

Representational Politics of Art Media in the Contemporary Indonesian Artworld

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Abstract

Entering the 2000s, the development of contemporary Indonesian art exhibits a new phenomenon with artists' various uses of art media. Simultaneously, the development of institutions in the art world has encouraged various forms of exhibition presentations and the co-existence of various art media in local, national, and international contexts.

This study employs the contextual ontology approach, utilizing aesthetics and sociology to explore the historical context of the research subjects. Aesthetic discipline is employed to delineate the concept and structure of the medium, sociology is applied to chart the landscape of contemporary art in Indonesia, and historical aspects are utilized to map modern art concepts. Whereas contemporary art practices tend to apply representational politics, media presentation in an exhibition is a collective strategic-contextual goal of art producers such as artists, gallery promoters, and curators, who entrust each other with non-aesthetic interests.

It concludes that the exploration of the social dimension of art experience involves the transformation of art appreciation beyond mere aesthetics. Examining the development of the concept of the medium in contemporary Indonesian art reveals its strategic role for all art producers. The medium in contemporary art is no longer solely defined by its aesthetic function but acquires a novel political dimension.

Keywords: Art media, artworld, contemporary art, politics of representation.

Introduction

Development of contemporary Indonesian art in the last two decade at the beginning of the 21st century reveals an increasing variety of art media approaches by artist. This shows the development of the concept and function of art media since modern art in Indonesian was introduced painting, sculpture and then printmaking.

The issue of media choice in modern Indonesian art emerged as a critical discourse since the New Art Movement (hereinafter, Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru (GSRB)) exhibition in 1975. Artists and critics raised this issue in a spirit of 'resistance' against the aesthetic establishment or idioms of conventional painting media. According to them, the media issue stifled creativity and the presence of new conceptual realities and idioms in art. The year 1975 was an era of reactive, radical rebellions against the principles of modernism (Supangkat,

2012). GSRB then became a historic gateway for media discourse in Indonesian art, impacting various areas of institutions and the field of art. Artists, especially the initiators of the GSRB, have transmitted an ideological view of art to enter the critical attitude. Art is not only an ideal issue that is formed in media traditions and conventions; its ideals are presented in a variety of media.

Entering the 1980s, Post-Rebellion Art in mainstream Indonesian art ripened the opportunities to overcome the bottleneck of creativity through discourses of cultural identity and socio-cultural awareness. At that time, instead of seeking the furthest reach from conventional technical conventions and media such as painting and sculpture, art media discourse exhibited a proliferation of 'alternative' media tendencies such as installation, video, photography, mixed-media, processing of objects and finished objects (ready-mades, found objects), and performance art.

In the 1990s, the term 'installation art' was widely used by artists and became a discourse that bound various art trends outside conventional media. Installation art marked a peak of freedom of expression and the search for novel forms of expression. With the free choice in implementation of form, these critical installation works were thematically, and often explicitly, related to the socio-political and cultural context. The installation approach, supported by a postmodern discourse rife in the constellation of Indonesian arts and culture, underlined that art is a matter of contextual representation.

Entering the new millennium, contemporary Indonesian artists present their works with a unique attitude. Various art media approaches and forms become contextual choices in the form and magnitude of their activities (solo, group, local, national, and international exhibition). The artistic process becomes an integrated part of the complex relationship in the artistic field in two ways: vertically (hierarchy of social class, power authority, and capital authority) and through horizontal (collegial) relationships with various types of sub-communities supporting the arts such as curators, promoters, and art managers. This phenomenon encourages the existence of art issues such as pragmatic commodification tendencies, becoming a production cycle and supply-demand fulfilment.

Each medium has a physical identity and aesthetic potential (attributes of the form). Therefore, the use of various media is undoubtedly a strategic and contextual choice for art producers (artists, curators, and promoters). This assumption raises questions that lead to the possibility of new meanings of the existence and conception of art media, and such conception develops according to context.

In this context, this study asks the following research questions.

- Does the strategic-contextual use of art media in contemporary art establish a new concept of the art medium?
- How is that concept understood?
- What are its attributes?
- If art media presentation is driven by strategic-contextual importance, what judgments underlie the presence of various types of art media?

Thus, this study aims to examine the concept of the art medium as a new perspective in contemporary art. Its objectives are:

1. To identify the structure and relationships of the elements that constitute the medium entity,
2. To identify the concept of the medium in the context of contemporary art and the conceptual shift in terms of the medium entity, and
3. To ascertain the paradigmatic tendency in the presentation of contemporary Indonesian artworks.

Theoretical Framework

This study applies an aesthetic and scientific approach to examine how the art medium manifests and to identify its elements. It explicitly questions the nature of how art manifests (ontology) in a medium rather than questioning the concept of medium ontology as philosophical reasoning. The terms and basic ontological concepts in the discussion of this

approach, the study applies a basic framework to describe the structural attributes of the medium to describe the entity.

In the traditional classification of art, media is an element that defines the form of art, such as the physical elements of stone and paint. This traditional view emphasizes the aspects of visual perception or aesthetic elements in identifying forms. In the study of art ontology, two main points of view examine the art of manifesting. The first is called the 'formalist-empirical' approach that classifies art forms as unique (singular) or as copies (multiple) such as reproduction or reprinting techniques in sculpture or photography. Both these perspectives question their existence, which affects the experience of art from a physical aspect, becomes a unique existence, or classifies its quality.

The second view is called 'contextualism' or 'contextual ontology.' Contextual ontology considers an artwork not only by its aesthetic physical elements (aesthetic ontology) but also by its contextual aspects including its historical setting, social role, function, the role of technology in the artwork, and other cultural aspects that affect the understanding about works of art (Davies, 2003). Moreover, contextual ontology emphasizes a descriptive function that maps ontological categories supported by a combination of historical and contemporary studies. It also confirms the premise that works of art can be easily explored by observers who understand their historical context (Gracyk, 2009). Thus, it opens up opportunities for reading complex works of contemporary art. This approach will help decipher the problem of the medium in modern art, which indicates the development of the principle of art producers who have traditionally relied on artists. In the contemporary context, art producers are also driven by elements of the artworld, namely, curators and art promoters.

Contextual ontology sees a truth that is shaped by its context. Assuming a description of art media with strategic-contextual phenomena, one must describe the contextual aspects that form the basis of the variable understanding of contemporary Indonesian art. By using the contextual ontology approach, this study then utilizes the disciplines of aesthetics and sociology and examines the historical context of the research objects. Aesthetic discipline is used to map the concept and structure of the medium; sociology is used to map the terrain of Indonesian contemporary art; and historical aspects are used to map modern art concepts as part of development.

