Exploring Media Art Curating in Indonesia: A Case Study of a Locally-grown Curator Collective

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Abstract: Year 2019 seems to be one of the most fascinating years in recent history of Indonesian media art. A number of media art exhibitions and festivals have been anticipated throughout the year by numerous organizers as diverse as artist collectives, independent curators, and government sectors. The return of the Cellsbutton, a media art festival led by Yogyakarta-based new media artist collective, MAG 19, which is the first showcase of Media Arts Globale organized by Europe-settled Indonesian independent curator, and Media Art Week *(Pekan Seni Media)* and Instrumenta, annual media art festivals hosted by Ministry of Education and Culture in Indonesia are part of this exciting map. In such diverse circumstances, an Indonesian curator collective called ARCOLABS has played an instrumental role in enhancing the development of media art curatorial practices in the country. In this paper, I begin with explaining ARCOLABS's consistent efforts to building numerous thematic and aesthetic approaches in order to introduce media art exhibitions in Indonesia. Then, I further explore the importance of collaboration in media art curating with various individuals and sectors across disciplines. I also discuss the new role granted to audience at the participatory and interactive structure of the exhibition in which their multiple sensory experiences are the key elements in media art appreciation. Essentially, this paper aims to reveal the various facets of current phenomena of media art practices in Indonesia by answering to the questions of what knowledge is required in curating media art exhibition in terms of theory and practice; what new role is granted to media art curator; and what new experience is expected to audience.

1 INTRODUCTION

Since 1993 when the concept of curatorship as an art profession was first introduced to The 9th Jakarta Biennale (*Biennale Seni Rupa Jakarta IX*), Indonesian contemporary art has grown parallel with the development of Indonesian curatorial practice (Supangkat, 2018, p.1). By altering its title from Indonesian Painting Exhibition (*Pameran Seni Lukis Indonesia*) initiated in 1974 to Jakarta Biennale in 1993, this international art platform adopted curatorship as an attempt to present contemporary art development of the 1980s through the post-modern perspectives. Unlike the previous biennales focusing on two-dimensional painting as the main medium, the exhibition featured the diverse presentation of creative mediums including installation, video, and performance (Timeline, 2018), the practices that are based on time or the fourth-dimension.

In the 1990s, the Indonesian art landscape could be characterized by the pluralism of various expressions. The creation of technology-based media art contributed to such diverse phenomena. One of the artists devoted to the earlier development of media art was Krisna Murti, who is considered a pioneer in exploring video as an art medium. His artistic concerns include criticizing the ideological power behind media technology, the television. Through his work, he elaborated his first-hand observation on how the television, or mass media, manipulated the public during the military dictatorship, and further made a shift to the society during the collapse of the New Order regime (Hujatnika, 2009, pp.2-3).

In the similar sense, Krisna's works were also concerned with television's 'one-way' communication that places audience as a passive recipient. As if suggesting a solution, another Indonesian forerunner Heri Dono looked into 'interactivity' between art and audience. By manually assembling and providing a new life to the second-hand electrical components, Heri's animism inspired kinetic installation raised a question on the meaning of technology for the locals. Mostly dealing with the humble machine of everyday life, people surrounding

the artist in Yogyakarta considered everyday machine as valuable as cutting-edge technology due to its strong connection to their daily life that is influenced by tradition and culture (Hujatnika, 2009, p.4). It is legitimate to say that sound, light, and movement generated by means of interactivity shown in much of his works later became seminal elements in works of Indonesian media art.

Undoubtedly, the video art of Krisna Murti and interactive kinetic installation of Heri Dono paved the way for younger generation to expand their experiments with more advanced technology in creating their work of art. Growing up with various digital tools and computer in particular, such young artist initiatives recognized the importance of digital technology and explored its possibility within their artistic experimentation and creative process. The earlier groups include HONF in Yogyakarta (1999), *Ruang Rupa* in Jakarta (2000) and Bandung Center for New Media Arts in Bandung (2001) (Timeline, 2018)[i]. Although their subject matter and the way of practice differs from one another, they commonly pursue blending art with different disciplines, such as science and technology in order to address the way technological development has changed a daily life in Indonesia.

It is interesting to note that these artist groups rather than curator first conducted media art curating in Indonesia. Therefore, apart from practicing as media artist, they also initiated video and technology-based art exhibitions and festivals in the city of their base. For example, *Ruang Rupa* kicked off biannually held OK. Video: Jakarta International Video Festival in 2003 to support video art development in Indonesia. Starting in 2015 it changed its name to OK. Video: Indonesia Media Arts Festival showcasing expanded art forms ranging from sound, Internet, social media and audio-visual art, along with traditional medium of video and film (Sukmana, 2015, p.5). In 2005, HONF started to organize video focused international festival called YIVF – Yogyakarta International Videowork Festival and ran annually until 2012, but their enthusiasm for pursuing innovation and convergence between art and science made them initiate the first Cellsbutton – Yogyakarta International Media Art Festival in 2007. One of the core missions of this annual media art festival lies in education and supporting local creative communities. After a six-year hiatus, Cellsbutton returns this year and is held concurrently with annual Transformaking, a maker's platform that began in 2013 (Christ, 2019).

