

# Collaborative Art as a Representation of the Spirit of Multiculturalism: Appreciation of Cultural Diversity and Locality Values

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**Abstract.** Contemporary artists are frequently viewed as conductors who oversee and organize collaborative art projects. These types of projects involve the creative contributions of multiple individuals to develop multicultural artworks. Postmodernist perspectives are closely associated with multiculturalism, and the aim of the collaborative art project in this study is to showcase a perspective of the creative process that flows naturally, equally, reciprocally, and adaptively. The artists are responsible for disseminating their ideas and managing various processes. They receive creative feedback from audience participation. This study concentrates on the creativity of artists from two art exhibitions in Magelang and Yogyakarta, employing Stuart Hall's theory of art representation, looking at mental representation and representation systems. Multicultural-based artworks are collaborative performance art, incorporating painting, music, and movement. As a result, the exhibition showcases the spirit of multicultural art, highlighting cross-cultural collaboration and promoting cultural diversity and local values.

**Keywords:** Contemporary Art, Collaborative Art, Multiculturalism, Local Values, Artworks

## 1 Introduction

Contemporary art and culture in Indonesia are confronted with new challenges in the era of globalization, wherein the scope for creative expression is boundless. In this context, globalization presents potential threats and opportunities for Indonesia's diverse and multicultural society. The motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* reflects a profound acknowledgment of the equal significance of diverse cultural phenomena, symbolizing a strong commitment to embracing differences while upholding unity within diversity [1]. This ethos aligns with the fundamental principles of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, underpinned by the philosophy of *Pancasila*, which espouses cultural plurality and the ethos of multiculturalism. Notably, multiculturalism delves into exploring a community's identity, not solely through its religious background but also its cultural heritage, positioning culture at the core of multiculturalism. While recognizing religious diversity, multiculturalism emphasizes cultural expression when intersecting with religious diversity, recognizing the intrinsic link between cultural expression and religious life [2].

There needs to be more research and art exploration on how contemporary Indonesian artists navigate and negotiate the challenges and opportunities presented by globalization, multiculturalism, and the postmodern art scene. The next challenge is understanding how artists integrate local cultural content and religious philosophy while addressing the impact of globalization and postmodernism, which remains an unexplored area that needs further research regarding the interpretation of postmodern conceptions and their representation in symbolic artworks. Contemporary artists often incorporate local cultural content and religious philosophy into their work, giving their art a unique and distinctive personal identity. This distinguishes their art representations in the postmodern art scene. In this paradigm, there is no longer a single objective standard of value in art. Instead, diversity and plurality of artistic expression involving various cultural values are embraced. This shift has led to a more open and subjective understanding of art. Any artistic goal, style, method, or combination is considered valid. This celebration of 'openness' is a hallmark of postmodernism, as stated by Arthur Danto [3].

Contemporary art in the 21st century tends to focus on sociopolitical themes, collaborative efforts, and hybrid art forms. Artists can explore new and unique approaches to their work, often creating site-specific installations or interactive virtual worlds [4]. As P. Villeneuve and M. Erickson note, this freedom allows for unconventional creations that can shape and alter our minds. Art has the power to transform us emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. It can inspire reflection, awe, and beauty and spark our imagination and creativity. Therefore, art can be a powerful tool for communication, raising awareness, and changing our perception of the world. As stated by T. Roald and J. Lang [5], "Art can shape and alter our minds."

The face of Indonesian art contains multicultural, intercultural, and diverse values in the dialectic of regional (traditional) arts, and there is a transformation of ideas and visual elements by absorbing modernization from Western colonialism, as well as contact with the world of modern education [6]. On the other hand, to gain identity or global recognition, people also want to return to the local culture of origin, which is perceived as the root of the self. The implication is that individuals now face a tension between the right to freely adopt elements from other cultures that they find exciting and necessary (freedom of choice) and the obligation to find and protect their unique identity by returning to their cultural treasures. It is the tension between route and root, in a sense, between the right to determine one's route of personal adventure in building oneself and the necessity to return to the roots of tradition; in short, between progressive tendencies and conservative tendencies [7]. Interpreting the dialectic of traditional and post-traditional identities consists of elements whose interrelationships are loose and uncertain. These elements can be rearranged according to the changing environment and situation. It is a process of guidance and counter-demands, changing responses and creating new expressions.

