Analysis of Popo Iskandar’s Works as Collections of National and International Museum and Galleries

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Abstract
Popo Iskandar was a modern painter in Indonesia who worked for 55 years (1943-1998). In addition, he was also a cultural essayist, art observer, educator and writer of art criticism. Judging from the flow of his painting journey, the most important period when he painted cats in the early 1970s by his personal expression. Besides painting cats, he also painted roosters and leopards as his trademark. Through this paper we will analyze the aesthetic value of Popo Iskandar’s works collected by galleries and museums. This research is a qualitative study using the theory of art and function as an expression and method of art criticism.

In Indonesia, Andy’s Gallery collects Popo Iskandar’s paint which was created in 1963 with the title Reclining Nude that shows abstract tendencies. The National Gallery of Indonesia collected work in 1977 with abstract and expressionism subject matter. In overseas, Popo Iskandar’s work was collected by the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan in 1954, entitled Studio with its subject matter is expressionism. The Singapore Art Museum collected works in 1963 with subject matter abstract and expressionism. Next Art Space Washington DC, USA collects a 1990 work with the title is Rooster and cat and the subject matter is expressionism.

Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that the works of the Popo Iskandar collection show an expression of Popo Iskandar in seeing subject matter, especially in the subject matter of cats and roosters. The subject matter of the two animals is the idiomek of Popo Iskandar himself. The aesthetic value of the work can be seen from the ability to abstract the subject of a painting and visualize it with firm lines that form the object of the painting.

Keywords: Popo iskandar, collector, aesthetic value, museum and gallery

1 Introduction
For 55 years, hundreds of works have been made by Popo Iskandar. As an artist in such a long range, Popo Iskandar has produced around two thousand works of art in the form of drawing, monoprint, high print, sculpture and painting. Popo Iskandar, known as an essential painter in capturing objects that have a tendency that is not the same as Rusli who rely more on the strength of lines in color. Popo is still developing various other visual elements and how to process them. This can be seen for example in processing the texture value, the effects of transparent or opaque techniques in the medium of paint, as well as the processing of deformation and the composition of the objects. In addition, this painter also always performs psychological excavations to display the essence and expression of the object to be painted [1].

By observing his objects, Popo has succeeded in displaying essential characters. He is so skilled
at displaying valor, virility, and artistic values on the objects of his work. The most phenomenal work of his painting is a cat which raised its name in the 1970s and made it a cat painter. In the cat object series, he explored the essence of various cat movements which is usually seen by his characters is docile, funny, beautiful, even exude mysterious traits. In addition to painting cats, Popo Iskandar also painted roosters and leopards which became his trademark. Popo Iskandar was often repeated with the same themes. It is as if all the colors and pulses of life for Popo can be contained through those objects. [2].

Popo Iskandar is famous for his unique paintings which are always on the theme of cats, roosters and tigers, making collectors interested in collecting one of his works. In addition to collectors, his works have also been collected by museums and galleries nationally and internationally. Popo Iskandar’s domestic paintings began to be collected in 1963 by the Andy’s Gallery entitled Reclining Nude. Besides Reclining Nude, Andy’s Gallery also collected other Popo paintings, Homage to Van Gogh in 1966 and Cat on the Roof in 1979. The National Gallery of Indonesia also collected Popo Iskandar’s works in 1975 entitled Funny Cat and Cat / Cat in 1977 [1].

Overseas Popo Iskandar’s works were collected by the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan in 1954 entitled studio. The Singapore Art Museum collected a 1963 work entitled Two Cubist Nude and Two Tigers and Two Suns in 1999. Next Art Space Washington DC, USA collected a 1990 work titled Rooster and a cat in 1998.

