



Exploration of revive inanimate object in the film “meja makan/ goodbye, table manner” (2018) by Wisnu Candra

Candra M. Wisnu ^{a,1,*}, Teguh H. Patriantoro ^{b,2}, Andriyan Rizqi Ananda ^{b,3}

^a Institut Seni Indonesia Surakarta, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia

^b Universitas Dian Nuswantoro, Semarang, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia

¹ wsnendra@gmail.com; ² teguhhp@dsn.dinus.ac.id; ³ kiki.bombers@gmail.com

* Correspondent Author

KEYWORDS

Treatment
Director
Film
Shot
Character

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the exploration carried out on inanimate objects in the form of dining tables. The case study used is a short film entitled "Goodbye, Table Manner" (2018) by Wisnu Candra. The film has won several national awards, namely Best Short Film – FESTCIL 2018, Best Direction, and Best Sound Design at the 2019 Indonesian Student Film Festival. The method used to bring the inanimate objects to life in this film is the application of a priori perspective based on personal experience and the interpretation of the shape of the table into the concept of film shots. The end result is to provide an equal position between the dinner table and the film's main character in running the film's plot because both have their own stories. Characters with a dining table layout and a dining table with a point of view that changes places.

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1. Introduction

The creation of the film *Meja Makan* originated from the personal experience of the author who experienced an event on an object, namely the dining table. This experience took place during approximately the time when the author was in junior high school until the beginning of senior high school with a duration of approximately 4 years. Seeing parents move an object in the house, in order to beautify or just make a new feel to the layout of the house is certainly a very common thing. In addition to avoiding boredom, moving objects in the house can provide a new view to the eyes of residents. However, what if what is moved in the house is only one object, namely the dining table. Of course this is an interesting phenomenon, because it can lead to functional interests regarding the existence of a dining table. The dining table becomes one of the central objects in the house.

Departing through personal experience regarding the existence of this object, which was then connected by the author to one of the elements in the filmmaking process. Apart from the story and the main character, there are also artistic elements. Artistic design is the concept of visual elements in film production, which includes the design of sets or locations, props, decorations, makeup, and costumes. Elements in the artistic design are certainly not presented without reason, because they must have a close relationship with the main character of the film. That's why the artistic design determines the image or look of the produced film. Character is an element of the movie that is presented to drive a plot. The plot is something that is designed through events that are connected into a sequence, and it seems as if the events



in the plot must be developed organically by the main character, because the main character is the figure in charge of driving the plot from beginning to end through his purpose (Truby 2008, 297).

Given the importance of characters in a plot, filmmakers always focus on creating the characters they want to present. The tool used to create characters is the bone structure theory. Bone structure is a theory to create a fictional character so that it can be said to be human. This theory has three dimensional structures, namely sociology, psychology and psychology. Sociology contains points: class or social status, education, place of residence, religion, statehood, political views and hobbies. Psychologically contains points: gender, age, posture, hair color, skin, eye color, face shape and body weight. Psychological contains points: partner, ambition, attitude, thinking ability, language ability and iq (Egri 1942, 35–37). The characters in the film *Dining Table* are of course also made using this theory so that the dynamics that appear from the three characters are different. Especially the main character of a mother who is designed to have a unique desire for more space to be filled with dining tables. This character design is also a barrier between the main character of the mother and the two supporting characters, father and son in interacting with the dinner table. That is, there is nothing so intense in the scene towards the dinner table except for the character of the mother. Because, if other characters come into contact with the dining table directly, then the audience will generalize the character design, and find no difference between the main character of the mother and father and the son.

A simple example that shows that the main character is the driver of the plot can be found by swapping the masks of American superheroes. An analogy can be used, what if Batman uses Spiderman's mask. Of course, it will impact the image of Batman as a superhero whose background is related to night-active bat mammals, while Spiderman is an animal whose active hours cannot be specifically confirmed. If the exchange of masks happens, the character of Batman will certainly affect the course the plot in the movie.

Batman's character has a design as a hero who keeps his mysterious side, it would be very funny if he suddenly became a narcissistic character after wearing Spiderman's mask. Spiderman's narcissistic character is seen through a scene in *Spiderman 1*, when he takes selfies to fill the newspaper pages. Then the question arises, how did the filmmaker create the character. One of the things that can answer it is the filmmaker's personal experience with the iconic character, which may have happened long ago when the creator was still a child. Another thing, of course, can be examined through the place where the filmmaker lives. That is, it could be that Indonesian filmmakers place Batman's heroism not as a hero who appears to save the city. But it could be in the form of asthma medication as used in Indonesia.

