The Struggle Never Ends
(The Reflection on The History of Struggle between Socio-Political Groups in The Creation of Painting)

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ABSTRACT

This artistic research aims for the creation of contemporary painting. State of art issues of art creation consists of paintings, socio-political, social functions, and visual symbols. The creation goals are to create painting from the ideas of creation and aesthetics visual form, departing from socio-political history condition in the struggle among mass organizations and politic organizations in Indonesia. By utilizing practice-based research method, the researcher is united with the object being worked in an in and through appreciation, must also refer to published creation method, thus that it is not subjective and the explanation is detailed. David Campbell’s creation method is used as the reference, i.e., Preparation, concentration, incubation, illumination, and verification-production. The study results and art design are contemporary painting “Pertarungan tak Kunjung Usai” (The Struggle Never Ends). It portrays the reflection of ideology struggle and socio-political outlook of figures or among community groups. Subject matter shows two figures group who facing and opposing each other with allegory or symbol attributes, such as weaponries, normative books, bulls, and garudas. The setting is on a ruins or ship deck wreckage. The painting is shown in decorative-expressive style, within contemporary aesthetic artistic images.

Keywords: painting; socio-political; social function; visual symbol

ABSTRAK


Kata kunci: seni lukis; sejarah-politik; fungsi sosial; simbol visual
Introduction

Today, in Indonesian socio-political lives there are still exist concerning phenomenon, such as the awareness vulnerability of respect and tolerance values among groups. It cannot be separated from the implementation of a democratic system that is not proper and the implementation of less strict law (Marzuki, 2011: 37-39). Particularly, in information technologies culture since reformation period until today affects massively to life. Socio-political information and events have become one of the most influential contents. Socio-political information flows rapidly and often interferes or even directly affects community’s life. The information that has great impact and seize community attention is the rivalry and struggle between mass organizations and political organizations. In history, starting from reformation period, it appears in every people’s representative and president elections, regional elections, new issuance of laws and government regulations, internal conflicts between mass organizations and political organization, as well as important policies concerning a whole community. Thus, it often results in mass movements, demonstrations, extraordinary congress degree, and several physical struggle (Brata, 2006, passim).

In some rivalry and struggle of the socio-political world, there are many things that can be mentioned. For instance, demonstration and various animosity pamphlets can be found in the elections of president, governor, and people’s representatives. There are physical conflicts in various demonstrations. There are demonstrators who bring sacks of stones and arrows inside a car. There are several animosity news or hoaxes during the election process. The incident of a court member throws a glass during plenary session in the election of commission head and complementary organs of the house. Also, there was the incident of DPR IV plenary session where a member of party faction overturn tables when the assembly is over. Similarly, the phenomenon of party internal struggles for the legitimacy and power of the party elites. There are still many examples that can be disclosed from the similar conflicts and struggles.

The existences and activities of various mass organizations and political organizations actually have been regulated by several norms. Consequently, the management of socio-political life in democratic government system has been fully executed by various government institutions, parliament institutions, and law enforcement institutions. However, in the historical development of socio-political life dynamics, interests have always emerged from different groups or distortion of the existing system. Those issues are actually a dynamic that lives in social systems or social changes clinging to the development history of a country and a nation (Lauer, 1991: passim). A healthy, safe, and orderly of socio-political life stability is the hope of entire community. However, in the historical inevitability, a constant and sustainable condition of balance will not be occurred. Therefore, the balance desired by community is a safe and secure socio-political implementation subjected to democratic, constitution, and the law. Socio-political phenomenon and rivalries or struggle of the elites are attractive and can be criticized and expressed the values and meanings to community through the process of painting creation (Hauser in Firnie, 201-213).

Based on background problems, the aims of this research and the creation of works are as follow. First, to design a painting with the creation concept comes from various historical phenomenon of socio-political in the never-ending rivalries and struggles between elites. Second, to pour the creation concept into the shape concept (painting visual shape), aesthetic visual symbols, uniqueness, relevance with the context of time, and actual situation. Third, to create painting with material, technique, and proper presentation method to support the creation concept and the visual shape.

