

## The Aesthetic Characteristics of Contemporary Art in Semarang Gallery, Sangkring Art Space and Kiniko Art Based on Practical Economic and Pure Aesthetic Values

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### Abstract

The gallery will select various forms of contemporary artworks based on a range of aesthetic criteria preferences ranging from concept, form, subject matter, relevance to social issues, symbolism, shocking materials, personal feelings, craftsmanship, innovation, current popularity, and others. The selection process for each exhibition dynamically considers these criteria, allowing the gallery to cater to market demands and introduce new aesthetic perspectives to advance Indonesian art. Therefore, this study aims to identify the parameters of aesthetic values used in collecting and exhibiting contemporary art in various galleries in Semarang and Yogyakarta, Indonesia. A descriptive qualitative method with a case study design explored art criticism, formalism, and deconstructivism. The sample population comprised contemporary art created by professional and emerging artists, which was exhibited between 2012 and 2022. Data were obtained from art samples, artists, appreciators, gallery owners, curators, and critics. Owners and curators were required to complete the questionnaire, followed by interviews, documentation, and observation. Conclusions were then drawn by examining the conceptual relationships in each choice of aesthetic value parameters selected by the gallery to identify aesthetic characteristics. The results showed preferences for contemporary reality, uniqueness attached to complex and complicated form processing, technical skills, and exploration of local idioms. Semarang Gallery presented art with unique dimensions beyond mainstream aesthetics. Intellectual ideas can be seen in Andy Dewantoro's 'Isolation', a work demonstrating a metalinguistic concept. The convention of landscape painting, typically characterized by vibrant colours, is challenged and interrogated through scenes rendered solely in black, white, and grey. The artistic mode of art at Semarang Gallery was also more innovative than that of Sangkring Art Space and Kiniko Art, which had several repetitions. Meanwhile, Sangkring Art Space and Kiniko Art focused more on the beauty of visualization than the criticality of visualization. The visual aesthetic in Nurhidayat's "Erotique, Toxique, Exotique" and Anton Afganial's "Uncertainty" present a visual aesthetic that emphasizes poetic functions. These paintings are complex, unified, and intense.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary art is a creative expression that explores diverse ideas, materials, styles, subject matter, and techniques. Furthermore, with an expansive scope, the contemporary movement carries liberation and embraces a profound respect for pluralism [1] [2]. The gallery plays an essential role in responding, selecting, and exhibiting a variety of this creative expression from both emerging and professional Indonesian artists based on economic and aesthetic values.

The sustenance of private art galleries largely depends on economic and financial support. Galleries find it difficult to exhibit works consistently without financial support generated from the sale of artwork. To reach a wider market segment, galleries participate in art fairs such as Art Jakarta Gardens and Art Moments, held annually in Jakarta. Art fairs also facilitate internationalization efforts, enabling galleries to participate in events like Art Basel, British Art Fairs, and others in European or American countries. These fairs blend commercial and non-commercial activities. Artists can either follow popular aesthetic styles or explore the creation of new ones.

The institution navigates the challenges of its existence by selling art to various market stakeholders, including collectors, art lovers, art dealers, and auction houses. However, the market pursuit of profits can sometimes overshadow a clear reference to aesthetic value parameters. The varied market segments also demand a variety of painting aesthetics. The aesthetic criteria or parameters employed by galleries are highly dynamic, influenced by factors such as the type of participant, exhibition theme, context, and purpose. Criteria for selecting works include concept, form, subject matter, relevance to social issues, symbolism, use of shocking materials, personal feelings, craftsmanship, innovation, current popularity, style, and others [3] [4]. The selection of objective aesthetic criteria requires a holistic consideration of the artist, artwork, audience, and exhibition context [5]. These diverse criteria invariably include creativity and originality [6]. Art faces a significant risk of becoming a commodity in this commercial landscape, with market players creating a discourse to inflate prices [7]. The gallery can also actively seek art to generate discourse, even when this piece does not necessarily exhibit robust ideas, concepts, and themes but shows retinal beauty [8].

A gallery is an institution society expects to support and uphold the pure aesthetic value of contemporary art by contributing modern aesthetic thoughts and knowledge [9]. The institution should have the courage to exhibit radical contemporary art (neo-avant-garde) as branding, even when the immediate financial returns are not promising. The pursuit of pure aesthetics seeks to break down the beauty and captivation criteria traditionally linked to modern art and offers intellectual beauty by corroding the symbolic arrangement [9] [10].

