EXPLORING THE ELEMENTS OF BATUAN PAINTING AS A BASIS FOR ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN METHOD

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to identify elements of Batuan painting, a local Balinese painting, that potentially become the basis of the architectural design method. The exploration of the image became an alternative in developing design methods as explored by some architects, such as Zaha Hadid, Van Doesburg, and Gerrit Thomas Rietveld. Arguably, such approaches offer different insights into programming architecture and further enrich the design process by creating particular relations with the context instead of producing a generic and contextless architecture. In this study, the local Batuan painting is related closely to the daily life of the Balinese community. Local philosophy is explored to connect architecture with the locality and cultural identity as part of the design process. This study employs the qualitative approach by visual observations and content analysis of Batuan paintings, identifying the elements, compositions, and essential aspects always present in Batuan paintings. This study reveals three details from Batuan painting critical to the design method: heterogeneity, hierarchy, and the particular local painting techniques of luck-naturelabour. The painters mainly developed such elements from Batuan Village to represent the everydayness of the local society to Tri Hita Karana, Hulu-Teben, and Tri Mandala philosophy. Furthermore, the elements imply the spatial classifications of local activities, dualism principles, and the embedded relationship between humans, humans with nature, and humans with God. The painting elements insinuate further insights for developing the architecture, particularly in the formal and spatial arrangements and spatial qualities, which could be more culturally meaningful and contextually situated.

Keywords: Batuan painting, architecture design method, locality, and identity

INTRODUCTION

The art of painting and architecture implies a close relationship in their progression, where an architectural work can inspire painting, and vice versa, where the painting can provide new ideas in applying architectural design methods (Lembersky, 1994). Exploring images as part of developing design methods is beneficial, as painting offers visual pattern, composition, or optical relations and acts as a medium that contains meanings, implying spatial consciousness and contextual awareness (Coates, 2012; Psarra, 2009). This paper explores Batuan painting, a local painting developed by the Balinese in Batuan Village, in search of elements potentially employed as the basis of the architecture design method.

Several architects have developed new design methods based on paintings in modern architecture. They utilized the geometrical pattern and relations of visual elements in the paintings as a basis for their design method. Van Doesburg and Rietveld were inspired by the de Stijl movement and Piet Mondrian (Psarra, 2009). As van Doesburg took the ideas from the arrangement of surfaces from the painting to three and four-dimensional space, Rietveld attempted further to employ colours to construct dimensions and spaces (Janssen, 2020). In the later era, Zaha Hadid developed a design method based on the paintings of the Russian painter Kazimir Malevich with its suprematism (Coates, 2012). The style that Zaha Hadid is exploring focuses on geometric abstraction, which leads to a further idea of distortion, movement, and anti-gravity in her architecture (Abdullah, 2013). Such exploration of painting becomes the basis of the geometrical surface compositions, the tectonics of architectural elements, or spatial configurations (Coates, 2012; Psarra, 2009). However, such explorations limit paintings only as form generators, and the potential of spatial practices and context should be discussed more.

On the other hand, paintings and architecture can be seen as a medium that contains meaning (Psarra, 2009); they carry a narrative dimension and insinuate cultural significance. As a narrative medium, both can reflect unseen forces of nature and the system of beliefs, which helps define a context and cultural significance (Coates, 2012; Tanis, 2021). Such aspects can be found in the traditional paintings rooted in particular contexts and cultural traditions. Therefore, this study explores essential elements in local painting works, namely Batuan painting—a traditional painting developed in Batuan Village by local Balinese people, to develop architectural design methods attached to local values.

Such discussion insinuates further speculation—if paintings become the basis of the architecture design method, paintings could open the possibility of projecting the identity and locality, including the philosophy contained within the painting, into the programming of architecture. Thus, this article is structured into four sections, starting from discussing the potentiality of painting as the basis of architectural design and further describing Batuan painting. To identify the essential elements of the local painting, a content analysis of visual data is employed to explore and

identify the potential elements for the design process, highlighting the contribution of this study to the architecture design discourse.

