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***ANALYSIS OF NATURALISM PAINTING IN BASUKI ABDULLAH'S WORKS USING  
FERDINAND DE SAUSSURE'S SEMIOTIC THEORY***

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**Abstract**

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Basuki Abdullah is a maestro painter from Indonesia who is a naturalist and realist. His work represents elements of natural and cultural beauty that are presented beautifully. This research aims to analyze the concepts or ideas and meanings contained in the work, including the color elements chosen so that they can form a portrait of the beauty of natural paintings. This research uses a qualitative method with Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory approach which focuses on a sign and the related relationship between the signifier and the signified to reveal the hidden messages in the work. The results of the analysis show that Basuki Abdullah's works are able to bring out aesthetic values in the landscape of natural beauty in Indonesia. This research provides further insight into the presentation of naturalist works of art by incorporating local elements into fine art elements while still highlighting their aesthetic value.

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## INTRODUCTION

Art is a medium of expression that is often used as a form of emotional manifestation that settles within. Painting can include beauty in the form of two-dimensional works created by humans by incorporating aesthetic values as a visual form (Noviadji, 2022). Painting comes from mature thinking that comes from various things, including one of which is the artist's concern for developing issues related to the artist's interest in the theme to be taken. In the book *The meaning of Art* (1959) by Herbert Read, it is written that art can be interpreted as a human endeavor in creating works of art that are pleasing in accordance with the sensitivity of the artist's feelings and the ability to unite various elements of art that can build harmony of visual presentation as the final result of the process of creating works of art (Santo et al, in Shiam, 2017).

Naturalism in painting is an approach that seeks to depict the reality of objects, painted as closely as possible to how they appear in nature. Naturalism prioritizes painting details, lighting, and accurate perspective to create the illusion of real life. The term naturalism is inversely proportional to the term supernaturalism, which emphasizes the view of nature with the existence of a force above or outside of nature. A work of naturalism will prioritize the resemblance of objects made as close as possible to their original state in the world, as similar as possible to its original state in alam (Putriani, n.d.).

The flow of naturalism is also one of the styles in painting that aims to depict objects based on the level of accuracy, and high detail, arguably even close to reality as captured by the eye. In the context of Indonesian art, this genre is used to depict the beauty of nature, daily life, and cultural traditions that characterize a particular region.

Basuki Abdullah is an Indonesian art maestro who is known as one of the figures who carry this naturalism flow. In his paintings he makes a harmonious blend of natural aesthetics and cultural symbolism. Basuki Abdullah is a maestro artist who was born in Surakarta, Central Java, on January 27, 1915. The son of painter Abdullah Suriosubroto. Basuki took his formal education at HIS and Mulo Solo, in 1933 he received a scholarship to study at the Academy of Fine Arts (Academie Voor Beeldende Kunsten) in The Hague, Netherlands and completed his studies within three years which later won the Royal International of Art (RIA) Certificate. Basuki's paintings are owned and kept by approximately 22 countries. Basuki revealed that: "My museum is on people's walls, all over the world. It is on the walls

of palaces in many countries. It's in books everywhere." (Dermawan T., 2010). As a painter, the figure of Basuki Abdullah has a series of achievements of various awards in the realm of international painting. He has also been recognized by many heads of state such as King Norodom Sihanouk and Sultan Bolkiah, as well as being included as a court painter in Thailand for King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Dermawan T. and Susanto, 2013: 102; Munandar et al., 2011).

This research focuses on several nature-themed paintings by Basuki Abdullah such as *Telaga Sarangan*, *Pantai Flores*, and *Sungai Tak Pernah Kembali* to reveal how Basuki Abdullah applies various elements of fine art to create works that contain aesthetic

value in visualizing the splendor of nature. Ferdinand De Saussure's semiotic analysis is a study of the meaning of a sign, including the myths and metaphors associated with the sign. The basic concepts of this theory are signs/symbols, codes, myths and metaphors. Ferdinand also divides it into three components, namely Sign (sign), Signifier (signifier), and Signified (Signified), all of which must have a complete existence in order to be studied and interpreted. Semiotics is a theory to study and analyze the meaning behind visuals or images that can be found from signs in Basuki Abdullah's paintings with the theme of nature.