In contrast, Japanese galleries have successfully penetrated the global market while preserving aesthetic novelty and the spirit of tradition [11]. Indonesian galleries face the dual challenge of promoting contemporary art while ensuring their continued existence. The need to finance exhibition operations through artwork sales often necessitates a degree of market-driven compromise, potentially delaying the pursuit of more experimental works. Consequently, contemporary Indonesian art has gradually shifted towards market tastes. Furthermore, each gallery possesses unique exhibition program dynamics shaped by the surrounding social and artistic scene. Some actively participate in art fairs, while others prioritize independent exhibitions. This significantly impacts artists' creative process, who must navigate the tension between artistic integrity and market demands. Building upon previous research that has primarily focused on the existence of galleries and artists within market dynamics, this study delves deeper by examining the aesthetic criteria preferences employed by galleries when selecting exhibition works. The study specifically investigates

the uniqueness of artworks, focusing on visual aesthetics and intellectual ideas. By analyzing three galleries with distinct characteristics, particularly in terms of exhibition scale, longevity, participant demographics, and market networks, this study aims to enhance our understanding of the nuanced differences between paintings primarily driven by market demands and those prioritizing exploring novel aesthetic ideas.

Deconstruction theory is crucial for uncovering the unique aspects of cognitive ideas that resist interpretation based on the truth of structural meaning. This approach avoids the limitations of logocentrism by focusing on traces of meaning and the experience of pleasure [12] [13]. A work of art serves as a medium for conveying messages between the artist and the appreciator. Through Roman Jakobson's Communication Theory, exhibited artworks can be analyzed to assess the effectiveness of message transmission considering the artist, the code employed, the presentation model, the context, and the audience. By identifying poetic and metalinguistic functions within the artwork, the prominent aesthetic characteristics of the paintings can be understood [14] [15]. Eaton's Aesthetic Theory provides a framework for objectively understanding aesthetic quality by integrating the artist's artistic intention, the viewer's response, the objective qualities of the artwork itself, and the surrounding context [16]. Specifically, visual objective quality relies on Monroe Beardsley's aesthetic theory through the principles of complexity, intensity, and unity [5]. Based on these considerations, the following research questions are formulated as follows. Firstly, what are the similarities and differences in the aesthetic characteristics of paintings exhibited at Semarang Gallery, Kinikoart Gallery, and Sangkring Art Space within the context of a developing art market? Secondly, what are the aesthetic characteristics of market-oriented paintings and novelty-oriented paintings at Semarang Gallery, Kinikoart Gallery, and Sangkring Art Space within the context of a developing art market? This research aims to elucidate the aesthetic characteristics of contemporary paintings that are favored by the market and those that offer novel artistic ideas, considering both visual and intellectual criteria. Furthermore, it seeks to understand the market's acceptance of artworks across a range of price points, objectively analyzing factors such as creativity and originality. This understanding can also serve as a reflection of the artist's creative strategies in facing the contemporary art market.

## 2. METHODS

This study used an Instrumental Case Study design and a qualitative descriptive method to examine aesthetic criticism and deconstructivism [17]. The sample population consisted of art exhibited and collected at the Semarang Gallery, Kinikoart Gallery, and Sangkring Art Space from 2012-2022. A period of 10 years is sufficient to obtain a diverse range of paintings with varying themes, styles, symbolic variations, creators, and contextual backgrounds. Semarang Gallery, Kinikoart Gallery, and Sangkring Art Space were selected as research subjects due to their representation of galleries orientated towards artwork sales while simultaneously striving to advance Indonesian contemporary art. All three galleries consistently hold exhibitions and participate in art fairs. While their exhibition program activities share some similarities, they each exhibit distinct characteristics. Each gallery presents a unique case study, differentiated by factors such as the quality of artworks, the artists they represent, their market networks, and the surrounding social and artistic scene. Semarang Gallery represents a broader market network with a focus on professional artists. Sangkring Art Space, on the other hand, emphasizes a national market network and prioritizes emerging artists. In contrast, Kiniko Art primarily caters to a more local market network, focusing on artists with immigrant backgrounds.

The time and gallery were carefully selected to reflect the origins, the volume of exhibitions, and the overall presence. This approach was carried out to obtain variants of symbols, uniqueness, and contextual aspects. Furthermore, this study investigated

contemporary aesthetic preferences in evaluating exhibition materials and their distinctive characteristics. Gallery owners and curators were given the questionnaire and required to select aesthetic values used in the curation of exhibition materials. Data were also collected through interviews with artists, collectors, appreciators, critics, documentaries, and observations. This approach aimed to uncover the form, subject matter, structure, content, and creative process behind art.

