

## **Dede Eri Supria's Creative Process of Painting Marginalized Urban People in the New Order Era**

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This article aims to reveal the creative process of Dede Eri Supria (DES) in the context of the development of Indonesian painting, showing the structure, style and thematics that represent the impact of development policies and New Order cultural politics. The discussion of this creative process uses Gramsci's concept of hegemony, namely the dominant group's ideology, to perpetuate its power through its apparatus spread throughout civil society, most of which are intellectual groups. This ideological hegemony also occurred in Indonesian painting during the New Order era. This article uses a qualitative description method to reveal and discuss data obtained through interviews and literature studies. Based on these methods and concepts, the following results were obtained. First, DES's creativity was influenced by his social environment with exponents of the New Fine Arts Movement (GSRB), which resulted in his critical views on social and cultural problems and ideological problems in the creative environment of ASRI students and GSRB activists. Second, the DES creative process is a creative reaction to express "freedom" in work to fight the dominant ideology that dominates art. Third, through a creative space free from dominant art ideologies, DES and GSRB exponents display their works at the TIM GSRB Exhibition. Fourth, the social, cultural and political development conditions during the New Order era impacted the socio-economic lives of marginalized urbanites, becoming one of the stimuli for the DES creative process. Fifth, DES in painting uses various visual references but does not copy them outright and creates a new reality in the space of his canvas so that his paintings represent a new type of art that is original and represents the spirit of his time, namely the hyperrealism style.

**Keywords:** *GSRB, hegemony, hyperrealism, New Order*

*Received: May 16, 2024; Accepted June 4, 2024; Published June 12, 2024*

*<https://doi.org/10.31091/mudra.v39i3.2876>*

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## INTRODUCTION

A painting does not exist in a vacuum; it is the result of the painter's reflection on his environment, which is a factor that stimulates him to express himself. Therefore, the situation and conditions of a particular era or regime can give colour to the work of art. In this context, the painter Dede Eri Supria (DES) is known for consistently highlighting the dynamic landscape of development and social problems of urbanites in Jakarta in the 1970s-1990s. DES was born and raised in Jakarta, and his creativity grew when the socio-political situation of the New Order came to power (1967) in Indonesia.

Under President Soeharto's leadership, The New Order government attempted to recover from the economic downturn inherited from the Old Order through efforts to launch the Development Trilogy, namely national stability, economic growth and equitable development. The Development Trilogy mandates that economic growth be increased. A stable and dynamic political situation is needed as a prerequisite for development (Adryamarthanino, 2022; Mayrudin, 2018; Supriyatna dkk., 2019). The primary condition for equitable development is that economic conditions become more conducive to realizing a just and prosperous society. The Development Trilogy then became the ideology of the New Order, which had to be protected from disturbing elements. The realization of the development ideology is outlined through the Outlines of State Policy (GBHN) and then implemented through the Five Year Development Plan (Repelita). In the context of government, this foundation is the workflow of the Development Cabinet, which organizes Pelita I-VII.

Implementing the Repelita I-VII program resulted in infrastructure development to support various systems, including macro and microeconomics, banking systems, transportation systems, and appropriate technology to support agriculture, forestry and the manufacturing industry. However, all of this depends on liberal Foreign Direct Investment (PMA) policies, resulting in dependency and swelling foreign debt (Junaedi, 2018).

Implementing the Development Trilogy during Soeharto's reign resulted in economic and political development that grew towards oligarchic practices, giving rise to controversial reactions from several community figures and organizations. Based on national stability, repressive regulations and practices were born, including controlling the mass media by suppressing press freedom, freedom of opinion and political freedom (Adryamarthanino,

2022; Mayrudin, 2018). The militaristic New Order government became anti-criticism. Instead of silencing, various vehicles were created as channels to express opinions, namely through the arts (fine arts, theatre performances and literature), so that several artists vocal in voicing criticism were prohibited from creating, were arrested and imprisoned (Indriani, 2020).

