



Aesthetic of contemporary Indonesian Arabic calligraphy painting in the works of Abdul Djalil Pirous, Didin Sirojudin, and Imam Pramono

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ABSTRACT

The art of calligraphy has an important value in Islamic history. This can be seen in the literature that discusses the history of Islam. The art of beautiful writing or calligraphy has been taught since the time of the prophet Muhammad SAW. The art of calligraphy also has an important role in the history of the spread of Islam in Indonesia. Along with the times, the art of Arabic calligraphy which was originally very formal gradually followed the rhythm of the times. Contemporary art has had a major influence on the development of calligraphy painting in Indonesia. This can be seen in the various styles and expressions of the artists in visually realizing the works of calligraphy painting. This writing takes samples of artwork from the Contemporary Islamic Art Exhibition of Islam and Identity in Bazaar Art I 2009 and Inside Islam in Bazaar Art II Jakarta 2010, the Sign and After exhibition at Lawangwangi Bandung 2010 and the Indonesian Contemporary Islamic Art Exhibition Bayang Jakarta in 2011. The works that are used as research samples are described using the Art Criticism method, so that a description and interpretation of the meaning of the work is obtained. The Islamic values contained in the works are interpreted using the concept of Islamic Aesthetics and then an overview of the visualization of works, concepts, and aesthetic values is obtained in the sample works. In general, contemporary Indonesian Arabic calligraphy paintings have shown expansion in concept and visual diversity. Aesthetic values can be seen apart from the work but also in the concept of the work. The uniqueness is seen in the courage to display calligraphy accompanied by the object figures in it. This shows that contemporary calligraphy painting conveys novelty beyond the conventions of art that enriches previous visual forms.

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1. Introduction

Islamic civilization has developed since centuries ago until now. Islamic art has become an important part that has colored his journey. Muslims, especially artists and painters, make art objects for aesthetic purposes, such as beautiful calligraphy, mosque buildings, embroidered textiles, carpets and ceramics of high value (Shaw 2012). The achievements achieved by Muslim experts in the fields of calligraphy, architecture, buildings, paintings, ceramics and others are a legacy that gives Muslims a sense of pride. This research aims to describe values



inherent in the calligraphic works are interpreted using the notion of Islamic Aesthetics, and the example works provide an overview of the visualization of works, concepts, and aesthetic values (Alashari, Hamzah, and Marni 2020). In addition to the relics of Islamic civilization outside Indonesia, in Indonesia there are also many evidences of the rapidly growing heritage of Islamic civilization (Abdullah 2017). Mosque buildings in the areas of Cirebon, Banten, Demak, Sumatra, and others, were born with magnificent building structures which are proof that Islamic art is advancing and developing (Wiryomartono 2009). In addition to relics in the form of buildings, there are many other relics of Islamic civilization, such as ornaments, decorations, ornaments, Arabic calligraphy, and others that we can find in addition to Indonesia as well as in various countries. Among the relics of Islamic civilization that is very important and interesting is the art of writing, namely Arabic calligraphy. Since the beginning of its development until today's modern era, the art of calligraphy continues to grow and develop. This shows that calligraphy has a special place among Muslims.

The skill of writing attractively is known as calligraphy, and Arabic calligraphy is one of Islam's major arts. Arabic is normally written from right to left, and Arabic letters are not all the same size, as they are in many other languages. Small markings above and below the bigger forms denote vowel sounds, silences, and double letters and are removed in some handwriting styles. Furthermore, depending on whether a letter comes at the beginning, middle, or end of a phrase, it may be formed differently. The Arabic language has been important to Islam since the Prophet Muhammad received the sacred scripture of the Qur'an in 610 CE. The verses of the Qur'an were communicated to the Prophet's companions in Arabic, and Muslims across the world continue to hear, read, and recite the Qur'an in that language. In addition to Qur'anic verses, inscriptions on Islamic art contain other religious texts, poetry, praise for rulers, and wise sayings. Islamic calligraphy moved east to China and India, north to Persia, and west across northern Africa as Islam flourished. Islamic calligraphy has been used to decorate a variety of surfaces in both public and private settings. Expressions range from small, personal scripts to grandiose texts emblazoned on the fronts of public buildings and mosques. Seven types of calligraphy, known as the seven classical scripts, evolved over time to meet the needs of poets, government officials, letter writers, and others.

