

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE LIFE CYCLE IN TEMBANG MACAPAT AS AN INSPIRATION FOR PAINTING

Reza Mukti Wibowo¹ and Muhammad Rahman Athian²

^{1,2} Visual Arts Education Program, Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

Corresponding author:

Reza Mukti Wibowo

rezamukti43545@students.unnes.ac.id

Received: 20 November 2024

Revised: 5 December 2024

Accepted: 23 December 2024

Published: 31 January 2025

Abstract. This research is a visualization of the human life cycle in each mentrum of *tembang macapat*, with romanticism as its main concept. The paintings are created using the glaze/glazing technique with a tenebrism lighting approach. The purpose of this study is to visualize the philosophy of the human life cycle in *tembang macapat* through painting, making it a means of appreciation, education, and local cultural preservation. Additionally, this research aims to present a more communicative artistic approach for younger generations, encouraging them to better understand and appreciate their cultural heritage. The novelty of this study lies in its cultural acculturation approach in visual arts, combining the philosophy of *tembang macapat* a Javanese cultural heritage with Western romanticism style in painting. Furthermore, it introduces the tenebrism lighting technique to enhance dramatic and emotional depth, a technique rarely used in previous visual representations of *tembang macapat*. This research has resulted in eleven paintings, each depicting the human life cycle based on the mentrum of *tembang macapat*. Each artwork is visualized in a romantic style, employing the glaze/glazing technique and tenebrism lighting, emphasizing dramatic elements and visual depth. The findings show that the philosophical values of *tembang macapat* can be interpreted visually to provide a broader understanding to the public and serve as a learning medium through art. The choice of a romantic style with human figure representations as a visualization of the human life cycle serves to present clear and accessible information. This approach ensures that the artworks are easily understood by a wider audience while inviting viewers to see, feel, and comprehend the meaning behind each phase of life.

Keywords: Human Life Cycle, *Tembang Macapat*, Painting

1. Introduction

In the midst of today's rapid advancements, the digital world has developed at an extraordinary pace, affecting various sectors such as culture, technology, education, and the arts. This development has had the greatest impact on the younger generation, who often struggle to wisely distinguish between the positive and negative influences of digitalization. While the progress of the digital era has brought positive impacts such as expanded knowledge and new insights across various fields it has also led to significant negative consequences, particularly in social and cultural aspects. One concerning issue is the growing indifference among young people toward social and moral values. Even more alarming is the gradual fading of local cultural traditions due to these developments (Ummah, 2022:2).

The emergence of social and cultural changes resulting from digitalization and the globalization of information has led to a shift in traditional arts and culture toward foreign influences. This can be seen in the increasing preference among young people for modern, popular arts and cultures, as they seek to appear trendy in society. The use of local languages

is declining, traditional arts (such as dance, literature, and music) are fading, clothing styles are becoming more Westernized, and even conflict resolution no longer adheres to customary traditions (Athian, 2023). This phenomenon occurs because modern and popular cultures offer more freedom and convenience, making them more appealing to younger generations, who often perceive traditional arts and culture as outdated, rigid, and restrictive. If left unchecked, these continuous social and cultural shifts will significantly impact the character development of society, particularly among the youth. Character is a crucial aspect of human resource quality, which plays a vital role in the progress of a nation. To cultivate high-quality character, it must be instilled, shaped, and nurtured from birth, with guidance and education provided by parents. Traditionally, the verses of *tembang macapat* (Javanese poetic songs) have been used as a medium for moral education and spiritual refinement, instilling a sense of beauty and serving as a reminder or moral guideline for human behavior from birth to death (Setiyadi, 2022:3).

The concept of the human life cycle, as outlined in *tembang macapat*, was highly valued and prioritized by the ancestors of the Javanese people (Susetya, 2019). This aligns with the perspective of Leginem et al. (1996), who stated that the philosophical essence and character representation in *tembang macapat* depict the human life cycle through three realms: *purwa* (the beginning world), *madya* (the present world), and *wasana* (the final world). This cycle begins in the mother's womb and continues until the end of life, when one departs from the physical world to face the Creator (Leginem et al., 1996:21). In *tembang macapat*, there are eleven *mentrum* (rhythmic structures) that illustrate different stages of human life: *Maskumambang* (in the womb), *Mijil* (infancy), *Sinom* (childhood), *Kinanthi* (adolescence), *Asmarandana* (youth/love phase), *Gambuh* (marriage), *Dhandanggula* (family life), *Durma* (expanding social and religious responsibilities), *Pangkur* (old age, seeking life guidance), *Megatruh* (facing death), and *Pocung* (becoming a corpse/departing from the worldly life) (Anto, 2019:78).

Furthermore, *tembang macapat* serves an essential educational function, aiming to preserve the value system within Javanese society. Every community inherently possesses its own cultural heritage, which is passed down from generation to generation through an unconscious learning process known as enculturation (Syafii, 2019:18). Therefore, efforts must be made to develop and promote local arts so that traditional artistic expressions remain relevant and accessible to all societal groups while maintaining their original functions and values of local wisdom. In this study, the author created a series of paintings as an elaboration of cultural acculturation between Eastern culture (*tembang macapat*) and Western culture (Romanticism style). This research employs a qualitative approach by observing and analyzing twelve (12) artworks concerning their cultural content. The study was conducted on June 10, 2024. Painting, as an art form, serves as a visual language that conveys artistic and aesthetic ideological experiences by utilizing lines and colors to express emotions, illusions, or dynamic illustrations of human conditions (Susanto, 2012:241). Through painting, the life cycle depicted

in *tembang macapat* can be visually represented, illustrating the journey of human life along with its moral and social teachings in a Romanticism style.