In order to obtain analysis and inspiration acumen in the creation of painting, state of art the creation of works problems is addressed, comprise of historical, socio-political systems, social-art functions, visual art symbols as theoretical approaches or some literature reviews and previous works. Robert H. Lauer, in Perspectives on Social Change, stated various structures and functions of community in social system within mankind
cultural development history. It is also stated several social change systems that is attached in the establishment of socio-political system. It is enriched with socio-political dynamics in evolutionary and revolutionary processes (Lauer, Terj. Alimandan, 1989, passim). The perspective can be used to view Indonesia representation in the development process of its democratic history, as follow. There are necessary factors that can be seen in developing the culture of democratic politics. Democratic constitution defines the survival of democratic institutions, the freedom of speech, and the assurance of inclusive citizenship rights. (Marzuki, 2011: 37-39). However, in various actual facts, since the 1998 reformation, the seed of political elite battle keeps growing until today. It even shows the powers of the New Order and Reformist groups that will compete (Brata, 2006, passim).

Arnold Hauser through Eric Firnie’s *Art History and Its Methods, A Critical Anthology*, reveals that there are some functions of arts that stick to human lives, such as function for identity, spiritual instrument (beauty of arts), worshiping or offering, and value propaganda whether it is subtle or overt. Therefore, in response to the complex social life they experience, artists reflect them to their artworks that contain psychological, sociological, and artistic dimensions that display style. It is believed that the style openly and sociologically expresses the spirit of the time (social) or psychological personal style (Firnie, 1995: 201-213). Social functions of arts are also revealed in Edmund Burke Feldman’s *Art as Image and Idea*. This part discusses the social functions of arts related to various expressions of political problems, description of social state, satire, and commentaries about social and cultural situations (Feldman, 1967: 36-69).

Ernest Cassirer in the theory of symbols explains that humans are animals with symbols (*animal symbolicum*) so they understand their world through symbols and arts. The art of symbols can represent expressions or aesthetic feelings that contain various ideas and experiences that are appreciated together (Cassirer, 1990: 36-40). According to Suzanne K. Langer’s theory, art symbols are forms of expressions, as a link between sensibility, emotion, feelings, and impersonal cognition, which are the main characteristics of artwork (Sudiarja, 1982: 75-78) in Burhan (2013).

Studies on artworks related to politics that are also used as literature review, Rozi, R., and Hasan, R., discusses television documentary films in the era of Post-Reformation (2018: 49-57). Another study on artworks related to social probes by Hidayatullah, T., discusses fine artworks from plastic waste, as well as various implications on environmental and social problems in Ciroyom area in Bandung (2018: 11-18).

Of the previous works, to be presented is a drawing artwork “The Cuckold Sign from Italy” in the 18th century. This work displayed contradictions shown from the physical gestures of the figures from two groups mocking each other, which shows the power of a bull through the hand symbol of a figure, and on the other side as the “cuckold” sign (husband with unfaithful wide) symbolized by ox of choice that has been castrated multiple times (Morris, 1977: 32). The visual form of this work becomes inspiration, which then becomes appropriated with further deformation according to the expression needs with the theme “Never-ending Fight” of Indonesian political elites who mock each other.

The other is the work of sculptor Aguste Rodin, titled “Burghers of Calais” (1889). Psychologically, this work of group sculpture shows the character of every figure realistically in terms of anatomy, clothing *drapheri*, and expression of sorrow. This work shows a figure grouping phenomenon in strong expressions, as well as the display of classic pediment (Feldman, 1967: 348-349), so this work becomes the inspiration to be developed in contemporary paintings idioms to create future works.