Development was also concentrated in Jakarta, resulting in disparities between regions and between Java and outside Java. The excess is the rapid urbanization of the city of Jakarta since the late 60s (Fuady, 2017; Harahap, 2013). The impact of the urbanization process is the marginalization of the urban poor when Jakarta is developed into a modern and global city carried out by actors who hold the power to produce urban space, which gives rise to various social, cultural and environmental problems (Simatupang, 2014).

The urbanites, who are the urban poor, are the people who appear in DES's paintings. So, DES paintings can be categorized as urban art, which refers to various art forms created to represent life or raise problems in urban areas. This aligns with Henri Lefebvre's (1996) concept of urban aesthetics: a reflection and multiple reconstructions with various representations of observed urban phenomena. According to Lefebvre, humanities texts (novels, music, poetry, paintings, etc.), urban spatiality and urban practices play a role in formulating art (Timmerman, 2022).

The influx of urban art during the New Order era cannot be separated from the growth and development of global capitalism and economic modernization in Indonesia (Karsono, 2021). This builds life experience, work ethic and culture in urban areas, stimulating artists to react artistically. One of DES's paintings, "The Labyrinth" (1987-88), shows the Jakarta area metamorphosing into a giant labyrinth as a dystopian space made from used cardboard. The labyrinth corridor itself can be interpreted as a picture of the slums and tortuous human landscape of the city.

According to Jurriëns (2021), DES is famous for its creative document about Jakarta's critical expansion in the 1980s, which shows Jakarta's modernity through a photorealist perspective that reflects the surreal juxtaposition between economic development and the poverty experienced by Jakarta residents. Mulyadi (Dermawan T, 1999) said that DES paintings are portraits of Indonesia, which is uncertain about undergoing a change process towards progress.

### Formulation of the Problem

DES is a painter who consistently highlights marginalized urbanites due to the development dynamics during the New Order era. An interesting thing to discuss about his paintings is identifying the problems that DES expressed through his creative process, especially the impulse that fostered his creativity. So the problem formulation that can be proposed is, how is the DES creative process so that it expresses marginalized urbanites?

Based on the problem formulation, the presentation in this article aims to understand the background of the DES creative process in the context of the development of Indonesian painting during the New Order era. For this reason, the study focuses on the thematics realized through the structure and style of DES paintings.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The discussion regarding DES paintings uses Gramsci's concept of hegemony, an ideological concept maintained by a dominant group, to perpetuate its power through its apparatus spread throughout civil society, most of which are intellectual groups, such as academics or cultural figures. This intellectual group maintains the dominant ideology by consistently producing discourse through conventions, not weapons. They become an extension of power by influencing people's views, values and beliefs (Ramos Jr, 1982), or agreement occurs because of moral and intellectual unity (Tenaya, 2021). Gramsci saw that groups not in power could build counter-hegemony, namely, building awareness of oppressive systems and structures (Moelyono, 1997).

Data was obtained through interview techniques and literature study. The interview with DES regarding the creative process was conducted on July 25, 2023, at DES' residence, Jln. Pinang Perak IX / PJ 18, Pondok Indah Housing Complex, South Jakarta. The literature study was carried out by exploring the scope of the DES creative process and various supporting theories from various literary sources in the form of journals and books.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### A Glance at the Face of Indonesian Painting

To see the face of Indonesian painting, we must recognize the role of the Association of Indonesian Painting Experts (PERSAGI), which pioneered the basic foundations of modern Indonesian art. PERSAGI, born on October 23, 1938, is an antithesis to the Mooi Indie paintings that developed

then. According to PERSAGI spokesperson Sudjojono, Mooi Indie only satisfied the tastes of tourists by showing an ideal and peaceful life, but Indonesian society at that time was suffering. The paintings of PERSAGI artists are social realism with their 'jiwa ketok' (visible soul) aesthetic, which depicts the daily lives of ordinary people. This flow became the basis for developing nationalism, or national identity, in Indonesian fine arts and culture (Kusumastuti, 2006; Spanjaard, 2018).