Medium and aesthetic codes

Medium in the context of art as an aesthetic object divided into physical and artistic media, in the context of communication, shows its position as a producer of codes, often referred to as aesthetic codes. Aesthetic codes, like the forms of communication works (artists), are looser to formulate and difficult to define, as they are related to cultural context; therefore, one can negotiate their meanings. They are also expressive, involving the artist's subjective world; therefore, they tend to be a source of 'fun' and meaningful for their worlds. In the context of art, the term 'code' is often referred to as 'style' (Fiske, 2004).

Conventional aesthetic codes, such as those used in mass art and folk art, require an agreement among users with the same cultural experience. Their traditional nature maintains 'similarity' and 'generality' to become mass art; therefore, aesthetic codes have become a kind of 'additional status'. However, they can also dismantle conventional codes (decoding). That is, they can become very specific and demonstrate elitist values and individual differences, rendering them of 'high value'. Such 'high art' contains clues or signs that lead to its decoding, and the art public must look for themselves in the context of the art itself. The decoding process requires prerequisites in the form of specific knowledge and other elements.

In this context, artists use the medium to produce specific aesthetic codes related to their intention and knowledge in processing their physical and artistic medium to produce value. Information from these codes requires a special channel (mediation) so that, in their uniqueness and specificity, they can be 'read' or experienced. Thus, the medium's function can be described as in the chart below.

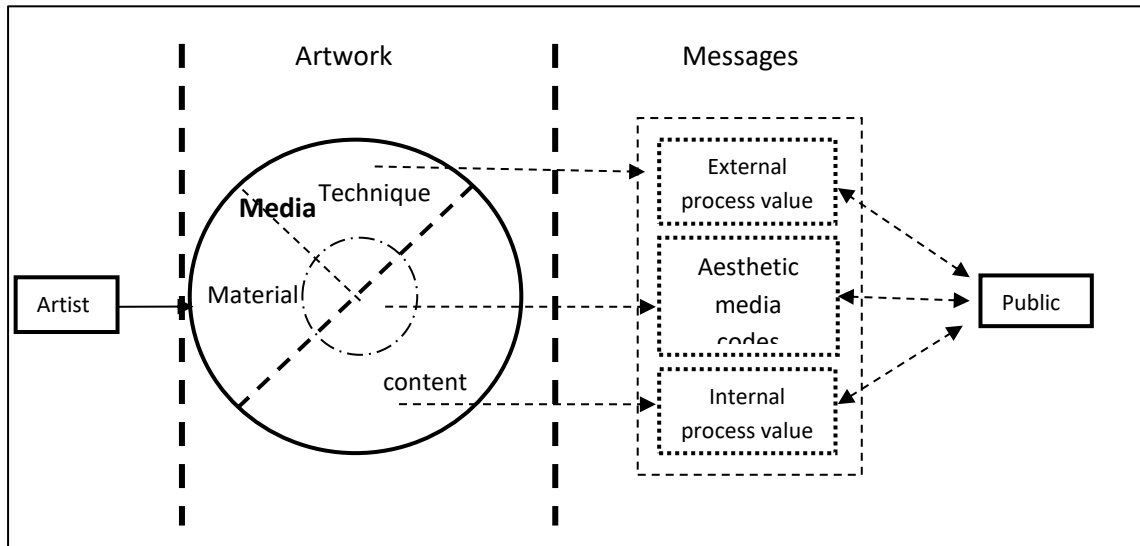


Fig. 1: Art communication process flow
Source: Author

In the process above, the structure of the medium illustrates that its elements can simultaneously be 'stored' as codes and messages. However, this phase will still go through a phase that channels to the public will mediate. This mediating factor, in exhibitions as art communication, will become a form of message 'package' that allows intervention. Therefore, the initial message constructed by the artist can become specific information or emphasize one main information factor, or even be biased. Interventions in art practice can occur because of curators, galleries, promoters, collectors, or other parties in the artworld.

Typology of the medium in art

The typology of the medium in art involves various art media with different specifications and characteristics. From an aesthetic point of view, these specifications and characteristics are built from a study of the choices of artists toward media and their aesthetic qualities. Moreover, they come from a study of the relationship between artists' options related to the context of art and their cultural context, which also becomes another element in the relationship between art media and art history. The three aspects, namely, the artist and their choice of media, context, and history, become an inseparable part of the information structure regarding art media. This typology developed along with modernity in the 19th century, in the spirit of the time, and established the views on 'newness' through the advancement of science and technology. Artists widely respond to art media that comprise novel materials and techniques and use the possibilities of the novel media's aesthetic qualities. This modern spirit (modernism) later became one of the benchmarks for developing the medium in art.

The typology of the art medium concerns a linear series of media developments and discourses. These series of developments render contextual characteristics or identities built by discourse and art theory (the artworld). The table below describes such typology of the medium.