OK. Video and Cellsbutton were based on the form of festival. Along with an artwork showcase, the festival consisted of numerous other programs such as open labs, workshops, film screening, audio-visual performances, and discussion series. The festival was undoubtedly an exciting event in that it offered a variety of attractions and various programs to participate, but it was sometimes overwhelming in terms of the number of works and programs, which results in some works not fitting to the theme of the festival and not all programs thoroughly appreciated. On the other hand, the media art exhibition organized on a smaller scale provided an opportunity for audience to concentrate on each work of art in relation to the exhibition theme. As a result, audience could comprehend the message of the exhibition that curator attempts to deliver. In mid 2010, a curator collective called ARCOLABS came into the contemporary art scene in Indonesia and made fresh efforts, particularly in developing different curatorial approaches to media art.

In 2014 ARCOLABS began its curatorial practices as Center for Art and Community Management within Surya University, aiming to enhance creativity and innovation through a variety of practice-based programs including visual art exhibitions, community development projects, hands-on workshops, student research, and other academic and non-academic events. Led by three female curators with various backgrounds[ii], ARCOLABS became independent of the university in 2016 and has currently focused on curatorial and education programs. Through their art and technology program, ARCOLABS has developed and experimented specific curating methods for media art exhibition. Unlike curating traditional exhibitions, media art curating requires different knowledge and the way of presentation. The works in the traditional exhibition mostly represented by paintings and sculptures, or so-called object-based, are static and visual, and therefore often categorized by medium, scale, and chronology in their arrangement. On the other hand, by utilizing digital technology, media art, by its nature, is often based on time (unless it is a digitally manipulated two-dimensional photography or illustration) and contains non-material elements that demand new understanding on its presentation.

This paper aims to discuss the instrumental role that ARCOLABS plays in enhancing the development of media art curatorial practices in Indonesia. It begins explaining ARCOLABS's constant efforts to introducing media art exhibitions in Indonesia by means of experimenting with numerous thematic and aesthetic approaches. Then, it further explores the importance of collaboration in media art curating with various individuals and sectors across disciplines. It also discusses the new role granted to audience at the participatory and interactive structure of the exhibition in which their multiple sensory experiences are the key elements in media art appreciation. Essentially, this paper aims to reveal the various facets of the current phenomena of media art practices in Indonesia and provide a

theoretical and practical knowledge to local curators who are interested in media art for their curatorial work.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

2.1 Elements and Principles of Media Art

The term 'media' in media art, as generally known, refers to mass media that is based on media technology (Rancajale, 2017, p.xix). Hence, when we say media, we are talking about all the different methods of communication in massive scale that reaches out to large number of people. Commonly known media include print, recordings, cinema in earlier form and radio and television in later system. Through these media technology, our ideas and information have been able to be stored and distributed (in the physical form of book, CD and video), or transmitted (via cable networks). Since 1990s all aforementioned media made it possible into one system called the Internet, or 'newer media' based on computer technology and now by using smartphone, we can communicate at anytime and anywhere (Eric, 2015).

Media art that incorporates media technology requires new set of aesthetic elements and principles. Unlike in traditional art of paintings and sculptures where lines, colors, shapes, and space matter, the seminal elements in media art include time, light, sound, and movements with which one can create, discuss and criticize a work of art. In addition, as ways to arrange the elements of art to communicate creatively and effectively, media art is based on such principles as causality, duration, interactivity and musicality, rather than value, balance, rhythm, and unity found in paintings and sculptures (Mueller, 2017). Now we are experiencing media art with more extended technology such as augmented reality, virtual reality, robotics, bio-technology, AI, and real-time data transmission. In this circumstance of emerging technology, or new media, and its adoption by artist, understanding the concepts and characteristics of the elements and principles pertinent to media art is a crucial task not just for artist but also for curator who pursue working with media and new media art.

For example, when an artist deals with the duration of a work, he/she should consider its effectiveness to viewer's concentration and comprehension of the work. As Mueller states, duration of the work can range from milliseconds to years and the experience of the work can be instantaneous. Based on telematic operation system, Ken Goldberg's art and technology installation titled "Telegarden" lasted for 9 years (1995-2004). Consisting of a soil bed and a robotic arm, the work allowed remote gardeners to water, plant and view a garden via online control. The work seemingly emphasized the role of the community by inviting people from all over the world to cultivate small ecological systems collectively. In contrast to the speed of the Internet, this cyber garden grows in slower pace that can last as long as it is connected to a remote social network (Mueller, 2017, pp.216-217).

2.2 New Media Art Curating

The complexity of new media art curating is due to the characteristics/behaviors of the works of new media art as argued by Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook, the practicing curators, academicians and co-authors of "Rethinking Curating: Art after New Media". In the book they define new media art as "art that is made using electronic media technology and that displays any or all of the three behaviors of interactivity, connectivity, and computability in any combination" (Graham, 2010, p.10). In other words, even if artwork is themed around science technology, if it is not made through digital process of technology, then they are not part of this art form. The authors further argue that new media should be understood as behaviors not as mediums because it is characterized as process rather than object (Graham, 2010, p.5). "Many new media art projects (though certainly not all) are not interested in the object outcome, but rather in the process, the engagement, and the interaction…new media art is not necessarily materialistic, but is instead concerned with method rather than with final form" (Graham, 2010, p.61).

