

# Performance Art as a New Media: Freedom of Expression and Extreme Activities

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**Abstract.** Performance Art provides a wider and freer space for movement than previous arts. However, this freedom has made some groups of artists to be very brave in creating the creative process in an anti-mainstream way. In the end, the stereotype of Performance Art as a sub-field of art synonymous with extremes is formed on the basis of that. This research was conducted with qualitative research methods using data collection techniques such as interviews, observations, and documentation. The results of this study explain that Performance Art is present today as a form of art evolution. The many new problematic treats in modern society give birth to new feelings in humans. Humans who live in this era feel things that are more complex than humans who lived in previous centuries. This feeling triggers the birth of a brutal and passionate feeling that some artists vent to extreme activities through Performance Art.

**Keywords:** performance art, expression, extreme activities

## 1 Introduction

The world of art is experiencing dynamics that lead to novelty, following how era after era has developed. Art from one era to another has a differentiation and has its own icon. This makes some artists continue to experiment by using more varied ideas and work properties. This phenomenon is the basis for the birth of various works of art with styles that were not found in the previous era. Renewal of works of art appears in various aspects ranging from renewal of ideas, themes, materials to visual works. And in the end this triggers the presence of a new genre, namely conceptual art. The figure who is identical with this school is Marcel Duchamp. In conceptual art, an idea or concept is the most important aspect of a work [1]. When an artist uses a conceptual art form, it means that all planning and decisions are made beforehand and their execution is a perfunctory affair [1].

In essence, conceptual art invites artists to put forward the image of the concept of the work. One of the sub-fields of art that is included in conceptual art is Performance Art. This sub-field

of art is developing progressively. The majority of those who develop their artistic process through this genre are young artists. They try to get past the old standards in order to get a new aesthetic experience. A significant difference is clearly seen when juxtaposing this new art with the art of the past. Performance Art is an art genre which is no longer a canvas as the medium, but in the form of bodily activities. The role of the body is very important when we start talking about Performance Art. The natural body is the first and essential element for human identity [2]. This statement supports how the body will be indispensable to become a performer artist because all the activities they do will definitely relate to the body itself.

When performing, they will be freed to express their own emotions and expressions. Not infrequently do they do things beyond reason. This indicates that they are at the peak of their aesthetic passion. Many performers improvise or spontaneously do Performance Art. They think that doing it spontaneously will get a more intimate soul. However, ordinary people and non-artists felt that some of the performances were presented strangely. They could not interpret every scene that they considered a little extreme. Not a few give the view that contemporary art renewal is getting crazy. In fact, the renewal of art is an overflow of free expression. Expressing more freely is something that has been shared in various spheres of Indonesian culture over the last few years [2].

This paper will describe how performer artists process in the world of Performance Art through a psycho-analytic approach and how they respond to public opinion about what they do. Through a joint interview, the author wants to explain freedom of expression and an explanation about extreme dishes in the world of Performance Art. The psychological approach here is used by looking inside the artist, what makes them dare to do that. The results of this research are expected to become useful literature for the surrounding community and through this research the public can respond wisely to the renewal of art.

## **2 Method**

In this study, the author uses a qualitative research method with a psycho-analytic theory approach. The psycho-analytic approach here is used to dig up information about the relationship between the artist and his work and the author selects informants with certain criteria, namely several performers in their actions performances so that they can provide accurate, detailed and factual data. There are two types of data collected, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained by using the technique of (1) direct observation, in order to get a detailed core picture. (2) interviews, by conducting a question and answer session of several critical questions to trusted and experienced informants in their fields. (3) documentation, where the writer asks the artist to provide some documentary evidence in the form of photos when the artist carries out the action, of course this is with the approval of both parties. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from books, journals, articles and others.

