

Empu Krt. Subandi Suponingrat Keris Preservation in Documentary Photography

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ABSTRACT

Keris is one of the wealth objects in Indonesia which currently still exists and the process of making it can still be studied. The activity of making keris, which is often seen from childhood, is one of the ideas for creating this photographic work. This visual work uses documentary photography and applies EDFAT method. Documentary photography is a style of photography that depicts an event or situation that has important and historical meaning. Implementing EDFAT method helps to clarify the flow of a documentary photography story in creating this final project. The aim of creating this final assignment is to increase the existence of the Keris-making process among the younger generation.

INTRODUCTION

Many art objects are found in Indonesia, and some can still be studied in the process of making them. Keris is one of the traditional weapons that still exists and can be found in several parts of Indonesia, and it still can be studied in the process of making it. Therefore, the Indonesian Institute of the Arts Surakarta created a keris and traditional weapons study program.

Making a keris is always accompanied by specific prayers, various spells, and special ceremonies and offerings (Moedjianto 1987, 76). The spell means prayers, so that every keris-making process can run smoothly without any obstacles, and every keris made can be helpful for the buyers. A few days before the forging process begins, the *empu* performs several other rituals, such as asceticism, namely not sleeping, fasting, and not touching the opposite sex at certain times. Keris generally has special meanings that are exalted. According to ethics, norms, religion, and the state, the keris blade symbolizes a good life. Aspects relating to knowledge of keris blades are broad, especially those involving mystical aspects, philosophy, social functions, traditions, and fine arts. The keris experienced development and change in function and form throughout its journey. In the past, keris were used as dueling weapons in war. In contrast, nowadays, keris are used as a complement to clothing, have several cultural symbols, or have become collectables in terms of aesthetics.

The Indonesian Keris has been registered with UNESCO as The Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity since 2005. The keris blade includes aspects of art, philosophy, tradition, social and mystical functions; these advantages make the Keris different from other traditional world weapons. Making keris blades is still quite traditional, using a furnace and iron heated using coals from teak charcoal. A keris artist, better known as "*empu*," is assisted by several workers or "*panjak*" (Harsrinuksmo 2004, 36) to process iron, which can be called "*Pande*," from cleaning the iron to the process of mixing it with materials to make *pamor*. The process of making a keris "*luk*" or curved Keris is done by the *empu* himself until the end of the Keris-making process because, in this process, only the master has a significant role.

KRT. Subandi Suponingrat is one of the *empu* in Surakarta. Empu Subandi has been around the world of Keris for approximately 40 years (Joko Suryono, Interview 25 July 2022). Empu Subandi's popularity is not only domestic but also abroad. Empu Subandi initially studied keris from a master in Jitar Village, Kulon Progo, Yogyakarta, named Empu Yoso.

According to Empu Subandi (Interview, 25 July 2022), Empu Yoso's whereabouts were discovered by Sedijono Djojokartiko Humardani by a German sailor named Dietrich Drescher. Initially, this sailor was offered a keris when his ship was docked in Surabaya, until finally, in 1962, Dietrich traveled around Indonesia to look for and study keris. Dietrich's journey brought him to meet Empu Yoso Pangaraso, who at that time was no longer active in making keris, but Empu Yoso still knew the sequence of the keris-making process by heart. After the "*nyatrik*" was completed in 1982, Empu Subandi began actively making keris at Sasana Mulya Surakarta and then made his *besalen* at home to apply the knowledge he had received and develop it. The process of making

keris in Yogyakarta and Surakarta has quite significant differences. According to Empu Subandi (Interview, 1 September 2022), this difference occurs in the "*pande*" process or during the forging process of processing iron materials to mixing iron with *pamor* materials. Empu and Panjak do it sitting in Yogyakarta, better known as lesehan, but Empu Subandi changes position in this process by standing. According to Empu Subandi (Interview, 1 September 2022), by standing, the energy released in this process is very efficient so that the workers' energy can be maximized. The changes made by Empu Subandi are still used and carried out by other masters in the city of Surakarta.

