

DOCUMENTARY PERSPECTIVE OF BALINESE PERFORMING ARTS IN 1928

Ni Kadek Dwiyani, S.S., M.Hum

Faculty of Fine Art and Design
Indonesian Institute of the Arts Denpasar-Bali
dwiedevana@gmail.com

Abstract

Documentary film has a great value to share any special event or even knowledge that might be occurred only in a certain occasion. It provides visually and literally description which may lead us to the other perspective that people could not imagine before. One of authentic prove about the role of documentary film is the documentary film of Balinese Performing Arts in 1928. The variant of performing arts in 1928 were very unique and brought the value of Balinese performing art into the highest of successful moment which then gave impact to the existence of Balinese performing arts at the present.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the characteristics of documentary film of Balinese Performing Arts in 1928 using documentary theory which also elaborated with descriptive-interpretative theory based on culture study approach. The data are taken from documentary film about Balinese *Janger* which known entitled “*Janger Kedaton Denpasar*” and “*Janger Abiantimbul Denpasar*” which analyzed using library research method.

This paper concluded that these documentaries were presented without words, black and white documentary films which provide visual shoots as the description of the whole story of the documentary film. The production of visual shoots has a very high intensity to delivered nature situation and condition of Balinese society engaged to Balinese performing arts in 1928. Besides, it also found 2 out of 7 techniques applied within the documentary films such as archival footage and exposition.

Keywords: Documentary, Film, Performing Arts in 1928

Introduction

Documentary film is one type of film which has an essential role as a documentation and communication tools. It can be used as a material to document event, knowledge and also information share from one to another through visual presentation of facts. Documentary film is probably one of the first mediums that come to mind when we think about “documenting reality,” yet it is also one of the most complex formats for recording aspects of our world. Documentary films use a variety of methods (e.g., images, words, sounds, and various film techniques) in order to present an argument.

As been stated by Prakoso (2008) that a documentary film is a nonfictional motion picture intended to document some aspect of reality, primarily for the purposes of instruction or maintaining a historical record. Such films were originally shot on film stock—the only medium available—but now include video and digital productions that can be either direct-to-video, made into a TV show or released for screening in cinemas. "Documentary" has been described as a "film making practice, a cinematic tradition, and mode of audience.

Documentary practice is the complex process of creating documentary projects. It refers to what people do with media devices, content, form, and production strategies in order to address the creative, ethical, and conceptual problems and choices that arise as they make documentaries. Grierson's principles of documentary were that cinema's potential for observing life could be exploited in a new art form; that the "original" actor and "original" scene are better guides than their fiction counterparts to interpreting the modern world; and that materials "thus taken from the raw" can be more real than the acted article. In this regard, Grierson's definition of documentary as "creative treatment of actuality"^[6] has gained some acceptance, with this position at variance with Soviet film-maker Dziga Vertov's provocation to present "life as it is" (that is, life filmed surreptitiously) and "life caught unawares" (life provoked or surprised by the camera). Meanwhile the American film critic Pare Lorentz defines a documentary film as "a factual film which is dramatic." Others further state that a documentary stands out from the other types of non-fiction films for providing an opinion, and a specific message, along with the facts it presents. Documentary practice is the complex process of creating documentary projects. It refers to what people do with media devices, content, form, and production strategies in order to address the creative, ethical, and conceptual problems and choices that arise as they make documentaries. During its development documentary filmmaking can be used as a form of journalism, advocacy, or personal expression.

