

## BOYO KALI COMAL DANCE AS AN INSPIRATION FOR ILLUSTRATIVE ARTWORKS IN A SURREALISTIC REPRESENTATIVE APPROACH

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**Abstract.** This writing raises the theme of the legendary story of the Boyo Kali Comal dance which is realized in an illustration work with a surrealistic representative approach. The purpose of creating this work is to explain the movements, values, and stories contained in the Boyo Kali Comal Dance through surrealistic illustrations. This work aims to reintroduce the richness of local culture to the community with a visual approach. The creation of this work is divided into three stages, namely pre-production, production, and post-production. The resulting work consists of two works. In the analysis of the work, Roland Barthes' semiotic approach is used to interpret the meaning and messages implied in each visual element. The first work entitled "Relying on Togetherness" this work emphasizes the value of harmony, a sense of mutual assistance between living things. The second work entitled "Resonance Boyo Comal" this work is a medium for inheriting the cultural values, beliefs, and spirituality of the local community that continue to live in the Boyo Kali Comal Dance tradition. Thus, this work not only presents visual beauty, but also functions as a medium for inheriting the cultural values, beliefs, and spirituality of the local community.

**Keywords:** Boyo Kali Comal Dance, Illustration Art, Surrealism

### 1. Introduction

Dance is an art form deeply connected to human body movement (Minarti et al., 2023). The human body serves as a tool of movement in dance, serving as a medium for conveying expressive expression. Specifically, traditional dance is a form of dance that has been passed down through generations. Traditional dance is the result of a long-term process of cultural acculturation (Setiawati in Mangku, 2021). Thus, each region has its own distinctive dance movements, influenced by cultural background, geographic location, and social influences.

Creative dance is the result of human thought and perspectives that continue to evolve as an effort to develop dance culture, ensuring that its aesthetic values remain sustainable and relevant to the dynamics of modern development (Wahyuni et al., 2023). According to Aulia in Indrayuda & Hadi (2019), creative dance represents local culture while still prioritizing the cultural values embodied in its movements. This dance draws inspiration from traditional dances, folklore, or even personal experiences, then transforms them into a more modern and expressive form. One such dance creation that embodies cultural values and folklore is the Boyo Kali Comal Dance.

The Boyo Kali Comal Dance is a traditional dance originating from Pemalang Regency, Central Java, and is steeped in cultural values and elements of local legend. The Boyo Kali Comal Dance tells the story of a crocodile and a human, who were once polar opposites, but their relationship changed due to an incident. The story begins with a group of white crocodiles holding a party. During the celebration, a violent storm caused a "loh" tree to fall. "Loh" is the

name for a large tree known to the local community for generations. The fall crushed one of the white crocodiles, immobilizing it, and the group was unable to rescue it. A powerful figure then appeared and rescued the crocodile from the fallen tree. This incident led to a pact between the crocodiles and the humans. The agreement stipulated that the crocodiles would not harm the local community, and vice versa. The group of white crocodiles would protect the community if another group of crocodiles were disturbed, and the group would appear as a warning sign to the community if a disaster were to occur in the area. This incident marked the beginning of the coexistence of humans and crocodiles.

The Boyo Kali Comal Dance tells the story of friendship and peace between humans and crocodiles. This legend was then adapted into meaningful dance movements, containing specific symbols that represent the harmonious relationship between humans and nature. The movements are not only visually beautiful but also possess philosophical meanings that reflect the local wisdom of the local community. The Boyo Kali Comal Dance is a form of regional cultural heritage that is not only unique but also deserves to be preserved and preserved as a valuable part of cultural identity.

While regional dances are generally performed gracefully, the Boyo Kali Comal Dance is distinct. In this dance, the movements are full of energy, strength, and emotion, creating a dynamic and magical impression. This magical nuance evokes the emotions of its audience. In its performances, the Boyo Kali Comal Dance utilizes unique props, with costumes representing white crocodiles, designed aesthetically.