![Figure 1. Drawing artwork “The Cuckold Sign from Italy” in 18th century.](image)
Another work is a painting by Pablo Picasso called “Guernica” (1937), which reveals social political theme with cubism style, is a warning of Basque bombing incident in Guernica in the time of Spanish Civil War. This painting inspires because the deformativer figures give out strong expression and movement in the time of cruelty, suffering, and chaos (Feldman in Stullerova, 2014). In Picasso’s etching work “Minotauromachy” (1935) is shown various figure elements and fantastic arts that include strange myth, dream, history, sex, and juxtaposition. This works reveals cruelty through figure correlations with movement and positions, or symbols that are attached to the figures (Feldman, 1967: 213). Picasso’s two artworks inspire “Never-ending Fight” that will be created because it contains conflict, showdown between figures, and shape composition in dynamic movement.

Next work is “Argument” (1989) by Widayat. This decorative-styled art inspires because it shows several people arguing and inciting quarrels (Spanjaard, 1998: 165).

The creation method used in this artwork is Practice Based Research, an artistic study when an artist as a researcher or artist does not only deal with the object problem they have to face, but they need to enter and experience it (in and through principal), with the object they study and create (Hannula et al, 2005, 109-118). Furthermore, the stage process of creation is continued with creating method, the sequence of which can be matched or uniformed with the stage process of various other artworks, which is David Campbell’s (1993) creating method. Campbell formulates five stages of the method used in this work reference as follows.

First, the preparation stage is the early stage of working process. In understanding the background and all the problems that follow, it is necessary to condition the activities or explorations of the basics (Spanjaard, 1998: 165).

Second, concentration stage is a stage where the artist’s feeling and reasoning focuses on the various object problems that they face and will

![Figure 2. Aguste Rodin, “Burghers of Calais (1889), bronze statues. (Feldman, 348-349)](image)

![Figure 3. Pablo Picasso's “Guernica” (1937), Mural. (Feldman, 1967: 47)](image)

![Figure 4. Picasso, “Minotauromachy” (1935), drawing on paper. (Feldman, 1967: 213)](image)

![Figure 5. Widayat, “Argument”, 1989, Oil on canvas. (Spanjaard, 1998: 165)](image)
work on. Artist’s inner appreciation on the problem object becomes deeper, stronger, and more intense. This is a stage to concentrate, consider, and test the problems that will be covered. The occurrences of trial and error are very possible in this process.

Third, incubation stage is a process of creation that gives chance to painters (artists) to place various object problems that are being worked on with space and time that are left floating. However, in the process, the artist will achieve maturation or spiritual maturity in exploring and elaborating the problems they face. Various syntheses from all directions of contemplation and thought developed in this process.

Fourth, the illumination stage is an artist’s work process in the phase to reach the formulation of ideas or creation ideas. Then also on how to solve and settle problems, methods, and work processes that will be carried out, and formulate new answers to various questions arises.

Fifth, the verification and production stage are the last stage. In this process, the artist will solve various practical problems related to the ideas of creating and embodiment of form images. Likewise, it will apply new answers to the various problems raised, and work methods that have been formulated from the previous stage. This verification and production stage is the stage of work implementation, starting from the initial stage of the idea that has been formulated until it is realized into a work of art, and then finally it can be presented to the public (Campbell, 1993: 19).

Results and Discussion

In solving problems and starting to design works of art, the stages of creation as stated in the method of creation that has been conveyed can occur randomly, maybe simultaneously in a continuous reciprocal process (in and through principle). However, to make it easier to understand in the presentation, the various stages are described in order according to the stages of the method of creation.

From the preparation stage, there is a process of understanding the background of the problems and problems that arise for the contemporary painting “Pertarungan Tak Kunjung Usai”. In this stage, there is an in and through process, namely the changing of ideas because there are various approaches used to create the contemporary painting “Pertarungan Tak Kunjung Usai”. Approaches to social thought, politics, history, art theory, and previous works occur in this preparation stage. Contemporary art is also the main choice because it also contains a preference for socio-political issues. In this matter, various aspects show the strengths of the groups, both the New Order and the Reformation, which have transformed in all the strengths of mass organizations and political organizations for the struggle for democracy. In addition, there is a passion in this creation to direct it in the form

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Figure 6. Flowchart that describes the complete research, from the initial stages, processes and outcomes, and indicators of achievement.
of contemporary painting according to the spirit of the times. One of the principal characteristics of contemporary art creation is that it is possible to use forms from the works of old artists to be transformed into new works with contemporary issues of appropriation or parody methods. Likewise, the disclosures and presentations are made in contemporary characters whose expressions are full of satire with a choice of striking colors. From this awareness, various discussions, exploration of problems, and collecting various data were started.

