

## RajutKejut Art: Participatory Knitting Installation Artwork in Public Spaces

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### Abstract

*RajutKejut Community is a knitted women's community since 2014 carrying out yarn bombings, wrapping large objects in Jakarta's public spaces with knits. Citizens can see, feel and interact sensually so that the work and community become close to the public. People who often raise social problems become a discourse of work following the cultural context of the people of Jakarta. The research question is how the shape of RajutK shock's artworks. The purpose of this study is to find alternative art forms using creative media. This study uses qualitative methods through observation, interviews, literature studies, and document reviews. This analysis uses the Norman Fairclough critical discourse analysis method. The choice of method is to find the RajutK shock art form by searching for the relationship between the micro text and the macro context of society. The conclusion of the research shows that RajutK shock's works are contemporary works of art, art that still explores discourse in the realm of style. Today, RajutK Shock is a combination of installation art, participatory art, knitting craft, pop art and street art.*

**Keywords:** RajutKejut, installation art, participatory art, public space.

## INTRODUCTION

The physical development of the city is increasing rapidly, but not followed by the development of the mentality of its people, causing the city to become dehumanist, there is a disharmony in people's attitudes and behavior towards the environment. An increase in urban community income but this does not promote public welfare and social justice. This condition occurs in Jakarta and triggers social conflicts in Jakarta, as explained by Musni Umar (2014) that around 90% of social conflicts are triggered by problems of power and economy. Among the causes of conflict are differences that are difficult for people to tolerate, such as differences in cultural, religious, political, economic, power struggles over natural resources and community organizations. In addition there are also differences in the interests of individuals and groups, changes in values so quickly, as well as political and economic interests and even matters relating to the establishment and feelings (Umar, 2014).

In the last few decades in big cities in various parts of the world, there are many works that have suddenly appeared in public spaces. Urban society recognizes this art as street art, like graffiti which adorns the city walls. In addition to the paint media, there is also street art in the form of yarn media and is realized through the crochet technique known as "yarn bombing". In Jakarta there is a knitting group that for the past five years

has made knit art works that are installed in the public spaces of the city of Jakarta, namely the RajutKejut Community. This community was born in 2014 with five initiators, namely Harjuni Rochajati, Yulina Achrini, Wahju Hardjanti, Vidhyasuri Utami and Elizabeth Tata. The beginning of their yarn bombing action was in order to welcome the celebration of the Independence Day of the Republic of Indonesia, precisely one day before the celebration of August 17, 2014 by wrapping the sidewalk benches with knits. Yarn bombing artwork is a work of art that is placed in a public space, can be seen and touched by senses so that it is not distant from the public. With its large size and attractive appearance, a yarn bombing work attracts attention and has the power to convey messages and invitations. On the next occasion they wrapped the bemo in knits and then paraded around the city as a form of concern for the typical Jakarta transportation mode which would be banned from operating. Another time the yarn bombing was carried out inside the CommuterLine carriage, knitting in roll-in among the train passengers and installing knitting work inside the carriage.

This group is in the form of a community, with a membership system that is liquid, open, and has informal management. Anyone can participate as a volunteer in a project, does not have to have an educational background in art or design, as long as they have knitting skills and have a sensitivity to beauty. They generally consist of middle class women of various ages, with diverse backgrounds in interests, education and occupation. The initiators realize that every knitter involved has unique ideas, skills, references and taste, which needs to have space for express themselves as long as it is still in the corridor of the concept or idea of the work, set by the initiator.

The name of the community was chosen because the purpose of the yarn bombing was to make a surprise, so the name RajutKejut was used. Since 2014 until now the RajutKejut community continues to work through yarn bombing projects in many locations in Jakarta. By utilizing the remnants of the threads they still have, this art practice is carried out togetherness, pro-bono and militantly. Yarns used are industrial-made polyester yarns that are easily found in markets. Initially this community wrapped an object or was hung or paraded by Jakarta women to simply knit together in the same place, make joint work and be happy together. There is no specific target because the knitters generally have often worked to meet their individual needs. Generally, community members come with their own knitting equipment, such as yarn, needles and patterns. Over time, RajutKejut's work emerged as a form of response to events or raising social issues, including celebrating independence day and invitations to respect diversity. The community expressed knitting volunteers awareness of social events or issues or phenomena by narrating and translating them into works in accordance with the cultural context of the people of Jakarta to be accepted and responded by the community.