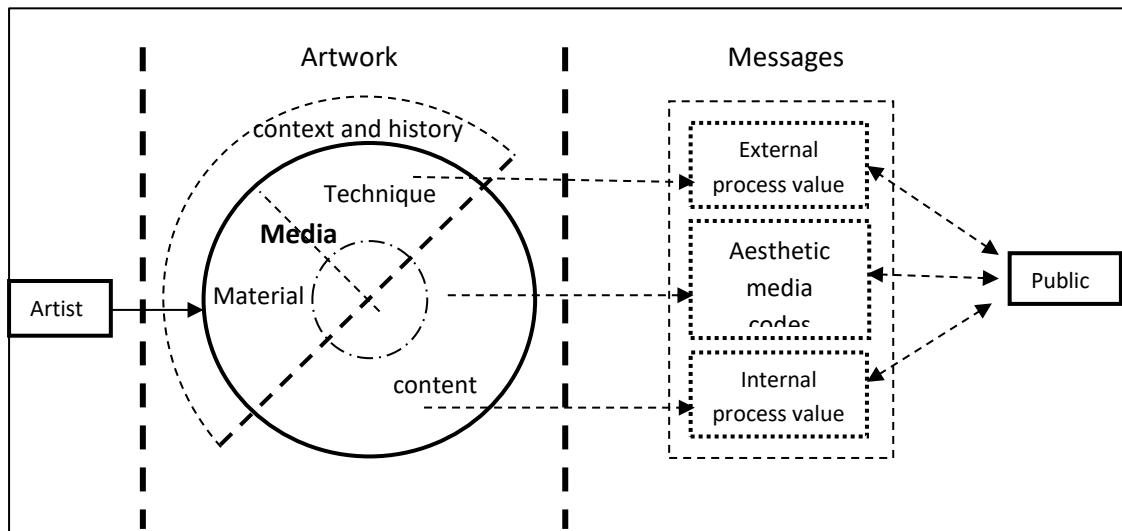
Table 1: Typology of the art medium

Source: Author

	Types of Media	Contextual Identity of Media
a.	Traditional art media i. Drawing ii. Painting iii. Sculpture	Classic Manual Artistic skills
b.	New Media Art i. Photography ii. Video iii. Digital Arts	New technologies
c.	Dematerialization, Conceptual Art	(Total works of art/ <i>Gesamtkunstwerk</i>)
d.	Cross Disciplinary Art 1. Installation Art 2. Performance Art	
e.	Post-Medium	Visual culture, game of signs (semiotics)

The Complex Structure of the Art Medium

What is an art medium? How did it come into being? These are ontological questions. The factors that conceptually and physically support the depiction of the art medium have been described above. Further, conceptual media and physical media can be described through an analysis of their relationship with art communication, aesthetic history, and their context, as shown in the chart below:

**Fig. 2:** The structure of an art medium

Source: Author

The chart above describes medium as a structure in two senses. First, the medium manifests as materials and techniques that contain content or representations that are 'entrusted' by artists. This chart, as observed in the historical development of media and aesthetics, demonstrates an important aspect, namely, the dimension of 'context and history' that can be considered as media attributes or contextual identities.

Second is the concept of the medium in the 'holistic art experience', namely, observing art media in all its relationships. Its existence cannot be separated from the basic function of the medium (between) that connects artists as media users (value producers) and the art public as message recipients. Observing the structure of the medium in a holistic art experience provides a complete picture of how the art medium, conceptually and physically, has

dimensions of the complexity of its structural relationships. Next, this study applies this structure to examine the phenomenon of contemporary art in the next chapter.

Institutional Theory of Art and the Artworld

The term ‘artworld’ in Western art discourse was first introduced by the American art critic Arthur Danto to identify the growing artistic production phenomenon in the West in the 1950s and 1960s. Danto specifically examined the artistic tendencies in the works of Minimal Art, Conceptual Art, and Pop Art. He identified two problems. First, assessing everyday objects in works of art were confusing and required specific ways and knowledge to distinguish them. In his article in the *Journal of Philosophy* entitled ‘Artworld,’ Danto (1964) historically explains the meaning of art, since the theory of mimesis (art as an imitation of nature), shifted from a theory of reality (as in painting) to everyday objects as art, exemplified by Andy Warhol’s Brillo Box. For Danto (1998), in the case of Klein’s painting, the work no longer leaves any visual reference as he said that “...in the fact that this artist has returned to the physicality of paint through an atmosphere compounded of artistic theories and the history of recent and remoter painting.”

As a result, considering painting as a medium becomes an activity to see objects, not images; painting as a medium becomes a physical object on a flat plane. Danto interprets the work as art, given comprehensive art history knowledge; those without an understanding of the development of theories in art history cannot interpret it as such. Therefore, Danto (1964) asserts “To see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry-an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld.”

In this context, Danto emphasizes the ‘artworld’ as a field where art is assessed based on art history knowledge. In other words, the artworld is a platform where an agreement about art is formed and the parties understand the history of art. Therefore, Danto (1964) reiterates: “Artists then, with greater or less alacrity, occupy the positions thus opened up: this is a remarkable feature of contemporary art, and for those unfamiliar with the matrix, it is hard, and perhaps impossible, to recognize certain positions as occupied by artworks. Nor would these things be artworks without the theories and the histories of the Artworld”

(Danto, 1964:584).

Here, ‘Artworld’ describes a specific field that adheres to a special system of art. In this system, artists, museums, collectors and art discourse constitute the contexts that contribute to declaring a ‘work’ as a ‘work of art.’ Art theory, art history, and art knowledge, together with art actors, become an institution that determines what is and is not art.

The term ‘artworld’ was later brought up by the critic George Dickie. He references Danto’s discussion of the term. Danto mentions the word ‘atmosphere,’ which Dickie interprets as a social dimension as he described “Work of art in the descriptive sense is (1) an artifact (2) upon which some society or some sub-group of society has conferred the status of candidate for appreciation.” (Dickie, 1969)

Furthermore, according to Dickie (1969), what is disputed in the term ‘Artworld’ refers to the institutionalized meaning of art. Thus, for Dickie, ‘artworld’ denotes a meaning of art that is institutionalized through a specific system in each context. Moreover, he implies that the meaning of art cannot be independent, because, in practice, the definitions of art contain many references from the social sphere of art formed by actors such as art historians, art observers, and art practices. Therefore, Dickie (1997) further elaborates on the artworld and the factors that determine the meaning of art and provides the following formulations:

1. Artworks are artifacts made for the art public.
2. An artist is someone who is involved in understanding the creation of art.
3. The art public is people who can already see art objects.
4. The artworld is the whole system that surrounds it.
5. The system in the field of art is a form of agreement for the appearance of the artist’s work in the public art space.

The artworld described by Dickie later became one of the undeniable foundations that the ‘baptism’ of an object into art or not art depends on interwoven arts institutions, and the term has become a more general term. Dickie’s book, *Art Circle*, also formulated this artworld approach as an institutional art theory approach.

The discussion of the artworld and the institutional theory of art has been further developed by Howard S. Becker, an American sociologist and art observer. Becker clearly looks back at the artworld approach put forward by Danto and Dickie. Becker observes the term ‘artworld’ in the discourse of institutional theory of art as not specifically explained but discussing a system that has the right to legitimize a work of art. However, given his background, Becker looks more at the problems surrounding art in a sociological framework and how the system intended by Dickie is seen as a pattern and a way of relating the elements. Becker’s explanation of the artworld emphasizes it as a ‘social network.’ In his research, he mentions two main factors in seeing the relationship among artists: works of art, and the art public. In the context of the art world, they refer to collective activity and convention.

Collective Activity

The collective activity that Becker refers to is a chain of processes or cycles of ‘becoming art.’ Furthermore, Becker (1982) mentions that there are seven factors of collective activity:

1. The initiating party (Becker’s term: ‘originator’), i.e., one or more people who develop the idea;
2. The idea that must be executed;
3. The materials and equipment to realize the idea;
4. Distribution, as a process that uses funds and time to produce feedback such as payments;
5. Supporting activities, as a follow-up process from points 1-4, for art, such as catalogue editing and exhibition room preparation.