The world of art is constantly changing, and each era brings unique styles and icons. This inspires artists to experiment with new ideas and techniques, resulting in diverse works that differ from those of previous eras. These changes can be seen in various aspects of art, including themes, materials, and visual works. One of the most recent developments in the art world is conceptual art, which emphasizes the idea or concept behind a work [8]. In conceptual art, all planning and decisions are made in advance, with execution becoming a mere formality. Essentially, it encourages artists to convey the essence of their work through the concept behind it. Performance art is one of the sub-fields that falls under the umbrella of conceptual art. Contemporary art in Indonesia can be understood in two ways. Firstly, it is seen as an alternative art that uses new media such as installation, performance, video, and environmental art, with

performance art also referred to as event art. Secondly, it opposes or rejects modern art, making it anti-modernist. Contemporary art celebrates diversity, flows freely, and ignores strict boundaries [9]. Contemporary artworks can be created using various objects, materials, or media, including everyday objects. The complexity of contemporary-postmodern art allows artists to use various methods and mediums to represent it. Creating art is a technical matter, and communicating ideas around these issues is crucial. Professional artists always seek to expand their knowledge and understanding of the skills, techniques, and processes that allow them to be creative in their own medium [10].

The contemporary artists who are the object material of this paper's study build the characteristics of their work by exploring the ideology of local and regional wisdom and modern Western academic knowledge. They build hybrid collaborations of identity and creativity from academic spaces as academic artists who graduated from the art college of Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta and the social spaces of the Indonesian art scene. The representation of their work is a form of aesthetic fusion of subjectivity 'taste', imagination, and conceptual-theoretical. In line with this, I Wayan Setem [11], in his article *Artistic Education with a Scholarly Character* says, "Artworks with the logic of taste and imagination, while science uses conceptual-theoretical logic. In art, the relationship between subject and object is reciprocal, exchanging each other like the duality of waves and particles. In science, the relationship between subject and object is distant."

Artists create artworks to satisfy their desire for beauty and to promote humanitarian and inclusive values. According to Warren [10] in his book *Using the Creative Arts in Therapy*, the true value of art lies in its ability to enrich the mind and emotions, not just the final product. This process of observation and feeling is inclusive and engaging, making it important to encourage visual arts experiences for everyone, including individuals with disabilities. Therefore, this paper examines the concept of art collaboration among contemporary artists in building public participation cooperation and how art representations interpret multiculturalism to provide knowledge of cultural diversity and local wisdom.

Contemporary artists today do not limit themselves to a particular genre or style. They have a wider scope to experiment with techniques, artistic methods, aesthetic media, and intimate art concepts that reflect contemporary issues. Collaboration is a common approach, where artists work with others from different disciplines to create art that involves the participation of outsiders and allows viewers to interpret the final meaning. Closeness between collaborators is an important element in this process of creation. The postmodern era values sharing, learning, and collaboration over competition, and each artist brings their unique ideas, skills, references, and tastes to the table [12]. However, Indonesian contemporary art remains rooted in traditional values, and traditional art expresses formal and artistic ideas that reflect local wisdom [13].

## **2 Literature Review**

During the 1990s in Indonesia, the term contemporary became popular with the advent of the postmodernism movement [14]. Contemporary art needs to be responsive to changes by recognizing the diverse ways of life, worldviews, and values of local communities based on their cultural context. According to Shusterman [3] in *Aesthetics and Postmodernism*, postmodernism tends to yearn for past styles, but postmodernists acknowledge and value the plurality of local wisdom in each culture. Local wisdom serves many purposes, including expressing a community's unique identity, uniting people, creating a sense of solidarity,

recognizing and appreciating shared culture, and promoting unity while preventing anything that could threaten community solidarity [15]. Flexibility and adaptability are crucial to deal with change while preserving essential local values. This involves eclectic appropriation, mixing elements from different historical periods, fragmentation, a heightened sense of space that spans time, an interest in the latest technology and mass culture, a sense of flatness or superficiality, and the logic of pastiche or empty parody, among other things [3]. Despite their differences, both architecture and interior art aim to create works of art that can be accessed and enjoyed by a broad audience. It is vital to reflect critically and engage in dialogue about how contemporary art and local wisdom can complement each other and collaborate to create transformative and equitable contemporary artworks.