This research aims to visualize the philosophy of the human life cycle in *tembang macapat* through paintings in the Romanticism style, with the hope that it can serve as a medium for education, appreciation, and the preservation of local culture. This approach seeks to present cultural values in a more communicative way, particularly for younger generations, to deepen their understanding and appreciation of Javanese heritage. Several studies have previously examined *tembang macapat* from literary, philosophical, and character education perspectives, as well as its application in performing arts. For instance, Ikawati et al. (2024) explored character education in *tembang macapat mijil*, Agung (2024) discussed the values of Sufism education in *tembang macapat*, and Nugrahanta et al. (2023) investigated direct training methods for *tembang macapat* at SD Kanisius Sorowajan Yogyakarta. However, no research has specifically interpreted the philosophical values of *tembang macapat* into the medium of painting using the Romanticism style and *tenebrism* lighting technique. Therefore, this study offers a new perspective on the visual representation of *tembang macapat* by exploring artistic styles and techniques that differ from previous research.

In the process of creating visual art, an artist is constantly required to be creative in developing new innovations for conveying information, whether in terms of technical mastery, medium, or conceptual ideas (Sugiharto, 2020:49). The medium in art serves as an intermediary or tool consisting of materials, instruments, and techniques that support the expression of ideas in creating an artwork. The tools used in the painting process include pencils, brushes, palettes, containers, palette knives, easels, and cloth rags. Meanwhile, the materials consist of oil paints, oil paint thinners/linseed oil, canvas, gasoline, and varnish/clear coat. The painting technique employed in this study is the glazing technique, combined with a *tenebrism* lighting approach. The creation process involves two main stages: idea exploration and idea visualization. The exploration stage includes a contemplative process regarding the subject matter to be visualized, while the visualization stage consists of preparing the medium, implementing the idea (composition and form development), and presenting the artwork. In every artwork created, the semiotic system plays a crucial role in conveying visual messages. The use of semiotics as a visual language in this study implies certain ideas, experiences, understandings, and beliefs that can be interpreted by both individuals and society (Bahari, 2017). This research was conducted from October 2023 to December 2023. During this period, the author explored conceptual ideas, designed visual compositions, selected techniques and media, and executed the artwork until its final stage. The chosen timeframe allowed for an in-depth exploration of *tembang macapat* and the refinement of the artwork, ensuring that the final result effectively represents the philosophy of the human life cycle in a visual form.

2. Paintings and *Tembang Macapat*

The results and discussion in this study are presented in the following order: a photo of the artwork, artwork specifications (including title, year, medium/materials, and dimensions), a

description of the artwork (covering its overall physical appearance, visual elements, subject matter, style, techniques used, and aesthetic organization), and a content analysis, which includes the interpretation or meaning of *tembang macapat* as visualized in the artwork. The following section provides an explanation and classification of various aspects of the completed paintings.

2.1 *Tembang Maskumambang*

Maskumambang is one of the *tembang macapat* rich in philosophical values, depicting the early phase of human life. The philosophy contained in this song is often associated with the beginning of life, the symbol of birth, and deep contemplation of the meaning of existence. In painting, this *tembang* is visualized to convey its message through visual elements that combine aesthetic beauty with profound meaning.



Figure 1. Painting Artwork 1/ *Maskumambang* Song

Source: Author Documentation

Artwork Description:

Title : *Pramila biyung den bekteni*

Year : 2023

Medium : Oil paint on canvas

Size : 60 cm x 60 cm

The elements present in the painting titled "Pramila Biyung Den Bekteni" consist of a pregnant mother, rice, a clay jar, a lantern, a door, a brick wall, and a stone floor. The colors featured in the painting include white, brown (red-brown, blue-brown, yellow-brown), red, and black. The painting depicts a pregnant mother gathering spilled rice from a toppled clay jar on the floor. She holds a lantern in her left hand, serving as a light source. The mother wears a long-sleeved white blouse and a yellow-brown (*soga*) skirt. Her facial expression conveys slight sadness or sorrow, with her hair tied back but partially falling over her face. She is seated sideways, facing the right side of the composition. In the background, there is a yellow-brown wooden door, a red-brown brick wall, two clay jars including one that has toppled over painted in red-brown, and a yellow-brown stone floor. The painting adopts a romantic style, utilizing the glazing technique with a tenebrism lighting approach.

The painting titled "Pramila Biyung den Bekteni" is a visual representation of one of the verses from the *Tembang Macapat Maskumambang*. "Pramila biyung den bekteni", which can be translated into Indonesian as "*Karena itu kamu harus berbakti kepada ibu*", means "Therefore, you must be devoted to your mother." Based on the chosen title, this painting illustrates the struggles of a mother during pregnancy. Below is the visual interpretation of the artwork. First, the depiction of the mother as one of the parents who plays a crucial role in bringing a child into the world. The pregnant mother represents the characteristics of the Maskumambang song, which include compassion, helplessness, sadness, emotion, and concern. The mother is visualized sitting sideways while gathering scattered rice, symbolizing the struggle of parents who are willing to work patiently and diligently to earn a livelihood and prepare for their child's future. Second, rice is a staple food for the people of Indonesia. The scattered rice can be interpreted as a representation of a family's declining economic condition or basic needs that are not being met. Third, the depiction of a lantern as a source of light symbolizes knowledge, which serves as a guide in seeking a livelihood. The lantern can also represent the intellectual and spiritual wisdom that parents pass on to their children. Parents are the first teachers who introduce various aspects of life to their children. Fourth, the closed wooden door in the background of the painting signifies protection and the sense of security that parents always provide. A closed door can also symbolize the Gua Garba (womb) that remains shut, representing a mother who has yet to give birth. Fifth, the jar (*gentong*), which is traditionally used to store food, water, and other essentials, symbolizes parents as caregivers who nurture, educate, and provide for their families. However, the fallen jar spilling rice represents a family facing economic hardship. Sixth, the depiction of brick walls and a stone floor adds to the atmosphere of simplicity. The uneven lighting across different areas of the painting, with strong contrasts between light and shadow, enhances the dramatic and melancholic effect. The more intense lighting on the right side of the painting further emphasizes the somber mood. Based on this description and analysis, the artwork seeks to highlight the sacrifices of parents, particularly a mother carrying her child. The themes of helplessness, compassion, concern, and perseverance are the intrinsic values conveyed in this piece. Ultimately, the painting reinforces the extraordinary role of mothers, reminding us that children should always be grateful and respectful toward their mothers and parents.

