

Senandung Tak Bertahta Exhibition in the Frame of Socialist Realism Pramoedya Ananta Toer

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses about Senandung tak Bertahta exhibition which departs from the situation and conditions of Balinese society in the frame of socialist realism Pramoedya Ananta Toer. Balinese society is still struggling to meet their living needs behind the glittering tourism sector. Take for example the Kerobokan area of Bali which is always under pressure with the rate of growth, between struggling, surviving, actually giving up, especially on the issue of land which is squeezed and lured by investors' enticements. The data source was obtained through a qualitative approach using a descriptive analysis method by utilizing library media. The Senandung tak Bertahta exhibition is a representative to voice the phenomenon, through three works that represent the voices of the buried community, the context of body ownership and the issue of fake identity. The Senandung tak bertahta exhibition will be studied using the theory of Socialist Realism which is in line with Pramoedya's thoughts and the works will be studied using theories by Adorno, Foucault and Julia Kristeva which describe the problem of the helplessness of society which is in line with the context of socialist realism. By studying symbolic elements, visual composition, and social context, this exhibition shows how contemporary art is still relevant as a medium for the struggle of lower-class discourse, as proposed in Pramoedya's literature.

KEYWORDS

Balinese Society,
Contemporary Arts,
Pramoedya Ananta
Toer, Senandung tak
Bertahta, Socialist
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Bali And Policies That Do Not Favor the Common People

Amid the glow of tourism and massive infrastructure development in Bali, the reality behind the scenes shows another face of modernity, namely the structural conflict between agrarian society and the power of capital and state policy. The phenomenon of the systematic takeover of farmers' land by elites, developers, and the government reflects the process of marginalizing small people from their most basic sources of livelihood. Land that functions not only as an economic resource, but also as a cultural heritage, spiritual, and social identity has been reduced to a capital commodity, released from the communal values that have been firmly held by the Balinese people.

The role of investment was opened for foreign and domestic investment to participate in building telecommunication transportation accommodation facilities and other tourism supporters. Promotion was also intensively carried out through diplomatic and trade missions so that Indonesia was quite well known in the international market. Bali is one of Indonesia's main destinations which is then followed by other developing destinations. Development activities supported by advanced technology have changed the environment to exceed the limits of its support power. modernization in development has led to changes in the quality of life of the community and its consumptive lifestyle as well as an increase in the quantity of population that requires high resource and energy support [1].

Inevitably, the impact of modernization in a number of areas such as Badung, Gianyar, and Tabanan, refers to the practice of massive conversion of agricultural land which triggers latent opposition among farmers. They are faced with a difficult choice: survive without certainty or succumb to the promise of progress offered in the form of villas, hotels and toll roads. In practice, the policies that underpin these strategic projects often do not favor local communities. Non-transparent licensing processes, disproportionate compensation, and pressure from state apparatus indicate unequal power relations. Farmers, who are the backbone of food security and local wisdom, are marginalized and lose agency over the land they have managed for generations.

Such is the rapid development of tourism with such a large land utilization, that Bali's land in a certain period has decreased by 1000 hectares every year. in other words, land in Bali has been converted from agriculture to non-agriculture. thus, it is clear that Bali is experiencing major physical changes, due to tourism development, and not a few new problems that arise in the community [2]. This event is something that should be understood, dealt with and resisted, so that the process of taking land with the slogan of sustainable tourism does not bury local communities slowly, amid the insistence of investors and tourists who actually take jobs in Bali. One of the acts of resistance that can be done is by voicing awareness through artistic expression.

Art is there to fight for the oppressed in a capitalist society, instead of running away. It was in such a view that critical art was born, especially socialist realism. According to Lukacs, capitalism has turned human consciousness into a false consciousness that distances humans from their free existence and instead brings humans closer to material characters that only have functional value. realism comes as a human effort to be free from alienation born of false consciousness, and then leads him towards a self-fulfillment as a whole human being [3]. Art becomes a bridge and dialectic in presenting the current situation, and is able to discourse it to stimulate public awareness. This discourse process is translated into ideas that are presented through an event entitled "Senandung Tak Bertahta".

Senandung Tak Bertahta Exhibition and Pramoedya Ananta Toer's Socialist Realism

The title *Senandung Tak Bertahta* itself is a subtle criticism of the system that silences small voices. "Senandung" is the soft sound of a song, barely audible [4]; "tak Bertahta" emphasizes the absence of power or influence. In the context of socialist realism, the Exhibition functions as a "representation" that represents the people not only as victims, but also as a collective entity ready to voice itself.

