

BETWEEN ART AND FAITH: EXPLORING SPIRITUAL EXPRESSIONS IN CONTEMPORARY MUSLIM ART

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Abstract: *This research explores the spiritual expressions of Muslim artists in contemporary paintings. In this era, Muslim artists often pursue art for art's sake, influenced by their background and spirituality. Though these are not always visible, they embed Islamic values into their work. The study uses a qualitative approach, analyzing data through Sayyed Hossein Nasr's spirituality theory and Kuntowijoyo. Findings show that Muslim artists, especially in Yogyakarta, expand their expertise to create appreciated works. About 28.57% focus on religious themes, 28.57% depict the universe, humanity, and religion, and 28.57% focus on the universe and humanity. Artists create with spiritual awareness, guided by their abilities. Those with higher education tend to be more deliberate in their choices. In Yogyakarta, 85.71% is for livelihood, 100% for artistic expression, and 28.57% for socio-political purposes. Driven by various motivations, Muslim artists contribute to society. The government, society, and art figures can collaborate toward a just, prosperous society.*

Keywords: *Spiritual Expression; Muslim Artists; Art Works; Contemporary Era*

Introduction

In this contemporary era, Muslim artists express their imagination through artworks not only for religious purposes but also for art's sake. Logically, the artistic expressions of Muslim artists are also influenced by their background as Muslims. This group falls into the category that views art as being connected to religion. Mircea Eliade explains that religiously related arts include: architecture, dance, drama, iconography (sculpture), literature, and music.¹ In reality, some artists create art purely for the sake of art. The concept of *art for art's sake*, or *l'art pour l'art*, attempts to separate religion from art.² This second group contrasts with the artistic tradition in the Islamic world. In the Islamic world, Islamic art adheres to guided or disciplined art. Religious and moral norms must be considered in the practice of art.³ In earlier times, sculpture did not develop significantly. Artists followed specific prohibitions in the visual arts, such as the prohibition against depicting God and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as well as the restriction against creating three-dimensional representations of living beings.⁴

¹Mircea Eliade, *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1993), pp. 426.

²C Israr, *Sejarah Kesenian Islam* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1978), pp. 217-219 and Lorens Bagus, *Kamus Filsafat* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2000), pp. 990.

³Lorens Bagus, *Kamus Filsafat*, pp. 990.

⁴Lihat: Muhammad Fuad Abdul Baqi, dalam *Al-Lu'lu' wal marjan: Himpunan Hadits Shabih disepakati oleh Buchori dan Muslim*, terj. Salim Bahreiosy (Surabaya: PT.Bina Ilmu, tt), hlm. 802;

Although the involvement of Islamic art may seem closed and slow, art in Islam has progressed, particularly in fine arts, literary arts, music, sound, and dance. Islam has produced magnificent architectural structures and decorated mosques, palaces, and residential buildings. Subsequently, art expanded to Indonesia, where it has developed across fine arts, literary arts, music, sound, and dance. This does not exclude the possibility of further expanding coverage. Muslim seminarians express their artistic tendencies through art for artistic purposes in this contemporary era. Artists emphasise art over religion. They legitimise various means to showcase art, including the male and female human body, while scenes, particularly in dance and music, exhibit performances that celebrate the beauty of women's bodies.

Based on some of these cases, a common thread emerges that indicates a strained relationship between the two. Art has overlooked the significance of religion. Art holds a different artistic value compared to religious values. Conversely, religious values do not deeply penetrate Indonesia's art scene. It is crucial to examine the role of religious values in art. The interaction between religious values and artistic values in artworks can be observed through the artist's background. In the hands of artists, particularly in Yogyakarta, works of art thrive and emanate beauty.

Yogyakarta is one of the cities that prioritises cultural development. The arts that flourish in Yogyakarta include both performing and fine arts. Performing arts are classified into two categories: classical art and folk art. Classical art is communal in the regions of Kridomandoyo and Siswoamungdekso in Dalem Kaneman, as well as Sasmitamardowo in Dalem Pujokusuman. The sun shines brightly in the sky. Folk art refers to art that evolves within society. For instance, Kubro Siswo's art is found in Senoboyo, Jetis, Pokoh, Sleman, and Yogyakarta regencies. Bedouins and Hadroh are also performed in Senoboyo, Keenemi, and Kerisan.

The Cultural Office has conducted surveys in various rural areas, particularly in Yogyakarta, to develop the region's cultural potential, with a focus on Islamic culture. For instance, cultural officials support the community in revitalising arts that have started to decline, such as Kubro Siswo, Kuda Lumpung, and Bedouin arts.⁵

In its development, the community began to preserve the arts, such as Kubro Siswo, Kuda Lumpung, and Bedouin. They have started performing at village activities, wedding celebrations, circumcision ceremonies, and other events. In several schools around Tempel, Badua art is a mandatory subject that elementary school

Muddzakir, *Fikih Sunnah* (Bandung: PT Almaarif, 1996), hlm. 129-135; Imam Buchari, *Shahih Buchari*, terj. Zainuddin Hamidy, Fahrudin Hs, dan Darwis Z (Djakarta: Penerbit Widjaya, 1970), hlm. 323 dan 357; Imam Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, terj. Mahoud Matraji (Beyrouth, Liban: Dar El Aker, 1993), pp. 406.

⁵The researcher was one of the people met to provide information to the Cultural Service Officer (Mrs. Wiwik) about the potential of the village in Senoboyo Hamlet, Banyurejo, Tempel, Sleman in 2020

students must study. Dance, painting, and music (*gamelan*) are additional subjects that students must take from elementary through to high school.⁶

Many studios, such as painting studios, have started to have many participants in Yogyakarta. We can see that one of the painting artists is Affandi. In Malioboro, creative results can be seen in the sale of clothes, handicrafts, silver jewellery, paintings, architecture, puppets, souvenirs made of paper, and others. From various existing phenomena, the researcher wants to reveal the role of religious understanding in the works of Muslim artists, especially in the field of painting at the Gajah Wong Gallery in Yogyakarta. The community can enjoy the results of this artist's work as a form of creativity, as part of human nature to develop culture, especially in Islamic culture.