Documentary filmmaking has also spread into the documentation of Biography, Otto-biography, history and arts and other issues of human's life. One to be discussed on this writing is art documentary on the documentation of Balinese performing arts namely *Janger* dance (*Janger Kedaton* and *Abiantimbul* Denpasar) in 1928. Bandem (1983) mentioned that *Janger* is considered as social dance which is performed by young people in some pairs. This dance will be performed with the music created from the traditional orchestra instruments known as gamelan. The music and dance will be performed harmoniously as one breathtaking performance for the audience. To perform the *janger* Dance, the young people consists of men and women will be in pairs. They perform the dance and song alternately. The dance is not merely a dance but it has deep meaning as the indication of story of a couple who are in love. This dance is performed as entertainment and part of traditional Balinese culture. *Janger* is also one of dances in Bali which can be performed by anyone and it is easy to dance without continuous training like some others. Besides with gamelan, the performance will also be accompanied by tetamburan and gender shadow puppet. Like other Balinese dances, *janger* dance cannot be separated from the stunning costume. Because this is performed by different genders, the costumes are also different. Balinese traditional male costume will be noticeable because they will wear *udeng* or male headband from this region. The female dancers will have different costumer in which they will use crown-like on their head. The female dancers should have long hair because it is the part of culture. Many people believe that his dance derived from Sanghyang or God's dance. The value presented in *janger* has its own characteristic which is very interesting to be observed based on documentary perspective. Therefore there two aspects to be observed within this writing are the representation of *Janger Kedaton* and *Abiantimbul* Denpasar in documentaries film and techniques applied within the documentary film of *Janger Kedaton* and *Abiantimbul* Denpasar based on documentary theories.

Research Method

This paper was designed to use qualitative approach using the documentary theory of documentary proposed by Nichols (2011) which elaborated with the theory of documentary techniques proposed by Tobias (1997). As been explained earlier a documentary film is a

film story concerning factual topics (i.e. someone or something). These films have a variety of aims: to record important events and ideas; to inform viewers; to convey opinions and to create public interest (Nichols, 2007). A number of common techniques or conventions are used in documentaries to achieve these aims. Those techniques are 1) Actuality in relation to documentary films ; 2) Voice-over; 3) Direct and Indirect Interviews; 4) Archival footage; 5) Reenactment; 6) Montage; and 7) Exposition. The observation on the data used is collecting using library research method based on several procedures. Each of the techniques in documentary films will be observed in each data in order to find out the process of pre-production-production and post production in making the documentary films of *janger* Kedaton and Abiantimbul in Denpasar.

The data used were documentary films on *janger* Kedaton and Abiantimbul in Denpasar. These data were taken from the documentary films of Balinese Performing Arts in 1928 produced by Research Foundation of CUNY and Stikom Bali in 2015. Data collecting were conducted through library research method and then analyzed based on several procedures. The procedures consist of observing, listing, comparing and evaluating to achieve the result and discussion to be presented in this paper. The observation of the data was conducted by watching the whole data several times to explore the flow of the film and analyze each of the presentation of both *janger* Kedaton and Abiantimbul. After the observation, the analysis will be continued by making some important list of the techniques of documentary films which were applied on the data. After each of the analysis result were noted, then those compared each other to define the similarities and the differentiation that might occurred. The last procedure should be conducted was the evaluation of each explanation regarding of problems to be discussed on the paper. The description should be conveyed descriptively in order to deliver clear and factual information to the readers.

Result And Discussion

Result and discussion on this paper will be presented in two descriptions namely the presentation of *janger* dance in performing arts 1928 documentary films and documentary techniques used in *janger* dance of performing arts in 192. The description of each will be delivered as follows:

A. The presentation of *Janger* Dance in Performing Arts 1928 Documentary Films

Due to the development of documentary since the previous era, it is found that in the Early film (pre-1900) was dominated by the novelty of showing an event. They were single-shot moments captured on film: a train entering a station, a boat docking, or factory workers leaving work. These short films were called "actuality" films; the term "documentary" was not coined until 1926. Many of the first films were a minute or less in length, due to technological limitations. Based on the theory mentioned above and related to the data used in this paper also found the fact that the length of documentaries films of *Janger* both *Janger* Kedaton and *Abiantimbul* were also presented within a view minutes but not in a very long duration that is approximately about 17 minutes, since the actual performance of *Janger* Dance is more than 1 hours. Those films captured the initial moment when there were some female dancer doing some preparation before the dance will be presented. The preparation

