

Traditional Balinese Umbrella as a Medium in Contemporary Art Exploration

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ABSTRACT

The creation of contemporary art using traditional Balinese umbrellas as a medium is an effort to explore various issues currently affecting the agricultural sector and the need to develop strategies to address them. This creation is clearly an effort to reintroduce existing cultural heritage. The discovery of ideas and concepts in creation began by observing the phenomena occurring in the community, particularly in agricultural areas today, and then through critical reflection, finding the connection between the existence of Payung Uang and Lunas and the creation of contemporary artworks that often stem from current social issues. Based on this, the creative idea was formulated: (1) How does the process of creating and shaping contemporary visual art based on the exploration of the traditional Balinese umbrella medium occur? The artwork is expressed through visual language by uniting objects to achieve the intended concept. The creative method used involves several stages: exploration, design, and formation. The formation process is described through several artistic stages, such as: 1. Initial coloring (*imprimatura*), 2. Coloring, 3. Finishing. The creation of contemporary art resulted in sixteen works divided into three major works titled: 1) Concrete Area, 2) Narrated Landscape.

KEYWORDS

Traditional Balinese,
Umbrella, Exploration,
Contemporary

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INTRODUCTION

Traditional umbrellas are a product of human culture that is an artifact, meaning it has a form as an object. Umbrellas have several cultural elements, namely 1) a knowledge system because it is related to how to make them, 2) a system of living equipment and technology because it is used as a tool in everyday life, 3) a livelihood system because making traditional umbrellas makes activities the economic support of family businesses, 4) artistic elements because currently traditional umbrellas are made as hotel accessories, dance equipment or carnivals (Koentjaraningrat, 1990: 204-205).

Umbrella by Yulinis (2019) Umbrellas are everyday items whose primary function is to protect oneself from rain or the hot sun. This function was later developed into a symbolic function where the word "protect" can be interpreted philosophically (Yulinis, 2019). Traditional umbrellas are made from natural materials and manufacturing techniques that have been carried out by traditional communities for generations. Traditional umbrellas are usually made from bamboo, wood, rattan, paper, silk, and cotton cloth. Some traditional umbrellas, such as the Wagasa Umbrella from Japan, use materials such as bamboo sap, *egonoki* plants, Japanese lacquer (*Urushi*), and Japanese paper (*Washi*) (Chandra, 2021). Around 1880, bamboo hats made by craftsmen from Serdang, Nempang, Rejang, and Tjilongkong became very popular and began to be exported (Winarno, FG 1992:17). According to Yulinis (2019), umbrellas are everyday items whose primary function is to protect

oneself from rain or the hot sun. This function was then developed into a symbolic function where the word "protect" can be interpreted philosophically (Yulinis, 2019).

Specifically, the Payangan sub-district boasts a unique bamboo craft, known as the Cukup and Lunas umbrellas, which were used in ancient times to protect farmers and ranchers from the scorching sun. The Cukup and Lunas umbrellas are works of art made from bamboo and boast beautiful and unique shapes. Their curved shape and practical use are unique features of the Cukup and Lunas umbrellas. Both umbrellas are hand-held and simply worn on top of the head, similar to a hat or a caping.

Umbrella Cukup and Lunas are hats or caping made from bamboo belly with the outer part or the hardest skin removed from the bamboo to form a sheet of bamboo slats which are then assembled using plastic ropes and reinforcements from the series and made of bamboo that is split into several thin parts to make it easier to bend. The difference between Umbrella Cukup and Lunas is in the shape and how to use it, the Lunas umbrella is square with each side slightly curved and how to use it rests on the top of the head, while the Cukup umbrella has the same shape as the Lunas umbrella but has a longer size, how to use it is different, the Cukup umbrella is able to protect the back of the person using it and on the head just hung it. The uniqueness of the Cukup and Lunas umbrellas lies in their curved shape and is very practical to use. When used, these two umbrellas do not require the help of hands to hold them, but are only used on the top of the head, as how to use a hat or caping.