Based on this, the researcher formulated the question: How is the spiritual expression of Muslim artists in contemporary paintings? The researcher employed Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance to uncover the influence of Muslim artists' spiritual expressions on their work. Comprehension is also defined as a learning outcome.⁷ Cognitive dissonance theory assumes that two elements of knowledge are in a dissonant (disharmonious) relationship if, considering only the two elements themselves. This theory argues that dissonance, "because it is psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate a person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve harmony, and the person will actively reject situations and information that would otherwise increase the dissonance."⁸

Dissonance will occur in several ways. The first is Logical Inconsistency. Festinger gave an example: water freezes at zero degrees Celsius. Logically, it is inconsistent with the belief that ice blocks will not melt at forty degrees Celsius. The second is cultural values. Culture often determines what is dissonant and what is consistent. For example, eating with the right hand in Europe is dissonant, but not so when eating in Indonesia. The third is the general opinion. Dissonance can occur because an opinion held by many people is forced on individual opinions, and the latter is based on experience.⁹

There are six studies related to art and religion. Oliver Leaman, in his book *Islamic Aesthetics*, which has been translated into *Estetika Islam: Menafsirkan Seni dan Keindahan* (Islamic Aesthetics: Interpreting Art and Beauty), discusses the common

⁶Observation at Aba Ngabean 1, II Kindergarten, Muhammadiyah Ngabean Elementary School, N Seyegan Junior High School, N Seyegan High School, N 1 Sleman High School, N Sleman High School from August to November 2020.

⁷Nana Sudjana, *Penilaian Hasil Proses Belajar Mengajar* (Bandung: PT. Remaja Rosdakarya, 1993), p. 4.

⁸Werner J. Severin, *Communication Theory: History, methods, and applications in mass media* (Yogyakarta: Kencana, 2007), pp. 165

⁹Sarlito Wirawan Sarwono, *Teori-Teori Psikologi Sosial* (Jakarta: Rajawali, 1984)pp. 123-124.

misconceptions in understanding Islamic art and its aesthetics.¹⁰ Ahmad Pattiroy also conducted a study on aesthetics in his thesis titled "*Pemikiran Falsafah Iqbal: Studi tentang Konsep Estetika dalam Pemikiran Modern Islam*" (The Philosophical Thought of Iqbal: A Study of the Concept of Aesthetics in Modern Islamic Thought).¹¹ Masmedia Pinem explored Islamic art in his work "*Estetika Islam: Studi Atas Pemikiran Ismail Raji' al-Faruqi*" (Islamic Aesthetics: A Study on the Thought of Ismail Raji al-Faruqi), using a methodology similar to that of Ahmad Pattiroy.¹²

Hamdy Salad, in his book *Agama Seni (Refleksi Teologis dalam Ruang Estetik)* (Religion and Art: Theological Reflections in the Aesthetic Space), discusses religion in relation to art using a descriptive-narrative approach.¹³ Asif Iqbal Khan, in his book *Some Aspects of Iqbal Thought (Religion, Philosophy, Art in Iqbal's Thought)*, critically and descriptively explores Iqbal's ideas on religion, philosophy, and art. Sayyed Hossein Nasr, in his book *Islamic Art and Spirituality*,¹⁴ examines aspects of Islamic art from a spiritual Islamic perspective, linked to Islamic principles.¹⁵ These studies are based on literature reviews; thus, research related to the artistic expressions of Muslim artists in the contemporary era complements these previous studies by contributing to the practical domain.

To answer the expressions of Muslim artists, the researcher will use the thoughts of Kuntowijoyo.¹⁶ Based on Kuntowijoyo's opinion, there are determining factors in the relationship between art and religion: art figures (artists); knowledge and level of education; and interests (government and society). The researcher captures the spiritual content embedded in the works of Muslim artists. Interpretations of the symbols presented are inseparable from the researcher's own framework of knowledge and experience. In order to grasp these artistic expressions, several key factors must be considered: the artist as a central figure, along with their aesthetic and spiritual background; their level of education and knowledge, which influences their symbolic interpretations; and the dynamics of government and societal interests, which shape the space for artistic expression, including its religious and artistic dimensions. The researcher will interpret these factors through a

¹⁰Oliver Leaman, *Islamic Aesthetics (Estetika Islam Menafsirkan Seni dan Keindahan)*, terj. Irfan Abubakar (Bandung: Mizan, 2004), pp.15-17.

¹¹Ahmad Pattiroy, "Pemikiran Falsafah Iqbal Studi tentang Konsep Estetika dalam Pemikiran Modern Islam", *Tesis* (Yogyakarta: Program Pascasarjana UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 1988), pp. 18.

¹²Masmedia Pinem, "Estetika Islam Studi Atas Pemikiran Ismail Raji' al-Faruqi", *Tesis* (Yogyakarta: Pascasarjana UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2003).

¹³Hamdy Salad, *Agama Seni Refleksi Teologis dalam Ruang Estetik* (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Semesta, 2000), pp. 16.

¹⁴Sayyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Art and Spirituality* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 1999).

¹⁵Asif Iqbal Khan dalam buku *Some Aspects of Iqbal Thought*, pp. 78.

¹⁶Kuntowijoyo, "Prospek Kesenian Islam Indonesia" dalam buku Faisal Ismail, *Paradigma Kebudayaan Islam: Studi Kritis dan Refleksi Historis* (Yogyakarta: Titian Ilahi Press, 1997), pp. 132-134

methodological approach to avoid reducing or oversimplifying the spiritual meaning contained in the artworks.

Method

The expressions of Muslim artists in the contemporary period are influenced by their knowledge, personal experiences, understanding, and individual interests. These factors significantly shape the artworks they produce. The religious expression found in the paintings of Muslim artists working in Yogyakarta serves as the object of this study, while the subjects of the research are the Muslim artists themselves. This study employs a qualitative approach with a fieldwork method conducted in Yogyakarta, aiming to explore the spiritual expressions in the paintings of Muslim artists. The research focuses on the artists' personal experiences, meanings, and interpretations in the creative process that influence their expressions.

The data collection method began with interviews involving several Muslim artists actively engaged in artistic creation. In addition, this study utilizes existing literature sources. The data were analyzed following the stages proposed by Huberman and Miles (1983), which include data reduction, data display, and data verification. Data reduction was conducted based on themes emerging from the interviews.¹⁷ At the same time, the research questions served as the basis for structuring the data. Data display was carried out in two ways: through tabulation and restatement of interview data. Data verification, as the process of drawing conclusions, was done through interpretation. This process began with restating the interview data, followed by descriptive analysis to identify emerging patterns or tendencies. In the final stage, interpretation was performed to uncover both explicit and implicit meanings from the data.