In a discourse on social collaboration, Doug Ashford in *A Conversation on Social Collaboration* [16] expressed his admiration for art in general, citing its potential to create shared moments of emancipation. He viewed cultural labor as a form of collaboration where people attend concerts, art exhibitions, and festivals and share experiences. Similarly, he believed that art would change the world, not necessarily directly or instrumentally, but because it creates a greater dialogue on the liberation of pleasure. In his opinion, the process of building collaborative art includes our participation in social practice.

Multiculturalism is based on promoting cultural policies that encourage accepting religious diversity and multiculturalism in people's lives. It involves respect and appreciation of one's own culture, as well as respect and curiosity for the ethnic cultures of others. This ideology recognizes and celebrates differences and inequality at the individual and cultural levels [1]. Multicultural art takes a local-global cultural approach, which responds to the changing times and recognizes that culture undergoes dynamic and continuous change. Arya Sucitra [17], in *Multiculturalistic Aesthetics of Balinese Diaspora Artists in Yogyakarta*, provides a view of the artistic representation of Balinese diaspora artists in Yogyakarta displaying a cultural identity that marks the crossing of Balinese multicultural cultural conceptions with Javanese culture and global culture as a dynamic creative process space. This context ultimately determines the nature of art. This multiculturalistic identity representation is adapted through the values of locality, culture, and the dynamics of cultural religiosity to strengthen creative work and advance national culture.

### **3 Research Method**

The study employed an inductive qualitative method with an interpretative representation approach to explore the philosophical concept of artist locality and the conception of exhibitions related to collaborative art and multiculturalism. This was done through interviews, literature reviews, and field studies in art exhibition spaces. The study utilized an interdisciplinary approach to explore several concepts and theories about postmodernism, philosophy of art/aesthetics, cultural studies, and multiculturalism. The material object of this paper is Indonesian contemporary artists who work in the realm of collaborative art and multicultural art, located in Magelang, Central Java, and the Yogyakarta Special Region. The method of collaborative practice of artists involves cross-discipline and participatory response. The formal object uses the conception of multiculturalism by representing multicultural symbolic meaning in painting visuality.

To describe how a multicultural collaborative practice informs the artist's work, Stuart Hall's representation theory [18] examines how meaning is conveyed through visual language and how

it can be exchanged within a group or community, particularly within the context of the art world. The representation system consists of two processes: mental representation, where objects, people, and events are associated with concepts in the artist's mind, and language, which involves constructing meaning through written language, body language, and visual images (signs). Meaning depends on the conceptual maps formed in the artist's mind to represent the world and give objects meaning both within and outside the mind.

All the artists in this study represent their 'inner world' and the plurality of aspects of their collaborations through text, body gestures, performance art, and visual language. Art representation refers to describing or depicting something through various artistic media, whether visual, auditory, or performance-based. It involves creating or re-creating objects, events, ideas, or emotions, often to express a particular message or elicit a particular response from an audience.

The data was collected through a combination of field research and literature review, which involved conducting interviews and making observations. The study focused on four artists in Magelang, Central Java, and Yogyakarta. These artists consistently produce works that explore local values and respond to art events and collaborative initiatives.

## **4 Results And Discussion**

### **4.1 Participatory Conception of Collaborative Art**

Participatory art in collaboration offers various opportunities for community involvement throughout the planning, selection, making, installation, maintenance, and appreciation. Participatory art is a form of dialogic practice that transforms when art becomes an object. In this practice, art creation is an open-ended activity involving an exchange of ideas and a broader interaction [12]. Before collaborating, artists must overcome their egoism, which is a significant challenge. Honesty, sincerity, and cooperation are the keys to successful collaboration. Honesty involves being honest about one's capabilities and what can be done. Once honesty is established, sincerity in presenting the artwork becomes the next vital factor. Finally, cooperation is essential. If an artist appreciates honesty and sincerity in his or her work, it will naturally lead to a desire to collaborate and create beautiful works of art.

