



## Interactivity on Participatory Artworks. A Case Study of Long Life Laboratory

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### ABSTRACT

Contemporary art is a signifier for the occurrence of the melting back aspect of melting back aspects of the arts with other non art disciplines in the art world as well as the creative industry. The collapse of hierarchies between high art and low art is the discourse in the West also influenced the development of art in Indonesia. This allows also many works popping up to a hybrid combination between pure art and design as applied art. Nowadays people believe the participatory art can be developed as the styled identity of Indonesia contemporary arts because of the collective spirit of commonly called 'paguyuban' it usually bring. There is a place called Jatiwangi Art Factory who developed an art movements by running a kind of community based methods to build their village out of economical bankruptcy. A similar approach was elaborated by a couple of Jakarta urban artist namely Irwan Ahmett and Tita Salina. They often work with the society in daily basis to criticize the Jakarta social problems. Departing from the above observation, this paper made to dissect the authos's works entitled "Long Life Laboratory" which had been exhibited at the Bazaar Art Jakarta 2016 in Pacific Place Mall by measuring the level of interactivity on this kind work of participatory art. A Qualitative method is used also to read this visual form associated with the theory of relational aesthetic, a thinking of a French art critic Nicolas Bourriard

## INTRODUCTION

In 1975 Indonesian contemporary art was believed to be born and marked by the occurrence of the “Black December” event which then initiated the Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru Indonesia. Arts academy also swiftly respond to this phenomenon by putting an art experimentation course as their subject in ITB and ASRI Yogyakarta. Another example was made in 1987, a successful experimental exhibition “Pasaraya Dunia Fantasi” which was held Taman Ismail Marzuki being a headline. This movement criticize about the domination of painting artworld that only concern about form and shape and follow Western manifesto “art for the art sake” which secession between art social realities.

In 1985 there was an art activity in the swamp named Waung Tulung Agung, an artist Moelyono made a performance work entitled “KUD” (Kesenian Unit Desa) or the arts Unit of the village – as an assessment test to pass his bachelor’s degree. This artwork has exposure of 12 sheets of red mats, each mat there was ‘*pincuk*’ or a rice place in banana leaves containing soil with bud sprouts, beans, spinach, chilies, corn, yam, a short mat loom up with sketches of the conglomerate face, at the end of a row of mats are mounted the podium with mike for sound wave radio transistor rustling.

He is regarded as the initial force that apply research methods partisipatori or partisipatory research that is explained as the combination of social research, education and political action work done by the people themselves. Fine art try positioned as a media research methodology in partisipatory by flowing an understanding between each other and every person can master utilizing art as a media analysis, made a dialogue and doing a critical thinking. This is an effort of looking for the solution of social problems in his community.

It is now four decades the development of experimentation medium celebrated even to other non-art disciplines. Being consider of it the author seeks to bring back the methods of the past that have been adapted to the contexts of today's problems and technological advances. The development of contemporary art and design has not been widely recognized as an interdisciplinary area that could potentially be developed into a sophisticated and cutting-edge work. In contrast, in some academic and art

academic discourses, student’s views are narrowed by thickening the barriers between art and design under the pretext of need capitalization of education.

This action is very similar to phenomenon that is happened in design scene at early 2000’s. That is the raising up of ambient advetising trend in both commercial or social campaign that use happening art in actions. Awareness campaign there is a charge of advocacy in the art world is called art of conscientization (*seni rupa penyadaran*) but when it got into advertising territory is called public service advertisements. So nowadays whatelse can divide between art and design despite their scene?

## METHODS

There are many areas or disciplines related to interactivity such as information systems, computer science, communication, design and creative industries even contemporary art. The large number of critical interface between fields makes necessary a simple agreement regarding limitations on where a product or work Inbox interactive categories.

There are 3 levels of views on interactivity:

1. Not interactive when a message is not related at all
2. Reactive, direlaskan message when only one direction as soon as possible of a previously existing messages.
3. Interactive, when a message that first source affect the actions of the second source and the next so intertwined relationships among them.

According to Tang, B.C. (2005), P. Kommers, G. Richards. and Arshavskiy (2013) in Interactive e-learning to engage learners – A simple classification there are four levels of interactivity namely passive interactions (level 1) , limited interactions (level 2), complex interactions (level 3), and real-time interaction (level 4).

Those levels are often used in multimedia-education field and game industry that explain the relation between the audiens and the medium itself. For passive interaction the participant has no control over the progress of the stories, they can only watch and see. In limited interactions, the participant has more control over the

sequence of the program. There are level content such as facts and procedures. Complex interaction needs a skill set of problem solving from the participant because they can reponse and manipulate the result. And the last, real time interaction allows participant to work together with

the medium or the maker. They need a good skill and knowledge of the real world situation so they can create such a complex problem solving.