THEORY/ RESEARCH METHODS

As discussed above, paintings can contribute to the design method of form generation and help define a context and cultural significance. Some painting streams are interconnected with particular philosophies, potentially generating architecture that responds to particular contexts (Vidler, 2003). For example, de Stijl's paintings employed by van Doesburg and Rietveld highlight the separation, proportion, and composition in painting, architecture, sculpture, furniture, or typography in rectangular shapes using primary colours (Barr, 1936). The clean rectangular lines of the interior and the emphasis on incidental ornamentation are essential characteristics of the negative characteristics of de Stijl's aesthetic (Barr, 1936). The understanding of the paintings helps to understand the possibilities of shape compositions and a particular order in proportion.

Meanwhile, surrealist paintings employ a technique to "exceed the boundaries of knowledge", revealing the unconscious life obscured by rationality (Sorkin, cited in Mical, 2005, p. 275). Such technique becomes relevant to criticize rationality radically, the demands of bourgeois society, and their desire to change lives (Harris & Berke, 1997). The explorations of such paintings allow the understanding of the painting's content and context, which has principles of going against rationality in Western society and emphasizing everyday life. Another stream developed by Malevich, suprematism, is the non-objective painting that focuses on translating his art for everyday life. The stream emphasizes spatial planning and the architectural components to focus on singular beauty (Beeren, Joosten & Veneman-Boersma, 1989; Wisotzki & Freifeld, 1990). The architecture focuses on geometry, distortion, movement, and anti-gravity (Abdullah, 2013).

The painting streams and the ideology would render the architecture by influencing the architectural discourse in context, content, analogy, or typology of architecture (Colquhoun, 1969). However, the discussion of paintings as a basis for design methods is limited to the modernist, the North, and the Western part of the globe. Therefore, this paper believes exploring the other locally developed tradition is crucial. It is necessary to elaborate the ideas of the paintings' stream and philosophy further in order to be able to engage the elements of traditional painting in the architectural design method. Such an approach contributes to developing design discourse that could be more diverse, creative, and provocative architectural knowledge (Johannes, 2021).

In this study, Batuan painting is employed as an attempt to understand architecture from a different point of view. Learning the potential of Batuan painting to develop architecture can reflect the locals' cultural and social practices beyond physical arrangements (Johanes & Wahid, 2018; Warakanyaka & Yatmo, 2013;

Yatmo & Atmodiwirjo, 2021). Batuan painting is a style influenced by Western painters such as Walter Spies and Rudolf Bonnet (Burhan, 2013) and developed locally in Bedulu and Batuan Village after that. The Batuan painting started to emerge as a painting style and showed the local people's character and identity that showed the local society's daily activities. It is often to see that various everyday activities of the locals are being displayed all together in one painting. They range from sacred ceremonies to mundane everyday activities, thus indicating the rich and heterogeneous cultural significance of the local Balinese people.

Aside from the often-displayed activities of local people as content, the paintings also follow important Balinese philosophies. The philosophies are (1) the *Tri Hita Karana*, (2) the *Hulu-Teben* or *Gunung-Segara*, (3) the *Tri Mandala*, and (4) the *Rwa Bhineda* principles. First, the *Tri Hita Karana* is the basic philosophy that regulates the life of the Balinese—between humans (*Palemahan*), humans and nature (*Pawongan*), and humans with the Gods (*Parahyangan*) to lead a happy and harmonious life (Dwijendra, 2003). Second, The *Gunung-Segara* or *Hulu-Teben* portrays the idea of a binary opposition that connects the mountain (*Gunung*) and the sea (*Segara*), the high and the low, the sacred and the profane. *Gunung* or *Hulu* represents the north direction and sacred.

