

SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF ARTISTIC EXPRESSION AND SOCIAL CRITICISM BY MURAL MASJO

Ratna Tri Maharani^{1*}, Pujiyanto², Robby Hidajat³
Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia^{1,2,3}
Email: ratnatrimaharan@gmail.com^{1*}, pujiyanto.fs@um.ac.id²,
robby.hidajat.fs@um.ac.id³

ABSTRACT

Murals are often a medium for conveying people's aspirations. However, most people think that murals are just graffiti on the wall with no meaning. In this case, mural artists play a role in voicing aspirations, criticism, ideas and things that are bothering society. Because murals do not only focus on the beauty of the mural artwork, but also have meaning and messages. Masjo, as a mural artist, sees phenomena around him that he uses as topics for murals. As happened some time ago, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a real impact on society. Masjo sees this phenomenon as sad. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method, using iconography and iconology semiotics to obtain markers of meaning contained in mural images. So that this research can explain or describe Masjo's mural work in detail. The results of this research are the meaning of artistic expression and messages of social criticism in Masjo's mural entitled 'Just stay at home'. The meaning of artistic expression in mural works tells how to survive in the Covid-19 pandemic situation. The social criticism in the mural discusses the role of the government which only advises people to stay at home, while the government does not provide guarantees for people's lives.

KEYWORDS Artistic expression, artistic, social criticism



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INTRODUCTION

Murals are often a medium for conveying people's aspirations, starting from the anxiety that exists in the thinking of mural artists. However, not all people think so. More people think that murals are just graffiti on the wall without meaning. Mural art whose existence in public space provides an aspect of beauty with the conception of creation according to needs rather than desires (Gazali, 2017). As the times progressed, murals developed as a medium in conveying people's aspirations from the perspective of mural artists. Although it is undeniable that mural works can only be the self-satisfaction of mural artists (Masnah, 2020).

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The role of artists according to (Ramadani et al., 2018) say Artists play a role in trying to convey people's aspirations to create interactions in the form of criticism, input, ideas, sarcasm, responses, or assessments of something that is considered deviant in people's lives with visual language. This statement is in line with Nababan who said that murals are not only works of art that function to fulfill aesthetic desires, but also a medium for conveying socio-cultural criticism, political patronage, ideology, and can be a promotional medium (Nababan, 2019). The message of criticism through murals is conveyed in the form of visuals and writings that are full of signs, codes, and meanings with themes related to social, economic, cultural, and political (Dewi & Zaini, 2016).

Mural comes from the word 'murus' which means wall, the word comes from Latin. Murals are one of the parts of painting whose medium is on walls or walls. This media is a special requirement for a work to be included in the mural category (Mikke, 2002). However, not only walls, but also other large and flat media such as iron boards, ceilings, and fabrics. Sahrial said that murals are illustrations that can help depict the atmosphere in conveying messages and information (Sahrial & Jati, 2022).

Murals have a difference with ukisan. The difference lies in the special requirements that must be met by the murals, namely in relation to the architecture/building, both in terms of design (aesthetics), as well as age as well as care and comfort in the room. Murals are different from graffiti, the difference is that graffiti uses written objects or letters and is usually done with spray paint. While murals emphasize more on the ability to draw objects (Harissman & Suryanti, 2019). There are five types of mural art, namely, political murals, aesthetic murals, socio-cultural murals, economic murals, and educational murals (Aryanti et al., 2020).

About murals according to (Adi, 2021) Murals are popular among young people, because the works produced are tangible and can be enjoyed by the community. Lately, mural art has developed, because murals can add aesthetic and exotic value in the middle of the hustle and bustle of the city which is increasingly chaotic, dirty, and filled with air pollution. Therefore, mural works must be able to be made precisely. In making art, especially mural artworks, with creativity and exploration can create something interesting. Sometimes the idea of the mural is not clearly visible, but after observing it in depth and also thinking with courage to eat it, the novelty is found (Marianto, 2017:14).

There are driving factors in the creation of mural works, these factors can come from the internal and external aspects of the artist. The factors for the creation of mural works are discussed in the book owned by (Ulyermini, 2021), he stated that this factor comes from internally in the form of abilities possessed by individual artists, and there are capitals owned by artists in the form of cultural and social capital. In addition, there is an external encouragement in the form of issues that arise in the community.