To properly appreciate the richness of Islamic art, an understanding of Islam as a faith and a way of life is required, since it highlights the principles and expressions found in Islamic art. The narrative begins in a cave near Mecca, Arabia, in the year 610 C.E., with a 40-year-old man meditating and seeking answers to questions about life and the cosmos. A voice appears out of nowhere and instructs him to "recite [read] in the name of your Lord." The voice was that of the archangel Gabriel, the man was Muhammad, and the words were those of God, which subsequently became the Qur'an. One of the key uniting characteristics of Islamic art is the use of Arabic calligraphy. In Arabic, the phrase "calligraphy" is "handast al-khatt," which translates as "writing geometry." The geometric proportioning of the Arabic letters establishes this link between writing and geometry (straight and curved lines). Arabic calligraphy as an art form has endured to the present day, as seen by the work of numerous current Islamic artists across the world. In addition to individual works of calligraphy, Arabic calligraphy has been utilized to embellish architectural buildings, both religious and profane. Not a few Muslim figures who admire calligraphy (Lee-Niinioja 2020). Some of them are Dr. Istiaq Husain Quresyi, Isma'il Raji Al Faruqi, D Sirojudin A.R, Wiyoso Yudhoseputro, A D Pirous, Achmad Sadali and others. They really admire calligraphy, even calligraphy is considered a successful and extraordinary achievement of Muslim art. In today's modern era, the art of calligraphy continues to move and develop following the rhythm of the times. But what is the art of calligraphy like in today's contemporary era? This is a big question that is hotly discussed and discussed. This research may contribute for the discussions regarding Islamic arts in general, and specifically Islamic calligraphy.

2. Method

The writing uses qualitative research methods. The method is to examine the growing phenomenon and describe all information related to the development of Islamic Art in Indonesia, then analyze it in the form of objective explanations. The main scientific approach is to use Islamic Aesthetics and an understanding of Contemporary Art in Indonesia. The Art Criticism method is used to understand the concept and aesthetic value of Islamic art works that are used as research samples, and others. In this research the authors' tries to examine artworks by prominent Indonesian artist related to calligraphic arts. The discussions then will be enriched with primary data collected from some notable persons which have insight of the Islamic arts. This study uses data collection techniques as follows; (1) Literature study, literature study through reference books related to Islamic Art, Contemporary Islamic Art, Islamic Aesthetics, and Art Criticism. In addition, data were also obtained from the internet with sites related to this research. Newspapers and catalogs are also included in the literature study; (2) Field observation, field observations were carried out by visiting exhibitions of Contemporary Islamic Art and visiting galleries that were included in the field observation area; (3) Interview, interview data were obtained by conducting interviews with experts and prominent artists who have insight into contemporary Islam; (4) Documentation with the help of a camera, visual documentation data is obtained.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The work of A.D Pirous

Abdul Djalil Pirous is an artist who gave birth to many works with Islamic nuances. One of the characteristics of A D pirous is his works of calligraphy painting. This discussion specifically discusses his calligraphy painting entitled "Alif Lam Mim I" which was exhibited at Bazaar Art II in Jakarta in 2010. This calligraphy painting is 72 x 80 cm in size with paste, marble, and acrylic media on canvas. The work was created in 2008 and exhibited at Bazaar Art II Jakarta in 2010. The visual form that appears in this calligraphy work is in the form of Arabic writing that reads "alif lam mim" which is clearly quoted from the Koran in the letter al-Baqarah verse 1. The calligraphy is made on a dark orange rectangular texture with a yellow color on the edges. At the outermost part, the color of the canvas is left blank, so that the focus of vision is in the middle of the canvas.



Fig. 1 A.D Pirous's work entitled "Alif Lam Mim I" in the exhibition of Islamic art at Bazaar Art II Jakarta 2010, pasta, marble & Acrylic on Canvas 72x80cm, 2008, (Source: Islamic Art Exhibition Catalog, Bazaar Art II 2010)

The composition of colors and shapes presented is not full of colors and tends to be monochrome. This of course will give a certain meaning to the work. In visual language theory, the placement of an image object in the center of the image field means that the object is declared important. This can be seen when the sentence "alif lam mim" in the Koran alif lam mim is translated that only God knows the meaning of the sentence. However, if we look in more detail at the title of the work, "Alif Lam Mim I", then of course there will be a sequel, maybe II, III and so on. Later versions may have different visual forms. If it is associated with a strong personal life background with Islamic nuances, this is what is reflected in AD Pirous's work, namely Islami. His work reflects his soul, in describing the work and the artist. "Soul Ketok" or the visible soul is the thought of S. Sudjojono whose truth may still be used as a way to see who the artist behind his work is.