Data validation was performed by assessing intersubjectivity through the expertise of competent figures, such as professional and academic perspectives, and insights from the market, including gallery owners, curation teams, critics, artists, and collectors. Intersubjectivity, characterized by shared understanding and agreement among experts, serves as a foundation for assessing the aesthetic quality of paintings. While complete consensus may be elusive, a negotiated agreement among experts offers the most viable guideline for objectivity. Experts are selected based on consistent professional practice within their respective fields and attaining national and even international recognition. The stages of data analysis followed the principles of data reduction, presentation, and conclusions. The analysis method used theoretical propositions of contemporary aesthetics and values. The method for assessing the significance of art was art criticism, incorporating both modern and postmodern aesthetic theories, particularly deconstructivism [18].

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### *General Description of Exhibition Implementation at Semarang Gallery, Sangkring Art Space, and Kiniko Art in the Range of 2017 to 2022*

Semarang Gallery, originally named Semarang Contemporary Art Gallery, was established as a commitment to designate this space to showcase the art of contemporary Asian artists, particularly those from Indonesia. The gallery consistently endeavoured to enhance public appreciation of art and worked towards developing contemporary creativity in the country through periodic exhibitions featuring Indonesian and foreign artists. The Semarang Gallery consistently holds exhibitions for the public every year. From 2017 to 2022, 3-6 exhibitions will be held annually. The Semarang Gallery always holds aesthetic discussions while the exhibition is still in progress by presenting representatives of appreciators, artists, curators, appreciators, or collectors to dissect the aesthetic qualities of contemporary works of art, especially those that are somewhat difficult, complicated, and difficult to understand.

Furthermore, visitors were allowed to appreciate and immerse themselves in the showcased art. Sangkring Art Space opened its doors to both seasoned maestros and emerging artists. Embracing diversity and fostering solidarity in art, the spaces became experimental venues for artists and enthusiasts from all circles, regardless of culture or ideological backgrounds. The elderly were respected, the young were honoured, the marginalized were defended, and the alternatives were allowed to collaborate. Sangkring Art Space was fully aware that an art space, serving as a platform for sharing and solidarity, was still highly needed in the country. Like the gallery, Kiniko Art, a younger establishment founded in 2016, recognized fine art as a promising avenue for the nation's development, with artists being perceived as the last bastion of culture. Fine art constituted one of the vital elements supporting civilization and underpinning numerous discoveries across various domains. In its journey, Kiniko Art was committed to evolving into a platform for various individuals, including art students, emerging talents, and seasoned artists from the Indonesian modern art era.

The exhibition, conducted from 2017 to 2022, was documented to have been held 17 times. The showcased art was highly diverse, spanning from modern to contemporary art. Furthermore, the presentation of exhibition materials extended beyond multiple arts to include singular pieces. Semarang Gallery seldom employed the services of the same

curator, ensuring a varied curatorship for each event. Original religious artists were prominent, and young creators from Bandung frequently secured exhibition spaces due to aesthetic concepts' perceived strength and uniqueness. Emphasizing conceptual art of overexpression, realism, and formalism, 280 pieces were exhibited over 5 years, comprising 133 paintings and 147 non-painting materials.

Exhibitions hosted by Sangkring Art Space from 2017 to 2022 occurred 50 times. The annual Yogya Annual Art exhibition, held each year, features many professional and emerging artists, ranging from 60-80 participants. Furthermore, the showcased art was highly diverse, featuring a blend of pieces by participants. The total number of paintings reached 853, surpassing non-painting material, totalled 301. Painting was dominant in the display compared to non-painting art, including installations, photography, graphics, and video art. Previous reports showed that the ratio of painting to non-painting art was 74%: 26%.

Kiniko Art also held exhibitions for young artists annually under the Blood Youth initiative, totalling 19 events from 2017-2022, with 272 paintings and 114 non-painting materials. 386 art were exhibited, with a percentage ratio of 70% painting and 30% non-painting. Kiniko Art also actively participated in the Jakarta Art Fair in 2022, which was held at the Jakarta Convention Center. The exhibition activity was conducted to promote the organization and showcase several representative and iconic art pieces from the gallery for sale. It also aimed to establish branding and introduce various collections to the market, specifically among art enthusiasts who were highly prospective in Jakarta.

### ***Overview of Contemporary Art at Semarang Gallery, Sangkring Art Space and Kiniko Art***

Each painting exhibited at Semarang Gallery, Sangkring Art Space, and Kiniko Art presented diverse themes, styles, techniques, materials, and messages. The themes covered various aspects, including social, cultural, religious, economic, personal, and environmental. Furthermore, the patterns included both representative and non-representative forms. The materials predominantly used were oil and acrylic paints on canvas, with some art taking the form of mixed media. Paintings made of paper were very rare and almost impossible to find.