According to (Nelson, 2016) In the creation of art, it is important for artists to pay attention to intertwined things; composition, which is meant to be an art that pays attention to proportion, balance, rhythm, and unity; Proportion, is the comparison between each part and each part with the whole in a composition; Balance, in art is the commonality of opposing elements, to create a unity; Rhythm, in art, means the effect of motion that arises from the harmony of the elements of fine art in the composition.

Contemporary mural techniques according to Barry (Budayana & Wijaya, 2020) Painted with a variety of techniques that use water and oil-based paints, and some even use digital computer techniques, a photo can be processed and then printed on large sticker paper, before finally pasted on the wall. Elements that need to be considered in the creation of painting according to Nelson (Nelson, 2016) in the form of lines, planes, shapes, and spaces.

In each mural work, there is a meaning that the mural artist wants to convey. The same is true of Masjo, who is one of the mural artists from the city of Sidoarjo who draws on the walls of buildings. Raharjojo or better known as Masjo is one of the young men who is active in developing mural and graffiti schemes in the city of shrimp, namely Sidoarjo. He has been involved in the world of fighting since 2011 until now. Not only that, Masjo also won several mural competitions organized by several parties.

Masjo's mural works begin with his anxiety seeing the problems around him. Then he poured the anxiety on the wall, so that his mural work not only displayed beauty, but also displayed the meaning he wanted to convey. The message in the mural is conveyed in visual form according to (Oji, 2021) which is full of symbols, signs, codes and meanings. Verbal images in murals are language in the form of writing, while visual images are the shapes and colors presented in the murals.

Functionally, murals are created by artists based on what the artist thinks, then process them with the creative process he has so as to create aesthetic mural artworks. According to (Ramadani et al., 2018) Regarding the function of murals as a message delivery by looking at the conditions around them that contain socio-cultural, aesthetic, economic, and political conditions.

This research aims to deepen the meaning of Masjo's mural work with the theme 'at home only'. The meaning is reviewed with iconological and iconographic theories. According to Budiman (in Utami, 2021) Regarding the power of iconographic and iconological analysis in the work, it is centered on the identification of attributes and accurate persynthesis in the work being observed, and sensitivity is needed to various points of view of reality related to the work of art. By using this theory, you will get a detailed description of the conclusion and meaning of the work. These meanings have more value because they can communicate a work.

This research was conducted with the aim of finding out the artistic expression and social criticism in Masjo's mural works. As in the discussion of the diastasis that mural works do not only contain aesthetic or beauty elements, but also contain social messages and criticisms as discussed in this study. In addition, with this research, we can find out what the artist feels and thinks, namely Masjo. What triggered Masjo in creating his mural works?

In the process of creating Masjo's mural work, he previously sketched the initial drawing. With the initial sketch and packaged concept, it will make it easier for Masjo in the process of working on the mural on the wall. After the creation of the concept, Masjo checked the condition of the field and the surface of the wall that will be drawn by the mural, the function is for Masjo to understand the field conditions and what steps he will take during the work.

Each mural created by Masjo has its own distinctive way and style. The coloring that is always dominant with red, black, orange, and yellow colors is the hallmark of Masjo's murals. Not only that, Masjo's mural works also always display

symbols such as plants, flowers, the sun, and house tiles. Of course, these symbols have meanings that they want to convey.

In this study, there are several previous researches that are of concern. "Iconography and Iconology Study on Youngsurakarta Mural Works Bujang Ganong Mask Series" in the study uses iconography and iconology studies in interpreting mural works, this is the same as what researchers do in interpreting Masjo's work. The difference in the research does not interpret the social criticism that exists in the mural work. "Mural Works as a Medium for Criticizing the Development of the Times" in the study explores social criticism in mural works, moral and social values in people's lives. This research discusses the meaning of Masjo's artistic expression in expressing his thoughts when creating murals. And what social criticism is contained in Masjo's mural work, which he wants to convey. So that the results of this study can explain the message and meaning of Masjo's mural work.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research method. With the aim of this study, it is possible to explain or describe Masjo's mural works in detail. Because qualitative methods are general, flexible, and dynamic research according to the conditions under which the research takes place. Qualitative research or descriptive research according to Nassaji (in Wijaya, 2019) aims to describe the phenomenon with various characters around it. The object of this research is a mural work with the theme 'at home only' made by Masjo.

