

Humanitarian Philanthropy as an Art Practice for the Survival of Art Workers

Suwarno Wisetrotomo¹, Pradani Ratna Pramastuti²

¹Indonesia Institute of the Arts of Yogyakarta

suwarno.wisetrotomo@isi.ac.id¹, pradaniratna@gmail.com²

The outbreak of a novel corona virus or the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a global crisis that affects all aspects of life. The health, economy, social, political and cultural crisis trigger the domino effect that lead to a humanitarian crisis. Since the virus was identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China at the end of 2019, it continues to radically affect the world. Globalization, that used to be about speed, progress, celebration, intimacy, and a sense of community, has now turned into slowness, decline, as well as physical and social distance. Indonesian government immediately took action by issuing a series of regulations, such as lockdown, self-isolation, and “new normal” habit when working and socializing; two of which are washing hands and wearing masks. Numerous communities experience stagnation in social, economic, political, cultural and artistic life, as well as the possibility of a food crisis due to the decline of their purchasing power. This situation prompts an initiative and contribution from the community members, including artists, to lend a hand. Art workers contribute in making the basic ends of the communities in need meet by providing masks and food for low-income families as well as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for medical personnel, such as nurses and doctors. Furthermore, several projects were also initiated by artists, namely “Dapur Aksi Berbagi”, “Dapur Aksi Tetandur”, “Rengeng-rengeng Sirep Pageblug Maskumambang” by LAURA “Climen Puppet Show: The Collaboration of a Puppeteer and a Painter”, “Wrapped-Rice Art”, Didi Kempot Online Concert, and “Panen Apa Hari Ini”. These projects can be considered as humanitarian philanthropy, which from the perspective of contemporary art, is categorized as an art practice. This research uses the descriptive method. The researchers observe and record various philanthropic acts of these artists carefully in order to describe the events that take place. The researchers then answer why the projects can be categorized as art practices. This research will disclose the potential for a new discourse on the relationship between humanitarian philanthropy conducted by artists and art practices.

Keywords: humanitarian, philanthropy, art practice, art worker

Filantropi Kemanusiaan Sebagai Praktik Seni untuk Survivalitas Para Pekerja Seni

Merebaknya virus corona baru atau pandemi COVID-19 telah menyebabkan krisis global. Krisis kesehatan, ekonomi, sosial, politik dan budaya menimbulkan efek domino, yang berujung pada krisis kemanusiaan. Sejak merebak di Wuhan, Provinsi Hubei, Cina sekitar akhir tahun 2019, virus tersebut masih berdampak radikal hingga saat ini. Globalisasi yang dahulu menyoal kecepatan, kemajuan, perayaan, keintiman, dan rasa kebersamaan, sekarang berbalik menjadi kelambatan, kemunduran, serta jarak fisik dan sosial. Negara dan aparatnya segera mengambil tindakan dengan mengeluarkan sejumlah peraturan, seperti kuncitara, isolasi diri, dan “tata krama” baru dalam bekerja dan bersosialisasi, dua diantaranya adalah cuci tangan dan memakai masker. Sejumlah komunitas mengalami stagnasi dalam kehidupan sosial, ekonomi, politik, budaya dan seni, termasuk menghadapi kemungkinan krisis bahan pangan karena menurunnya daya beli. Situasi ini menuntut inisiatif dan peran anggota komunitas, seperti para seniman, untuk turun tangan. Para seniman berkontribusi dalam memenuhi “kebutuhan dasar” komunitas dengan menyediakan masker dan makanan untuk keluarga berpenghasilan rendah serta Alat Pelindung Diri (APD) untuk tenaga medis, seperti perawat dan dokter. Selain itu, sejumlah proyek juga digagas seniman sebagai aksi filantropi kemanusiaan, antara lain “Dapur Aksi Berbagi”, “Dapur Aksi Tetandur”, “Rengeng-rengeng Sirep Pageblug Maskumambang” yang diselenggarakan LAURA, “Pentas Wayang Climen:

Kolaborasi Dalang dengan Pelukis”, “Seni Nasi Bungkus”, “Konser Online Didi Kempot”, dan “Panen Apa Hari Ini”. Proyek-proyek tersebut dianggap sebagai filantropi kemanusiaan, yang dari perspektif seni rupa kontemporer, dikategorikan sebagai praktik seni. Penelitian ini bersifat deskriptif. Peneliti mengamati dan mencatat dengan cermat berbagai tindakan filantropi para seniman, dan kemudian mengelaborasi peristiwa yang terjadi. Risalah ini menjawab mengapa aktivitas mereka bisa dikategorikan sebagai praktik seni. Risalah ini juga membuka potensi wacana terkait hubungan antara filantropi kemanusiaan yang dilakukan oleh seniman dengan praktik seni.

