

# Visual Analysis of Niken Larasati's Braille Painting: A Mimesis Studies

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**Keywords:** Braille Painting, Niken Larasati, Mimesis

**Abstract:** The purpose of this reseach is determining the aesthetic appeal of the aspects of the form (formal), moisture content (symbol), and emotional expression on Niken Larasati's Braille painting. This painting themed by dolanan anak (traditional children games) and has embedded on ox skin. For getting a deep analysis, author used Mimesis theory by Aristotle. The research method used is qualitative research. Techniques and data collection tools are done by interviews, field observation, and document reviews. Data analysis using semiotics approach on qualitative research that the author must decipher the meaning carried by the sign or symbol. The results obtained from this research are the symbolic interactions between idea, visual, and cultural representation on the dolanan anak activities. Result study is expected to provide information for people how about a painter creates the artworks.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Dolanan anak are traditional children games that are played communally or together and there are a number of activities. Dolanan anak are divided into various types such as dhakon, gobag sodhor, engkling, pasaran, anak-anakan, and others. It is usually played by children and it contains noble teachings of values such as tolerance, mutual respect, queuing, careless for other friends, being patient, honest to health. John Huizinga's statement in (Dharmamulya, 2008) defines dolanan as a playing activity: (a) a voluntary existing out-side "ordinary" life; (b) totally absorbing; (c) unproductive; (d)occurring within a circumscribed time and space; (e) ordered by rules; and (f) characterized by group relationships which surround themselves by secrecy and disguise. (Dharmamulya, 2008) The human activity shown by the children is taught by generations and contains the identity of a society through expressing values being, so that the children bow is one of the cultural assets that deserve to be preserved. "Psychologically, traditional games are able to generate creativity and bring children closer to the natural world and God." (Krisdayatmiko, 1999). This is reflected in the types and activities of children who teaching noble values. (Ariani, 1997) said that dolanan anak teaches following values are:

- The democratic values shown by children before they begin to play through the behavior of choosing and determining the type of game must follow all the rules or rules agreed.
- Educational values taught include aspects of physical and spiritual (social characteristics, discipline, ethics, honesty, independence and confidence).
- Personality values include physical aspects (strength, endurance, flexibility) and emotional aspects (social communication that foster leadership attitude for children).
- The value of courage in taking decisions by taking into account certain strategies, so as to win the game.
- Healthy value leads to play activities of children who use many movements such as running, jumping, and chasing so that the muscles of the body can move and function properly.
- The value of unity attached to the Javanese society about the principle of life in harmony with others or community life based on mutual understanding or *tepa slira*.
- A moral value that is closely related to the philosophical value or essence of the game itself is to shape the child's personality.

Based on the description, children are directed to leverage all the things around them, preparing places before playing, creative thinking, utilizing or processing and empowering all the things around him. Currently the popularity of children's clothing has increasingly disappeared due to the proliferation of modern children games such as video and online games. This modern game, it takes more children to dissolve into their own world and reduce their interaction with the environment. It became a concern by Niken because the lack of character education of children based on noble values. The problematic of the disappearance of child polish has long been blowing, many worries arise then discussed in seminars or mass media. This phenomenon continues to resonate today because it becomes a serious problem for the mental development of children in Indonesia. At present our country has not been dealing correctly and thoroughly about conservation of dolanan anak. A painter named Niken Larasati was moved to make the artwork that concerning for the preservation of children.

She was born in Yogyakarta on December 28th in 1971, an painting graduate from SMSR vocational high school in 1988 and Department of Photography and Graphic Design of MSD (Modern School Design) in 1994. Niken is a painter who does not need the services of managers to organize all artistic activities. Besides profession as her professional, Niken also acts as a wife and mother for her three children, she residing in Kronggahan, Sleman, and Yogyakarta is still taking time to socializ. Niken realizes that she is a woman who has a career as well as a task that must be lived, but not hinder in the creative process in the work.

