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Art Discourse in Modern Fine Arts in Surabaya: An Analytical Historical Research

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Abstract

This research aims to understand the art discourse that is the foundation for developing modern fine arts in Surabaya. Art discourse represents the fundamental ideas behind the creation of artworks, which are developed and dialectically discussed within the context of the art ecosystem in Surabaya. The research design is based on an analytical, historical research method with a socio-historical approach. The findings reveal the existence of continuity and change in art discourse from the Aksera generation (Academy of Fine Arts Surabaya) in the 1970s to the post-Aksera generations, namely the 1980s and 1990s generations. Three bases of art discourse emerged as the core expressions of aesthetics in modern fine arts in Surabaya during the 1970s to 1990s: 1. The discourse of nationalism (identity) underlies the art discourse of the Aksera generation; 2. The discourse of the market (commodification of art) becomes the main concern of the 1980s generation; 3. The social-political discourse serves as the platform for the art discourse of the 1990s generation. These three discourses demonstrate similarities and differences within the context of art discourse that evolved in modern fine arts in Indonesia.

Keywords: art discourse; modern fine arts; nationalism discourse; market discourse; social-political discourse

INTRODUCTION

The study of modern fine arts in Indonesia until the present has been predominantly focused on Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, and Bali, which are considered the primary objects of research. These regions are recognized as Indonesia's development centers for modern fine arts. Conversely, other areas such as Medan, Padang, Manado, Semarang, Solo, and Surabaya have yet to receive substantial attention as primary study subjects. Numerous studies have exhibited this tendency; for instance, Holt (1967), Sudarmaji (1974), Yuliman (1976), Kusnadi et al. (1979), Kusuma Atmadja et al. (1990), Wright (1994), Supangkat (1997), Miklouho-Maklai (1998), and Spanjaard (1998). These studies have not provided specific and adequate explanations regarding modern fine arts outside Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, and Bali.

However, it is crucial not to interpret this trend as implying that modern fine arts solely flourish in these four regions or exclusively represent the development centers for modern fine arts in Indonesia. Instead, this phenomenon indicates that

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the emergence and interpretation of modern art in a particular region are closely related to the social-historical context and the growth of artistic infrastructure (Trafi-Prats, 2010).

Sociologically, the foundations for developing modern fine arts are situated in urban areas. This association is linked to the modern infrastructure and superstructure that collaboratively form the art world or art ecosystem, predominantly thriving and evolving in major cities (Becker, 1982, p.310). In the context of modern and contemporary fine arts, the components of the art world include artists, art dealers, collectors, critics, art historians, art journal editors, museum directors, gallery owners, and curators (Sandler, 1996, p.214). Furthermore, modern fine arts emerged alongside the growth of capitalist society and culture centered in major cities as hubs for political, governmental, economic, educational, and trade activities (Chua, 2011; Romain, 2016).

Meanwhile, in the context of interpreting art discourse in a particular region, the components of the art world are typically examined based on their growth and roles in facilitating the emergence of art discourse (Codell, 2018; Romain, 2016; Taylor & Zitzewitz, 2018). This analysis focuses on how discourse evolves and changes in a specific area, with the functional relationship between the components of the art world seen as a critical factor in shaping the discourse. Suppose a region is dominant as a producer of discourse. In that case, it becomes the primary source of study in the field of fine arts and, consequently, in the writing of art history (historiography). This helps to explain why the spatial historiography of modern fine arts in Indonesia primarily revolves around Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, and Bali.

However, the issue with such a historiographic model is that it tends to be too macroscopic (Antoinette, 2020; Antoinette & Maravillas, 2020). In essence, the historiography of modern fine arts in Indonesia focuses mainly on general tendencies occurring in these four regions. However,

if the historiography is deconstructed and developed within the context of different regions, other variations of modern art in Indonesia may likely be discovered. This is because, from a socio-historical perspective, each study area possesses unique cultural characteristics, intellectual bases, and differing conditions of the components of the art world (Chountasi et al., 2021)a field of contemporary art which still remains non-contextualized in a particular socio-political environment by art theoreticians in Greece. The present study explores the concept of newness in new media arts and provides an overview and a critical reflection on the role of the non-profit and non-governmental organizations (NPOs/ NGOs). Therefore, there is a need for research that analyzes discourse and changes in a specific region from a micro perspective, aiming to provide a comprehensive overview of the development of modern fine arts in that area.

Surabaya, as one of the entities of modernity in Indonesia, has historically demonstrated the growth of modern fine arts (Djatiprambudi, 2009, 2019). This development is in tandem with the growth of the city of Surabaya, which, since the colonial era, was designed as a trading and industrial city and a governmental center after Batavia (Jones, 2018). Surabaya became a hub for asserting direct authority in the Eastern Indonesian region.

Based on these grounds, the development of modern fine arts in Surabaya from the Aksera period to the emergence of alternative art forms reflects continuity and changes based on the evolving discourse during each period. These discourses serve as sources of ideas, subsequently elaborated in the practice of fine arts in Surabaya.

In connection with the above exposition, this research focuses on the art discourse within modern fine arts in Surabaya, from establishing Aksera until the emergence of alternative art forms. The changes in discourse will be comprehensively analyzed, encompassing historical backgrounds, socio-cultural contexts, and aesthetic expressions during each decade

(the 1970s to 1990s).