Empu Subandi explained that the keris he made in the early days of his career as an *empu* were used as academic investments (Interview, 25 July 2022) until the keris he made got appreciation from keris circles in Indonesia. In the 1980s, ASKI Surakarta held a *tosan aji* exhibition. Collectors sought after the keris he made, and currently, 700 of the keris he made have been kept by domestic and foreign collectors. Empu Subandi's *besalen* activities have been running for years, making the relationship between Empu Subandi and several *panjaks* close. This activity visualizes the activities carried out while in Besalen with the process of making a keris, which is still traditional, using simple tools, portraits of the buildings that support it, a portrait of Empu Subandi, who completed the final stage of the process of making his keris.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Documentary Photography

Documentary photography is a means of providing a summary of events for the future, which provides information and increases insight to many people because it has a personal nature and broad interests, such as the interests of photojournalism. Documentary photography emerged because of journalists. Journalistic photography is a photo that provides news value, displays exciting photos, and can provide information to the public (Wijaya, 2016, p. 05). The result of photography's primary function is documentation that contains visual data. Documentary photos show a realistic or natural side created by the photographer, which also shows aesthetic value. According to (Soedjono, 2007, p. 133), documentary photography is an essential characteristic of photography that functions as recording or documenting something. It must have a firm idea or concept regarding the subject, theme, and technique. An indication of the achievement of the concept of documentary photography is the achievement of a message to the viewer about what is happening quickly and clearly. According to (Sugiarto, 2005, p. 117), documentary photos are no different from a film's synopsis; they are photos that tell the story of an event or event. The photo created is a photo that tells an event coherently and transparently.

The photographers apply the EDFAT method to remain the structure. This method was introduced by the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University. EDFAT is an acronym for Entire, Detail, Frame, Angel, and Time. The application of this method is used to train sensitivity to the aspects that need to be considered when shooting to get comprehensive and varied photos in terms of photography and moments in

an event. Apart from EDFAT, Henri Cartier-Bresson (HCB) also introduced the term “decisive moment,” which is also essential in the world of documentary photography and journalistic photography.

Documentary photography is a type of photography that depicts an event or situation that has essential and historical meaning. Documentary photography works are authentic, objective images. In a book entitled “Photography: A Culture History,” Marry Warner explains that, generally, *a documentary* can be defined as a non-fiction representation in books or visual media. Documentary photography aims to communicate all essential things or events. (Marien, n.d.) Time Life Books defines documentary photography as “A depiction of the real world by a photographer whose intent is to communicate something of importance-to make a comment-that will be understood by the viewer.” (Editor Team, 1972). The book also states that:

“...documentary photography has also created essential records that provide tangible evidence supported by great visual detail, cast the compelling impression of truth, allow viewers to occupy the position of the photographer, serve as an impartial and faithful witness to life’s events, and freeze an instant of time so that places and events may later be studied and restudied.” (Peres, 2007)

Documentary photography tells each object clearly without manipulation so that art connoisseurs can easily understand each work. Therefore, every documentary photography is expected to provide transparent information in every photo created.

METHODOLOGY

The EDFAT method used to manage images will be well conceptualized so that every documentary photography creation can be coherent and clear. The application of the EDFAT method in creating documentary works by Empu Subandi Suponingrat Keris Preservation in Documentary Photography aims to make it easier for photographers to carry out work and help creators produce orderly photos so they can produce photos that tell a story. According to Setiyanto and Irwandi, the application of the EDFAT method is quite effective when used as a guide in shooting documentary photography (Setiyanto et al., 2017)

1. E = Entire

The entire or in the EDFAT method is better known as establishing a shot or the entirety of the shot when viewing an event or moment.

2. D = Details

Detail refers to a point of view to take an object in detail. Taking pictures can be done in 2 ways: getting closer to the object or using a zoom or telephoto lens. In this stage, the photographer must choose the proper and vital object as the POI (Point of Interest) in each photo.

3. F = Frame

Frame or framing stages, framing objects. At this stage, the photographer gets to know the shooting subject's composition, pattern, texture, and shape correctly. Photographers are also required to be more creative in processing objects, so they do not just focus on the main object, but photographers must be able to process or utilize objects around them. Frames or frames can be used as foreground or background.

4. A = Angel

At this stage, the point of view plays an essential role in taking photos. The photographer must determine where he will stand and take the picture.

5. T = Time

Time or timing where the photographer determines the exposure time using a combination of the diaphragm and essential speed with the previous stages. Time is the act of shooting and is related to the moment of shooting.