2.2 *Tembang Mijil*

Tembang Mijil is one of the parts of *Tembang Macapat* that represents the beginning of a person's journey in seeking self-identity and wisdom. The values contained in this *tembang* teach the importance of self-control, mastery of knowledge, and wisdom in facing various life challenges. Through this visualization, *Tembang Mijil* is presented with an aesthetic approach that aims to deeply depict the philosophy of life.



Figure 2. Painting Artwork 2/ Mijil Song
Source: Author Documentation

Artwork Description:

Title : *Dedalan guna lawan sekti*
 Year : 2023
 Medium : Oil paint on canvas
 Size : 80.5 cm x 60 cm

The elements present in the painting titled "*Dedalan Guna Lawan Sekti*" consist of a baby, a chair, a book, a flower, and a brown-toned background. The colors used include white, brown (reddish brown, bluish brown, yellowish brown), red, blue, and black. The main subject is a baby undergoing the *Tedhak Sinten* tradition. The baby boy is dressed in traditional Javanese attire, wearing a black headpiece with yellow-brown accents, a long-sleeved black *beskap* jacket, and a *jarik* cloth in a brown *parang* pattern with white and black accents. The baby is posed while opening a white book with slight red and blue accents. His facial expression appears neutral or expressionless, with closed eyes. His body is seated on a red chair with wooden brown accents, facing forward, while his gaze is slightly directed downward to the left. In the background, there is a yellow-brown bamboo birdcage, a red rose, a brown wall, and a dark brown wooden floor. The artistic approach used in this painting is romanticism. The technique applied is the glazing method (*glaze/glazing*), combined with the *tenebrism* lighting approach.

The painting titled "*Dedalan Guna Lawan Sekti*" is a representation or visualization of a verse from the *Macapat Mijil* song. "*Dedalan guna lawan sekti*", which can be translated into Indonesian as "*Jalan seseorang supaya bermanfaat, memiliki ilmu pengetahuan, dan memiliki kekuatan dalam dirinya*", means "*A person's path to being useful, possessing knowledge, and having inner strength*." Based on this title, the painting depicts a scene from one of the

traditions in the *Tedhak Sinten* ceremony. First, *Tedhak Sinten* is a traditional Javanese ritual performed when a baby steps on the ground for the first time. One of the key traditions within *Tedhak Sinten* is the *Kurungan* ritual, where the baby is placed inside a cage filled with various objects that the baby will later choose. These objects represent different professions or serve as symbolic guides for the child's future path in life. Second, the cage (*sangkar*) plays a significant role in the *Tedhak Sinten* tradition. It symbolizes that a child, as they begin their early stages of life, must be nurtured with positive influences to grow into a virtuous and beneficial person for society. Third, the depiction of the chair can be interpreted as a representation of the spirit of chivalry and strong leadership. A leader must be calm, patient, mindful of their actions, possess noble character, and be just in making decisions. Additionally, a chair can symbolize patience and composure if one sits restlessly or without patience, they risk falling. Fourth, the depiction of the book represents knowledge as a provision and guidance in life, helping individuals become useful to others. Fifth, the flower symbolizes the characteristics of *Tembang Mijil* itself love, compassion, and hope. The depiction of the flower can be interpreted as a form of affection and aspirations from parents and loved ones who support and encourage the child. Sixth, the dominant use of brown in the painting represents the earth and soil, evoking warmth and comfort. Brown also symbolizes simplicity, steadfastness, calmness, patience, and stability. Seventh, the baby is portrayed with a glowing light effect on the face, expressing serenity and purity, emphasized further by the closed eyes. The baby wears traditional Javanese attire, starting with the head covering (*udheng*), which signifies that every individual should maintain a clear mind and not be easily discouraged by unfavorable circumstances. The *beskap*, known as *piwulang sinandhi* (rich in hidden wisdom), conveys the message that men should always be careful and meticulous in their actions. The *parang* batik motif used in the *jarik* (skirt) symbolizes the continuous self-improvement, introspection, and perseverance required to navigate life and maintain relationships with others, nature, and God. Based on this description and analysis, the artwork seeks to highlight how Javanese traditions treat a baby with great care for a meaningful future. Love, hope, and tranquility are the extrinsic values conveyed in this piece. Ultimately, the painting reinforces the idea that a baby or child embodies love and hope for their parents.

2.3 *Tembang Sinom*

Tembang Sinom is a *Tembang macapat* that reflects the teenage years, a phase where individuals begin to acquire knowledge and shape their character. The values embedded in this *tembang* emphasize the importance of respect, learning, and becoming a useful person to others. The presented artwork attempts to visualize the moral message of this *tembang* by combining elements of tradition and modern aesthetics, aiming to captivate the audience and encourage them to contemplate the deeper meaning of life within it.



Figure 3. Painting Artwork 3/ *Sinom Song*

Source: Author Documentation

Artwork Description:

Title : *Pitutor dados tiyang pengageng*

Year : 2023

Medium : Oil paint on canvas

Size : 60 cm x 80 cm

The painting titled "*Pitutor Dados Tiyang Pangageng*" consists of several elements, including two human figures, *wayang kulit* (shadow puppets), a cage, a chair, a wall, a bamboo tree, and the silhouettes of trees. The color palette includes white, brown (red-brown, blue-brown, yellow-brown), green, red, blue, and black. The main subjects are a young boy watching an elderly man tell a story using shadow puppets. The painting depicts a rural village setting in the morning, enveloped in mist. The boy is dressed in a long-sleeved golden-brown shirt and black shorts. He is squatting while holding a wooden puppet stick (*gapit kayu*), with a slightly cheerful expression, closed eyes, and a slightly open mouth. The elderly man wears a green shirt and black pants, with a neutral facial expression, gazing forward at the *wayang kulit*. The puppet featured in the painting is *Petruk*, one of the *Punakawan* characters. The painting employs a romantic style, using the glazing technique with a *tenebrism* lighting approach. The artwork "*Pitutor Dados Tiyang Pangageng*" represents or visualizes a verse from the *Macapat Sinom* song. "*Pitutor dados tiyang pangageng*", which translates to "Advice on becoming a leader", conveys a moral lesson. Based on the title and the *Tembang macapat*, the painting illustrates a grandfather advising his grandson (the young boy) through a *wayang* performance, specifically the *Petruk Dadi Ratu* story. This serves as a lesson for the boy to grow into a wise and righteous leader.