This study will address the following research questions: (1) What are the social-historical backgrounds of the emergence of modern fine arts in Surabaya?; (2) How does the art discourse within modern fine arts in Surabaya from the 1970s to the 1990s relate to the discourses of identity, market, and social politics?; (3) How does this discourse influence the creative process and aesthetic expression of Surabaya painters during the 1970s to 1990s? The temporal scope of this research, in the context of the chronology of the development of modern fine arts in Surabaya, is focused on the 1970s to the 1990s. The spatial limitation of this study is Surabaya itself, emphasizing the significance of historiographical studies within local contexts to enrich the understanding of the development of modern fine arts in Indonesia. This consideration is based on the development of art discourse in modern fine arts in Surabaya exhibits unique and distinctive continuity and changes within the context of modern fine arts in Indonesia.
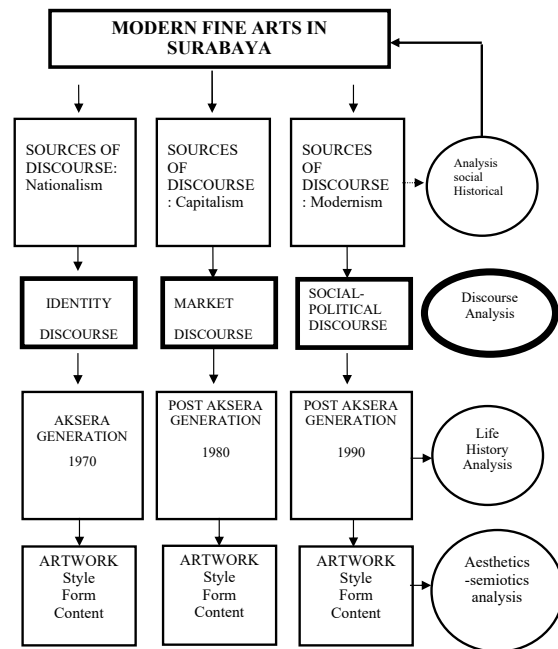
METHOD

This research is designed as an analytical, historical study (Carretero et al., 2017). According to Kartodirdjo (2016), analytical history aims to explain the complex structure of phenomena from various dimensions. Therefore, it requires a set of theories drawn from social sciences and operationalized within the research concepts. This approach allows for a historical explanation that not only considers the chronological development over time or periods but also proportional attention to social, cultural, economic, and political factors to sharpen the analysis of the multilayered development of fine arts.

Kartodirdjo (2016) and Burke (2003) introduced the paradigm of historical research utilizing social sciences. According to Kuntowijoyo (1994, pp.33-39, 1995, p.107), history and social sciences have a reciprocal relationship, benefiting from each other. As Burhan (Burhan, 2003, p.19) sug-

gests, this paradigm has gradually been adopted in the research of fine arts history, which previously focused more on aesthetic tendencies that shaped styles within periods or the uniqueness of personal styles. John House, as quoted by Burhan (2003, p.19), asserts that art studies take on social significance after directing their attention to the institutional context of society. Consequently, from a social perspective, the development of modern fine arts can be explained in multiple layers based on the surrounding social factors (Wolff, 1983).

This research utilizes social theories, such as the theory of hegemony, social change theory, and capitalism theory (Agger, 2003; Berger, 1990; Craib, 1984; Patria & Arief, 1999; Sampurno, 2023). These theories are employed to explain the active social variables that correlate with the phenomena of modern fine arts in Surabaya. The research adopts a sociohistorical approach (Fernie, 1995; Hauser, 1985), aiming to observe fine art phenomena through their encompassing social dimensions.

Figure 1. Model of Analysis

Artworks in this context are viewed as symbolic expressions of society, while society provides the social environment that enables the creation and support of

art. The analytical, historical research method with a social-historical approach is depicted as follows (Figure 1).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Modern Fine Arts in Surabaya

According to Lombard (2008b, 2008a), Surabaya was designed as an entry point for Westernization alongside Batavia (Jakarta) within the context of modernity in Indonesia. From 1923 to 1935, modern cultural activities flourished in Surabaya, including modern fine arts. Under the leadership of the painter Maskan, an art community called Perkumpulan Seni Raden Saleh (Raden Saleh Art Association) was established. Some active artists then were Soepardi, Pik Gan, Slamet, and Djojowisastra (Isbandi, 1975). This was followed by the presence of a Dutch artist, Gerald P. Adolfs, who settled in Surabaya and worked on his art almost throughout the 1940s. His artistic activities and style influenced several artists in Surabaya, such as Karjono, Kasenda, and Kentarjo. Adolf's painting style had a strong impact, particularly on the painter Koempoel, who had received direct instruction from Adolfs (Dermawan T, 1994).

As a modern city in the 1950s, Surabaya attracted many artists from various regions in Indonesia and abroad to showcase their works. Pik Gan Art Gallery emerged as an important venue for art exhibitions during that decade. The gallery was owned by a Chinese descendant antique trader who had settled in Surabaya for a long time. Besides being an exhibition space, it also housed a collection of modern European paintings, classical Chinese paintings, and various artworks from Surabaya and other cities. Additionally, there was a group of artists under the name *Keluarga Prabangkara* (Prabangkara Family, 1950-1957), founded by artists Karyono Js., Bandarkoem, and Wiwiek Hidayat, and later, Sanggar Angin (Wind Studio) was established in 1957. The latter group consisted of young painters at the time, such as Tedja Suminar, Daryono, O.H. Supono,

and Krishna Mustajab, among others. Subsequently, in 1961, the *Kegiatan Kebudayaan Indonesia (KKI)* (Indonesian Cultural Activities) was formed, with several artists actively participating, including Tedja Suminar, Boedi Sr, Ipe Ma'roef, and Hardjono. In 1966, *Kelompok* (The Group) was formed, consisting mostly of artists who had previously been part of other artistic collectives (Isbandi, 1975).

However, these successive groups of artists were sporadic or temporal, focusing mainly on organizing exhibitions rather than being ideologically-based movements that could create a distinctive artistic trend. As a result, their historical impact could have been clearer. None of these groups left a lasting impression as a major artistic movement with a particular style.