In new media art curating, space and time are the essential elements to comprehend. Today's art is getting more immaterialized that it is often experienced through the system of networks and/or virtual space. Hence one shall get into the system to be connected to the work of art (Graham, 2010, p.60), which in turn gives the new condition to new media art space with an environmental infrastructure that is appropriate for web-based art[iii]. As far as space is concerned in new media art curating, time is correspondingly essential as both time and space are inseparable. Curators dealing with new media art must understand how the characteristics of time in new media art differs from the time in video and performance: for example, new media art that is based on "behaviors of connectivity and computability" (Graham, 2010, p.92) provides a "real-time" experience while video art and performance art are understood as "time-based" or "live" (Graham, 2010,

p.87). Furthermore, "if video's default option is the simple recording and transmission…of real-time visual information, then the computer's talents lie in the manipulation of data (ideally in real time)" (Graham, 2010, p.97). Considering co-operation between absolute time inherent in art and relative time of experiencing art, curators of new media art must pay attention to time issue when mounting an exhibition.

Reflecting the notion that new media art is characterized as process rather than object, who is involved in the process and how, should be taken into consideration (Graham, 2010, p.111). In traditional exhibition, one experiences a work of art through internal and spiritual interaction in one's state of mind. This type of interaction is based on a visual experience that stimulates an aesthetic sense of the individual by very personal levels. In the case of media art exhibitions, however, interactive activities are carried out by the direct intervention of and communication by the audience's body. In this circumstance the audience becomes a participant who actively intervenes in the work using one's various senses beyond visual. However, as Graham and Cook pointed out, it is important to note that in many cases interaction is not truly "acting upon each other". In other words, it is not a two-way interaction, but instead, one-way "reaction". By "reaction" it means that if an audience operates a mechanic part in art, then the art reacts by the audience's stimulus (Graham, 2010, p.112). How to make true interactivity (two-way interaction) still remains as a challenge for curators because it is one of the important parts of behaviors in new media art.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research refers to a qualitative method based on the data about Indonesian media art and artist in order to explore the growing phenomena of media art practices in the country. It also refers to a qualitative method over the specific media art exhibitions organized by ARCOLABS, a locally-grown curator collective focusing on media art exhibition in order to examine its role and contribution to developing media art scene in Indonesia. The research analyzed a wide range of collected data from theoretical text in media art and curating, conference paper, artist statement, exhibition catalogue and curatorial essay. The research is also based on personal involvement of curating numerous media art exhibitions over the past years; therefore, it provides a curator's direct experience and perspective. This paper hopes to reveal the various facets in the recent development of media art in Indonesia while answering to the

questions of what knowledge is required in curating media art exhibition in terms of theory and practice; what new role is granted to media art curator; and what new experience is expected to audience.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 Various Themes and Aesthetics of ARCOLABS's Media Art Exhibition

Since its inception in 2014, ARCOLABS has constantly curated exhibitions that include media art. Each exhibition is developed based on certain theme that reflects the importance of time when the exhibition was made. From big data to nomadism, from eco-politics to artificial intelligence, the media art exhibitions by ARCOLABS aim to broaden a thematic possibility that media art can express, rather than merely concentrating on technological impact of 'media' to our society and/or demonstrating characteristics of media as a 'medium' that is often seen in other media art exhibitions. By suggesting various interesting themes, ARCOLABS has enabled media art exhibitions to be more accessible by the public. Among many examples, three exhibitions shall be analyzed and discussed in this section, namely Visualizing the Invisible (2016), Nomadic Traveler (2017), and Typotopia (2014).

4.1.1 Visualizing the Invisible

Visualizing the Invisible (2016) was held in conjunction with Data for Life Conference 2016, an international conference that aimed to raising awareness about the power of big data and its related technology. The exhibition aimed to present a variety of perspectives toward the idea of data through the eyes of media artists who demonstrate how media art pushes boundaries between art and technology (Jeon, 2016b). The curatorial process began with an acknowledgement that data is an unfamiliar subject for both artists and public. Although overwhelmingly connected through online, we did not notice how our online activities are related to data in terms of its production and dissemination. Considering increasing concern about data from many different fields, this exhibition was made timely enough, giving a new flavor on how to understand invisible data as an exhibition theme by means of artistic attempt (ARCOLABS, 2016b).

Seven artists were invited to the exhibition. Despite the limited numbers of the participating artists, each artist presented his/her work in large

scale with in-depth exploration. They presented their work in unique way on how to read, understand and visualize the subject matter, leaving powerful impression on the audience. For example, the real time movement of currency data by Mioon, which is portrayed as a digital forest, reminded us of its dominant and ubiquitous impact on our lives (Fig. 1). By using data from bacteria and plants and incorporating scientific methodology of photosynthesis process, HONF suggests a possibility of art beyond its comfort zone. As a showcase of artists from different parts of the world, the exhibition provided an opportunity to witness the distinctive characteristics of culture to culture on how to deal with data. Most importantly, the interest and attention by the public was given equally to every work of art, as all were visually appealing and conceptually acceptable. (ARCOLABS, 2016b).
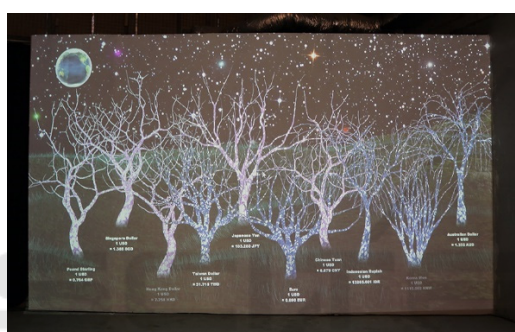

Figure 1: Mioon, Contingent Rule (2009-2016), Jakarta. Modified version of original artwork of 2009 to present currencies of the countries around and related to Indonesia which real-time exchange data transmitted every five seconds. The image shows Indonesian Rupiah 13285.001 per 1 USD when it was captured.

