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Kites as Symbols in Balinese *Karawitan* Music New Creations: Deconstructing the Kite Tradition

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In Balinese gamelan art, a new Balinese musical creation featuring kites has been introduced. While kite-flying traditions had previously existed, there had been no Balinese gamelan musical works featuring. This phenomena reflects a transformational style that involves deconstructive techniques. The concerns are: 1) What is the shape of new kite building in Balinese *karawitan* art activities?; 2) Are there differences in kite traditions & in Balinese *karawitan* art activities?; 3) What is the purpose of deconstruction of kite traditions in Balinese *karawitan* art activities?. A qualitative methods was applied from a cultural studies standpoint. An interdisciplinary strategy was used to collect all data, which included document studies, participant observation, and interviews with *Karawitan* artists. All data were analyzed qualitatively-interpretively, with consideration given to deconstruction, aesthetics, and ethnomusicology theories. The results show tha t: 1) a new construction of kite tradition elements is seen in the sound patterns of new creative *karawitan* music; 2) the form of kite tradition is seen in the phase preceding the realization of new creative *karawitan* music works with a kite theme; and 3) artistic, religious, and communicative meanings are implied in the new creative *karawitan* artworks as a deconstruction of the kite tradition. These discoveries help to shape *karawitan* art based on local wisdom and create opportunity for discussion amongst traditional cultural forms.

Keywords: *Deconstruction, Kite, Symbolic Transformation, Construction, Balinese Karawitan Music Art, New Creation*

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INTRODUCTION

Kites are one of the traditional Balinese artifacts, a seasonal entertainment for the people, a cultural symbol that carries layers of philosophical meaning, religious tradition, and aesthetics. In the context of Balinese agrarian traditions, kites represent the relationship between humans and the universe (macrocosmos) and serve as a medium for symbolic offerings to the sky, *akasa* in Balinese Hindu cosmology (Eiseman, 1989). During kite festivals such as the Sanur International Kite Festival and the Gianyar Kite Festival, thousands of kites adorn the sky with their rhythmic movements, colorful visuals, and the distinctive humming sound ‘*nging*’ of *be-bean* or *janggan* kites, creating a multisensory experience that is not only visually captivating but also soul-stirring. In line with this, the creation of new works in the context of Balinese *karawitan* art is increasingly open to transdisciplinary approaches and dialogues with cultural elements in folk games such as kite flying.

Karawitan, as a genre of traditional Balinese music based on *gamelan*, has demonstrated innovative spirit and flexibility in responding to cultural issues amid social change. The process of creating *karawitan* is not merely musical composition, but also a space for representing local cultural values that can be sourced from various cultural objects such as kites (Bandem & DeBoer, 1981). In line with the aesthetic views of Bharata Muni (1961), kite performances emphasize aesthetic experiences in the form of taste. The movement of traditional Balinese kites can stimulate taste. Meanwhile, *karawitan* artworks are *bhava*, a musical articulation directed in aural space to build aesthetic experiences. Just as the buzzing sound of kites moving in the sky and their colorful visual appearance can be initial sensory stimuli that can be transformed into musical textures, rhythmic motifs, and dramaturgical compositions in *karawitan* artworks. On the one hand, an ethnomusicological approach is used to understand how the kite tradition functions as a symbolic landscape that is translated into a musical context.

According to Merriam (1981), music in a cultural context is not merely a structure of sound. Through the idiom of *karawitan*, the sound performance of kites flying monotonously in the sky can become a symbolic inspiration for beautiful *karawitan* works for collective rituals and collective cosmological expressions. *Gema Akasa* is a Balinese *karawitan* creation whose artistic sound composition acculturates the rhythmic and spiral sounds of the *janggan*-type kite in the kite tradition. The beauty of the musical creation called *layangan bayu* is built on the components of *ngebet* sound waves and slanted sounds that are very similar to the sound of kites flying in the wind. The aesthetic performance of art in the kite tradition for musical musicians can be emphasized as useful inspiration for the creation of musical artworks, in addition to being entertainment.

This research is important because it opens a new discourse in the creation of Balinese *gamelan* creations that are not solely embedded in folklore and religious rites but also from cultural artifacts that have deep symbolic value. Bandem & deBoer (1981) emphasized that Balinese performing arts are valuable because they are integrative, where visual, aural, and symbolic elements are interconnected. In this context, kites as cultural artifacts can be an inspiration in the realm of music, manifested in contemporary *gamelan* works such as *Gema Akasa* by I Wayan Julianlara.

Eiseman (1989) highlighted that kites possess profound spiritual value, connected to the *niskala*, invisible dimension. In the context of *gamelan* music, this spiritual aspect can be transformed into musical expression that embodies “*rasa*” in the aesthetic sense. This viewpoint contrasts with (Stobart, 2008), who emphasized the importance of an ethnographic approach in understanding the creative process of locally based music.

The improvisation in new-style *gamelan* compositions can respond to the rhythm of the wind, the movement of nature, and the metaphor of kite movement. In 2021, musician I

Gede Arya's *gamelan* shows take a similar approach, drawing inspiration from the zigzag movements of the *be-bean* kite. In 2016, musician Nugraha shows that the color symbols in kites (red, white, and black) are reflected in *karawitan* compositions by exploring the dynamics of high (loud), medium, and low (soft) tones, depicting the elements of *Tri Guna*. In 2016, musician Nugraha showed that the red-white-black color symbols in kites are reflected in *karawitan* compositions by exploring the dynamics of high (loud), medium, and low (soft) tones, depicting the elements of *Tri Guna*. (Barwick, 2014) emphasized the importance of translating material culture into sound, as is done in the *kulintang* and *gamelan* traditions. This concept inspired the creation of *Bayu Swara* by Ni Made Serini, combining *gamelan* rhythms with the recorded sounds of kites in Sanur.

Furthermore, the dragon-necked *janggan* kite reflects a mythological narrative that can be composed as a musical dramaturgical structure with a narrative theme. From an Eastern aesthetic perspective, Abhinavagupta's study of *rasa* strengthens the theoretical basis for how the visual and spiritual experience of kites can be processed into a musical experience through the process of transforming *rasa* into musical *bhava*. Finally, the great potential of local cultural objects as sparks of innovation in arts education. He recommends that traditional game culture, such as kites, be taught in the *gamelan* music creation curriculum.