On the other hand, the author sees another opportunity in bringing traditional Balinese umbrellas as part of the creation due to the uniqueness and preservation benefits that can be represented through the work. The uniqueness of using traditional Balinese umbrellas as a medium for work lies in their shape and materials, unlike most other traditional hats. The shape of the umbrella is quite and Lunas square and angled, in the process of making these umbrellas requires expertise in processing materials. Especially now that their existence is increasingly rare and not many people and millennials know about their existence, especially in Payangan (Suparta, 2020). The identity of the existence of the umbrella cukup and lunas which the author only found in the Payangan area is also a strong reason for using it as the main medium in the creation of this thesis.

In today's modern era, everyday human life is intervened and filled with technological advancement programs and entertainment, which can change people's perspective on life with the entry of more modern foreign cultures (Lestamega, VM, 2024).

The use of media that is often associated with crafts is increasingly widespread in the development of contemporary fine arts today, for example by artists such as Nindityo Adipurnomo, who displays installation artworks made from pyrite rattan and pyrite mattresses, uses rattan as a work with a form that looks flexible and reads current phenomena to create an interesting contemporary artwork. Exploration is a crucial part of presenting new possibilities in a work. In-depth and repeated exploration will produce forms that will continually evolve and become better. It is at this point that the forms that feel appropriate to convey the meaning or message desired in the work emerge, either consciously or unconsciously (Darmayanta, 2024).

Based on the above explanation, the idea for a creation entitled "Traditional Balinese Umbrella Medium in Contemporary Art Exploration" was born. The position of the traditional

Balinese umbrella in this thesis is as a medium of work used as material for contemporary art exploration. has his own opinion on how contemporary art exists within a different convention. According to him, contemporary art seems to be in a zone of freedom, separate from the ordinary and functional character of everyday life, as well as from its rules and conventions.

Medium has a different character from the media. Each unit of medium will dissolve in the work, such as paint that will melt with pencil strokes, and so on. While the media still represents specific messages, such as the use of stone media or ready-made objects attached to the work, the media still attaches the message (Adnyana, 2018:31). The visuals displayed in the traditional Balinese umbrella medium are used to re-question the function of the Cukup and Lunas umbrellas and their relationship to the agrarian phenomena that the author observes in the surrounding environment. For example, touching on the surrounding problems that the author experiences such as land conversion conditions, displacement of community livelihoods, and events related to the function of the Cukup and Lunas umbrellas along with the transformation of the times that ultimately displaced the function of the traditional umbrella in society. So the purpose of the creation of this work is able to raise the public's enthusiasm for the existence of the Traditional Balinese Umbrella.

The visual element is by taking regional map objects with the help of the Google Maps application and using a bird's eye perspective made with a realistic impressionist painting technique in an emphasis on iconic objects of each district for its agricultural potential. In addition, in other works utilizing several image references that are felt to be able to convey ideas that are in accordance with the author's concerns related to agricultural problems. The techniques used are diverse to adjust to the needs in creating works such as some works using cutting stickers, burning, spray paint, texture. While the visual characteristics that want to be referred to are approaching the form of image references or realistic. The choice of such technical and visual approaches is a form of interpretation of the conditions of the umbrella and Lunas which initially had a central function in the lives of farmers then its function faded over time.

Freedom is not merely free to create anything, the meaning of freedom related to Lenin's thoughts is actually releasing the bonds that are behind the scenes such as substantial and self-image that are often pursued (Suryajaya, 2016:576). The discovery of the creative method in the title of the traditional Balinese umbrella medium in the exploration of contemporary art is undeniable, while the process is described in several stages, including: Exploration, Design, and Embodiment. From the phenomenon and the results of these observations, an idea emerged from the author to create a work entitled "Traditional Balinese Umbrella Medium in Contemporary Art Exploration" with a focus on the creative process and form of contemporary art based on the exploration of the traditional Balinese umbrella medium. A deeper exploration of ideas related to the process of experimentation and exploration of the traditional Balinese umbrella medium, namely specifically choosing Payung Cukup and Lunas, became the basis for discovering new meanings that could be conveyed as a basic idea in the creation of the work.