In addition, as if a reproduction of the anthropological classification, Angelica Dass' anonymous portrait series profoundly touched on all human dignity (Fig. 2).
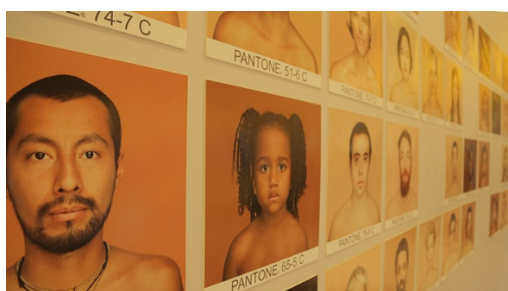

Figure 2: Angélica Dass, partial display view of Humanaé project (2016) in Jakarta, a work in progress since 2012. Portrait of anonymous being labeled with a color code from the PANTONE ® charts.

Visualizing the Invisible was held in an unfinished lot at Pacific Place, one of the prestigious malls in Jakarta. The mall itself has been a home for a decade run Art Jakarta, one of the major art fairs in the country, and hence it is a familiar art venue for general public. By presenting art in a major shopping mall, the exhibition reached out a broader audience aside from the academic and art communities. According to the record, the total number of visitors throughout the exhibition for two weeks (Aug. 31 – Sept. 13 2016) marks the approximately 3500 people from various backgrounds: artist, art collectors, gallery owners, students, data analysts, tech company professionals, financial executives, interior designers, architects, photographers, and musicians. Such a remarkable number of attendees demonstrated that this exhibition provided unusual opportunity of cutting-edge art to a wide range of public in everyday life context (ARCOLABS, 2016b).

There were several challenges for curatorial team to deal with during the preparation. As the exhibition was held in non-traditional gallery space, there were many necessary yet unexpected settlements to be done between the curatorial team and the venue management, and due to a strict regulation in the mall in terms of its use of space and duration of display, curatorial team must settle an agreement a head of time so the exhibition can be prepared better (ARCOLABS, 2016b). Some of the main challenges regarding the space is that as the space was unfinished after an old tenant recently moved out, there were much work to be done for renovating the space even prior to artwork display. If the uneven cement floor with tremendous dust was regards to building the hardware infrastructure, ensuring network for real-time data and web-based interactive work was for the software infrastructure, both of which are important matters to be taken into consideration. The exhibition provided the curatorial team with a valuable lesson for what is needed in mounting a media art exhibition in a public space with raw condition.

4.1.2 Nomadic Traveler

Humans have always had the urge to move from one place to another. Whether they do so for a permanent objective, humans have been motivated to travel for such various reasons for survival, desire for exploration, life's pleasures, and/or seeking a better life. When human travel confronts the boundaries of the state and the concept of citizen, it becomes a more contested term as it is affected by the political and economic conditions. Today with the aid of digital technology, humans search for their move beyond space and time, while others are exploring a possibility of new human history in Mars (Huang, 2017, p.11).

Nomadic Traveler (2017) is an exhibition to explore ideas of travel in the realm of contemporary art. Migration has become a discourse in contemporary art today, and the diverse motives of displacement can be observed through numerous artistic activities. Themes of journey can be found in the contexts of crossings between territorial boundaries, as well as different cultures. These artists also journey through artistic shifts as they experiment with different media and techniques. With the aid of digital technology, they search for virtual mobility (Huang, 2017, p.11). Historically, geographic relocation has been observed even before the term "globalization" was introduced into the common vocabulary. Today it is an ongoing phenomenon experienced on global level.

The eight artists were invited to this exhibition with works that do not limit to human travel within a specific cultural context, but rather extending it to the mobility of material, reason, and information associated with our society. In Figure 3, Indonesian media artist Julia Sarisetiati reveals challenges of migrant workers during their time spent overseas. One of the challenges that the artist proposed is the day-to-day language used by Indonesian factory workers who were employed in Korea. Her video installation "Indo K-Work" engaged the Indonesian migrant workers to share the on-site vocabularies that are not taught during preparation before their departure to new land. By placing the factory workers as an alternative source of information, this video installation suggested the new wave of human migration that extends beyond geographical and economical contexts (Sarisetiati, 2017, p.32).

Figure 3: Julia Sarisetiati, Indo K-Work (2017). Seen in the video installation are Indonesian migrant factory workers in Korea who share a wide range of vocabularies useful in their everyday life, yet not learned during pre-departure preparation.