The research process is related to the sociology of art. On the sociology of art according to Hauser (in Mappalahere, 2018) Sociology of art is the science of the framework of human analysis related to artistic activities. Sociology of art examines people who are involved in art activities in cultural phenomena that then affect art activities. In order to conduct research using the sociology of art in order to analyze art practices and activities. With his analysis, we can understand the relationship between the process of artistic creativity, including art products and the supporting society. So that the results of this study can find out what factors affect the mindset of artists to create mural works.

The research uses an overview of iconology and iconography. According to Budiman, the power of iconographic and iconographic analysis in works lies in the accurate identification of attributes and personifications in the works being observed, as well as sensitivity to various points of view of reality related to the works of art. From this theory, you will get the results of the conclusion and deep meaning of the work.

The data was obtained in 3 ways, namely an online interview with Masjo, through an Instagram *video call*. Photos of mural works 'at home only' were obtained through Masjo's personal Instagram social media. Scientific data is obtained from various sources of books and scientific literature. Then data from interview results, documentation photos, and other scientific data as supporting data are processed in detailed analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Masjo's mural work with the theme of 'at home only' is rich in the meaning of expression, social message, and criticism that he wants to convey to the wider community. Therefore, in this discussion, we will reveal in detail what are the meanings of expressions, social messages, and criticisms that Masjo wants to convey in his work. Murals allow a person to express their thoughts to all circles of society or government, in visual form in the social environment (Iswandi, 2021).

Masjo is one of the mural artists from the city of Sidoarjo. Masjo's background is an artist who graduated from Visual Communication Design, State University of Malang so that he understands more about drawing and coloring techniques. The work made by Masjo was not originally made, before executing on the wall, Masjo went through the process of conceptualizing the work and sketching the initial sketch of the work. With the aim of not only displaying beauty in his mural works, but also being able to convey messages in an easily understood manner by the audience.

The Meaning of Masjo's Artistic Expression

Terror of artistic expression according to Khatchadourian (in Soedarwanto et al., 2018) Declaring art is an expression/expression of the artist/maker's experience. These expressions can be consciously (intellectually, emotionally or imaginatively) or unconsciously, they can be influenced by internal (natural, coming from self-awareness) or external (other people, environment) factors.

The process of interpretation using theory iconography and iconology. Panofsky (in Budiman, 2017) said iconography is descriptive and classificatory, while iconography is identification. The process goes through three stages, namely pre-iconography in the form of visual explanations that appear in the mural works. Then the iconography process, the arrangement of the story contained in the mural work in a secondary manner. Then the last stage of the iconological process which is the stage of interpreting intrinsically, the general tendency and essence of the human mind expressed by special themes and concepts.



Figure 1. Masjo's mural work 'at home only' (source: Masjo's personal documentation, 2021)

Table 1. Iconographic analysis and iconology of works (source: researcher)

	Pre-iconography	Iconography	Iconology
1.	The visual of the house tiles is red.	House tiles are a roof as a protector of the house. With tiles, the house is protected from the heat of the sun and rain.	This mural tells the story of a giant figure who embraces the seeds as a form of protecting the seeds, so that the seeds continue to grow as expected. Tiles as a shelter or home for giant figures and the seeds they guard.
2.	The visual of people sitting hugging a circle like a seed.		
3.	Visual vegetation around people's objects.	A seed or seedling is something or a beginning that will grow.	
4.	A field of white circles above people's heads.		
5.	The sun visual with curved stripes is red and black.		

Masjo's mural 'at home only' is located on the back wall of the house in the Pagerwojo Sidoarjo area, made on August 1, 2021. With the size of the image on the wall, it is 2.5 meters high and 1.5 meters wide. The mural certainly has the meaning that Masjo wants to convey.

Visually, the objects of the mural have several images that the researcher will explain. The roof tiles of the house or house are interpreted as sheltered tiles or also as umbrellas. A house is not only a place to live, for living beings a house is also a place of refuge. With a house, living things can take refuge from bad things. Even during a pandemic like now, home is the safest place to avoid the spread of the covid-19 virus.

The figure of a giant creature that embraces seeds or seeds, in the mural work there are 2 seeds with different characteristics. Some of the seeds have wings and flowers, Masjo described as a beetle and a plant. These seeds must be maintained so that they can continue to grow and live as they should. It must be saved from the harshness of the world, until it is able to survive on its own.

The giant with an arrow stuck in his body means that the arrow is a difficult, bad, and difficult thing to face the harshness of the world. As a form of pain that exists in him to protect those at home. Although the giant felt difficult, Masjo did not describe the face of the giant sad. Because the sadness and distress do not need to go down to the house, it does not need to be known by those who take care of it.

