Visual Styles of Indonesian Superhero Gundala Putra Petir Film Posters

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ABSTRACT

Film is a mass communication media in the form of a series of motion pictures taken from moving objects andpresentedin a continuous movement of the events that serves as a medium of entertainment, education, and information. One of the film genres that is popular in Indonesia today is the superhero genre such as *Gundala Putra Petir* film. The Gundala figure is an adaptation of Hasmi's comic character that was adapted into films in 1981 and 2019. The *Gundala Putra Petir* film cannot be separated from the promotional media, one of which is film poster. On a film poster, there are visual communication design elements in the form of pictures (illustrations), letters and typography, colors, composition, and layout. The purpose of this study was to determine the visual aesthetics of *Gundala* film posters designed in different eras. This research was a qualitative research using descriptive method with aesthetic approach. The five elements were discussed using Monroe Beardsley's aesthetic theory to determine the aesthetic values of the film posters' visual styles to determine the ideal aesthetic values in the visualization of the film posters.

Keywords: Film poster, *Gundala Putra Petir*, Aesthetics of film poster

1. INTRODUCTION

Comic is a popular form of communication media that has a long history in Indonesia. Comics with superhero theme or genre are a type of comics that are very popular among the public [1]. Superhero comics typically present stories about super heroes who defend justice and save humanity. The emergence of superhero comics in Indonesia was influenced mainly by the social and cultural conditions of the people at certain times. The site of a comic production and the site of the comic setting it self are strongly influenced by the site where the comic is seen by various audiences. The audience characteristics are one of the driving directions towards where a superhero comic is taken to [2]. During the 1960-1970s periods, one of the superhero comics that became a center of attention in Indonesia was "Gundala Putra Petir" (Gundala Son of Lightning) created by Hasmi in 1969. The popularity of this comic was proven by the adaptation of the character "Gundala" into the big screen in 1981. The film "Gundala Putra Petir" was released after director Lilik Sudjio bought the comic license from Hasmi.

Coming along with films, before they are even played in theaters, promotional media in the form of movie posters play an important role. There are two aspects that are used as values in film posters including the function values as promotional means and the visualization

values as a work of visual communication design. Both of these elements work simultaneously [3]. Thus, the position of a film poster is very important in representing the film it self. Movie poster is a media that is often appreciated due to its representation of a film theme through a unique and interesting visual design [4]. The development of film posters in Indonesia also experienced rapid progress along with the development of Indonesian films themselves. In making a poster, the theme is usually determined according to the film's narration [5]. The poster is one of the main means used by film market actors in Indonesia in the everly popular film market where the role of cinema as the main place to enjoy films has not been replaced by other media such as television, computer screens (internet), mobile screens (smartphones) and etcetera.

The functions of film postersare not only limited to conveying information from the producer to the consumer, but it must also be able to improve the aesthetic value of the film, that will also improve the artistic awareness of the culture and fellow people where the film and poster are presented [6]. Film posters are designed to intrigue consumers to watch the films, thus the contents of the film poster must be able to win the hearts of the potential consumers that they would want to spend time watching the film [7]. The visual posters of *Gundala Putra Petir* in 1981 and 2019 are interesting to study, because each of the film posters has a different style that adapts to the trends that developed inits time. This paper will focus on studying the visual styles in the two posters from different eras in the terms of poster building elements and the aesthetic elements.

2. METHOD

This study applied descriptive qualitative research method as ameans to answer to the challenges and understand the phenomenon under study which includes the building elements and aesthetics of the *Gundala Putra Petir* film postersfrom 1981 and 2019. The type of this research was a case study and the data collectionswere conducted through library research and interview. The data were collected by reviewing several books and scientific articles related to film posters. Further, the data that had been collected were reduced by sorting them outto be used and organizing them in such a way so that the final conclusions can be drawn. To examine the visual style of the *Gundala Putra Petir* film posters, researchers used the Monroe Beardsley aesthetic views which explain the three characteristics that constitute aesthetic (beauty) properties of objects in general.

In aesthetics, Monroe Beardsley articulated the last grand, simple, and elegan theory. Beardsley holds that the directly relevant evaluative properties of work are limited to three: unity, complexity, and intensity [8].

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Superhero comics tellstories about superheroes that always defend justice and save humanity. Indonesian superhero characters are considered unique because many of them have similarities with Western superhero characters. One character that is often considered to have similarities with Western superheroes is the character of *Gundala Putra Petir* [9]. In 1981, the figure of *Gundala Putra Petir* was adapted into a film and then the film was remade in 2019. The gap between the two films is 38 years. The long time gap between the two films certainly made the films influenced by different cultural and technological development trends that represent their eras. The difference can also be seen from the visual styles of each of the film posters.

Film poster is a form of visual communication that is designed to stimulate and persuade people to watch a film [10]. In line with the film, poster designs also experienced changes or evolution and even revolution caused by the emergence of new technology and the spread of visual culture throughout the world in the 20th century. Along its history, film poster has always been an inseparable part of the distribution and circulation activities of film products. Film posters are used to provide the public, as the film market, a general description of the narrative or film story, outlined in a still image whose form comes from diverse cultural traditions ranging from popular, traditional to modern [11]. A film poster is also a work which has both function and visual values. One of the objectives of film poster is to lead potential viewers to watch the film, even though it is usually not accompanied by persuasive messages or sentences. This is where its uniqueness lies, because in reality, film poster is also a "monumental" work related to the film being made.