Techniques for verifying or testing the reliability of the results are crucial for ensuring the validity of the data. Credibility testing was conducted by enhancing researcher persistence and engaging in peer discussions.¹⁸ Similarly, by increasing persistence, the researcher could provide accurate and systematic descriptions of the observed phenomena. To strengthen this persistence, the researcher consulted various reference books, previous studies, and relevant documentation related to the research findings.¹⁹ Through such readings, the researcher's insights became broader and more refined, enabling a more reliable assessment of whether the collected data were valid and trustworthy.²⁰

¹⁷ Matthew B. Miles dan A. Michael Huberman, *Analisis Data Kualitatif* (Jakarta: UI Press, 1992), pp. 15-21.

¹⁸ Soegiono, *Metode Penelitian Kombinasi (Mixed Methods)* (Bandung: Penerbit Alfabeta, 2011), pp. 327.

¹⁹ Sugiono, *Metode Penelitian Kombinasi*, pp. 368.

²⁰ Sugiono, *Metode Penelitian Kombinasi*, pp. 369.

Result and Discussion

There are determining factors in the relationship between art and religion

Art Figures

Art figures (artists) have a significant role in developing Islamic culture. Several experts reveal information about art figures. Lie reveals that the artist captures the relationships in nature with his emotions, then expresses them again with his emotions, and then reexpresses them in the described form. So art results from human love for patterns based on their understanding of natural patterns.²¹

Soedarsono, Retno Astuti, and I.W. Pantja Sunjata explained that there are determining factors in artists' works of art. The first is factors outside the artist's self, such as space, time, culture, and materials (media). The factors in the artist are the appreciation of the theme, creativity, independence (personality, taste), and skills. From two factors, both from the inside and outside, this will produce a work of art.²²

An artist produces a work that cannot be separated from meaning. Meaning is present to be understood, but to be enjoyed. An art connoisseur will try to capture the meaning of the artwork.²³ This artwork results from an artist's creativity as an art form, sourced from life combined with the artist's imagination. Artists are inseparable from social ties. This artwork also functions as an act of communication between artists and art connoisseurs and as a bridge between one reader and another.²⁴

According to Faruk, works of art in the traditional era differ from those in modern times. Traditional works refer to the natural environment—nature as a tool to carry human-cultural messages. For example, a literary work entitled: "like the buttocks longing for the moon"; "patting water on a tray, slapping yourself in the face". In modern times, works of art refer not only to nature, but also to events, processes, and circumstances that exist in human cultural life, as well as to individual mental states and events.²⁵

When people see the work of an art figure (artist), they say that it is "beautiful" and "interesting". They can say that they cannot say anything about the work of art,

²¹The Liang Gie, *Filsafat Keindahan* (Yogyakarta: PUBIB, 1996), pp. 74.

²²Soedarsono, Retno Astuti and I.W. Pantja Sunjata, *Aspek Ritual dan Kreativitas dalam Perkembangan Seni di Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Proyek Penelitian dan Pengkajian Kebudayaan Nusantara (Javanologi) Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1985), pp. 19.

²³Faruk, "Sastra Islam Dalam Dua Sistem Nalar: Kasus Sastra Melayu/Indonesia", dalam Ahmad Tohari, D. Nawawi Imron, Faruk dkk, *Sastra dan Budaya Islam Nusantara (Dialektika Antarsistem Nilai)*, (Yogyakarta: SMF Adab IAIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 1998), pp. 4.

²⁴ Rahmad Djoko Pradopo, *Prinsip-prinsip Kritik Sastra*, (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 2003), hlm.61; A Teeuw, *Membaca dan Menilai Sastra* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1991), hlm. 56; Suharmo, "Pertemuan Budaya Belanda Pra-kemerdekaan Dalam Novel Student Hijo Karya Marco Kartodikromo Sebuah Pandangan Interkulturalisme", dalam *BULAK Jurnal Sosial dan Budaya Universitas Gadjah Mada*, Volume 6, Desember 2012, p. 105.

²⁵ Faruk, "Sastra Sebagai Produk dan Produsen Kebudayaan: Sebuah (De-) Konstruksi", dalam *BULAK Jurnal Sosial dan Budaya Universitas Gadjah Mada*, Volume 6, Desember 2012, pp. 125.

and hear about it that they cannot hear. This condition is called "art for the sake of art". The artistic power embodied in the strokes of colour in a painting is called "art for the sake of art".²⁶ This is the work of an artist.

An art figure (artist) seeks awards based on the services they provide, their intellect, and their sensitivity. Their goal is to be comfortable there with their ambition and greed. In this field of art, artists scramble to earn money among other artists. There is unhealthy competition. Enmity, friendship, conspiracy, jealousy, and intrigues are the consequences of the materialistic goal of art. People avoid artists with high ideas; they find a purpose in art without a purpose.²⁷

Nonetheless, there were new developments, such as spiritual life following art flow. It is something extraordinary that is part of a thought. Although the form is different, it has the same purpose.

There are two genres of artists, namely: artists with the original Indonesian art genre and the imaginary genre of national music with Western styles. According to Ismail, the dichotomy in art must be eliminated. Even if the national music art that carries the Indonesian personality is shown, Indonesian music culture will not develop because art is the expression of a person or group and not an expression of a modern nation.²⁸

Art figures (artists) pour out their ideas based on several aspects of life. They pay attention to the social environment. They try to maintain the spirit of survival in their household. He, with the spirit of the Indonesian people, tried to build the nation with a "micro social planner".²⁹ Like Afandi, he expresses his ideas based on his acquired reality.³⁰

He belongs to the expressive group. In his gallery, he reveals family life and social criticism in his works. His ideas are carried out directly based on events in his social environment. For example, he made a social critique of the impact of cockfighting around 1980.³¹

Hegel reveals that art is an Absolute manifestation through the artist (art figure) who produces the work of art. An artist does not realise that the Absolute pervades and encourages an artist to create. Thus, art is a phenomenon of the

²⁶ Diane Apostolos-Cappadona (ed.), *Art, Creativity, and the Sacred* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1984), pp. 6.

²⁷ Diane Apostolos-Cappadona (ed.), *Art, Creativity, and The Sacred*, p. 6

²⁸ Ismail Marzuki, *Musik, Tanah Air dan Cinta* (Jakarta: Pustaka LP3ES Indonesia, 2005), p. xvii.