The following two audience factors are additional factors outside the production factor:

1. Response and appreciation activities as part of the completeness of production and consumption;
2. Creating and maintaining basic goals.

For Becker, this process must be complete. If not, an art activity and creation are ‘unsupported’ and ‘unappreciated.’

Convention

The second factor that Becker refers to in terms of the completeness of the artworld is convention. It has a significant role concerning the ‘event of art’, like ‘dictating’, starting from the use of materials and the dimensions of the work to suggestions for appropriateness and the rules for the relationship between the artist and his audience. Becker pays special attention to this convention, especially the relationship between artists and distributors, and artists and their audiences. This convention ensures the continuity of art, both in terms of existence and financial sustainability.

The structure of Becker’s version of the artworld system emphasizes two elements that influence each other: production and audience. However, he also makes it clear that conventions set by audiences also change.

The production system and conventions that Becker describes demonstrate that the ongoing artworld becomes the social system of art in determining the existence of art. Therefore, this institutional art problem is closely related to the principles of sociology because these institutions are interconnected networks and norms that regulate the relationship of social elements.

The ongoing social system of art, also known as the artistic field or area, was further studied by Pierre Bourdieu, a French contemporary post-structuralist sociologist. Bourdieu

studied the social system, especially in the artistic and social area influencing the direction of art events. In particular, he examined the social segment that influences aesthetic judgment in his book, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment Taste*. In the book, Bourdieu (1979) emphasizes the question of 'taste' formed by certain social classes that affect aesthetic judgments and also examines Becker's artworld theory. Bourdieu introduced the term 'field' (translated into Indonesian as a region or terrain); in this context, it is a social area or terrain. This study applies the term the term field, known as 'field theory,' which Becker refers to as the world, network, configuration, and system.

Bourdieu completed his views on the artworld in his book *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* in 1996. He includes all his initial concepts about field theory, which has become widely known as the 'cultural field.' There is a principal difference between Bourdieu and Becker's thoughts. Becker, the sociologist, prefers to show the complexity of the artworld system through a study of cases of the working of the social system of art, while Bourdieu analyses the general structure that applies the rules and mechanisms in art, the complexity. Three keywords constitute Bourdieu's thinking on 'field theory': (1) 'the artistic field', (2) 'specific symbolic capital', and (3) 'habitus' (customs/habits) as shown in Figure 1.

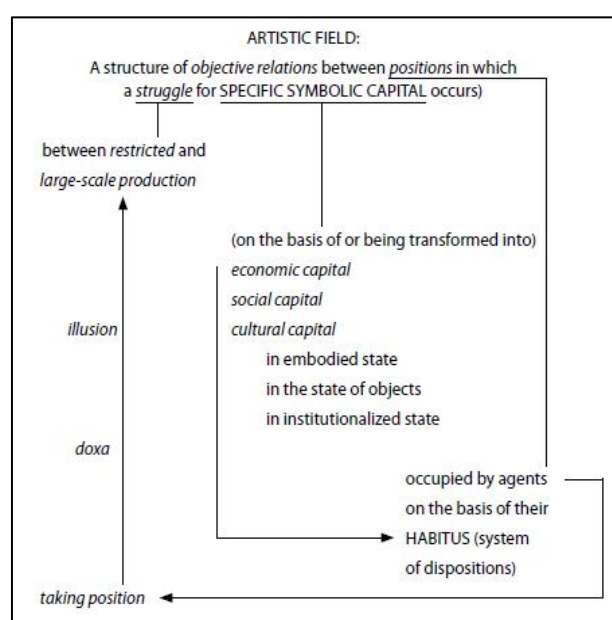


Fig. 3: Bourdieu's Keywords in 'Field Theory'
Source: Van Maanen, 2009

In principle, Bourdieu (1996) identified the artworld as the will of social class and a matter of competence. For him, art is a form of cultural capital; its meaning and value is collectively produced for the social class that 'owns' it. Art in this context is seen and validated by museums and galleries and as something that is 'owned' by members of a social class. Then, a work of art can be meaningful and interesting only for someone who has cultural competence. Therefore, the codes they produce can only be 'decoded' by them.

The four fundamental concepts of the artworld proposed by Danto, Dickie, Becker, and Bourdieu establish the development of the artworld concept as an institutional theory of art proving that an object is considered art as an agreement among elements and social actors. In the end, Bourdieu (1996) reveals more about his defining area, namely, the tastes of certain social classes. This reveals another potential of the workings of the artworld system, namely, the occurrence of power abuses, whether consciously or not, by the actors in the artworld. The problem of potential deviation in the artworld was raised by Natalie Heinich, on the *Societal Functioning of Aesthetic Value*: 'The hierarchy which forms the basis for

classification has to be considered unjust according to critical sociologists because it incites social inequality. According to such reasoning, every museum curator can be blamed for abuse of power nowadays if he refuses to buy or exhibit a certain work of art. But anyone who succeeds in getting through from the outside into the officially recognized domain automatically incriminates himself on the grounds of having become an accomplice of the dominant class.’ (Heinich in Van Maanen, 88).

Based on the study of the five thinkers above, we can derive the following regarding the development of theories and thoughts about the artworld as in Table 2:

Table 1: Keywords of Thinkers About the Artworld
Source: Author

Thinkers	Keywords	Meanings
Arthur Danto	<i>Artworld = Artistic Production</i>	Art systems and performers
George Dickie	<i>Artworld = Institutional</i>	Art institution
Howard Becker	<i>Artworld = Networks</i>	Social networks
Pierre Bourdieu	<i>Artworld = Cultural Field</i>	Cultural competency
Natalie Heinich	<i>Artworld = Hierarchy</i>	Class domination

The artworld, which literally refers to the world of art, is a term used and developed within the scope of art to describe parties in the social sphere that determine art—not art itself. The discourse and theory of the artworld itself later developed into aesthetic and social issues. Recently, it has focused on the cultural dimension, as post-structuralists underline that the symptoms of power determine the direction of culture.

Elements that Support the Artworld

Artworld theory was initially a matter of philosophy of art and aesthetics. However, Danto’s discussion revealed areas of artistic production influenced by sociological dimensions. Later, it was related to the network system and social class as well as production mechanisms related to the economy as well as appreciation associated with the cultural dimension.