Based on the results of previous research on naturalism paintings by Basuki Abdullah conducted by Syifa S.S and Dian R. (2023), in an article entitled analysis of naturalism paintings by Basuki Abdullah, it shows that the works presented by him reflect the beauty of Indonesian nature through a distinctive aesthetic approach. As in the work *Sungai Tak Pernah Kembali*, which depicts the longing for a peaceful countryside atmosphere, in for the peaceful rural atmosphere, in Flores Beach, which highlights the beauty of the eastern region of Indonesia with its deep cultural and historical elements. As a naturalist painter, Basuki Abdullah not only displays reality, but also conveys an emotional message and nostalgia for the beautiful natural environment that is increasingly lost and polluted. The findings in the article written by Syifa S.S and Dian R (2023) by highlighting Basuki Abdullah's nature-themed works as a whole, show the results that these works are not only technically outstanding, but also have significant cultural and historical value.

This research will be highly relevant for other authors who wish to examine the relationship between art and Indonesia's cultural identity.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method to explore the meaning contained in Basuki Abdullah's artwork. The qualitative descriptive method is an approach that aims to describe and describe certain phenomena in depth by relying on narrative and visual data. In this context, the researcher will conduct an in-depth observation of three paintings by Basuki Abdullah: Telaga Sarangan, Flores Beach, and Sungai Never Return. This research aims not only to describe the visual elements of the artwork, but also to interpret the hidden meanings and messages behind these visual representations.

This study uses Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic approach as an analytical tool to explore the meaning behind the visual signs in Basuki Abdullah's paintings. Semiotic theory, according to Saussure, views signs as something that consists of two main components, namely signifiers and signified. Markers refer to the physical form of the mark (e.g. colors, shapes, or objects in paintings), while markers refer to the concept or meaning represented by the shape.

This approach helps to understand how each visual element in a painting—such as composition, color, natural elements, or depictions of objects—conveys a profound aesthetic and philosophical message. Each sign (e.g. a natural landscape or a human figure) will be analyzed based on the relationship between the marker and the marker, as well as the myth or cultural metaphor that underlies the work.

### Data Collection Procedure

**Visual Description:** Each painting will first be described in detail, from the main visual elements (such as objects, composition, and use of color) to the minor elements that have an impact on the atmosphere or message you want to convey.

**Semiotic Analysis:** After the visual description, the next step is to apply Saussure's semiotic theory to analyze the relationship between markers and landmarks in each painting. This analysis will identify how those visual elements form a particular meaning that can be interpreted as hidden messages in the artwork.

**Interpretation of Myths and Metaphors:** Semiotic analysis will also include the identification of myths or metaphors that may be present in the artwork. For example, certain natural elements such as rivers, mountains, or forests can have certain symbolic meanings in Indonesian culture, which depicts human connection with nature or other spiritual meanings.

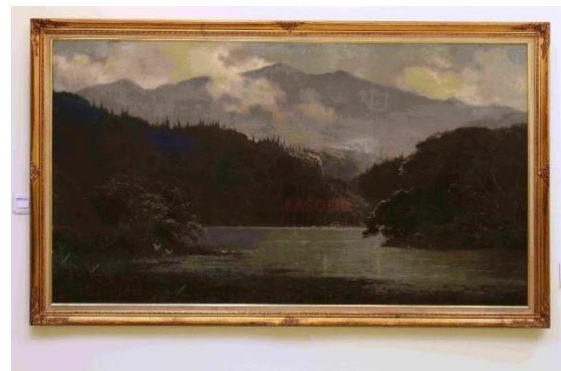
**Synthesis of Meaning:** After the analysis is done, the final step is to synthesize the findings and