Kata Kunci: kemanusiaan, filantropi, praktik seni, pekerja seni

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INTRODUCTION

This study departs from the experience of a gloomy situation for five months, from March to July 2020, due to the COVID-19 outbreak that radically changed all aspects of life. All event agendas that had been prepared, such as exhibitions, performances, concerts and screenings, all of whose whole process depended on promptness, celebration and togetherness, suddenly came to a dead end. Everything was reversed as art activities stopped, decelerated, localized, contemplated as well as separated in the form of physical and social distancing. Daily activities had to adapt to new normal habits, such as washing hands with soap in running water, wearing masks, self-isolating, maintaining physical fitness and avoiding stress. The usual lifestyle people have accustomed to is promoted as “new normal” habits.

This pandemic caused economic, trade and production decadence, as well as consumption and purchasing power decadency. The lower-level working people, who relied on daily income, such as manual labor, street vendors, online motorcycle taxi drivers, pedicab drivers and massage therapists, lost their livelihoods. There were also layoffs (PHK) of industrial employees and laborers.

Similar impacts also afflicted art activities, such as fine-art exhibitions, dance performances, music concerts, festivals and art markets, which were cancelled or indefinitely postponed. Art workers, who depended on the arts ecosystem, such as art handling, packing, stage stylists, lighting stylists, production managers, stage managers, and even parking attendants, lost their source of income.

Nevertheless, there was always a sense of humanity for kindness and aid to those in need. Some society members, including artists, immediately mobilize to help, taking various actions to overcome emergency problems, especially the food (purchasing power) crisis. The various forms of art action included “Dapur Aksi Berbagi” (DAB) and “Dapur Aksi Tetandur” (DAT), “Climen Puppet Show: The Collaboration of a Puppeteer and a Painter”, “Seni Nasi Bungkus” initiated by a painter; “Rengeng-rengeng Pageblug Maskumambang” initiated by an anthropologist with his community, as well as “Panen Apa Hari Ini” initiated by a network of art workers. The artists took onto the field carrying out real action, such as collecting donations and food, creating communal kitchens, supplying masks and encouraging establishing endeavours for food sufficiency in every household by *tetandur* or planting with an artistic approach.

The question arises, can all of their philanthropic actions be classified as art practices?. This research was conducted in these two areas of problem, namely humanitarian philanthropy and art practice. The term ‘philanthropy’ derives from the Greek words, ‘*philein*’ meaning ‘love’, and ‘*anthropos*’ meaning ‘human’. Philanthropy then can be defined as the love for fellow human beings, or in other words, the act of caring for others. Philanthropic activity does not only express caring with material things, but also can be in the form of other ways that improve the welfare of life, both physically and mentally. This research focuses on humanitarian philanthropic activities at the beginning of the pandemic. It is interesting to observe the DAT program which encourages food sufficiency at the familial level. The next step is to discuss and formulate how the humanitarian philanthropic activity is managed, and how it can be called an art activity.

THEORY AND RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION

This research enters the realm of understanding the meaning of art through a number of art practices, as well as the relationship between humanitarian philanthropy and art practices. Franz Magnis-Suseno SJ writes in the introduction of his book *Seni-Apa itu?: Posisi Estetika dari Platon sampai Danto* (Hauskeller, 2015), “Berhadapan dengan seni timbul pelbagai pertanyaan. Apa itu indah? Apa itu seni? Apa yang membedakan karya seni dari karya bukan seni? Atas dasar apa karya seni dinilai indah? Apa keindahan ada kedekatan dengan kebaikan, dengan kebaikan moral? [In dealing with art, various questions arise. Is it beautiful? What is art? What distinguishes a work of art from a work that is not art? On what basis is a work of art considered beautiful? Does beauty have an adjacency with goodness, with moral goodness?]” (p.7). The book discusses the views of 16 philosophers, from Plato to Arthur C. Danto, whom Hauskeller considers as essential figures who put a lot of thought on art and beauty. Discussing Danto’s thoughts, who, for example, questions Andy Warhol’s works, is an interesting case of how Warhol turned the issues of art-and-beauty as well as art-and-not-art upside down. Brillo boxes as the packaging of cleaning kitchen utensils, Coca-Cola bottles, and Marilyn Monroe’s portraits become the main objects of Warhol’s works, which are done with a ‘cold’ expression, almost without being reworked. The thoughts in this book are used as a source to determine a certain criteria regarding work and works of art.