Film posters are interpretive works of designers related to the film stories. Film posters have several elements, such as the title, main characters, message, and background [12]. All elements contained there in are solely for the sake of directing potential viewers to the same understanding regarding the film. Like in superhero films, the visuals of the posters are designed to display superior, domineering, heroic and powerful impressions.

Gundala Film Poster in 1981   Gundala Film Poster in 2019

3.1. Visual Communication Design Elements of GundalaFilm Posters

Visual Communication Design is the study of communication concepts and creative expression forms, which are applied in a variety of visual communication media by processing graphic design elements consisting of images (illustrations), letters and typography, colors, composition, and layout. All these elements are applied to convey messages visually, audio, and / or audio visual to the intended target [13]. According to Kusrianto, Adi(2007: 140), illustration is an art that is used to deliver a depiction of a purpose or goal visually [14]. Based on this description, in the 1981 poster of the film *Gundala Putra Petir*, the main illustration displays the figure of the superhero *Gundala* who seems dynamic, agile, and has a powerful lightning power, and on as supporting illustrations, images of pieces or scenes from the film were displayed.

The appearance of *Gundala Putra Petir* poster illustration in 2019 is similar to the design of an American superhero film poster. The visualization of *Gundala* character in the 2019 film poster who is surrounded by his enemies is in line with Jason Dittmer's statement in his research, that the visuals of American superhero films after the events of September 11, 2001 depicts gloomy atmosphere, such as when evil characters are planning mass murder in urban areas and superheroes emerge and are determined to thwart the evil plan [15].

Typography in visual communication design is considered as a "visual language", which means a language that can be seen. Thus, typography must be able to communicate in its strongest form, clarity and legibility [16]. The typography that appears prominently on the poster is the film title.In addition to its larger size than the other letters, typography in the titles of *Gundala* is given the addition of a three-dimensional effect with curved perspectives. Meanwhile, in the 2019 *Gundala* poster, the typography used the sans serif font type. What is different is the use of typography in the film's title. The letters used in the 2019 *Gundala* movie title are custom typefaces, in which the letters were specifically created for the purposes of graphic designs. Therefore, the use of custom typefaces letters can reflect the characteristics of the *Gundala Putra Petir* film by giving a strong impression of action with a blend of modern and elegant nuances.

Color is a complement to a picture and represents the psychological atmosphere of the painter in communicating. Color is also a very sharp element to touch vision sensitivity and to stimulate the emergence of emotion, sadness, joy, mood, spirit, and others [13]. Color can be used not for the sake of forms but for the sake of color itself, to express the possibility of its beauty and to be used for various forms of expression as well as psychological expression [17]. Each poster applies different dominant color elements. The use of colors on the 1981 *Gundala* poster is dominant in term of contrast.The gradation of black to blue was selected as the poster background to visualize the atmosphere of a cloudy sky where lightning comes from. In addition, the yellow color was also used as a three-dimensional part of the name *Gundala*. The red color is placed as the color of the subheadline and the name of the author of *Gundala* comic character and the film actor.Whereas in the *Gundala* poster of 2019, the color used tends to be black as a visualization of strength and evil.

In order for a graphic design work to be good, compositions need to be taken into consideration. Composition is the organization of visual elements arranged harmoniously in a graphic design work between parts and parts, and between parts and the whole design. Harmonious composition can be obtained by following the rules or principles of composition which include unity, balance, rhythm, contrast, focus, and proportion [13]. In the 1981 *Gundala* film poster, the clearly shown composition is the placement of illustrations and the title of the film which is more dominant than the other elements. This aims to make the poster noticed, seen, and understood in terms of its contents and purposes by the audience so that they react in certain manner. The domination of the bluish black gradation (from bottom to top) also provides an opportunity for *Gundala's* illustration to be the audiences' focus of attention.

The illustration placement of the *Gundala* figure in the 2019 poster is very dominant with a large size right in the middle of the poster. The perspective direction of building rows, rows of enemies standing in line, and the lightning direction at the top also contributed to the dominance of the *Gundala* figure on the poster. The use of dark color on the background makes an impression of a dominant dark atmosphere throughout the poster. Black and dark atmosphere on the poster shows the impression of crime dominance in a city. Both the 1981 and 2019 *Gundala* film posters were seen using centered balance and symmetrical balance, as well as the visual format of the poster which has a vertical direction of motion. First, the

reader is directed to see the *Gundala* figure in the middle, then to see other visual elements sequentially. In the 1981 *Gundala* movie poster, the impression of rhythm lies in the type of typography and color elements, in which there is not much use of lettertypes so that the message in the poster is quickly understood by the audience. Whereas in the 2019 *Gundala* movie poster, the impression of a strong rhythm found in the line of characters standing on the right and left of the building roofs which seem to reinforce the existence of *Gundala* as the main character in the poster.