Meanwhile, Segara or Teben implies the south direction and is labelled dirty (Glebet et al., 1982). Third, the Tri Mandala principle regulates zones vertically into three parts—Utama, Madya, and Nista (Howe, 2005). Utama represents the highest and sacred position, Madya is intermediate, and Nista is the lowest and dirty position. The fourth, Rwa Bhineda, is the philosophy of dualism or contradiction that always exists and coexists in life (Adnyana et al., 2017). The contrasting yet always complementary principle, painting, and architecture might be represented between the Sakala space (concrete, tangible) and the Niskala space (abstract, intangible). These philosophical ideas render the Batuan paintings, suggesting that the positioning of people and their activities, properties or objects, and the elements of landscape or nature follow particular order in the painting. The paintings convey an important message about the principles and orders that ought to be followed by Balinese people in every aspect of their life, which would be indicated by a particular hierarchy and spatial configurations in the paintings.

Batuan paintings are notorious for their painting technique. There are several stages in making Batuan paintings that involve particular techniques such as *nyeket*, *nyawi*, *nyigar*, *ngurek*, *ngarsir*, *ngucek*, *ngabur*, and the final colouring process. In particular, *ngabur* or *ngucek* are effective techniques that give the painting a dimmed or darkened impression before the final colouring (Rudana, 1991). Another uniqueness of Batuan painting is the choice of colours (Andyana et al., 2017) and the theme and composition of the painting (Bonnet, 1936). The techniques become crucial to show a certain depth in the painting and emphasize contrasting colours, insinuating beauty and the paintings' mysticism, serenity, ambiguity, and vague sensation. According to Hill (2006), such invoked sensorial experience suggests the presence of intangible or immaterial aspects of architecture. The colour, as an immaterial form that cannot be seen but can be felt, opposes the everyday experience

(Pallasmaa, 2011). This immaterial concept has similarities described by Deleuze (2003), where he calls this event a "sensation" where when he observes Francis Bacon's painting, realizing that what is painted on the canvas is not an object but a sensation that someone experiences.

Based on the illustration above, some elements are always present in the painting. These elements include the heterogenous Balinese culture, particular hierarchical order or spatial arrangements within the paintings, and local techniques imploring indigenous beauty as their identity. The elements provide context and rich cultural content for the architecture to be programmed. These elements will be explored further in the next section, elaborating further on how these elements are intertwined with the local philosophies and potentially be the basis of the architectural design method.

Methods

Culture, paintings, or other works of art are something unique and have been inherited from generation to generation through specific groups of people where culture or art in the form of dance, paintings, and other ways in other than able to describe the identity of several groups (Katsakou, 2020). The paintings are the visual representations of the life of the traditional Balinese, inferring the spatial practice and the generated spatial arrangement (Coates, 2012; de Certeau, 1984; Psarra, 2009). The paintings become the visual data that will be explored descriptively, highlighting the relationship between elements and the local philosophies. To analyze painting as a medium that provides context and conveys meaning, a qualitative approach is required for this study (Banks, 2007; Wang & Groat, 2013).

Lembersky (1994) stated that the expression of the spiritual or the content would be the similarities in art and architecture. Therefore, to analyze the paintings, dematerialization, abstraction, organization, and identifying the construction of space become essential steps. DematerializationDematerialization refers to identifying the geometry and chromatic properties of the paintings or the beauty elements. Meanwhile, abstraction highlights the visual perception of pictorial qualities, such as depth and movement in the paintings. OrganizingOrganizing the paintings is an attempt to cluster the information or the content and understand the purpose of the arrangement in the painting or the context. It can be based on the visual elements and the arrangement principles, such as proportion and composition, that suggest the structure of the painting. Such analysis could be a tool to understand the essential elements of the painting, leading to the ordering of space and formmaking devices for the architecture.