RESULTS

Empu Krt. Subandi Suponingrat Keris Preservation In Documentary Photography

Documentary photography is a photo of an event that can serve as documentary evidence and information for the future. A photo will be more manageable to provide information if each photo contains 5W+1H, namely what, where, why, when, who, and how, thereby increasing the validity of a photo. Photos through captions or captions in each photo (Wright, 1999, p. 118). The object of the creation of this documentary photography work is the activity or process of making keris carried out by Empu Subandi at the Besalen Omah Keris, owned by Empu KRT. Subandi Suponingrat in Banaran Village, Ngringo, Karanganyar Regency. It is hoped that Empu Subandi's selection of objects will be a multi-purpose lesson, which can be used as documentary photography practice and keris-making process practice, documenting traditional culture in Indonesia, especially in Karanganyar Regency, as well as enriching the realm of art photography in Indonesia.

Idea

The visual object of the creation of this work is an artist who makes traditional weapons, especially keris. The visuals presented or shown are how keris blades are made, from preparation to the final stage or finishing. This work is formed from everyday life that the author has seen every day since childhood and studies how a keris is created and what unique things happen in this process. The visual depiction of this work explains the process of creating a keris blade because, in every creation of a keris blade, there is an exciting process to immortalize.

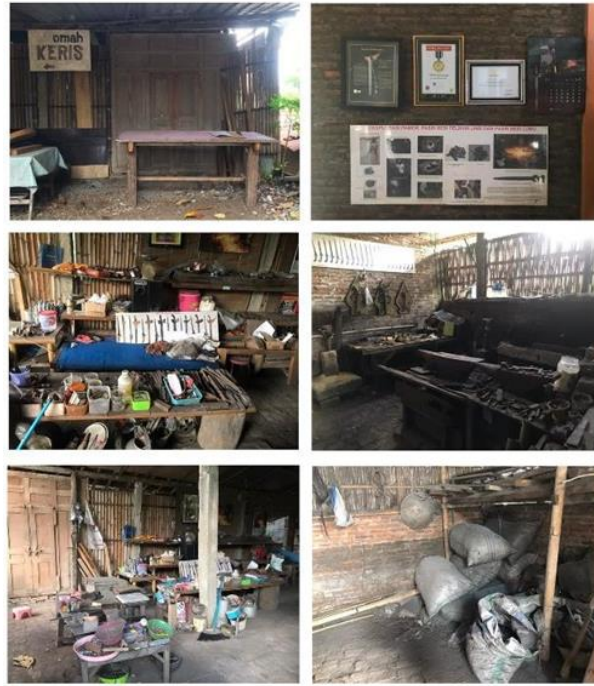


Image 1. *Besalen Omah Keris*
Jl. Widoro Kandang, Banaran, Ngringo, District. Jaten, Karanganyar Regency,
Central Java 57731
(By : Sepba Fri Atnin, 2022)

Creation Process

Exploration of photographic works created by the creators contains ideas and messages that want to be conveyed, such as increasing knowledge of keris to the public, providing education about the process of making keris, and applying photography as a medium to capture moments in the keris-making process. Development in making this work to differentiate it from other existing works.

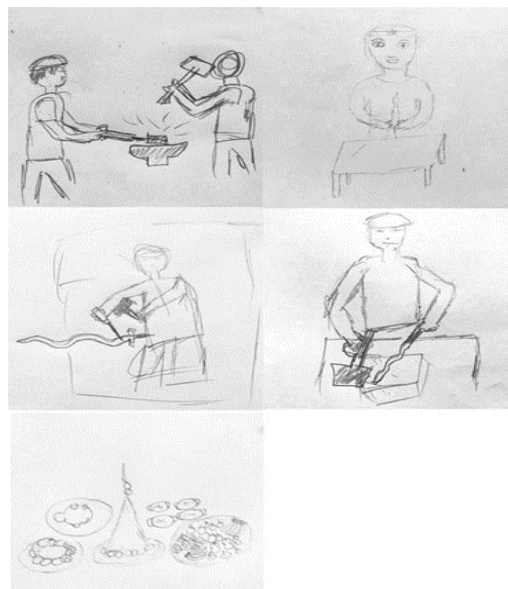


Image 2. *Storyboard*
(Project by Sepba Fri Atnin, 2022)

Image 1 is a form of creative exploration of the journey of creating this photographic work. The creator started by making a mood board and storyboard as the first step in creating this photographic work. The concept of a mood board and storyboard is a neatly arranged sketch with a sequence according to the text or script created for the development of visual content. The primary function of a storyboard is to make it easier to understand the storyline of the script that has been prepared. Apart from that, preparing equipment is also important. The equipment includes cameras, lenses, memory cards, tripods, and other equipment. The photography process was carried out indoors. Exploration of the process of making a keris was carried out through the techniques used in its creation.