Based on the above conditions, this study raises a research question: What is the form of RajutKejut art that appears as communal art in public spaces. The objective of this research especially in Visual Communication Design subject is to find alternative forms of artwork and media in the context of solving visual communication problems by utilizing creative media.



Fig 1. Emergence works of RajutKejut Art (doc. RajutKejut)

## METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method, with data collected by observing ongoing activities. During the observation activity, interviews were also conducted with informants, namely the initiators of RajutKejut and knitting volunteers, both of whom were artists. In line with these activities, researchers also reviewed documents by studying media coverage both print and online. With the Artistic Based Artistic Research paradigm as explained by Guntur (2016), concepts or theories that are intersecting with Art and Culture are used. The object of research is the process of its creation. Art Based Research is a form of qualitative research in studying artists, which uses the premises, procedures, and principles of art. This research is used as a way to find out, measure the capacity to create works of art, as well as contribute to theory, expand ways and vehicles of birth of knowledge. Research involves developing sensitivity in art over time in an effort to produce and present data. In it has a continuous reflective attitude by emphasizing the importance of engagement, analysis and learning (Guntur, 2016). The analysis was carried out Phenomenologically because the researcher wanted to get a description of the participant's experience which would later obtain an understanding of the essence of the experience of a group of participants. The study will examine the phenomenon of art that occurs in the knitters as art practitioners as participants (Kahija, 2017).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Harjuni explained that this group was in the form of an informal community-based community. As an open community, anyone can participate as a volunteer in a project, not having an educational background in art or design, as long as they have knitting skills and sensitivity to beauty. Generally consists of middle class women of various ages, backgrounds, interests, education and occupations. This can be understood through the explanation of Martin Suryajaya (2016) that the actors of art may be that they are not artists, but have an interest in art. The definition of artists in the postmodern era has now become liquid, the artist profession is not only owned by people with an artistic background (Suryajaya, 2016).



**Fig 2. The process of making RajutKejut artworks by women knitters in a residential environment (doc. Sari Wulandari)**

Artists consist of initiators, and volunteer knitters who are domiciled throughout Indonesia. Each of those involved is unique in their ideas, skills, references and tastes, which are given exploration space as long as they are still in the corridor of a concept or work idea.

Referring to contemporary art, according to Dharsono S. Kartika (2017), contemporary art attaches characteristics of the time aspect of borrowing the past to the present context, is eclectic, works orientation to themes and media more freely, explores popular culture, cares for social and political issues, popular, temporary and critical of rationalism. When modernity is a rationalization of culture, society, and even personality, in the postmodern era, contemporary art emerges that are not bound by any convention, having anti-establishment characteristics in terms of style, style and aesthetics. Artists are no longer confined to one art discipline but diverse and depart from the reality they feel together, so the work they create together is full of nuances of social life that lead to universal ideas. Another reason is that they want to break away from the confines of individuals who are squeezed by time and space. This work of art can also be categorized as pop art, where Kartika once again explained that pop art is an art that is reminiscent of the art of reality by raising environmental issues, namely issues that are close to daily life, important for life but often forgotten or ignored (Kartika, 2017).

RajutKejut art that is realized through the craft process, can also be said as craft art, as explained by John Walker (2010) where the craft still has an appeal for some middle class people, for those who have the awareness not to depend on the mass market, respect for the substance of matter, and appreciate work skills and the role of imagination, namely the union between intellectual work and manual methods. Others appreciate crafts because of nostalgia and respect for the environment (Walker, 2010).

RajutKejut's works, which appear as graffiti knits in the middle of the city, can be seen as street art. According to two researchers Farinosi and Fortunati (2018) found that many countries consider graffiti knitting installations illegal because they are considered to be doing traditional graffiti, so activists usually prepare works at the beginning and then put them up at night. However, unlike graffiti in general, the effect of this installation is not permanent, because it can be removed easily with scissors without damaging the city landscape or objects and buildings that have been 'bombed'. Perhaps because the installation made has a positive connotation and is mainly intended to create a good

mood, in a non-aggressive and temporary way to reconfigure public space, urban knit can be accepted by local authorities and even receive a lot of positive attention in various international discourses. The main objective of this initiative is generally to improve the urban environment, transforming the meaning of 'bombed' spaces in addition to their functions. The installation is usually oriented towards issues in society and is intended to draw public attention to relevant social and political issues, such as conflict and war. Through urban knitting, ancient knitting techniques change their values and meanings, into effective media for citizen involvement, for activism, and a medium for protesting, as well as ways to contribute to sociopolitical discourse and engagement (Farinosi, 2018).