Equally important, Venzha Christ has a lifelong interest in science fiction, particularly in astronomy and space science. He has created a series of radio frequency transmitters to connect the Earth with the outer space to look for signs of alien life (Fig. 4). His practice as an artist-scientist provides a rare opportunity to introduce the theme of outer space travel within contemporary artistic practices. By using advanced technology as a medium, he transmits his hopes and vision to reach out to other civilizations in our galaxy (Huang, 2017, p.12).
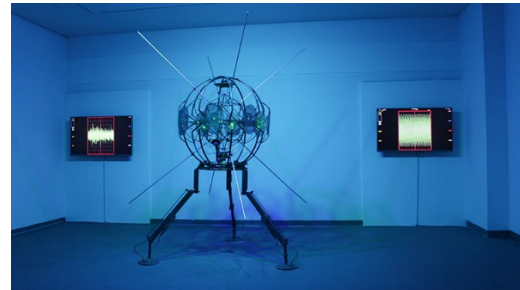

Figure 4: Venzha Christ, The Unknown: Received-Transmitted (2017). Developed by v.u.f.o.c lab and powered by ISSS-Indonesia Space Science Society. Real-time data transmitter sending signal and frequency in the gallery room to outer space.

Artists of this exhibition explore the idea of nomadism and mobility that characterize the contemporary society through various creative means. Living in the midst of technologically-driven, hyper-connected world, we have all become (virtual) nomads and cross beyond boundaries. This reality provides us with an opportunity to reflect on our identities; it seems that the more we are (digitally) connected with others, the more we tend to lose touch with ourselves. Through a wide spectrum of art from the two countries that combine new ideas with latest approaches, the exhibition becomes a joyful expansion of an artistic journey that reflects an aspect of contemporary nomadic life in the 21st century (Huang, 2017, p.13).

4.1.3 Typotopia

Exposing art in everyday life and reaching out to general public beyond art sphere is an ongoing inquiry for ARCOLABS's curatorial practice. To fulfill its mission, ARCOLABS has been exploring the ways in which a wider range of public can access to media art in their daily life context. In addition, today's art in many ways resembles play, and therefore, a sense of playfulness has become an important element in art. In this regard, Typotopia (2014) is a good example to discuss on the matter of public, everyday life and playfulness. Inspired by typography, the artists from Korea and Indonesia presented the rediscovery of alphabets, texts, and symbols representing both Korea and Indonesia. Typography was suggested not only as a tool of

communication and means of aesthetic expression, but also as a method of play.

Through a variety of media such as video installation, motion graphics, animation, interactive object, and typography furniture, the exhibition was curated within three sub-themes: Typography + Art, Typography + Technology, and Typography + Play. Artworks that focus on the language and meaning of typography were presented in Typography + Art. In Typography + Technology, the artists manipulated letters, text, and typography by means of digital media. On the other hand, artists in Typography + Play suggested that the power of imagination and playful interaction with artwork is the key for communicating with contemporary art.

The exhibition was held in an open space in Lotte Shopping Avenue in Jakarta, attracting a great number of visitors. Many artworks were interactive and participative that audience experienced being part of each work. In Adityo Pratomo's generative installation (Fig. 5), audience was invited to interact with a pre-determined word by changing its shape and visual. If audience pours water into the water container, a custom-made algorithm implemented in computer code generates new shape and visual of the word 'Civilization (*Peradaban*)'. Through his work, Adityo talked about two important aspects of human civilization; that is, roots and growth (Huang, 2014, p.24).

Figure 5: Adityo Pratomo, Civilization (*Peradaban*) (2014). Word in the screen changing its shape and visual as audience activates computer algorithm by pouring water into the container.

On the other hand, in Terra Bajraghosa's interactive computer game audience was invited to produce one's own avatar (Fig. 6). By selecting and arranging illustrated items, the audience was able to create a pixelated and virtual alter ego. (Jeon, 2014, p.30-31).

Figure 6: Terra Bajraghosa, Pieces of Me (2010, 2014). Outcomes of production of avatar on display on the wall. Game engine by Gerdi Budi.

The exhibition was an earlier curatorial practice in technology-based art by ARCOLABS. Hence, there were some technical challenges faced by the curators, one of which was the difficulty in ensuring technician. In order to set up a Korean artist's interactive digital animation without his presence during display, display team were struggled with generating the computer application that was customized by the artist, which allowed the artwork to be activated by human movement. Video conference between the artist, curators and display team were conducted for two nights until the artwork was properly set up. The open floor plan and bright ambience of the mall was another challenge, particularly for projection-based work that the curators and display team must negotiate with the venue in order to adjust the space.

4.2 Media Art Across Disciplines

In media art practices, collaboration cannot be ignored. Whether it is between artist-scientist, artist-technician, artist-curator and/or curator-curator, collective process in media art cannot be absent in order to ensure the success of a project. It is not merely because of the complexity of technical knowledge of constructing a work of art, but it is also because of the benefit to conceptually deepen one's understanding of certain fields of studies. The following two examples demonstrate ARCOLABS's efforts to exploring different working methods of curating through collaboration with many different parties; Arbotics (2014) and Five Passages to the Future (2019).

4.2.1 Arbotics

Additionally, Arbotics (2014) is one of the earlier curatorial projects of media art conducted by ARCOLABS. The initial motivation was to explore a new approach in interdisciplinary studies through the concept of a robot. Curators observed the fact that the

convergence between art and science had gained a great deal of attention for the past decades through which a new form of art had been introduced and an alternative to the science driven society had been suggested. Arbotics is an exhibition that revealed the current urge of bridging between art and science. Through the form of kinetic, interactive and robotic installations, the invited artist groups tried to discover a new language and new paradigm in art (Jeon, 2014b).