In 2018, musician Widyantara developed the kite hum motif as a theme in his gong kebyar compositions. He emphasized the importance of the "nging" sound frequency, which resembles a natural hum, and its articulation in a pentatonic scale. The visual structure of the kite is translated by musicians into a symmetrical-dynamic compositional structure in experimental *gamelan* works. Meanwhile, musician Sudarsana emphasized the role of symbols and spirituality in Balinese cultural objects, including kites as a medium connecting humans and gods. This reinforces the idea that the sound in kite-inspired *gamelan* music serves more than just an aesthetic function but can also accommodate creative aspirations.

The involvement of the kite tradition in the creative process of creating musical works reflects cultural diversification through the medium of sound and broadens the aesthetic horizon of *gamelan* towards the relative without forgetting its local cultural identity. In line with the aesthetics in the thoughts of Bharata Muni (1961), the symbolic transformation that has elements of imitation of the sound of kite movements and musical discourse has opened a space for discussion of the kite tradition, which has become a source of creativity and innovation for Balinese *gamelan* artworks. The symbolic transformation of the discussion space of the kite tradition that is appropriate to the context of this *gamelan* artwork is ideal in ethnomusicology (Merriam, 1981).

The practice of deconstruction and symbolic transformation of kites is considered a determining factor in the success of new creative Balinese *gamelan* works. This creative process reflects Derrida's spirit in opening up plurality of aesthetic interpretations, destabilizing the stability of meaning, and re-reading tradition deconstructively. Meaning can change due to differences, delays, and the instability of the relationship between signs and context (Trumbull, 2022). According to Derrida in Nass (2021), there is no meaning outside the text. In texts, there are often hierarchical binary oppositions. Unraveling and overcoming hierarchical binary oppositions is the direction of plurality of interpretation, criticism of stability, and re-reading of traditional texts (De Ville, 2023). Just as Balinese *gamelan* musicians dismantle and rebuild musical elements and shift old meanings toward new ones without losing the foundations of their traditional cultural identity, this demonstrates a way to overcome the problems of rigid stereotypes of traditional *gamelan* music, the need for creativity in musical art, and the aesthetic form of traditional kite-flying. The results of the analysis of new styles in the presentation of kite symbols for entertainment are certainly meaningful in adding to the benefits of deconstructive understanding, just as deconstruction theory can be useful as a framework for analyzing data on kite symbols in new Balinese

karawitan music creations in order to prove that the meaning of kites is not singular and absolute, but only as traditional games for boys.

It's interesting to note that various new Balinese gamelan works have been discovered, but there has been no research on new Balinese gamelan works featuring kites. Yet, the tradition of kites and Balinese gamelan music in traditional Balinese culture is fascinating to observe. The main problems are focused on: 1) How is the new construction form of the kite tradition?; 2) How is the different form of the kite tradition?; 3) What is the meaning of the deconstruction of the kite tradition in new creative Balinese *gamelan* art activities?.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used is a qualitative method from a cultural studies perspective. This research is strengthened by an understanding of ethnoaesthetics and ethnomusicology, which allows for an in-depth exploration of the symbolic transformations of the Balinese kite tradition and Balinese gamelan musical works. The main focus of this method is to collect data, interpret the symbolic meanings, visual structures, and cultural values inherent in traditional Balinese kites and how these elements are manifested in gamelan-based musical compositions.

Data collection was conducted using an interdisciplinary approach based on the operation of three techniques, namely: (1) participatory observation, conducted in the context of kite rituals and festivals, such as the Sanur International Kite Festival and the Gianyar Traditional Kite Festival, to observe the visual elements, movement, and natural sound of kites, including social interactions and symbolic expressions of the community. For example, in the *janggan* kite, observations focused on the long tail shape, which is narrated as a dragon guarding the sky; (2) in-depth interviews, conducted with several contemporary Balinese *gamelan* composers who have created *gamelan* works inspired by kites. Interviews also involved kite craftsmen from Sanur Village and sound engineers at the Indonesian Institute of the Arts Bali to explore symbolic understanding and sound interpretation. The interviews were conducted in natural settings such as Sanur, homes, and offices. There were nine informants, who were selected based on their experience and knowledge of kites using purposive sampling; (3) document studies, including visual analysis of photographs and videos of kite festivals, as well as transcriptions and notations of *gamelan* music from works such as “*Gema Akasa*,” “*Bayu Swara*,” and “*Layangan Bayu*.” This study also utilized library sources from previous research (Bandem & DeBoer, 1981).

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which focuses on identifying key themes within symbolic narratives and musical expressions. The analysis process was divided into several stages: (1) initial coding, noting symbolic elements of kites (color, shape, movement, sound) relevant to the musical dimension. Each element was observed in detail to discover its symbolic meaning and aesthetic function within a musical context. The data obtained were then coded according to initial categories that emerged from field observations. This process helped researchers identify initial patterns or themes that connected the kite's visual and auditory elements to musical principles. Thus, the initial coding served as the basis for further analysis and its musical expression; (2) categorization, organizing themes based on visual-to-musical transformations for example, the spiral shape of the be-bean kite interpreted in the rotating melodic structure of gamelan. This process focuses on the relationship between the kite's visual form and its transformation into musical structure. For example, the spiral shape of the be-bean kite is interpreted as a representation of the swirling melodic structure in gamelan music. Each thematic category reflects a pattern of transposition between a visual element and its musical equivalent. Thus, this stage helps build a conceptual understanding of how visual symbols translate into musical expression; (3) aesthetic interpretation, using the theory of *rasa* (feeling) by Bharata Muni (1961) and Abhinavagupta to examine the connection between the visual experience of kites and the

creation of musical *rasa* in gamelan works. In the aesthetic interpretation stage, the analysis focused on exploring the emotional and aesthetic meanings between the visual experience of kites and the creation of musical feeling in gamelan compositions. This approach uses the *rasa* theory of Bharata Muni and Abhinavagupta as a conceptual foundation for understanding the relationship between form, color, movement, and musical expression. All data were analyzed qualitatively and interpretively, considering theories of deconstruction, aesthetics, and ethnomusicology to enrich the meaning. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and techniques and member checking with the composers to confirm the interpretations. The credibility of the research was strengthened through the researcher's active involvement in the Balinese gamelan community, thus deepening the understanding of the cultural context and creative process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Balinese kite tradition is closely linked to the religious rituals of Balinese Hindu culture. Hindu religious rituals are inextricably linked to traditional Balinese agricultural routines (Karmini et al., 2019). Balinese farmers believe that *Sang Hyang Rare Angon* is a manifestation of the Lord Shiva when the rice harvest season ends. Traditional Balinese farmers believe *Sang Hyang Rare Angon* can protect their rice fields from pests during the next planting season. Furthermore, the symbol of *Sang Hyang Rare Angon*, a shepherd riding an ox or cow carrying a flute, is always present in Hindu religious ceremonies such as *mecaru*, *mekarya*, and other major ceremonies. This reflects the close relationship between human endeavor, natural energy, and supernatural powers in Balinese culture, ensuring a balance between the microcosm and the macrocosm.