The name of Niken Larasati became known and became a talk in various mass media and social media because she held her solo exhibition in Japan for 3 months has brought 22 artworks on canvas which themed dolanan anak in 2012. Her solo exhibition also attending Prof. Nobuko Sasaki, a lecture from Daito Bunka University, Saitama, Japan and got a chance doing workshop in 111 Javanese vocabulary that received a good appreciation by the people. The artworks made and have been exhibited in Japan, depicted with female figures are meant to show and introduce the culture that Indonesia has, especially from Java, in the form of dolanan anak to the world. This is the main attraction for the author to be researched. After of her solo exhibition successfully, Niken expanded into the business world. She made leather bags from Indonesian calf leather that was ordered directly from Magetan, East Java. In each of her leather bags, she always pinned figures about

child dressings. The colour is used a tertiary colour category that has undergone a mixing process of various pigments.

In addition to preserving a dolanan anak, Niken Larasati also answered the questions from a masseur blind massage who had met her about 17 years ago. At that time, the person asked her what her profession and what is the meaning of painting. Based on her observations and experiences as a painter, and in order to answer that question, she created a Braille painting. At the first, the artworks themed dolanan anak is only done on the canvas, but over time, she develops into other media of skin. The reason is that the work can be enjoyed directly by the dissenting people, so this work is intended for all circles. Canvas paintings, leather bags, and Braille paintings are interesting combinations of visualize to be examined by the author using the Mimesis theory of Aristotle. To get a more in-depth study, the author has added semiotics analysis for qualitative research. An in-depth study is conducted to dissect the whole and explain in detail the relationship between the symbols in her artworks.

(Arne, 1995) in her book *Theories of Mimesis* explained that: "Plato uses the word with a primarily visual significance; mimesis suggests image, a visual image related to imitation, re-presentation". In Plato's arts theory, the paintings made by artists are only a mimemis of worldly reality, whereas the temporal reality itself is but a false mirror of a perfect world of ideas or forms. Thus, a painter according to Plato is merely the imitator of the apparition in this world, so that it is twice as far away from the world of reality perfect and eternal. According to his philosophy, art misleads people by keeping away from perfect reality. (Gie, 2004) Imitating can give you joy and beauty. Artists do "imitate" reality, but deviate from the world of experience empirical. The characteristics of beauty are unity (perfection of form, no more no less), harmony (balance of proportional elements), and clarity (clear, pure, clear, without any doubt).

Plato's mimesis is, in my reading, a movable concept, and every effort to make it reasonably unambiguous would be a betrayal of that floating ambiguity. The various translations that have been offered during the long history of the concept give some clues to its possibilities, Including its scenic and visual connotations, the which seem constant in four words like "imitation"/ "mirroring"/ "representation", or the German versions *Nachahmung* and *Darstellung*. (Arne, 1995) Aristotle reveals that mimesis is a form of imitation of an action. He is defined by *mythos* and *praxis*, which brings the concept of time and action- in contrast to

Platonic mimesis, which is closer to image, imagination and imitation. Mythos is a concept of order, which makes it possible to view literary works as structured wholes. Praxis refers to already structured events or chains of events, which can be perceived as meaningful and answering a purpose. (Arne, 1995) Artists do not imitate reality or nature, but represent nature or reality. According to this view, mimesis is a picture of what is possible, so the work of art can also be unrealistic. Based on the works of Neo-Platonist Plotinos, the artworks do not imitate reality, but rather imitate the pure form of a form or idea. Here, the artwork has seen parallel to the products that made by artisan's or phenomena natural itself.

Plato stressed that the beauty of the work of art lies in the form or idea expressed by the artist through the raw material. Artists can do this because the ideal form world provides a pure idea of art and beauty, passing through his mind during the creative process. Plato considers the idea that man possesses something that is perfect and unchangeable. Idea is the ideal world found in humans. Idea by man can only be known through ratio, it is impossible to be seen or touched with the five senses. Idea for Plato is fixed or unchangeable, for example the idea of a triangular shape, it is only one but can be transformed in the form of triangles made of wood with more than number one. The idea of the triangle cannot change, but the triangle made of wood can change.

Plato's view had gained resistance from Aristotle, a pioneer of Plato's opposition to mimesis, which also opposed Plato's low view of art. If Plato thinks that art only humiliates humans for appealing to passions and emotions, he considers art as something that can raise the mind. When Aristotle saw art as *katharsis*, purification of the soul. Artwork by Aristotle was causing concern and compassion to free from low desire audience. Aristotle considers artists and writers who do mimesis not merely trace the reality, but a creative process to produce novelty. Artists and writers produce a new form of the sensory reality it gains. In his book *Poetica* (Luxemberg, 1986), Aristotle argues that literature is not a copy (as Plato describes) but an expression of "universalia" (general concepts). From the self-effacing reality of an artist or poet chooses several elements to be re-created into "the eternal human nature", universal truth. That is makes Aristotle strongly argue that artists and writers are much more powerful than carpenters and other craftsmen. According to Plato, the world is divided into three worlds of ideas, the physical world, and artwork (Bertens, 1979). The world of ideas is the source of all forms/ ideas (true).