Social and artistic issues have long been discussed by many prominent figures, including Georgi Valentinovich Plekhanov. [Plekhanov \(2006\)](#) states that, “Fungsi seni ialah membantu perkembangan kesadaran manusia, membantu memajukan sistem sosial [The function of art is to help the development of human consciousness, to help advancing the social system]” (p.1). He continues, “semua kegiatan manusia mesti mengabdikan kemanusiaan jika kegiatan itu tidak mau menjadi pekerjaan yang sia-sia dan keisengan belaka [all human activities must serve humanity if these activities do not want to be a useless job and a mere fad]” (p.1). Based on this thought, the criteria on what kind of humanitarian work is related, or at least intersects, with artistic work can be constructed.

All humanitarian actions are fundamentally rooted from awareness. Art can play a significant role in the humanitarian awareness. [Greg Soetomo \(2003\)](#) discusses the topic sharply in *Krisis Seni Krisis Kesadaran* through the critical thinking of a number of figures, including Walter Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht and Theodor W. Adorno. He bases his thought from Marcuse, citing “keindahan itu sebenarnya lahir dari kemampuan “bentuk” untuk memahami dan menyusun realitas [beauty is actually born from the ability of “form” to understand and compose reality]” (p.25) and “fungsi seni adalah membangun fantasi serta melepaskan keinginan-keinginan yang direpresi [the function of art is to build fantasy and release repressed desires]” (p.25). During the pandemic, almost all possibilities people were used to, including the previous reality, are unavoidably “repressed”, or at least restrained.

In a lot of ways, the creation or expression of art is also related to practical interests, which are primary needs, namely food, clothing, and shelter. [Tjetjep Rohendi Rohidi \(2000\)](#) in *Ekspresi Seni Orang Miskin: Adaptasi Simbolik Terhadap Kemiskinan* extensively discusses the topic of artistic expression in relation to meeting primary needs, which can be used as a basis for identifying art practices and humanitarian activities.

The aspects of humanitarian encouragement in art practice uses Primadi Tabrani's (2006) thoughts *Kreativitas & Humanitas: Sebuah Studi Tentang Peranan Kreativitas dalam Perikehidupan Manusia*. The aesthetic aspect of (fine) art uses the thoughts of [Stanislaus Yangi \(2012\)](#) as described in *Dari Khaos ke Khaosmos: Etetika Seni Rupa*.

Semsar Siahaan's creative process places his critical perspective on social injustice, humanity and political issues, which are the theme of his works,

that clearly show his stand on political, social, economic and humanitarian crises as described in *Seni Manubilis: Semsar Siahaan 1952-2005* ([Siahaan, dkk, 2017](#)). It is similar when placing the art practice as an awareness-raising advocacy practice for the lower-class people, as described by Moelyono in *Seni Rupa Penyadaran*. Moelyono, who lives in an impoverished fishing village in Tulungagung regency, East Java, raises public awareness regarding the rights and obligations as well as awareness to dare speaking up of any injustice through (drawing) art practice.

The humanitarian philanthropy practice as an art practice certainly involves the public, as well as the importance of identifying what is called a public art ([Art and its Publics, editor McClellan, 2003](#)). Harriet F. Senie's essay in section 9, “Reframing Public Art: Audience Use, Interpretation, and Appreciation” shows how ‘public art’ begins and interacts with its publics. The simplest example is when the public (audience; spectators) immortalizes itself in a public work with the caption “I was here” (p. 188). It can also be seen in the current trend of how people take a selfie in a public artwork and upload it on social media as a sign that they have become a part of the event and the artwork.

From these references, a theoretical concept can be drawn that art practice functions as a medium for public education, especially humanitarian education, and philanthropy as an aesthetic conception.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Method

Employing the descriptive method, this research carefully observes a number of humanitarian philanthropic events which are considered to be within the framework of art practice. Due to the pandemic, observations and interviews are conducted through online media as well as from the posts on social media and print media, like newspapers.