Following the establishment of Pik Gan Art Gallery, collectors from various professions began to emerge, and their contributions played a significant role in promoting the growth of modern fine arts in Surabaya. These collectors included figures such as Usman Naban (an Arab descendant book trader), Soedarmadi (a professor of dentistry at Airlangga University), Soenarjo Umar Sidik (a civil servant in Surabaya), Sani (a fabric merchant), Pik Gan (the gallery owner), and Sampan (a garden supplies trader). Particularly, the role of Sunaryo Umar Sidik, a prestigious collector, served as a patron. He collected works by Surabaya artists and acquired paintings by prominent artists such as Affandi, Hendra Gunawan, S. Sudjojono, and Basoeki Abdullah. Sunaryo Umar Sidik's extensive collection covered various styles representing the works of modern Indonesian artists, making it a point of reference for other collectors and artists.

Based on these facts, the social art scene for modern fine arts in Surabaya began to take shape before the 1970s. This phenomenon was influenced by the discourse of nationalistic fine arts, a sequence of the art discourse that formed the platform of the Persatuan Ahli Gambar Indonesia (Persagi) (The Association of Indonesian Drawing Experts). Additionally, art

discourse affiliated with politics, influenced by the debates between the Manikebu and Lekra groups in the 1950s and 1960s, also played a central role in shaping the art discourse. The works of Surabaya artists during this period represented a tendency to explore local cultural values and the spirit of populist nationalism as sources of inspiration to explore national aspirations or national identity (Burhan, 2008, 2013; Spanjaard, 2018).

Art Discourse of the Aksera Generation

The debate on nationalism in modern fine arts in Surabaya continued until the 1970s. Nationalism was understood as a search for identity in fine arts, not in the context of the nation's struggle against colonialism. This shift in understanding was influenced by Sudjojono's statements concerning fine art with a national identity. During the transition from the Old Order regime to the New Order regime in the late 1960s, the debate on nationalism and identity remained strong due to sharp political frictions, reflected in differing views among communist, religious, nationalist, and socialist groups. These frictions affected the diverse views on art ideology, forming the basis of art discourse. As a result, nationalism was perceived as an ideology capable of reconciling these different perspectives (Resobowo, 2004; Spanjaard, 2018).

Against the 1950s-1960s political backdrop, the Surabaya Academy of Fine Arts (Aksera) was established in 1967. Aksera was founded by a group of Surabaya artists who did not have sharply contrasting artistic ideologies. Among them were Gatot Kusumo, Amang Rahman, M. Daryono, M. Ruslan, and Krishna Mustajab. They viewed art as a universal form of expression without burdening it with political context, although the discourse of national identity served as the primary platform for their artistic pursuits.

Sociologically, Aksera emerged from a culture of camaraderie, making it egalitarian. This allowed Aksera to be managed and developed with a free, bold, fearless character without a senior-junior dichotomy. Its teaching activities resembled those of an art studio. Although a curriculum was present, other supporting elements were absent. The subjects taught included Philosophy of Art, Sociology of Art, Psychology of Art, Art Criticism, History of Fine Arts, Knowledge of Tools and Materials, Fine Arts (Painting and Sculpture), Advertising, and Decoration. Philosophy of Art was initially taught to students to shape their perspectives and sharpen their artistic vision. Thus, Aksera aimed to nurture artists with strong characters and a distinct sense of self.

However, Aksera could not maintain its reputation as an art education institution with an egalitarian studio model. With the establishment of the Dewan Kesenian Surabaya (Surabaya Arts Council) as a result of a convention of Surabaya artists and later ratified by the Mayor of Surabaya through Decree No. 678/K on December 6, 1971, Aksera gradually faded away as an institution. Aksera only educated six cohorts of students from 1967 to 1972. Nevertheless, it successfully created a myth of artistic prowess that continues to influence Surabaya's modern fine arts scene. Several of its alums dominated the practice of modern fine arts in Surabaya, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s. Some of them, such as Makhfoed, Dwijo Sukatmo, Nunung Ws., Nuzurlis Koto, and Serudi Sera, achieved phenomenal recognition nationally (Djatiprambudi, 2009).

One influential lecturer at Aksera was Gatot Kusumo (known as a figure of the Indonesian Socialist Party, a cultural scholar, and a film director), who taught the Philosophy of Art and successfully shaped the character and work ethic of Aksera's students in the realm of fine arts. His words always provoked Aksera students: "Be yourself!" This teaching inspired students to explore their potential to produce unique aesthetic expressions. The search for personal identity (personal style) was strongly emphasized at Aksera.

Gatot Kusumo played a central role as a respected patron in shaping the ar-

tistic character of the 1970s-1980s. His thoughts encompassed two poles: the modernist pole, which viewed art as a universal phenomenon, and the nationalist pole, which regarded art as a local phenomenon related to the ideas of cultural identity. These principles were taught pragmatically to form artistic perspectives and attitudes that considered cultural values, social contexts, national ideologies, and national aspirations. This indicates that modern ideas coexisted with a strong Indonesian spirit.

As an institution aspiring to educate aspiring artists or professionals in painting, sculpture, and advertising, Aksera nurtured the tradition of modern fine arts. It introduced various Western aesthetic theories, art history, and a multitude of art knowledge, mostly from a Western perspective. However, students were also exposed to insights into Indonesian culture, history, and multicultural society.

During its early development, the artworks of the Aksera generation tended to lean toward Cubist, Abstract, and Expressionist styles. This tendency was not only popular among Aksera students but was also prevalent outside the institution. For instance, the paintings of O.H. Soepono strongly exhibited a Cubist tendency in the 1960s, while Rudi Isbandi produced many abstract paintings. Daryono was known for his powerful expressionist style, while Amang Rahman explored surrealist elements. The expressive works of these artists showcased distinctive aesthetic expressions, resulting in a diverse range of styles and themes within the Aksera generation. Although their works fell within certain stylistic frameworks, they could manifest strong personal characteristics in both neoplastic and physioplastic aspects. This is how Aksera ignited an artistic spirit that was total, independent, and individualistic (Djatiprambudi, 2019).