The work in Andy’s Gallery, titled Reclining Nude in 1963, were done in the early period Popo Iskandar worked and had subject matter with abstract tendencies but in paintings Reclining Nude can still be associated with vitality, body structure and human gesture. This painting had been influenced by Modigliani, but subsequently exploration of female figures was not much done by Popo because he did not arrive at a deep interest in female objects. Even some of the paintings of women do not show maximum maturity. Homage to Van Gogh paintings in 1966 has subject matter expressionism, appeared calm and showed no emotion or gelagak wildness that was nervous and excessive like Van Gogh painting in general. It’s just that the colors used in Homage to Van Gogh’s paintings are almost similar to Sunflowers’s paintings that were made by Van Gogh in 1889. The Paint on the Roof 1979 has the subject matter of expressionism. In this painting, the cat is described as very docile, flirty and not predatory. This painting is also a characteristic of the maturity of Popo Iskandar’s paintings.

While in the National Gallery of Indonesia the paintings collected have become a characteristic of Popo Iskandar himself, namely the painting titled Cat / Cat in 1977 and Funny Cat in 1975. As we know that Popo painted cats in the 1970s and both cat paintings show subject matter expressionism.

Overseas, the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan collected a 1954 Popo painting entitled studio. This studio painting was made during the Popo period in the ITB art studio, namely the influence of Ries Mulder’s education which was characterized by cubism with its subject matter as expressionism.

The Singapore Art Museum collected a 1963 work entitled Two Cubist Nude and Two Tigers and Two Suns in 1999. In Two Cubist Nude (1963) Popo took a textual approach through analytical deformation and the subject matter of this painting is abstract. Painting of Two Tigers and Two Suns (1999) is a painting of a continuous period from previous periods. In this painting Popo adds the moon (orange and black circles) and the sun (yellow).

Next Art Space Washington DC, USA collected a 1990 work entitled Rooster and a cat in 1998.
The Painting was *Rooster* made in the last period Popo worked as an artist. Because after 1998, precisely in the 2000s Popo breathed his last. This Painting *Rooster* and cat also has a *subject matter of expressionism*.

Based on the works of Popo Iskandar collected by national and international museums and galleries, in paintings of cats, roosters and tigers, Popo tries to emphasize the elements of lines and impresses strongly emotionally, where we cannot find vitality or other impressions and sometimes not there is no meaning at all with these three themes. The reason why Popo is so interested in painting cats, roosters and tigers is because there is emotional involvement and tension that is shown by the elements of visual text, namely lines, colors, fields, illusory spaces and so on.

In Indonesian modern painting, Popo painters by observers (fine arts) are seated as a modernist who successfully places the principle of purity of individual creativity in his works. The characteristic essence of objects in imaginary space is a strong sign of their achievement. Therefore, this study tries to analyze the aesthetic values of Popo Iskandar’s works, which are collected by museums and galleries nationally and internationally.

1.2 Problem Formulation

Based on the background above, the problem formulation is:

What is the aesthetic value of Popo Iskandar’s work which is a collection of museums and galleries nationally and internationally?

1.3 Limitation Problem

Many collectors collect Popo Iskandar’s paintings, so researchers limit by taking 3 works collected by museums and galleries nationally (Indonesia) and 3 works from museums and galleries internationally and then analyzed to make them relevant to existing data.

1.4 Research Methodology

In this study, researchers will use qualitative methods, supported by literature studies and art theories, namely art as an expression and art criticism by Edmun Burke Feldman. Art theory as an expression to find out how Popo Iskandar expresses his paintings. Whereas the theory of art criticism by Feldman uses four methods, namely work description, formal analysis, interpretation and evaluation of the work.

1.5 Analysis

The works collected by museums and galleries nationally and internationally are works that began in 1954, namely the early period of Popo Iskandar working and studying fine arts at ITB with his teacher named Ries Mulder. Popo was influenced by painters of modern art. Popo’s paintings also influenced Avant Garde such as cubism and constructivism.

Art as an expression for Popo Iskandar is his ability to express. Blue sky is blue sky, but for an expressionist like papa, the sky can be expressed in other colors. This color is a manifestation of what he lives, what surges in his heart and mood. Therefore, for an expressionist like Popo, what he experiences is not an objective phenomenon, but can be very subjective. Subjective manifestation is the area of “liberation” power of expression that is able to embrace personal beliefs.
and appreciation. In fact he was able to embrace every element of interest in aesthetic expression and language. “Each element of the painting does not stand alone, but rather becomes a complete accumulation of the whole expressing an expression of appreciation.” [3]

Popo also emphasized that painting not only conveys emotional excitement, but also the involvement of thoughts and ideas. Because of that he always wanted to say that painting is a combination of emotions and intellectual genius to the touch of a rising intuition. Style is not the only way to achieve intuition but on the contrary, intuition can achieve a style that is believed by intensive work.