There is an interesting participatory art activity studied by Sari Wulandari [12] in the RajutKejut Community in Jakarta, which is then used as a research study in *Deconstruction of RajutKejut Art in the Era of Disruption* is a participatory art project that involves collaboration between artists and the community. The goal is to create a collaborative and liberating process where everyone can contribute to building culture. The resulting artworks are collaborative, not individual, made without ego. Participatory art blurs the boundaries between the community's activities and the work's creator. As pop art, when viewed from the symptoms of its emergence, Rajut Kejut art has characteristics that refer to art in the postmodern era. Among these is the knitting artists' concern for the issue of volunteer knitters' excitement during the process of creating the work.

Collaboration and participation in the arts can result in an experimental and enjoyable experience that combines each individual's unique strengths and experiences. According to art curator Bambang Witjaksono [19], who analyzed a collaborative art-based art exhibition in Yogyakarta in Gugur Gunung: The Power of Participation and Collaboration in Art and Culture, it is important to recognize the potential of participatory art practice the value of collaboration

and participation in art and culture. Collaboration and participation are the essences of '*Gugur Gunung*,' which means *gotong royong*, or cooperation. Bung Karno called the spirit of *gotong royong* "the pearl of cultural wisdom of the Indonesian people". Bung Karno made the spirit of *gotong royong* part of the spirit of Pancasila values [20]. This means that the spirit of cooperation, mutual help, assistance, and mutual respect is a proactive cultural character that has been deeply rooted and has become a habit of Indonesian society long ago.

Individuals involved in arts and cultural projects allow them to cooperate and contribute to the creative process. This involvement fosters a sense of ownership and investment in the result, increasing their engagement and appreciation of the project. These practices allow individuals to collaborate with artists and co-create work that has significance to their lives and communities. Engaging in collaborative art projects has a significant impact on promoting social connection and community development. Such initiatives foster cross-cultural understanding and empathy, contributing to the creation of a fairer society. By participating in arts events, stakeholders can support artists who raise awareness of social justice issues, leading to a greater social impact. This aligns with the principles of participatory philanthropy, which increase engagement, support, and social impact in events.

When the community takes part in the creation of public art, it has the potential to more accurately reflect the neighborhood's unique identity, culture, and heritage. This collaborative approach fosters stronger community ties and instills a shared pride in cultural and social values and public amenities. Given the importance of inclusivity and accessibility, all community members must have the opportunity to participate in such an undertaking. Collaborative and public art initiatives should be integrated into a comprehensive, multidisciplinary strategy to rejuvenate a city or cultural district for optimal results. John Dewey [5] said a work of art is a work of art as a process of engagement between humans and some aspect of their environment. However, the work of art does not occur only in an objective environment or exclusively in a space of inner experience but in a developing organism-environment interaction, where the environment is physical, interpersonal, and cultural.

To truly comprehend art, one needs to have both objective and subjective experiences and understand both tangible and intangible elements. As Dwi Marianto's [21] perspective states, "Art shares the same duality of form and content as any other reality." Artists always strive to create and express their ideas in novel ways, aiming to communicate quality, essence, and emotion through their work. They generate spiritual and material value, combining social and personal experiences, as P. Gryglewski [22] explains.

The following individuals - I Made Arya Dwita Dedok, Grace Tjondronimpuno, Ruby Sofyan, and Budi Agung Kuswara - have displayed a profound understanding of how individual and social experiences can trigger artistic creativity. They believe that artistic collaboration in collective spaces is crucial and that art practice should involve imagination that transcends objective artistic expression and sensitivity to social context. It is also important to maintain local values while allowing them to evolve with the spirit of the times. The reflective intentions of consciousness are always directed towards the world of life, leading to the formation of social awareness, including personal experience [23]. According to Hegel, humans are self-conscious subjects who think, reflect, and act critically and freely and are not merely objects present in the world [24].

Artists create art as a symbolic representation of reality that different people can interpret differently based on their knowledge and social experiences. They aim to develop original ideas

that can create meaningful experiences for their audience. This is a principle that postmodern artists have developed through contemporary art. However, it is important to consider how these ideas are communicated to the public and the two-way relationship between artists and their audience [25]. A constant process of reflection is crucial to appreciating people's experiences and different identities in a participatory manner [26].