A descriptive research is research used to ‘describe’ a situation, subject, behavior or phenomenon. It is used to answer questions about who, what, when, where, and how in relation to the research question or problem. Citing a number of sources, a descriptive research is a research method employed to clarify social phenomena through various research variables that are interrelated with one another. Another definition states that a descriptive research is a research method that aims to specifically explain social and natural events ([Rina](#)

[Hayati](https://penelitianilmiah.com), *Pengertian Penelitian Deskriptif, Macam, Ciri, dan Cara Menuliskannya*, retrieved from <https://penelitianilmiah.com> posted on Saturday, 11 July 2020 at 14.29 WIB).

A descriptive research is also closely related to observational studies. Using this method is expected to be: 1) effective in analyzing research topics and problems; 2) possible to observe the humanitarian philanthropy through art practices; 3) time-effective.

Research Subject and Object

Research Subject

The research subjects are a number of individuals who act as initiators, organizers, and workers in humanitarian philanthropic work, as follows:

- a. “Dapur Aksi Berbagi [Action-Sharing Kitchen]” and “Dapur Aksi Tetandur [Action-Planting Kitchen]” activities.
- b. “Rengeng-Rengeng Sirep Pageblug Maskumambang” activity by LAURA.
- c. “Pentas Wayang Climen [Climen Puppet Show]” the Collaboration of a Puppeteer and a Painter.
- d. “Seni Nasi Bungkus [Wrapped-Rice Art]” activity.
- e. “Panen Apa Hari Ini [What is Today’s Harvest]” activity.

Research Object

The research objects are five activities: “Dapur Aksi Berbagi” and “Dapur Aksi Tetandur”, “Rengeng-rengeng Sirep Pageblug Maskumambang” by LAURA, “Pentas Wayang Climen Kolaborasi Dalang dengan Pelukis”, “Seni Nasi Bungkus” dan “Panen Apa Hari Ini”.

The research subjects and objects are investigated carefully and exhaustively in order to obtain complete information, starting from ideas until implementing and investigating them in the field. The investigation includes the background and concept of the activity, how, when and where it takes place as well as how it relates to the art activity. The results of the investigation can be used to analyze whether humanitarian philanthropic activities are within the framework of art practice.

The COVID-19 outbreak triggers a domino effect. Starting with the economic crisis, it has since led to the social (and political) crisis, followed by the food (purchasing power) crisis, including the postponement of art agendas. Artists continue to work in shuttle space between humanitarian philanthropy and art practice, complementing and

interpreting each other, which leads to the form and definition of ‘art/philanthropic art practice’.

The five research subjects are chosen based on their immediate initial action, preceding the action that the government apparatus took in responding to the COVID-19 outbreak. They, both communities and individuals, proceeded immediately due to the feeling of compassion towards those who were experiencing the food crisis. Their activities show that art activities and artworks have the potential to address humanitarian issues.

This research will be able to reveal humanitarian philanthropic activities that intersect with art practices, especially those motivated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This research prioritizes the investigation process with five “resource persons” whose position is the subjects of the research objects through direct observation in the field (on a few objects), online observation, recording observation, and interviews both in-person and online. The findings of the research are described as follows.

“Dapur Aksi Berbagi” and “Dapur Aksi Tetandur”

In March 2020, when President Joko Widodo announced the emergence of the novel corona virus, and then it became a widespread pandemic, a number of artists began to talk about how to respond to the pandemic. Artists and art workers proceeded immediately to conduct philanthropic movements. One of them was Bambang Paningron Astiaji (b. 1965), an international art festival promoter of Asia Tri at the end of 2020 and the Curator of Pekan Kebudayaan Nasional [National Culture Week], an agenda of the Directorate General of Culture, Ministry of Education and Culture [Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan, Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan]. He coordinated a few of his colleagues, Aji Wartono, Ignatius Kendal and Yustina Neni, as well as lecturers from several public and private universities in Yogyakarta, who have information regarding the condition of students affected by the pandemic, such as living expenses difficulty for daily meals. This discovery is the reason why the main idea that was agreed upon was to make a communal kitchen.

The ideas and action plans were immediately agreed upon by the artists, because, as stated by Astiaji, “kegiatan di Jogja relatif berkurang drastis, ada banyak waktu luang [the activities in Jogja are

relatively reduced in a drastic number, there is a lot of free time]”. Subsequently, “di awal pandemi gerakan diinisiasi sepenuhnya karena pertimbangan kemanusiaan, berdasar informasi para pekerja seni, diprediksi akan ada kesulitan di waktu berikutnya [in the beginning of the pandemic, the movement was initiated entirely due to humanitarian considerations, based on information from art workers, it was predicted that there would be other difficulties in the future]”.

