

Conference Paper

The Meaning of Color and Its Symbol of Strength in the Exhibition” 17/71: *Goresan Juang Kemerdekaan*”

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Abstract

The exhibition 17/71 with the theme ” *Goresan Juang Kemerdekaan*” or “The Scratch for Independent Struggles” was held from the 17th to the 30th of August 2016 at the Indonesian National Gallery in Jakarta. The showroom combined multiple visual elements, including shape, symbol, lines of narration, and color. The most influential element was the color management. The exhibition presented collections of Indonesian art paintings focusing on the Indonesian struggle for independence, and included paintings from Indonesian artists as well as foreign contributions. This paper offers an overview of the effectiveness and contribution to the overall appeal of the exhibition of the colour management techniques. The researcher used qualitative and semiotic methods to demonstrate that the meaning of color and its symbol of strength have become the potential reference for management of art objects collection in the showrooms.

Keywords: Meaning of Color, Symbol, Color Strength, Showroom, *Goresan Juang Kemerdekaan*

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1. Introduction

The Indonesian 17/71st independence in 2016 was commemorated by conducting Fine Art Exhibition at the National Gallery, Jakarta. The main reason of this important event is to link the art into the independent message. The exhibition was based on the mission to show the Indonesian proudness of having works of art made by famous Indonesian artists and its maestro painters. In general, the meaning of ”*Goresan Juang Kemerdekaan*” or The Scratch for Independent Struggles” is referring to the image, visualization that shares heroic stories, and exposes the spirit of the independence, the desire to get free from oppression, and to gain a sovereignty, just and prosperous country. The implementation of this theme is given by 28 works of 20 Indonesian painters and 1 painting made by the late president Soekarno. The galleries are divided into 3 narrative categories. The first classifications are the art paintings related to the

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context of the nation's struggle and made by Indonesian art maestros. The second category is the collection of art objects made by President Sukarno (Dullah to Lee Man Fong editions, 1956-1965), and the last categories are the booklets of the Presidential Palace of the Republic of Indonesia together with another book entitled *Rumah Bangsa* (2004). These booklets are inseparable part of galleries and collections of the exhibition [1].

Since the theme of the show is very important to be conveyed to the visitors, the exhibition showrooms need to be elaborated and analyzed, thus this research is aimed at analyzing the relationship between narrative lines and the selection of colors in the showroom No 17/71 and finding out the problems related to the visual elements, such as shapes, symbols, lines of narration and colors. Color is a sensation produced by the eye after receiving light or color is an effect produced by a beam of light from a particular wave, or a mixture of it. As a sensation, color creates a simultaneous effect on brain nerves which gives rise to certain feelings in humans. Therefore, colors in everyday life are used to give nuances that give rise to certain feelings in human beings [2].

Nevertheless, each color has its certain characteristics. What the researcher's meant by characteristics in this case are the features possessed by a color itself. Broadly speaking, the distinctive characteristics possessed by color are divided into two major groups; warm colors and light colors. Chijiwa in his book *Color Harmony* makes another classification of colors, and he also takes the basis of its characteristics, such as warm colors for red, yellow, brown, orange. Then cool colors are range of colors from green to purple through blue. Strong colors are blue, red, yellow, white, black while dark colors are colors that are closed to black (dark brown, dark blue and so on), and light colors are colors near to white colors. Finally mixed colors are all colors that are given a gray mixture [3].

To reveal the secrets and to examine the signs behind the meaning of color used in the exhibition room no 17/71, with the theme "The Scratch for Freedom Fighters", the researcher used semiotic analysis which refers to the theory of Charles Sanders Peirce, namely icons, indices, and symbols and applied a qualitative descriptive approach. The objects of his research are paintings and spaces/rooms that have been used during the exhibition. Semiotic analysis is used with the assumption that the showrooms communicate the painting, and the color of the wall is one of communication channels. In the exhibition, the message is conveyed by the curator throughout the management of art galleries and the use of color as the symbol of the hidden exhibition content.