including the make-up, hair-do and dancers custom prepared by themselves. The crowd of viewer also becoming the list of shoots to be presented in these two documentaries films which shows the reality of Balinese community in the presence of *Janger* dance at that time. The performance of *janger* dance which performed by a group of youth (male-female) dancers present the plot of the dance which also containing a short story about traditional epic entitle Raja Pala story on *Janger Kedaton*. Meanwhile, the presentation of *janger Abiantimbul* only presented the series of dance without the existence of additional story during the presentation, which differ from *janger Kedaton*. Some description of the explanation above can be seen on the below pictures:



Female *Janger* Dancer



Janger Dance Performance
Source: Bali 1028.Vol.V



Janger Dance Performance

In another documentary perspective, stated that participatory documentaries believe that it is impossible for the act of filmmaking to not influence or alter the events being filmed. What these films do is emulate the approach of the anthropologist: participant-observation. Not only is the filmmaker part of the film, we also get a sense of how situations in the film are affected or altered by their presence. The filmmaker steps out from behind the cloak of voice-over commentary, steps away from poetic meditation, steps down from a fly-on-the-wall perch, and becomes a social actor (almost) like any other (Nichols: 2001). Almost like any other because the filmmaker retains the camera, and with it, a certain degree of potential power and control over events. The encounter between filmmaker and subject becomes a critical element of the film. In the data which observed on the paper also shown that the participation of dancers had the main role to be presented during the documentary films. The presentation of dance preparation, the crowd of viewers, and the dance performance proved that the process in capturing the moment was taken naturally without any special direction from the director and film crew. It means that the participants on the documentary of *janger* dance, both in *janger Kedaton* and *Abiantimbul* perform their acts spontaneously during the moment were captured.

From the perspective of poetic documentaries, which first appeared in the 1920s, were a sort of reaction against both the content and the rapidly crystallizing grammar of the early fiction film. The poetic mode moved away from continuity editing and instead organized images of the material world by means of associations and patterns, both in terms of time and space. Well-rounded characters—"lifelike people"—were absent; instead, people appeared in these films as entities, just like any other, that are found in the material world. The films were fragmentary, impressionistic and lyrical. Their disruption of the coherence of time and space can also be seen as an element of the modernist counter-model of cinematic

narrative. The "real world, Nichols (2001) calls it the "historical world"—was broken up into fragments and aesthetically reconstituted using film form. The correlation of the analysis done through the data used with the theory mentioned above is was also found that the process of editing was done by combining the shoots stock into one shoots. The presence of lighting and background were ignored which can be seen on several shoots which looked un-cleared and blur. There were no well organization the systematically of shoots that may lead the audience into less information regarding the whole performance of *janger* dance Kedaton and Abiantimbul. The presentation of limited color within the data that is the presentation of black and white color for the whole duration seems affected to the dramatics sequences on the documentary films used as the data in this paper. Even though the use of modern tools and technology cannot be ignored as the main reason of the limited color presentation.

In the terms of narration, these two documentary films were categorized into documentary films form without words. Documentary films form without words have been made from 1928, for example the Qatsi trilogy and the similar *Baraka* could be described as visual tone poems, with music related to the images, but no spoken content. *Koyaanisqatsi* (part of the Qatsi trilogy) consists primarily of slow motion and time-lapse photography of cities and many natural landscapes across the United States. *Baraka* tries to capture the great pulse of humanity as it flocks and swarms in daily activity and religious ceremonies. *Body song* was made in 2003 and won a British Independent Film Award for "Best British Documentary." The 2004 film *Genesis* shows animal and plant life in states of expansion, decay, sex, and death, with some, but little, narration. In the modern era of documentary films also stated the application of silent narration within a documentary film. The main differentiation is that silent narration is a type of narration uses title screens to visually narrate the documentary. The screens are held for about 5–10 seconds to allow adequate time for the viewer to read them. They are similar to the ones shown at the end of movies based on true stories, but they are shown throughout, typically between scenes. Meanwhile, documentary films with no words means there is additional information both in spoken and written to assist the viewers while they watch the whole documentary films.