The character of *Petruk* in the story *Petruk Dadi Ratu* is a Javanese *wayang* tale rich in meaning. This narrative depicts an ordinary commoner who suddenly becomes a king due to a sacred heirloom entrusted to him. The story can be viewed from two perspectives. The first perspective sees it as a manifestation of an unworthy individual being appointed as a leader, resulting in chaos and imbalance. The second perspective portrays *Petruk* as a revolutionary leader who emerges in response to the people's frustration with the existing disorder. He overturns the corrupt government system to restore order and justice.

First, children represent the future leaders and bear great responsibilities. Therefore, character education from an early age is crucial. In the painting, the child symbolizes the recipient of information and curiosity, as children generally have a strong sense of curiosity. Additionally, the child is dressed in brownish-golden clothing, symbolizing something valuable and cheerful. Second, the elderly man represents wisdom gained through life experience. In the painting, he is depicted as if telling a story and offering advice based on his past experiences to serve as lessons. The depiction of the elderly man reflects the essence of *Tembang Sinom*, symbolizing patience and sincerity in giving counsel. He wears a green outfit, representing spirituality, security, comfort, and peace. Third, the wooden chair symbolizes simplicity and strong leadership. A true leader must be calm, patient, virtuous, and fair in decision-making. The chair also represents patience and tranquility, as one must sit steadily; otherwise, they might fall. Fourth, bamboo (both as a tree and as processed material for house walls and cages) symbolizes the qualities of a good leader having strong principles, adaptability, and usefulness to society. Fifth, the cage represents protection, signifying that children should be nurtured with positive influences to grow into noble and beneficial individuals. The cage is placed behind the child to imply that children should not be overly protected but rather supported and guided to develop independence. Sixth, a leader must possess a broad mindset and knowledge to be beneficial to others, symbolized by the windows in the painting. There are two windows one open and one closed. The open window represents openness, acceptance, and sincerity, while the closed window signifies gratitude, protection, and rejection of negativity. Each window corresponds to a subject in the painting. Seventh, the depiction of a strong rural atmosphere represents the idea that great leaders can come from any background or place. The colors used in the painting are predominantly brown and white. Brown symbolizes the earth, warmth, and comfort, while white signifies truth and purity.

Thus, these colors symbolize truth, simplicity, steadfastness, calmness, patience, and stability. Based on the description and analysis, this artwork primarily aims to depict how a grandfather imparts wisdom to his grandchild, guiding them to become a good and righteous leader. Simplicity, patience, gentleness, and sincerity are the intrinsic values conveyed. The artwork further emphasizes that children are the future successors of the nation and future leaders for themselves, their families, society, the country, and their faith. Therefore, character education must be nurtured from an early age. The success of this artwork can be seen in the harmonious integration of the tenebrism lighting technique with a romantic style, inspired by the *Tembang Macapat Sinom*.

2.4 Tembang Kinanthi

Tembang Kinanthi symbolizes a phase of life filled with guidance and learning, where an individual is shaped into a wise person. This theme is highly relevant in artistic visualization due to the educational and moral values it conveys. Through a painting inspired by *Tembang Kinanthi*, the artist seeks to present a traditional Javanese atmosphere with deep visual exploration, allowing cultural messages to be conveyed in a more universal and inspiring way.



Figure 4. Painting Artwork 4/*Kinanthi* Song

Source: Author Documentation

Artwork Description:

Title : *Ing Sasmita Amrip Lantip*

Year : 2023

Medium : Oil paint on canvas

Size : 60 cm x 80 cm

The elements present in the painting titled "*Ing Sasmita Amrip Lantip*" consist of two human figures, a bow and arrow, rocks, a river, and trees. The colors displayed include white, brown, green, red, orange, blue, and black. The painting depicts a teacher guiding a teenage boy in archery practice. There are two human subjects in the painting, set in a forest with a river and trees in the background. The scene portrays the atmosphere of a riverside forest in the morning transitioning into midday. The boy is dressed in an orange shirt, black long pants, and a headband with a *tiang kebuk* pattern. He is seated, drawing the bowstring with a focused facial expression, his sharp gaze fixed on the arrow's target. Meanwhile, the teacher, a male figure, is wearing traditional Javanese attire (*baju surjan*), black pants, and a head covering (*udheng*). His expression appears joyful, and he is looking down towards the boy's right hand. The artistic approach used in this piece is romanticism. The technique applied is glazing, with a tenebrism-style lighting approach.