From the perspective of modern fine arts in Indonesia, the spirit of searching for identity resulted from the significant cultural debates of the 1930s. These debates became more prominent in the world of fine arts with the emergence of Persagi, which firmly advocated the birth of nationally distinctive fine arts. The spirit of Indonesian-ness, the creed of Persagi, can also be understood as a process of modernity in Indonesian fine arts. The transformation of modern fine arts, emphasizing individual and universal elements that tended to be hegemonic, encountered a reaction in the context of the Persagi spirit. However, this reaction was not dialectical but instead occurred through osmosis. This indicates a transformation of modern Western art ideologies or principles by absorbing values considered suitable and representative of ideas, emotions, and cultural backgrounds. In the context of the development of fine arts in Surabaya after the 1970s, several trends emerged in the search for artistic identity. These trends were perceived as manifestations of exploring unique aesthetics personally.

The first trend involved absorbing the values of traditions close to the heart of each painter. Amang Rahman (1931-2001), a painter of Arab descent, was born and raised in a devout Islamic cultural environment and tended to embrace Islam's cultural and ritualistic values. He internalized this tradition from a young age and deepened his understanding by reading various books on Islam, especially those related to Sufism and Islamic civilization. Besides being known as a painter, he was also a poet. For him, painting was like composing visual poetry, and poetry was like painting with verbal language. Thus, critic Rudi Isbandi described Amang Rahman's paintings as visible poetry. While being a painter, his soul was that of a poet (Nurcahyo & Mamannoor, 2001).

O.H. Soepono (1937-1991) was widely recognized for his strong talent in various fields of art (Figure 2). He was a creative painter, unbound by a single style, technique, or theme. In the 1980s, he produced many paintings inspired by the relief sculptures of Rupadhatu at Borobudur (Figure 2). He had admired Borobudur for a long time, carefully studied every detail of the temple, understood its historical

narratives, and appreciated its philosophical values, eventually discovering its beauty (Figure 2).

Figure 2. O.H. Soepono, Relief of Borobudur II, 1990, 100 x 90 cm, oil on canvas (Source: Catalog of the Surabaya Painter Grand Exhibition).

The search for identity by returning to traditional roots is also evident in the paintings of M. Ruslan (1931-1999) and Krishna Mustajab (1931-1987), who explored wayang (shadow puppet) icons as their aesthetic idiom. They were artists with extensive knowledge of *wayang kulit* (leather puppet) art. Their interest in *wayang kulit* was shaped from childhood, as they were born into Javanese traditions firmly upheld in their family and community environments. Despite both focusing on the theme of *wayang*, their artistic works exhibit distinct aesthetic differences.

This tendency differs from the approach taken by Nunung WS, a student of Aksera from the 1967 cohort. Nunung WS was an abstract artist, and his name is synonymous with his presence in the world of abstract painting in Indonesia. He believed that abstraction was the most suitable aesthetic language for expressing his identity, and he found himself in paintings with an abstract style. His use of color was straightforward, arranged 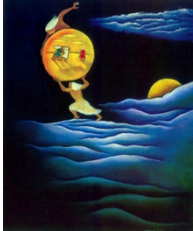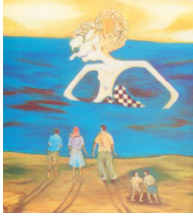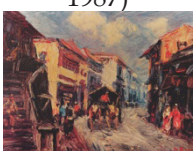in horizontal and vertical layers. Occasionally, a single line would appear as an accent while suggesting specific images. Such lines often brought a captivating charm to his paintings, making them appear more vibrant. In this context, Nunung WS understood the formalist movement that emerged in the United States in the early 20th century. Formalism advocated that paintings be freed from storytelling, narrative, or fairytale elements. Formalists focused solely on the beauty of visual structures.

Another interesting tendency was the pointillist works of Serudi Sera, who belonged to the 1971 cohort of Aksera. From the beginning of his artistic exploration, he had a penchant for exploring points. Clusters of points could evoke images of something specific. These point clusters appeared as fundamental visual components and proved capable of leading the painter to explore symbols or metaphors. They formed configurations of shapes with particular meanings. Some shapes were presented, while others intentionally remained obscure and distant, existing in a horizon of imagery.
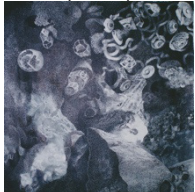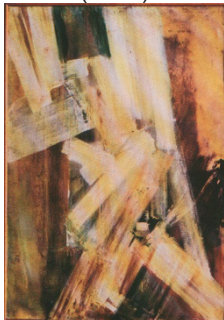
These tendencies depict the absence of stylistic similarities among the Aksera generations in their expression. Each of them had a unique language of expression. Their paintings did not bear the influence of a teacher (patron) on their students. This highlights how the styles of Amang Rahman, Daryono, Krishna Mustajab, and O.H. Soepono, who were considered patrons, were not "inherited" by their students, the Aksera students. This is because there was a strong tradition within Aksera of not becoming epigones of other painters. Therefore, it is not surprising that artists of the caliber of Makhfoed, Nuzurlis Koto, Dwijo Sukatmo, and other Aksera painters displayed strong individual styles rooted in distinctive artistic discourses (Nurcahyo, 1998, pp.24-27).