Figure 1. Five Batuan paintings will be breakdown to find identity and locality Source: Author's documentations, 2021

Five Batuan paintings were documented, visually observed, and analyzed to identify the elements that essentially represent the locality and identity of the Balinese people in search of unpredicted findings regardless of the size and shape (Figure 1) (Banks, 2007). Aside from the visual documentation, some literature studies regarding the paintings were also conducted, providing further information that could enrich the understanding of what is depicted in the paintings. Based on the above thematic content analysis (Ryan & Bernard, 2003), the result would be synthesizing the essential elements of Batuan painting that could be the basis of architectural programming.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Exploring and Identifying Essential Elements of The Batuan Paintings

To identify the essential elements of the Batuan paintings, five paintings were analyzed based on the steps explained by Lembersky (1994) (Figure 2), which then led to the identification of beauty elements, proportion, and composition along with other information that constructs the content and the context of the paintings. Based on the analysis of the uniqueness of Batuan paintings, there are three elements contained in Batuan paintings that potentially become the basis for the architectural design method. The three elements are the (1) heterogeneity of activities of the local people; (2) the spatial hierarchy based on the Balinese philosophies, and (3) the

ngucek-ngurek-ngabur as effective local techniques that generate the pictorial qualities.

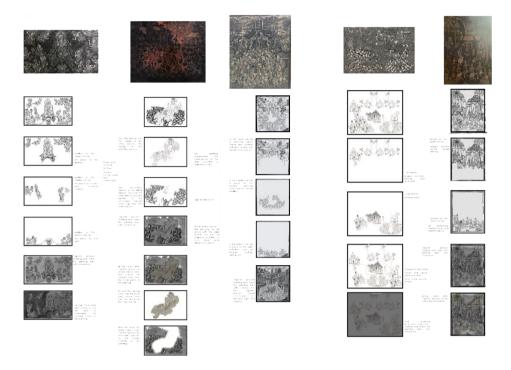


Figure 2. Analyzing Analyzing Batuan paintings Source: Author, 2022

1. Heterogeneity of Activities of The Local People

After exploring and analyzing five Batuan paintings, a pattern of heterogeneity of everyday activities of local people is always to be seen in the paintings. The everydayness is shown and composed at once through the various activities of local people, such as work, social interactions, religious ceremonies, and community rituals and traditions. Many activities dominate the painting, demonstrating the importance of composing a wide range of activities for the local people (Figure 3). The heterogeneity of activities becomes the main content of each painting, representing the identity and locality of the Balinese people in Batuan Village.

The Batuan paintings illustrate how Balinese philosophies dissolve into the everydayness of the local people, suggesting that the heterogeneity of activities is a crucial element to be programmed in architecture. The diverse activities displayed with *Tri Hita Karana*'s philosophy are constantly shown through the presence of God, harmonious interactions between humans, and arrangements of the built environment within the landscape or natural elements (Adnyana et al., 2017). Ceremonies or rituals describe the relationship with God, while the interactions between humans are displayed through interactions such as the gathering and performing arts. Meanwhile,

the relationship between humans and nature is shown in how humans utilize nature and how landscapes are always present in Batuan paintings. The relationship developed between humans, humans with God, and humans with nature, thus, should be taken into account in the spatial arrangements of the architecture.



Figure 3. The diversity of activities shown in Batuan paintings concerning the philosophy of *Tri Hita Karana*Source: Author. 2022

2. The Spatial Hierarchy Based on The Balinese Philosophies

Another essential element always present in Batuan painting is the implied spatial hierarchy that guides the positions of the everyday activities of the local people within the painting. There are particular organizing or clustering techniques by Lembersky (1994) used for each kind of activity shown by different densities in painting. The higher the density, the more profane the activities are (Figure 4). Such densities are also related to the positions within the painting, meaning that the high density of activities will be positioned at the lower part of the paintings. The high density of activities often suggests the everydayness of local people, such as interacting, gathering, and trading, which would be positioned in the middle-low part of the painting.

Meanwhile, if it is related to spiritual themes that display evil traits, such as giants, evil spirits (*bhuta kala*), or other representations of evil traits will be placed at the bottom of the paintings. Meanwhile, activities with low density are always in the upper position of the canvas in Batuan paintings. Usually, activities with low density are more related to religious activities, such as ceremonies or something sacred or something holy. The more sacred the activities, the higher position the activities will be placed in the paintings. Such positionings are related to the *Tri Mandala* philosophy, in which the *nista* or the dirt suggests an essential hierarchy in spatially ordering activities.