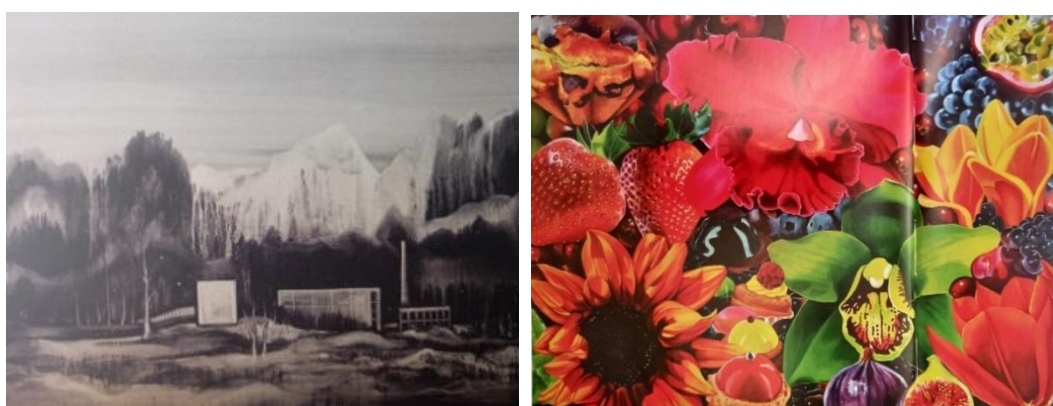
The paintings at the Semarang Gallery tended to emphasize substance or ideas over formalistic qualities or visual beauty. By 2000, the development of contemporary art in Indonesia had garnered significant global attention [8]. The Artjog exhibition, held annually in Yogyakarta since 2008, has consistently demonstrated successful organization. This international exhibition has effectively challenged artists to explore diverse perspectives on the future in current conditions. In light of these developments, Semarang Gallery prioritizes artworks that offer novel, exploratory, and experimental ideas, aiming to introduce new aesthetics rather than merely celebrating existing ones. As Chris Dharmawan (2024) noted, Semarang Gallery recognized the highly competitive nature of the contemporary art market. For this reason, Semarang Gallery regularly exhibits experimental artworks that may be challenging to sell commercially. This practice serves a dual purpose: it provides a platform for showcasing innovative artistic expression while also contributing to the gallery's reputation as a supporter of contemporary art.

The focus was on questioning the nature of aesthetic originality rather than merely representing the idea of a theme. The theme served as a mere vehicle to present a conceptual idea. Andy Dewantoro's painting, titled 'Isolation', was particularly intriguing in its intelligence in conveying the idea of originality and aesthetic value. In plain view, the painting presented the beauty of the landscape. Furthermore, this art held another mysterious side that was more intellectual than visual from a contemporary perspective, particularly emphasising the metalinguistic function. According to previous reports,



poetically and referentially provocative readings were often quite deceptive [14] [19]. Andy Dewantoro challenges the conventional depiction of landscape paintings, which often feature vibrant colours. He subverts this expectation by employing a monochromatic black, white, and grey palette. Dewantoro asserts that the essence of landscape lies not in representing the aesthetic of nature but rather in conveying a sense of spirituality.

The second tendency is that visual beauty serves as a technical means to actualize the form or subject of art. This type of art highlighted heightened visual beauty, employing a compositional strategy that considered formalistic, expressive, communicative, and unique principles to create a more poetic and dramatic visual impression. The compositional effects and high-skill techniques made the beauty of art prominent. The thematic symbol carried the meaning of community agreement based on convention (regular rules). This second type of art was also strongly influenced by the uniqueness inherent in using materials, tools, and techniques. An example of art that exemplified popular beauty was a painting titled 'Erotique, Toxique, Exotique' by Nurhidayat.



**Figure 1.** Andy Dewantoro, *Isolation*, Acrylic on canvas, 180 x 240 cm, 2013; Nurhidayat, "Erotique, Toxique, Exotique", Acrylic on Canvas, 120 x 160 cm, 2011  
[Source: Photo Documentation by Repro from Katalog]

Art in Sangkring Art Space was more numerous, heterogeneous, and complex than at Semarang Gallery. Between 2017 and 2022, 853 artworks were exhibited, with Semarang Gallery showcasing 280. The term "heterogeneous" refers to the diverse characteristics of the paintings, encompassing a wide range of qualities, ideas, visuals, forms, styles, techniques, themes, sizes, and more. "Complex" signifies that the gallery exhibits works by sales-oriented artists and those resulting from workshops or educational activities. These characteristics reflect the philosophy of Sangkring Art Space, which embraces a vision of inclusivity and diversity within the art space. Jenni Vie Mee Yei, the owner, emphasized that the gallery valued differences and creative experimentation equally, regardless of cultural and ideological origins. Artists of all ages, backgrounds, and experience levels were encouraged to collaborate.

