

Sustainable Artwork with Nature Theme by The Jakarta Modernist Painters: Zaini, Rusli, Nashar, and Oesman Effendi

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses four Jakarta painters: Zaini, Rusli, Nashar, and Oesman Effendi who jointly fought for Indonesian independence through SIM organizations in Madiun and Yogyakarta. After the war was over, they created works of modernism in an abstract style that was far different from the SIM ideology which was based on realism. They then built LPKJ in Jakarta, a non-conventional art school that prioritizes freedom of expression, appreciation of nature, outdoor studies, and interdisciplinary studies. This research uses a descriptive method through observation techniques with several case studies, namely examining their painting styles and finding similar characteristics in their works. It turns out that they have a common thread, namely love and appreciation for nature in order to get to its essence. Their thoughts were then passed on to LPKJ students and inspired a younger generation of Indonesian artists.

INTRODUCTION

Writing about Jakarta's modernist painters, namely Zaini, Rusli, Nashar and Oesman Effendi, is really challenging. Considering that most of their histories have not been recorded, except for Nashar, who was fortunate that his works were made into books in 2009. Meanwhile, the new generation does not have adequate references to the four painters who are the elders of modern Indonesian art. So that the counterfeiting of his works took place intensely, waiting for his prey, namely the collectors who did not know much about the four painters. They are said to be Jakarta painters, because during the War of Independence they fled from Jakarta to Madiun and Yogyakarta to fight against Dutch colonialism. There they gathered in the SIM (Young Indonesian Artists) organization led by the painter Sudjojono. And after the war, the four artists gathered again in Jakarta, refusing to continue with the ideology of realism that Sudjojono had put forward in the SIM collection. Later, they jointly founded LPKJ, which subsequently changed its name to the Jakarta Arts Institute (IKJ), the first art school in Jakarta. At the end of 1943, Japan established a Cultural Center which was named Keimin Bunka Shidoso. The Cultural Center provides painting lessons and holds exhibitions. The main painting teacher is Basoeki Abdullah. Meanwhile, from the Japanese side, there were also painting teachers such as Yoshioka - an impressionist painter, Yamamoto - an expressionist, Saseo Ono - a caricaturist, and Kohno - a poster design expert. The Indonesian painters who received training from Keimin Bunka Shidoso include Kartono Yudhokusumo, Emiria Sunassa, Baharudin, Mochtar Apin, Harijadi, Hendra Gunawan, Kusnadi, Trubus and Zaini.

METHODS

Data collected from documentation of the first major exhibition after independence was held on 15-25 January 1951 at the pendopo (gazebo-like building) Sono Budoyo, Yogyakarta, which was organized by Kusnadi. The exhibition was attended by 40 artists who presented 71 works of painting. The aim of this exhibition is to provide a more representative picture of modern art. Praise is given by Trisno Sumarjo, an art critic, to the abstract natural landscape paintings by painters Rusli, Oesman Effendi and Zaini. Especially for Oesman Effendi's works, Trisno gave an intense review. The painters' process became crucial data for analyzing the result. His paintings belong to the impressionist abstract type. There are no detailed object descriptions on his works, what is provided is an image of vague and dim objects: trees, landscapes, fish, goats, shrimp, and boats. From Zaini's paintings, we can see the sensitivity of his painter's soul in absorbing the beauty of the objects he paints. His painting is a form of living appreciation of what he sees. When viewing shrimp, the viewer will feel the shrimp living on the canvas. The engraved lines give a strong expression. His works testify to the depths as he reads the mysteries of the natural surroundings. He chooses an object, such as a boat, with the motivation to seek the unseen from nature. In desire to fulfill the quick intuitive demands of painting, various nuances of aesthetic discovery are born based on the technical skills it possesses. Color is an important language pronunciation tool besides the lines in strokes that show the process of creation, we can see this in the work of "Fish", 1961 with that tries to reveal the mysteries of nature.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

If Trisno Sumarjo said that Oesman Effendi was an intrinsic painter or essence painter, then actually that epithet is more appropriate to Rusli. From Rusli's works we never get a complete painting, but we will be presented with a series of lines that depict images of mountains, sea, boats, houses and people. We won't be given the finished picture, but the brush strokes suggest an atmosphere it is trying to convey - a movement and life on a canvas shaped by the basic colors: red, green, and black against a flat yellow background. Consider Rusli's way of presenting women in "Two Girls with Offerings", 1963, he only gave 2 curved lines to represent the hand and 2 more lines to depict the fabric from the waist down. There is a pile of black streaks on the girl's head as a representative of the hair. That is the true essence painter, because the lines rendered are very minimal. Likewise, the way he built the temple, the fine graffiti depicting doors and steps, was enough for him. The work emerged from intense watching, and in his long observations, Rusli described the essence of what he witnessed. The use of natural images as frugally as possible has been able to evoke feelings and visions about life. Rusli's painting has reminded us of a type of Japanese poem, haiku, which also speaks in symbolic of that impression. Haiku also tries to keep the form of speech as short as possible but contains the smoothest possible suggestion. Haiku, which has a limited number of words, intends to invite us to contemplate silently about the meaning of life or to be aware of the experience of feelings deeply. The silence on the swamp interrupted for a moment by the frog's plunging into the water, which will soon be engulfed in silence, places us at that moment of silence, when our souls can gaze deeper into the heart and nature.



CONCLUSION

From the description above, it can be seen that there are similarities in the characteristics of the four Jakarta painters. They grew up during the Dutch colonial period, and in the youth they then studied painting from a Japanese cultural institution in Jakarta and during the war for independence, they joined the SIM organization under the leadership of Sudjojono in Yogyakarta. After the war, they reunited in Jakarta and then developed paintings that were different from Sudjojono's realism. Their paintings have ideological similarities, namely oriented towards modernism, especially in the abstract style of American expressionism. We can see that effect in Nashar's painting, which reminds him of the breath of Milton Avery there. Unlike the painters from the Bandung Madzhab, who went to school for their European academic teachers to study cubism, these Jakarta painters studied modernism self-taught. They voluntarily transformed from realist painters to painters who produced works of modernism. Color is an important language pronunciation tool besides the lines in its strokes showing the process of creation.