During the pandemic, art activities continued to be held. Artists was clueless at the beginning, especially regarding the lockdown policy from the central government. Another problem is that from February to April 2020, most of the artists neither had saving funds nor groceries. During the preparation, projections and action planning, the idea of “Dapur Aksi Berbagi” (DAB) was conceived, which functioned as a communal kitchen. The production of ready-to-eat food from the communal kitchens was distributed to traditional art colleagues, who lost art performance jobs, as well as students, who lived in boarding houses, could not eat due to not having money and food vendors being closed.

The communal kitchen activity in Kasongan, Bantul, in collaboration with Kedai Kebun Resto, distributed wrapped rice to pedicab drivers, porters, taxi drivers, taxibike riders, shop owners whom were forced to close and students who were from out of town. The aid was initially projected for a month, and would be followed by giving groceries to be cooked by the recipients themselves. However, students, who lived in boarding houses and did not have cooking utensils, would still be given rice boxes. DAB was put forward by volunteers, groceries and money were obtained from a number of friends, donors and anyone who emphasized by this humanitarian project.

Approaching June 2020, the DAB managers decided to stop the communal kitchen activities. DAB movement is considered quite helpful but is temporary in nature, and tries not to create dependency for aid recipients, as donations might decline. Because of that reason, Paningron and his friends decided to change the communal kitchen project to “Dapur Aksi Tetandur” (DAT). The activity of DAT movement is to distribute various plant seeds, such as chili, eggplant, spinach, cucumber, kale and leeks, to families, especially those living in urban areas. Limited land is not a problem because these seeds only require planting media in small pots, but can produce enough harvests for a family to consume. If planted well,

they can even be shared with relatives. When this research was conducted, a number of families had already started harvesting DAT-donated crops.

The DAB and DAT movements are interesting because the issue of food security has become a new awareness in the Indonesian society, whom before the pandemic was highly dependent, as it was easy, to get foodstuffs. In further conversation, the term “daulat pangan [food sufficiency]” even emerged. DAT raises a new awareness that basic food needs can be pursued independently, and can even be shared with others. In the beginning, it was not intended for artistic action. However, meetings among artists throughout the project resulted in the creative interactions and the intersection of ideas, both in terms of assistance as well as strategies to deal with the situation of the pandemic.

From those meetings, numerous new works of art were born, as the artists’ responses to the pandemic. One of them was the use of new media. Exchanges of information also occurs with foreign artists, for the latest project in the form of collecting spells as a means of psychic healing in facing the hardship of life during a pandemic. The current difficulty faced by the artists is the problem of expression, namely the loss of momentum for interaction with audience and the loss of catharsis for stage artists that goes hand in hand with the stage art that cannot be held. Therefore, this pandemic becomes an uncanny learning process in order to find a way out.

“Rengeng-Rengeng Sirep Pageblug Maskumambang” by LAURA

LAURA is the name of a communication group on WhatsApp Messenger that brings together anthropologists, led by Laksono PM, Professor of Anthropology at Universitas Gadjah Mada. As the world entered the fourth month of the pandemic in June 2020, Laksono initiated an activity called “Rengeng Sirep Pageblug Maskumambang” Festival, supported by the Faculty of Cultural Sciences, UGM, the Postgraduate Program of ISI Yogyakarta and several donors.

The theme of “Rereng-rengeng Maskumambang” stems from the belief that this piece of *Macapat suluk* (Javanese song) contains a prayer for safety and health. In *macapat*, according to I Made Suarta (2018: 192), various journeys of noble experiences of human life are recorded, which are morally able to encourage an individual to think and act in nurturing care and openness within social interactions. In Suarta’s view, *macapat* is not just an entertainment, but also contains values of love for

others and The Creator, as well as educational values for morals and nobility ([Suarta, 2018: 192](#)).

This invitation was open to anyone to compose *Macapat Maskumambang* that would be developed, recorded and uploaded on social media. More than 600 people responded, resulting in around 1,000 song titles. Participants came from all over of the country, as well as foreign students from Canada, Japan, South Korea and Australia who studied in Indonesian universities, especially UGM.