According to Becker (1982), the artworld is ‘a network of people who actively work together, organized through their conventional shared knowledge to produce something, produce works of art in an artworld that then records it’. Then, the artworld is an area where all aspects are combined in the context of art production, promotion, trade, and preservation. It is a system that has different procedures in each social context, even conducting negotiations and competitions in producing and interpreting every aspect of art.

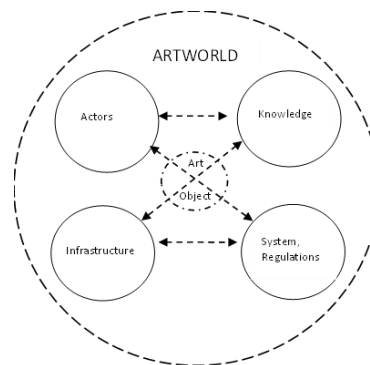


Fig. 1: Elements of the Contemporary Artworld Relationships
Source: Author

The elements of the artworld in Figure 4, consisting of actors, infrastructure, knowledge, and rules, represent a relationship that determines art presentation that manifests through media or art objects. In contemporary art, these elements do not stand alone but constitute complex network relationships.

The definition of the term artworld in Indonesian, which is currently widely used by Indonesian art writers, is the 'field of art.' This is reasonable and clear, considering that the whole discussion above is about art and social elements. Bourdieu (1996) has also more explicitly explained that the artworld is a matter of the field; when translated into Indonesian, it means area or terrain.

The field of visual arts is a new term that developed in the discourse of Indonesian art in the late 1990s. The term is often used by art writers and denotes a concept about the system of social relations of art institutions. For example, Yuliman, in his article, 'Boom in Painting, Where is Our Painting?' (Pikiran Rakyat, 31 July, 1990) mentions the term 'field of painting,' to describe the social elements of art. The term 'artworld,' referred to by Yuliman, was later applied by curator Rizki A. Zaelani in his article 'Traveling Southern Contemporary Art Thoughts (Highway = Walking in Rice Field Banks)' which explores the development of contemporary art in the art issue of the Non-Aligned Movement: 'The institutionalization of contemporary art that runs without any attempt to establish a "healthy" flow of relationship mechanisms will only show an attitude of arrogance and even anarchy towards and in the development of artistic discourse. Attention to the proportional growth of the artworld, "though by no means free from ideological problems," is the only effort that must be taken in southern countries so that it will be enough to cultivate the courage to try to write and reinterpret the history of the development of world art, where we are part of it.' (Zaelani, 1995).

The term later became more popular among critics and observers of Indonesian art as 'field of art.' It describes a system and social relations that run the art culture, and discusses the art infrastructure's dimensions that support the formation of a system or working rules to agree on the meaning of art. This concept indirectly resembles the meaning of a term often used in the discussion and criticism of art in the West: the artworld.

Research Methodology

This research focuses on artists who have used multiple media in their works. There are 41 artists who, in several exhibitions, show such multi-media tendency. However, not all these artists exhibit consistency in terms of using multi-media in their works.

This study established some categories according to the purposive sample that could support this research:

- (1) Artists with solo exhibitions at home and abroad (regular exhibitions, biennales, and art fairs);
- (2) artists who used at least three different types of art media in their works (traditional media, mixed media or installations, and new media);
- (3) artist who have not held a retrospective exhibition.

Filtering through several artists from this purposive sample, following were selected for the study: FX Harsono (born in 1949), Krisna Murti (born in 1957), Tisna Sanjaya (born in 1958), Ugo Untoro (born in 1970), and J.A. Pramuhendra (born in 1984).

Several significant phenomena appeared in the presentation of Indonesian artists' works, and at least two new paradigms were identified in the sample studied:

a. The role of the art infrastructure

In the 1990s, various contemporary art activities occurred without the support of private Indonesian galleries. Then, modern art and the development of the artworld in the 2000s in Indonesia experienced a new development, that is, the strengthening role of Indonesian artworld actors. As observed in the activities of the sampled artists, the role of curators, promoters, galleries, collectors, and information media play a significant role in supporting, packaging, and directing the development of contemporary art. In this context, the artist is no longer the central figure in art production activities.

Exhibitions and forms of artwork can be initiated by various parties, not only by an artist or curator, and may be based on non-artistic and aesthetic considerations such as investment intentions. The trend in the sample also shows exhibition forms

supported by a robust economic capital infrastructure. Large-scale presentations at the National Gallery of Indonesia and international exhibitions supported by galleries or promoters demonstrate a strong circulation in the art economy with the emergence of post-exhibition works, especially paintings in auction halls.

b. The presentation paradigm

The development of contemporary art media observed in the sample study demonstrates the media hierarchy associated with the historical development of art media. The paradigm is divided into three trends in terms of media use:

1. Two-dimensional traditional media, such as painting and drawing.
2. Three-dimensional media such as sculptures, objects, and installation approaches.
3. New media, such as digital photography and video.

Based on the review in the field, the media hierarchy paradigm is a complex form of decision. On the one hand, artists have their artistic justifications; on the other hand, the exhibition is a decision among the many components of the actors in the artworld.

Painting or drawing on canvas is one of the most easily connected media in the vast public art area. Painting is the most accessible medium to explain the status of art to the general public. The history of painting is the most generic knowledge about the quality of art. Moreover, painting has a pragmatic side; it is easy to package and install, making it economically highly efficient. Apart from being an artistic medium, painting has tremendous potential for commodification. In terms of efficiency and 'liquidity' (a term often used by galleries for artworks that are easily sold), the appearance of paintings is also a major determining factor in organizing exhibitions, as they support the circulation of capital investment and profit for promoters.

Three-dimensional media comprising sculpture, objects, and installations, is an area of experimentation for artists and curators. Galleries, promoters, and collectors tend to distance themselves from this approach; and installation objects are rarely observed in auction houses. Three-dimensional objects in the installation approach always demonstrate 'totality' (*Gesamtkunstwerk* tradition in installation art) and the conceptual side of an artist. Works with this tendency require complex production management. Relatively large capital involved in sculpture and installation object work also demonstrate the capacity of artists, promoters, and curators who are part of the exhibition organization.

New media (digital photography and video) is generally a complementary presentation paradigm. They generally complement the two traditional approaches, painting or drawing and the totality in three-dimensional installation works. From the artist's point of view, this approach is viewed from the idiom of photography and video as an aesthetic and symbolic quality that records reality and the experience of seeing reality in the dimension of time, both still as in photography and continuous as in video. Much of the video media used is to package the documentary side to complement the thematic issues of the exhibition. Meanwhile, digital photography is generally considered an 'alternative way' of presenting the artist's reality experience, transferred to a new aesthetic presentation room (new media).