From the explanation above, the visual elements and legend of the Boyo Kali Comal Dance served as a source of inspiration for the author in creating artwork, particularly illustrations. The author explored in-depth to translate the dance's message into a visual form that was not only engaging but also meaningful. In this way, the essence of the Boyo Kali Comal Dance was preserved and enjoyed through the illustrations.

Illustration is a branch of two-dimensional art. Illustration is a work of art created with the aim of clarifying information, whether historical or incidental, but prioritizing artistic value (pure art). Illustrations can be diagrams, graphs, or hand-drawn drawings, either manually or with digital aids, which serve to clarify, embellish, and enliven the meaning in a manuscript or writing (Dio, 2018). Creating illustrations, there are several approaches, one of which is the surrealistic representative approach. Representative is a word that originates from representation. Representation depends on culturally understood signs and images, in language learning, messages, and markings in forming a reciprocal textual system (Purnama in Permatasari et al., 2018). Surrealism is an art movement that displays depictions of objects based on imaginary or dreamlike realms (Bahri & Al Furqan in Admojo et al., 2023). Surrealism is a characteristic or style of surrealism that conveys visuals while simultaneously revealing the story within (Admojo et al., 2023). Thus, surrealistic representation is an art style that presents real objects as visual forms while simultaneously depicting the dream world or subconscious imagination typical of surrealism.

In this context, the author uses a surrealistic approach to creating this illustration. This approach was chosen because it was deemed relevant to represent the author's expression of the legendary stories that occur in the community. Using the Boyo Kali Comal Dance as inspiration in creating this surrealistic illustration also opens up space for exploring local identity through a contemporary approach. Thus, the resulting work serves not only as visual documentation but also as a form of creative interpretation and reflection of inherited cultural values.

The purpose of this work is to explain the movements, values, and stories contained in the Boyo Kali Comal Dance through illustrations using a surrealistic representational approach,

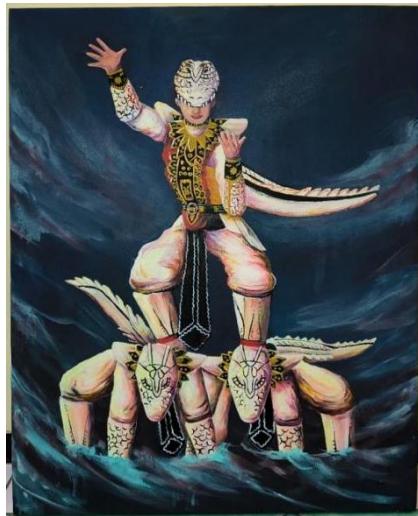
resulting in a visualization that combines elements of tradition with free imagination. This work aims to reintroduce the richness of local culture to the public through a unique and creative visual approach.

The creation of the illustration for the Boyo Kali Comal Dance employed a surrealistic representative approach and manual techniques. The creation of this illustration was divided into three stages: pre-production, production, and post-production. Furthermore, to write the results of the analysis of the work's meaning, the author used Roland Barthes' semiotic approach regarding denotative and connotative meanings to analyze the object of the surrealistic illustration of the Boyo Kali Comal Dance that he produced. Denotation is the level of signification that explains the relationship between signifier and signified in reality, resulting in explicit, direct, and definite meaning. Connotation is the level of signification that explains the relationship between signifier and signified by presenting meaning that is not explicit, indirect, and uncertain (Kusumarini in Hismanto & Sunarya, 2022).

The creation stage began with the pre-production stage, during which the author conducted an interview on September 22, 2024, at the Srimpi Dance Studio, located at Jalan Raya Losari No. 184, Pesadangan, Ujunggede, Ampelgading District, Pemalang Regency, Central Java. This interview was conducted with Denada Widya Kusumaningtyas, S.Pd., to learn about the history of the Boyo Kali Comal Dance. The next step was to observe the Boyo Kali Comal Dance practice at the Serimpi Dance Studio. The final step was document study. The author conducted document study through YouTube, Google Drive, and Instagram. Next, the author prepared the media used in creating this work, including tools and materials such as brushes, palettes, tubes, palette knives, glasses, chalk, canvas, and acrylic paint. Before beginning the production process, the author chose a surrealist approach as the basis for the illustration. Furthermore, in creating this work, the author sought references through Instagram, Pinterest, and other platforms.