²⁹ Frans M. Parera (editor), *Tokoh Seni dan Profesional: Pribadi-Pribadi Pembuka Cakrawala* (Jakarta: PT.Kompas Media Nusantara, 2000), pp. xi-xix.

³⁰ See *Tokoh Indonesia.com*, "Affandi (1907-1990) Maestro Seni Lukis Indonesia", diakses pada hari Rabu, 2 Juni 2010.

³¹ Interview with Afandi's grandson, Didit, who continues the profession of Kartika bin Afandi's mother at the Wong Afandi Elephant Gallery on November 14, 2023, at 14.15.

Absolute (God or gods). Hegel always connected works of art with a transcendent dimension.³²

Nonetheless, there is a difference between art and religion in presenting the Absolute. In art, the Absolute appears in the senses, the limited, and the material. Art can be highlighted based on imagination, emotion, and intuition. Those objects are needed in the field of religion, but they are not as important as in art, because the most important thing is belief. The Absolute is no longer imagined, but thought. The point is that the absolute is conceptualised in the mind. Thus, if absolute art is objective, as stated in material works of art, religion is subjective and non-rational (feeling, belief).³³

An art figure (artist) can create works of art based on his creativity, nature, man, and God. For example, the romantic artist Goethe reveals the unity of nature and man. Regarding creating a work of art, art achieves its goal and produces a creation through an intuitive process, which goes directly into the object with feelings of empathy and sympathy. Intuition means intellectual sympathy (according to Bergson) or sympathy (according to Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana).³⁴

Artists reach their peak when they have created works of art. The encounter between the soul that created it and the world captured by the senses is always full of feeling, excitement, and concentration. In creating art, the human mind or spiritual life must be emphasized. An art object is the result of the radiance of his mind. A person who does not have hands can create a work of art. So, art objects are only born from the art of art.³⁵

Artistic creativity cannot be separated from the expressions contained in art creation. The process of creation or creativity of art occurs from or is centred on impressions, speech, or expression. Impressions are concrete, which come through our senses from external reality or something from our fantasies (feelings). With strong intuition, the impression becomes special, encouraging utterance or expression in a form. Impressions that do not turn into expressions are only sensations or perceptions of the five senses.³⁶

Thus, art creation is driven by the desire to create form; the art figure (the art creator) has a sense of satisfaction and pleasure. According to Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, there are three forms of aesthetic human beings and three art creations. The first art creation was Impressionism. In this group, artists surrender themselves to external impressions or internal impressions. It jumps from effect to effect. The second art creation is expressionism. Art figures live with their virtue, spirituality,

³²Mudji Sutrisno, *Teks-Teks Kunci Estetika Filsafat Seni* (Yogyakarta: Galang Press, 2005), p. 15

³³ In the realm of philosophy, art and religion can be united into a single spiritual and realize itself in the mind of Mudji Sutrisno, *Teks-Teks Kunci Estetika Filsafat Seni*, pp. 16-17.

³⁴ Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana (ed.), "Kreativitas Dilihat dari Jurusan Filsafat Manusia", dalam *Kreativitas*, (Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 1983), p. 39.

³⁵ Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana (ed.), "Kreativitas Dilihat dari Jurusan Filsafat Manusia", p. 39.

³⁶ Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana (ed.), "Kreativitas Dilihat dari Jurusan Filsafat Manusia", p. 40.

and feelings. So that each impression is given a subjective colour. The third art creation is classic. Artists create forms in a balanced way, namely between external forces (impressions) and inner forces (spirituality).³⁷

Artists (art figures) have different tendencies when creating works of art. Some are only bound to the environment and the form of their creations, some create according to the struggle of their soul form, and some create a complete work. A biased human being is an artist (art figure) dominated by art's value. Everything is seen from art alone. He tends to approach other values to enrich himself. Judging from the value of theory, science is poor, colourless, and life becomes dry.³⁸

Judging from the economic value, economic usefulness will damage the human person as an artist. If the value of usability enters into the material of art creation, then this can enrich the art. For example, an artist depicts a merchant with his life's struggles.³⁹ The art figure (artist) tends to present himself (individualism) in public relations. They do not live to help others, both materially and spiritually. The other person becomes an object of empathy that he wants to understand with his feelings, so it becomes the object of pleasure of his creator's soul.⁴⁰

There is a desire among artists (art figures), namely, theocracy of beauty. This is related to religion. Beauty is supreme, so his religion is the religion of beauty. For art figures (artists), the idea of creating art is the creation of a cosmos. God is the supreme creator and regulator, that is, a mind found in the universal nature, harmony, and ocean of beauty—the soulfulness of the entire universe is in the natural scene.⁴¹ Few art figures (artists) are aware of ethics, so it is necessary to have norms in life. For artists, religion is the love of beauty, and the most beautiful is the most sacred and holy.⁴²

When this age is full of struggles, the artist responsible with his imagination can depict a new world and a better future that he aspires to. With the suggestive and evocative energy of his creations, people participate with the feelings and ideals he projects, and with the form of his creation, people can be moved to act to carry out their ideals. To realise the ideals of a new society and culture, artists, poets, songwriters, painters, and sculptors participate in the front row as givers of encouragement, joy, and fortitude on the side of the struggle to realise the goals.⁴³

³⁷ Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana explained that the task of aesthetic science is to investigate the objective boundaries of the emotional fantasy given by the creator soul to the object. Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana (ed), "Kreativitas Dilihat dari Jurusan Filsafat Manusia", p. 40.

³⁸ Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana (ed), "Kreativitas Dilihat dari Jurusan Filsafat Manusia", p. 41.

³⁹ Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana (ed), "Kreativitas Dilihat dari Jurusan Filsafat Manusia", p. 42.

⁴⁰ He can unite feelings with others, but he is not entirely bound. Shared preoccupation based on freedom does not contain common interests. Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana (ed), "Kreativitas Dilihat dari Jurusan Filsafat Manusia", p.42.

⁴¹ Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana (ed), "Kreativitas Dilihat dari Jurusan Filsafat Manusia", p.42

⁴² Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana (ed), "Kreativitas Dilihat dari Jurusan Filsafat Manusia", p. 42

⁴³ Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana (ed), "Kreativitas Dilihat dari Jurusan Filsafat Manusia", p. 12.