The diverse group of painters discussed above from the 1970s and Aksera era collectively contributed to the intriguing tapestry of Indonesian art history (Table 1). Their individual identities were shaped by varying educational backgrounds, artistic

Table 1. Discourse Representation of Identity Generation 1970 and Aksera

PAINTERS	EDUCATION	AESTHETICS
Amang Rahman (1931-2001)	Self-taught	Amang Rahman's paintings appear pictorially in a surrealist style, but his creative consciousness is not based on surrealist painting techniques. His works are symbolic, with dark blue and dark green colors symbolizing celestial nature, dominantly evoking a serene, isolated, and mystical atmosphere. His paintings exude a poetic quality akin to personified poems. In the mid-1970s, he ventured into painting Arab-Islamic calligraphy.
M. Daryono (1933-1992)	Self-taught	Daryono steadfastly adhered to a realist-expressionistic style during his career as a painter. His paintings depicted themes drawn from everyday life in his surroundings. His brushstrokes left strong, expressive, and emotional imprints. When painting, he believed in the honesty of his inner vision. Objects merely served as stimuli to express the turmoil of his emotions and thoughts.
O.H. Soepono (1937-1991)	Akademi Kesenian Surakarta, 1958.	O.H. Soepono was a restless painter. His paintings exhibited changing forms of expression, ranging from cubist, surrealist, expressionistic, and realistic styles to the *Rupadhatu* period. The diverse transitions in his style demonstrate a strong elan vital. His paintings always emerged with vitality and remarkable aesthetic achievement.
Krishna Mustajab (1931-1987)	Self-taught	Krishna Mustajab was an artist with many ideas, often building his paintings on scattered concepts. However, he possessed a strong symbolic sensitivity underpinned by abstract thinking. In his later period, he frequently employed wayang (shadow puppet) as a symbolic language to convey his abstract thoughts.
M. Ruslan (1931-1999)	Self-taught	Ruslan's paintings developed along two main tendencies: social realism and Javanese calligraphy. His works focused on portraying the lower-class society with all its daily activities, expressions of suffering, and simplicity. Anatomy and chiaroscuro were given little importance. The emphasis lay on creating atmosphere and expressing the subjects' body language. As a Javanese culture enthusiast, he also painted Javanese calligraphy symbolically.
Koempoel (1912-1987)	Studying painting with Gerald P. Adolf	Koempoel's paintings, from the outset, displayed a tendency towards realism. He painted numerous corners of old Surabaya city, capturing buildings, traditional means of transportation, the bustling harbor, markets, and natural landscapes with attention to light, object characteristics, and atmosphere.

Nunung WS. (1948)	Aksera, 1967	The label of abstract art has become synonymous with Nunung WS. His paintings tended to reveal calm and uncluttered color strokes. The colors he used were simple in horizontal compositions, with rare explorations of texture. He seemed to believe in the suggestive power of colors, capable of evoking rich inner sentiments.
Serudi Sera (1950)	Aksera, 1971	He was an artist who strongly believed in the power of dots (points). Clusters of points dominated his composition. These points appeared in different pressures and configurations, giving rise to specific forms. These forms then weaved together meanings. Although pictorially monotonous, his paintings offered many images resulting from the repetition of dots.
Rudi Isbandi (1937)	Sanggar Pelukis Rakyat, Yogyakarta (1950-1953)	Abstraction is Rudi Isbandi's most prominent expressive language. Before embracing abstraction, his works displayed a tendency toward realism. In abstract art, he truly believed in the minimal use of colors to create specific images. Throughout his career, he went through different periods, including early realism, rhythm, Irian, nuances, collage, and installations. Rudi was an artist who constantly questioned and thought carefully about his art.

philosophies, and aesthetics. In the context of the art discourse of the *aksera* generation, it's evident that these artists showcased a remarkable spectrum of artistic expressions (Table 1). From Amang Rahman's symbolic surrealism to Daryono's emotional realist-expressionism, each artist represented a unique facet of this generation's creative identity. O.H. Soepono's transitions through cubism, surrealism, expressionism, and realism underscored a strong artistic vitality. Krishna Mustajab and M. Ruslan employed symbolism, with the former using shadow puppetry as a language and the latter emphasizing social realism and Javanese calligraphy. Koempoel's realistic portrayal of Surabaya's urban life offered a different perspective. Meanwhile, Nunung WS. and Serudi Sera ventured into abstract art with distinct approaches - serene color strokes and point-based compositions, respectively. Lastly, Rudi Isbandi's artistic journey from realism to abstraction and his exploration of various periods added depth to this discourse. Together, these artists encapsulate the complex and multifaceted "Art Discourse of the Aksera Generation," exemplifying the era's artistic dynamism and its contribution to the rich tapestry of Indonesian fine arts history.

Art Discourse of the Post-Aksera Generation

The painters of Surabaya from the 1980s were born into a situation marked by the prevailing surrealist style, which was practiced phenomenally, and the emergence of the art market as a result of the art boom. The significant influence of the art market led most painters to seek aesthetic expressions that resonated with the market's demands. Consequently, this external factor triggered a shift in artistic

styles. The exploration of art discourse also experienced a shallowing of intellectual thought. During the 1980s, paintings tended to exhibit decorative and naturalistic elements with vibrant colors. The main subjects depicted were the underwater world, flowers, horses, landscapes, dancers, and masks. However, in certain instances, this phenomenon led to creative stagnation (Dermawan T, 2003; Djatiprambudi, 1994).

The impact of the powerful art market was fueled by news of several Surabaya painters achieving success through solo exhibitions in commercial art galleries in Jakarta. In 1989, Satya Budhi, an artist, sold all his artworks during his exhibition at Edwin's Gallery in Jakarta. This success was followed by Asri Nugroho, a self-taught artist who succeeded in the same gallery. Such triumphs improved and drastically changed social-economic conditions for these painters (Djatiprambudi, 2009, 2019).