Fig. 2 "Believe You Will Be Strong" mixed Media on Canvas 85x85cm 2010 (Source: Islamic Art Exhibition Catalog, Bazaar Art II 2010)

As one of the prominent contemporary Indonesian Muslim artists, Abdul Djalil Pirous or fondly called AD Pirous is a multicultural artist who was born in Meulaboh, Aceh in 1932. In 1955 AD Pirous studied and studied fine arts at ITB, then in line with his artistic journey, AD Pirous is known as one of the most influential Islamic artists in the development of fine arts in Indonesia. AD Pirous has had experience in working since the colonial period, the old order, the new order to the reformation period. AD Pirous since 1060 has produced many works that have made him a reformer in modern painting with Islamic backgrounds. AD Pirous's works have been exhibited many times, hundreds of times exhibited both on a national and international scale. As an artist AD Pirous has held several solo exhibitions, including Retrospective Exhibition I for works 1960-1985, at TIM in 1985 and Retrospective II for works from 1985-2002, at the National Gallery, Jakarta in 2002. The textures and colors that are made are very elaborate and patient, becoming the painting style of AD Pirous that is easily recognizable from the works made. How to paint is done by coating the color with alabaster paste and a palette knife. Pirous's Beginning of Calligraphy When Pirous saw the Ceramic Fragments exhibition, AD Pirous was the beginning of his work on Ancient Islamic Calligraphy, Quranic Calligraphy and miniature paintings which were exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, United States around the 1960s. The strength of Islamic art inherent in AD Pirous was obtained from the strong influence of his mother. Where since childhood his mother had an influence both directly and indirectly on AD Pirous, his mother often made embroidery with the theme of the Koran while listening to the stories of the prophets to AD Pirous, thus adding insight into Islamic knowledge to AD Pirous, plus a small AD Pirous went to school in Islamic schools. The biggest inspiration for AD Pirous was from his mother who was very good at reading the Koran, good at telling stories, good at writing Acehnese and Malay poems into Arabic script. This is what inspired AD Pirous to become a strong Muslim artist.



Fig. 3 "God Is With The Patient" Mixed Media on Canvas 92x81 cm 2010 (Source: Islamic Art Exhibition Catalog, Bazaar Art II 2010)

3.2. The work of Imam Pramono

"Merahku, Goresanku" is the title of Imam Pramono's work in the form of calligraphy combined with human objects. Measuring 135 cm long and 90 cm wide, it was made in 2009. The visual shown is a boy facing a wall, short black hair, wearing a yellow short-sleeved shirt on the top and blue on the bottom, and black shorts. with the back of the observer. He carried a small bucket of paint in his left hand and a brush in his right. He is painting the pronunciation of "Allah" in Arabic letters on the wall. The writing is red, leaving a few drops of paint. The boy's gaze was fixed on the words "Allah" earlier. The light came from behind the child so that a shadow appeared to cover part of the wall. The main focus of this work is on two objects that look contrasting in terms of color. The first is the inscription "Allah" in Arabic letters on the wall, the color is red. The second is the figure of the little boy in red and blue clothes. The child's standing position is not too in the middle so that the balance of the work doesn't look too stiff. His gestures show two important things, namely the direction of his gaze with his head slightly tilted and his hands. The main focus of this work is on two objects that look contrasting in terms of color. The first is the inscription "Allah" in Arabic letters on the wall, the color is red. The second is the figure of the little boy in red and blue clothes. The child's standing position is not too in the middle so that the balance of the work doesn't look too stiff. His gestures show two important things, namely the direction of his gaze with his head slightly tilted and his hands. "My Red, My Scratches" is an expressionist calligraphy work. This work depicts the figure of a small child after writing the pronunciation of Allah on a wall. The writing "Allah" looks expressive / untidy. The child looks up at the position where the red pronunciation of "Allah" is written. "Redku" seems to represent the calligraphy of the pronunciation of "Allah", while "Scratches" seems to represent a little boy who has just finished writing the pronunciation. So the title "Redku, Goresanku" each word represents the visual form in the work.