The painting titled "*Ing Sasmita Amrip Lantip*" is a representation or visualization of one of the verses from the *tembang macapat Kinanthi*. "*Ing Sasmita Amrip Lantip*", which can be translated into Indonesian as "*Tentang suara hati agar menjadi pandai*", means "*About the voice of the heart to become wise*" in English. Inspired by its title and the *tembang macapat* it is based on, the painting depicts a teacher guiding his student (a young teenage boy) in archery practice in a forest setting, surrounded by a river and trees. First, the depiction of the teacher as a guide and mentor represents the essence of the *Kinanthi* song, which symbolizes guidance. The teacher can also be interpreted as embodying the characteristics of the *Kinanthi* song itself one that conveys the values of exemplary living, nurturing a sense of care, and fostering happiness. The teacher in the painting is depicted wearing traditional Javanese attire, including a head covering (*udheng*), which symbolizes that every person should have a clear and righteous mind, remaining steadfast even in unfavorable situations. Secondly, archery is

an activity that requires calmness, patience, and sensitivity. The depiction of archery practice with full concentration and a clear target can be interpreted as a lesson in self-control and dedicated learning to achieve one's goals. Learning archery teaches emotional and mental discipline. This practice can be understood as follows: aiming represents intention, drawing the bow represents effort (*ikhtiar*), and releasing the arrow represents *tawakkal* (trust in divine will). Similarly, in daily life, we must stay focused on our goals, letting go of ego, excessive desires, and emotions. Once the arrow is released, we can only surrender and wait to see whether our aim hits the target or not. As human beings, we can only strive to the best of our ability, while the final outcome is determined by God Almighty. Thirdly, the background depiction of the forest and river represents the environment we live in. A forest and river can either be seen as frightening or peaceful, depending on one's perspective. Likewise, in life, our experiences depend on how we perceive and respond to the circumstances surrounding us. It is crucial to control ourselves and our desires so that we do not fall into worldly temptations. The painting's color palette is dominated by shades of green and brown. Green represents nature and is often associated with hope and fertility. The color brown represents the earth/soil, which can be associated with tranquility and simplicity. Thus, this color symbolizes hope, modesty, steadfastness, calmness, patience, stability, and growth. Fourth, adolescence is a phase in life where guidance and mentorship are essential to prevent negative behavior. The depiction of the patterned headband worn by the teenage boy features the *tiang kebuk* motif, which symbolizes support. *Tiang kebuk* is a traditional motif from Kalimantan, particularly among the Dayak people. This motif serves as a symbol or message from ancestors to future generations, especially young men. Therefore, the headband in the painting represents the idea that as a young man, he must grow to support his family and contribute to building his nation, no matter where he is. The teenage boy is also depicted wearing an orange-colored shirt, which symbolizes the spirit of struggle and joy. The color orange is formed from a combination of red (representing passion, intensity, and emotion) and yellow (representing cheerfulness and positivity).

Thus, based on the description and analysis, this work aims to reveal how a teacher provides guidance to their students so that they become useful individuals, possess broad knowledge and insight, and contribute to building the nation while supporting their families wherever they are. Serenity, patience, exemplary behavior, gentleness, and sincerity are the extrinsic values that this work seeks to express. Furthermore, this work emphasizes the importance of providing proper guidance and mentorship to teenagers so that they grow into intelligent, knowledgeable, well-mannered, and valuable individuals in the future.

2.5 Tembang Asmaradhana

Tembang Asmaradhana is known as a *tembang* that symbolizes love and affection in the journey of human life. This theme is rich in deep emotions and romance, making it one of the most culturally significant elements to be visualized in artistic works. Through a painting

themed *Asmaradhana*, the artist seeks to depict the beauty and complexity of love with a visually dramatic and meaningful approach while staying deeply rooted in Javanese tradition.



Figure 5. Painting Artwork 5/ *Asmaradhana* Song

Source: Author Documentation

Artwork Description:

Title : *Kidung Kedresaning Kapti*

Year : 2023

Medium : Oil paint on canvas

Size : 80 cm x 60 cm

The elements present in the painting titled "*Kidung Kedresaning Kapti*" consist of two human figures, a guitar, a chair, a wooden floor, a bamboo wall, and a wooden door. The colors used in the painting include white, brown (yellow-brown, red-brown), green, and black. The painting depicts a young couple in love, where a young man playing music accompanies a young woman who is singing. The setting portrays a rural house terrace during the daytime. The young man is dressed in a slightly grayish white shirt with black trousers. He is seated on a chair, playing a guitar, with a slightly happy expression, eyes gazing at the young woman, and his mouth slightly open. The young woman is wearing a white blouse paired with a *parang* batik-patterned skirt in yellow-brown and dark red-brown. She displays a slightly joyful expression, looking upward toward the young man. She is seated on the wooden floor, with her right hand resting on the young man's leg. The artistic approach used in this work is romantic. The technique applied is the glaze/glazing technique with a *tenebrism* style approach.

The painting titled "*Kidung Kedresaning Kapti*" is a representation or visualization of one of the verses from the *tembang macapat Asmaradhana*. "*Kidung Kedresaning Kapti*", which can

be translated into Indonesian as "*Nyanyian Kesungguhan Hati*", means "*The Song of Sincerity*" in English. Inspired by its title and the *tembang macapat* it is based on, this painting portrays a young couple expressing their love through music on a house terrace. Love is not merely about romantic relationships between genders but also about trust, joy, tranquility, and mutual care for one another. First, the depiction of the young couple wearing white clothing symbolizes purity. This serves as guidance, reminding us that in love, one should not be carried away by emotions but should preserve both heart and body in purity. A relationship built on a pure heart, sincere intentions, and strong determination leads to greater happiness and stability. The *parang* batik motif on the skirt (*jarik*) represents the idea that every individual must continuously improve, engage in self-reflection, and persevere in life and relationships with others, nature, and God. Second, the guitar as a musical instrument serves as a medium for conveying the rhythm of life, including love stories and education, allowing them to resonate deeply within the soul. Music can bring comfort and solace, fostering peace, tranquility, and emotional depth. Third, the wooden chair symbolizes resilience and simplicity. A chair is sturdy and strong, capable of bearing weight without discrimination. It also represents patience and calmness. In life, if we do not sit on a chair with composure and patience, we may fall. Thus, we must remain calm, patient, virtuous, and just in making decisions to avoid misfortune. Fourth, the depiction of bamboo walls (*gedek*) and a wooden door symbolizes protection. In any relationship, individuals must protect one another, safeguarding their hearts, minds, and physical well-being from negative influences, ensuring a positive and nurturing connection.