The world we live in today is the physical world. The physical world is the imitation of the world of ideas. The point is everything we have saw, everything we have hold, something we think beautiful, ugly, or other that exists in this physical world is a replica of the true form that is in the world of ideas. According to Plato, before our spirit descends from the world of ideas and blends with our bodies in this physical world, our spirits are introduced with many concepts. Given this thought means in the physical world there is no such thing as originality. In Aristotle's book *Poetic*, all types of poems (epic poet, tragedy, comedy), or even flute games are imitations. And he divides the imitation into three namely means, object, and manner (Bertens, 1979). (a) "Means" which means ways of rhythm, language (dialogue, voice of person), and harmony. Aristotle exemplifies, the art of rhyme is only imitation of the language, does not involve harmony. (b) Object means to imitate from human nature (character). Aristotle argues that human character in general is two that virtue and vice (goodness and evil). (c) Manner means the presentation of a character. A player or actor acts/ pretends to be a character he plays in a story, good or evil. An actor performs, represents imitation of the nature/ character of the real life.

## 2 METHOD

Visual analysis of Braille painting by Niken Larasati is qualitative, so it needs a process of reading, understanding, and practice in accordance with the basic concepts and rules that exist in qualitative research. "Qualitative is research naturalistic or natural research, ethnography, symbolic interactionism, inward perspective, ethnomethodology, phenomenology, case studies, interpretive, ecological, and descriptive." (Moleong, 2010) Qualitative research seeks to build a view of the object under study in detail through explanations by essays, holistic, and complex images. Qualitative methods consist of observation, interview, or document review. This method is used because of several considerations (1) adjusting qualitative methods more easily when faced with plural reality; (2) this method presents directly the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the respondent; (3), this method is more sensitive and more adaptable to much sharpening of the shared effect on the value patterns encountered.

Qualitative research aims to understand the phenomenon or text that occurs in the object of

research such as behaviour, perception, motivation of action, and others holistically, descriptive on the context of natural and natural methods. Observations made on the main object in the form of Braille paintings are enclosed in the leather themed dolanan child. Participant interview selected by the author among others.

- Junanto Herdiawan, a Indonesian journalist who lived in Japan.
- Seiichi Okawa, a former Tempo journalist in Indonesia for 25 years who knows Niken through facebook and since he learned that he will perform solo exhibitions in Japan in 2012, then willing to be a writer for the catalog of solo exhibitions Niken Larasati in Japan.
- Tri Agus Susanto Siswowiharjo, a lecturer in communication science and secretary of the department in the Communication Studies ProgramME "STPMD" Yogyakarta, wrote a book entitled "Merapi Tak Pernah Ingkar Janji" a humor book that shows the expression of creativity and endurance of the Yogyakarta community in facing the reality of life, one of them is the disaster of Mount Merapi eruption.

Data collection will be done by literature review, interviews, and observation direct. A literature review by the author to track and review the literature including the theoretical foundations such as books, journals, research results, articles, and media coverage related to the object of research. This is done to support the foundation of thought and deepen the concept and writing for to develop the analysis in the research. Primary data of research is 3 pieces of painting Braille.

The author uses a semiotics analysis tool that must study signs and symbols commonly used in certain scientific domains and understand the rules of use. The author must decipher the meaning carried by the sign or symbol (Sarosa, 2017). the semiotics approach according to Hackley (Sarosa, 2017) consists of: (a) the questions asked; (b) the potential source of the sign is: object (visual semiosis) → style of dress, the use of objects in advertising, font type, use of symbols); gestur (bodily semiosis) → facial expression, expressive behavior, posture, face type, body position, product; speech (verbal semiosis) → idiom, accent, or dialect used.