### **3 Result and Discussion**

#### **3.1 Early Stages of Artists Introduction to Performance Art**

No professional is immediately proficient in pursuing a field. Likewise with artists. They pass through the ages, honing their skills and experience in order to enhance their aesthetic and artistic experience. It is not only a matter of creating beautiful works, but an artist also pays attention to how his ideas and ideas are processed properly so that they provide a thick aesthetic value. The term aesthetics used in the world of art actually has the same root as anesthesia in medical circles, namely the Greek word aesthetic which means taste, human perception of experience. It contains not only the human perception of beauty, but also a feeling in the broadest sense, including pain, disgust, anger, disgust, passion and so on. All kinds of taste is a human response obtained through the senses of sight, touch, smell, taste, and listener. Aesthetics is thus a human response to bodily experiences [2].

The activities of artists in processing feelings vary. There are those who spill it by painting beautiful things and there are also those who vent it with strong lines. It is the way the artist validates and controls his feelings that is the basis for the birth of renewal in the work of art. One of them is Performance Art as a new media in the world of art. Performance Art in fine arts is a development of Performing Art which belongs to the performing arts genre. Therefore, a performance that is delivered by a performer is often seen carrying several ornaments such as music and activities that involve the body. A performance artist usually uses literature, fine arts, popular culture, music, dance, and bar-images from a computer. A performance can consist of one or more people who take place anywhere with arbitrary duration. Performance Art often uses the artist's body as the main medium. The performance may be autobiographical or make a political statement, especially under radical conditions [3].

One of the informants said that the first time they learned about this art branch was when they were still in the performing arts or theater world. Informants also contribute to the world of art. Seeing Performance Art as a new medium in fine arts made the informants curious to take action on a performance art. Because they have studied almost the same thing, the informant has no difficulty adapting to this new media. Even the informants also found a sense of comfort and satisfaction that peaked when performing performance art actions. All the weight that had accumulated on the chest was gone when they vented it through their bodies. It was as if the tightness in their hearts disappeared instantly when they performed dances and movements as part of the show. However, one of the informants said that they were confused when they tried to perform performance art. They continue to be haunted by questions in their heads about the 'right and wrong' of what they do when they perform. However, over time, performers enjoy the process of how they eventually become performers because of the freedom to express themselves. This is a strong reason for the interest of many groups of people who finally choose to enter the world of Performance Art. Performance Art gives performers the freedom to be themselves. Thus, actions beyond expectations often appear in Performance Art show.

### **3.1 Expression in Performance Art**

#### **Poetry**

Literary works, prose and poetry, are basically a reflection of society and its era. Through literary works we can get a picture of the nature of thoughts, feelings, hopes, and various problems faced by society in an era [4]. It can be said that poetry is a reflection of humans and their environment. That is why the poems and phrases used by today's society are different from those used in the past. Modern poetry represents more complex problems with mixed feelings. Anxiety, disappointment, and anger, are some of the feelings that are present in modern poetry. Reading poetry is one of the things that can be demonstrated when performing art. Performers will read poetry, whether personal writing or popular poetry, by performing a series of other parts of the performance. Reading poetry through an art performance is satisfying because it manages to express emotions and reach the peak of enjoyment of expression.

#### **Music**

In general, music is the accompaniment of Performance Art. Some performing arts use music as one of their offerings. However, not the type of nautical orchestral music, the majority of the music used in Performance Art is traditional folk music. Traditional folk music is considered more sacred and more intimately used. When the show has started, this music will follow the movements of the performer so that there is a fusion between the two things. These two things seem to complement each other. The musician will also align his feelings with the performer. When these two parties have reached the point of solemnity and feelings that go hand in hand, it will create a situation where the overflow of artists' expressions will complement each other. One of the informants explained that, when he was in that state, he would feel completely satisfied and without any burden on his mind.