This can be seen from various artists in Yogyakarta who express works in an interesting form, such as those done by Affandi, Yamie K, Eddy Djati S, Cupung, Didit, and others, based on their expertise. Affandi, a Yogyakarta painting maestro, tends to reveal all aspects of life in his artworks.⁴⁴ Affandi also painted several works with Islamic nuances, namely paintings of natural beauty (Parangtritis Beach in 1984) and the Kaaba. He was one of the Indonesian Muslim artists allowed to paint the Kaaba in Mecca when he went on the Hajj as one of the King's invitations in the 1970s.⁴⁵

There are also sculptural artists in Yogyakarta who pour the ideas and meanings in the Qur'⁴⁶ into a new sculpture work—for example, the full moon statue and human marriage under God's grace. According to Yamie, he paints on paper whose ideas come from his religious understanding. Then he poured it not only through paintings, but also through stone media. One of his artworks is the soles of his mother's feet and the echo of the land of Java.⁴⁶

In addition, there are also Yogyakarta artists such as Amri Yahya, Ahmad Sadali, Amang Rahman, A.D. Piorus, Hendra Buana, Robert Nasrullah, and Syaiful Adnan, with their spirituality expressing the message of the Qur'⁴⁷ expressed in the art of calligraphy.

Besides the Yogyakarta artist pouring his work based on his religious understanding, some artists pour their ideas without limits. One of them is Cubung WP. According to him, artists are religious as well. He had to be patient in painting. The end of his painting is about balance. From his various works, he also features the figure of a naked woman. According to him, nudity is fitrah. Humans are born naked. Porn, and it depends on who looks at it and the mind of the person who looks at it.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Observation of Afandi's work at the Affandi Gallery on Jalan Laksda Adisucipto 167, Gajah Wong, Yogyakarta, on November 24, 2023, at 13.00 WIB. The Affandi Museum was established in 1962 with an area of 314.6, which was inaugurated by the Director General of Culture Prof. Ida Bagus Mantra in 1974.

⁴⁵ Interview with Didit, Afandi's grandson, on November 14, 2023, at 14.20 WIB

⁴⁶ Interview with Yamie E on Jln Rotowijayan no.4 Yogyakarta at 15.30 WIB. He graduated from ISI, where he later became an Officer of the Cultural Service, and now he is pursuing the field of painting and sculpture.

⁴⁷ Interview with Cubung WP at the Affandi Museum Gallery on Jalan Laksda Adisucipto 167, Gajah Wong, Yogyakarta, on November 24, 2023, at 15.30 WIB.

Table 1. Artistic Expressions of Art Figures in Yogyakarta

Coding	Naration	Source
Paintings of Nature, Humanity, and Religion	Mr. Affandi was a maestro. Since 1943, he had held exhibitions and received numerous awards. He painted the beauty of nature (such as Parangtritis in 1984) and also the Kaaba. He was one of the Indonesian Muslim artists invited by the Saudi Arabian government in the 1970s. I also follow in Mr. Affandi's footsteps. I paint the universe, humanity, and also religious teachings that are embodied in my artworks."	KU (32) 
Paintings of Nature, Humanity, and Religion	"I am the grandchild of Affandi. I paint because I want to continue managing the Affandi Museum. I paint based on requests, such as landscapes, human figures, and also themes of religious tolerance. In our paintings, we incorporate Islamic values, as I am a Muslim."	Di (55) 
Paintings of Nature and Humanity	"I paint, but it may not appear that there are any religious elements in my work. This painting has already been sold as it was pre-ordered. The theme is about a woman with the	Ya (54)

world inside her womb. At first glance, there seems to be no religious aspect, but I added a figure touching the mother's feet. So, I am also influenced by Islamic teachings that say paradise lies at the feet of the mother."



Religion

"I am currently working on a commissioned painting. In this artwork, there is a depiction of a full moon sculpture, as well as a sculpture of a human marriage under the blessing of God."

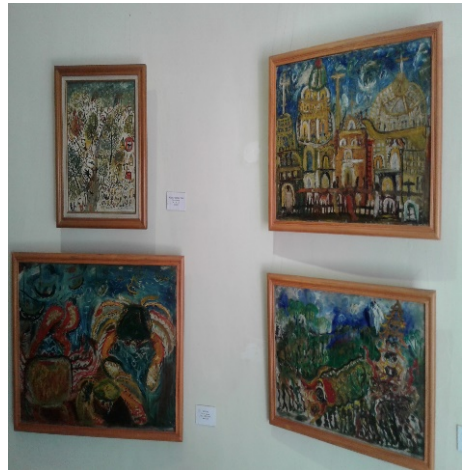
Ed (27)



Human and Nature

"An artist is also a religious person. I must be patient in the process of painting. The final message of my work is about balance. In several of his works, he also depicts nude female figures. According to him, nudity is natural—it is human nature. Humans are born naked. Whether something is pornographic or not

Cu (54)



	depends on the viewer and the mindset of the person perceiving it."	
Religion	"We have been engaged in the art of calligraphy. We take verses from the Qur'an as our source, so the religious values in our work are unquestionable."	MZ (25) 
The Universe and Religious Rituals	"I love painting— everything from the beauty of nature and people to religious rituals."	Al (53) 

Based on this, art figures (artists), especially in Yogyakarta, have created new works that the public can enjoy by expanding the breadth of their expertise and knowledge without limits. In terms of form, all artists produce diverse artworks, ranging from depictions of natural beauty and human figures to religious teachings. Among Muslim artists, 28.57% focus specifically on religious teachings, 42.85% concentrate on themes combining nature, humanity, and religion, while 28.57% focus on the universe and human subjects.

Artists are essentially religious by nature, as they paint with spiritual awareness and create according to their own capacities. This research aligns with the thought of Sayyed Hossein Nasr, who states that Islamic art is a divine manifestation

that deepens spiritual awareness.⁴⁸ Spirituality is not limited to the material form alone, but the spirit within the material also carries spirituality.⁴⁹ Based on this understanding, Muslim artists with spiritual values—particularly in Yogyakarta—continue to produce new works that can be appreciated by the public, while continuously expanding their artistic knowledge and capabilities without limits.

Knowledge and Education Level

According to his nature, man is the only creature created by God to develop that knowledge in earnest. Humans think of new things, develop culture, and give meaning to life.⁵⁰ Human knowledge from centuries ago is increasingly developing.⁵¹ He creates something for his life needs according to the development of his knowledge.