Broadly speaking, this mural tells a giant figure that can be interpreted as a father, mother, and also another figure as a protector in the family who protects the seeds at home. The seed is interpreted as its children, and the house as a place to take refuge. The figure guards and strives to save and support the seeds in any way. These methods can be done in a way that is not halal. Because the urgency makes them think that no matter how they do, they must continue to support the people at home. The harshness of life outside the home leaves scars on breadwinners. He didn't want to feel the wound deeply and also didn't want to show it to the one at home. He prefers to show a smile on the seeds. The giant figure as a breadwinner and the seeds as hope and successor.

What Masjo thought in creating this work was the phenomenon that occurred around him some time ago. The emergence of the covid-19 virus around the world has changed all aspects, even in Indonesia it has been affected. Various efforts have been made to break the cycle of virus transmission. But this cannot change the

number of infections to be drastically reduced. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has brought deep sadness to several communities.

This was felt by Masjo, he saw that many people around him were infected with the covid-19 virus and also many died from this virus. The government's efforts to always urge the public to always stay at home, use masks, take care of themselves, and always clean their hands with soap and hand sanitizer have also been carried out by the community. In reality, life is still going on, humans cannot continue at home. The breadwinners of the family must still leave the house to live in their families. With the worst risk of contracting the covid-19 virus, it must be swallowed for the sake of household income. This is what underlies Masjo in creating murals 'at home only' with the phenomenon of loss around him.

Social Criticism by Masjo

Murals are part of public art that requires two-way communication. Mural artists communicate visually to something that the artist wants to convey. The public as art connoisseurs is able to interact directly with mural artists and their works. So murals cannot stand alone without meaning and message. Like other mural artists, Masjo's mural works also have the right amount of social criticism that he wants to convey. He packaged the message in a very beautiful visual form, in the form of a mural 'at home only'. The message of social criticism is based on his anxiety about what is happening around him.

As explained in the meaning above, this pandemic condition is a difficult thing for various communities. According to Masjo, conditions like this are very severe, many people are sick, die, and lose their loved ones. No one ever expected this pandemic condition. The government, which always encourages the use of masks, washing hands using soap and hand sanitizer, and maintaining distance, cannot reduce the transmission rate quickly. The appeal to stay at home, and not travel in public places has also been carried out starting from level 4 to decreasing to level 1. In fact, the number of covid transmissions still exists, and people cannot continue to be forced to stay at home all the time. Because he still has to find rupiah coffers to support his family.

Masjo's mural work 'at home only' has a message of social criticism to the government. The government always gives an appeal to stay at home to all parts of society. However, it cannot really be done, because there are still many earners who have to work outside the home. The government only gives an appeal without providing life guarantees to the community. This restriction of activities outside the home seems to make it difficult for people to find a job. These breadwinners are willing to accept unwanted risks for the sake of the sustainability of family life at home. If the government wants all people to comply with its policies, then the government should be able to guarantee the lives of all people. In this condition, the community does not receive assistance, but struggles on its own to support their families.

The message of the mural certainly touches people's thoughts. The message makes them realize that as a breadwinner, no matter what the condition, they must continue to look for rupiah coffers, do not need to rely on or rely on government assistance. The weight is certain, but if you don't try it yourself, where else do you hope from? This makes Masjo's mural work full of messages and meanings. Mural art must have a function and social, masjo mural works as a medium that makes people aware.

CONCLUSION

In this study, it was found that murals are a medium for conveying the aspirations of the community represented by artists. What Masjo thought in creating this work was the phenomenon that occurred around him some time ago. The emergence of the covid-19 virus around the world has changed all aspects, even in Indonesia it has been affected. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has brought deep sadness to several communities.

Masjo's mural works have the meaning of artistic expression that can be discussed. This mural work tells the story of a giant figure which can be interpreted as a protective figure in the family who protects the seeds at home. The seed is interpreted as its children, and the house as a place to take refuge. The figure guards and strives to save and support the seeds in any way. The message of social criticism on Masjo's mural work 'at home only' is directed at the government. The government always gives an appeal to stay at home to all parts of society. However, it cannot really be done, because there are still many earners who have to work outside the home. The government only gives an appeal without providing life guarantees to the community. So the mural work became a medium to welcome the kitrik based on the surrounding phenomenon.

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