Research shows that traditional Balinese kites have undergone significant development in form, function, and their symbolic role in the creation of the Javanese gamelan art. The development in question can be seen in the new construction section of the kite tradition in the practice of new creative Balinese gamelan art, the difference from the kite tradition, and the meaning of the deconstruction of the kite tradition in Balinese *gamelan* art activities.

4.1 New Construction of The Kite Tradition in The Practice of Balinese *Gamelan* Art: A Creation of New Balinese Music

Deconstruction works by exposing and destabilizing established meaning structures, old constructs, not to permanently destroy them, but rather to postpone the emergence of a single, definitive meaning (De Ville, 2023; Naas, 2021). This process allows for the emergence of new meanings, new constructs that are already implicit in the contradictions and instability of the text or old structure itself. New constructs are not absolute replacements, but rather the result of a remapping and division of meaning that opens up other meaningful possibilities. In other words, new constructs are the performative result of deconstruction, namely the realization of the tension between maintaining and breaking with old meanings, resulting in the old meanings being suspended and undergoing continuous shifts. This reflects the fact that texts or social realities do not have fixed meanings but are always in a process of endless reshaping.

In the Balinese kite tradition, there are three main types of kites: the *Bebean*, the *Pecukan*, and the *Janggan*. Each type represents a distinctive visual form. The *Bebean* resembles a fish, the *Pecukan* resembles a leaf or eye, and the *Janggan* resembles a dragon with a long, flowing tail. However, over time, innovations have emerged in Balinese kite forms, such as the *Kedis-kedisan*, the *Cotek*, and the *Janggan Buntut*, which not only represent nature but also expand the visual heritage of Balinese culture.

In the realm of new-style performing arts production, intermedium integration becomes a compelling expressive strategy. One interesting practice is the interpretation of the

visual elements of traditional Balinese kites such as *Bebean*, *Pecukan*, and *Janggan* into new compositions for *karawitan* artworks. These kite visualizations, laden with cultural meaning, are transformed into musical structures through symbolic, gestural, and textual approaches. This phenomenon is critically analyzed based on visual semiotics, intermodal aesthetics, and Balinese aesthetics.

According to Barthes & Heath (1977), visual signs are not only denotative but also connotative, tending to contain deep cultural meanings. For example, the meaning of freedom and agility in the *Bebean* kite movement is voiced in the *karawitan* composition with its bouncing and dynamic melody. The high meaning and permanence in the *Janggan* kite movement are represented in the composition of long notes, glissando notes of the flute, and the resonant sound of the *gangsa jongkok*.

This transposition is not merely literal but rather a process of semiosis, transforming visual imagery into musical idiom. For example, the unstable spiral motion of a *pegukan* kite can be transformed into an asymmetrical rhythmic pattern (odd meters) or polyrhythm in a *karawitan* composition. In this case, the visuals are not merely inspiration but become a "source of signs" in the musical arrangement.

A series of signs can act as entertainment and a medium for communicating messages (Sudirga et al., 2024). McLuhan (2003) stated that the medium is the message. In this context, when the visual of a kite is transferred to a musical medium, a change in meaning and perception occurs. Meaning can be created based on the orientation of practical values, practices, and responses (Arniati et al., 2020). In line with Meyer's (1956) intermodal aesthetic view, the transfer of experience from one medium to another allows for the creation of multisensory sensations and responses. Like the *karawitan* work entitled *ngudang angin*, it can be seen that there is a synthesis, where the visual elements of the kite are interpreted and translated into the art of wind play in the production of the beauty of the sound of the flute and the sound of the wind combined with the pulling of the strings that comes from the resonance of the drum.

This type of transformation has expanded the expressive scope of *karawitan* art from primarily auditory to auditory-imaginative. Changes in form can occur based on the performer's practice, potential, and external stimuli (Dharmika et al., 2022). Composers no longer compose musical notation solely based on melodic and rhythmic structures but also on the shape, color, and visual movement of the kite. This is where the concept of synesthetic thinking becomes crucial: creative thinking that unites visual and sound into a unified artistic expression.

Considering aspects of traditional Balinese culture, kites are not merely children's games but symbols of human relationships according to the *Tri Hita Karana* and *Tri Angga* in cosmological space. The *Janggan* kite element, such as its long tail that cuts through the sky, symbolizes the relationship between the *purusa* and *pradana* and communication with ancestors. When this element is aestheticized in the form of musical sounds, the artistic composition becomes not only sound but also a sound ritual capable of balancing the relationship between the macrocosm and the microcosm. As seen in the work entitled *ngudang janggan* by I Wayan Sadra, which successfully replicates the movement of a kite as it rises, hovers, falls, and returns to flight within the beautiful musical structure of a creative *karawitan* work. As stated by I Wayan Sadra in Gianyar in 2021:

"...a number of melodic lines in the work tell the story of a kite's ascent, descent, return to flight, and soaring. There are also musical combinations that depict the force of wind gusts and the law of gravity..."

Based on the informant's statement above, it can be seen that the representation of the kite shape in the new creative Balinese *karawitan* musical work. Crescendo-decrescendo

techniques, tempo changes, and layering of instruments are used to depict the dance of the wind and the attraction of the earth. Music becomes a transcendent narrative rooted in the visual and spiritual culture of Balinese Hinduism.



Figure 1. Kites as Inspiration for the Creation of Balinese *Karawitan* Art
(Doc. Yoga, 2025)

The image above illustrates the shape of the kite, which inspired the creation of a new Balinese gamelan artwork. The gamelan artwork, titled *Gemetik Layangan*, depicts the flute musicians' hand movements, reminiscent of pulling a kite string. The tempo dynamics of the *Gemetik Layangan* music, among other things, demonstrate the movement of a kite flying in the wind. For example, in the experimental performance *Nguncal Layang*, the musicians not only create rhythm but also create body gestures that represent the movements of throwing and pulling a kite.