B. Documentary Techniques Used in *Janger* Dance of Performing Arts in 1928

Tobias (1997) mentioned that there are 7 techniques apply in documentary films such as 1) Actuality in relation to documentary films ; 2) Voice-over; 3) Direct and Indirect Interviews; 4) Archival footage; 5) Reenactment; 6) Montage; and 7) Exposition. The explanation regarding of the application documentary films are as follow:

1. Actuality in relation to documentary films

Actuality is the term for raw film footage of real life events, places and people as opposed to fictional films which use actors, scripted stories and artificial sets. Documentaries are not pure actuality films - rather they combine actuality with explanation, commentary, and perhaps even dramatization. These two data used in the paper could be taken into raw film footage of real life events, place and people as opposed to fictional films. But the fact that in actuality in relation to documentary films which use actors, scripted stories and artificial sets removes the hypothesis. On these data, the documentary films about *janger* Kedaton and Abiantimbul in Denpasar were documented naturally as what they were at that moment. There were no scripted stories and artificial sets that prepared before the shootings were started. It looks so natural and those dancers and people were captured without any special direction from of the direction.

2. Voice-over

The voice-over in a documentary is a commentary by the filmmaker, spoken while the camera is filming, or added to the soundtrack during the production. Through this the filmmaker can speak directly to the viewer, offering information, explanations and opinions. On the perspective of documentary films, the data used in this paper has been categorized as documentary film without words which enable to assist the viewers during they watch the films. The whole film presents the series of shoots about *janger* dance Kedaton and Abiantimbul which only shows movements, gestures and body languages of the dancers and the people who watch the performance.

3. Direct and Indirect Interviews

The interview is a common documentary technique. It allows people being filmed to speak directly about events, prompted by the questions asked by the filmmaker. An interview may take place on screen, or off screen, on a different set. Interviews in a documentary give the viewer a sense of realism, that the documentary maker's views are mutually shared by another person or source, and thus more valid. To achieve this much detail from what may be a one-hour interview, clips of only a few minutes are shown. Interviews on opposing sides of an issue may be shown to give the viewer comprehensive information about a topic. These two data of documentary films provides no interview for the whole presentation of *janger* Kedaton and Abiantimbul. The whole presentation was dominated by the dancers and the crowd of the people who watch the performance. There was no approach conducted to the participants since the information only can be seen through the preparation and the performance.

4. Archival footage

Archival, or stock footage, is material obtained from a film library or archive and inserted into a documentary to show historical events or to add detail without the need for additional filming. It clearly seen that the editing process of these two films used this technique only by seeing the fact that this films are collected from the shoots list taken by another filmmaker then those edited as the whole story presented today.

5. Reenactment

Reconstructions are also often used in documentaries. They are artificial scenes of an event which has been reconstructed and acted out on film based on information of the event. Reconstructions generally provide factual information, and give the viewer a sense of realism, as if the event really happened in front of them live. They often indicate that the footage is not real by using techniques such as blurring, distortion, lighting effects, changes in camera level, and color enhancement within the footage. As been mentioned on the earlier explanation that the moment captured were taken in the different era of the publish era shows that the shoots are reconstructed based on the information of the *janger* Kedaton and Abiantimbul performances as the factual information.