PERSAGI essentially underlines two things: first, the artist's starting point is his soul, and second, it lays the foundation of modern Indonesian art. However, for the first time, the artist detached himself from the familiar realm of traditional art, such as the Balinese Kamasan paintings depicting wayang mythology. There is a contradiction here. On the one hand, they want to form a national artistic identity in painting, but on the other hand, they let go of their traditions so that their paintings become distant from their society (Kayam, 1981).

The issue of national identity in fine arts emerged again in 1935 with a cultural polemic, which divided the fine arts school into two camps, between Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, with his pro-Western thinking, and Sanusi Pane, who preferred to refer to Indonesian culture. Pane said the new culture must be based on the old Eastern culture (Spanjaard, 2018).

This conflict also influenced the next generation, with the establishment of the Indonesian Academy of Fine Arts (ASRI) Yogyakarta (1950), which promoted traditional and social values, and the Drawing Teachers' University Education Center (the forerunner of ITB Fine Arts) Bandung (1948) which was based on Western modern art, especially cubism. The conflict was triggered when Bandung students (including Ahmad Sadali, But Muchtar, Popo Iskandar, and Sudjoko) held an exhibition at the Jakarta Cultural Hall, which caused a polemic because of Trisno Sumardjo's article in the Siasat Weekly, November 1954, which stated that the works of the work of Bandung artists is empty-hearted and is the embodiment of a laboratory of Western art. This statement made Sudjoko angry, and he responded in the same magazine by calling Trisno just criticizing without providing adequate arguments. The polemic then involved more names and lasted for three editions. The impact of this polemic caused the Indonesian arts map to split into the Yogyakarta camp and the Bandung camp (Janti, 2018; Novitasari & Utama, 2020).

The structural, stylistic and thematic tendencies of fine arts established between these two camps in the following period resulted in a hegemonic situation in their respective camps, which gave rise to creative bottlenecks and dissatisfaction among students in each camp. They also rebelled to get out of this situation. They became the embryo for the emergence of GSRB at STSRI ASRI Yogyakarta and the Fine Arts Department of ITB Bandung separately around the 1970s. The work of ASRI students, who tended to paint using rulers with geometric patterns, was considered by their teacher to be "without emotional turmoil" and was accused of being a "mem-Bandung" style. This was considered a betrayal and re-ignited feelings of hostility in the past between the Bandung camp and the Yogyakarta camp. In Bandung, the opposite situation emerged. The students opposed the order of form and accused their teachers of ignoring creativity (Supangkat, 2012).

This situation culminated in a dispute between teachers and students from the Yogyakarta camp breaking out in Jakarta when the Yogya youth group protested the jury's decision on the best works in the Great Indonesian Painting Exhibition (PBSLI) (1974), organized by the Jakarta Arts Council (DKJ) through a statement "Black December." This young group attacked the jury's decision, which they accused of favouring "decorative works," which is generally adhered to by Yogyakarta teachers. The jury did not want to be outdone and declared the work of the young group to be "a work of trial and error." This statement was very well known to the Bandung youth group, and they felt they were being attacked even though none of the Bandung youth groups took part in the exhibition (Supangkat, 2012).

The culmination of this conflict gave birth to the GSRB (1975-1979). Yogyakarta and Bandung youth groups agreed to organize a "rebellion exhibition." The New Indonesian Fine Arts Exhibition was finally held. The first (1975) and second (1977) GSRB exhibitions were held at Taman Ismail Marzuki (TIM) Jakarta. The New Fine Arts Movement was a youth movement that broke the fine arts establishment at that time and was a forum that united fine arts students from Bandung and Yogyakarta, who were previously at odds (Supangkat, 2012). GSRB has also become a marker of the development of contemporary art in Indonesia.

Students from STSRI ASRI Yogyakarta drove GSRB, and students from the ITB Fine Arts Department, namely F.X. Harsono, Hardi, Ris

Purnomo, S. Prinka, Anyool Soebroto, Satyagraha, Nyoman Nuarta, Pandu Sudewo, Agus Tjahjono, Jim Supangkat, Siti Adiyati Subangun, Nanik Mirna, Wagiono S, B. Munni Ardhi, and Bachtiar Zainoel, and Dede Eri Supria, as the only exponent who is not a student, but is an SSRI student who dropped out.