The colors used in the painting are predominantly brown and green. Green represents the earth/soil and can be associated with tranquility, simplicity, and comfort. Based on this description and analysis, the artwork aims to convey the emotions of a young couple experiencing love. Joy, affection, tenderness, and sincerity are the extrinsic values the painting seeks to express. Furthermore, this artwork emphasizes the importance of guiding and mentoring young people in love, ensuring they grow into wise, knowledgeable, and virtuous individuals who respect religious and social norms.

2.6 *Tembang Gambuh*

Tembang Gambuh symbolizes harmony, wisdom, and balance in life. As one of the *tembang macapats*, *Gambuh* carries a profound meaning, emphasizing the importance of maintaining harmonious relationships between humans, nature, and the Creator. In a painting that explores the theme of *Gambuh*, the artist delves into these values through a visually rich and detailed composition, evoking a deep sense of balance in the journey of human life.



Figure 6. Painting Artwork 6/ *Gambuh Song*
Source: Author Documentation

Artwork Description:

Title : *Pitutur Lebetiing Yasa Sesambetan*
 Year : 2023
 Medium : Oil paint on canvas
 Size : 80 cm x 60 cm

The elements present in the painting titled "*Pitutur Lebetiing Yasa Sesambetan*" consist of two human hands, a lily flower, a mirror, and a brown background. The colors used in the painting include white, brown (yellow-brown, red-brown, greenish-brown), green, and black. The painting depicts two hands of a couple holding each other, with both hands gently grasping a white lily in front of a mirror. The male hand appears larger than the female hand. The two hands are positioned in a way that suggests mutual support and affectionate connection. The female hand is shown wearing a slightly grayish-white garment. The artistic approach used in this work is romantic. The technique applied is the glaze/glazing technique, with a lighting style inspired by *tenebrism*.

The painting titled "*Pitutur Lebetiing Yasa Sesambetan*" is a representation or visualization of a verse from the *Gambuh tembang macapat*. "*Pitutur Lebetiing Yasa Sesambetan*", which can be translated into Indonesian as "*Nasihat dalam menjaga hubungan*" (Advice on Maintaining a Relationship), conveys guidance on navigating marriage or relationships. Based on the title and the *tembang macapat* it references, this painting illustrates the advice given for maintaining a harmonious relationship. Partners must guard their hearts and be mindful of various aspects, including social interactions, attitudes, and behaviors in a relationship. This approach fosters a bond that is protective, mutually beneficial, joyful, and enduring. First, the depiction of hands holding each other symbolizes commitment and attachment in building a

life together. The female hand is clothed in a white-grayish garment, representing purity, sincerity, and innocence. Meanwhile, the male hand appears more prominent and larger, signifying support, protection, and dominance. This reflects the traditional role of men in a household, where they are often perceived as stronger figures, both physically and in leadership, responsible for safeguarding against negative influences. Second, the lily flower symbolizes purity of heart, loyalty, and wisdom qualities essential for maintaining harmony and fidelity in a relationship. Third, the mirror represents self-awareness and introspection in a shared life. Reflection and self-evaluation are crucial for better self-understanding, allowing partners to complement each other and avoid undesirable behaviors. The mirror's frame is adorned with floral motifs in brown, yellow, and green hues. The floral motif signifies attachment and connection, brown symbolizes serenity and simplicity, green represents hope and fertility, and yellow conveys cheerfulness.

Thus, the depiction of the mirror frame carries the meaning that in a relationship, one must embrace serenity and simplicity, with the hope that the relationship will remain happy until death separates them. Based on this description and analysis, this work seeks to express how a relationship should be nurtured, especially in the context of sacred marriage. Sincerity, warmth, affection, purity, wisdom, and happiness are the extrinsic values that this work aims to convey. Furthermore, it reinforces the idea that in marriage, partners must love, complement, and be wise in making decisions.

2.7 Tembang Dhandanggula

The *Tembang Dhandanggula* depicts a life filled with beauty, happiness, and hope. As one of the *tembang macapats*, *Dhandanggula* conveys harmony and prosperity as the ultimate goals in human life. A painting inspired by this song presents a visually evocative representation with an atmosphere of optimism while delivering the message that life, despite its challenges, always offers beauty worth appreciating.



Figure 7. Painting Artwork 7/ *Dhandanggula* Song
Source: Author Documentation

Artwork Description:

Title : *Rasa kang Satuhu*

Year : 2023

Medium : Oil paint on canvas
 Size : 60 cm x 80 cm

The elements in the painting titled "*Rasa kang Satuhu*" consist of three human figures, a hut/granary, a tree, bamboo pieces, a set of batik-making tools and materials (*canting*, stove, fabric), a wooden chest, a dove cage/house, and a *tampah* (a tray used for sorting rice). The colors featured in the painting include red, white, blue, purple, green, brown (reddish brown, bluish brown, yellowish brown), and black. The painting depicts a harmonious family engaged in their respective activities while sharing laughter. It presents a rural setting in the late afternoon with bright and clear weather. The father figure is dressed in a blue shirt and purple pants, sitting on a wooden chest while working on a dove house (*gupon*). He holds a piece of bamboo in his left hand while his right arm embraces a young boy. His facial expression conveys joy, with slightly closed eyes looking toward the child and his mouth slightly open.

The young boy is dressed in a slightly faded black long-sleeved shirt. He is seated, engaged in the activity of using a *canting* (a tool for batik painting), with his right hand holding the *canting* and his left hand holding the fabric. His facial expression shows happiness, with slightly closed eyes looking at the father figure and his mouth slightly open. The mother figure is wearing a red long-sleeved shirt, a brownish-purple skirt, and a brown head covering. She is standing, sorting rice (*napeni beras*) with her hands holding a *tampah* (a tray for sorting rice). Her expression is joyful, with her gaze directed to the side, looking at the father and son. The artistic approach used in this work is romantic. The technique employed is glaze/glazing with a tenebrism lighting style.