Contemporary artists no longer publish themselves independently in building a participatory art world. There is an openness to the 'collaborative needs' of various disciplines of expertise. Artists are not 'super beings' who can do many technical, managerial matters and public collaborative interactions in one whole scheme of the art field. Contemporary artworks do not only talk about the ideality of the 'world of its subjectivity', sacred and untouched by the market. The importance of an aesthetic that explores the conditions and character of a new way of functioning art in a dynamically changing social and cultural reality. Contemporary artists embrace the transformative potential of participatory art by bridging the gap between art and social life, creating desirable forms [27].

Artists require teamwork and support from various parties in art managerial spaces to build intertextuality of art's meaning in a participatory culture. This helps bridge the gap between high and popular art and creates an enjoyable shared art form according to each participant's imagination. This will make it easier for artists to build their artistic conceptions, focus on their artistic visions and missions, and enrich the context of their conceptual ideas. Contemporary art is experiencing a new era of openness, as described by Julian Stallabrass [28] in his concept of the "freedom zone." This era is defined by the globalization of institutions and market values that support and fund artists' work. Arts management is crucial in promoting artists and helping them find channels for their creations. Meanwhile, artistic consultants, such as writers and curators, assist artists in formulating their ideas. The works are thoroughly discussed and displayed in galleries, and high-quality publications such as catalogs, reviews, and advertisements in art magazines are used to showcase them. This approach fosters collaboration between artists, art institutions, and art audiences, creating participatory spaces that encourage cross-creation and managerial collaboration. This dynamic representation of multicultural art education dialectics values the plurality of each individual's ideas, personal values, artistic potential, and knowledge.

#### **4.2 Representation of Collaboration in Multicultural Art**

The presence of multicultural arts creates a welcoming environment that encourages local creativity and innovation. Dialogue promotes cultural values, leading to a diverse and rich art world. Bhiku Parekh [29], in the study of multiculturalism, provides three categories of multicultural society, namely (1) subcultural diversity, (2) perspective diversity, and (3) communal diversity. The interpretation of works of art in its various visualities can be a spectacle and also a guide to the values of goodness, truth, and harmony, depending on the perspective of the viewer's cultural interpretation. Stuart Hall [18] argues that the embodiment of concepts, ideas, and emotions in symbolic forms that can be transmitted and interpreted meaningfully is what is meant by 'practices of representation.' Meaning must enter into the realm of these practices if it is to circulate effectively within a culture. Art representation as a symbolic space allows artists to communicate ideas, perspectives, emotions, or experiences to an audience, inspiring thought, reflection, and engagement with the artwork. It can serve as a means to express, explore, and understand the world around them.

I Made Arya Dwita Dedok, a diaspora artist from Bali who lives in Magelang, apart from being a professional painter and photographer, is often involved in art collaborations across various disciplines and cultures, especially those related to performance art that 'builds awareness' of the nature of the relationship of loving existence between humans, nature, and God as the creator of the universe. Dedok applies Balinese local wisdom to the *Tri Hita Karana* principle, which means the Three Causes of Happiness: harmony between humans and humans, humans and nature, and human spirituality towards devotion to God. *Tri Hita Karana* expects humans to maintain the relationship between the three elements to achieve happiness [30].

Dedok's collaborative work that promotes plurality, tolerance, intercultural, and diversity is presented in a performance art entitled "*Persembahan untuk Bumi*" with the cultural community Lyra De Blauw (Sri de Glenk) and Trunghung Wargo Budoyo Gejayan Merbabu Magelang. Some symbols that voice the concept of *Tri hita karana* are realized with Dedok's headdress costume in the shape of a tree trunk horn as a symbol of plant buds. For him, plant buds are the heart of life. Multicultural collaboration is shown with the figure of an accompanying dancer wearing a madura mask, a typical Dayak necklace, a typical fisherman's hat, carrying a pandanus mat like a farmer, and waving leaves is a symbol of life that is organized in various forms, various ethnicities, and various interests. Life must be balanced under Mother Earth's umbrella, and the beat of life must continue to beat in a harmonious rhythm. The mysterious black-clad figure is a metaphor that humans are the guardians of nature, not the predators of nature. As the heart of life, trees must be preserved for life itself. With the accompaniment of mantras, dances from various ethnicities, and traditional Javanese music, people realize that we live in cultural plurality but come from the same Creator (God) and must protect and respect each other. Cosmologically, humans (*bhuwana alit*) are part of nature (*bhuwana agung*), with similar forming elements, but with differences in size and function [31]. Dedok and his fellow artists play this role as a form of harmony in diversity.