RajutKejuted art works just like public service advertisements made not for commercial purposes but placed in public spaces. However, these knitting women feel happy to manifest their craftwork in public space, which can be weathered and could potentially be a victim of ignorant and irresponsible hands. With the desire to bring up an idea or invitation in the midst of the community, the more encouraging the emergence of enthusiasm and excitement in knitting volunteers in the work. This condition can be understood through the explanation of Pablo Helguera (2011) who argues that art as a social activity is not a manipulative activity to merely achieve certain goals but more than that, communication arises where art activity is able to lead to the understanding of every individual who looks to understand the political context and its culture, gave rise to emancipatory attitudes. Thus, artists are able to produce collective art that has an impact on the public domain in a profound and meaningful way, not just creating representation of social problems. Art as a social activity because it involves the community, he explained that being an interesting basis to see how participatory art is a choice to make art as a social practice. With his background as an artist, performer, writer, and Director of the Adult and Academic Programs at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, he believes that art in the modern paradigm has an isolated position from the context of social practice. This is because the practice of creating art by artists tends to be conventional and distance from other scientific disciplines. Art only takes the vertices of the issue and is represented in the form of work, not in more tangible activities. The contradiction of art activities is often related to the view that art practice cannot be separated from symbolic practice, and the impact of participatory art practice on society cannot be measured directly. Of course this will happen if the artist only thinks of art as a symbolic practice because he will never reach his goal due to not being directly involved socially, but his artistic activities will only fall into the category of art as is well known in general (Helguera, 2011).

Relational aesthetics as a series of artistic practices in critical thinking Nicolas Bourriaud in Bishop (2012) is described as an art theory and practice that is held based on the relationship between humans and their social environment, not on private and independent spaces. Bourriaud, who is a curator and art critic who has held many exhibitions and biennales throughout the world, described the relational aesthetic as a shift from gallery space or private space to the public sphere. This shift to public space occurs largely because of the development of new institutions in the world of art such as the biennale, art fair, and the like that have provided opportunities for artists to display relational art projects. The growth of these art institutions has resulted in new ecosystems that are more receptive to participatory art projects compared to traditional galleries or museum spaces (Bishop, 2012). According to Otty Widasari (2019) an object or work or product can be seen as a work of art if there is a framing of art there. Framing art occurs when infrastructure within the art field works (Widasari, 2019). On the other hand, the aesthetics that appear in the RajutKejut art are Taste Aesthetics, where this aesthetic according to Dharsono S. Kartika (2018) has long been abandoned about a century ago. This aesthetic is built on the basis of enjoyment, not based on formal aesthetics that are very academic and prioritizing rationality, also on aesthetic



experiences that involve feelings (emotionally) when people enjoy art. The deep involvement of taste produces our feelings (psychologically) being dragged into the intrinsic and extrinsic qualities of art, which came to be known as the "self-transmission" theory (*einfehlung* or empathy). This theory introduced by a German scholar named Friedrich T. Vischer (1807-1887), who was developed later by Theodor Lipps (1851-1914). Aesthetic problems in art, some experts try to use several theories, including self-transmission theory. In the design of works of art and design now is no longer bound by the principles of art and design, but is based on a decision on the likes or dislikes (Kartika, 2018).

## CONCLUSION

RajutKejut community activities which initially moved in the realm of hobbies and moved into the social realm, were then seen and discourse in the realm of art for the work of art infrastructure - in this case curators and art critics - then the work produced by RajutKejut became works of art and presented at art events, in the circle of art infrastructure.

As a contemporary work of art, the work of RajutKejut is an art that is still being discussed in the realm of art style. At present it is still understood as a combination of installation art, participatory art, knitting craft art, pop art, and street art. The emergence of Rajut art works. Surprised in the public space in the postmodern era, even though it is an art that is still being discussed and may cause many contradictions, but the knitters believe that what they do can be an alternative answer in the framework of artists' efforts to continue to hone a sense of humanity, appreciate the existence of individuals (Javanese: *di-wong-ke*), in a city where people are always busy, moving fast and tend to be individualistic.

Participatory art that embodies RajutKejut's work is a way to make a social movement in art practice. The most important thing is not solely the work of knitting created but how the symbolic interactions that occur in the community that prioritize aspects of communication, not just symbolic practices, with emancipatory attitudes that are ideologically propagated through narratives in meetings with meetings the knitters as well as through the news in the mass media, so that not a few people who welcomed the invitation of the initiators of the RajutKejut community because they felt the same anxiety and felt represented by the presence of the work in the community.

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