Based on the description above, it can be assumed that movie characters still have the highest position to drive a plot. However, this article offers readers something different. Through the film *Meja Makan / Goodbye, Table Manner* (2018) by Wisnu Candra, there are other things that can determine the running of the plot besides characters, that is, artistic properties. Because artistic arrangement is a factor that determines the image or appearance of a film. So it would be very possible if the property in the artistic setting becomes the main key to the running of a plot, which in the film *Meja Makan*, the choice of the art property is the dining table. Of course, making inanimate objects as the main key to the plot is not to become a different film. But, there is an aesthetic experience behind it, which is the phenomenon between the dining table and the filmmaker.

In the general sense, the function of the dining table is a place for the family gathering. From breakfast, dinner, or even talking about something. This means that there is an interaction that occurs and can be interpreted as an activity of accepting diversity between family members to create a peaceful and harmonious life (Saliro, Muchsin, and Baharuddin 2021, 33). From this function, the dining table can be one of the main objects that move family members. Even if the dining table is moved from room one to room two, family members will still make a new route to go to the dining table.

The film *Meja Makan*, used as a case study in this article, is based on a personal experience between the filmmaker and the existence of a dining table in the house. During junior high school and high school era, the dining table in the filmmaker's house was often moved from one place to another. From the kitchen, family room, and living room. The reason for moving the table was simply to renew the look and hopefully bring in a new vibe in the house. This is one of the unique phenomena experienced by the filmmaker's life. In fact, the space occupied by the dining table always changed the color of the walls, even though the table had been placed there in previous years or months. However, if the existence of the dining table is expected as a meaning of a harmonious and peaceful life. This movie chooses to portrait the narrow space that is forced as a place for the dining table. Although in the end the dining table in this movie is not to pursue the meaning of a harmonious life because there is not enough space for the table. However, the end result of the dining table in this movie and other families has the same value. As an object that can move family members to the same place even though the dining table room changes.

Based on this, the author assumes that if the dining table placed in a film plot. Then its position or existence can be the same as the main character. If the main character moves the film based on emotion, expression and dialog. The dining table moves the plot by moving from space to space, which then forms the dynamics of the film and the film's dramatic stage that gives shock to the audience. The displacement of space then affects the character's movement in the new space occupied by the dining table. So, the main character and the dining table have their own personal lives in the film.

2. Method

The film *Meja Makan* was made by adopting the author's personal experience into the medium of film. Some of the things adopted include: 1. family structure consisting of three members, father, mother and son, 2. Treatment of the figure of a mother who cares about the existence of a dining table in the house, 3. The shape of the house is 6 meters wide and 12 meters long with a total of 14 doors. All of these things are part of the personal phenomenon experienced by the author. Without the purpose of comparing the experience of the artist with the experience of others. Methods that can be used to transfer these experiences into film media use retrospective research methods with reflective research models.

Retrospective research, is research that highlights the process of reflection, analysis and interpretation of an individual's artistic experience (Peradantha 2024, 157). The point of retrospective research in the film *Meja Makan* used by the creator is to transfer the phenomenon of mother's closeness to the dining table, which in the scene of the film the dining table is always placed in different places. This certainly has a great impact on the audience and can trigger several assumptions, namely: how dear is the mother character with the dinner table compared to other families, who is the main character of the film? mother or dining table characters because both have the same duration portion. As for the dramatic staircase of the film, the artist uses a reflection research model.

The reflection research model is an approach model that places the reflection process as the basis for understanding the social, cultural, and spatial context in which the artwork is created (Budiawan and Martyastiadi 2020, 145–52). This model helps the creator in determining the selection of the filming setting. In a social context, the dinner table film discusses the desire for families to gather in eating together. Culturally, because this film is made by showing the conditions of the lower middle social class, the activity of having dinner together at a table is a question in itself. Considering that the culture of having dinner together is one of the cultures that entered post-colonial Indonesia. This also influenced the director's statement that to eat with the family, you don't have to use a table. What is important is how communication between family members takes place. In terms of place, this film is made using the author's parents' house, the house in this film is very unique because it has 14 doors that can connect each room in the house. The choice of a house with conditions like this certainly

helps the artist to explore the space chosen by the mother's character to place the dining table. Based on the selection of the method, the craftsman got a common point, that the table is one of the objects that has a great influence on its existence. Therefore, the shape of the table was adopted as a concept shot in the film.