Popo Iskandar’s works began to be collected by the Fukuoka Asian Art museum in Japan in 1954. The Japanese Fukuoka Asian Art Museum was the first collector to collect Popo Iskandar’s paintings because Popo was a member of Keimin Bunka Shidoso in 1943. Keimin Bunka Shidoso is an institution culture formed by the Japanese colonial government that specifically worked to hone skills and broaden the horizons of Indonesian arts. Because of this, Japan and Popo have historical value that makes the Fukuoka Museum interested in collecting one of the paintings of Indonesian maestro.

Based on Fieldman’s art criticism, studio work (1954) describes the studio, when he studied art at ITB with his teacher named Ries Mulder. In this studio work, there is a room filled with four paintings, one painting on a white wall with a gray (chromatic) floor with cement material. In this painting Popo attempted in the process of searching for “essence of form” or “object essence” because the paintings in this period still felt more struggled with the alias exteriority in the visual-physical aspects of the object. [4]

Based on the formal analysis of this studio painting using oil with a medium of canvas, the composition of the painting consists of three layers of insulation. The color of the paintings in this studio is more inclined to the original color of wood and there are white and black colors. This painting studio interprets an empty painting studio without anyone else in it. The assessment of this studio painting was to seek inspiration in the process of creating his own work which at that time was influenced by modern art namely expressionism. [5]

In the painting at Andy’s Gallery entitled Reclining Nude in 1963 and Homage to Van Gogh in 1966 and Cat on the Roof in 1979 also worked on in the early period of work until the maturity of Popo looking for the characteristics of his own paintings. The painting titled Reclining Nude (1963) describes a woman in a pose lying in the style of figurative expressionism, cubism, abstraction, and Asian calligraphy. Formal analysis using oil painting techniques on canvas. The painting interprets a naked woman where Popo is looking for inspiration through the human body, especially women. The assessment of this painting is that Popo is still looking for the essence of the shape of the object he painted.

In Homage to Van Gogh’s (1966) painting, this painting describes sunflowers in a dead vase, using background red and ore. The formal analysis of this painting uses the technique of painting oil on canvas with the brushes being a flat knife. In this painting there are 6 flowers with a color composition of red, yellow, ocre, white, orange, green and blue. This painting interprets the admiration of someone who really likes flowers. The evaluation of this painting was influenced by Van Gogh, where Van Gogh once made a painting similar to the title Sunflowers (1889) with the same canvas size and color as Van Gogh’s paintings.

The last painting collected by Andy’s Gallery is Cat on the Roof in 1979. This painting describes the image of a cat walking at night, with a black patterned brown on its body and with sharp green
eyes. The formal analysis uses oil painting techniques on canvas. The assessment of this painting is a zoomorphic which means to describe art by imagining humans as non-human animals and Popo also performs psychological excavations to display the essence and expression of objects to be painted. Thus, the character of the objects can be expressed in a typical way. In the cat object series he explores the essence of various cat movements which are usually seen as benign, funny, beautiful, and can even exude mysterious characteristics.

The National Gallery of Indonesia collects paintings that have become characteristic of Popo Iskandar himself, namely a painting entitled Funny Cat in 1975 and Cat in 1977. Paintings of Funny Cat (1975) and Cat (1977) describe the picture of a mysterious cat figure, black with white lines that act adorable. The formal analysis still uses the technique of painting oil on canvas. This painting has a predominant black color composition of cats on a white background. What distinguishes the painting Funny Cat (1975) with the Cat (1977) lies in a formal analysis where the background on the canvas uses cream colors and there is harmony between black and white. The assessment of this painting is the same as that of Cat on the Roof (1979) owned by Andy's Gallery.