The painting titled "*Rasa kang Satuhu*" is a representation or visualization of a verse from the *Dhandanggula* tembang macapat. "*Rasa kang Satuhu*", which can be translated into Indonesian as "*The Essence of True Feelings*", is inspired by the title and the *tembang macapat*. This painting depicts a simple, harmonious, and joyful family engaged in their respective activities, laughing and seemingly free from life's burdens. The painting offers advice on how to live a family life in order to achieve sweet hopes and create a life full of blessings from God. First, the father figure is shown sitting, embracing and joking with his child, which can be interpreted as a representation of a protector and caregiver. As the head of the household, the father plays the role of a leader, protector, provider, and source of happiness for the family. In the painting, the father is depicted holding a piece of bamboo, engaged in making a dove house (*gupon*) in front of him. This activity can symbolize the fulfillment of basic household needs, particularly *papan* (housing) as a place of residence. The father is dressed in a blue shirt, symbolizing inspiration, innovation, and sincerity, and purple pants, representing maturity and wisdom. Second, the mother figure is shown standing and holding a *tampah* (a tray) filled with rice (*napeni beras*), which can be interpreted as a representation of an enforcer, caretaker, and protector. As a central figure in the household, the mother plays a role in nurturing, maintaining, and preserving harmony within the family. In the painting, the mother is depicted cleaning or sorting rice in the *tampah*, which symbolizes care and concern, making life more

enjoyable, beautiful, and peaceful. This activity also symbolizes the fulfillment of basic household needs, particularly *pangan* (food) as the main sustenance for the human body. The mother is depicted wearing a red shirt, symbolizing energy, emotion, and love, with purple pants representing maturity and wisdom. Third, the child figure in the painting is shown engaged in *canting* (batik painting) with a happy expression. This can be interpreted as a representation of inner peace, which is reflected in the way we handle the *canting*. Holding the *canting* symbolizes the foundation of belief in God, dipping the *canting* into the wax signifies intention and greatness of soul, and applying the wax on the fabric represents carefulness in action. This activity also symbolizes the fulfillment of basic household needs, particularly *sandang* (clothing) as part of human culture. The child is depicted wearing a black shirt, symbolizing self-control, bravery, and the mysteries of the universe. Fourth, the rural background in the painting represents the essence of the *Dhandanggula* song itself an atmosphere of calm, peace, warmth, and simplicity. The depiction of a hut/granary, used for storing food and livestock, can symbolize prosperity and enjoyment granted by God when humans adhere to the four pieces of advice. The added lighting effect creates a dramatic impression, which can be interpreted as the grace and blessings bestowed by God. The background colors are dominated by brown and green, with green symbolizing nature, representing hope and fertility, and brown symbolizing the earth/land, representing serenity and simplicity.

Thus, these colors represent the *Tembang Dhandhanggula*, which conveys meanings of kindness, simplicity, and hope. Based on this description and analysis, this work aims to express how one should strive to achieve beautiful dreams and aspirations, both in the joys and sorrows of married life. Wisdom and happiness are the extrinsic values that this work seeks to convey. Furthermore, it emphasizes that every family member has their own role, both within the family and in society. All behaviors and actions of family members should align with the values and norms learned and upheld within the family and the community. Additionally, wisdom in decision-making is essential to creating a more beautiful and peaceful life.

3. Painting As A Medium Of Cultural Interpretation

Art has long been recognized as an effective medium for expressing human ideas and emotions. Through art, individuals can convey values, thoughts, and experiences without relying solely on verbal language, which is often limited in capturing deeper meanings (Rahma et al., 2024). In this context, the creation of paintings that adapt the philosophy of *tembang macapat* serves as an effort to reintroduce Javanese cultural wisdom in a visual form, making it more accessible and appreciated by a broader audience. Culture, as explained by Koentjaraningrat, is a system of ideas, actions, and human creations passed down through learning from generation to generation. Art, as a part of culture, is not merely an aesthetic representation but also reflects the social and spiritual values that develop within a society (Koentjaraningrat, 1985). In this regard, *tembang macapat*, which serves as the inspiration for the creation of paintings, plays a significant role as an oral literary heritage containing moral

and spiritual teachings, while also reflecting the human life journey from birth to death (Ikawati & Sulanjari, 2024).

Each stanza in *tembang macapat* portrays different phases of human life, from birth, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood to death. The wisdom embedded in these verses not only provides philosophical insight but also reflects the socio-cultural dynamics of Javanese society in understanding the cycle of life (Nisa & Siswanto, 2023). Therefore, adapting *tembang macapat* into paintings is not merely a transformation of media but also a strategy to strengthen the understanding of the cultural values contained within it. As a cultural element, art plays a crucial role in preserving the authenticity and continuity of a community's local identity (Aditya, 2024). By continuously exploring motifs and visuals in painting, artists can present new interpretations that are more relevant to modern society without losing the essence of tradition. Through this approach, painting functions not only as a form of personal expression but also as a medium for cultural preservation that adapts to changing times.

Furthermore, the sustainability of a culture can be maintained through art, as it serves as a medium for documentation, reflection, and education for future generations (Saputra et al., 2024). In an era of globalization that increasingly blurs local cultural identities, it is essential for the younger generation to recognize and understand their cultural heritage. One effective way to achieve this is by presenting traditional values in visually appealing and communicative forms, as demonstrated in this study. Through the creation of these artworks, it is hoped that young people will not only appreciate art but also be encouraged to explore their own culture further and innovate without restrictions that hinder creativity. Thus, this study not only highlights how *tembang macapat* can be visualized in paintings but also emphasizes how art can serve as a sustainable means of cultural preservation. By engaging in unrestricted exploration of motifs and visual concepts, visual art can bridge the heritage of the past with contemporary understanding, ensuring that local culture remains alive and relevant amid the rapid development of modern times.