The cinematography technique in this article lies in the point of making film shots. Based on individual artistic experience of the phenomenon of moving the dining table that occurs in the house over the years. The shape of the rectangular four-sided table becomes deeply embedded in the filmmaker's head. This then became the basis of the concept of shooting in the film Dining Table. This 6-minute film uses the concept of still shot and full action. This means that in each shot shown one event and one movement of the film character has been told, and the next shot will produce the same event, namely the movement of the table with different character movements. Because the main point of the dining table is as an axis that moves or animates the characters of the movie. Just like we eat at the table, when the meal is finished we can move the table as we wish.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Dinning Table Respons the Main Character's Place and Space

Film layout is one of the central elements in filmmaking. The choice does not necessarily refer to whether it is feasible or not, because basically, space in the world of film is something that is built to show its relationship with the main character. The dining table film was made by choosing a space that was less than 6 meters wide and 12 meters long, and the number of room doors was 14 pieces. This was chosen by taking into account the condition of the main character of the mother who likes to move the dining table. If this film is only made in a house with a common room structure that does not have 14 doors, then the impression of connection between the mother character and the interconnected space will be commonplace.

Konsep ruang dan tempat sendiri dapat diartikan sebagai area hidup manusia. Keduanya selalu diposisikan berdampingan, tetapi perbedaannya terletak pada makna tempat (Sita 2010, 12). Tempat berarti memungkinkan peristiwa terjadi di dalamnya dan terhubung dengan seseorang. Sementara ruang adalah keberadaan yang tidak terbatas, yang berarti bahwa ruang itu sendiri "tempat adalah keamanan, ruang adalah kebebasan (Tuan Yi-Fu 1979)). Ini kemudian mengacu pada penciptaan pengaturan film. Siapa yang akan mengisi latar dan siapa yang akan menghidupkan latar itu. Artinya, jika set film tidak terhubung dengan seseorang, set tersebut akan sepenuhnya menjadi ruang yang berisi beberapa objek artistik.

In general, filmmakers will entrust the setting to the main character. The main character's appreciation of the film setting is one of the points that makes the filmmaker has succeeded in bringing the setting to life. In addition to the character, another thing that can bring the setting to life as a supporter of the character's existence is through artistic objects. Of course, artistic objects are not placed carelessly. Rather, it must consider the context of the movie being made. The movie Meja Makan largely tells the condition of a lower-middle social family who wants to maintain the existence of a dining table in the house. Therefore, a wooden dining table with only a rectangular shape is more logical to be placed in the film Meja Makan, rather than a table made of marble. The dining table as a plot driver has another offering. In this movie, the dining table is there to move the characters towards the dining table. So, it is as if the table has its own life in the movie. So if drawn in the concept of place and space, the dining table in this film is an object that fills a space which then turns space into place, through character movements, and dialog in the film.

3.2. Meja Makan as Film Shot Concept

Shot is one of the important aspects in cinematography that produces a moving image. It affects the look, feel, and atmosphere built in the movie. Shot has various variants: medium shot, long shot, close up shot, extreme close up. In terms of angle, shots also have variants, high angle, low angle, eye level, frog eye and bird eye. The film Meja Makan, which adopts the table

frame as a shot concept, uses a medium shot with an eye level angle. This was chosen by the filmmaker to emphasize the existence of the table in the house. It is interpreted as a matter of equality. This means that all family members in the movie have the right to determine and question the existence of a table in the house. Although throughout the movie, the one who really wants to maintain the existence of the table is the mother character.

The interpretation produced from the table frame becomes a shot, then makes the 6-minute film *Meja Makan* has a total of 10 shots. Each shot shown in *Meja Makan* is also a depiction of the beginning and end of a story. The beginning of the story is marked by the moving of the table and the end of the story is marked by the departure of the family members, except for the mother character. However, what makes this movie feel non-repetitive in each shot is by creating new movements for each character. Because the dining table in this film acts as a plot driver whose position is the same as the main character



Fig 1. Shot 1 dan Shot 2

Shot 1 is the opening of the movie. The table position is in the living room and shows a scene of a father playing a pianika instrument. This shot doesn't use character movement. Not as a representation of the masculinity of the father's presence in the house. This shot is connected to the 2nd shot, which presents the movement of the mother's character moving from the inside of the room to the dining table. The placement of the father sitting on the table is only as an initial distraction or conflict trigger in the movie.