The paintings of the Presidential Palace collection that will be displayed in this exhibition are: Affandi, *Laskar Rakyat Mengatur Siasat I*, 1946; Affandi, *Potret H.O.S.*

Tjokroaminoto, 1946; Basoeki Abdullah, Pangeran Diponegoro Memimpin Perang, 1949; Dullah, Persiapan Gerilya, 1949; Harijadi Sumadidjaja, Awan Berarak Jalan Bersimpang, 1955; Harijadi Sumadidjaja, Biografi II di Malioboro, 1949; Henk Ngantung, Memanah, 1943 (reproduksi orisinal oleh Haris Purnomo); Kartono Yudhokusumo, Pertempuran di Pengok, 1949; Raden Saleh, Penangkapan Pangeran Diponegoro, 1857; S. Sudjojono, Di Depan Kelambu Terbuka, 1939; S. Sudjojono, Kawan-kawan Revolusi, 1947.; S. Sudjojono, Markas Laskar di Bekas Gudang Beras Tjikampek, 1964; S. Sudjojono, Mengungsi, 1950; S. Sudjojono. Sekko (Perintis Gerilya), 1949; Sudjono Abdullah, Diponegoro, 1947; Trubus Sudarsono, Potret R.A. Kartini, 1946/7 ; Gambiranom Suhardi, Potret Jenderal Sudirman, 1956; Soerono, Ketoprak, 1950; Ir. Sukarno, Rini, 1958; Lee Man-Fong, Margasatwa dan Puspita Nusantara, 1961; Rudolf Bonnet, Penari-penari Bali sedang Berhias, 1954; Hendra Gunawan, Kerokan, 1955; Diego Rivera, Gadis Melayu dengan Bunga, 1955; Miguel Covarrubias, Empat Gadis Bali dengan Sajen, sekitar 1933-1936; Walter Spies, Kehidupan di Borobudur di Abad ke-9, 1930; Ida Bagus Made Nadera, Fajar Menjingsing, 1949; Srihadi Soedarsono, Tara, 1977; Mahjuddin, Pantai Karang Bolong, tahun tak terlacak (sekitar 1950an) [5].

2. Research Method

To capture of the meaning of color and the color symbolism of strength in the exhibition 17/71 with the theme “*Goresan Juang Kemerdekaan*”, the researchers seek the meaning of various art objects based on exhibition space, which includes the study of the meaning of the narrative lines observed, then sorted, filtered and found an idea of the color of the space presented. This study focuses on the color as a symptom that has objective meaning. It means the researcher tried to describe the meaning of space in relation to the understanding of art objects presented in the showroom itself. The research was conducted by using qualitative method in which the data were gathered through observation and interview conducted to the informants. The data were collected from the exhibition at National Galery, at Jakarta, on 17-30 August 2016. The data were classified into semiotic framework in term of the historical of aspects, visual elements, such as shapes, symbols, lines of narration, and colors [4].

3. Color has the power to communicate meaning and messages without using words

3.1. Green

Currently the most popular decorating color, green symbolizes nature. It is the easiest color on the eye and can improve vision. It is a calming, refreshing color. Hospitals often use green because it relaxes patients. Dark green is masculine, conservative, and implies wealth. The color of growth, nature, and money. A calming color also that's very pleasing to the senses. Dark forest green is associated with terms like conservative, masculine and wealth. It is also the color associated with envy, good luck, generosity and fertility. It is the traditional color of peace, harmony, comfortable nurturing, support and energy.