4. Conclusion

The creation of this painting aims to visualize the philosophy of the human life cycle in *tembang macapat* through a romantic style approach and tenebrism lighting technique. Each artwork produced explores subjects and visual elements that have never been created before while maintaining the values and characteristics of *tembang macapat*. The glaze/glazing technique applied in dramatic lighting enhances the depth and brings a more vivid visual effect to each painting. The dominance of brown tones in these works not only reinforces the Javanese traditional atmosphere but also conveys a warm and profound impression in harmony with the theme of life presented. Beyond being a work of art, this study demonstrates that painting can serve as an effective medium for conveying cultural values in a more communicative and engaging way to the broader public. The research concludes that the acculturation between Eastern culture (*tembang macapat*) and Western culture (romantic style) in painting can create a new artistic form while maintaining a strong connection to traditional

roots. This artwork also has great potential as an educational tool for cultural preservation, particularly for the younger generation, encouraging them to better understand and appreciate their ancestral heritage. With limitless exploration in motifs and creative techniques, painting can continue to evolve without losing its philosophical essence. The findings of this study are expected to inspire other artists to delve deeper into local cultural richness and create artworks that are not only aesthetically valuable but also rich in meaning, contributing to strengthening cultural competitiveness in the era of globalization.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors state that there is no conflict of interest in the publication of this article

Funding Information

None

Acknowledgement

The author expresses gratitude to the informants involved in the research

References

- Aditya, M. C. P. (2024). Revitalisasi Tari RadatSelimut Putih: menjembatani Pendidikan Karakter dan pemahaman Budaya Lokal melalui manajemen Seni Pertunjukan. *Academy of Education Journal*, 15(1), 348–356. <https://doi.org/10.47200/aoej.v15i1.2193>.
- Agung, R. (2024). *Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Tasawuf Dalam Tembang Macapat.*, repository.radenintan.ac.id, <http://repository.radenintan.ac.id/33953/>.
- Ikawati, Il, & Sulanjari, B (2024). Pendidikan Karakter dalam Tembang Macapat Mijil. *Kaloka Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan ...*, journal.upgris.ac.id, <https://journal.upgris.ac.id/index.php/JURNALPBSJ/article/view/12480>.
- Ikawati, Il, & Sulanjari, B (2024). Pendidikan Karakter dalam Tembang Macapat Mijil. *Kaloka Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan ...*, journal.upgris.ac.id, <https://journal.upgris.ac.id/index.php/JURNALPBSJ/article/view/12480>.
- Irsyada, A. E., & Happy, D. H. R. (2021). Representasi Nilai-Nilai Religiusitas Dalam Desain Ornamen Gong Senen Jepara, *ANDHARUPA*, 07, 282-297.
- Kartini, R. (2019). Gayor Gong Senen. Retrieved from <https://www.rumahkartini.com/karya-seni-lukis-kartini-japara/>
- Koentjaraningrat. (1985). *Kebudayaan, Mentalitas dan Pembangunan*. (1st ed.). Gramedia.
- Mintorogo, B. (2023). Sejarah Desa Senenan. Retrieved from <http://senenan.desa.id/berita/read/sejarah-desa-senenan-3320110214>
- Murtiyoso, O. (1999). Kajian bentuk, struktur, fungsi dan simbol elemen estetis keleteng Tay Kak Sie Semarang. In *Universitas Komputer Indonesia*. <http://repository.unikom.ac.id/id/eprint/2035>
- Nisa, DC, & Siswanto, S (2023). Kebertahanan Budaya Tembang Macapat dalam Tradisi Masyarakat Madura (Mengungkap Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Islam). *Indo-MathEdu Intellectuals ...*, ejournal.indo-intellectual.id, <https://ejournal.indo-intellectual.id/index.php/imeji/article/view/153>.
- Nugrahanta, GA, Parmadi, EH, Adji, FT, & ... (2023). Pelatihan tembang macapat dengan pendekatan langsung di SD Kanisius Sorowajan Yogyakarta. *Dinamisia: Jurnal ...*, pustaka-psm.unilak.ac.id, <https://pustaka-psm.unilak.ac.id/index.php/dinamisia/article/view/15685>.
- Pradana, R. W. B. (2020). Bentuk dan Makna Simbolik Ragam Hias pada Masjid Sunan Giri. *Ruang*, 7, 71–84.
- Rahma, LE, Sabrina, SE, Junaedi, D, Mayer, NK, & ... (2024). Seni Sebagai Media Ekspresi dan Rehabilitasi Bagi Anak ABH: Meningkatkan Kreativitas dan Pemulihan Psikologis Anak Melalui Program Pengabdian Seni. ..., jurnal.isi-ska.ac.id, <https://jurnal.isi-ska.ac.id/index.php/sanggitarupa/article/view/6270>.
- Rohidi, T. (2011). *Metodologi Penelitian Seni*. Semarang: Cipta Prima Nusantara.
- Salam, S. (2020). *Pengetahuan Dasar Seni Rupa*. Makassar: Badan Penerbit Universitas Negeri Makassar
- Saputra, R, Hasanah, N, Azis, M, Putra, MA, & ... (2024). Peran Seni Dalam Mempertahankan Identitas Budaya Lokal Di Era Modern. ... : *Jurnal Seni Desain ...*, ejournal.uigm.ac.id, <https://ejournal.uigm.ac.id/index.php/Besaung/article/view/4044>.
- Siyoto, S., & Sodik, M. A. (2015). *Dasar Metodologi Penelitian*. Yogyakarta: Literasi Media Publishing.
- Suryahadi, A. A. (2016). *SENI RUPA untuk Sekolah Kejuruan Menengah jilid 2*. Jakarta: Direktorat Pembinaan Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan.

- Susanto, M. (2011). DIKSI RUPA. Yogyakarta: DictiArt Lab & Djagad Art House.
Triyanto. (2018). Belajar Dari Kearifan Lokal Seni Pesisiran. Semarang: Cipta Prima Nusantara.