The scope related to the creation scheme in focus includes the creation of contemporary art works, especially using the medium of umbrellas and Lunas as a working medium that can convey messages of existence regarding the existence of umbrellas and also summarizes changes regarding agrarian conditions as well as several phenomena. The concept of taking a bird's eye perspective and taking several objects that specialize in the characteristics of several traditions related to agriculture in Bali is intended to explain that the transformation that occurs in the function of umbrellas also has an impact on several traditions and the richness of traditions in Bali. The medium of umbrellas is considered appropriate to discuss these issues because of its characteristics and functions which then have several similarities with the fate of several traditions that will be visualized in the work.

METHOD

Method in artistic creation is a necessity because it serves as a bridge that must be traversed to produce a process of becoming. Quoted from the book *Epistemology of Art Creation* (Sunarto, 2013). Exploration is the key word to explain and create a novelty in the creative process and give birth to thoughts or convey an expression of the heart's content in an artwork. In the process of creating contemporary art, it can be done intuitively and can be achieved with scientific methods that

are carried out carefully, analytically, and systematically. In general, the process of creating a work is inspired by the stages that refer to the theory of art creation by SP Gustami in *Butir-butir mutiara aestik timur: ide dasar kreasi seni kriya Indonesia* (2007; 229-331). Through Gustami's opinion, the author then developed stages that are in accordance with the process and stages of his own work so that in practice many things ultimately make the method eclectic, namely taking inspiration from the techniques and creative processes of other artists. The ancient Greek term, *Aistheton*, means the ability to see through the senses. This aesthetic appeal arises from the aspects of form (formal), content (symbol), and emotional expression (expression). Thus producing an analytical model of formalism, symbolism, and expressionism (Walker, 1989: xxiii).

The findings from these stages then become a characteristic in the creation as the stages quoted above but still adapt to the author's personal process. The process is in the form of exploration which is described in stages (1) personal experience, namely exploring concerns and empirical experience as an author, (2) exploring sources of ideas and references, in the form of visual designs that will be displayed and (3) identifying current problems in the scope of current agricultural conditions which are translated into visuals according to the author's characteristics, the next stage is the design which is divided into (1) Prototype (2) discovery of materials and techniques, and the third is the formation which is described in several artistic stages such as: 1. *Imprimatura* (initial coloring), 2. *Coloring* (coloring), 3. *Finishing* (completion)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Exploration

a. Personal experience

Exploration to produce visual ideas full of artistic expression and the spirit of creation has been applied in the realization of the work (Kuntoro, 2024). The creation of art is also influenced by the author's personal experience, this refers to the empirical and aesthetic experiences faced while living life. This personal experience is related to moments facing various processes and problems in life related to anxiety in the surrounding environment. The creation of this painting raises various problems faced by the agricultural sector through the medium of sufficient and keeled umbrellas related to history to current problems, because there is a correlation between umbrellas and agriculture and its problems where the abandonment of sufficient and keeled umbrellas becomes a benchmark for the emergence of various problems faced by agriculture.

b. Digging for Sources of Ideas and References

The exploration involved sources of reference for visual forms, themes, backgrounds, and various elements related to the overall theme of the creation. The initial step in exploring sources of ideas was to search for works related to contemporary agricultural issues. This initial step involved grouping several artworks that could be observed directly and virtually.

c. Identifying Current Problems

Frequently encountered contemporary problems are often used as major themes in contemporary art, closely related to data discovery and the formation of new meanings through the creation of contemporary art works addressing current issues. The visual data collected, in the form of paintings, photographs, and videos, and aspects of the phenomena raised are identified based on their thematic relevance and taking into account the umbrella medium that serves as the primary medium for creation.

2. Design

a. Prototype

Prototyping is the initial stage in realizing a work based on a pre-made design, including sketches and digital designs. Most sketches are created using digital media, such as a large iPad or tablet, for their functionality and practicality. The ease of designing composition and proportions directly allows the author to see more clearly what the final product will look like due to the tablet's sophistication.