Painting in Indonesia in the 1970-1990s cannot be separated from Jakarta's position as the capital of the Republic of Indonesia and the contribution of DKJ (1968) and all its supporting instruments, namely the Jakarta Arts Center (PJK), which later became known as TIM (1968); Jakarta Arts Education Institute (LPKJ) at the TIM complex (1970); and Jakarta Academy (1973). The presence of DKJ was at the initiative of Ali Sadikin, Governor of Jakarta at that time (Ramadhan K. H, 1995).

DKJ accommodates all traditional and modern art forms involving various artists from all over Indonesia. Since TIM was founded and Ali Sadikin ended up serving as Governor, an average of 250 events have been held yearly (Ramadhan K. H, 1995). TIM's role is also huge in the dynamics of Indonesian art history (Dewi Smara, 2021). DES himself is a painter who began his existence in Indonesian fine arts in line with the flourishing artistic climate in Jakarta in the 1970s and became part of the historic event of the GSRB Exhibition at TIM.

#### **Dede Eri Supria's Creative Process**

DES was born in Jakarta on January 29 1956, in the Cideng area of Jakarta. He is the seventh child of 11 children. His father, Supandi Tanumiharja, is an STM teacher. His mother, Saribanon, died when DES was two years old. Alfiah took over as the mother of this family. This modest family lives in a house measuring 5 x 15 meters (Dermawan T, 1999). DES grew up amidst many people struggling to survive in Jakarta. Glaring social inequality and chaos became prominent problems that he felt and made him empathize with them (Duraisy, 2015).

In 1974, DES attended the Indonesian School of Fine Arts (SSRI) in Yogyakarta. While attending school here, DES had problems. He was deemed to have not complied with school assignment regulations, which required painting four small paintings, but instead, DES wanted to paint one large painting. DES was also ridiculed for his interest in realism. He only lasted about three years and left school a year before graduating (Dermawan T, 1999; Maulana, 2018; 2012).

At that time, the SSRI where DES studied used the same building as ASRI, which made him socialize with ASRI students and stimulated him to get involved in GSRB (Maulana, 2018; Moelyono, 1997). There are similarities in the background between Dede Eri Supria, and the ASRI students who became GSRB activists, namely, "both were rejected by their teachers, and both were anxious and rebelled against the creative climate on the campus where they studied."

DES is the most famous painter in various Indonesian art circles because the themes he addresses represent the daily problems of urban society. He developed his ability to cover these themes with a painting technique that no other artist had, namely the hyperrealist style.

The term hyperrealism began in 1973 when Isy Brachot (Belgium) created the title *L'hyperréalisme* for an exhibition at her gallery in Brussels. The exhibition featured the work of Ralph Goings and Chuck Close, who developed the photorealist style. Hyperrealism was born from Photorealism, a style of painting that was born in America during the late 1960s and early 1970s (*A Brief History of Hyperrealism*, 2015; Bornemisza, 2013; Taggart, 2018).

The basic concept of hyperrealism painting is to create paintings that do not try to copy everyday reality but create a new reality on canvas as an illusionistic fiction, namely art that places objects in an unnatural arrangement. Hyperrealist painting aims to show its artifice, refining details and creating new works of art that are more subtle and complex than their reference photos, for example, through detailed depictions of wrinkles or pores on human skin. The size and scale of objects are no longer realistic, giving birth to new narratives that do not necessarily match the size in reality. Hyperrealism "is not obsessed with the truth" and creates new truths, namely a narrative built through the artist's fictional perspective, or tends to play around with the narrative it creates (Susilowati, 2020; Wango, 2020).