This tendency is a part of bridging the trend of mainstream art in new media in the contemporary art world, becoming one of the characteristics of contemporary artists. New media is used to show the updated aspects of artists. This is generally observed because of the redundancy of visual information, repeating the representations in paintings. Only Krisna Murti's work ideologically deliberately questions the existence of visuals due to new media, video, and photography.

Overall, the discussion in this section demonstrates a new complexity in considering the presentation of contemporary artworks, especially regarding the use of media. The use of media in contemporary Indonesian art is not only considered as the emergence of aesthetic and artistic values but also demonstrates the influence of the development of actors in the field of art. This phenomenon indicates that the use of media is part of a strategy that is a collective agreement

of the actors in the artworld to achieve quality imagery in each context. This is a symptom of representational politics.

Discussion

Contemporary Indonesian Art

The development direction of the Indonesian art world in the 2000s was different than that in the 1990s. This new historical chapter can be summarized by several indications:

1. Socio-political changes resulted in a more liberal economy, encouraging economic opportunities in the field of art. These opportunities in the early 2000s coincided with the growth of the Asian art market, the boom in Chinese contemporary art due to China's rapidly growing economy, and the booming Chinese contemporary art market in world auction houses. These developments brought about new sentiments in the trade of contemporary Indonesian artworks and the entry of works of Chinese artists into the domestic market. Consequently, the enthusiasm of the domestic market has increased.
2. The strong impetus for high-art market opportunities, both due to market sentiment and the substantial purchasing power of domestic collectors, created opportunities to develop gallery infrastructure as a gateway for the appreciation and distribution of artworks, increasing from the beginning of 2000s to 2010.
3. Strong market sentiment and dramatically increasing competition among actors required justification and adequate promotional media. This need prompted the emergence of publication media in the form of art magazines in the 2000s and the use of other information media to support distribution patterns.
4. Market mechanisms aggressively managed by the private sector are not followed by regulations or government initiatives. As a result, as asserted by Ingham (2007), the development of the government's infrastructure cannot actively encourage the development of a 'state' art, which can promote the broader development of art
5. Contemporary art, developed mainly by market-oriented private sectors, tends to strengthen the art elite who are primarily cantered in big cities, especially Jakarta.

In 2008, research with two curators of the Manifesto Exhibition, Jim Supangkat and Rizki Ahmad Zaelani, created a list of living Indonesian artists to compile details of potential artists who could be invited to the exhibition. Successfully profiled around 670 Indonesian artists through a series of data collections published in exhibition catalogues since the 1980s. The curatorial team reviewed the artists' activities up to 2007 and selected around 361 artists to be included in the exhibition, based on their consistency in each exhibition from year to year. This data is used to reference the development of the field of art and artworks in this research.

This research focuses on artists who have used multiple media in their works. There are 41 artists who, in several exhibitions, show such multi-media tendency. However, not all these artists exhibit consistency in terms of using multi-media in their works.

This study established some categories according to the sample that could support this research: (1) Artists with solo exhibitions at home and abroad (regular exhibitions, biennales, and art fairs); (2) artists who used at least three different types of art media in their works (traditional media, mixed media or installations, and new media); (3) artist who have not held a retrospective exhibition.

Filtering through several artists from this purposive sample, the following were selected for the study: FX Harsono (born in 1949), Krisna Murti (born in 1957), Tisna Sanjaya (born in 1958), Ugo Untoro (born in 1970), and J.A. Pramuhendra (born in 1984).

Two new paradigms were identified in the sample studied significant phenomena appeared in the presentation of Indonesian artists' works:

1. The role of the art infrastructure

In the 1990s, various contemporary art activities occurred without the support of private Indonesian galleries. Then the development of the artworld in the 2000s in Indonesia experienced a new development, that is, the strengthening role of Indonesian

artworld actors. As observed in the activities of the sampled artists, the role of curators, promoters, galleries, collectors, and information media play a significant role in supporting, packaging, and directing the development of contemporary art. In this context, the artist is no longer the central figure in art production activities. Exhibition and forms of artwork can be initiated by various parties, not only by an artist or curator, and may be based on non-artistic and aesthetic considerations such as investment intentions.

2. The presentation paradigm

The development of contemporary art media observed in the sample study demonstrates the media hierarchy associated with the historical development of art media. The paradigm is divided into three trends in terms of media use:

- a. Two-dimensional traditional media, such as painting and drawing.
- b. Three-dimensional media such as sculptures, objects, and installation approaches.
- c. New media, such as digital photography and video.

Based on our review, the media hierarchy paradigm is a complex form of decision. On the one hand, artists have their artistic justifications; on the other hand, the exhibition is an agreement among the many components of the actors in the artworld.

Painting or drawing on canvas is one of the most easily connected and accessible medium to explain the status of art to the public. The history of painting is the most generic knowledge about the quality of art. Moreover, painting has a pragmatic side; it is easy to package and install, making it economically highly efficient. Apart from being an artistic medium, painting has tremendous potential for commodification. The appearance of paintings is also a major determining factor in organizing exhibitions, as they support the circulation of capital investment and profit for promoters.

Three-dimensional media comprising sculpture, objects, and installations, is an area of experimentation for artists and curators. Galleries, promoters, and collectors tend to distance themselves from this approach; and installation objects are rarely observed in auction houses. Three-dimensional objects in the installation approach demonstrate 'totality' (Gesamtkunstwerk tradition in installation art) and the conceptual side of an artist. Works with this tendency require complex production management. Relatively large capital involved in sculpture and installation object work also demonstrate the capacity of artists, promoters, and curators who are part of the exhibition organization.

New media (digital photography and video) complement the two traditional approaches, painting or drawing and the totality in three-dimensional installation works. From the artist's point of view, this approach is viewed from the idiom of photography and video as an aesthetic and symbolic quality that records reality and the experience of seeing reality in the dimension of time, both still as in photography and continuous as in video. Much of the video media used is to package the documentary side to complement the thematic issues of the exhibition. Meanwhile, digital photography is generally considered an 'alternative way' of presenting the artist's reality experience, transferred to a new aesthetic presentation room (new media).