Green color has two general meanings which are quite paradoxical; the first one is related to the nature and environment, and the second one to economics condition or good finance and good wealth. If it is connected with nature, green color represents living plant and the growth and is continually used to promote 'green' in the environment, continuity, and organic, natural essence of the word. The use of shades of green as the background of the paintings with a slight bluish so that it becomes a darker and stronger green nuance on the wall of the painting becomes a color that strongly supports the third concept of painting which indeed has the meaning of the struggle of prominent figures who foster fighting spirit in the lives of Indonesian people such as the maestro presenting many images of the struggle for life, upheaval against tense situations, to an image of heroic values that are present in strong and interesting individuals. These individuals became inspiration in the future. Individuals as fighters are strongly recorded in the works of Trubus Sudarsono, Kartini (1947), Sudjono Abdullah, Portrait of Diponegoro (1947-8), and the work of Gambiranom, Portrait of General Sudirman. The green color indicates growth, and renewal; while the green is darker, represents dignity, and is full of life force. Green gives a good effect for the identity of the struggle painting with the color of the painting that is naturally colored. Earth's pine green has been applied to various images and adds a sensation of dignity, wealth and depth and inspiration.

A number of portrait paintings of heroes are evidences that Basoeki Abdullah since his early career as a painter had been so concerned with the gures of Indonesian independence movement. Since the 1940s or the Japanese era he had painted a number of portraits of the members of the so-called "Empat Serangkai", who led Poesat



Figure 1: Pangeran Diponegoro Memimpin Perang 120 x 150 cm, 1949, cat minyak di kanvas *oil on canvas* (Photo documents of Ika Yuni purnama, 2016.)

Tenaga Rakjat (Center of People's Power). In the time thereafter he painted a number of portraits of heroes wonderfully so that it is easily recorded by succeeding generations. [6].

This painting was done when Basoeki Abdullah was in the Netherlands. At the same time Round Table Conference (RTC) was held in The Hague. While the conference was taking place, a number of drawings and paintings were created.

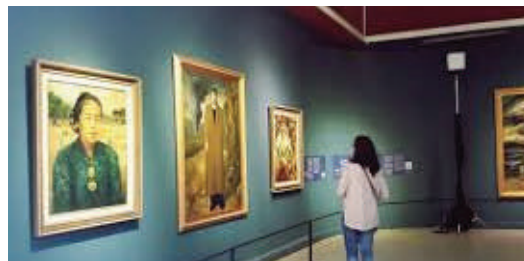


Figure 2: Green wall for Trubus Sudarsono's paintings, *Kartini* (1947), Sudjono Abdullah, *Potret Diponegoro* (1947-8), and the works of Gambiranom, *Potret Jenderal Sudirman*.(Photo documents of Ika Yuni purnama, 2016.)

3.2. Blue

The color of the sky and the ocean, blue is one of the most popular colors. It causes the opposite reaction as red. Peaceful, tranquil blue causes the body to produce calming

chemicals, so it is often used in bedrooms. Blue can also be cold and depressing. Much of the world is blue (skies, seas). Some shades can send a cold and uncaring message. Many bedrooms are blue because it's calm, restful color. Over the ages blue has become associated with steadfastness, dependability, wisdom and loyalty.

Blue is a universal color that is often used; blue is the favorite color for rooms that frequently uses to convey reliability, trustworthiness and communication, and to express authority and nuance. Besides, blue is also appreciated for the calm and quality of harmony which are associated with the sea and sky. There are two types of blue color used; light blue and dark blue. Dark blue is used to give strong and reliable impression, calm, and to provide peace and feeling of sadness because of being left by the loved ones. Blue also conveys reliability, professionalism and strength. The identity of the painting with complementary colors from the painting is a nuance of light blue with orange, yellow, and white giving homage to paintings that conveys a quiet room and communicates the story of the painting. The painting of Diego Rivera, Miguel Covarrubias, Walter Spies, Srihadi Soedarsono, and masterpieces of the maestros are considered as important piece of works that represent the witness of the Indonesian people struggle for their independence.