The first collaboration aspect of media art in Arbotics lies in the characteristics of each artist group. The exhibition invited five Yogyakarta based artist collectives, Doni & Hafez, HONF, Indieguerillas, ThedeoMIXBLOOD, and XXLABS. Doni is an artist working with photography and now expands to three dimensional installations while Hafez is known as a paper artist and pop-up book designer. HONF, as a new media artist group, is working closely with artist, designer, architect, sound artist, programmer, and electronic engineers. Indieguerillas is a duet of Santi Ariestyowanti and Dyatmiko "Miko" Bawono whose backgrounds are Visual Communication Design and Interior Design respectively. ThedeoMIXBLOOD is a project group of Dila (Fahla Fadhillah Lotan) and Otong (R. Bonar D. Senan Putro) with an interest in Graffiti and Pop Art. XXLABS[iv] is a female artists' initiative whose main focus is electronic art using both open source software and hardware (Jeon, 2014b).

Prior to the exhibition, the artist groups attended a series of workshop programs in order to sharpen the understanding of robotics and enrich the insight of artists in terms of themes and ideas for their artistic expression. In Figure 7, Dr. Riza Muhida, director of the Center for Robotics and Intelligent Machine, Surya University, who introduced the current robotic developments and the basics of machine mechanics, conducted the first workshop session.

Figure 7: Workshop session by Dr. Riza Muhida, discussing basic mechanism in robotics.

Then, the second workshop session was led by Yuka Narendra who was the researcher from the Center for Art and Design, Surya University (at the time of the program), discussing various local cultures in Indonesia and how culture is related to pursuing the future (Fig. 8).

Figure 8: Workshop session by Yuka Narendra, discussing Indonesian culture as a medium for contemporary art.

Finally, in Figure 9, Heri Dono, a senior artist from Yogyakarta shared his experience of working with kinetic and media art (ARCOLABS, 2014a). Workshops were intensive and productive and helped the participants broaden their scope of robotics as the main theme of their work.

Figure 9: Workshop session by Heri Dono, sharing his experience and perspective in new media art.

In so doing, this exhibition is based on the collaborative effort by each group, which resembles a mechanical working logic that requires cooperation of many different parts. Likewise, each group divides jobs for each artist. For example, in the work of "B.I.O. #0.1 ESM-Basic Intelligent Organism Externalized Spatial Memory" (Fig. 10 & 11), HONF divided roles by several individuals. For instance, programming and concept were developed by Irene Agrivina and Tommy Surya R. Meanwhile, Weissa Adhiprasetya provided installations and techniques and Felix Deufel sound installation.

Figure 10: HONF, B.I.O. #0.1 ESM (2014). Display view of intelligent bacteria placed in hanging petri discs which movement is captured by hacked infrared web cam underneath and transferred to stereo speakers for sound and TV monitors for visual patterns. All controlled by central computer.
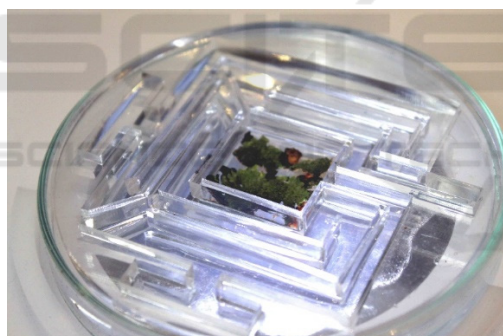

Figure 11: Partial view of B.I.O. #0.1 ESM (2014) showing colony of intelligent bacteria in a petri disc.

In the case of "Facing the Future" (Fig. 12 & 13), an interactive installation by XXLABS, more numbers of individuals were involved. In collaboration with Stefanie W., Irene Agrivina, Asa Rahmana, Rennie "Emonk" Agustine and Fahla Fadillah Lotan conducted concept, installation, and techniques. Additional assistance was provided by Eka Jayaningtyas and Ratna Djuwita and additional programming was done by Yudianto Asmoro (ARCOLABS, 2014a).

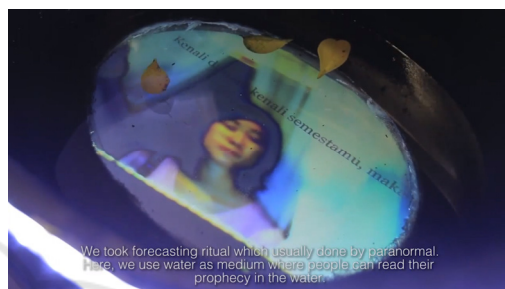Figure 12: XXLABS, Facing the Future (2014). Audience getting into interaction with the work.

Figure 13: Audience being reflected on the water in the installation Facing the Future (2014), reading her own future.

4.2.2 Five Passages to the Future

It is an unorthodox to discuss a project that is still in preparation stage, but Five Passages to the Future (2019) is a very good example of curatorial experimentation, which core idea lies in significance of collaboration in media art. Scheduled in October 2019 in National Gallery of Indonesia, this exhibition is a collaborative effort by five female curators in Indonesia who have different professional background and interest in the field of research. For example, Evelyn Huang is a curator educator who is interested in local wisdom of indigenous people in relation to environment issue. On the other hand, Irene Agrivina is an artist curator who focuses on the problem of sustainability through ecological relevant artworks. Meantime, Jeong Ok Jeon who is a curator educator explores how AI has become a part of our daily routines. As a curator writer, Nin Djani suggests VR and video games as a way of storytelling media of today while Ratna Djuwita who is an artist researcher examines wearable technology through fashion that is built with bio-material (ARCOLABS, 2019).