Humans also learn from revelation (God, who conveys revelation through his prophets) and intuition (non-analytical, feeling). With revelation, man gains knowledge by believing that what is revealed is true.⁵² Thus, this knowledge is information that a person is aware of and knows. This knowledge is something that humans acquire through observation and reason. Using their intellect, humans recognise something that has never been seen and felt, so knowledge emerges. For example, a person eats food he has just tasted and learns about the dish's shape, taste, and aroma.

As individuals, humans view beauty differently from one another. The beauty of nature is not solely the essence of nature, but there are various other considerations, namely, use/knowledge. For example, a person no longer enjoys bamboo trees for their beauty. This is due to the development in thinking used to make chicken cages, flutes, etc. This is different; if an artist paints the bamboo tree.⁵³

Quoting Erik Kahler, Lian Gie revealed the sense of beauty. This feeling will reach its peak if the artwork can express a strong feeling and a perfect blend of sincerity. The point is that a beautiful work of art must combine a sensitive precision in expression with the harmony of a rich diversity of elements.⁵⁴

⁴⁸Ali Ahmadpour and Behrouz Muhamadimufared, "A Critical Review of the Function of Islamic Art in Theosophy and Spirituality from Sayyed Hossein Nasr's Perspective", *Journal of New Intellectual Research*, Volume 7, No. 14, March 2023, pp.173.

⁴⁹Sayyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Art and Spirituality*, pp.3.

⁵⁰Jujun S. Suriasumantri, *Filsafat Ilmu: Sebuah Pengantar Populer* (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1998), pp.39

⁵¹Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, *Perkembangan Sejarah Kebudayaan Indonesia: Dilihat dari Jurusan Nilai-Nilai* (Jakarta: Yayasan Idayu, 1975), pp.8.

⁵²Jujun S. Suriasumantri, *Filsafat Ilmu: Sebuah Pengantar Populer*, pp. 40.

⁵³Jujun S. Suriasumantri, *Filsafat Ilmu: Sebuah Pengantar Populer*, pp. 42-44.

⁵⁴The Liang Gie, *Filsafat Keindahan*, pp. 70.

When pouring his artwork, Cubung, one of the Yogyakarta painters, poured his imagination about this world into his paintings. He is one of the most objective painters.⁵⁵ In 2023, he completed his artwork about the current state of the world.⁵⁶

Suppose an artist creates this beautiful work of art, considering his heart and society (customs, religious norms). In that case, society will also respond similarly, saying that it is a beautiful work. Thus, artists can create works of art freely, and the public, as art connoisseurs, can also enjoy artworks freely based on the knowledge gained through education.

In addition to knowledge, the level of education also plays a significant role in how the value of art and religious values are related. According to the term, education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere/learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have religious, spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble morals, and the skills needed by themselves, society, nation, and state.⁵⁷

There are three paths of education: formal, non-formal, and informal education. Formal education is a structured and tiered educational path consisting of primary, secondary, and higher education. Non-formal education is an educational path outside of formal education that can be carried out in a structured and tiered manner. Informal education is a family and environmental education pathway.⁵⁸

People who receive formal education, both formal and informal, will create or enjoy different arts according to the education they obtain, especially in the arts. For example, people who receive higher education in the arts will have more mastery of art, so the works produced will be more organised according to the material obtained at the university concerned.

Some painters in Yogyakarta have received higher education. Like Amay, he graduated from ISI Yogyakarta and is now pursuing painting at Garely Affandi. Cubung and Didid also received higher education and are now in the field of painting. Some people are active in calligraphy art and have higher education, such as Aziz.

⁵⁵ The Liang Gie, *Filsafat Keindahan*, p. 72.

⁵⁶ Interview with Cubung WP at the Affandi Museum Gallery on Jalan Laksda Adisucipto 167, Gajah Wong, Yogyakarta, on November 24, 2023, at 15.30 WIB.

⁵⁷ CHAPTER I General Provisions of Article 1 paragraph 1, Editorial of Sinar Grafika, *SISDIKNAS (National Education System) Law 2003 (Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 TH. 2003)*, 4th Edition (Jakarta: Sinar Grafika, 2007), p. 2.

⁵⁸ CHAPTER I General Provisions of Article 1 paragraphs 11, 12, 13, Editorial of Sinar Grafika, *SISDIKNAS Law*, pp. 3-4.

Table 2. Knowledge and Level of Education

Coding	Naration	Source
Higher Education	"Painting is my profession. I work at an Art Gallery. I understand painting because I hold a Master's degree (S2) in painting, and I paint in accordance with the knowledge I have acquired."	Ku (32) 
Higher Education	"I graduated with a bachelor's degree, but not from an art program. I learned to paint on my own, as a self-taught artist. Our family has always been involved in the arts, so even though I didn't study art formally, I'm still able to paint because the artistic spirit runs in my blood."	Di (55) 
Higher Education	"I graduated from an Institute of the Arts. I chose to become a painter because it aligns with my field of study. Therefore, the knowledge I have can be directly implemented in my artworks."	Ya (54)



**Higher
Education**

"I graduated from an art college. I teach painting courses and express all my ideas based on the knowledge I gained during my studies. We also organize exhibitions and send representatives to participate in painting competitions."

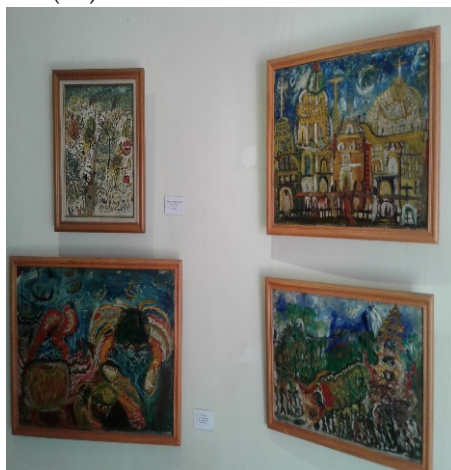
Ed (27)



**Higher
Education**

"My educational background is in the field of art. I express my ideas freely, in accordance with the knowledge I possess."