The deconstruction of the visual elements of kites into innovative *gamelan* compositions is not only a creative practice but also a form of cultural reinterpretation that strengthens the relationship between traditional and innovative artworks. In Derrida's deconstruction framework, new construction is the achievement of *différance* which postpones and diversifies old meanings, thus producing new possibilities in understanding without eliminating the old ones. Through a semiotic approach, intermodal aesthetics, and local context, this practice is able to present an aesthetic experience rich in meaning and touches on spiritual, social, and ecological realms. Through practices such as these, Balinese *gamelan* artists not only preserve tradition but also reconstruct cultural symbols into a dialogic and dynamic musical format. These works are testimony that art is a living space of interpretation, echoing from the sky where kites dance to the notes of the *gamelan* that endlessly voice identity.

4.2 *Différance* Forms of Kite Tradition in Balinese *Karawitan* Art Activities

Human movement is not only a means of expression but also a medium for representing cultural meaning. In the context of Balinese *gamelan* art, interpreting movement opens up intermedial possibilities between body and sound, between visual and auditory space. Movement, once the primary domain of dance, has become a source of inspiration, structure in the development of more performative and multisensory musical compositions. According to *différance*, meaning is never fully present or fixed. It always arises through an

interval of differences and delays between signifiers. New construction is understood as the achievement of *différance*, the postponement of old constructions. *Différance* marks a process in which meaning is never absolutely and finally present but is always in a state of suspension and difference through the continuous shifting of signs and interpretations.

In the Balinese gamelan context, movement and sound engage in this interplay, movement's visual rhythm and gesture do not simply mirror sound but continuously modify, defer, and differ from it, producing emergent composite meanings that neither belong solely to the body nor to music but to the intermedial encounter. This intermedial relationship manifests as a "modified present" where the body's motion and sonic textures co-constitute a multisensory experience that transcends their individual meanings. Movement inspires and structures musical motifs, while gamelan sounds evoke corporeal dynamics and cultural gestures, creating iterative loops of difference and deferral that reflect Balinese cosmology's layered and fluid worldview. Thus, movement in gamelan art is both a signifying system and a generative force within the deconstructive framework of *différance*, emphasizing the constant re-interpretation and renewal of cultural meaning across sensory modalities. This reflects the deeply embedded Balinese sensibility where art forms are interrelated, and cultural signification is always provisional, relational, and open-ended.

Referring to Roland Barthes's semiotics of movement as understood by Pint & Gernerchak (2010), movement is never neutral. Movement is a sign that contains the connotative and denotative meanings of a symbol. In new creative art performances, kite movements such as pulling, throwing, and twisting can be interpreted as symbolic manifestations of cultural values about freedom, cosmic tension, and harmony. In the composition of creative *karawitan* art, this transposition is realized in the technique of playing the instrument. For example, the sudden movement of a kite being thrown can be translated into a staccato technique on the *gangsa*. Meanwhile, the smooth floating movement of the kite is translated by *karawitan* musicians as an imaginative score and then symbolically realized as a glissando or tremolo on the sound of the flute or the sound of the *rebab*. In this transformation model, movement is not imitated literally but is interpreted symbolically and mediated through sound.

According to Merleau-Ponty (2012), the body is the center of aesthetic experience, known as embodied perception. In this context, the interpretation of movement elements is not merely done through observation but through the experience of the body directly involved in the musical process. When a *gamelan* player composes a rhythmic pattern based on the experience of kite movement, he creates music from his or her body, which remembers movement.

The interpretation of kite movement as a source of musical inspiration is a process of kinesthetic empathy. Musicians, based on kinesthetic empathy, strive to absorb the qualities of movement into their bodies and re-emerge them in musical form. This also occurs in Balinese tradition, where *gamelan* musicians often dance in a seated position. Their body movements synchronize with the vibrations of the notes and dynamics, creating a wholeness of expression that is not only auditory but also kinesthetic. In this case, the role of movement is not merely inspiration but becomes the basic structure of musical dramaturgy. Their subtle, synchronized bodily movements in seated dance do not simply imitate the movement but actively participate in the ongoing play of difference and deferral between sound and motion. The vibrations and dynamics of the gamelan music influence their body motions, which in turn shape musical expression, creating a continuous feedback loop of mutual modification. This dynamic interplay expresses a "between-ness," where impression and expression constantly defer and differ from one another in time and space.

Movement becomes more than just inspiration. It is the structural dramaturgy of the music itself, embedding layers of cultural meaning through embodied experience. The

musicians' bodies act as conduits of cultural signification, where the meaning of sound is always mediated through, and differentiated by, embodied gesture. Thus, within difference, kinesthetic empathy and musical dramaturgy exemplify how Balinese gamelan articulates the fluid, open-ended nature of cultural meaning, meaning arises relationally through an ongoing process where sound, body, and movement simultaneously differ and defer each other. This enriches gamelan music as a multisensory cultural practice that integrates visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements into a living, evolving semiotic space.

In Balinese cosmology, movement is inseparable from ritual and social values. Social and ceremonial values can be crystallized in symbols (Ida Bagus & Kharisma Pradana, 2021). Ritual movements such as the *Rejang* dance, *Baris* dance, and *Topeng* dance are rich in symbolism. Movement not only fills space but also builds relationships between humans, nature, and ancestral spirits. Because kites are believed to hold religious properties, they are often associated with religious offerings and rituals in Bali.

When the elements of kite movement are transformed and interpreted in the art of *karawitan*, the composition becomes not only an aesthetic form but also a statement of faith and culture. The sounds born from the interpretation of movement become a musical *mantra* that expresses the balance between the *niskala* (invisible) and *sekala* (visible). For example, the work *ngelayang di angkasa* contains the results of the transformation of the up-and-down and spiral movements of a kite to convey a narrative message about the journey of the soul (*atma*) to the sacred realm. The fluctuating rhythmic and melodic sound patterns in the work *ngelayang di angkasa* depict the uncertainty of the wind direction that supports the flight of the kite as well as the challenges faced by humans to achieve serenity.