The initial motivation for curators is based on the phenomena of digital technology that has made tremendous shifts in art. According to them, it does not just prompt the emergence of new media art, but also suggests unpredictable direction of future art.

Furthermore, new media art has established a new way of artistic experience of time and space where audience relates to art instantly, bilaterally, and virtually. New media art today, which presents the most innovative way of art in the 21st century, is looking beyond the mere reflection on digital media, and rather suggesting a new perspective in art and life. Five Passages to the Future aims to showcase five cutting-edge approaches of new media art in the issues around eco-politics, sustainability, AI, digital narrative, and wearable technology, which all serves as an indicator for future art. The exhibition also showcases various explorations of five emerging practices in the field under the theme of eco-data (ARCOLABS, 2019).

4.3 A New Audience Role in Participating and Interactivity

The emergence of media art has made a significant change in the role of audience. Unlike in traditional exhibition, the audience of media art exhibition became an active participant rather than passive viewer. Such change in the role of audience has affected the problem of communication in art. The media art exhibitions organized by ARCOLABS focus on the new way of communication between a work of art and audience through the participatory and interactive structure of the exhibition. This section will analyze Dialogue with the Senses (2016) exhibition in order to reveal how multiple sensory experiences become the key elements of communication in media art.

4.3.1 Dialogue with the Senses

Dialogue with the Senses (2016) is an exhibition that aims to explore 'sensory experience' and its significance in the course of our lives. The exhibition stimulates various sensory experiences to encourage audience members to engage with the works of art at multiple levels. Some arts are hands-on and interactive, requiring physical contact or direct operation by the audience. Some are participatory in that they stimulate the audience to become a performer within the works on display. All of them draw a sense of emotion and psychological excitement through the stimuli of sensory experience. Therefore, the body in this regard plays a central role in perceiving each work of art (Jeon, 2016, pp.13-14).

Dialogue with the Senses features nine innovative artists whose main consideration lies in the participation of the audience that is a crucial factor in completing their work. The sensory experiences that are pivotal in this exhibition are essentially different from traditional modes of art appreciation. Unlike the viewing of paintings or sculptures in conventional exhibitions, the new mode of art appreciation presented in this exhibition goes beyond the visual. We are not only viewing a work of art, but also hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting it. In that respect, this exhibition also challenges the long-term privileging of 'sight' in the appreciation of art, and recovers the power of all other physical senses that are equally valuable (Jeon, 2016, p.14).

In Fig. 14 & 15, Fajar Abadi is a young Indonesian artist who often uses food as his main art medium. With food as a medium, Fajar has highlighted the 'ephemerality' and 'rasa' (flavor, taste, sense) of food in a wide rage of art forms, including performances, installations, and community projects. In his work titled "Rasarumah" (which can be translated as 'home-aroma-therapy'), he created an aromatherapy candle with two different scents: one represents the popular Indonesian chicken soup (sop ayam), the other the common Korean fermented soybean paste stew (doenjang jjigae). Commonly served at family meals in the two different cultures, sop ayam and doenjang jjigae, as mundane food, provoke longing for family and memories of one's hometown. Subtle and trivial, the ephemeral scent from the candle serves as an invisible yet powerful art medium that arouses a variety of sentimental and sensory responses from the audience (Jeon, 2016, p.15).

Figure 14: Fajar Abadi, Rasarumah (2016). Two bowls of candles in installation that provoke aroma of soybean paste stew (doenjang jjigae) far left and of chicken soup (sop ayam) in the center.

Figure 15: Detail view of the bowl that contain the aroma of chicken soup (sop ayam). The pattern in bowl itself representing the particular bowl used in everyday life.

Park Seung Soon is a musician and new media artist from Korea who created media art content for audiences who can play a variety of traditional Indonesian instruments using water. Titled "Symphonie Aquatique" (Fig. 16 & 17), Park's instrumental installation consists of nine bowls of water that serve as a musical instrument. When audience touches the water in a bowl, Indonesian traditional melody resonates in the space. Incorporating digital media, whereby a computer program creates a set of sophisticated musical instruments, the performance is undertaken spontaneously by anyone who plays it. By virtue of his experimental music installation turning us from music consumers into creators of our own music, Park's work allows us to witness our long-held contemporary belief that anyone can be an artist (Jeon, 2016, p.16).
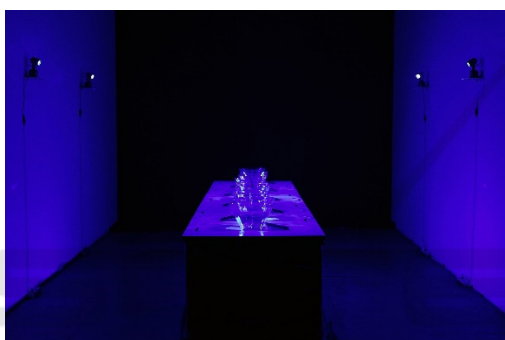
Figure 16: Park Seung Soon, Symphonie Aquatique (2016). Installation view without audience interaction.
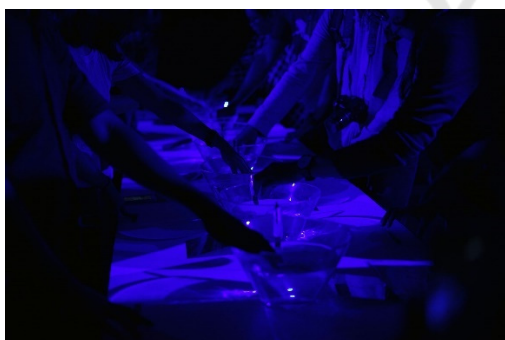

Figure 17: Symphonie Aquatique (2016) being interacted by audience who becomes a music player and producer.