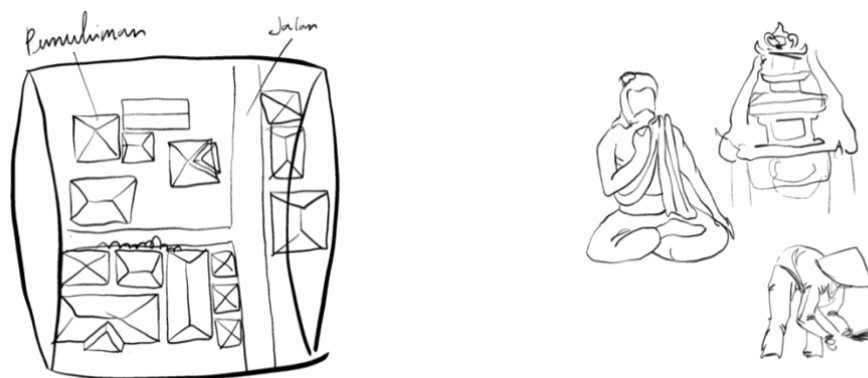


Figure 3. Sketch of work on tablet media Figure 4. Digital design on tablet media.

b. Discovery of Materials and Techniques

This stage is carried out with the aim of exploring materials or media that can be used in creating paintings on the medium of sufficient and keeled umbrellas. The use of media is also greatly influenced by experience in previous works and is related to references used in the reference search stage. Various experiments in visualizing character forms and technical approaches have been carried out, then continued with the stage of experimenting with materials that will be realized in the form of painting. Then continued with various experiments with drawing pen techniques, dry brush, spray, burning, splashing, watercolor, stencil, to seek artistic effects while finding a unique characteristic in using these materials.

3. Formation

The formation process is the final stage of a series of three stages of creation after the exploration and design stages. The paintings contained in the design plan use umbrella media with acrylic paint, gesso, pencils, drawing pens, brushes, and various media that can facilitate the creation process. In the formation stage, it is divided into three artistic stages, namely 1) Imprimatura 2) Coloring 3) Finishing. From the stages of the creation process that have been passed and created various experiments that include materials and techniques, the final result obtained is a written report in the form of a thesis of creation and the results of the artwork as mentioned in the previous description. The explanation of the art creation method as described above is a trial and error process, there are several things that certainly cannot be realized due to various factors such as experience, work time, the new medium used as a medium for creating paintings, costs. The stages of the artistic approach as described above are also not applied to all works but are divided into several applications of experimental techniques, the application can be seen from the process that has been conveyed.

4. Form of Work

The final result of a work, created through a predetermined method, yields a solution to the various issues raised and the ideas pursued. The form of the work is inseparable from the aesthetic aspects that support it. The aesthetics explained are in accordance with Djelantik's view regarding the aesthetic elements that form a work of art, including form, weight and appearance (Djelantik. 1999:17). Form is examined through the compositions or forms themselves in the form of elements of fine art, including: lines, colors, shapes, space and textures as well as the principles of their creation, such as: composition, proportion, unity, balance, rhythm, center of attention, contrast, and color. Color is something that needs to be considered in the application of interactive design media with emotional or psychological themes (Zahra, N., & Mansoor, AZ (2024). Weight is measured through the aspect of atmosphere which in the work is reflected through color and through the meaning of each work, this is also related to the phenomena raised in each work. In addition, in the aspect of appearance, it is more about the basic part of the art object in the form of media presentation. These aspects are not explained in detail one by one but are explained according to their portion that is manifested in the work.



Figure 5. Work 1 Title: “Concrete Area” Size 123 cm x 125 cm, Acrylic Paint Material on Lunas Umbrella, Year 2024

The displacement of crowded residential landscape objects taken from the area surrounding the author's residential environment. By using four panels arranged parallel, two horizontal parts and two vertical parts, with close distances to each other. The use of a bird's eye perspective with the help of the Google maps application to clarify the depiction of the situation of the density of rural spatial planning that is increasingly full of buildings, the object of rice fields squeezed by the surrounding housing is a depiction of the actual situation presented. The coordinate point icon found on Google maps is also presented in the work as a clue that illustrates the author's closeness to the existing problem. Supporting objects such as road signs are also presented to strengthen the subject matter which aims to clarify the visuals of Google maps.