This reality subsequently created a strong desire among other painters to approach commercial galleries, participate in group exhibitions in Jakarta, and engage with painting collectors by holding exhibitions in hotel lobbies and plazas. All these efforts are aimed at achieving financial success. In this situation, they paid less attention to idealism and the exploration of personal authority, a characteristic of the Aksera generation. The creative process of the 1980s generation represented the dominant relationship with the commodification of art. However, it is not to imply that no paintings carried the weight of aesthetic composition driven by personal authority, independent of market dictates. Such paintings can be seen in the works of Hening Purnamawati, Bilaningsih, Sugiarso Widodo, and Satya Budhi.

The boom in the art market also influenced the activities of the Sanggar Sangkakala, which was established in early 1979. This group consisted of young artists, most still art students at IKIP Surabaya. They included Setyoko, Kris AW, Tiko Hamzah, Heri Suyanto, and Hanavi. These young artists represented the continuity of the Aksera generation's tradition. Sanggar Sangkakala marked the transition between the Aksera generation and the post-Aksera generation. At its inception, this studio dominated the activities of young artists' exhibitions until the late 1980s. However, with the increasing impact of the art boom, the studio's activities gradually declined. Subsequently, its activities took the form of individual pursuits, with some joining in the euphoria of the art painting boom.
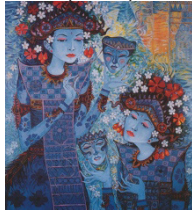
Another notable impact was the emergence of several young artists forming a collective called "Himpunan Pelukis Surabaya" (Hipbaya). They were established in the early 1990s, with Ivan Hariyanto as its chairman, a graduate of STSRI Asri Yogyakarta. After organizing touring exhibitions in several cities in 1992, involving 30 painters, their activities became less visible. One of the reasons for this was the divergence of views within Hipbaya, with some painters advocating for critical and reflective art discourse. In contrast, others tended to accommodate the market.

The ambiguous stance of the 1980s generation raised concerns among senior artists about the development of modern art in Surabaya. According to Rudi Isbandi, this situation can be likened to a swinging pendulum moving from left to right. Eventually, this situation will return to normal. In other words, the idealism of art, based on a critical and reflective art discourse, will continue to serve as a reference. The works of the 1980s generation co-opted by the art market are represented in Table 2.

The artists of the 1980s found themselves in a strong discourse of the art market. This presence resulted in the co-optation of the artistic climate by market forces. The powerful art boom that began in the mid-1980s brought about several phenomena: (1) a shift in the concept of art, marked by changes in style that were exogenously motivated (changed due to external influences), (2) an increase in exhibition activities driven by economic motivations, (3) a decline in the motivation to explore with creative and innovative spirit, (4) a

Table 2. 1980s Generation Market Discourse Representation

PAINTERS	EDUCATION	AESTHETICS
Anang Timur (1955)	Self-taught	Anang's paintings initially exhibited a surrealist style, but after the early 1990s, he shifted towards a decorative style. His themes varied, including reliefs, the underwater world, and dancers. All these works were executed enthusiastically to achieve visual beauty, relying on soft, harmonious colors with minimal contrast.
Salamun K. (1954)	Seni Rupa IKIP Surabaya and Yogyakarta	In the early '80s, his paintings displayed a strong development in abstraction. In the "Rajah" period, he featured paintings sensitive to hatching, carrying the aesthetic weight that delved into traditional themes. Subsequently, after the early '90s, he extensively explored human themes with cheerful, light, and cohesive colors. His paintings exhibited careful contouring to accentuate the object's gesture.
Satya Budhi (1959)	Self-taught	Budhi's paintings always portrayed elongated figures faced with blank expressions, slightly enlarged eyes, and narrow faces. They conveyed a sense of constraint and bitter life experiences. Pictorially, his works appeared surreal. The forms present always represented symbols of his intended thoughts. The colors tended to be dark, melancholic and often exuded a mystical aura.
Bilaningsih (1960)	STSRI "ASRI" Yogyakarta	The world of children, full of innocence and fantasy, served as the main subject in Bilaningsih's paintings. With lively, energetic lines and bright colors, her works leaned towards expressiveness, reflecting the dynamic movements of children. In her compositions, there was always a central figure drawing attention, while the rest surrounded it in mutually supportive fields.
Rilantono (1960)	STSRI "ASRI" Yogyakarta	During the early period, Rilantono's paintings explored the theme of wayang (shadow puppetry). Subsequently, he shifted to figures of dancers and reliefs from temples, all depicted with decorative imagery. Redundancy in lines, colors, and shapes became dominant features. He has transitioned to deforming figures, creating a sense of caricature.
Setyoko (1955)	Fine Arts IKIP Surabaya	In the early period, Setyoko's paintings exhibited a surrealist style, although only partially focused on it. The main themes revolved around humans and their problems. Human figures could appear alone, with vacant gazes yet holding meaningful connotations. Alternatively, they appeared in groups, each with their character. The colors and forms did not intend to depict tangible reality. Instead, they served as metaphors, aiming to capture the inner mood rather than presenting the figures as they are.

Heri Suyanto (1956)	Fine Arts IKIP Surabaya	The decorative tendency has become a defining trait of Heri Suyanto's paintings. His works primarily revolve around graceful female dancers captured with gentle body language. Repetitions of line patterns, colors, and fields combine in harmonious compositions. Cool and soft colors are regularly applied in successive layers to create a spatial effect. Contrasts are absent in his paintings; everything is integrated into harmony.
Ivan Hariyanto (1955)	STSRI "ASRI" Yogyakarta	In the past, he experimented with Pop Art during his student days. Afterward, he inclined towards a surrealist artistic language, possibly influenced by the prevalent trend of surrealistic painting in Yogya at that time. To construct surrealistic imagery, he often incorporated wayang golek puppets, statues, books, people, horses, and masks as the central objects imbued with meaning.
Mas Dibyo (1962)	Fine Arts IKIP Surabaya	His favorite objects in his paintings include roosters, cats, tigers, women with braids, flower vases, and Barong masks. His dynamic, expressive, and energetic line characters dominate the picture plane, highlighting the main objects in prominent proportions. Layered colors create a spatial effect. He is an extremely productive artist, and his aesthetic language leans towards expressiveness while also demonstrating a conscious effort to beautify objects with decorative patterns.
Sugiarso W. (1960)	Self-taught	Mechanical elements resembling machine constructions with a metallic impression are visual elements creatively crafted by Sugiarso. Sometimes he includes metal pieces or circles to reinforce his aesthetic imagery. The imagery of machines and technology appears strongly in his works, intending to convey meaning about the culture of automatism, mechanization, practicality, and logic prevalent in the contemporary era.

dominance of explorations in the form of canvas paintings due to market demand turning art into a commodity.