Movement and sound structures in gamelan art form a semiotic system where meaning is not fixed or mimetically reproduced but is always differentiated and deferred. Movement is transformed from a mere source of inspiration into a foundational element of a new symbolic language in sound, creating an interplay where movement and sound constantly reference and reshape each other. This process aligns with Derrida's idea that meaning arises through an infinite play of differences between signs rather than through stable identities. The interpenetration of body, space, and sound in Balinese gamelan exemplifies this difference, the movements do not simply represent sound, nor does sound merely replicate movement. Instead, they constitute a dynamic relational system where meanings emerge from their differences and mutual deferrals, contributing to the evolving cultural expression rooted in tradition yet open to continual reinterpretation.

The interpretive diversification of the symbolic elements of the sound and movement of kites into new creative compositions of *gamelan* art represents a transformation of bodily expression into sound structures. Through a semiotic, embodied, and aesthetic approach, artists not only reproduce movements mimetically but also transform them into a new symbolic system in sound art. Herein lies the power of new creative Balinese *gamelan* art. Rooted in tradition, it consistently demonstrates development through the interpenetration of body, space, and sound.

4.3 The Deconstruction of the Kite Tradition in Balinese Karawitan Art Activities

The deconstruction of the elements of the kite tradition into creative works of art is a dynamic process that reinterprets and revitalizes elements of traditional culture through innovative *karawitan* artistic expressions based on heritage. Elements of traditional kites, including shapes, motifs, colors, and cultural stories from the kite-flying tradition, are not simply duplicated; instead, they are analyzed and restructured into a new format for display as works of art on the Balinese *karawitan* art stage. The artists still draw inspiration from cultural beliefs, myths, and everyday life reflected in the kites, using metaphors, contrasts, and symbols to instill new artistic meanings that respect the *karawitan* art tradition while innovating based on the kite symbol. In the context of Balinese *gamelan* creations, kites, which

were originally part of the culture, a game, and a symbol of Balinese beliefs, undergo a difference in basic meaning into new musical motifs laden with local philosophical values. Examining Paul Ricoeur's symbolic hermeneutics as understood by Peterson (2023), kites are reinterpreted into musical elements that are not just sounds but also meaningful sounds.

Besides being a medium for play, kites in Balinese culture can serve as a ritual and an expression of the performer's beliefs. For example, the *Janggan* kite of North Bali, which features a dragon face and a long tail, is not only visually spectacular but also symbolizes the connection between humans and the universe (*akasa*) and ancestors. Its towering, skyward shape represents transcendental aspirations, leading to the perfection of spiritual hopes.

Fulfilling spiritual hopes can be a source of happiness, as stated in *Tri Hita Karana*. According to *Tri Hita Karana*, kites symbolize harmony between humans, nature, and God. Their dancing movements in the sky convey the freedom of the soul (*atma*) from worldly bonds. This is the basic meaning that is then deconstructed into new meaning in karawitan musical language.

In the context of creative Balinese *gamelan*, these philosophical meanings are deconstructed as musical motifs meaning through the use of tonal patterns, sound textures, and dynamics that depict the philosophy of kites. Based on deconstruction theory, this process is not merely about reproducing fixed symbols; rather, it is about breaking down and transforming traditional meanings to create new, dynamic expressions in music. Meaning emerges from the interplay between form and context, and is never fixed or singular. In gamelan music, musical motifs derived from kite symbolism do not just represent the philosophy superficially, they embody complex cultural, cosmological, and spiritual values encoded in tone choices, rhythmic patterns, and the textures of sound. This transforms the music into a semiotic "second language" where traditional kite symbols are fragmented and reassembled sonically, opening a new interpretive space. Tonal patterns and dynamics can evoke the cultural ascent and cosmic harmony that kites symbolize, while sound textures may recreate movements and energies associated with the kite's flight, reflecting Balinese cosmology. The creative compositional process dialogues continuously between the original symbolic text of the kite and the musical context, generating meanings that are at once rooted in tradition and innovatively re-signified. Based on Philip Tagg's musical semiotics as understood by Zielonka (2020), it allows receptors to read musical motifs as codes that represent cultural meanings. For example, circular, rising and falling, and open musical motifs are used to symbolize the free-floating movement of kites. This is not just a musical form but a symbolic strategy to express spiritual achievement in the language of sound. In the work *Layangan Janggan : Nyurat Akasa* by a young Balinese composer, *gamelan* motifs are arranged with a pattern of high and falling notes, accompanied by rhythmic but interrupted repetitions, as if to voice the pulling and beating of kite strings when they are pitted against the wind.

Referring to Ricoeur's (1976) symbolic hermeneutics, the deconstruction of kites symbol as meaningful musical motif, a dialectical process between text and context. In Derrida's concept of *différance*, where meaning is always deferred and differs depending on context, applies here as the kite symbols continuously find new expressions through musical motifs, never fully settling on a single interpretation. The dialectical tension between the traditional kite symbol and its reinterpretation and transformation into music enables the constant renewal of cultural meanings, sustaining both tradition and innovation. This interpretive dynamism aligns with Balinese cultural principles, where art and ritual are living practices continuously negotiated between the old and the new, the visible and the invisible. In this case, the "text" is the kite symbol itself, a complex signifier rich with layers of Balinese cosmology and cultural meaning. The "context" is the surrounding cultural and ritual frameworks that inform how these symbols are understood, including gamelan music and its role in Balinese religious and social life.

Deconstruction reveals that meaning is not fixed in the kite symbol alone but emerges through its interaction with gamelan music as a performing and interpretive context. The musical composition becomes a "second language," translating visual and philosophical meanings of the kite into sonic form. This process is not merely mimetic or representational. Instead, it opens a new interpretive space where traditional symbols are fragmented, rearranged, and re-signified, allowing for fresh dialogue and multiple interpretations. The music acts as a medium that communicates these meanings in a form that evokes emotional and spiritual resonance congruent with Balinese cosmological values. Deconstruction insists that musical motifs and cultural and cosmological understanding are inseparable and co-constitutive. The motifs gain their significance only when heard within the specific cultural and symbolic "context" of Balinese spirituality. In this way, meaning is not embedded in the music alone but is created in the play between music form and listening context, shaped by cultural knowledge and social practice.