The social problems regarding agriculture in the painting above are reflected through the selection of crowded housing objects due to the conversion of agricultural land functions that are now rampant in Bali. The conversion of agricultural land functions often becomes a threat to all of us, how recently the scarcity of staple food rice has often hit Indonesia. While Indonesia is the largest agricultural country in Southeast Asia but is hit by a crisis, this is an anomaly that occurs around us. However, referring to the author's initial goal of raising the existence of Payung Cukup and Lunas, the work that raises the loss of agricultural land also departs from the author's anxiety about the erosion of agriculture not only from the land conversion sector but also the decreasing number of successors as farmers causing people to be unaware of agricultural facilities and infrastructure including the Payung Cukup and Lunas. In appearance, the work is made on 4 hats that are made into one work with a size of 123 cm x 125 cm.



Figure 6. Work 2 Title “Narrated landscape” Size unknown, Acrylic material on Lunas umbrella Year 2024

This work uses nine panels arranged according to predetermined positions based on the concept to be displayed in the work. Presenting eight is a depiction of the number of districts in Bali, the pieces of objects in the work are a representation of the agricultural characteristics of each district,

each panel of the work has a different background color according to the author's observations of the area. The arrangement of the work display follows the geographical location of each district, starting from the east, namely Jembrana district with a green background with the Makepung object which is a buffalo racing tradition that is often carried out after the harvest is over, Buleleng district with a pink background inspired by the basic material of Buleleng temple carvings or temples which are often called paras sangsit, by presenting the Bukakak object, bukakak is a tradition carried out to express gratitude to the Goddess of Fertility for the fertility of the land and abundant harvests.

Karangasem Regency with a light blue background depicts the sacred dance object Sanghyang dedari which is performed as a ritual to ask for safety and prosperity for the community, especially farmers, to avoid natural disasters, disease outbreaks, and pests. This dance is usually performed at village intersections during the full moon of sasih kedasa, namely before the rice harvest. Tabanan Regency with a turquoise background displays a piece of a typical Balinese rice barn building object, namely Jineng, besides being a symbol of the city of Tabanan, rice barns are also spread almost evenly in every resident's house, the Jineng symbol is a prosperity that is believed by the Balinese people to have their own rituals and special days for ceremonies. Jembrana Regency is visualized with the Makepung symbol which is a tradition carried out by farmers after the harvest is over, makepung has also become an identity that is widely known by the public regarding Jembrana Regency. Klungkung Regency, with an ochre-colored background featuring a Kamasan puppet character planting seaweed, was chosen to showcase the distinctive characteristics of the existing agricultural product, namely seaweed, which is abundantly produced in the Nusa Penida region. The choice of puppet character is an attempt by the author to reinforce the claim that Klungkung is unique.

Gianyar Regency with a purple background displays the object of a farmer who is planting rice and using a Lunas umbrella and the object of a Rsi Markandya who is sitting cross-legged, this is considering the findings in the Markandya Purana text, Rsi Markandya passed down the knowledge of farming at Pura Murwa Bumi Payangan which is believed by the community until now, therefore the author describes the temple which is the Murwa Bumi temple. Bangli Regency visualizes the object of the statue of the goddess Danu which is an icon for Bangli Regency and uses yellow as the background in the painting. Badung Regency with a terracotta background inspired by the typical Bebadungan building and visualizes the object of a cement mixer machine which is often used in construction projects. Denpasar City with a red background chosen based on the author's personal experience in his memories with the city of Denpasar and visualizes a satirical object with the writing land for sale plots inspired by the many lands in the city of Denpasar that have been sold and rented.

The arrangement of this work display adapts to the layout of the regencies and cities in Bali without changing the position in the slightest so that it looks abstract but has harmony in its composition. Basically, Bali is an island with various uniqueness in the agricultural sector, each regency has its own characteristics in agricultural culture, from how to perform dances to ask for abundant agricultural yields, superior rice, unique agricultural equipment, post-harvest offering ceremonies, to the problem of loss of agricultural land in developing areas in Bali. Various phenomena can be read in a work, this is also in line with the spirit of contemporary art, where art is an awareness for society. This reading can make the current generation or young people aware of what and how agriculture in Bali.