Concentration stage (feelings and reasoning are focused on the various problems the object faces, so that appreciation becomes deeper, stronger, and more intense). In this stage, feelings and reasoning are directed in the process of focusing on the concept of creation based on conflicts between groups in mass organizations and political organizations from various eras that have been transformed to build the theme of painting creation. The feelings and reasoning of these various problems are elaborated through direct life experiences as well as with various book references. In addition, they are also looking for visual references to build ideas of form by comparing them with previous works, or with artistic values and styles that will be developed in later paintings. The first comparison and appropriation is with the art of “The Cuckold Sign from Italy”, (18th century). This work is taken and deformed by composing the forms and contexts of problems that occur in Indonesia. Auguste Rodin’s second reference and comparison work, “Burghers of Calais” (1889) showing artistic groupings of figures. As well as Picasso’s, “Guernica” (1937) and “Minotaumachy” (1935) show the figures of victims of a fight, war, sex, and absurd juxtaposition. Widayat’s “Argument” (1989) displays the groups who are arguing and fighting. The work to be made, “Pertarungan Tak Kunjung Usai”, will have idioms of different shapes and styles. However, these various reference works provide a lot of consideration and inspiration, both the idea of creation and the idea of a form of the work to be made. In this phase, the running process of in-and-through is also taken place, for achieving artistic values and the functions to be developed in the work to be created needs conceptual reference, artistic exploration from various comparisons and sources, as well as intense internalization.

The incubation phase (put any object’s matters within some space and time and let them afloat to reach spiritual maturation) is in exploring and elaborating issues. The synthesis of contemplation and thought is established. In this phase, the occurrence of the in-and-through process is running with the discussions with the research team as well as the other artists. Any consideration of artistic values and functions which also involve technical issues continues to be internalized to achieve various syntheses and build conclusions.

1. Idea of Creation

The next essential phase is the illumination phase (reaching the idea formulation or the idea of creation). In this phase until the idea discovery or creation theme and the idea of form, which the process also via an in-and-through, the process is as follows.

The search for idea of creation is based on various studies of the background of the creation and the purpose of creation and is enriched with various sorts of literature reviews and references. The references of perspectives on social change revealed the social system dynamics in the history of the cultural development and socio-political systems in processes that are both evolutionary and revolutionary.

In Indonesia’s history and politics, the process of democracy development needs to be known through constructive political culture. Various problems of Indonesian democracy have gone through a historical process, from the Independence period, the Old Order, the New Order, until the Reformation period, which was full of struggles for the demands of constitutional norms and interests for the sake of upholding the state. In the dynamics full of the ebb and flow of the socio-political wave, the outbreak of reform in 1998, was the new seed for the struggle of the political elite to this day. Moreover, the period shows the forces from New Order and Reform groups that will keep fighting. From the internalization of various
references and current facts, the idea of creation for “Pertarungan Tak Kunjung Usai” was born.

This idea of creation is also heavily enriched by art theories. As stated by Arnold Hauser, from the function of art embedded in life, an artist will respond to the complex social life experiences through the reflection of artworks. That response includes psychological, sociological, and artistic dimensions that directly display the style according to the zeitgeist. This work to be created is indeed not only reflect the group’s fight but also psychologically exhibits a personal style of expressive decorative in nature as the style of painting created so far. Furthermore, indeed the paintings created sociologically will reflect the trend of developing contemporary painting styles. The created painting is referring to Edmund Burke Feldman’s view on social function; it also functions as a message about socio-political conditions, forms of satire, and various comments on social and cultural situations.