The participation was also accompanied by an invitation to give donations to LAURA. The proceeds from the donation were used to buy groceries and distributed to a number of people who were considered in need.

“Pentas Wayang Climen” from the Collaboration of Puppeteer, Ki Seni Nugroho, and Painter, Nasirun

Prior to COVID-19 pandemic, a famous puppeteer Ki Seno Nugroho (b. 1973) had a very busy schedule of shadow puppet performances; up to twenty times or more per month. However, during the pandemic, he experienced a decrease in the number of requests to perform. Performing puppeteer is not only a space for artistic expression, but also a source of livelihood for the entire performance team, which consists of *niyaga* [gamelan musicians], *waranggana* or *pasindhèn* [female singer of a gamelan group], guest stars, audio technicians and other supporting personnels, such as parking attendants and food vendor, that have grown into around Nugroho’s puppetry ecosystem. His fans created organizations, one of which was Paguyuban Penggemar Ki Seno Nugroho [Ki Seno Nugroho Fan Association] with members spread from Java, Sumatra and abroad.

Regardless of where the show was being held, it is always a full house every time Nugroho performed, with audience coming from all over the country, such as Yogyakarta, Surakarta, East Java, Central Java and West Java. I Gusti N. Semasara observes that artists have the opportunity to involve the public to participate, either as connoisseurs or spectators, and then build communication through their works ([Seramasara, 2019: 83](#)).

From mid-March 2020 onwards, agendas of all art shows that had been listed were cancelled due to the pandemic. It means that the entire art workers lost their economic resources. In May 2020, Nugroho made a breakthrough in small format performances, consisting of six gamelan musicians with two or three *pasindhèn*. The performance was held at his residence in Sedayu Village, Bantul, and was

broadcast online on YouTube. As the audience responded incredibly well to his video performances, his YouTube channel was to be monetized, he thus was able to earn money from advertisements shown throughout his videos.

In the first ‘climen’ performance, Nugroho collaborated with a painter named Nasirun, who painted live. Entitled “Corona Puppet”, the painting was completed during the show and given to the Climen performance team to be auctioned online.

Nasirun, born in Cilacap, Central Java in 1967, is an artist who has an international reputation, with contemporary works on the themes of mythology, legend, occult, everyday life, shape distortion, a wide array of color and full of ornamentation. Climen performances and collaborations continued to be developed during the pandemic. However, before the pandemic ended, Nugroho passed away on Wednesday, 4 November 2020, at the age of 48 years old. His sudden departure is a truly irreplaceable loss.

Despite his untimely departure, three of Nugroho’s legacy lives on. Firstly, he “revived” the traditional art of *wayang kulit purwa* [ancient shadow puppets] with a new approach, both in terms of “style”, combining Yogyakarta style with Surakarta style into a distinctive blend of his style, as well as in terms of performance: *sabetan*, *sanggit*, *antawecana* and story. Secondly, it was his initiative and creativity that instigated the Climen puppet show. Thirdly, he initiated streaming shadow puppets on YouTube. In the last moments of his life, he was filled with performing activities by prioritizing the philanthropic dimension.

“Seni Nasi Bungkus” by Teguh Ostenrik

When the COVID-19 pandemic was getting worse and affecting the economic aspect severely, people were directly hit. Teguh Ostenrik (b.1950), a fine artist who is well-known for his works responding to the environmental issues, found out that his regular masseuse was no longer received massage offers since early April 2020.

The masseuse is a middle-aged woman whose family’s livelihood depended on the fee from her clients. One morning, a brief conversation between Ostenrik and the masseuse took place. He asked the masseuse, “Can you cook?”. She answered, “Yes, sir”. He then continued, “Can you cook for several people?”. “Yes, sir”. “Ok, here’s a little money to groceries, cook them, then wrap the food and distribute them to other masseurs, or our neighbours nearby, including your family.” The masseuse was

able to carry out the request well and feeling happy because she was helped, while at the same time was able to help others.

Ostenrik also met an itinerant porridge seller, whom he occasionally bought from. However, he was not selling at that time. In fact, it had been a month he did not trip around the neighbourhood offering his prodge. There were no buyers, which means he did not have any capital. He asked, "How much capital do you usually need to sell? How many servings of chicken porridge are you able to sell?" After getting an answer, he then gave him money as capital to sell his porridge. This way, the porridge can be cooked as usual, then he could trip around and give the porridge to his neighbour for free until the prepared amounts of portion were all given out. The porridge could carry on as if he was selling with joy and full of enthusiasm because he could reunite with his customers, give them the porridge for free, but stillnable to earn money.