Overall, the discussion in this section demonstrates a new complexity in considering the presentation of contemporary artworks, especially regarding the use of media. The use of media in contemporary Indonesian art is not only considered as the emergence of aesthetic and artistic values but also demonstrates the influence of the development of actors in the field of art. This phenomenon indicates that the use of media is part of a strategy that is a collective agreement of the actors in the artworld to achieve quality imagery in each context. This is a symptom of representational politics.

The Complex Structure of the Art Medium

What is an art medium? How did it come into being? These are ontological questions. Further, conceptual media and physical media can be described through an analysis of their relationship with art communication, aesthetic history, and their context, as shown in Figure 2.

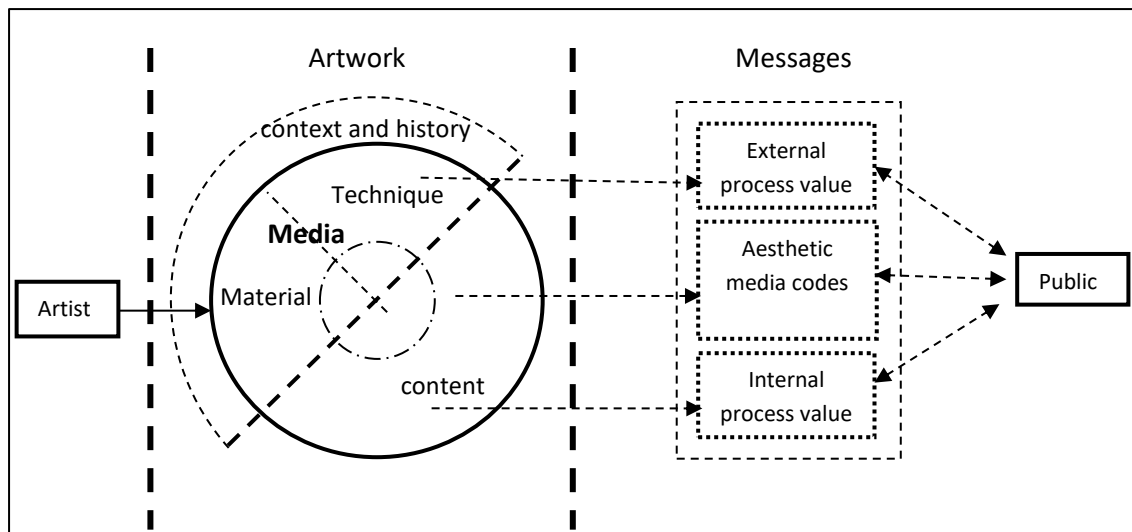


Fig. 5: The Structure of an Art Medium
Source: Author

The chart above describes medium as a structure in two senses. First, the medium manifests as materials and techniques that contain content or representations that are ‘entrusted’ by artists. This chart, as observed in the historical development of media and aesthetics, demonstrates an important aspect, namely, the dimension of ‘context and history’ that can be considered as media attributes or contextual identities.

Second is the concept of the medium in the ‘holistic art experience’, namely, observing art media in all its relationships. Its existence cannot be separated from the basic function of the medium (between) that connects artists as media users (value producers) and the art public as message recipients. Observing the structure of the medium in a holistic art experience provides a complete picture of how conceptually and physically, the art medium has complex structural relationships.

New Elements of the Medium in Contemporary Art: The Symbolic Code of the Art Media

The media presentation paradigm in contemporary art in Indonesia, tends to manage art presentation strategies as a collective agreement among actors in the social field of art. Art media then become an entity that not only functions as an area to be explored by artists but also becomes an area of artworld stakeholder interests.

The phenomenon of collective art production and the tendency to use several media in the practice of contemporary Indonesian art encourages us to examine in more detail this phenomenon and its influence on the shift in the concept of the medium. Our analysis reveals that the structure of the classical medium, which is based on an artistic and aesthetic points of view alone, can no longer describe the complexity of the dimensions of contemporary art.

As previously described, the history of media has resulted in the accumulation of aesthetic history, which later gave birth to the collective knowledge about art media. Moreover, modern art history has shaped our collective understanding on the journey of painting, video, and their conceptual status. According to this new collective knowledge, each medium has a contextual identity used as symbolic codes.

The symbolic code in the form of identity is linked to each media type born in the historical development of art media. For example, painting in the contemporary art context, in addition to having specific conventions, also currently carries the attributes of a long historical epic, is classic, and gives the image of artistic capacity that relies on high skills. This is different from the installation approach that demonstrates a totality and conceptual image. Then, such symbolic code becomes an attribute that is inherently attached and widely and consciously used to reinforce the aesthetic entity of the media. Thus, it becomes an attribute that completes the new structure of the medium concept as in Figure 5.

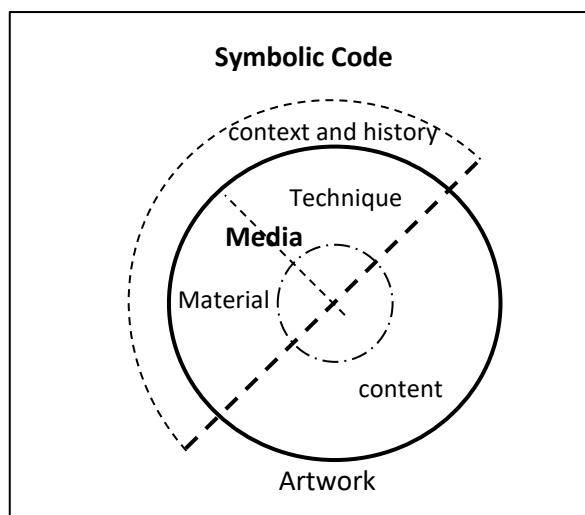


Fig. 6: The Symbolic Code of the Media
Source: Author

Conclusions

The Contemporary Art Presentation Paradigm: Representation Politics

The symbolic code is inherently attached to each type of media entity. It becomes collective knowledge and opens up opportunities for the field to compare the quality of its existence and the impact of the artistic experience. The use of several media signifies an awareness of the symbolic code's function and its comparison to each medium's existence.

The strategic-contextual presence of painting media, installation, and video approaches in the sample cases, in addition to the function of aesthetic experience, is also an effort to generate symbolic codes that strengthen the existence of other media in their presentations. For example, the symbolic code of classical painting is mutually reinforced with the image of the totality in the installation approach and the image of novelty in the use of new media.

In the context of representation, where the art market trend favours the statistically more commodified painting as a medium, the presence of other media has also been strengthened. This shows that the strategic pattern of representation of art presentations through various media that communicate the symbolic codes of the media. We will refer to this as the 'political' practice of media representation.