6. Montage

A montage sequence conveys ideas visually by putting them in a specific order in the film. Narrative montages involve the planning of sequence of shots used to indicate changes in time and place within a film. Ideational montages link actions with words, and are often used in documentaries. A different positioning of shots conveys different ideas to the viewer. For example, a montage containing a negative theme followed by a positive theme may give the viewer the idea that the positive theme is the main theme of the montage. Montages in documentaries are usually linked with words that characters say. This visual representation of the characters thoughts helps position the viewer in the story, and helps the viewer better understand what the character is saying. It visually

presents a progression of ideas on a screen. The theory of montage technique provides the process with the perfect planning before the production is started. It full of important elements estimation during the making of documentary films. Differ to the fact of found on the data used in this paper, in which the only taken at the same moment that is the day of the performance without indication of time and place which link actions with words.

7. Exposition

In a documentary, the exposition occurs at the beginning and introduces the important themes of the film. It is important because it creates the viewer's first impression and introduces the viewer to the content. Dramatic segments of the documentary are specially chosen in order to catch the viewer's attention. These shots are specifically positioned, such that the montage positions us to believe a certain theme presented by the documentary and this the documentary presents its view much more persuasively to the viewer. The theme of these documentary films is about the performance of *janger* Kedaton and Abiantimbul which shows the preparation of the dancers before the performances was conducted at the beginning of the film. The flawless of the dancers may bring the identity of Balinese women at that period which full of confident and energetic at any occasion of their performance as *janger* dancers.

Conclusion And Suggestion

This paper concluded two points of discussion such the representation of documentary films on Janger dance namely *Janger* Kedaton and *Janger* Abiantimbul in Denpasar and also the techniques applied within those documentary films. The performance of both *janger* dance, Kedaton and Abiantimbul have their own characteristics not only in movements, gestures and also body languages. The story given during the performance also has a big role to create attractive performance. Besides the type of dancer's customs also gives art touch to the viewers as the references of fashion in the era of 1928 in Bali.

Both these documentaries were presented in silent narration, black and white documentary films which provide visual shoots as the description of the whole story of the documentary film. The production of visual shoots has a very high intensity to delivered nature situation and condition of Balinese society engaged to Balinese performing arts in 1928. The fact shown that narration was becoming less important compared to the exposing of shoots within the documentary films in analyzed on the paper.

Besides, it also found 3 out of 7 techniques applied within the documentary films such as archival footage, reenactment (reconstruction) and exposition. The editing of pieces by pieces shoots were edited and applied in the presentation of shoots which convey the story started from the beginning to the ending based on the fact happened at that time as the form of archival footage and reenactment/reconstruction. Meanwhile the exposition technique was applied at the beginning and introduces the important themes of the film. It is important because it creates the viewer's first impression and introduces the viewer to the content of Balinese *janger*. Dramatic segments of the documentary are specially chosen in order to catch the viewer's attention. These shots are specifically positioned, such that the montage positions us to believe a certain theme presented by the documentary and this the documentary presents its view much more persuasively to the viewer.

Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank and share her great gratitude to those who are sharing support and motivation during the paper was written. The first is delivered to the Almighty God for His kindly bless. Many thank also share to Rector and Staff of ISI Denpasar, Dean

of Faculty of Fine Arts and Design and Staff of ISI Denpasar and others who have contributed to the writing process of this paper.

References

- Aitken, Ian. 2005. *Encyclopedia of the Documentary Film*. New York: Routledge.
- Bandem, I Made. 1983. *Ensiklopedi Tari Bali*. Denpasar: Akademi Seni Tari Indonesia (ASTI) Denpasar.
- Barnouw, Erik. 1993. *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*, 2nd rev. ed. New York: Oxford University
- Prakosa, Gatot. 2008. *Film Pinggiran: Antologi Film Pendek, Film Eksperimental, Film Dokumenter*. Jakarta: Yayasan Seni Visual Indonesia (YSVI)
- PressLivingston, Don. 1993. *Film and The Director*. New York. The McMillan Co.
- Meleong, L. 1991. *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung. Remaja Karya.
- Nichols, Bill. 2001. *Introduction to Documentary*, Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press..
- Tobias, Michael. 1997. *The Search for Reality: The Art of Documentary Filmmaking*. Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions 1997.
- .