Judging from the visuals, it is clear that the pronunciation of "Allah" has a more important meaning than the object of the child. The object of the child is only as an additional aesthetic element. The focus is more on the calligraphy. Allah Most High may be the inspiration for this visual manifestation. However, upon closer inspection, Allah's writing in Arabic appears to be the result of the child's scratch. This can be seen from the visual depiction of the child holding a brush and holding a can of red paint which shows the activity of finishing painting. Allah's writing is not neat, still smudged nearby. A small child is not good enough in the development of logic. Children will continue to grow until they become teenagers, adults, old and then old.

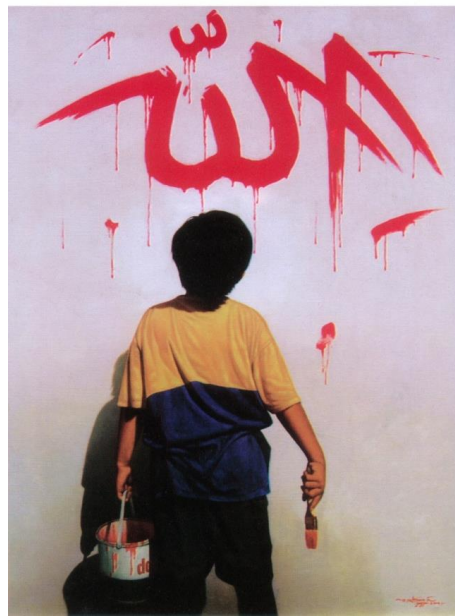


Fig. 4 Imam Pramono's work is entitled "My Red, My Scratches". Using oil and acrylic paints on canvas. Measuring 135x90 cm, year 2009 (Source: Islamic and Identity Exhibition Catalog)

In this work, it is as if depicting great pride. Seen from the title which seems to show that 'he' can, as if to say "this is my red, my scratch". "My red" in this case is the pronunciation of Allah, in Islam Allah is God, the Creator of the Universe. The "scratch" in this case is himself, the child's self, the human self, the self as a weak being before God.



Pronunciation of
"Allah"

Fig. 5 Section of Imam Pramono's work is entitled "My Red, My Scratches". Using oil and acrylic paints on canvas. Measuring 135x90 cm, year 2009. (Source: Islamic and Identity Exhibition Catalog)

This work has its own uniqueness. The merging of two "controversial" objects is courage. On the one hand, the art of calligraphy in Islam is an art of high value (Faruqi 1983), on the other hand, the depiction of living creatures in Islam has become a controversy between halal and haram laws. However, this work is characteristic of the artist M Pramono, where at the Istiqlal Festival, M Pramono once exhibited a calligraphy work accompanied by a human object entitled "Thole learns to read" which visually has similarities. M Pramono seems to be trying to combine two contradictory objects. One side of calligraphy is highly exalted and the other side presents objects of animate creatures that are very "cursed" by some Islamic societies. Actually the depiction of animate beings is part of the opinion that it is permissible as long as it is not for the sake of worship/shirk. I quoted Yustiono's statement (2010) in a class lecture, it was said that HAMKA stated that it is not forbidden to draw animate creatures as long as the drawing is not for worship or glorification purposes.

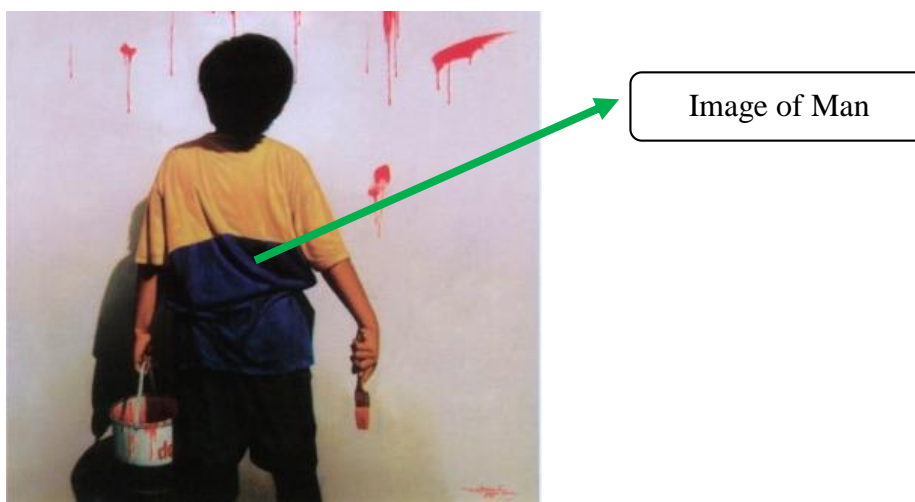


Fig. 6 Section of Imam Pramo's work is entitled "My Red, My Scratches". Using oil and acrylic paints on canvas. Measuring 135x90 cm, year 2009. (Source: Islamic and Identity Exhibition Catalog)