Cu (54)



Higher Education	"I am involved in the art of calligraphy. I graduated from UIN Sunan Kalijaga. From the beginning, I was interested in calligraphy because, in addition to studying at university, I also lived in a pesantren (Islamic boarding school). I participated in campus activities and joined calligraphy studios and communities with my friends. Although I was not from the Faculty of Arts, I was drawn to exploring calligraphy as a form of religious art. Through my experiences, I have been able to express my imagination in calligraphic artworks. As a result, my undergraduate thesis also focused on this subject."	MZ (25)  A photograph of a man in a red and white checkered shirt and black pants standing next to a large, curved wall. The wall is covered in a vibrant calligraphic artwork with green and gold Arabic script. The ceiling is blue with white clouds. The floor is light-colored.
Higher Education	"I hold a bachelor's degree from UIN Sunan Kalijaga and continued my studies abroad. One of my hobbies is painting. I am able to paint any object I wish to depict, based on my vivid imagination. I have painted people and nature, as well as calligraphy."	AI (53)  Three abstract paintings are displayed. The largest painting on the left shows a landscape with green foliage in the foreground and a blue and purple sky. To its right are two smaller paintings: the top one features a colorful, abstract composition with yellow, red, and blue, and the bottom one shows a more muted, abstract scene with white and blue tones.

Based on the data, Muslim artists have received higher education. This indicates that those who tend to be consistent in the field of art are individuals who have reached a mature level of education. Therefore, from the educational aspect, one's level of education influences one's perspective toward a work of art. Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana explains that the university is the pinnacle and center of culture. The university is a place to develop objective science, educate and prepare leading people in all branches of industrial culture with political, economic, religious, and artistic life.⁵⁹ To make higher education a centre or peak of culture, it is necessary to question the midst of technological advances. Thus, art figures (artists), Muslims become role models for art connoisseurs to take action. For example, art figures (artists), Muslim channelling their ideas in literature, will become a source of knowledge. Many people admire and imitate his words. So, if the art figure issues his idea, the connoisseur will follow based on their respective interests.

Interests

Human beings with actions carried out cannot be separated from their interests. Interests are interests sought to survive changes threatening the position of people or groups. These interests are political, economic, or other interests for power.⁶⁰ Everyone has different interests. In a country, there are many differences in the variety of personalities, attitudes, atmospheres, outlooks on life and expressions of community members. According to Marzuki, the interests of each member of society are different and sometimes opposite to those of others.⁶¹

Art has been used for the benefit of a person. The community will easily absorb and digest art based on standardised norms. Nevertheless, art is used for the benefit of others. A person or institution determines the standard norms of the field of art; then it will come out of the framework of the essence of art itself.⁶² For example, it is not the artists who determine the arts curriculum, but officials with specific political targets. Thus, all arts, including music, must be freed from political functions if we want children to have broad, critical, and responsible perceptions. This desire can be achieved through experience in diversity, not monoculture.⁶³

The political system will look humane if differences of opinion usually happen, and it is not an attempt to shift the norms that endanger the system. Religiosity is the process of questioning and answering, evaluation, and regeneration vertically and horizontally (between groups, ethnicities, sub-ethnicities, or

⁵⁹See Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, "Tugas Ilmu, Agama dan Seni dalam Krisis Poros Sejarah dewasa Ini", dalam *Ilmu dan Budaya*, No. 1 Th. XII (Oktober) 1989, p. 9.

⁶⁰ Said Rusli, "Kepentingan Mapan", *Ensiklopedi Nasional Indonesia*, Jilid 8 (Jakarta: PT. Cipta Adi Pustaka, 1990) p. 378.

⁶¹ Ismail Marzuki, *Musik, Tanah Air dan Cinta* (Jakarta: Pustaka LP3ES Indonesia, 2005)p. xvi.

⁶² Ismail Marzuki, *Musik, Tanah Air dan Cinta*, p. xviii.

⁶³ Ismail Marzuki, *Musik, Tanah Air dan Cinta*, p. xix.

fortifications). The wheels of reform began to roll and also touched the field of education, including arts education. One of the slogans is: regional autonomy, so it is necessary to make a special law. This is an exceptional opportunity to revitalise the diversity of local musical arts throughout the archipelago. The compulsion of the alliance of primitive Western music, as seen in the struggle song, the obligatory song, is not yet finished. Centralistic diversity changed to local/regional ethnocentrism. The semi-realization of a desire and arrogance of local cultural owners or certain officials again rapes music.⁶⁴ From various arts, there is an element of nationalism in the field of art. This can be seen in local traditional music, which at that time was generally functional, both for ritual and entertainment purposes, and other interests that were integral to the life of certain ethnic groups. He can meet creative, appreciative, and spiritual needs. It develops and constantly changes without realizing it.⁶⁵

Within the scope of the feudal system, art can be considered something that can refine perception. European nobles in the Middle Ages competed for and contracted the artists who were considered the most creative and unique. When nations emerge, the situation changes. A modern state is an artificial product determined by economic, political, and social considerations, not natural similarities. The argument about forming a nation-state does not apply in art. The essence of art is human expression. Thus, politicising the art field will result in the death of art itself.⁶⁶

There are several examples of the rape of art for political purposes. According to Ismail Marzuki, this can only be seen from a political perspective, not from the originality and progress of art. Some composers have chosen to describe their political goals through musical works. However, many artists have done this and failed to achieve their goal.⁶⁷

Music is too abstract to be used as a concrete political tool. They conveyed their ideology. They simplify or accompany music with texts and captions. Political information is conveyed through the medium of literature rather than through music. The essence of art cannot be attributed to a nation unless a particular political system of an authoritarian nature imposes it. Abuse by the extreme right or left is unimportant because the impact is the same: raising something artificially into a symbol to generalise and control humans. A song as part of art is an extension of a political system.⁶⁸

In addition, art can be used for religious purposes. For example, art can be a medium of Islamic da'wah. Art is essentially a human nature given by Allah. Dak'wah

⁶⁴ Ismail Marzuki, *Musik, Tanah Air dan Cinta*, p. xix.

⁶⁵ Ismail Marzuki, *Musik, Tanah Air dan Cinta*, p. xx.

⁶⁶ Ismail Marzuki, *Musik, Tanah Air dan Cinta*, p. xx

⁶⁷ Ismail Marzuki, *Musik, Tanah Air dan Cinta*, p. xx.

⁶⁸ Ismail Marzuki, *Musik, Tanah Air dan Cinta*, p. xvii.

means inviting people to do good deeds as long as Islam guides them. Thus, the encouragement to be artistic is also part of religion, like literature.

The relationship between literature and religion can be seen in the Qur'an al-Qur'an as a source of Islamic religious teachings containing clear signs of literature, so that the beauty of the language of the Qur'an influences the development of literature. The purpose of the Qur'an being revealed in the style of beautiful language was to subdue and soften the human heart, especially the Arabic language at that time, which had a high sensitivity to the beauty of words. Religion and art are part of culture.