Regarding the style he developed, DES admitted that he was influenced by American photorealism and hyperrealism painters after 1977 or after the launch of GSRB. Previously, he was heavily influenced by Indonesian master painters, including S. Soedjojono, Affandi, and Basuki Abdullah. According to Dermawan (1999), DES admires the works of Norman Rockwell and James Rosenquist. His works are images of reality processed using optical tactics.

### Ideas, References and Painting Techniques

Four paintings will be analyzed and discussed in this article, which show DES's creative process, namely paintings (1) *The Labyrinth* (1987-88), (2) *Communication* May 1998 (1999), (3) *What Remains is a Panorama* (1997), and (4) *Jack of Fate* (1998). The themes of DES's paintings based on the works discussed in this article are full of views of urban humans amidst the rapid development of big cities in Indonesia, especially Jakarta. The following is DES's statement regarding the rationale that supports his works:

"I have a tendency to paint urban things or big city problems. Starting from living in Jogja (1974) because I lived among ASRI children who always painted with certain themes. That's the influence that provokes me to paint these things. I thought about it and saw that in Jakarta there are many urban problems, and I brought these problems into my paintings. I'm just an example, following ASRI children. I was still SSRI at that time, but I was already working (ideally), even though the school didn't assign it at all."

DES's introduction to "themed" painting was a new experience because he had previously started out as a model painter without a specific theme. ASRI students also introduced DES to painting techniques using slide projector photos reflected onto the surface of the canvas (1976-1977) as part of an exploration of objects in photo format. The use of projector technology (a new trend) opened up rich creative possibilities for DES to produce surprising artistic effects.

DES's free and always restless spirit has found fertile ground in GSRB. The seeds of his rebellion, visible since he did not follow the painting rules at SSRI and wanted to paint large-sized paintings, were noticed by ASRI students who invited him to join GSRB. His interest in painting in large sizes with detail also indirectly shows his tendency towards hyperrealistic painting.

According to DES, before painting, he did a study first. The meaning of study here is (1) carrying out various experiments, looking for various alternative possible forms until a suitable formula is found according to the desired visual idealization; (2) looking for inspiration or observations in the field/place regarding the object he wants to paint, by travelling to villages.

DES always has ideas for painting. The source of ideas can come from anywhere, from what they see,

hear, dream, murmur, jokes, and aspirations to critical shouts from friends, opponents or people they do not know. Everything and anything enters the world of his painting (Dermawan T, 1999). The ideas for DES's paintings are inspired by and taken from reality, but in DES's hands, he reconstructs reality by taking its essence. For example, the painting "Labyrinth" (1987-1988) was inspired by Jakarta's very dense Sumur Batu area. It only took its essence by depicting a labyrinth made of cardboard to represent a slum settlement with many cardboard walls.

In general, DES's creative painting process uses visual references taken from various sources, from photos taken by himself, magazines, advertisements in domestic and foreign print media, calendars, scraps of waste paper, wrapping paper, packaging designs for industrial goods, and so on. For reference, photos taken by DES are divided into two types. The first is photos deliberately taken candidly on the spot in a public place. The second is a photo shoot using a model. Reference photos made on the spot can be taken from anywhere. The weakness of this type of photo is that the lighting may need to match expectations. For photo shoots that use models, the models are deliberately set up, dressed in costumes, and pose in a certain way according to the scenario or purpose of the painting to be made, with lighting arranged according to idealization.

When DES wants to paint, he often does not need to conceptualize the idea initially. Even though something was originally conceptualized, the final result can change again. He admits, "My way of working is chaotic and not patterned," he said, illustrating that he uses various methods when expressing his ideas in paintings. Dede has a habit of painting three or four canvases at once and moving between paintings. If he gets bored with one painting, he will move to another painting. The moving method of painting is his strategy for continuing to work simultaneously.

DES in creating is always guided by time and driven by ideas. A painting can never be finished if it remains in front of it. A painting that he might consider one hundred percent complete could stimulate him to change and add more to it. Painting, for him, is an endless process (Dermawan T, 1999). Because it never ends, many paintings still need to be finished because they are forgotten and because they are so bored. However, on the other hand, because ideas continue to develop, in Dede's hands, one reference photo can produce several different paintings.