**Figure 1.** Collaborative performance art by Dedok et al., titled "*Persembahan untuk Bumi*" (2023) at Balai Budaya Magelang and alun-alun Kota Magelang.

(Source: Personal documentation of I Made Arya Dwita Dedok)



Grace Tjondronimpuno, an artist based in Magelang, creates collaborative works that represent various themes such as peace, love, unity, religious tolerance, cultural hybridity, and multiculturalism. Her works are expressed through three-dimensional paintings or installation art. Grace's art aims to encourage the audience to engage in interpretive and reflective thinking through her symbolic and spiritualistic pieces. The audience's participation in Grace's work is not through direct involvement in the creation process but through passive involvement by viewing the artwork. The artwork encourages the audience to transfer knowledge between the symbols and the representation, allowing them to create their own subjective understanding. This interaction is an essential point that builds a world of understanding based on the audience's subjective space.

Grace consistently portrays the subject matter of her artworks with themes of tolerance towards various local and global cultures without any racial or ethnic compartmentalization. She achieves this by presenting various types of traditional artifacts, traditional clothing, regional languages, and foreign languages in one iconographic unity. The symbolic interactions in her paintings and installations represent her ideal of humanity: building a multicultural world with respect and equality in religious and cultural plurality. According to Grace, "we are a big family in the same world (earth)," and this is consistent with the Hindu philosophy of *tatwam asi* and *vasudaiva kutumbakam* [32]. If we examine Grace's work titled 'Indonesia' (2018), we can see her in-depth study of various cultures and artifacts from the archipelago. The figures and ornamental elements are plasticized and detailed, each with its icon of locality. Local wisdom texts on diversity and tolerance based on diversity are arranged in a circle like the sacred *rajah* of the archipelago's sea of unity. There is a series of three-dimensional texts with the word INDONESIA, drawn and erected by dozens of miniature human figures from all ethnicities of the archipelago. This work depicts the spirit of Indonesian youth in fighting for and defending the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia to stand tall as a country that is the shelter of a great, multicultural nation. The youth work together to build large stones that are assembled into one word, 'INDONESIA' with an unyielding spirit that has been inherited from the ancestors of this nation as described in the *Panji* stories in the era of the glory of the Majapahit kingdom.

The whole work displays a bright, colorful atmosphere, with flickering lights on the INDONESIA writing block as a sign that diversity, unity, and living in peace and harmony will be light, giving brightness and happiness. Grace also emphasized that we should be literate in our nation's history, as historical events are a mirror for the next generation to move forward for the glory of Indonesian civilization and a foundation for future behavior. The hermeneutic philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer [33] states, "We can expand our horizons to gain knowledge of foreign things through a fusion of horizons." Gadamer formulated the concept of "consciousness that moves in history," as Hegel had also formulated, that interpretation moves dialectically with history and is then displayed in the text [24]. Grace presents a very artistic interpretation of Gadamer's thought.



**Figure 2.** Artwork by Grace Tjondronimpuno, “Indonesia” (2018), Mixed Media.

(Source: Grace Tjondronimpuno’s documentation)

Ruby Sofyan & Budi Agung Kuswara present a cross-media collaborative duet entitled “*Datang, Berserah di Jalan Sembah: Berpostur & Menyusui*” (2023) at Cemeti Gallery - Institute for Art and Society, Yogyakarta. In the presentation in the exhibition space, their work intensely requires an active post-participatory response from visitors. Both young artists come from different art disciplines. Kuswara, an artist from Sanur-Bali, has been working in painting since the beginning of his career, while Ruby from East Priangan, West Java, an interior designer and lecturer at the Faculty of Fine Arts ISI Yogyakarta, focuses on interior design and spatial planning. This collaboration translates Posture (pose) and Nurture (breastfeeding) as a unity in accessing grace combined in one installation format. Kuswara’s paintings present a classic impression with worshipful figures in monochromatic blue tones through the traditional Balinese visuality frame with its ornamental elements combined with an eclectic approach. His work advances the audience’s perception of the dimensions of space, time, and history. Kuswara views material as a living character not limited to objects or subjects and views technicality as a vehicle in representing the character of each material he uses, including visual archives that speak of history. His biggest concern is the negotiation of existence, appreciation, and equality, including the surrounding social environment (<https://taksu.com/budi-agung-kuswara>, accessed 27 September 2023, at 20.10 WIB).