Seeing the success of his spontaneous idea, Ostenrik then shared it with his close friends. He encouraged them to take part in the movement, or at least to give donation of what they could spare, so that the humanitarian could continue. His friends, consisting of artists, academics, and socialites, were enthusiastic and able to collect quite an abundant amount of funds. The funds were then distributed to masseurs, porridge seller and local villagers, to be managed in accordance to what had been initially implemented. As a result, the distribution of wrapped rice to people who were considered in need, extended beyond his neighbourhood. The fund management was transparently reported to donors.

In a conversation with the researchers, Ostenrik stated he could not find an opportunity to work on painting, sculptures or other forms of fine arts that since the beginning of the pandemic because his time was focused on managing these philanthropic activities. However, he confidently said, "itulah karya seni saya sekarang, yang terbaru, menggerakkan banyak kawan dan nasi bungkus [That is my art now, the newest one, moving a lot of friends and wrapped rice]". Citing research by Munaf, Piliang, and Purnomo, in the context of art being a medium of social relations, art must be understood as part of social production because art is produced in the reality of the social world (Munaf, Piliang, Purnomo, 2016: 308). In the realm of evaluation, Munaf said, a work of art is not only purely based on aesthetics, but also the social role or function of art, in determining its social process (Munaf, Piliang and Purnomo, 2016: 308). In this

context of thinking, his actions and claims can be understood.

The creation of art is triggered by the surrounding reality, to be then processed by reasons, and sharpened by the sensitivity of the soul. Therefore, Ostenrik's wrapped rice movement can be said following the same plot. The nature of his art activities shows activism, as seen in the art projects for coral reef conservation in Wakatobi. This work of art involved a number of societal elements, such as environmental activists and the young generation.

Ostenrik allowed anyone to get involved in the "Seni Nasi Bungkus" as long as they have philanthropic spirits. He emboldened the lower-class people, such as manual laborers, who were vulnerable to becoming victims of crisis during the pandemic. He mobilized sellers and service providers to help other people who were equally helpless and powerless. His artistry goes beyond the usual aesthetic and artistic rules and parameters but manifests themselves into activism.

"Panen Apa Hari Ini" Anang Saptoto

Anang Saptoto (b. 1982), one of the directors of Mes56 in Yogyakarta, initiated "Panen Apa Hari Ini" (PAHI) movement, founded at the beginning of the pandemic and still to operate. AS started his career as a graphic designer and artist in 2000. In 2006, Saptoto became a facilitator for several International NGOs (Non-Government Organizations). Focusing on mentoring children with academics from various universities, they were sent to several regions in Indonesia to make participatory programs in making video documentaries. This work was the beginning of his art research practice to identify the context of problems in each region. In 2002, he joined "Peta Hijau Yogyakarta" [Yogyakarta Green Map] and Mes56 and devoted almost all of his artistic activities to respond to the situation in his surroundings.

At the beginning of the pandemic, Saptoto and his friends became the initiator for arranging communal kitchens. Starting from the need for chili as a cooking ingredient supply of the communal kitchens, PAHI movement collaborated with farmers from Kulon Progo, whom in 2016 created an association of farmers affected by the construction of Yogyakarta International Airport, in distributing their crop via e-catalogue on <http://panenapahariini.blogspot.com>. In addition, digital distribution was also carried out via social media and WhatsApp Messenger. He bought out the

crops in the beginning of every week, then packed, promoted, and distributed them himself. In the middle of a lockdown situation, the customers felt immensely helped by this movement.

As the number of customers grew, an idea emerged in creating souvenirs for buyers and farmers through digital photo editing that mixes their bodily figures with the vegetables they purchased or harvested. The idea was able to build a quality emotional relationship with farmers and customers, as well as maintain the sales rate.

Besides its funny edited-photo merchandise, another one of PAHI appeals is the eccentric product naming as a reminder of the issues faced by the vegetable-producing farmers, which may intersect with the problems of buyers or customers such as: “Terong Ungu Saling Tolong [Purple Eggplants Help One Another]”, “Cabe Rawit Setan Kredit [Satan’s Credit Chili Rawit]” and “Bawang Merah Lubang Tambang Semakin Parah [Mining-Hole Getting Worse Shallot]”. This becomes an effective reminder of ongoing issues as well as being a differentiator between PAHI and other selling channels. In addition, there are also t-shirts printed with articles of the Agrarian Law, which are of interest to many customers.