DISCUSSION

This part allows you to elaborate on your results findings academically. You must not put numbers related to your statistical tests here; instead, you have to explain that numbers here. You have to compile your discussion with academic supports to your study and a good explanation according to the specific area you are investigating.

The experimental stage is the try-and-error stage to get visuals that match the desired. The production process is carried out by exploring the room in Besalen Omah Keris and determining the angle of taking the object. This stage aims to gain knowledge and find out whether or not photography works before entering the work. The next step is to work on the work.

The work is carried out in detail and arranged because this process follows the process of making a keris that starts from the procession of bancakan, the forging process, to the finishing process. In this stage of work, the work is required to have accurate accuracy in taking photos because in the process of making a keris, some moments cannot be repeated.



Image 4. *Behind the scene photoshoot*
(Project by Rahdan Hutama and Puti Andam, 2022)

Images 3 and 4 describe of the process of doing photoshoot. The process went smoothly with the mood board and storyboard that had previously been made and good cooperation between the keris maker and the production team. After the shooting process, the selected photo results are processed using Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Lightroom to process toning, cropping, or distortion in the photo.

Masterwork

The following works were successfully created by applying the EDFAT method in creating documentary photography by raising the title of KRT. Subandi Suponingrat Keris Preservation in Documentary Photography.



Image 5. Work 1. *Bancakan*
(Photo Paper. 60cm x 80cm, Photo by Sepba Fri Atnin, 2022)

Bancakan becomes the opening before starting the process of making a keris. This process symbolizes gratitude for what has been given and hopes that each process in making a keris runs smoothly.

In *Bancakan*, several types of food have their meaning. "*Nasi Tumpeng*" is a form of gratitude to God Almighty for the grace that has been given, "*Nasi Golong*" is a form of Walking and being a good result, "*Kembang Setaman*" the meaning of hope, hopefully it can be helpful and give a beautiful aura in life, "*Bubur empat warna*" means to show four directions of the winds that exist east, west, north and south, and "*Jajanan Pasar*" means of hope and all the necessities of life fulfilled.

In the first work, three photo series visualize the *bancakan* procession. This work contains a message so that we are always grateful for whatever fortune God has given us and give lessons to always share the fortune. The entire framing method is applied in this work. The method is used because the work above shows visuals that complement the elements of the method. Applying the entire method in this work aims to visually make anything prepared in the *bancakan* process visible.

In contrast, the framing method is used because, in this process, several people are sitting in a circle so that the framing method can be applied to this work and produce a different visual from several other works. The following process, or the second stage of making a keris, visualizes the procession of praying from the Empu KRT. Subandi Suponingrat, which he did himself while walking towards *Besalen* after the procession of *bancakan* was finished.



Image 6. Work 2. *Ndedongo*
(Photo Paper. 60cm x 90cm, Photo by Sepba Fri Atnin, 2022)



Image 7. Work 3. *Fire Embers*

(Photo Paper. 60cm x 90cm, Photo by Sepba Fri Atnin 2022)

The initial process in making a keris is burning the iron to be processed, which aims to clean it of dirt so that later, the iron used to make the keris will be clean. Iron is heated to 800 degrees Celsius, burned, and forged many times during this process. The meaning of this work is a depiction of human nature so as not to be enthusiastic about everything done to get the best results. This work applies the Time method because when shooting, it requires the right timing to get the right moment. Accuracy in visualizing this work is crucial because when turning the iron and ensuring that the molten iron does not block the air holes if the timing is not correct, splashes of charcoal could cover Empu Subandi's face.



Image 8. Work 4. *Towards the Forge*

(Photo Paper. 60cm x 80cm, Photo by :Sepba Fri Atnin 2022)

Iron is mixed with nickel when forging iron to create *saton* with a specific layer to create the desired prestige motif. In ancient times, the material used to make *pamor* was meteoroids. Currently, the material used for *pamor* is nickel because meteor material is challenging to find if it is available. This material is quite expensive.

The meaning of this work is to symbolize how, in life, we have to go through the same processes repeatedly so that we don't get used to instant processes. This work applies the Time and Entire method because this work shows the process of moving iron from the furnace to the forge. The shooting technique in this work uses slow motion to see Empu Subandi's movement from the front of the furnace to the forge. Hence, applying the Time and Entire method is very appropriate in creating this work.