Figure 4. Analyzing Analyzing the high density of activities represents a more profane activity and is positioned in the mid-low of the paintings

Source: Author, 2022

The arrangements or organizations of activities in Batuan paintings also suggest another kind of spatial division that works as a binary opposition. The *Tri Mandala* is not the only principle that governs the position. In this arrangement, the Hulu-Teben philosophy also plays an essential role in positioning the activities, objects, or actors. The mountains or such highlands are to be arranged in the *Hulu* or north direction, implying a zone or area for something holy, clean, or sacred. On the other hand, the sea or something low is made into the *Teben* or south and is regarded as a dirty zone. It is demonstrated that such concepts always play a crucial role in spatial organization. This spatial hierarchy should be considered in programming such architecture that represents the local identity.











Figure 5. Analyzing Analyzing activities, actors, or objects with sacred values, such as religious rituals, shrines, or sacred activities, are made into *Hulu*

Source: Author, 2022

Even though both philosophies suggest spatial divisions related to sacredness, they regulate the space differently. Tri Mandala orders the space vertically into three divisions—namely the *utama mandala* (holy, sacred), *madya mandala* (intermediate), and *nista mandala* or dirty places (Howe, 2005). On the other hand, the *Hulu-Teben* binary concept always positions two opposite ideas in different directions, either north-south, high-low, or mountain-sea. These local Balinese philosophies can be seen in the paintings' composition, regulating activities, objects, and actors at each rightful position, which then would be a particular way of arranging the space and identity of the architecture.

3. The Ngucek-Ngurek-Ngabur as Influential Techniques

The process of making the Batuan painting consists of six stages: *nyeket*, *nyawi*, *nyigar*, making motifs, *ngucek-ngurek-ngabur*, and finally, the process of giving colour (Andyana et al., 2017). *Nyeket* is the first process of the painting, a rough sketch to be used as the basis for the painting. *Nyawi* means reinforcing the rough sketch before *nyigar*, a process to darken or lighten with black or white. The following process is making motifs on the sketches, which takes the longest time compared to other stages to produce detailed motifs, a different kind of geometry and beauty. The next stage is the most influential, as it must be done repetitively to get the desired dark colour or blur and vague sensation, namely the *ngucek*, *ngurek or ngabur*. This process is followed by the optional stage, giving colour to the Batuan painting.

The spiritual experience in art and architecture can evoke various sensations in human beings, signifying the notability of such a technique as the basis of the design method. However, the painting process often ends at the *ngucek-ngurek-ngabur* stage. The darkening and blurring process is enjoyable because the process generates a dominant dark colour composition in the painting (Figure 6). It dims or highlights the particular colour in the painting to create a magical impression or mystique (Rudana, 1991). Such a process is critical in giving a spiritual or symbolic value based on the philosophy of the *Rwa Bhineda*, the philosophy of dualism that always exists and coexists in life, contrasting yet complementary (Adnyana et al., 2017). These local techniques create a particular sensation and spirituality expressed in touching the human soul (Lembersky, 1994).

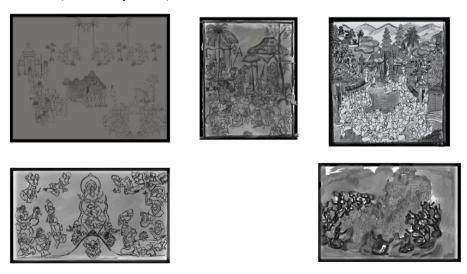


Figure 6. Analyzing the process of *ngucek/ngurek/ngabur* in Batuan paintings Source: Author, 2022

Based on Lembersky (1994), such a particular painting process, in this case, ngucek-ngurek-ngabur, can be used to develop a design method that requires abstraction and dematerialization. Through abstraction and dematerialization, the ngucek-ngurek-ngabur can be seen as The process of dematerialization and abstraction in this ngucek/ngurek/ngabur technique shows that the bright or light colours in the painting resulted from the darkening or blurring process, highlighting particular arrangement of shapes and forms, which would contribute as unique intangible and immaterial aspects of architecture, as mentioned by Hill (2006) and Deleuze (2003).