3.3. Didin Sirojudin's work

Before the researcher describes this calligraphy work, the researcher first conveys about the artist (calligrapher) D Sirojuddin. Didin Sirojuddin Ar was born in Kuningan, West Java, July 15, 1957. Didin Sirojudin's hobby since childhood was painting and little Didin would scribble anything, including the walls of the house and draw pictures using kitchen charcoal. Didin also uses a cauldron to write finely with a frog pen that he sticks into the handle of the kalam. Drawing landscapes is his passion and painting it with paint, through his habit when he sees pictures of landscapes that he encounters that are held on the side of the road, hung on the wall of a neighbor's house that he often passes by. His passion for seeing sights was still what he did when Didin was in Jakarta. The habit of going around seeing exhibitions from one place to another is still carried out as part of the process of creating and performing arts in the art of calligraphy. Soon his talent grew and developed outside of his duties as a lecturer at the Faculty of Adab and Humanities UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Didin who has been painting since before actively developing calligraphy in Indonesia. Starting from learning to write khat at Pondok Modern Gontor (1969-1975) to becoming a journalist for Panji Masyarakat magazine while painting, writing Al-Quran manuscripts, making comics/illustrations and writing khat for books and magazines, props, posters, and calendars in Jakarta. In 1985 he founded the Al-Quran Calligraphy Institute (LEMKA) in Jakarta, followed by 1998 founded the Lemka Al-Quran Calligraphy Islamic Boarding School in Sukabumi, his two vehicles of struggle accompanied by his activities of writing calligraphy books, judging calligraphy competitions at the National and ASEAN MTQ, and traveling around building calligraphy. in various parts of Indonesia.

The calligraphy by D Sirojuddin above is entitled "Tali Nan Sturdy Strong" using a fairly large 140x100 cm canvas using acrylic as the coloring medium. The visual form is displayed with yellow and brown coloring on the bottom, then white and light green in the middle, and light brown on the top. The Arabic letters presented in this work are black. The color composition presented is very simple with the form of writing that seems abstract. However, if you look in more detail, it will be seen that there is an impression that something is hanging or attached to a rope, such as clothes that are attached to a hanger and dried/hanged on a rope. In this case, if it is related to the title of this painting, there will be an interpretation that the only place to depend is God Almighty, namely Allah SWT. The Qur'an clearly states that there is no refuge except in Allah. The rope referred to in the title and seen in this work is most likely the Creator. The writing of calligraphy that looks abstract is clearly the result of the influence of the development of contemporary art that carries art with the values of diversity.



Fig. 7 D. Sirojuddin A.R.'s work entitled "Strong Nan Strong Rope" in the exhibition Shadows of Indonesian Islamic Contemporary Art Exhibition Acrylic on Canvas 140x100cm 2011
(Source: Indonesian Islamic Contemporary Art Exhibition Catalog, 2011)

4. Conclusion

This paper provides several points of conclusions and suggestions which are the answers to the formulation of the problem in this study. The following are the conclusions and suggestions; (1) The visual form of contemporary Arabic calligraphy is seen from Islamic aesthetic theory, which has a variety of ideas showing visual diversity. This means that Arabic letters which are the raw material in the work are mandatory to be poured into the canvas, but the accompanying aesthetic elements such as background colors, shapes, etc. can be created according to the concept of each artist, so that the strengths of the artist are found. are in the process of being creative in their art; (2) In the concept of describing living things, up to now there has not been a meeting point and has become a debate in terms of the exact law. In several works, collaborations between Arabic letters and pictures of living creatures in the form of real humans are shown (not simplification of forms). This seems to be an overlapping concept, namely between Al Faruqi's thoughts and Oliver Leaman's. Al Faruqi based his thoughts on monotheism that was clean from the likeness of living creatures and said that calligraphy was the highest Islamic art, while Oliver Leaman did not make calligraphy the highest Islamic art and not always what was written in his work always sentences from the Qur'an or al-Hadith

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