compile the overall meaning of each artwork. This interpretation will reveal the hidden messages conveyed by Basuki Abdullah through his work, both in the aesthetic and philosophical contexts related to Indonesian nature and culture.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Basuki Abdullah's paintings with the theme of landscape and nature are made using oil paint, watercolor, canvas, and paper. Various regions that have been explored and used as objects of his paintings are East Java, West Java, East Nusa Tenggara with the beauty of landscapes realized in paintings. Basuki Abdullah's paintings with the flow of Naturalism depict the beautiful atmosphere of a region in Indonesia combining various realist colors that he sees in the landscape. Natural objects such as trees, beaches, sea, rice fields, rivers, and mountains are depicted with detailed strokes that are similar to their original state.

The first artwork to be analyzed is a painting titled 'Telaga Sarangan'. Telaga Sarangan is located in Magetan Regency, East Java. This area that has stunning natural scenery attracted the maestro's attention. The natural lake that stretches wide with the majestic panorama of Mount Lawu completes the impression of beauty.




**Figure 1** Basuki Abdullah, Telaga Sarangan, Oil Paint on Canvas, Size 100 x 180 cm  
(Source: Nikmah 2024)

The semiotic analysis that can be studied from the painting of Telaga Sarangan above is as follows:

**Table 1** Semiotic Analysis Table of Basuki Abdullah's Telaga Sarangan Painting

Signifier (Markr)	Signified (Sign)	Meaning
The visual of the calm lake reflects the	A calm lake symbolizes tranquility,	This painting 'Telaga Sarangan' can
peaceful		

element of nature.	silence, and inner peace..	be interpreted as a form of representation of the peace of nature in contrast to the dynamics of human life modern.	beauty of the tropical sea.	viewpoint of Flores' alluring beaches. The harmony of nature and human figures, which looks small compared to the landscape, shows that the relationship between humans and nature Walk harmonized and not dominant.	admiration for the nature of Eastern Indonesia, namely Flores, which can invite appreciation for the wealth of local nature. local nature. In Indonesian culture, especially the Nusa Tenggara region, nature is often associated with spiritual and mythical aspects. As seen in this painting, the portrait of the majestic mountains and vast ocean symbolizes the eternity and power of the Creator. Creator.
<p>This painting expresses the peace of nature and invites the viewer to reflect on the relationship between humans and nature that is purer and calmer.</p> <p>The second painting that will be analyzed is the painting titled 'Flores Beach'. Flores Beach is located in East Nusa Tenggara. This painting is in the Jakarta Presidential Palace, collected by the First President of Indonesia, Ir. Soekarno, who liked this painting because of its historical value. This painting represents the natural beauty of Eastern Indonesia. White sandy beaches with clear sea water and coral reefs become the natural boundary between West Nusa Tenggara Province and South Sulawesi Province.</p>  <p><b>Figure 2</b> Basuki Abdullah (1935-1993), Pantai Flores, Oil on Canvas, Size 180 x 116,5 cm (Source: Nikmah 2024)</p> <p>The following is a semiotic analysis that can be studied from the work above:</p>					
Signifier (Marker)	Signified (Sign)	Meaning	The vast white-sand beach looks serene and natural.	Seclusion and tranquility can be seen from the mountain and sea elements that give the	Two human figures who look small amidst the splendor
The beach with gentle waves in the blue ocean reflects the	Tropical natural beauty depicts an exotic	This painting emphasizes beauty as a form of			

	impression of a secluded yet beautiful place, inviting a sense of calm and reflection.	of nature lead to reflect on life in a simpler way and can be in harmony with the environment. surroundings.
Trees and shrubs growing on the cliffs show	Indonesia's natural wealth is depicted through visuals of flora and	
flora typical of tropical lands.	The fauna in this painting reflects the abundance of nature in the Archipelago.	
Two small human figures on the beach with one of them playing in the sand add to the scale of the beauty of the view. landscape.		