The art practices of the 1980s generation, which tended to follow the fluctuations of the art boom, eventually faced criticism from the subsequent generation, the 1990s generation. The emergence of this new generation was marked by the rise of alternative art in Surabaya. This phenomenon was evident in the exhibitions of Saiful Hadjar, Agus Koecink, Hary Prayitno, and Hadi Mas'ud, held between 1994 and 2000. During this period, contemporary art in Yogyakarta and Bandung experienced a phenomenal escalation of development. This was concurrent with the growth of the social art field, which supported the development of discourses and practices in contemporary art, exemplified by the emergence of institutions like Cemeti (Yogyakarta), Rumah Nusantara (Bandung), and Rumah Proses (Bandung).

Exponents of the 1990s generation emerged from academic institutions, such as the School of Art Wilwatikta (STKW) Surabaya and the Surabaya Institute of Teaching and Education (now Unesa). STKW aimed to educate future artists, and thus, its education pattern leaned towards encouraging students to be independent by building networks with artists outside the city, particularly young artists in Yogyakarta and Bandung. Consequently, many STKW students became the new generation that drove alternative art after the generation of Saiful, Agus Koecink, and Hary Prayitno.

The early exposure of the alternative art generation to contemporary art discourse was due to their close association with Moeljono, a prominent figure in the

art world. They actively participated in several art projects with Moeljono, which influenced contemporary art's knowledge, paradigms, and practices. Moeljono was a noted educator at STKW during that time. Additionally, they often invited various artists from Yogyakarta to work together, forming workshops with their results presented within the campus. Such a campus environment stimulated them to continue creating. Small discussions were frequently held to study literature related to contemporary art, and they actively accessed internet sites providing information on sources of contemporary art discourse.

In the context of post-Aksera art development, alternative art represented an act of rebellion. Their discourse base differed from the previous generation. The term "alternative" was understood as a form of real difference in discourse and practice. Their works often took the form of installations. While painting was still utilized as a medium of expression, its presence leaned towards representing critical thoughts rather than merely questioning lyrical beauty.

The group of young artists, most of whom were graduates of art schools, offered new and more progressive ideas, presenting what they considered new alternatives. They believed that art should originate from the context of societal issues. According to their beliefs, art should reflect the social restlessness experienced by society. They considered art as a means to express the complexities of social issues. The works of this alternative art group highlighted the concept of contextual aesthetics, which resonated with the platform of contemporary art discourse that began to be debated since the emergence of the New Art Movement.

Contemporary art possessed a paradigmatic nature that challenged and questioned conventions. This trait often became overly pronounced, overshadowing its artistic nature. The focus tended to be on its provocative aspect. Metaphors, symbolism, visual language, unique forms, and aesthetic expressions were sometimes overlooked. This phenomenon was evident among Surabaya artists of the 1990s generation, whose birth coincided with the third tendency in post-Aksera art discourse, which involved seeking alternative forms of aesthetic expression perceived as new and embracing multimedia and new media (Table 3). This quest for alternatives was driven by contemporary art discourse, which emphasized plurality and the synthesis of disciplinary boundaries.

The artists of the 1990s generation aspired to bring art into a field of meaning directly related to the social-political conditions of society (Table 3). Therefore, this generation vigorously explored social-political themes with a new visual language, predominantly through installation art. They tended to depart from conventional visual languages, such as lyrical paintings that often lacked contextual relevance to their surroundings (Table 3).

The painters of the 1990s generation, as detailed in Table 3, were integral to the socio-political discourse of their era, channeling their unique educational backgrounds and aesthetics to offer insightful commentary. Adi Kaneko's monochromatic depictions of individuals engaged in power struggles encapsulated his keenly observed social realities. Fibri Andrianto's transition from conventional mediums to intricate collages and assemblages with found objects mirrored her evolving engagement with socio-political phenomena. Arifin Petruk's innovative use of installation art and multimedia elements amplified her socio-political themes, creating immersive experiences for viewers. Jopram's shift to spatial abstraction and pastel palettes allowed her to explore the subtle intricacies of life within the socio-political context. Bambang BP.'s incorporation of found objects, clay, and fiberglass into her installation art portrayed displaced individuals and rulers' behaviors, all rooted in the socio-political climate. Martin's embrace of electronic mediums like video art and installations breathed life into her socio-political concepts, infusing her work with imaginative depth. Suharman's diverse