Image 9. Work 5 *Inserting Nickel*

(Photo Paper. 60cm x 80cm, Photo by : Sepba Fri Atnin, 2022)

This work shows iron material that is ready to be mixed with *pamor* material and will be forged again to melt into one. During this process, the iron will be folded many times, and the number of folds that will be made varies depending on the prestige motif. At least 36 folds on a keris, even thousands or more.

This work means that a long process is needed to obtain a satisfactory result even though it goes through a repetitive process. This work applies the Angle method because it takes an angle or point of view from below to get details of the iron folds. The technique for taking this work is placing the camera position lower than the object so that you can see where the nickel is

placed because if it is taken at the same angle as the object, you will not be able to see where the nickel is placed.



Image 10. Work 6. *Pijar*

(Photo Paper. 60cm x 80cm, Photo by : Sepba Fri Atnin, 2022)

The forging process is carried out by burning and repeatedly hitting the iron so that sparks appear. These sparks are a sign that several elements of the burned metal have fused, and the impurities in the iron have been removed.

This work has meaning; in the process of forging ourselves, we not only shape ourselves to be better but also eliminate bad traits. The Time method was applied in this work because creating this work requires the right timing to get the image from the moment the fire sparks, and this cannot be repeated. The process of creating this work, by placing the camera on a tripod so that the visuals created do not shake or produce blurry photos and positioning the camera slightly higher than the eye angle, the application of the Time method in this work is exact because this visual is waiting for the right moment and timing.



Image 11. Work 7. *Pande*
(Photo Paper. 60cm x 80cm, Photo by : Sepba Fri Atnin, 2022)

"Pande" is one step in making a keris; the iron is heated and struck many times. Then, the iron is cleaned and mixed with *pamor* material to form a "*keris luk*." The forging process is repeated with a minimum of 36 or even thousands to achieve the desired folds. This work has meaning; hot iron is elementary to shape, break, and even bend, just like humans. Humans will be easy to shape if they have a soft heart and are not stubborn. The Entire method was applied to this work because it shows throughout the *besalen* room.



Image 12. Work 8. *Ngeluk*
(Photo Paper. 60cm x 80cm, Photo by : Sepba Fri Atnin. 2022)

Ngeluk is one of the processes of forming a keris; the number of *luk* on each keris is different. Each keris *luk* has its meaning; for example, *luk 3* means "Tall," a wish that can be achieved, and *luk five* means "Pandawa," namely the characteristics of the Pandavas. The *lucks* on a keris are usually odd numbers (3, 5, 7, 9, and so on)

This work has the meaning that every human being must have good intentions. The Angle method is applied to this work; in creating this work, the photographer must position the camera at an eye-level angle to get a photo at eye level.



Image 13. Work 9. *Perfection*
(Photo Paper. 60cm x 80cm, Photo by : Sepba Fri Atnin, 2022)

This stage is a quality control after making the "*luk*" to see whether the "*luk*" on the keris blade is precise.

The meaning of this work is that accuracy is one of the keys to success. The Entire method was applied to this work because it shows the entire observation process and the *besalen* space used by Empu Subandi to work.



Image 14. . Work 10. *Grinding*
(Photo Paper. 60cm x 80cm, Photo by : Sepba Fri Atnin. 2022)

This work shows the finishing stage. This process uses grinders, files, and chisels to smooth each side of the keris. The meaning of this work is the process of finding one's identity, which is not only forged but also a process of sharpening oneself. The method used in this work is the Angle method because

the shooting is done from below to get Empu Subandi's expression when grinding the keris. The frame or framing method is also used because the door is used as a foreground to frame the main object.



Image 15. Work 11. *Natah*
(Photo Paper. 60cm x 90cm, Photo by : Sepba Fri Atnin. 2022)

This work shows the finishing stages of the keris or *Natah* Process, which usually forms a complicated process between *sogokan*, *pejetan*, or *blumbangan*. This work means thoroughness and perseverance in forming one's identity. The Frame or Framing method was used to create this work, using the door as a foreground to frame the main object.



Image 16. Work 12. *Nyepuh*
(Photo Paper. 60cm x 90cm, Photo by Sepba Fri Atnin. 2022)

Nyepuh process is the final stage of making a keris. *Nyepuh* aims to harden the keris blade by burning it and dipping it in water. Apart from this

method, Empu Subandi also has another method, namely gilding the keris using his tongue, which other masters rarely do. There are two visual photo works displayed in this process.

This work means that good prayers must always be offered to God to get something good, too. The method in this work uses the Time method. The visuals of this work require precise timing because these visuals cannot be taken repeatedly.