The next stage, the author created a rough sketch on A4 paper as an initial outline of the composition that would be realized in the work. Next, the author began applying the base color to the canvas. The author used a yellowish brown or golden yellow as the initial layer to cover the canvas surface. Then, in the next stage, the author begins the sketching process. The sketch is made directly on the canvas surface using chalk. After that, the coloring is done in stages, starting with the background, then continuing with coloring the main object. In this process, the author applies two color mixing methods, namely using a palette and directly on the canvas surface. Finally, the finishing stage is carried out as the final stage in creating this illustration. The final stage is the post-production stage, focusing on the process of perfecting the work that has been created.

## 2. Results and Discussion



**Figure 1.** Work 1

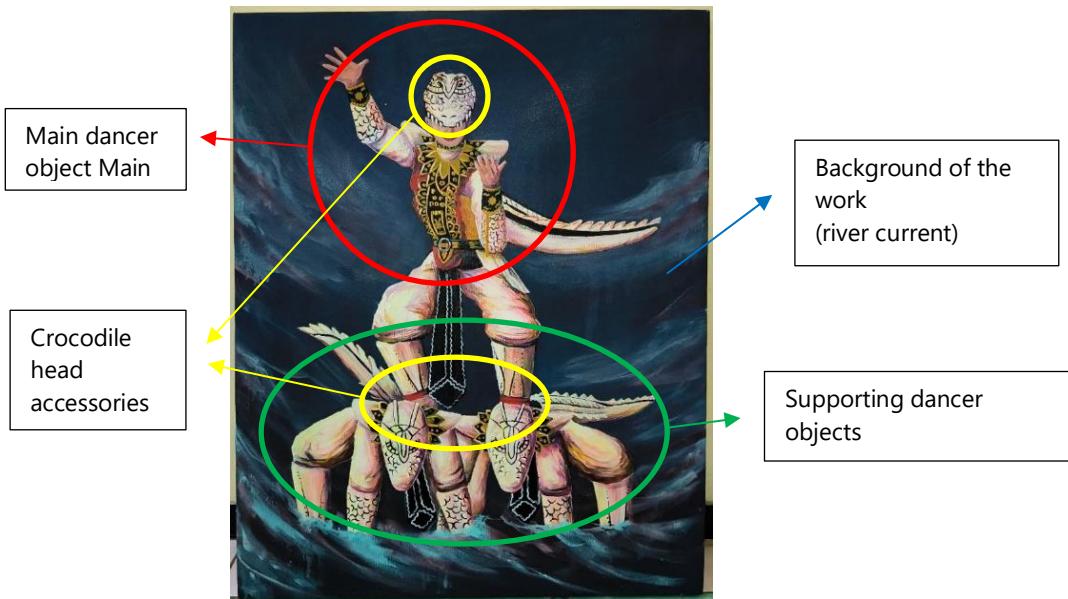
**Source:** Author's documentation

### Artwork Specifications

Title	: Based on Togetherness
Name	: Muhammad Rizqiono
Size	: 80 cm × 100 cm
Technique	: Manual
Medium	: Acrylic paint on canvas
Year	: 2025

The work entitled "Relying on Togetherness", at the denotation stage, dancers are seen wearing Boyo Kali Comal Dance costumes. This illustration displays a pyramid-shaped composition of dancers in this painting, consisting of three dancer figures, with one dancer in the upper position and the other two dancers supporting the main dancer. The three dancers wear crocodile-shaped head covering accessories to emphasize the objects being portrayed. The costume colors used in the dancer figures are white, red, golden yellow, purple, blue, and black. The main dancer in this work is depicted in a standing position with her right hand raised up and her left hand raised in front of her chest, where the palms are facing the dancer's body. The three figures wear accessories on their hands and feet, and tails are equipped with crocodile-like scale motifs. The background of the illustration is predominantly dark blue, light blue, and reddish purple with brush strokes that resemble water currents.