In Pramoedya's definition: "Socialist realism is a method that continues the philosophy of materialism in literature and continues the views of scientific socialism. In dealing with the problems of society, socialist realism takes a fundamental structural view". In this way, socialist realism is actually a theory of art based on dialectical contemplation between the artist and the social environment. The artist is placed not separate from the environment in which he is located. the essence of socialist realism can be said to place art as a vehicle for "awareness" for society to raise awareness of his existence as an alienated / alienated human being (in Marxist terms) and be able to realize himself as a human being who has freedom [5].



Figure 1. Situation of the opening of the exhibition *Senandung tak Bertahta* at TAT Artspace Bali in July 2023 (Author documentation).

The vehicle of awareness in the context of self and environment is a part that should be fought for. Especially when the self loses awareness or is even complacent with a nurturing situation, it will be fatal when the seduction of investors is present to make a deal. This happens especially to farmers or people who own land in strategic parts of Bali. These lands are acquired until in the end the original owner has no control over his own land. *Senandung Tak Bertakhta* comes as a visual response to this reality. It transforms into a form of visual literature in the spirit of socialist realism, where art is not only a medium of expression, but also a tool of struggle. In the spirit of Pramoedya Ananta Toer, the people are depicted not only as victims, but as conscious entities that have critical power.

This consciousness and critical power, which is like *Senandung*; a barely audible sound, gives an image like the clinking of spoons, where it produces an event of satisfaction from the user agent. The clinking of the spoons has a different flow for each caste of user agents. By understanding the clinking and strains of the spoon, the social strata of its users can be clearly classified. In this exhibition, works are presented that refer to the appreciation of humming as a study of anxiety in understanding the rhythm of life. One of the works visualized refers to the art form of Installation, by utilizing 2500 spoons hung close together that have different rhythms and can be responded to by the appreciator. The proximity of the spoon and its touch between the parts are able to present abstract sounds that are perceived as social humming. This process of awareness is what we are trying to strive for in understanding the contextualization of existence.

In addition to the spoon installations, there are also works that show figures that are crushed, buried, or have their identities obscured - symbols of farmers who have lost their space, lost their right to vote, but still retain collective memory and the potential for resistance. Three works from the *Senandung tak Bertakhta* exhibition will be further examined using Adorno's theoretical approach on the function of art in society, Foucault on power relations and the body, and Julia Kristeva on intertextuality and marginalized identities, to enrich the reading of the works in this exhibition. The body in the works is not just an anatomy, but a representation of a dispossessed space. Identity is not just a cultural symbol, but the last bastion against homogenization and the erasure of local traces.

Study of Works with Theories by Adorno, Foucault and Julia Kristeva

Adorno in Frigidanto [6] discusses in detail the relationship between art and society in terms of how art functions in seeing society. He said, "Art is the antithesis of society, but that does not mean that art is even separated from its society". According to Adorno, there are two interconnected questions in defining art, namely "how does art relate to society" and the second question - "is art a part of society"? These questions

are addressed in Aesthetic Theory: The struggle of art is motivated by the conflict between its magical charm and the progress of the world that always rejects it. The world outside art will try to eliminate the magic from art. Because art has a character that liberates itself from reality, but the charm of such art makes itself part of enlightenment: so that art can awaken a disappointing world.