From the foundation of the various thoughts, the idea of creation was born to portray the groups’ never-ending struggle in the process of democracy represented by various mass and political organizations in the history of Indonesia. Therefore, this painting design for “Pertarungan Tak Kunjung Usai” depicts figures or groups that represent groups who fight, are hostile, and conflict with each other while showing features of their respective attributes. In addition to figure grouping, several extra figures are also be portrayed, all sorts of allegory and attributes, various supporting symbols that marked the thoughts of the groups in conflict. The problem solving of the design can be seen in the sketching process, final drawing, sketching on canvas, until the final painting work.

2. Form Idea and The Process of Work Creation Phases

The last phase, verification and production, is the phase where the work is implemented until it becomes the painting of “Pertarungan Tak Kunjung Usai”. That process can be constructed through the phases as follow. The process of discovering forms through various testing, analysis, and elaboration. Likewise, to align the aimed characters, some testing with material and technique to be used have been performed. The process is constructed as depicted in the result of Figure 9-14. Such process is also an in and through process, that fused and internalized in the midst of the discovering process, in order to find the strong, artistic, and meaningful experience and forms. Furthermore, from studying and analyzing the creation of idea through comparative studies with previous works, both the appropriated and developed works inspire the creation as well as ideas. The next step is to execute the idea of creation to become basic shapes, through the initial designs on sketches, then choosing the relevant objects to materialize into the final drawing.

Sketches made in a large number will not entirely be shown in the report. However, the sketches shown here are the ones that have led to the final forms. These sketches begin as spontaneous drawings portraying the forms that can represent the creation idea; also, they are supported by the previous works as the inspirations. The sketch is started with portraying each part of desired forms from the sequences of creation idea’s theme (Figure 7-9).

The final drawing is the analysis phase from all the sketches and then materialized in the whole configuration of the creation idea’s theme of “Pertarungan Tak Kunjung Usai”. This final drawing not only shows the details in certain parts but also starts to develop the support objects in every panel or the group of the main object (Figure 10).

Acrylic paint, oil paint, and canvas are the chosen mediums for this painting. Moreover, the process to materialize the forms of subject matter and the final drawing of sketches on the canvas is performed. The forms are then materialized on canvas with two panels. The process occurs in many stages, repeatedly, with the flowing feeling of intentions, and the possibility of improvisation. It is also because the used technique has to be aligned to form the anatomy movement and the drapery of the
fabric. However, this work is not within the realist chain of forms entirely. The forms after the materialized are likely to be broken down at first, like a mosaic, and then they are filled with colors with the impasto technique (Figure 11-12). The forms reveal many kinds of figures which represent social organization groups or the people and the political organization groups. The depiction reveals various gestures from the figures of two groups who stalk, threaten, argue, and fight in conflict with each other. Each of them wears the group’s attributes, various symbols, and devices such as guns and the norm books. The bull is also portrayed as a symbol of wounded democracy, while a Garuda with its wings broken is a symbol of crisis of unity. All of the scenes are supported by the setting depicting stakes with the historical years’ graffiti, pieces of barren lands, and the rubbles of buildings or ships. Or it is also in the imagination of other forms as a frail ship remains.

In the searching of the idea of forms or the visual symbols from this idea of creation, figurative forms based on the formation of realism but composed with archaic characters such as statues or stone reliefs have been achieved. However, the figurative forms are revealed with polychromatic colors so that they can reflect the actual zeitgeist. Likewise, the formation of the figures with an impasto technique, namely the accumulation of repeated paint strokes to produce expressive textures.

The forms materialized on canvas consist of two panels joined together. In the process of materializing the main objects and the support objects, as well as painting the background, we underwent some changes several times with considerations related to the relevance of the idea of creation, discovering artistic forms, and high expression. The result of the implementation in the first stage is a form depiction of the “Pertarungan Tak Kunjung Usai” painting theme as a whole in a sketch on the canvas. Then it is finished by painting the first panel until the final stage is reached. The next process is in the completion of the second panel. The last stage is the alignment of the two panels with the supporting objects and the completion of the background.