This work utilizes principles of fine art such as balance, proportion, rhythm, and unity. The arrangement of objects in this work creates a sense of visual stability and balance. The dancer's body shape is depicted proportionally. Rhythm is displayed in the background, where the repetition of paint strokes is depicted resembling the flow of water. Unity in this work is formed through the continuity of color, motif, and line, which form a harmonious whole.

**Figure 2.** Analysis of work 1

Source: Author's Documentation

Then, by connecting the existing visual elements, we reach a point of connotation. In this work, the dancers, arranged in a pyramid, can be connoted as solidarity among each other through a spirit of mutual cooperation to achieve a common goal. The main dancer, standing above the other dancers with her right hand raised and her legs in a horse stance, represents strength, power, and leadership. The main dancer's bowed head demonstrates humility and wisdom as a leader. The dancers' costumes use a combination of white, red, golden yellow, purple, blue, and black, creating a harmonious impression, symbolizing the visual of the white crocodile. The work's dark blue, light blue, and reddish purple background create a dramatic atmosphere, representing a storm and strong river currents.

This work is an interpretation of a local legend, representing the myth of balance between humans and crocodiles, which were previously at odds, now coexist. In other words, this work emphasizes the value of harmony and mutual assistance between living creatures. This work also represents the local myth that the white crocodile will appear as a warning of impending disaster. Thus, this work conveys a moral message about the importance of maintaining balance between humans and nature in order to create a harmonious and sustainable life, while also emphasizing the role of local legends in shaping public awareness to be more sensitive to nature.

**Figure 3.** Work 2

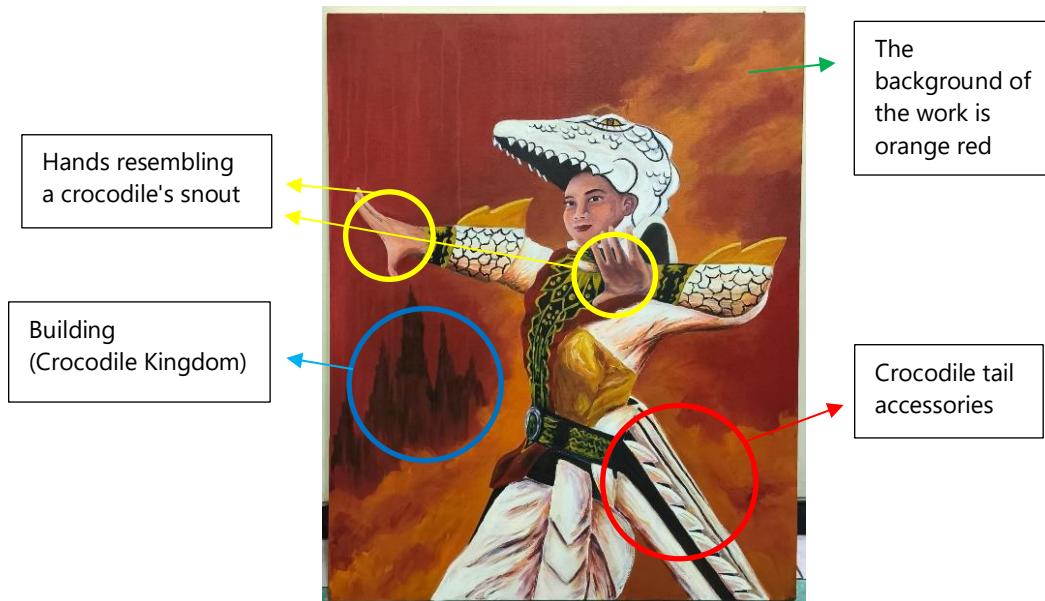
**Source:** Author's documentation

### Artwork Specifications

Title	:	Resonance of Boyo Comal
Name	:	Muhammad Rizqiono
Size	:	80 cm × 100 cm
Technique	:	Manual
Medium	:	Acrylic paint on canvas
Year	:	2025