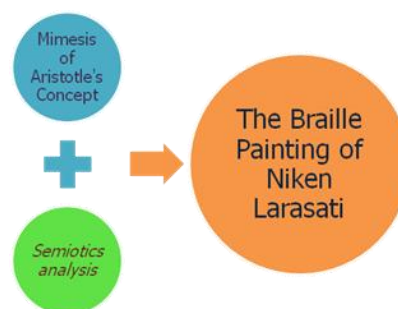


Figure 1: Schematic analysis (Source: Probosiwi, 2018).

### 3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the theoretical basis and data analysis tools used, the author has made regular observations of the painting Braille by Niken Larasati. Based on the analysis scheme in Figure 1, Aristotle's mimesis concept and analysis semiotics on qualitative research became the foundation in outlining the results of this research. In Niken's artwork, it describes the world situation of children who have freedom, innocence, and joy. They are portrayed with innocent characters, as they are, and have not been contaminated by certain interests. The number of displayed figures is always large, so there is a perception that clothing children's teaches children not to be selfish, always cooperate, to build tolerance. They become an important subject in salvation as well as cultural preservation, because they are the next generation which means the shoot of a nation.

The result of intensive interviews between the writer and Niken gained exposure as follows: "dolanan anak said to the philosophy of the Javanese much in common, but please note games traditional children elsewhere in the world also exist such as Japan, the Netherlands, Ghana, Middle East that use creativity, contact with nature and the use of the environment is just a different name and was more likely to self-mature to the environment just outside the room. (Larasati, 2015) All of Braille's paintings are portrayed on the outdoor area as a feature playing dolanan anak at outdoors and a form of criticism of the reduced playing field for children today. Figure children do not wear footwear such as shoes, sandals, or the like. It provides effects a healthy and resilient for children's physical indirectly. They become healthier and stronger. Furthermore, the children's bowl contains memory, nostalgia, and part of the child's breath and prepares their mental facing new life later. In it, they are taught to be patient (waiting to play), working together (shoulder-to-should in



game), tolerance (helping a friend difficult while playing together), and responsibility (preparing and clearing the place after playing).

The values taught use the principle of independence; set the game when it starts and ends; face weather conditions that may change at any time as a form of self-resilience; can measure the ability of friends, respect each other and respect the conditions that all these contain small risks. Children's dolphins dismiss the assumptions of traits generated by gender groupings, in other words there is no difference between women and men, both of which have the same place and opportunity. (Herdiawan, 2014) said that gender and inferior stereotyping of women is no longer a problem for society, because through Niken can be seen the real action as women who have a double profession and are able to work with extraordinary management. Women and men do not have biological differences but in terms of their capacity and capacity both share the same portion because they basically need each other and support each other. In addition, women are no longer only imposed on domestic territory, but also broader coverage. The meeting between Niken and Junanto Herdiawan was the process of appointing a human agency structure to the surface, and it could even be said to be the "medium" of providing power. The appointment process referred to is Niken's name began to be known through the coverage carried out by Junanto Herdiawan and disseminated in various media in Japan. This is the main attraction because the majority of figures in Niken's painting is female. Another online article was obtained by author Jennifer Zhang uploaded about child games as follows: "However, I think traditional games are still indispensable in children's learning process, even much more essential than modern games, especially in modern society. One primary merit of traditional games is that they are foster children's communication skills. Unlike most modern games which focus on the interactions between children and machines, traditional games provide a relaxing and enjoyable atmosphere where children can chat, laugh and cooperate face to face. As a result, communicating with a variety of people will not be an issue for these children any more. Furthermore, it is the educational functions of traditional games that hold alive today. In fact, these traditional games were elaborately devised by educators and have been proven effective in improving children's skills on different aspects in the previous teaching practices". The article provides an explanation of the importance children's traditional games because it provides a relaxed and enjoyable space for them to mingle, joke,

and meet face-to-face. This activity is included in the social interaction of how to deal with situations, conditions, communication, and possible difficulties during the game. Game play activities traditional become more effective when done in collaboration with educators, in this case the parents and teachers as a learning medium.



Figure 2: Braille painting works niken larasati title "Pasaran" (Source: Author documentation, 2017).