It was told that the painting came to Indonesia because of Sukarno's persuasion. According to Guntur Sukarno, at first President Lopez of Mexico would never give the painting to anyone because it was a rare and historical painting for the nation and the people of Mexico. There was a special law that protected the painting. In this law it was stipulated that under any circumstances it was not justified to bring the painting out of Mexico. So, apparently before the painting was given to Sukarno as a keepsake present, behind the scene a process of high-level "persuasion" had occurred between Sukarno and Lopez.

3.3. Black

Black is the color of authority and power. It is popular in fashion because it makes people appear thinner. It is also stylish and timeless. Black also implies submission. Priests wear black to signify submission to God. Black outfits can also be overpowering, or make the wearer seem aloof or evil. Black is the color of authority and power, stability and strength. It is also the color associated with intelligence. In the western hemisphere black is associated with grieving. Black is a serious color that evokes strong emotions; it is easy to overwhelm people with too much black.



Figure 3: Diego Rivera, *Gadis Melayu dengan Bunga* 120x175 cm, 1955, cat minyak di kanvas *oil on canvas* (Photo documents of Ika Yuni Purnama, 2016.)



Figure 4: Blue wall for Diego Rivera, Miguel Covarrubias, Walter Spies, Srihadi Soedarsono works (Photo documents of Ika Yuni purnama, 2016)

The paintings of Rudolf Bonnet, Lee Man Fong, Hendra Gunawan, and Ida Bagus Made Nadera, express the introduction to the struggle for the national independent and they also share the aesthetics. Black wall background is usually used to increase the recognition of art objects and when it is used correctly it will become special color; it is easy to remember, and it is communicative as a support for presenting the art galleries. Black can be considered a serious color. It represents strength, luxury, sophistication and exclusivity in the one hand; and death, devil, and mystery on the other side. In terms of desire for power, black is firm and classic. It should not be played with randomly. The use of bright gold is in contrast with black which is a firm touch of luxury. The application of the black is made with grayish gray, illustrating sophistication, and specifically this one is a visual identity for a maestro's painting. Classic firm black and golden sparkle can attract the attention of the visitors. The visual identity for the room represents luxury and exclusivity with black which is juxtaposed with gold in the frame of the painting, so that the overall appearance looks formal, professional and serious.



Figure 5: Black wall for the paintings of Rudolf Bonnet, Lee Man Fong, Hendra Gunawan, Ida Bagus Made Nadera (Photo documents of Ika Yuni Purnama, 2016)



Figure 6: Fadjar Menjingsing 188 x 300 cm, 1949, cat akrilik di kanvas *acrylic on canvas* (Photo documents of Ika Yuni purnama, 2016.)

Ida Bagus Made Nadera was a Balinese painter who went through dif cult time during the war. The painting can be interpreted differently. Fadjar Menjingsing could

mean the time when Sukarno was born or when the sun is going to rise, implying the independence of Indonesia as point to start a new life.

Historical photographs also play the function supportive element of the narrative / theme of "inspiration and action". "Inspiration" is a word or term that represents past events, during 71 years of independence. The word "Action" is a representation of activity that must be taken during the independence. The main point "17 (inspiring calendar) and 71 (time scale that gives us action and real work)" is a medium or mirror that always reflects the awareness to the public or Indonesian people that the history is an important part of a nation.



Figure 7: Black wall for Historical Photos. (Photo documents of Ika Yuni purnama, 2016)

4. Conclusion

By principle, all colors are good and proper for every situation but how to choose appropriate colors that match with the showroom and collection objects is difficult as it can't be separated from each line of narration on the showroom which should be managed in accordance with guideline for determining the color of wall or room or space that supports art collection objects. The meaning of the struggle for Indonesian Independent in the color of the showroom implies there is a closed relationship between the themes of the exhibition and the collection of art objects. The mission of the showroom can be created by choosing appropriate color supporting each art paintings. The meaning of the collection of art objects, particularly in painting works, is represented

by the use of wall colors and the overall impression of space is created by applying the art of exhibition management.

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