At the denotative level, this work features a female dancer wearing a white crocodile-head costume from the Boyo Kali Comal Dance, dressed in white, red, black, and golden yellow. The dancer is depicted in detail, her facial expression full of emotion and smile. The dancer's palms are depicted with the thumbs spread apart from the other four fingers. The background of the work is depicted with predominantly red-orange brushstrokes and features objects resembling royal buildings.

The principles employed in this work are balance, proportion, unity, and emphasis. Balance is achieved through the placement of the dancer, the building, and the accessories worn by the dancer. Proportion is displayed with the dancer being larger than the building, creating a sense of distance and proximity between objects. The visual elements presented create a cohesive whole. The dancer is presented with greater prominence, creating emphasis or a focal point within the work.

**Figure 4.** Analysis of work 2

Source: Author's documentation

At the connotative level, the visualization of the dancing women's movements reflects passion, sincerity, and emotion through energetic, strong, and assertive hand movements. The dancers' costumes utilize a combination of white, red, golden yellow, purple, blue, and black, creating a harmonious impression, symbolizing the visualization of a white crocodile. The hand movements depicted represent the crocodile's snout through the position of four fingers together and a wide thumb. The building depicted represents the local belief in a crocodile kingdom in the Comal River. The red-orange backdrop depicts the work, creating a dramatic effect, creating an energetic and warm atmosphere.

This work represents the local myth of the white crocodile, believed to inhabit the Comal River. The dancers, depicted in crocodile-head costumes and hand movements resembling the crocodile's snout, represent the relationship between humans and crocodiles. The building's kingdom-like setting reinforces the mythological narrative of the crocodile kingdom in the Comal River. This work serves as a medium for transmitting the cultural values, beliefs, and spirituality of the local community, which continue to live on in the Boyo Dance tradition of the Comal River.

### 3. Conclusion

This work is inspired by the Boyo Kali Comal Dance, which represents the relationship between humans and crocodiles. The dance is uniquely performed with crocodile costumes and energetic, emotional, magical movements, and a story behind them.

This work uses a surrealistic representational approach. This approach was chosen to express the author's emotions, traditions, and subconscious in interpreting the Boyo Kali Comal Dance. The creative process for this work is divided into three stages: pre-production (interviews, observations, and document studies), production (creating the work using acrylic paint on canvas), and post-production (refining the work).

The resulting work consists of two pieces. The first, titled "Bertumput pada Kebersamaan," measures 80 cm x 100 cm. It depicts two dancers dressed in white crocodile costumes supporting the main dancer. The main dancer, standing above the other dancers with her head slightly bowed, symbolizes the role of a wise and humble leader. Meanwhile, the two dancers at the bottom symbolize the values of togetherness, mutual cooperation, and

mutual assistance to achieve a common goal. The dark blue background of this work creates a dramatic and magical feel.

The second work, titled "Resonansi Boyo Comal," measuring 80x100 cm, depicts a female dancer wearing a white crocodile costume, whose hand movements resemble a crocodile's snout. These movements convey an energetic impression and symbolize the white crocodile, a creature inhabiting the Comal River. The red-orange background creates an energetic and warm atmosphere. The royal building in the work emphasizes the myth of the crocodile kingdom in the Comal River.

Thus, this work not only presents visual beauty but also serves as a medium for transmitting the cultural values, beliefs, and spirituality of the local community. The Boyo Kali Comal Dance, depicted in this painting, demonstrates how art serves as a means of preserving the cultural values of the people of Leboyo Hamlet, Losari Village, Ampel Gading District, Pemalang Regency. This work emphasizes the important role of art in preserving cultural values that are alive in the local community and passed down from generation to generation.

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

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