Another Korean artist Choi Suk Young approaches his new media art as a form of play. In figure 18, his video installation "Interactive SeeSea Drawing" is designed to invite the audience to contribute a drawing and play with the work of art. Choi's sensibility toward and love of nature encouraged him to share his awareness of the importance of nature, which provides a never-ending sense of security and maternal warmth. He invited audience to draw endangered underwater animals on a piece of paper. Their drawings are then scanned and appear on the projected video, as if the animals have been back to life. Play and participation is crucial to Choi's art, for he wants art to become a playground that enhances our emotional state (Jeon, 2016, p.17).

Figure 18: Choi Suk Young, Interactive SeeSea Drawing (2016). Drawing of audience coming to life and shown in the projected video installation.

5 CONCLUSIONS

More and more artists are working with new media today and the curators need to be aware of this new trend in art and be prepared for new curatorial demands. As if demonstrating such phenomena, year 2019 anticipates a number of media art exhibitions and festivals throughout the year. The programs' organizers are as diverse as artist collectives, independent curators, and government sectors that are promoting their programs. The return of the Cellsbutton, a media art festival led by Yogyakarta-based new media artist collective, MAG 19, which is the first showcase of Media Arts Globale organized by Europe-settled Indonesian independent curator, and Media Art Week *(Pekan Seni Media)* and Instrumenta, annual media art festivals hosted by Ministry of Education and Culture in Indonesia are part of this exciting map. In such diverse circumstances, an Indonesian curator collective called ARCOLABS has played an instrumental role in enhancing the development of media art curatorial practices in the country. Consisting of three female curators, ARCOLABS has flourished locally while focusing on media art. Their consistent efforts to building numerous thematic and aesthetic approaches helped general public more familiar with media art in Indonesia. Their working methods have highlighted the importance of collaboration in media art curating with various individuals and sectors across disciplines. Through the participatory and interactive

structure of the exhibition, members of the audience become more active participants, instead of passive viewers. In so doing, they make their multiple sensory experiences the key elements in media art appreciation. With the aid of technology, media art requires a new process of curatorial framework that differs from other contemporary art presentation, and for that reason, more collaborations and exchanges between the curators are encouraged.

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LIST OF FIGURES

ENDNOTES

i Besides the three aforementioned artist groups, there are other artist initiatives that concern a dramatic transformation of Indonesian society caused by technological advancement. Ruang Mes 56 in Yogyakarta (2002) focuses on contemporary art and photography; Forum Lenteng in Jakarta (2003) on documentary, film, video and performance; and Videolab in Bandung (2003) on video art of young artists, just to name a few. More artist list can be found in the exhibition catalogue of Pekan Seni Media 2019.

ii ARCOLABS is currently run by three female curators: (1) Jeong Ok Jeon is a Jakarta-based Korean curator who is actively engaging in Southeast Asian contemporary art, especially working on providing international exposures for regional artists in and outside of Indonesia. With interests in new media and interactive art, she has curated several science and technology based art exhibitions. She has gained an MFA from Savannah College of Art and Design in the US and a BFA from Ewha Womans University in Korea. Now Jeon serves as the managing director at ARCOLABS and a full-time lecturer at Jakarta State University; (2) Evelyn Huang is an Indonesian curator and lecturer who graduated from her MFA in Creative Entrepreneurship, Jakarta Institute of Arts after obtaining her Bachelor degree in Visual Communication Design, University of Pelita Harapan and Master degree in Cultural Studies, University of Indonesia. She curates annual media art exhibitions and international exchange exhibitions for ARCOLABS while she has been also curating EXI(S)T, one of the most renowned art incubation programs in Indonesia. At present, she is the program head of Visual Communication Design in International Design School; and (3) Nin Djani is an Indonesian curator and writer with a passion in literature, history, and pop culture which become significant influences in her artistic curatorial practice. She holds an MA in Southeast Asian Studies from Leiden University and a BA in Media Communications from Goldsmiths, University of London. Nin is independently active in various inter-disciplinary creative projects and she is part of Suar Artspace, ARCOLABS and Atreyu Moniaga Project.

iii Today's media art can be expressed in various forms and one of the growing forms of media art in Indonesia is sound art. In order to showcase sound art in indoor gallery space, soundproof system of the building is required. As for light art, capacity of electrical power of the designated venue is crucial so that the artwork can be presented as properly as it is meant to be by the artist. If the media art is showcased outdoor, there must be much more to be taken into consideration.

iv After the exhibition, XXLABS has changed its name to XXLab and its members have also been changed over the years.