Table 2 Semiotic Analysis Table of Basuki Abdullah's Flores Beach Painting

Flores Beach represents the natural beauty of Indonesia's tropical and invites the audience to appreciate the natural wealth and the importance of keeping nature sustainable. The third work of Basuki Abdullah that will be analyzed is the painting titled 'The River Never Returns'. This work depicts Basuki's longing for a time that will never be repeated, where a beautiful atmosphere stretches across the eyes. All elements of nature are presented in this painting such as rivers with clear water, shady trees, and rice fields with majestic mountains in the background. In stark contrast with the situation in the city which is full of nature to tell the world about Indonesia's nature, as well as provide a reminder to the next generation of the

nation to continue to preserve cultural heritage and the environment with skyscrapers and air pollution that spread throughout the city. In this work, Basuki Abdullah poured all his heart by inviting nostalgia back to the beautiful natural atmosphere.



Figure 3. Basuki Abdullah, Sungai Tak Pernah Kembali, Reproduction on Canvas, Size 125 x 20 cm (Source: Nikmah 2024)

The semiotic analysis that can be studied in the work 'Sungai Tak Tak Pernah Kembali' is as follows:

Signifier (Marker)	Signified (Sign)	Meaning
The meandering river is calm and deep as it cuts through the natural landscape.	The river symbolizes the passage of time that continues to flow and cannot return, a symbol of life that cannot be repeated.	The title 'The River Never Returns' shows that the journey of life cannot be repeated, Enrich expected and suspected.
The coconut trees and lush green foliage reflect Indonesia's flora.	The disaster-prone life, as seen in the volcanic smoke emanating from the active mountain, symbolizes the unpredictable power of nature.	In Indonesian culture, nature is often considered to have a spiritual dimension, with rivers and mountains being interpreted as symbols of the soul's journey or links to a higher world.

Bridge small seem Replace above Ordinary rivers digunakan as Liaison.	Bridge hang and river flow get Symbolism n a trip life Transition human beings and nature.	Views A Beautiful and visible This peace have contradiction harmonious, in Where is the smoke From the Mountain give n Signal Possibility The Danger,
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Signifier (Marker)	Signified (Sign)	Meaning
Mountains that towering with tinge of thin smoke on its peak, signaling activity volcanic activity that is still active and add impression atmosphere magical atmosphere.	Rural life with elements of rice fields and small bridges depicts the simplicity and quiet traditions of village life in Indonesia.	This painting celebrates the simple and beautiful rural life, also in harmony with nature.
Rural scenery with rice paddies, fields and lush tropical vegetation.	The peaceful harmony of nature shows the close balance between man and nature.	Big, smoky mountains remind people of the power and majesty of nature that cannot be ignored. points to the duality between harmony and natural surprise.
The playful pattern of light points to the time of morning or dusk, giving an		

emotional feel.		
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**Table 3** Table of Semiotic Analysis of Basuki Abdullah's Painting The River Never Returns

This painting conveys a message about the inability to repeat time, as well as invites reflection on the importance of preserving natural life and rural traditions that are increasingly displaced by modernity.

## CONCLUSION

Basuki Abdullah's Naturalism painting shows the beauty of nature in Indonesia. However, Basuki also paints two human figures interacting with nature as in the Flores beach painting. Based on the results of the analysis carried out with Ferdinand De Saussure's semiotic approach, it can be concluded that the naturalism works made by Basuki Abdullah have a deep message and meaning about how the balance of nature must always be maintained by humans, in order to create harmony between human relations and nature. Basuki Abdullah also indirectly shows his existence as an Indonesian artist who raises the theme of scenery.

In addition, art naturalist Basuki Abdullah has a very important role in art education in Indonesia. His works can be used as an important reference in teaching aesthetic values, precision in observation, and accurate and realistic painting techniques. By integrating these works in the art education curriculum, Indonesia's young generation can learn to better appreciate Indonesia's natural beauty and realize the importance of preserving culture and the environment. In addition, Basuki Abdullah's works also provide opportunities to introduce traditional Indonesian arts to international audiences, enrich global art discourse, and create cross-cultural dialogue.

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