#### **Body Demonstration**

Performance Art is part of the conceptual art genre. Indicates that what will be visualized has been conceptualized in such a way. Because it is a new media art, the body is an unusual thing at this time. However, seeing the rapid development of Performance Art in Indonesia with the presence of popular performers now, new media will certainly experience progress. 'Ordinary' and 'unusual' are two things that are dialectically related. The 'ordinary' provides the basis for the determination and discovery of the 'unusual.' On the other hand, the presence of the 'unusual' over time has the opportunity to become 'the ordinary' [2]. The view of Performance Art is now easy to find in every art exhibition. Performers display art using their bodies, they are free to do anything as a pure art form. Sometimes this freedom makes many of the audience wonder what they are doing. Despite responding, the performers did not pay attention to the views of the audience. The most important thing is that they have succeeded in making their subjective body a medium for the overflow of taste for taste that has never been conveyed before.

### **3.3 Extreme Things, Performer Artists and Performance Art**

Performance art is often referred to as the art of brief presence, involving the artist himself (performer) in carrying out an action or actions that are carried out at the same time. The real action taken by the artist then becomes a work of art. Every work of art requires different materials, such as painting requires paint or music based on the medium of music. Likewise in performance art, artists need to think about the materials, or elements needed. Almost all

performance art depends on four elements, namely, body, space, time, audience. In essence, performance art is a kind of art form, where the artist uses the body directly [5]. It is a new media in the form of the use of the body that prioritizes freedom, which is the basic reason why the appearance of a performer is considered unusual and even leads to extreme things. Several informants also admitted that they repeatedly did unexpected things, such as eating used cigarette butts with fire still on them, intentionally making their gums bleed using sharp threads, sewing their own mouths, slashing their bare chests with a razor blade, and kissing the same sex for a certain duration. as their performance material. It is undeniable, Performance Art is pure art because it is not traded or enjoyed everywhere. So that performers need one hundred percent of their energy at that time, when they bring their work. A performer must lose his prestige when presenting an art performance. It takes energy and mental steel to carry out this action.

The factor that drives them to dare to do the things mentioned earlier is the feeling of turmoil from within when they try to manifest the taste into a visual form. The feelings of overlapping and struggling to get out as soon as possible make performers carry out spontaneous and expert activities. Before taking action, they will prepare ideas and materials in advance or conduct a study about the techniques and styles to be presented. Then, they will explore it before finally appearing. When performing, it is as if their body and soul take control over the performer. After the show is over, they may actually forget the things they have done. When finished doing these extreme things, the body will begin to react. Pain, injuries, even some performers after doing extreme activities experience burnout, anxiety, trauma, to mental illness. Even though they have to make sacrifices, they admit that they find comfort and satisfaction after the process in Performance Art activities. Especially when they bring explicit and sensitive themes, they feel more and more challenged and find their own point of satisfaction in each plot they have ever done even though they have to give up their bodies for a field called this art.

### **3.4 Performance Art and Social Community Perception**

The general public considers that the activities in Performance Art are very unusual and even lead to disturbing things. This statement was conveyed to the informants. As a performance artist, they cannot deny it because some performers who often pass by and exist today use their body media to vent their emotions (in a negative connotation). When asked whether they agree or not, the performer admits to having stood between agreeing and disagreeing positions. Disagree with the reason because Performance Art is the language or medium of the body of the visual arts portion where we are free to do anything. The performer is in control of what they will do with their body. And the reason for agreeing from the informants was about the age-of-body principle which states that "when you feel sick, don't make it more painful by hurting yourself". Apart from all that, the informant thought that art will always pass far following the times and every art has its own audience. Public speculation will always color the art world.

## **4 Conclusion**

Based on what has been written above, it can be concluded that Performance Art as a new media gives birth to new artists. During the process in the world of performance, many of them go through identity crises such as lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes in their work. However, they really enjoy the existing process and make themselves full of courage because to do a performance art requires special skills. Some of them choose to display extreme things as a form of expression on the grounds of achieving satisfaction. But this triggers a stigma in the general public regarding performance art. In essence, art will move forward with the times.

More complex problems lead to more complex feelings. Statements from good to bad will always exist to complete the world of art.

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