On the 1981 *Gundala* film poster, the contrast element was very visible in the use of color and size in the illustrations. Whereas in the 2019 *Gundala* film poster, the contrast element also appears in the use of typographic colors on the poster background, so that the text in the poster is easier to read than the other text presented in the *Gundala* poster in 1981. The focuses on the *Gundala Putra Petir* film posters in 1981 and 2019 are relatively similar in term of using *Gundala* figure as the center of attention. Proportion is the ratio of size between parts and parts and between parts and whole design. The principle of composition emphasizes on the sizes of each element to be arranged and the extent to which that size supports the harmony of the design presentation [14]. In the poster films of *Gundala Putra Petir* in 1981 and 2019,the proportion puts more emphasis on the figure of the superhero *Gundala* as the main character of the film. The last visual communication design element is layout. In the visual poster of the *Gundala Putra Petir* films in 1981 and 2019 the layoutsare almost the same.

3.2. Aesthetics of *Gundala Putra Petir* Film Posters

The aesthetics of the *Gundala* film poster, related to the beauty of vital visual communication design elements, including illustrations, text/ typography and color, are assessed using Monroe Beardsley perspective in *Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* which explains the three characteristics that make the good (beautiful) traits of aesthetic objects, namely: (1) Unity, meaning that an aesthetic object is well-composed or perfectly shaped, (2) Complexity, in which aesthetic objects or works of art are not very simple, but rich in content and elements that contradict oneaother or contain subtle differences, and (3) seriousness (intensity), where a good aesthetic object must have certain qualities that stand out and not just something empty. It does not matter what quality it contains (such as, a gloomy or joyful atmosphere, a gentle or rough nature) as long as it is intensive or serious [18]. On the *Gundala Putra Petir* film posters in 1981 and 2019, the aesthetic characteristics found are as follows:

3.2.1. Unity

Unity can be interpreted that aesthetically arranged objects are well formed or have perfect shape. In the visual poster of the *Gundala Putra Petir* film in 1981 and 2019, the composition of *Gundala's* character illustrations in terms of visual communication design elements such as color, typography, and layout form an inseparable unity. The arrangement of visual communication design elements does not dominate one another so it really seems united. The second illustration of the poster that places *Gundala* figure as the dominant feature among the poster elements merged with a brief typography using sans serif letters that appear firm. This makes the visual display to be whole and unified. The two posters of different eras use visual techniques of photography, but the difference is that the poster in 1981 uses montage techniques to compile the "stories" in their posters while the posters in 2019 show more digital processing techniques to build the atmosphere in the posters. This is understandable because in 1981, graphic design technology was not as sophisticated as 2019.

3.2.2. Complexity

The aesthetic objects or works of art under study are not simple, but are full of contrast element contents and subtle differences. On the 1981 *Gundala* poster, the complexity is apparent from the visual arrangement of large and small illustrations. To keep it realistic, the illustration arrangement wasmade in such a way as to produce a poster plot that is easily understood by the readers. While, in the posters of 2019, the complexity is apparent from the arrangement of the poster illustration perspectives, which were made in such a way that the visual poster can represent the film atmosphere.

3.2.3. Intensity

A good aesthetic object must have certain qualities that are highlighted and not merelyan empty thing. It does not matter what quality it contains (such as, a gloomy or content atmosphere, gentle or rough nature) as long as it is intensive or serious. In the 1981 *Gundala* movie poster, the intensity is evident from the the poster layout arrangement that visualizes an interesting storyline in the poster, whereas on the 2019 *Gundala* movie poster, the intensity is very apparent in the term of illustrations so that the film atmosphere can be felt by the human vision. If not done intensely, of course, the poster will not be properly arranged.

The visual styles of the *Gundala Putra Petir* film posters in 1981 and 2019 have distinct design characteristics, each of which represents the trends that occurred in the respective eras. The visual language of film posters in each era remains strong.This is because the image is still the main attraction to the audiences of the poster depiction. Regarding the visual styles of the film posters, in line with Zhaohui Yuan's research, graphic posters illustrate the imagination of the fantasy film world, which is able to arouse the audiences' enthusiasm to appreciate the film work. The same principle applies in graphic design of film posters that requires extensive references and artistic thinking that represent social and cultural elements to produce meaningful and colorful works [19]. In the visual poster of *Gundala Putra Petir* film posters, the fantasy elements are arranged to persuade the audience to be interested to watch the film and perceive the moral message from the film.

4. CONCLUSION

Technological advances and trends that develop in each period greatly affect the visual styles of the two posters of the *Gundala Putra Petir* films. The visual styles of the two posters look different but it does not lose the impressions of originality from the *Gundala* character as an Indonesian superhero.The visual styles of each *Gundala* movie postersare actually inseparable from the influence of the modern visual style of the Hollywood film poster. The trends that occurred in each era are also quite visible from the visual style of the two posters of the *Gundala Putra Petir* film. Aesthetic visual communication design work will also build an aesthetic atmosphere to the people who see it. Both visual styles of the *Gundala Putra Petir* movie posters in 1981 and 2019 have fulfilled the aesthetic elements so that they can be considered as good visual works.

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