When painting using a slide projector, DES only takes a rough outline of the visual image displayed by the projector on the canvas. Because the projector has a weakness, it will change position and get hot if it sways, so it has to be drawn quickly. This method helps him save time and create accuracy in sketching. Another advantage of using a projector is that you can experiment and produce more artistic effects. Dede uses the latest tools, such as focus and HP, which produce neater results.

DES also paints in various ways. Some are painted on the spot, and some use a grid to get accurate results. A ruler is sometimes used to get straight lines in a painting, or a drawn thread is used to create perspective.

When he wants to paint, various reference sources, ranging from photos to scraps of paper, spread DES in front of him as a stimulus, then combine them in the painting using various techniques, as mentioned above. The DES work sequence when painting is not systematic. It can start from anywhere. Sometimes, he makes an initial design based on various reference sources, paints it, looks for other references in magazines, takes more photos, and then paints again. Sometimes, something is deleted and then replaced with a new object. Sometimes, to get a particular effect, objects that have been painted are shot through a slide projector and new objects are stacked on top. DES calls it a "patchwork" technique, a way of painting by taking it apart.

Reference photos for his paintings can be taken from anywhere and may not be related between one photo and another, whether in time, place or event. However, after being combined into a painting, it becomes a unified idea that binds within a theme frame. As in the painting "Communication May 1998." DES took the reference photo of the woman looking down in sadness at an airport (1993), while the reference photo of the men standing with their backs was taken while watching football (1980) (Dermawan T, 1999). DES does not fully use reference sources in painting but can combine them with imagination. The painting "What Remains is a Panorama (1997)," uses only photos of women and rice fields as reference photos while building elements, fences, and so on are compositions or imagination only.

What DES saw during field observations could have been depicted on canvas differently. For example, when looking at the density of a slum environment from an eye-level perspective, the visualization is painted from a top perspective (bird's eye perspective).

For DES, any object, including inanimate objects that look ordinary daily, can be exciting material to paint. These objects are brought to life and have certain connotations when linked to the social context. As in his painting entitled "Jack of Fate (1998)," in his eyes, the eviction was like being "jacked up."

## CONCLUSION

The stimulus behind DES's creative process in painting marginalized urbanites is two things. The first is the social reality experienced, felt, seen, read and heard by the artist. DES paints based on his anxiety about the problems of the social (urban) environment that have been before his eyes (Jakarta) since he was a child. DES's social sensitivity in raising environmental issues was formed due to the second stimulus, namely its association with GSRB exponents. The emergence of GSRB was a reaction to the bottleneck of creativity in Indonesian painting at the beginning of the capitalistic New Order era, as a result of the political hegemony of New Order culture, and gave rise to a type of art that was not critical of the socio-political situation. DES and other GSRB activists rebelled against this situation, namely painting by looking at social reality.

DES's closeness and involvement in GSRB are due to ideological similarities between him and the ASRI students who became GSRB activists: "Their teachers rejected both, both were restless and rebelled against the creative climate in the place where they studied."

The condition for this creative process to be fulfilled is that there must be "freedom" in the work, even though it must be against the dominant ideology. In other words, through this rebellion, the GSRB exponents with DES in them have counter-hegemony against the political ideology of the New Order culture. They broke the established situation and imprisoned this creativity by painting outside the political policy lines of the New Order's National Culture through creativity using technological assistance and through themes considered sensitive by the New Order. Creativity to thrive also needs space to accommodate it. For the first, DES found space in GSRB, and the second was in TIM.

DES's creative process in painting marginalized urbanites involves using visual references from various sources. However, it does not try to plagiarize or copy raw reality. Instead, it reconstructs this reality using various techniques to communicate ideas and create new realities on the canvas.

Thus, as a result of creativity that originates from the socio-political environment in a particular space and period, DES's paintings regarding the environment of Jakarta's urban society in the New Order era can be said to be worthy of representing a new (type of) original art and representing the spirit of its time (zeitgeist).

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