Music not only conveys form but also presupposes an understanding of Balinese cosmology and spiritual values. Composition becomes a new interpretive space, a place where traditional visual symbols and philosophy are presented in a second language through music. For example, the use of long notes and drones in several sections of contemporary gamelan works such as *Angin di Ulu* represents the eternity and silence of the sky. This is a musical expression of the meaning of *akasa*, the empty space where the kite dances, and also the space where the soul returns.

Balinese aesthetics place a strong emphasis on harmony and the interconnectedness of form and meaning. In this context, composers employ musical motifs not only technically but also consider the emotional value (*taksu*) and spiritual appreciation of the kite symbol. These *gamelan* compositions often involve a meditative process, where the musician is not merely a technician but also a communicator in conveying meaning. In the work *ngambang*, for example, the sound of the flute, delay effects, and tremolo techniques simulate the gentle movement of a wind kite, creating a contemplative atmosphere that reflects the human soul's wanderings between the mundane and the spiritual. This is a concrete manifestation of the transformation of the kite philosophy into the language of sound.

The deconstruction of the philosophical meaning of kites into new meaningful musical motifs in Balinese *gamelan* music is not merely a superficial aesthetic but a cultural practice that re-explores the symbolic and cosmological roots of Balinese tradition. Deconstructing the philosophical meaning of kites into gamelan music motifs is a critical cultural act that breaks down fixed symbolic meanings to generate evolving, pluralistic musical expressions that revisit Balinese cosmology and spirituality, reflecting Derrida's idea of constantly re-signifying cultural texts rather than preserving them as static. Derrida's deconstruction posits that meaning is not fixed but rather fluid, generated through the play of differences and reinterpretations. Applying this to Balinese kite philosophy and *gamelan*, one sees the established kite symbolism (text) taken apart and music meaning in ways that challenge and expand the original ideas while retaining their essential cultural resonance. The tension between originality and reinterpretation reflects the balance between unfixed meaning and traditional cosmology, a core duality in Balinese culture itself. This tension allows for creative freedom while rooting artistic innovations in tradition.

Kites in Bali symbolize human aspiration and communication with the divine, reflecting the cosmic harmony between the earthly realm and the cultural forces of nature. The act of flying a kite is a metaphor for transcendence and connection with deities and ancestors. When these symbolic meanings are deconstructed into *gamelan* motifs, each musical phrase or pattern is not just a sound but a narrative of these cosmological and spiritual ideas, re-explored in sonic form. Instead of taking the kite's symbols as fixed, *gamelan* composers and musicians question and dismantle these traditional meanings, allowing for emergent interpretations that interact dynamically with contemporary cultural realities. This

transforms the kite's philosophical concepts like freedom, balance, cultural connection into new musical motifs that evoke similar emotions and reflections without being literal. This process is deeply embedded in Balinese cultural practice because gamelan music serves ritualistic and social functions. The new musical motifs created through deconstruction sustain the cultural narrative by continually re-examining and expressing Balinese spirituality and identity through sound, keeping the tradition alive and relevant. Based on deconstruction theory, especially as developed by Jacques Derrida, deconstruction involves dismantling established meanings and structures to reveal underlying assumptions, tensions, and multiple layers of significance that were previously implicit or overlooked. In the context of Balinese gamelan music and kite symbolism, this means critically breaking down the traditional philosophical meanings embedded in kite motifs and expressions by recontextualizing them into Balinese *karawitan* musical language.

Through considerations of hermeneutics, musical semiotics, and local aesthetics, *gamelan* artists are able to create a new interpretive space that infuses cultural values into innovative musical forms. In their hands, kites become not only a form of inspiration but also a bridge between visual culture, local philosophy, and new creative musical expressions.

4.4 Discussions

This research found that the symbolic transformation of kites does not stop at visual forms alone but spreads to the musical medium, namely the art of *karawitan*, especially in the genres of *Gong Kebyar*, *Baleganjur*, and *Pepanggulan*. The creativity of *karawitan* artists in translating the form, symbol, and philosophy of kites into musical compositions is a complex and meaningful artistic transposition process. A concrete example can be seen in the work *Janggana Layang* by I Wayan Widia. This percussion is directly inspired by the visualization of the *Janggan* kite, which has a majestic dragon shape and a long, dangling tail. The musical structure of *Janggana Layang* maps the body of the kite into a musical structure as follows: a. The *kawitan* (dragon head) section is transformed into a *tabuh* opening with a majestic feel and full of ornamentation, using *pepayasan* that depicts mythological majesty; b. The *pengawak* and *pengisep* (dragon body) sections reflect the strength and solidity of the composition, with a steady and dimensional musical pattern; c. The *pengecet* (dragon's tail) section is interpreted through rhythmic variations, bar changes, and triplet patterns that depict the curve of the dragon's tail when struck by the wind. This element forms the musical and visual climax of the work.

The 2018 re-performance of *Janggana Layang* at the PKB (Indonesian Cultural Center) demonstrated that this form is not merely a repetition but rather a process of musical development. While the basic structure is similar to the 2014 version, the adaptations to the accompaniment and accompaniment sections demonstrate that the symbolic transformation is dynamic and allows for compositional improvisation. The second work analyzed is *Pecuk* by I Kadek Vanny Mahendra Putra. This work reflects the *Layangan Pecukan*, which possesses symmetrical balance and sharp shapes. The philosophy of *Pecukan* as a symbol of harmony and precision is translated into a musical structure with a proportional compositional blend. As stated by I Kadek Vanny Mahendra Putra in Denpasar in 2024:

"...this *pecukan* is visualized harmoniously and balanced in the *kawitan* section. The expression of the *pecukan* as a flying kite is conveyed through the dynamics of swinging and rhythmic musical style, accompanied by *tabuh* *lelambatan*..."

Through the informant's statement above, it can be understood that Vanny divides her musical structure into three thematic parts: a. *Kawitan* illustrates the complexity of forming a balanced *pecukan*; b. The crew represents the body of the kite with a pattern that develops from the structure of the *Tabuh Lelambatan*; c. The painter depicts the harmony and power of the kite in the air, visualized through interlocking tone patterns, swinging dynamics, and expressive rhythmic play.

The significance of this work lies in its exploration of the idea of visual balance in the form of musical harmony. The *pecukan*, which is prone to imbalance if not executed precisely, serves as a metaphor for the structural precision of the *gamelan*.