The spatial collaboration became Ruby’s challenge to capture the ‘spiritual reflection’ of Kuswara’s painting manifestation, both in the single pattern of the painting banner and the mural of dozens of worshipping figures. Ruby represents the symbolism of triangular space as a spiritual layout synergistic with the conception of ‘surrendering in the way of worship’ as a medium for initiating cultural experiences and inner-spiritual reflections of visitors. The symmetrical placement of the blue-colored banner is carefully considered to create an atmosphere that supports spiritual growth, reflection, and the search for meaning in life. Ruby believes that the space where art is displayed should be in harmony with the works themselves. Therefore, the triangular spiritual room was chosen as a symbol of the trinity or the balance between the three important aspects of human experience: body, soul, and spirit. The triangular room, in a spiritual context, prompts questions and reflections on balancing the three aspects of our daily lives. It becomes a place for meditation and introspection (interview with Ruby in Yogyakarta, 20 September 2023).

Ruby and Kuswara also observe cross-medium collaboration, stating that art in the contemporary art scene is not sterile and free of autonomy but must open up the possibility of participatory art performance collaboration. The spiritual practices involved in the activation process of the work are yogis, dancers, and practitioners of *kanuragan* sports in *silat* schools.

The selection of these spiritual practitioners is not without reason, as yogis, dancers, and martial arts practitioners can express these elements artistically and symbolically through meditation and contemplation. Beyond these three components of medium collaboration, their installations are also open for the general public to respond to and document as part of participatory engagement. This is part of ‘sowing memories’ of culture, that art can engage others with fun and interpret how rich Indonesian art is in its cultural diversity and aesthetic expression. Therefore, each work of art with various means of representation provides different forms, patterns, styles, meanings/symbols, and diverse subject and cultural backgrounds. *In Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Stuart Hall [18] says, “Above all, cultural meanings are not just in the head; cultural meanings organize and regulate social practices, influence our behavior, and have a real and praxis impact.” This is like entering the concept of life-world that Husserl understood with the ‘world’ as humans live it in their spontaneity, as the basis of communication between subjects [34].



**Figure 3.** Ruby Sofyan & Budi Agung Kuswara’s installation and performance art titled “Datang, Berserah di Jalan Sembah: Berpostur & Menyusui” (2023) at Cemeti Gallery - Institute for Art and Society, Yogyakarta.

(Source: (above) Ruby Sofyan documentation, (below) <https://cemeti.art/2023/08/04/mamalungsa/>)

## 5 Conclusion

The artists examined in this paper use the philosophical foundations of art to reflect and reinterpret the world around them. They seek to establish unity between their artistic vision, cultural experience, collaborative interaction with their audience, and multicultural-based art practice. Through the unification of locality and modern symbols and metaphors, they express aesthetically their artistic vision, locality value, and collaborative practice that conveys human thought, will, and a sense of emotional grandeur. Additionally, the artists present art and spirituality in a sublime manner that creates a reflective space for viewers to engage with art in public spaces. As academic artists, they acknowledge that in the postmodern era, where culture has hybridized, art has reached the ‘anything goes’ stage. The acceleration of information has impacted all aspects of art, including physical and online social media collaborations.

Hence, there are various viewpoints on the significance of cultural relativity across generations, the importance of embracing cultural diversity, and the role of multicultural art in fostering a fair, equitable, and harmonious society. Collaborative art serves as a means of ‘liberation’ by democratizing art and making it accessible to the masses, enabling them to create an ideal art world that is vibrant, inclusive, and fosters limitless creativity. Multicultural art, as a representation of the postmodern era, transcends traditional notions of art appreciation and

welcomes diverse perspectives and expressions based on one's life experiences, cultural values, and personal taste. In this way, everyone is afforded the 'freedom to interpret art' and express themselves through various art forms.

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