Image17. Work 13. *Warangi*
(Photo Paper. 60cm x 80cm, Photo by : Sepba Fri Atnin. 2022)

This work shows the process of a keris being *warangi*, creating motifs on the keris blade. The keris is first cleaned, or called a *mutih* process, by soaking it in coconut water after it is clean, then the *warangi* process. The *warangi* process uses ingredients containing acids such as lime and other acids such as realgar, arsenickisses, and aura pigment. Then, the keris blade is soaked in liquid for one week, or if the prestige of the keris is visible in contrast, the keris is cleaned and dried. However, this process is not good if done too often because it will cause the keris to become porous quickly due to the acid mixture used.

The meaning of this work is that change cannot be made instantly. It requires a long process to become better. Detail Method was used in this work, and The visual work focuses on picking the keris blade.



Image 18. Work 14. *Cendana*
(Photo Paper. 60cm x 80cm, Photo by : Sepba Fri Atnin. 2022)

This work shows a keris that has just been smeared with oil after going through the *warangi* stage. Applying this oil aims to prevent the keris blade from rusting quickly. The oil used is the oil with the aroma of sandalwood, rose, jasmine, and others.

This work has meaning; the skills possessed by every human being must be maintained and must constantly be developed so that these skills can survive. The visual of this work used the Angle and Detail method, taking the visual of the work from above to clearly show the keris blade being oiled and the details of the work process.



Image 19. Work 15. *Jewelry*
(Photo paper 60cm x 90cm. Photo by : Sepba Fri Atnin. 2022)

This work shows the keris being equipped with jewelry. Apart from adding beauty to the keris, jewelry also has an implied meaning, *mendhak*, which means every human being must try to subdue themselves. *Pendhok* or keris axle sheath made of silver or gold, *pendhok* means that every human being must be polite if they want to be respected by others. *Deder* is a handle on a keris made of wood carved to make it easier to hold the keris.

This work means that every human being must possess skills and intelligence to become a helpful human being. The Angle and Detail method is applied to this work. The visual shot from above aims to show the details of the work.



Image 20. Work 16. *Empu Subandi and his collection*

(Photo paper 60cm x 90cm, Photo by : Sepba Fri Atnin. 2022)

This work shows Empu Subandi with some of his keris collection. Many of his works have also been collected by local and foreign collectors.

The visuals for this work use the entire method because they show Empu Subandi and his entire collection.



Image 21. Work 17. *Empu KRT. Subandi Suponingrat*
(Photo Paper. 60cm x 90cm, Photo by :Sepba Fri Atnin 2022)

This work shows the profile of Empu KRT. Subandi Suponingrat was holding one of the keris he made. The visual of this work used the Angle method, using an eye-level angle to get a visual angle that is parallel to the photographer's eye. The eye-level angle is very suitable for portrait photos.



Image 22. Work 18. *Sharpening Knowledge*
(Photo Paper. 60cm x 90cm, Photo by : Sepba Fri Atnin 2022)

This work shows KRT Master Subandi Suponingrat looking at the keris he made, and there is a book he reads.

This work means that the knowledge we already have must continue to be sharpened. The visual of this work used the Angle method, using an eye-level angle to get the object's position parallel to the eye's point of view.



Image 23. Work 19. *Mutih*
(Photo Paper. 60cm x 90cm, Photo by : Sepba Fri Atnin 2022)

This work shows Empu KRT. Subandi Suponingrat did *Mutih*, it aims to cleanse oneself. Usually, when doing *Mutih*, Empu Subandi eats white rice and drinks water. The meaning of this work is to control desires. This visual work uses the Detail method to show the process of eating rice.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Art is a medium for human expression in realizing ideas in their minds. Art is a medium for uniting the cultural diversity that exists in Indonesia. Every art or culture has its uniqueness and diversity.

The process of making a keris is the main idea in a photographic documentary. The creation and writing of this work must be distinct from the cultural studies that underlie it. Various visualizations of photographic works are presented with various angles and reviews, which become study sources. Hope this work becomes a reference for learning about the process of making keris and modern visual values, namely photography.

FURTHER STUDY

Further research could lead to a more in-depth exploration of the use of digital technology and virtual reality in photographic documentation to expand accessibility and increase the interactive experience of the keris art heritage preserved by EMPU KRT. Subandi Suponingrat. In addition, further research could focus on using social media as a platform to expand reach and increase public awareness of the beauty and cultural value of keris, build networks between communities, and encourage participation in efforts to preserve traditional art.

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