Based on the above, there are political, economic, artistic, and religious interests in art. In Islamic culture, art is for religious purposes. In addition to religious interests, the community's aspirations determine the relationship between art and religion.

According to E.Z. Jusuf Nusjirwan, aspiration is the desire and ambition to achieve something better than what we have now, or the desire to achieve progress or ambition. Strong aspirations can encourage individuals to do things they are less interested in to realise what they want. Everyone has a level that they want. Everyone has their level of aspiration, which is the level that is expected to be achieved. The realistic aspiration level is commensurate with one's ability, and circumstances like this provide a more significant opportunity to achieve what one aspires. If an individual has a level of aspiration far above his ability, he will likely fail and experience frustration. People who are less courageous in the face of failure tend to have a low level of aspiration.⁶⁹

However, several models of society are seen in responding to policies from the government; the community is "all taken for granted", that is, everything is already an obligation of the government (central), and the obligation is only to receive. They do not feel responsible for it.⁷⁰ On the other hand, spontaneous community participation will generate creativity and increase productivity for development. Community participation will cause independence so that community mobilisers emerge.⁷¹

People can participate in all fields, from politics to economics to art. In art, people can contribute their aspirations as art connoisseurs. With the provision of the value of art in them, they can enjoy art according to their imagination. In addition to the community, the government, as a guarantor of interests, influences the development of art. The government and the Ministry of Education and Culture also preserve culture, for example, by providing facilities and opportunities for artists to

⁶⁹E.Z. Jusuf Nusjirwan, "Aspirasi", *Ensiklopedi Nasional Indonesia*, Jilid 2 (Jakarta: P.T. Cipta Adi Pustaka, 1988), p. 373.

⁷⁰H.A.R. Tilaar, *Manajemen Pendidikan Nasional* (Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 1999), hlm. 38.

⁷⁰Ismail Marzuki, *Musik, Tanah Air dan Cinta*, p. 38.

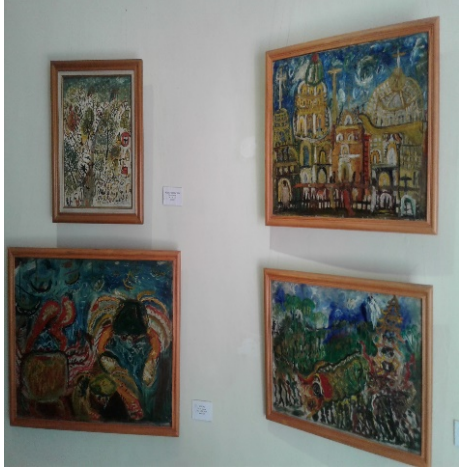
⁷¹Ismail Marzuki, *Musik, Tanah Air dan Cinta*, p. 39.

work and be involved in the government. For example, the Banyuwangi Regency government holds an Arts Festival, and there is a puppet show to commemorate the birthday of the Republic of Indonesia in the districts. The art figure can become a political figure. The art figure (artist) feels powerful regarding the value of power. The beauty of clothes, home, and language can influence others. The art figure (artist) can become a political figure. With his power, art figures have the freedom to make choices in the political field. In practical terms, Muslim artists have varying interests and motivations.

Table 3. Interest

Coding	Naration	Source
☐ Economy (Survival) ☐ Religion ☐ Art	"I paint because it is my profession as an artist. My main goal is to sustain my livelihood. I also create paintings related to religious teachings."	Ku (32) 
- ☐ Economy (Survival) ☐ Art (Developing Interests) ☐ Imagination in Responding to Current Issues ☐ Religion	"I paint because I want to continue managing the Affandi Museum. Besides that, painting is my hobby, and it allows me to express ideas through works of art. One of my	Di (55) 

	paintings has even been sold for the price of a car."	
☐ Economy (Survival) ☐ Art (Developing Interests) ☐ Responding to Current Issues	"I paint because I work as an artist. I paint to channel my imagination into a work of art. I also paint about current conditions, such as the increasingly heated world, in relation to the problems present in society."	Ya (54) 
☐ Economy (Survival) ☐ Art (Expressing Interests)	"I paint because I am an artist. Some people have bought my artwork. I feel happy. I also create sculptures, and there are those interested in buying them. I keep creating,	Ed (27) 

	even though my artworks don't always sell quickly."	
☐ Economy (Survival) ☐ Art (Channeling Interests)	"An artist is also a religious person. I have to be patient when painting. The end goal of a painting is about balance. In some of my works, I depict nude women. To me, nudity is a natural state—humans are born naked. Whether something is considered pornographic or not depends on the viewer's perception and mindset."	Cu (54) 
☐ Economy (Survival) ☐ Art (Pursuing/Channeling Personal Interests) ☐ Religion	"We have been engaged in the art of calligraphy. Besides channeling	MZ (25)

	our hobby, it also allows us to earn a living."	
☐ Art (Channeling Interests) ☐ Seeking Happiness	"I paint because I enjoy it. I paint not only to express my talent and interest, but also to bring happiness to others."	Al (53) 

Based on the interviews, Muslim artists in Yogyakarta paint for various purposes. A total of 85.71% do so for economic reasons—as a means of survival. Meanwhile, 100% of the artists create art for artistic purposes, as a way to express their talents and interests. Additionally, 28.57% use their artworks for political and social purposes—as a form of critique on life’s problems. Thus, Muslim artists, driven by diverse motivations, are able to contribute to life through their creative works. The government, society, and art figures can work together to achieve a shared goal: the realization of a just and prosperous society.

Conclusion

Muslim artists, especially in Yogyakarta, have developed new works that the public can enjoy by broadening their expertise and knowledge without limitations. Among them, 28.57% focus specifically on religious teachings in their art; 42.85% depict themes combining the universe, humanity, and religion; while 28.57% concentrate on the universe and human subjects. Artists are inherently religious, creating with spiritual awareness and working according to their abilities. Muslim artists with higher education tend to be more consistent in their work, as they carefully consider their career choices. In Yogyakarta, Muslim artists produce art motivated by various reasons: 85.71% for economic purposes (to support themselves), 100% for artistic expression (to showcase their talents and interests), and 28.57% for socio-political reasons (to critique societal issues). Therefore, Muslim artists, driven

by diverse motivations, can contribute meaningfully to society through their creations. The government, society, and art figures can collaborate to achieve a shared goal: a just and prosperous society.

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