The third work analyzed is *Swabawaning Nur*, a Baleganjur composition by I Wayan Arik Wirawan and Ngurah Krisna Murti. This work not only interprets the form of a kite but also captures the spirit of its creation, specifically the creation of the giant *Nagaraja* kite by the youth of *Banjar Daging Peken*. *Baleganjur*, as an energetic ensemble, was chosen to convey the spirit of kite creation. The burst of enthusiasm is expressed through: a. A combination of drum patterns and *ceng-ceng kopyak*, which forms an aggressive rhythm; b. *Ponggang* and *riong* melodies that flow like the twists of *Nagaraja*'s tail; c. The symbolism of fire is translated into a fast-paced and dynamic musical structure, reflecting *Teja* as an element of the *Panca Maha Bhuta* and a limitless creative spirit. This work shows that inspiration does not always have to come from the physical form of an object but can be the creative ethos and spiritual values contained in the process of creating cultural artifacts, such as the *Nagaraja* kite.

Finally, I Wayan Sruta Wiguna's *Tapa Rare* demonstrates a more symbolic and narrative approach. This work draws on the world of children, including the activity of flying kites, as a source of inspiration. In this work: a. Body expressions and musical dynamics reflect the imagination and spontaneity of the child's world; b. The final section displays live visualizations of *bebean*, *pecukan*, and *janggan* kites theatrically on stage, accompanied by flute and gamelan melodies; c. The simultaneous integration of visual and musical elements makes this work not only a musical performance but also a multimedia performance based on local culture.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that Balinese kites have become a multifaceted source of inspiration, from visualization of form and symbolic value to spiritual representation and creative spirit. In the context of Balinese *gamelan*, kites present both challenges and opportunities for aesthetic transposition from visual to audial culture. Young Balinese composers have succeeded in constructing musical narratives that not only elevate traditional Balinese cultural symbols but also creatively articulate cultural experiences.

The creativity in the practice of deconstructing the kite tradition is evident in the impact of integrating visual symbols into the musical structure of Balinese *gamelan* art, which has succeeded in creating innovative musical works. This research proves that the visual symbols and philosophical elements of the kite tradition can be transformed into musical compositions based on traditional structures such as *Gong Kebyar* and *Baleganjur*. This goes beyond mere thematic illustration to the formation of musical structures based on symbolic narratives.

The symbolic narrative within this musical structure is examined by integrating the principles of ethnoaesthetics, visual semiotics, and ethnomusicology into the analysis and creation process. This approach allows for the creation of traditional musical works based on popular cultural objects without losing their spiritual and philosophical roots. Through this innovative artwork, kites are not merely artifacts of traditional games but are successfully positioned as a source of inspiration and an element of Balinese *gamelan* creative art. This strengthens the position of local culture visually as a foundation for musical artistic creativity.

This creation model based on symbolic representation and aesthetic tradition has found a creation model rooted in the transformation of visual elements (shape, color, movement), symbolic values (mythological and spiritual meanings), and rhythmic structures (based on sensory experiences of kites) into a coherent and communicative *gending* structure. The findings of this study have contributed to the development of an arts curriculum, where kites as local cultural objects can be teaching materials in applied studies of local ethnic

culture-based music, as well as a strategy for cultural preservation through innovative works. Based on this evidence, it can be understood that this study can not only broaden insights into the practice of creating Balinese *gamelan* but also offer a new approach in placing traditional cultural objects as a foundation for developing dynamic, contextual, and contemporary musical aesthetics.

The symbolic transformation of traditional Balinese kites into *karawitan* musical creations is not merely aesthetic but also contains complex ethnomusicological, spiritual, and creative dimensions. This process reflects a dialogue across cultural forms, from the visual to the aural, from cultural objects to performative works. According to the concept of *rasa* in classical Indian aesthetics (Bharata Muni, 1961), every form of artistic expression aims to evoke a universal emotional experience rooted in *bhava*, or internal conditions. In this context, the shape, movement, and color of traditional kites become stimuli for *rasa*, which are then processed by composers into musical structures that convey the impression of the sublime (*vīra rasa*), happiness (*hāsyā*), or even spirituality (*śānta*).

Bandem and deBoer (1981) state that Balinese *gamelan* art is intertextual and highly open to visual and symbolic influences. Works such as *Janggana Layang* demonstrate that the dragon form in the janggan kite can be systematically translated into the musical structure of the *gong kebyar*. The dragon's head becomes the majestic *kawitan*, the dragon's body the sturdy *pengewak*, and the long, winding tail the polyrhythmic and dynamic *pengecet*. This aligns with Stobart's (2008) findings, which emphasize that the relationship between symbol and sound is central to contemporary ethnomusicological studies.

Vanny Mahendra's Pecuk work demonstrates that the symbol of balance in the *Pecukan* kite is conveyed through a harmonious composition. As Vanny Mahendra stated in Denpasar in 2024 :

“...the potential for the pecuk to fail to fly, even though there is an error in the standard size of the kite, it is still visualized harmoniously for the beauty of the musical composition of the gamelan about the pecuk...”

The idea that a mistake in determining the elbow (standard size) of the kite will cause it to fail to fly is translated into the principle of harmony in the structure of the song, demonstrating that the functional meaning of visual culture can be applied to musical logic. This echoes the cultural semiosis approach proposed by Hatten (2004), which highlights the relationship between form, meaning, and expression across media.

Furthermore, *Swabawaning* Nur reflects a symbolic interpretation of the creative process of making the giant *Nagaraja* kite. Through the strong rhythm of *Baleganjur* and the exploration of sounds that depict the fire of spirit, this work reflects the spirit of teja in the *Panca Maha Bhuta*. As explained by Eiseman (1989), the element of fire is not only a physical element but also a spiritual energy that animates culture. The beat of the drums, *ceng-ceng*, and the melody of the *ponggang* in this work serve as a musical metaphor for the burning collective spirit that embodies cultural works.

Tapa Rare depicts kites in the context of children's worlds as symbols of imagination, creativity, and recreation. In Merriam's (1981) view, music's functions include emotional expression and the reinforcement of social norms, and in this work, kite-playing becomes a symbol of childhood collective expression, translated into flute melodies, light rhythmic dynamics, and expressive explorations of the body. This narrative reinforces that even popular cultural symbols can be elevated into meaningful musical discourse.