This last stage, namely verification and production, is the implementation stage of the work until it becomes a contemporary painting. The stages can be seen in the order of the construction process results as follows: (Figure 7-12).

Figure 7. “Kelompok kiri yang berhadapan akan bertarung” sketch.

Figure 8. “Kelompok kanan yang berhadapan akan bertarung” sketch.
3. Results

This painting is a reflection of the struggle of the elites in socio-political culture, which is expressed in various symbolic forms. The visual symbols reveal various figures representing groups of social, community, and political organizations that are fighting each other in conflict. Each is with its attributes and symbols. Also, the figure of a bull and an eagle symbolize democracy in struggle. All of these scenes are supported by a setting in the form of a milestone with graffiti of historical years, pieces of arid land and the rubble of buildings or ships. This painting is made in the form of 2 panels, each measuring 100 x 150 cm. Or else, if put together the presentation becomes 200 x 150 cm.

In every stage, from the sketch, to the final drawing, to the pouring on the canvas, there are always changes. This is a reciprocal process between research and analysis processes mixed with creative expressions that are always supported by intense artistic appreciation. This is an in and through process of developing the idea.
of creating and harmonizing the forms that also require artistic consideration and deepening. Finishing touch is the final stage for blending the two right and left panels. The process of this stage combines the main objects so that they are in complete motion, in communication, and responding to each other. Likewise, adding supporting objects to strengthen the overall metaphorical and symbolic meaning. The last part, which combines the background of the right panel and the left panel to blend but each, has a character from the main object group.

The following is a performance of the painting “Pertarungan Tak Kunjung Usai” with the idea of creation and the idea of a shape that can be realized (figure 13-14).

**Conclusion**

From the background of the problem and various elaborations of thought in the phenomenon of creating this artwork, the concept and idea of creating a painting is built, namely competition and elite battle that never ends. Various structures and functions of society in the social system, cultural history, and social change reflect the dynamics and socio-political processes of the Indonesian nation. In the history of the dynamics of building norms, laws, and democracy, there has been a rigorous power struggle. The eruption of political reform in 1998 was the seed of the struggle of the political elite to this day. In addition, it also shows the strengths of the New Order group and the Reformation group who continue to fight. The various phenomena of complex socio-political life reflect psychological, sociological, and artistic dimensions that are immediately evocative to be expressed in works of art. Therefore, the created painting also has a social function, as a form of cultural satire and commentary, a message of meaning to build political balance, and social conditions. The idea of creation focuses on historical reflection, concerns about socio-cultural conditions, the decline in human values, and the dignity of the nation in the protracted struggle of the political elite.

In the creation of this work, the concept of a visual form or form of painting has been obtained which can represent the idea of creation strongly and artistically. The concept of form symbolizes figures or groups that represent groups that are fighting, antagonizing, and contradicting each other. In addition, there are also supporting forms such as *keris* weapons, books, bulls, and eagles, as symbols that mark the opposing group’s thoughts. Therefore, these forms also reflect visual symbols that are aesthetic, unique, and relevant to the context of the times. In this contemporary painting, visual symbols are created from figurative forms based on realism, but are composed with archaic characters such as stone statues, and are expressed in polychromatic colors so that they can reflect the actual situation.
The right materials, techniques and media were used, namely acrylic paint, oil paint, and canvas to realize the creation of the painting “Pertarungan tak Kunjung Usai”. In constructing the configuration of various object shapes, the *impasto* technique is used repeatedly, resulting in various expressive textures and achieving an archaic character.

For presentation, this painting uses two panels that are coupled together, each containing the theme of the group of figures who will fight. It unites the relationship and communication of two groups of figures who face each other in contradictory situations. However, this work can also stand alone in its presentation. Therefore, there are technical and artistic considerations in making the background and other elements so that they can blend together when the two panels are combined into one, or stand alone.

**References**