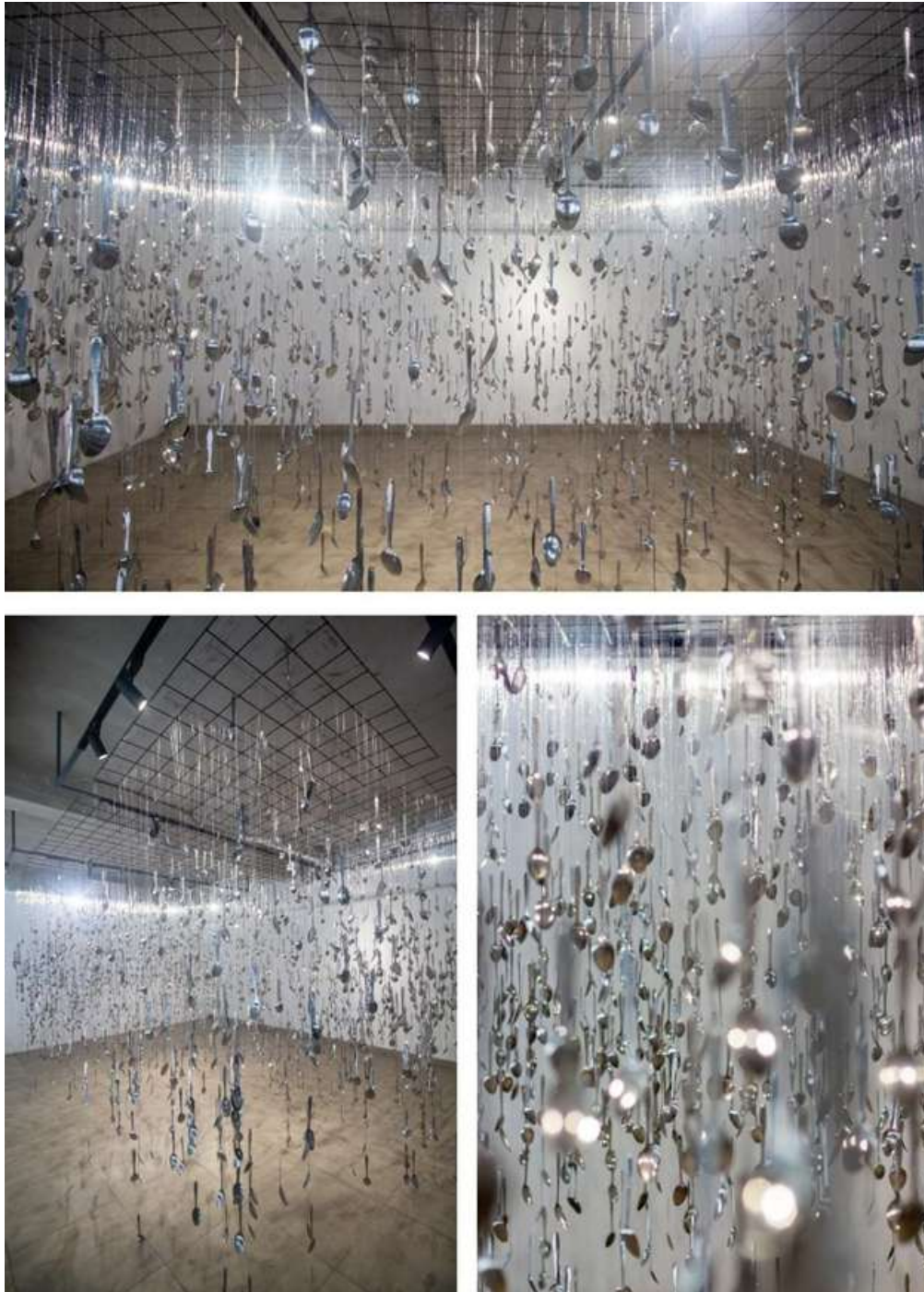


Figure 2. “Senandung Tak Bertahta” 2500 spoons, Variable size, 2023, (Author documentation).

Art, the world and society are linked in the context of realization, so that the relationship between art and society becomes a strategy of resistance to systems of power that oppress the lower classes. In the context of socialist realism, the spoon can be interpreted as a symbol of the lower society, especially the working class, those who work every day to fill their stomachs but never sit in the seat of power.

This situation is presented in the work titled *Senandung tak Bertta*, which utilizes 2500 spoons as the lower class, working class, farmers and laborers. Thousands of spoons are hung in a silent space as if quarantined, not allowed to be free and always imprisoned by deprivation. The spoons hanging neatly from the ceiling like a grid suggest order, perhaps an illusion of order in the social system, or conversely, a longing for an organized and just system. But from below, they seem to hang off the ground: a dangling existence, without a foothold, similar to the fate of the people who are not yet socio-economically independent.

The work "*Senandung Tak Bertta*" brings out more meaning when the thousands of spoons intersect/collide, and give rise to small voices that "hum" in silence, creating a common echo when touched, but have no "throne", power, or space for representation. It is as if the collective voice that is present is not buzzing and is deliberately silenced.

Pramoedya always wrote for and about those who were "not considered". Like these spoons, Pram's characters come from the lower class: peasants, workers, marginalized women. Pram's socialist realism is a struggle to represent the reality of the people in a form that can raise class consciousness. The presence of *Senandung tanpa bertahta* is a representation to convey messages without verbal narration, which evokes and provides awareness efforts for today's society.