Fig 2. Shot 3

The dining table moves to the living room, and so does the mother who follows the table. This scene in the movie shows a mother planning to move the dining table to another room. The shots and scenes in this section are a common interpretation of a mother's affection for bringing her family together at the dinner table. But in this film, it is made to look the other way around. Other props that fill the living room make the dining table unnecessary. The dysfunction of properties such as the glass cabinet placed in this shot also represents the feeling of the dining table itself depicted through the mother's confusion.



Fig 3. Shot 4

Shot 4 is the first sign that the boy character is present. The presence of the boy in this shot is juxtaposed with the figure of the father playing the pianika. Not without reason, this shot is a personal interpretation of the filmmaker's sense of closeness to the father. This shot is also a sign of the communication language between the boy and the father, that is, through expressions and sitting side by side.



Fig 4. Shot 5

Shot 5, is a shot that shows the first interaction between the boy and the mother. This interaction is designed with a dialog from the son who makes a statement to the mother about moving the table under the stairs. The boy's movement is shown from the top of the stairs, while the mother has been sitting at the table since the beginning. This is also a further conflict in the movie. That the existence of the dining table has seemed forced by the mother. This is the author's interpretation of how affectionate the mother figure is to the objects in the house. A simple example that we can find in a mother figure in general is storing used plastic into certain containers. Because for the mother the plastic can be reused. Like the dining table in this movie, which is always maintained by the mother, with the desire to provide a new atmosphere in each move and give different feelings to family members.



Fig 5. Shot 6

Shot 6, the location set is the same as the previous shot. This shot is the turning point of the mother's feelings after her attempt to move the table from the front room to the kitchen.

However, the difference is that the mother enters from the back side and walks towards the luminous hallway. The concept of this shot is designed to show a hallucinatory mood. The hallucination comes from the same place as shot 5 but with a different scene. If shot 5 talks about the disturbing movement of the table, then shot 6 is designed to talk about the mother's search for the table.



Fig 6. Shot 7

Shot 7, in this story, is a shot that connects with shot 6. The connection between the two is marked using a bright light that becomes the mother's route to find the table. From shot 1 to shot 7, it is not shown who moved the table frontally. This is done to strengthen the impression of giving life to the table in executing the plot of the story. As if the table will move magically. Shot 7 is also the first time the main character meets the supporting characters, father and boy. The issue discussed in shot 7 is talking about the moving table that is getting over. While the father, who has been presented as a passive character with the pianika since the beginning, finally provides a solution. Although the solution given is only to reduce the peak of conflict for a moment. The appearance of the father's character is then depicted as a fragment of a shot, that is, shot 8 and 9.



Fig 7. Shot 8 dan 9

The shot is designed as a still, with the sound design of the ambience of the busy neighborhood and the sounds of birds in the afternoon. Shot 8 and shot 9 are another form of the filmmaker's personal experience and are the first shots that do not show the presence of a table. The personal experience senses the relationship between father and son. The father is patient and never once pinches his son. This patience is depicted through the depth of the building with colorful paint. And the mirror cabinet as a reflection to the audience. Would the audience reflect as a child or mother or father in this film.



Fig 8. Shot 10

Shot 10 is the ending shot of the film which uses the right panning technique. This right panning technique is also the only camera movement applied. The scene in this shot is the father and son characters moving the dining table which is not shown in the end. The ending of this shot and film is deliberately made to hang. This is an interpretation of the table that can be the hub of family members. Both the table in this film and the dining table in other homes. A simple sample that can be explained by the filmmaker is the movement of people doing culinary tourism. Each shop or stall must have a table position that is arranged as desired. However, what is certain and unchanging is that people will look for their own table. Some even choose a table with a certain position. This can then be interpreted that the dining table as an inanimate object, is able to make itself alive because of a common interest and function globally.

4. Conclusion

The dining table is one of the objects that can be interpreted as a place for family gatherings. Gathering to just eat according to their main function, gathering to chat, or even exchanging opinions and advice. However, in this film, the role of the dining table is not shown as it should. The film *Dining Table* chooses to show the problem of space and place that accommodates the existence of the dining table itself. Through the scene of moving the dining table from room to space carried out by the main character mother. Meanwhile, the characters of the father and son are displayed indifferently, because for them, the problem they are experiencing is the existence of the dining table itself. The size of the table is also the main factor that makes the dining table a nuisance, considering that the space in the house is indeed insufficient. Therefore, behind the move of the table from room to space, this film also highlights the problem of unbalanced communication between family members. So that without a dining table in the house, communication between family members should still be running.

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