The practice of political representation in contemporary art is fundamentally different from the art-for-art's-sake approach, which is the jargon of modern art that tends to show the extreme limits of aesthetic concepts. The politics of contemporary art representation is an imaging strategy aimed at the elements of a complex art world—the field of art that consists of the interrelationships of multiple aspects of modern culture in global capitalism.

Art media is a representative aspect of art producers in the art that seeks to have the broadest possible impact in terms of appreciation, such as the goal of achieving international stages such as biennales, art fairs, or solo exhibitions. The political phenomenon of media representation becomes a cultural production, namely, the 'packaging' of art presentations by incorporating as many aesthetic and cultural values as possible.

The analysis of the five samples in this study revealed the same trend of media presentation patterns. In addition to exhibiting or conveying subject matter or artistic content, exhibitions also display an awareness of the distribution of information on the symbolic code of each medium. In this case, the concept of the medium, apart from being a subject-matter vehicle, can also become the message itself.

In *Understanding Media*, McLuhan (1994) illustrated how the medium itself is a messenger ('Medium is the message'). Besides his major focus on the development of information technologies and their impact on modern culture, McLuhan (1994) discusses the case of painting in his writings. He gives an example of how a Cubist painting is not only a matter of playing three-dimensional illusions on a flat plane but a message of the existence of the painting itself; its two-dimensional typology conveys its limits and breadth.

The tendency of the medium to become a specific message is increasingly realized by the artworld. This demonstrates the shift in the concept of the medium from aesthetic and artistic functions into a broader form of message management; the symbolic, coded message of the media supports the overall message of art, both accommodating the message of art producers and for the appreciating public.

The Social Dimension of the Art Experience

Media appreciation (art experience), both collection activities by collectors and by institutions such as museums, are no longer oriented only towards the aesthetic appreciation dimension of art. Contemporary art producers realize that the intrinsic value of art is no longer sufficient as a commodification value. This means that the meaning of art no longer depends only on artists but extends to more collective and network-based aspects (artists, curators, galleries, promoters, magazines, and so on).

The forms of art presentation in our study cases show not only the experience of art at the exhibition site (in-situ) but also the preparation process, the relationships among the network of actors in the artworld, aspects of the strength of the promoter's capital, and how the collectors absorb the works. Success, here, involves not only the results of art criticism writings but also the extent to which the exhibition impacts imaging in the artworld.

The problem of art experience in contemporary art is also related to the image management of actors in the field of art, i.e., the images of the artist, gallery, curator, collector, and exhibition. The practice of contemporary Indonesian art still displays the role of the elite in the field, who rely a lot on capital. Statistics on the achievement of record sales and exhibition sizes, art awards in various forums tend to be a political image expected to strengthen cultural capital, which continues to be recapitalized in the elite social sphere of art. The phenomenon of contemporary art in the media context is an aesthetic experience of perceptual values that turns into an experience of social effects. The social experience of art is the activity of placing the value of art into social status. It shows that the artists are the extension of curators' intention and the networks of the collectors.

The Development of the Concept of Medium in Contemporary Art

The shift in the concept of the medium in the practice of contemporary Indonesian art through the symbolic code component of media, representational politics, and the experience of the social effects of art proves that the position of the art media used is a strategic part that is utilized not only by artists but by all components of art producers. Therefore, the media used is not only an aesthetic but also a strategic political concern.

The art medium concept traditionally provided only an aesthetic experience. Yet, this study proves that through the media's symbolic code it develops into two phenomena: (1) the symbolic code of the media used by all elements of the artworld has resulted in the emergence of a media presentation paradigm as a practice of political representation and (2) the practice of political representation involving elements of strategic-contextual interests in the artworld adds to the social experience of art an aesthetic perspective as a perceptual experience. The next section will refer to the relationship between these two factors as the development of the concept of the medium into a political representation.

The Medium as a Political Representation Phenomenon

We have described the structure of the medium, which generally defines its function in an aesthetic approach, such as in pictures. The physical entity of art media serves to convey the quality or value of sensory perception. Structurally, the concept of the medium has an additional function, namely a political function. This is a novel concept of the medium that can describe the complexity of contemporary artworks. The political aspect complements the aesthetic domain.

The model is developed due to the development of artistic aesthetics, which later became collective knowledge in the field of art. Collective knowledge about the media's symbolic code is then used as a strategic approach to media representation to develop aesthetic media into political media. The impact is that the structure of the medium is complemented by its political attributes, resulting in the following models of the medium in contemporary art as shown Figure 7:

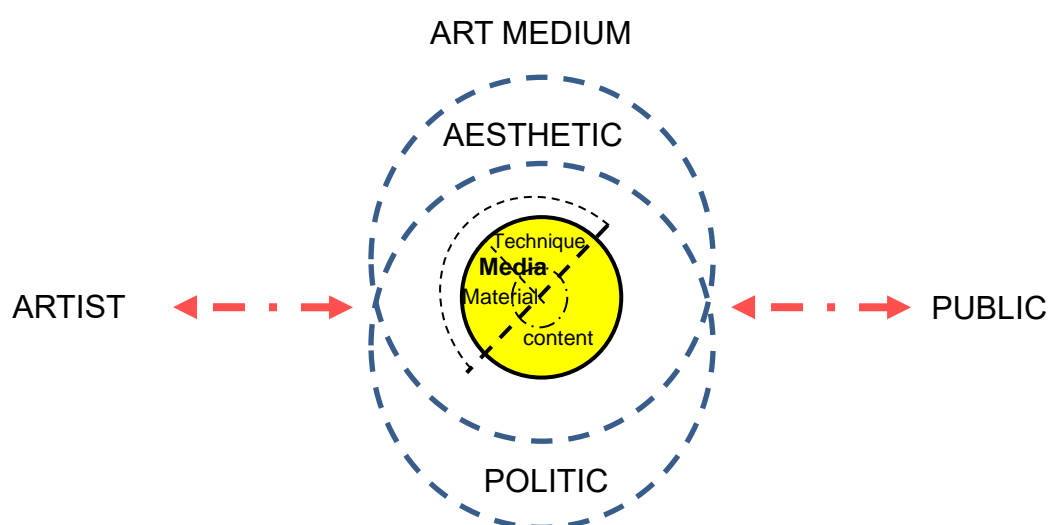


Fig. 7: Aesthetic and Political Attributes of the Medium
Source: Author

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