Figure 3. “Not Wholly Owned” Multiplek and NC, Variable Dimension, 2023 (Author documentation).

In addition to the spoon installation, the exhibition also features human figures lined up neatly but fragile, as if they have no power over themselves. Power strategies take place everywhere because wherever there are structures, rules, regulatory systems, where there are humans who relate to each other, there power is at work. He also revealed that power is not destructive but productive, therefore power can also be positive. One of Foucault's discussions on power is his concept of power over the body,

this concept is called "body discipline". Body discipline is an attempt to control all aspects of an individual's body including: behavior, intelligence, how to look, and how to become a more useful individual. Body discipline is a power technology that is carried out to discipline the body and make it an obedient and useful body [7].

There are red-colored figures, some whole, cut and figures with many hands, standing on footholds in a pool of water that seems to have been disciplined, in order to silence their will to be free. By utilizing the color red, it can be interpreted as a symbol of struggle, blood, and disciplined anger. These bodies, despite their mutilated arms and gestures, remain faceless and voiceless. This collective mute phenomenon depicts a people who are required to move, work, and obey, but do not have the right to speak out. In line with Pramoedya's idea of how the regime oppresses the people by silencing their narrative. The many arms can be read as a collective workload or a spirit of gotongroyong, but when faceless and expressionless, that spirit becomes manipulative: movement without consciousness, work without control over fate. In the narrative of socialist realism, such a body is not only a political body, but also a historical body, where people are not only victims of structures, but also symbols of the power that is being built.



Figure 4. "Fake Identity" 30 cosplay participants Performance Art 2023 (Author documentation).

The third work is studied through the theory of post-structuralist semiotics in describing signifiers and signs, which in this case uses Julia Kristeva's approach of intertextuality to explain the complex interdependence, one on top of the other, between one text and previous texts in a culture. Poststructuralism semiotics offers a new relationship between signifier and sign, between form and meaning. The text is no longer considered as a being, but a process of becoming, for which innovation, creativity and productivity

are needed in order to maintain everything that is unthinkable and unimaginable before. meaning is considered never stable, final or finished, but always in the process of becoming in the constellation of an endless game of signifiers [8].

The third work in this exhibition presents imaginary figures whose existence cannot be confirmed, if this context can be studied using intertextuality, because it must read the previous text to relate it to today's context. Imaginary figures are a sign that the context of reality is still in the shackles of uncertainty which raises a sign that reality is not about what it is, but rather what it is. Today's reality comes from a series of layers of events that are still unfinished from the past, giving rise to various perceptions of today as an unclear identity or even an identity that is contrary to the truth.

Imaginary figures that resemble humans but have been deformed, faces are invisible, identities are obscured, and body gestures no longer show individuality. In the context of socialist realism, this form can be read as a metaphor for the condition of the people whose identity is erased by the dominant system: economy, power, and even ideology. These figures reflect the impact of a system that not only physically oppresses, but also deprives people of their subjectivity. These are bodies that do not have narratives - exactly as Pramoedya depicted in the stories of small folk characters whose lives are only a backdrop to a larger history that they do not own.

Conclusion

The Senandung Tak Bertahta exhibition is a tangible manifestation of art that favors the little people, as well as a form of symbolic resistance to an oppressive social system. In the frame of Pramoedya Ananta Toer's socialist realism, this exhibition not only depicts suffering, but also opens a space for awareness and realization: that the people are not just passive objects, but historical subjects who are able to speak out, fight back, and survive.

The three main works in this exhibition form an interrelated visual narrative. The first work, using Adorno's theoretical study of unconsidered voices, illustrates how the system of power and capitalism suppresses small voices until they almost disappear. However, like a song that lives on in silence, this work shows that the voice of the people is never truly dead, only temporarily silenced.

The second work uses Foucault's study of the body that loses ownership, representing the small people who are disciplined, organized to obey and without resistance. The body in this work becomes a metaphor of a living space that is usurped, exiled from ancestral lands, and commodified into part of the tourism capitalism machine. This is in line with Pramoedya's thought that power makes small bodies as slaves.

The third work uses Julia Kristeva's approach of intertextuality that examines the false identities of imaginary figures that highlight how the dominant system creates false

images of the people. In the midst of the onslaught of the cultural industry, people are often forced to play roles that are not their own. Their identities are reshaped for the benefit of the market, such as cultural workers in Bali's tourism industry. This work reveals how aesthetics is used to mask inequality.

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