Saptoto’s social activities were initially not aimed as art practices. However, he neither believed nor agreed that art activities should be put on hold during the pandemic. He stated, “Adalah risiko menjadi macet ketika *mindset*-nya berkarya seni hanya terbatas pada ruang pameran [It is a risk of getting stuck when the *mindset* of creating art is limited to a showroom]”. He drew lots of inspirations from PAHI, which determined the people he developed them with. The main purpose of PAHI is to distribute agricultural products and share insights about agriculture, so that the relationship between PAHI, suppliers and buyers is not merely a transactional relationship.

The five philanthropic activities described above eventually turned into art practice activities that aroused people’s awareness. With the activism approach on art, people will soon get involved in various roles. The compassion for humanity or philanthropy projects have been successfully carried out and expanded, while works of art can still be produced well, even within limitations.

CONCLUSION

This research took place in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the researchers were still

able to investigate properly. Communication was conducted easily via online, as it could be done from anywhere and anytime, according to the agreement with the resource persons.

The findings of the study show that, compared to the government, artists are generally more responsive and reactive to urgent humanitarian issues. Their responsiveness and reaction, in addition to the character and sensitivity sharpened by every creative process of their artistry, are also their innate nature. This quick reaction is possible because the processes and procedures they take are not bound by bureaucracy. It is in contrast with the government, the state apparatus to be exact, whom mobilized in a much slower speed because they have to go through bureaucratic procedures and complicated responsibilities.

This research also shows that humanitarian philanthropic activities that artists and art workers initiated are considered to be artistic practice activities as well. All of the aforementioned philanthropic activities were materialized on art media, through art approaches or by producing works of art. Even though art creation was not the initial intention, art was eventually created throughout the process. This reality proves that art crisis, in this case the ideological, functional and message aspects carried or entrusted to works of art, as pointed out by [Soetomo \(2003\)](#), can reappear, even strongly, if a palpable humanitarian crisis in the future. The increasingly distant life in physical interaction has proven not to dull the sensitivity of compassion for others.

In relation of humanitarian philanthropic activities with the endeavour to cultivate and preserve the survival power of art workers, there are evidence showing that art workers were the first to receive assistance. A question then arises, who can be considered as art workers? A set of criteria is needed because there are numerous art worker categories, such as production managers, stage managers, film production teams, fashion stylists, stage stylists, lighting stylists, fine-art stylists, designers and curators. Without any criteria, priority and a distinct profession mapping, the target of aid is prone to unjust distribution. For example, there are art workers who are severely in need help but are not reachable because they are not included in the mapping.

However, humanitarian philanthropic activities, as art practices and an effort to become a ‘safety belt’ for social-humanitarian issues, deserve to be

developed in any situation as part of building a humanitarian ecosystem.

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Appendixes



Figure 1. “Dapur Aksi Berbagi”
(Source: Author, 2020)



Figure 2. Team coordination “Dapur Aksi Berbagi” & “Dapur Aksi Tetandur” (Source: Author, 2020)

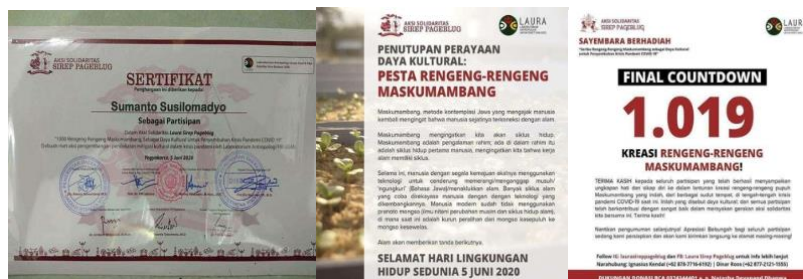


Figure 3. Laura: “Rengeng-rengeng Sirep Pageblug Maskumambang” (Source: Author, 2020)



Figure 4. “Pentas Wayang Climen Ki Seni Nugroho kolaborasi dengan Pelukis Nasirun” (Source: Author, 2020)



Figure 5. “Seni Nasi Bungkus Teguh Ostenrik” (Source: Author, 2020)



Figure 6. “Panen Apa Hari Ini” (Source: Author, 2020)