The form of the work above is influenced by the arrangement of pieces of a single object that becomes the subject matter and by using a plain background of various colors so that it shows a contrasting impression and an approach to pop art culture paintings. The use of Payung Cukup and Lunas as the medium of the work is in line with what Alia stated that in the realm of fine art, the use of finished objects (found objects) as work materials is always referred to the innovation made by Marcel Duchamp in the early 20th century (A. Swastika, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that the work "Medium Traditional Balinese Umbrella" in Contemporary Art Exploration is a work that stems from the discovery of art objects and contains elements of noble culture. The Umbrella Cukup and Lunas are agricultural heritage objects that are very interesting to use as a medium in creating paintings. Furthermore, the

existence of the Umbrella Cukup and Lunas must be preserved and maintained through interesting introductions.

The explicit definition and purpose of exploration in this thesis is the process of searching for and exploring new ideas, concepts, techniques, or meanings in the creation of a work. Therefore, exploration is at the heart of the creative process in contemporary art. By continually exploring, artists can produce works that are engaging, inspiring, and relevant to their times.

So this exploration-based creation is a strategy in conveying a message that refers to social problems and is in line with Law Number 5 of 2017 concerning the advancement of culture, where creation with the medium of traditional Balinese umbrellas is able to advance umbrellas and arts in Bali which are now almost threatened with extinction and artistically realize the visuals referred to.

Evidence of the exploration-based creative process with the medium of traditional Balinese umbrellas that was carried out began with the discovery of ideas and concepts by looking at the phenomena as well as challenges faced by human civilization today in the modern era with various problems, especially the agricultural sector that is attached to the existence of the Cukup and Lunas umbrellas, such as the conversion of agricultural land into housing, the next generation as farmers, arts related to agrarian religious myths, then through the discovery of various existing problems and the discovery of Cukup and Lunas umbrella artifacts, a correlation was found that this traditional Balinese umbrella can represent various existing agrarian social problems as well as the discovery of visual objects that are able to express ideas and concepts to be conveyed in the final work.

The contemporary tendency that does not limit an idea, in Jullian Stallabras' opinion, is beneficial in the exploration process so that in compiling a concept it not only provides the possibility of using unconventional media but also allows for the presentation of various objects that are related and in accordance with the narrative to be conveyed.

In general, the visualization process that is passed is a series of trial and error processes that include existence by digging into the empirical experience within the author through personal experiences and environmental problems and then continued with the exploration process with the author's personal experiences that have been passed until now. As well as through the design process with the stages of digging up sources of ideas and references, identifying current problems, and making prototypes such as sketches and digital manipulation through tablet technology, then being able to estimate the composition, working methods, and determining the materials and techniques to be used. Through the formation process by going through three artistic stages namely: 1. Imprimatura (initial coloring), 2. Coloring (coloring), 3. Finishing (completion).

Through various stages of the creative process, it finally produced contemporary paintings with different but interrelated themes discussing the current agricultural environmental problems, including fifteen works divided into 3 large works, namely works entitled: "Concrete Area" which consists of four panels of works, "Narrated Landscape" which consists of nine panels of paintings, and "Scarecrow" which consists of two paintings.

The traditional Balinese umbrella medium in contemporary art exploration contains the aesthetics of the work through a combination of techniques associated with modern and postmodern. Various technical discoveries that have been explained previously are also implemented to create a desired visual language that is not owned by other artists to obtain its own characteristics. The aesthetic aspects discussed can be examined through the ideoplastic aspect that is born from the author's basic idea in visualizing the form and technical aspects, namely physioplastic through elements of fine art such as line, color, shape, space, and texture. As well as the principles of creation such as composition, proportion, unity, balance, rhythm, center of attention, and contrast. As in the first work to discuss problems that plague agriculture such as land conversion, the creator visualizes crowded housing that is crowded with each other by taking visuals from the internet with the help of Google satellite by showing objects of rice fields squeezed by the surrounding houses, to give the meaning of the agricultural conditions that are increasingly squeezed by modernity and the progress of human civilization. The second work has the idea of depicting the uniqueness of agriculture in each district in Bali, each uniqueness is symbolized by art or traditions related to agriculture in each region so that the work has an effort to display and discuss agriculture but not merely depict directly what is to be conveyed, but several areas that have problems with agriculture are currently visualized

satirically, this is intentional because the creator wants to convey a message that the island which is famous for its natural beauty and traditions has various complex problems in it

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