. The aesthetics of Marxism has an approach that upholds reality as it is an object of art. Works of art and literature are not just thoughts blind to reality, but it is a reflection of that reality, namely a work which is influenced by all the ambiguities of the reality it describes [31], [34]. Therefore, it is the interpreter who must carry out the task of uncovering the ideology hidden in it. Furthermore, Marxist aesthetics developed from Hegelian aesthetics centered on content issues where murals have a lot of meaning

and messages in their content. The aesthetics of Marxism can protect murals from the dangers of naturalism, where the content is removed from the form, and the dangers of formalism, which does not pay attention to the content. Marxist aesthetics also avoids mural as a youth-media form of formalist aesthetics, which reduces art to formal relations that study form, pattern, symmetry, rhythm, and style, as well as a psychological view that leaves the analyst on beauty and instead pays attention to the subjective pleasures that beauty produces [35], [36].

Murals often present as messengers on social issues, and activism can convey anything. Some of the things that can be seen from the murals are class conflict. If you look at the murals often done by young people, there is match Karl Marx's opinion that art during the Romantic period was a mockery of the bourgeoisie against the working class. Like being happy over the suffering of others. A mural artist close to the youth media does not depend on the bourgeois class, which gives him wages to sell his labor and creative work. Because of this, the Marxist aesthetic views that when art is freed from economic shackles, the creative freedom of artists can be realized, and the working class is no longer burdened with their basic needs because they have been fulfilled. Art has become material for the history of the revolution, and all of this appears in murals.

4. Conclusion

Understanding a work of art goes beyond understanding the artist's expressed intention. Recent hermeneutics is not a reconstructive method, and such hermeneutics do not attempt to reconstruct the historical context of work or restore the artist's original intentions. We may rebuild how historical works were produced, but we can no longer 'see' the way of a seventeenth-century person. The artist's intention may be instructive but needs to exhaust the meaning of a work. The significance of a work has to do with its subsequent effect on how the subject comes to be understood, an effect which, if we place it exclusively within the intentionality of the artist, we will never see. Acknowledging the importance of little intentionality in this context means that historical awareness is still critical. On the contrary, it is essential because understanding murals and youth media is not a matter of establishing identity or similarities but ensuring fundamental differences.

Hermeneutics does not argue that art is language or that the operations of art can be reduced to words. However, understanding the dynamics of linguistic relationships provides insight into how works of art communicate. Murals, youth media, and the aesthetics of Marxism value symbolic conversation (via visuals) as a paradigm of the dialectical dimension of language, namely the ability that is said to bring the unspoken to mind. The experience of remembering something is an objective occurrence caused by the conversation itself. If the conversation were merely an exchange of subjective preferences, no conversation would take place, but if it did – and this is an important point – the participants would experience an intimate and unexpected change in their views.

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