The art comprised a variety of techniques, materials, discourse, and sizes. The subject of the painting embodied the theme inspired by reflections on the reality of life, and the meaning was expressed in a highly personal, imaginative way through symbolization. Some of the paintings also presented enigmatic symbols that were difficult to interpret. However, Yuswantoro's art, based on iconic, indexical, and symbolic meanings, was very easy to identify, and this illustrative presentation diminished the essence of the beauty value. Yunizar's art "Untitled" required a deep reflection to comprehend its message. From this perspective, the symbolism of art ideas was not to be interpreted in terms of reference or sense of meaning due to the ability of symbols to offer new intellectual ideas. Painting was similar to writing or telling children stories, making art interesting and uniquely objective.



**Figure 2.** Yuswantoro Adi "This Is the Real Champion" 240 x 200 cm, Oil on canvas, 2019; Yunizar, "Untitled" 185 x 203 cm, Acrylic on Hard Paper, 2012  
[Source: Photo Documentation by Repro from Katalog]

In Kiniko Art, painting also exhibits the same diversity of materials, tools, and techniques as the Semarang Gallery and Sangkring Art Space. The artistic modes were highly diverse and blended between various streams. Observation showed that specific style or pattern standards did not confine painting styles' artistic method and presentation. Some symbols served as intermediate forms, while others displayed enigmatic symbols that proved challenging to interpret. The prominence was in the technical strength, neatness, and smoothness, and the theme was closely related to everyday life. Rizal Hasan's art, titled 'Just Chill', exemplified a direction that emphasized visual beauty through light, inexpensive symbols, and decorative presentations.

Artists were conscious of creating paintings to create artistic forms. The creative process comprised manipulating colours, shapes, and textures. The composition was accompanied by exploring form, reflecting on realities in ways distinct from previous approaches, or expressing feelings or emotions embedded in every thought. In terms of content, artists presented discourse ideas on the reality of life and reflected on personal subjectivity.

Each visitor had unique tastes and aesthetic preferences influenced by the emotional state, sensitivity, perception, and background. Some visitors appreciated symbols deemed strange, unpredictable, and challenging to interpret. Meanwhile, others preferred contrasting, bright, or vivid colors, with each individual influenced by the preferences. Painting symbols needed effective communication with the guest, and the uniqueness enhanced knowledge and enriched aesthetic experience. Symbols result from an artist's creative encoding process, functioning to convey their message to the public. Although symbols are personally packaged and difficult to unpack with common codes, effective artistic communication relies on the ability for symbols to be understood based on established conventions or shared public sensibilities [20] [19]. In Anton Afganial's painting "Uncertainty," the symbols are not merely interpreted as representations of Batik. Instead, they evoke a world filling with energy and unique character. Through distinctive distortions, the meandering and colorful flora depicted within the artwork successfully convey the artist's personal experiences, inviting the public to become immersed in them. This statement was made by Anton Afganial in 2024.

"Many viewers of my work perceive the strokes I apply to the canvas as resembling patterns or shades of Batik, a renowned traditional Indonesian pattern. While this interpretation is not inaccurate, my approach involves creating shapes with lines and

colors. This approach is a direct result of the combination of my Madurese heritage, which instilled in me an appreciation for vibrant and striking colors, and my belief that life itself is inherently dynamic and ever-changing."

Curators played a crucial role in determining the theme and materials for the exhibition by reading, interpreting, and presenting existing art based on the relevance of actual conditions. These individuals also functioned as critics, possessing the foresight to determine the aesthetic value of art based on a unique creative idea. Art must be marketable, with aesthetic quality strongly influenced by considerations like consistency, novelty, achievement, and the artist's reputation.

### ***Similarities and Differences in Characteristics of Contemporary Aesthetic in Semarang Gallery, Sangkring Art Space, and Kiniko Art***

Contemporary art exhibited similar aesthetic characteristics, such as portraying subject matter drawn from contemporary reality. Current and pressing societal issues in Indonesia and globally consistently captivated reflective attention. The stylistic characteristics in the principles of modern art lacked uniqueness. In contrast, the style or pattern in contemporary art merely serves as an intermediary for the form or subject of art. Furthermore, these elements functioned solely as a technique for expressing content and creation. Contemporary art's distinctiveness emerged from presenting complex and intricate forms. This presentation was reinforced by the quality of the materials and tools, thereby ensuring durability. Technical skills significantly influenced the charm of painting through very realistic, smooth, and perfect brush strokes. Some paintings used the mixed media technique, which led to the production of stunning collages. This art also delved into local idioms, transforming them into contemporary symbols in spoken language [21].