Table 3. Representation of Socio-Political Discourse of the 1990s Generation

PAINTERS	EDUCATION	AESTHETICS
Adi Kaneko (1966)	Fine Arts IKIP Surabaya	The figures with strange faces, some masked, wide-open eyes, and robust bodies, all engaged in wrestling-like interactions as if vying for something. They are often depicted in monochromatic colors, black-brown hues. There are emerging colors, but they still give a minimal and simplistic impression. This is the expressive language tendency of Edi Kaniko. Such depictions of humans represent the social reality he keenly observes. Everyone desires power.
E.Y. Fibri Andrianto (1974)	Sekolah Tinggi Kesenian Wilwatikta Surabaya	Fibri is an artist who is not easily satisfied with conventional mediums. Her works often display a tendency for diverse techniques, ranging from regular painting techniques to collages and even intricate assemblages. Found objects frequently appear in her works, seamlessly integrated into her creations. Her ideas are developed from a keen observation of socio-political phenomena. This differs from her earlier period, where she was inspired by cosmological issues and their relationship to her existence.
Arifin Petruk (1965)	Self-taught	Initially known as a theater practitioner, she has more recently emerged with installation artworks. The ideas behind her works stem from socio-political themes. She extensively utilizes found objects, electronic assemblies, and video effects to support her concepts. Besides manifesting in concrete forms, there are also auditory imageries to strengthen the atmosphere and spirit she conceives.
Jopram (1975)	Sekolah Menengah Seni Rupa (SMSR) Surabaya	Her early period works reveal a preference for decorative patterns, fully relying on the power of lines. Subsequently, the repetitive imagery of lines in specific patterns shifted to spatial images that depended on layered divisions of the surface. The space appears illusory, non-real, and relatively abstract. The colors become soft and pastel, complementing the ideas related to her life.
Bambang BP. (1980)	Sekolah Tinggi Kesenian Wilwatikta Surabaya	In addition to painting, she also engages in installation art. She not only relies on the technique of assembling found objects, but she also crafts these objects using clay and fiberglass, all originating from socio-political themes. Displaced people, pursuits by authorities, and various behaviors of arrogant rulers emerge in her works.
Martin (1975)	Diskomvis Petra Surabaya	Her explorations into new mediums have become familiar to her. Her affinity with computers, videos, and various other electronic devices has led her to utilize these objects to visualize her concepts. Video art, video installations, and video performances have become her expressive language, believed to be rich in imagination.
Suharman (1952)	Fine Arts UNS Surakarta	Her creative ventures are diverse, manifested in glass paintings, sculptures, and performance art. Her works are always infused with sarcastic humor to poke at human behavior. Social themes are her primary source of inspiration. The 'wayang' figures represent representations of human temperaments that she critiques.

creative ventures, infused with sarcastic humor and 'wayang' symbolism, critically examined human behavior within the socio-political framework. Collectively, these artists served as prominent voices in the "Representation of Socio-Political Discourse of the 1990s Generation," offering sharp and poignant commentary on their time's complex social and political dynamics through the language of art.

CONCLUSIONS

The construction of art discourse in modern art in Surabaya over three decades (1970s-1990s) was initiated by the emergence of the Aksera generation in the 1970s. This generation was born from the discourse of nationalism, which pragmatically translated into the search for personal identity in their paintings. The belief in the importance of personal identity (personal style) in art stemmed from the discourse about national art or art with a national personality, which was the credo of Persagi. The modern art credo that positioned artists at the center of culture was translated into the dialectic of seeking personal identity. Each artist was expected to create a uniquely expressive language or aesthetic idiom.

This tendency was pursued in various ways, including (1) returning to traditional cultural roots, (2) exploring visual elements formally, and (3) exploring social reality. The artistic inclination to question personal identity resulted in the works of the Aksera generation lacking a direct connection to the realities of life. As an education aimed at nurturing future artists, Aksera succeeded in producing artists with strong stylistic originality.

The post-Aksera generation, comprising the 1980s and 1990s, exhibited tendencies toward (1) decorative and surrealist paintings favored by the market, (2) a market discourse that reduced critical and reflective attitudes in aesthetic expressions, and (3) rebellious art as an antithesis to market-coopted art.

The art discourse of the 1980s focus-

ed on lyricism, while the art discourse of the 1990s embraced non-lyricism. The discourse of the 1980s was formed by the hegemony of the market, which treated paintings as commodities. On the other hand, the discourse of the 1990s was shaped by the discourse of contemporary art, which raised issues of opposition to universal and linear modernism.

The Aksera generation can be seen as a response to modernism by seeking personal identity based on nationalistic issues. In contrast, the post-Aksera generation (especially the 1990s) responded to contemporary art discourse. Between these two poles, another point of development responds to the phenomenon of the commodification of painting. Thus, the development of visual arts in Surabaya over three decades has passed through three phases of historical discourse as the foundation of modern art practices in the city. This phenomenon represents continuity and changes in historical discourses, demonstrating similarities and differences in the art discourses that underlie modern art growth in Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, and Bali.

Historical research focused on art discourse with a sociohistorical approach was initially challenging for art historians to accept. They were accustomed to confining art issues solely to artworks (formal analysis) and artists (historicism). This approach was criticized for being too focused on social context and neglecting discussions of artworks and their underlying discourses.

Such critiques typically came from perceptual and formalist thinkers. In contrast, semiotic thinkers tended to remind that a formalist art discourse, or one solely focused on the physical form of the artwork, would be trapped in perceptual, reducing art to a matter of structure (artistic allure). Similarly, if art is solely viewed through a social context, it would be confined to pure social history. Meanwhile, the social-historical approach emphasizes the study of ideology as the source of art discourse. Therefore, in this research, an

effort has been made to include two models of discussion: first, focusing on social context, and second, emphasizing the form of the artwork (form) and the signs, as well as the life history of the artists.

The implications of this research are twofold. First, modern Indonesian art history is still predominantly written using a linear historical model, limited to certain cities considered centers of modernity, and chronologically inclined towards socio-political events. Hence, there is a need to develop a form of historical explanation that sharpens the main focus, expands the areas of development, and diversifies the research models.

Second, studying art discourse in modern art in Indonesia has been relatively scarce. Thus, the art discourse as a framework for the debate in the development of art history needs to be comprehensively understood. Art discourse as a fundamental historical framework will be deeply examined in various important domains of art history, such as ideas, will, actions, changes, networks, figures, and infrastructures in a specific region.

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