There is a tendency for Balinese gamelan artists to use cultural artifacts as a starting point for their creations in creating new works of art (Barwick, 2014). Kites, in this case, become a rich medium of expression in terms of form, movement, color, and symbolic and

ritualistic meaning. This tendency indicates that Balinese *gamelan* art has entered the postmodern realm in a phase of discourse expansion, where the boundaries between traditional and innovative art are increasingly blurred. According to Sweeney-Turner (1996), the increasingly blurred boundaries between traditional and innovative art are often part of the expansion of discourse.

The ethnomusicological analysis in this study positively appreciates the phenomenon of new creative arts moving into the postmodern realm, where the creation of karawitan artworks should not only be read as sounds that can entertain but should be a representation of local knowledge systems, social relations, and cultural symbols. Therefore, the process of transforming the symbol of the kite into karawitan is a form of cultural recontextualization, a process of reinterpreting cultural symbols in a different medium but still rooted in local cultural identity. Thus, the symbolic transformation of the Balinese kite into karawitan art is not only a form of innovation but also a strategy for preserving and expanding the meaning of local culture through performing arts. This process presents a new model in the creation of traditional cultural creative music based on visual narratives and Balinese belief in the influence of the *niskala* (spiritual) on the *sekala* (material). Which is constructed aesthetically to be not only musically communicative but also reflective of contemporary cultural and social dynamics.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion of the results of the analysis of the deconstruction of the kite tradition and the symbolic transformation aspects of the kite in the construction of the new creative Balinese karawitan music art, it can be concluded as follows: 1) The new construction of the elements of the kite tradition in the practice of the new creative Balinese *karawitan* art is seen in the dynamics of the rhythmic sound pattern, which means the joy of children playing kites. The movement of the *bebean* kite is constructed in the structure of the new creative *karawitan* artwork in the form of a bouncing sound melody and a dynamic melody, which means the freedom and agility of the *bebean* kite movement. The movement of the *janggan* kite is reflected in the composition of long notes, glissando-toned flute sounds, resonant sounds of the *jongkok gangsa*, tempo changes, layering of instruments, application of crescendo-decrescendo techniques, and triplet sound patterns in the *pengecet* section, which means eternity, means high, means the balance of the relationship between the universe and its living creatures, and means the beauty of the curling movements of the *janggan* kite's tail. Meanwhile, the unstable construction of the spiral movement of the *Pecukan* kite is seen in the asymmetrical rhythmic tone sound pattern and polyrhythm in the melodic structure of the new creative Balinese *gamelan* music. The stable and proportional structure of the *gamelan* in the new creative Balinese *gamelan* art represents the harmonious value contained in the form of the *Pecukan* kite.; 2) The form of difference of the kite tradition is manifested in the effort to refuse to completely duplicate the forms of kites, seeking inspiration for works of art from the form of kites, interpretation of the symbols of the kite form, kinesthetic empathy, and making mimetic movements before the artist realizes the results of the interpretation of the symbols of form and movement into a new form of creative musical art.; 3) Deconstruction of the Kite Tradition in Balinese *Karawitan* Art Activities can have religious meaning, artistic meaning, and communication meaning.

The findings of this study confirm that cultural or artistic meanings are not fixed and static, but rather are always in a process of differentiation and endless postponement of *différance*, opening up space for innovation and creativity. New constructions do not always mean old constructions, but can continue their traces in the process of deconstruction, so that traditions become alive and develop. Arts such as Balinese *gamelan* operate as a dialectical field between maintaining traditional values and opening up the possibility of new meanings. These findings reinforce the view that deconstruction is not simply destruction, but a productive strategy in cultural and aesthetic development. Through this kinesthetic and

symbolic process, deconstruction becomes an analytical tool capable of unraveling the complex relationships between symbols, movement, and sound in the context of Balinese culture. These findings encourage a multidimensional understanding of intermediality as a creative practice involving the body, space, and sound in the formation of new meanings in traditional art. Thus, deconstruction theory provides a strong conceptual framework for understanding the dynamics of tradition and innovation in Balinese gamelan art in depth.

These findings reinforce Derrida's theory of deconstruction, stating that meaning in cultural traditions such as Balinese *gamelan* is not static, but rather constantly shifts and restructures through a process of difference. The analysis shows how the kite tradition is not merely reproduced literally but reinterpreted into new, dynamic, and multisensorial symbolic forms, enriching the aesthetics of Balinese *gamelan*. These findings emphasize the importance of the body and movement as living semiotic media interacting with sound, allowing Balinese musical traditions to develop into intermedial and contextual art forms. From a theoretical, these findings demonstrate the role of deconstruction as a creative strategy to open up space for innovation while respecting cultural identity affiliations, transcending the traditional-modern dichotomy. These findings also underscore the dual meaning of artistic activities containing religious, artistic, and communication values that simultaneously create aesthetic and spiritual experiences in local contexts. Thus, these findings broaden the understanding of the relationship between cultural symbols, the body, and sound in the ever-evolving practice of traditional arts.

This research's strong focus on symbolic and aesthetic aspects is limited, perhaps ignoring the socio-political context that also significantly influences the development of Balinese *gamelan* as a whole. Interpretation of kite symbols and movements is more subjective, so the potential for bias in interpreting meaning from a particular perspective is unavoidable. Because the research is qualitative and interpretive, the results are less generalizable to broader artistic or cultural contexts without additional study. The ritualistic and religious aspects inherent in the kite tradition and Balinese gamelan still require deeper exploration so that their spiritual meaning is not reduced solely to aesthetic aspects. Technical limitations such as the sample of works and musicians studied may affect the representativeness of the research results regarding the overall development of new Balinese *gamelan*. Thus, while these findings provide in-depth insights into symbolic and aesthetic transformations, further, more comprehensive studies are needed to understand the overall dynamics of Balinese *gamelan* culture.

Future research can focus on developing a more systematic and comprehensive analytical methodology to understand the process of symbolic transformation in new creative Balinese gamelan. Furthermore, research can explore the intermedial relationship between visuals, movement, and sound in greater depth, utilizing digital technology for performative analysis. Furthermore, longitudinal studies on the social and cultural impacts of new gamelan music on local communities can enrich understanding of the changing traditions. Research can also expand the study by incorporating the perspectives of musicians and art connoisseurs to gain a more holistic insight into this creative practice. Finally, the development of deconstruction theory in the context of traditional arts can be enriched with a cross-disciplinary approach to explore the relationship between aesthetics, cultural, and economy in Balinese *gamelan*.

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