**Table 1.** Characteristics of Similarity Criteria for Contemporary Art Aesthetic in Semarang Gallery, Sangkring Art Space, and Kiniko Art

| No | Uniqueness Contemporary Aesthetic                | Semarang Gallery | Sangkring Art Space | Kiniko Art |
|----|--|------------------|---------------------|------------|
| 1  | Reading or Interpretation of the Reality Problem | V                | V                   | V          |
| 2  | Beauty Prioritizes the Complexity of the Form    | V                | V                   | V          |
| 3  | Use of Local Idioms                              | V                | V                   | V          |
| 4  | Exposes New Associations                         | V                | V                   | V          |

Semarang Gallery presented more art expressing robust and critical content ideas dimensions, challenging established aesthetic values. The idea of new emerging artists often involves a desire to abandon established aesthetics in favour of novel artistic explorations. Art innovation aims to reject the establishment of previous artistic modes of painting that are widely considered popular. Prevailing aesthetic standards are often dismantled to question their relevance in the contemporary context. Semarang Gallery recognizes that thriving in the contemporary art market promotes a commitment to originality. Innovation can emerge from exploring the 'grey area,' a liminal space where the boundaries between art and non-art become blurred and difficult to define. This grey area becomes a battleground for artists to gain public acceptance for their innovative ideas. However, this experimental territory can be perilous if not grounded in a strong underlying artistic ideology. The curatorial introduction to the exhibition titled 'Formless: on Human Artifice and Natural Order', held from March 26<sup>th</sup> to May 29<sup>th</sup> 2022, reveals the ambiguity between art and non-art as an integral part of creativity. The following is a fragment of the curatorial



introduction. "Apart from artistic skill, the discourse on the distinction between art and non-art remains a significant issue within the art world. Artists aware of this often engage in creative explorations within this liminal space. This raises fundamental questions about art's valuation, function, and impact."

Meanwhile, Sangkring Art Space and Kiniko Art emphasized visual beauty, even though some art possessed strong conceptual elements. The art displayed at the Semarang Gallery avoided the repetition of artistic modes. Each exhibition presented by an artist was seldom repeated except in notable innovation and development cases. Sangkring Art Space served as a vast haven for creators, where artists could exhibit multiple times, allowing for the repetition of artistic modes with different subjects. Kiniko Art followed a similar pattern. Art in Semarang Gallery focused more on questioning the essence of the meaning of art in a deconstructive manner. These consistently aimed to scrutinize traces of significance, and this technique was employed by only a few artists at Sangkring Art Space and Kiniko Art.

**Table 2.** Differences in Contemporary Art Aesthetic in Semarang Gallery, Sangkring Art Space, and Kiniko Art

| No | Uniqueness Contemporary Aesthetic | Semarang Gallery   | Sangkring Art Space   | Kiniko Art  |
|----|-----------------------------------|--|---|---|
| 1  | Idea Concept                      | Aesthetic novelty  | Representation of reality   | Representation of reality   |
| 2  | Innovation in Form Processing     | Artistic mode is more highly varied  | Moderately varied artistic mode   | Medium various artistic modes   |
| 3  | Meaning of Symbols                | Personal associative of artists is very high, and symbols have a deconstruction function | Personal associative of artists and symbols function as representations | Personal associative of artists and symbols function as representations |

### ***Intellectual and Visual-Based Aesthetic Characteristics of Contemporary Art***

Considering the similarities and differences in aesthetic characteristics outlined in Tables 1 and 2, Semarang Gallery, Sangkring Art Space, and Kiniko Art presented the exhibition using two parameters of aesthetic value: visual beauty and the beauty of intellectual ideas.

Aesthetic-based intellectual beauty is characterized by the following features: First, art conveys novel and innovative ideas that offer fresh perspectives on reality in life. The emphasis on art quality prioritized discourse over visual beauty, and art opened up new horizons of knowledge regarding life aspects that had not been previously explored. The strength of the discourse presented ensured that several arts of this nature were consistently discussed from an ideological perspective [23]. Second, another characteristic was that this type of painting comprised processing symbols or idioms with a mode that did not prioritize the purely artistic side but was more intuitive and personal. Representations were challenging to understand conventionally, conveying a sense of freshness, and resisted easy interpretation compared to conventional symbols. Readers explored various content possibilities, and the twisting experience of interpretation made symbols a central objective quality of art. Third, contemporary art also possessed a relatively strong impact power, and the beauty property was not straightforward.

Furthermore, forms were processed interestingly, where the shock effect had a refreshing impact. Uniqueness was often obtained or observed after discovering the content or meaning of art. The fourth characteristic was that the beauty of this intellectual type of painting could offer a new and refreshing aesthetic discourse. The beauty emerged because it succeeded in providing a new point of view in terms of aesthetic criteria. The previous variant was dismantled to question its relevance to contemporary developments and required deep reflection in understanding. The fifth characteristic was that standard criteria did not justify this intellectual-based art easily. Justification required parameters that needed agreement from figures considered credible and experienced. Furthermore, this agreement was deemed tested when art gained market momentum at a relatively high price.