Elements of Batuan Painting as A Basis for A Design Method

From the above discussion, it can be concluded how the elements—heterogeneity of activities, spatial hierarchy, and *ngurek-ngucek-ngabur* technique—configure Batuan painting. The essential elements can provide novelty for a design method, particularly in generating architecture that manifests a particular identity and locality. The heterogeneity becomes the first essential element for developing the design method, as it implores the importance of the everyday activities of the local people ranging from sacred to profane; the programming should accommodate that. It also suggests how the heterogeneous activities should be positioned and interconnected spatially, rearranging the appropriateness based on the local philosophies, which is related to the second element.

The second element is the spatial hierarchy developed based on the *Tri Hita Karana*, *Hulu-Teben*, and *Tri Mandala*. They suggest spatial division for activities, objects, and actors with the value of sacredness. The sacred, joint, and dirty would be positioned differently as a hierarchy in space, vertically or horizontally, implying opposition that contradicts yet complements each other. The holly areas are usually on the higher place or the north side, while the dirty ones are usually on the lower area or the south side. Such arrangements are related to religious ceremonies or rituals, which should be located in a higher position than everyday activities. Such ideas can be a basis for spatial order in locally derived architecture.

The third element that regards the particular technique in Batuan painting would be beneficial in creating a sensuous spatial experience, emphasizing the contrast between dark and light, experimenting with shadow and blurred effects. Such techniques can generate a unique effect on the architecture, allowing a vague sense from the painting through dark and vague immaterial qualities. This technique is essential to developing the design methods base on Batuan painting, particularly for the visual effect and human experience. It offers the potential to generate the space that represents the *Rwa Bhineda*, creating a unique dan appropriate spatial identity.

CONCLUSION

Embracing the Cultural Identity and Locality in the Architecture Design

Based on the above discussion, this study reveals that the Batuan painting contains essential elements that emphasize the identity and locality of the local Balinese people. These elements, namely the heterogeneity of activities, spatial hierarchy, and *ngucek-ngurek-ngabur* as local painting techniques, embrace the composition, proportion, complexity, and contradiction influenced by the local philosophy. The elements are interrelated and describe the heterogeneity of activities, followed by the particular spatial hierarchy based on the sanctity level and particular sensorial experience. This study demonstrates that the three elements found from exploring Batuan painting are potential insights for programming the architecture.

Furthermore, this study enriches the discussion of a design method that would shift our perspective in seeing cultural identity and locality in the design process. Cultural identity and locality can help define the content and context employed as a basis of the design method. The idea portrays not only a particular arrangement of shape and the concept of local beauty but also conveys a strong message about the relationship between humans, humans and God, and humans and nature. The local philosophies, such as *Tri Hita Karana, Hulu-Teben, Tri Mandala, and Rwa Bhineda*, become influential as it guides how to maintain the dualism, balancing the complexities and contradictions in the arrangement of activities, objects, and human actors. The idea encourages how architecture can play a different role in maintaining the world's sustenance by arranging human activities, objects and human actors spatially without neglecting spatial experience and beauty. The elements insinuate further insights for developing the architecture, particularly in the formal and spatial arrangements and qualities, which could be more culturally meaningful and contextually situated.

The study raises further questions on further application of the elements in the programming and further form-making as part of the design process. It would be fascinating to see what kind of architecture might be generated from these elements. This research could trigger similar research in countries with rich and diverse cultures like Indonesia. It also opens the possibility of investigating other cultural artefacts and artifices, adding novelty to the current architectural design methods.

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