The Singapore Art Museum was founded in 1996 but has more than 7700 collections, including masterpieces by Indonesian artists, one of which is Popo Iskandar. The Singapore Art Museum has become one of Popo Iskandar's painting collectors because Popo is an artist who has a presentation on the continuation of a historical journey that leads to contemporary art which cannot be avoided.

The Singapore Art Museum collected a 1963 work entitled Two Cubist Nude and Two Tigers and Two Suns in 1999. In the painting Two Cubist Nude (1963) describes two cabbage-shaped human bodies in nude poses. Formal analysis using oil painting techniques on canvas. The composition of the painting uses white, cream and gray. This painting interprets two naked women in which Popo is looking for inspiration through the human body, especially women. The assessment of this painting is that Popo is still looking for the essence of the shape of the object he painted.

While the paintings of Two Tigers and Two Suns (1999) describe two tigers with green eyes and yellow sun in the upper left corner. The formal analysis of this painting still uses oil painting techniques on canvas. This painting has two dominant forms of zoomorphic on a white background. This painting interprets two leopards playing in the bright yellow sun. The assessment of this painting is that Popo does not draw a tiger with the ferocious nature of the wild tiger but with tenderness, flexibility and gracefulness like a woman who walks gracefully and is often referred to as “lift the stripes of a tanasional tea” that means walking like a limp tiger. The face of a leopard Popo is always glazed and does not cause a creepy feeling. The spots on the tigers he obtained were not intentional, but an effort which he developed through an effort to balance the composition.

Next, Art Space Washington DC, USA collected a 1990 work titled Rooster and a cat in 1998. Furthermore, Art Space Washington DC, USA collected a work in 1990 entitled Rooster and a paint in 1998. The reason Art Space Washington DC, USA became one of Popo’s painting collectors because of Popo’s abstract painting style and expressionism as well as his westward-oriented painting style. So that by collecting Popo’s paintings can represent their country.

In the painting Rooster (1990) describes the handsome roosters and colorful male. The formal analysis of this painting uses oil painting techniques on canvas. Popo paints roosters with intuition. There is harmony in the colors of the painting. This Rooster painting interprets bravery, virility and for farmers and traders, roosters are believed to be a symbol of environmental preparedness. The evaluation of the rooster painting has been deformed, adapting to the style of figurative
expressionism, abstract composition with lively colors. Popo’s rooster is like a shadow puppet where it is displayed in a cross-section (from the side). With its visual expression language, Popo is easier to express directly through the character of his rooster. Whereas in the painting of cats (1998) it describes 3 forms of zoomorphic with a night background and with green cat eyes. Sticking with figurative expressionism as in other different cat paintings is the color composition and number of cats in the painting. This cat painting is also Popo’s last period in painting cats because in the 2000s Popo breathed his last.

1.5 Conclusion

Based on the works collected by museums and galleries nationally and internationally, conclusions can be obtained from the results of the analysis using art theory as an expression and criticism of Fieldman’s art, the researchers conclude that the works collected by museums and galleries nationwide are works on the early period Popo worked in 1963 until the period of maturity of Popo painting (1970s), that is, a cat painting that became his trademark. 

Later international museums and galleries collected Popo paintings starting in 1954 by Fukuoka Asian Art in Japan. This painting in 1954 was also an early period of Popo working at ITB with the training of Ries Mulder until his maturity period, namely painting cat objects (1970s), roosters (mid-1970s) and leopards (1980s) which became the hallmark typical (idiolek) Popo Iskandar himself.

So it can be concluded that the paintings collected by national and international museums and galleries are mostly Popo Iskandar’s works that show the expression of Popo Iskandar in seeing subject matter especially in the subject matter of cats and roosters and Popo’s work has historical value in the course of art in Indonesia. The subject matter of the two animals is the idiolek of Popo Iskandar himself. The aesthetic value of the work can be seen from the ability to abstract the subject of a painting and visualize it with firm lines that form the object of the painting. This is what distinguishes Popo from other artists. So that collectors and art-loving societies will always know the characteristics of Popo paintings just by glancing at the characteristics of the maestro’s paintings.

2 References