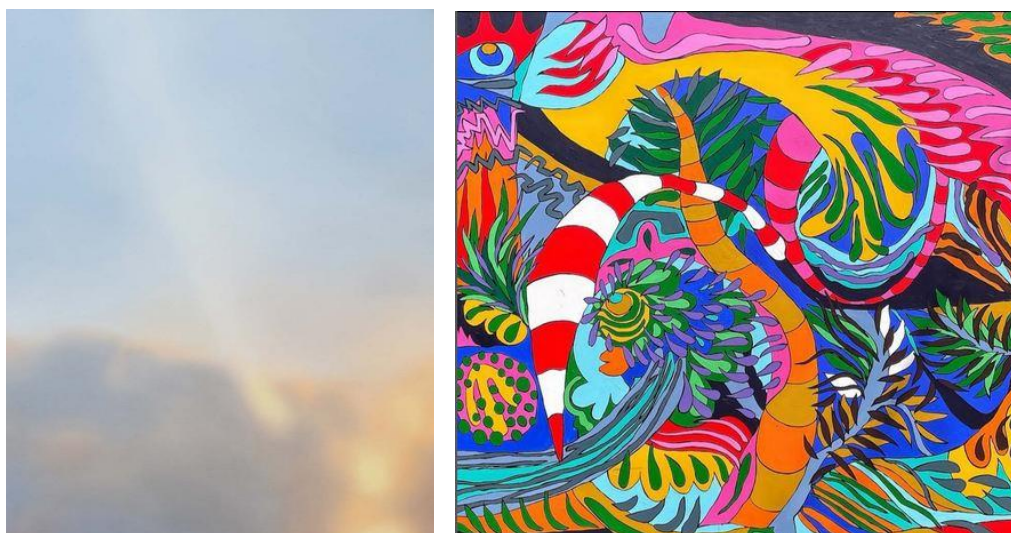
Behind the visual beauty, Tara Astari Kasenda's art entitled 'Odayeri' displayed aesthetic ideas intellectually. Art was not only used to represent the beautiful sky, clouds, and sunlight but also emphasized that the sky contained many hues of colour. It could be identified through camera technology and Photoshop. This symbol prioritized the multilingual or meta-biblical function, inherently questioning its symbolic nature. Ultimately, the reading of meaning did not rely on logocentrism. The bright blue sky did not represent the standard meaning of natural aesthetics. Rather, the symbol had been deconstructed and liberated from standardized meaning structures [24] [14]. Interpretation allowed the referent to remain open-ended, as the reader was not confined to a limited scope of ground or anchorage [19] [25] [26]. Through deconstructive interpretation, a meaning is derived from the experience of pleasure. One of the meanings of sky blue is to question the blue itself. Sky blue becomes a clue that prompts an inquiry into the scientific structure of the colour. In contemporary art, the symbol plays a crucial role in questioning its nature and existence rather than simply functioning as a representation of a standardized meaning [27]. The character of contemporary art prioritizes the cognitive idea over the harmonious execution of its form. This is exemplified by the statement, "The idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work," which states that "the execution is a perfunctory affair" [28]. Tara creates work intended for a new form of regard "in conscious opposition to" a form of regard accepted as correct in the past [29].

Aesthetic-based Visual beauty is characterized by the following features: First, popular art displayed quality translations of more idioms that were definitively easier to recognize and understand. The quality of the translation was greater in terms of symbols that were easier to comprehend. The second characteristic was that this type of painting had an artistic mode of visually citing intellectual art at a new level of creativity. Regarding psychology, popular painting could help relieve the tension in a person's mind accustomed to working all day. Third, market-oriented contemporary painting still displayed complexity, novelty, new elements, shock, heterogeneity, and asymmetry, akin to painting in the high art category. However, these principles were implemented more simply, and form processing that created a visual aura was emphasized, such as using cheerful, bright, and complex colours. Fourth, another characteristic was that standard criteria more easily justified popular art. Market art was accessible mainly to the general public and not exclusive to high-class art collectors. An example of art that could represent an instance of market aesthetic and was popular at the time was the painting by Anton Afganial. Anton's art presented a unique viewpoint on accessing nature, highlighting visual beauty through the organic complexity depicted with thick contour lines, vibrant colours, and sinuous organic shapes.