Based on the article's excerpt, the author relates it to Niken's idea of developing a dolanan anak on Braille paintings. She seeks to answer questions of the blind and as an expression of self-indulgence. In this present era, children with disabilities have started to pay much attention, as evidenced by the many inclusive schools that are accompanied by the availability of teachers for the crew. Niken as a painter provides an alternative media of art and cultural learning for children with disabilities. Activities in which there is social interaction also need to be taught to them to be able to socialize, communicate, and interact with his friends. The author also obtained secondary data from interviews with Seiichi Okawa via email, a former Tempo journalist in Indonesia for 25 years and is now the he is a Chairman of Graha Budaya Indonesia in Japan. Okawa mentions that "the quality and power possessed by the artist comes from the work it creates. Not only aesthetic issues, but also the purpose of making works. Even artists have more value when able to play more than one profession, as well as Niken who remains consistent to maintain the existence and idealism in the work for the achievement of the goal desired is to revive the child's increasingly extinct dolanan (Okawa, 2015).

Furthermore, Seiichi Okawa says the Niken painting is like a history book containing the meaning of the work can be enjoyed all the time and read by the audience according to their past empirical experience of the game of tradition. Meanwhile, the purity of the work revealed by him lies in his statement saying that Niken no longer need to be a

famous artist to be able to introduce her artworks, just doing with honesty and enjoy the process let alone still understand his role as a mother and wife. At this point, women have a very important role for the survival of heritage has owned by Indonesia, especially in Java. (Okawa, 2015) The Niken's artwork idea in the artworks when associated with Aristotle's thinking that art as something that can raise the mind. Aristotle considers artists and writers who do mimesis not merely trace the fact, but a creative process to produce novelty. She does so by representing the painting on the sensitivity of touch, so that painting can not only be enjoyed and interpreted by normal human, but also the person with disability. The figures presented are embroidered using special tools made by her and assisted by her husband. The tool is made in various sizes tailored to the thick needs of the thin inlay line on the object. Thus, this painting can be said to have creative elements and novelty in terms of art works in Indonesia. At this time, her artwork is being exhibited in France. In addition, Niken also will be held her third solo exhibition at the National Gallery of Indonesia. Tri Agus Susanto Siswiharjo said the artist working from the heart, honesty, originality, and purity must understand that artworks don't stand alone; it means that it is side by side with other art media or supporters of artists' artistic activities.



Figure 3: Painting braille the work of Niken Larasati entitled "Perahu Layar" (Source: Author documentation, 2017).



Figure 4: Some braille paintings by Niken Larasati (Source: Author's documentation, 2014 & 2017).

Niken's artworks analysis using semiotics in qualitative research has a compliant component consisting of questions posed, sources potential of signs, and gestures. Based on observations of Braille

paintings and interviews with her, the authors obtained information on the reasons for choosing of dolanan anak theme for each of their work. This is because, the successor generation of Indonesia has many who do not know what a traditional child play is let alone play it. They've enjoyed sophisticated games, though developments provide many benefits as well. It's just that the next generation of the nation should still not leave the identity or character as part of the state of Indonesia. For her, dolanan anak is not just a mere game, but also a form of cultural and artistic learning because it teaches moral values that deserve to be maintained. The potential source of the mark refers to the objects and figures displayed on each Braille painting as the female figure dominates the space. Character of children who exist in Indonesia with all kinds of skin color, face shape, hair models, and so on. Niken gives an understanding to others that, dolanan anak has powered to unite anyone through playful activity without seeing tribe, race, religion, education, to degrees. In the background of the artworks, she creates a line groove that, when observed in dynamic motion, reflects the position of the extinct child's bow and now seeks to resurrect.

The children's figure that playing dolanan anak portrayals look dynamic with different positions and expressions. In Braille painting, the floppy play activity and are encrusted using special tools, resulting in a palpable texture.



Figure 5: Sketches of braille paintings which tied on the skin (Source: Facebook Niken Larasati, 2018).

## 4 CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the work using Aristotelian mimesis theory and semiotics approach in qualitative research, it can be deduced that the ideas and ideas of the work of the painters originated from empirical experience, anxiety, and the spirit of novelty. These three things are able to increase the quality and attractiveness of a work made by painters. As a painter, Niken not only stops on one media only, but is able to penetrate to other media tailored to the needs and convey the intent of the work. The role of artists in the educational process for the next generation is necessary, so that can be obtained a combination of arts and cultural education. It is intended to combine techniques with the empirical experience of artists. Artwork can be used as an alternative to cultural learning media created by artists.

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