In this characteristic, contemporary painting emphasizes the poetic function as its primary focus rather than the multilingual function. This work favours the visual aesthetic as its strength and unique characteristic rather than the criticality of the symbol itself. Visual aesthetics can be analyzed through formalism, drawing upon Monroe Beardsley's Aesthetic Theory, which emphasizes the principles of complexity, intensity, and unity [16] [30]. The

complexity of a painting like "Uncertainty" is evident in the diversity of its forms, drawing inspiration from batik art. Natural organisms, depicted with thick contour lines, are imbued with vibrant colours and shapes. The painting radiates a dynamic intensity by repeating organic forms in various colours and shapes. Unity is achieved through the harmonious integration of elements, with the similarity of forms contributing to a cohesive overall composition. Eaton's Aesthetic Theory proves that assessing the quality of artworks for exhibition cannot solely rely on the subjective preferences of the gallery owner. It necessitates a broader consideration that includes the artist's competence, the objective quality of the artwork, and the market's desires as an audience while also considering the broader social, political, and cultural context [5]. Deconstructive reading confirms that modes of symbol presentation that merely quote, recycle, or imitate existing symbolic idioms often aim to question the very nature of symbolic language itself - a metalinguistic [5].

On the other hand, some contemporary paintings prioritize poetic functions, emphasizing visual aesthetics while de-emphasizing metalinguistic aspects. Ultimately, the uniqueness of contemporary paintings can be attributed to their ability to engage in multilingual and poetic functions effectively. Their referential functions often imply a reflection on social realities and societal problems or a critique of established aesthetic norms.



**Figure 3** Tara Astari Kasenda "Odayeri", oil on canvas, 81 x 65 cm, 2020; Anton Afganial "Uncertainty", Acrylic on canvas, 120 x 120 cm, 2020; [Source: Photo Documentation by Repro from Katalog]

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results showed that the preferences or aesthetic criteria used in selecting the quality of beauty in contemporary art at Semarang Gallery, Kinikoart Gallery, and Sangkring Art Space, amid the tension between economic and pure aesthetic values, exhibited both similarities and differences. The similarities included: (1) Contemporary art depicted subject matter from modern reality, (2) The characteristics of styles in the principles of modern art were not unique, (3) The uniqueness of contemporary art was linked to the presentation of complex and intricate forms, (4) Technical skills significantly influenced the attractiveness of painting, and (5) Some art explored local idioms as symbols of spoken language, with these idioms processed in the form of contemporary symbols.

The distinguishing factors were: (1) Based on the aspects of extrinsic value, specifically the criticality of aesthetic conventions, Semarang Gallery presented more art that was bolder

in expressing stronger and more critical dimensions of meaning. Sangkring Art Space emphasized beauty through visualization rather than the criticality of use. Kiniko Art also mostly presents the art of visual beauty, and (2) Art in Semarang Gallery does not repeat many artistic modes. At the same time, Sangkring Art Space and Kiniko Art had several repetitions, and (3) Art at Semarang Gallery was more inclined to question meaning in a deconstructive way. In contrast, only a few artists at Sangkring Art Space and Kiniko Art used this technique. Deconstruction is evident in paintings where symbols are not intended to represent standardized meaning relationships but instead emerge from a flow of personal experience and aesthetic pleasure. Artists do not rely on conventional symbolic meanings but draw upon their unique psychological experiences in conveying their ideas. Paintings that were popular and easily sellable in the market displayed trending idioms and were definitively easier to recognize and understand. This kind of popular art, psychologically, consisted mostly of modern art. Market-oriented contemporary painting still displayed complexity, novelty, new elements, shock, heterogeneity, and asymmetry. Meanwhile, paintings that possessed beauty academically displayed intellectual ideas that aimed to convey innovative artistic modes as a newer form of beauty.

The theoretical implication is that exhibitions can prioritize either the potential quality of intellectual ideas or the quality of visual aesthetics. This highlights that dynamic aesthetic criteria in selecting exhibition works at Semarang Gallery, Sangkring Art Space, and Kiniko Art are crucial for ensuring their continued existence within a highly competitive art market. The assessment of works cannot solely rely on objective criteria. It must also consider the artist's artistic intention, market tastes, and the broader context within which the art is created and presented. This demonstrates that artistic practice reflects the dynamic nature of artistic progress, which continues to evolve transformatively, both economically and culturally, within the Indonesian context. The practical implication is that the selection of exhibition works, considering the artist's competence, the quality of the artwork, audience appreciation, and the broader socio-ecological context, can serve as a model for other galleries to ensure a more objective assessment of aesthetic quality.

Furthermore, engaging in intensive discussions with curators enables artists to gain valuable insights into market dynamics and evolving contexts. This allows them to create artwork more likely to resonate with the market or establish new market segments. Suggestions: as integral components of the social field of art, galleries need to collaborate effectively with artists, communities, critics, government agencies, and collectors. This balanced and proportional approach ensures that all stakeholders contribute to a thriving artistic climate, particularly in art education, creation, criticism, collection, publication, and art management.

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