Despite there is a common theory interactivity, the author has another interpretation based on an observation:

Table 1. Interactivity Level

Objects	Caption Position
Gaze	Less Interactive
Feature	Reactive – Medium Interactive
Participatory	In-Depth Interactive

In the history of science in developing regions games, interactivity and interactive media are supported by technological developments. In the post-war period the modern question of this interactivity was manifested in the form of applications in the digital world as present in smartphone, computer screen, or tablet. However definitively and the science of this interactivity can be applied further in the conventional media. Strategies to involve more likely the emotions of the audiences by enjoying the works can be applied more broadly in the region not only with digital treatments, for example is the pop-up illustrations book which is requiring decisions and contribution of a reader to find the the answer from the instructions prepared in paper form through cutting or folding paper. The existence of elements of the game in the media making it legitimate referred to as interactive media because it includes the dimensions of interactivity is high. Generally the magnitude of interactivitas gave the impact among each other.

As Nicolas Bourriaud implies about relational aesthetics artworks, “Their works bring into play modes of social exchange, interaction with the viewer inside the aesthetic experience he or she is offered, and processes of communication in their concrete dimensions as tools that can be used to bring together individual and human groups. They there fore all work within what we might call the relational sphere.” (1998, p. 107) inherent in this view of art is a moveaway from the perceptual aspect of art’s materials and facture,the art object, and a move

towards the situational aspects of art,as we witness with performance art and artworks that require viewers to become participants, similarly explored by Norma Jean’s work and by Jacob Dahlgren. In Norma Jean’s work, the brightred blocks of modelling clay in the gallery are soon dispersed and layered in the space and extended across time. Individuals model or build upon the remnants of previous work, and their work will become the medium for their successors, with the work continually being remade along the lines of social interaction across time and space. (Minnisale 2013 : 332)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Despite all the buzz about medical technological development, wheter herbal or chemical inventions, whether they make sense or do not, it turns out that they fail to bring our modern lives to a better place. The fact is the world's health and life expectancy index continues to decrease, in spite of all the health supplements that are around whether for babies or the elderly. Are all these technological advances only creating an acute sense of dependency and consequently bring us become "less human than human"

What the writer showed for Bazaar Art Jakarta 2016 was enlittled bit different. The issue that had been pulled out from personal context to be more social, and interaction was needed in order to succed this performance. The writer wanted to expose how the issues the writer experienced are also experienced by others such

as Jakarta's urban society in particular. Therefore, developing the themes that lead to title the writer work later in BAJ (Bazaar Art Jakarta) 2016 was developed into a laboratory of longevity and being entitled as "Long Life Laboratory". The performance worked well by inviting

them to make their own style longevity recipe, which depended on perception, memory, information, and expectations of themselves on living a long life.



Figure 1. Artist After the Performance "Long Life Laboratory"

The performer try to involving the audience in Laboratory performance Longevity and not just a watch, so that they can redefine what it means to be long life, does the method they choose and do currently had enough fit with their expectations, amid the fierce beauty products health products as well as a modern commercial advertising as a 'cutting edge' technology? In order to discuss and emphatize with them, the performer shared experiences then got input from audiences to create a new conclusion about the death of information of situation today. This artwork is also a respond to create prototype

on protagonist relational aesthetic that an art critic Claire Bishop who ever criticize a performance piece made by decendants of Thailand international artist, Rirkrit Tiravanija. She said that performance that Rirkrit produced has antagonist quality because it was inviting audiences to try his home-made curry in gallery for free only for utilized. They didn't affect the artwork.

Considering that discourse, Long Life Laboratory is an effort to answer the paradoxes of making art by playing the protagonist relational aesthetic role which occurred intimacy between the artwork and the public and made the work organically developing by itself.



Figure 2. Interaction with the Participant

The development of the theme of this also automatically coupled with the development of the concept and context. When the previous works presents a situation of confusion because of how marketing sells ideas about living a long life that is the instinctive human

desire, and then the ideas manifesting in the form of health products as well as traditional to modern form of beauty, in this work the attention thus go to the audience itself



Figure 3. Art Installation

The statement is the dialectic of the so-called traditional and so-called modern. What is the primitive and what was said. The sophistication of today's technology allows both meet but eventually put at risk human perception of modern cradles.

Often what's called traditional by now no longer corresponds to the so-called traditional in ancient times. And what is the cutting edge at the time labeled now often empty and only weight in packaging. This applies also in the medical world.



Figure 4. Collecting 'Long Life' Recipes

Long Life Laboratory was a performative work that manipulate an event. Situation as if the activity is a social experiment is conditioned in order to reach the sympathy of prospective participants. In

this case the performer tries to approach the target audience by designing a visually friendly exhibition booth.

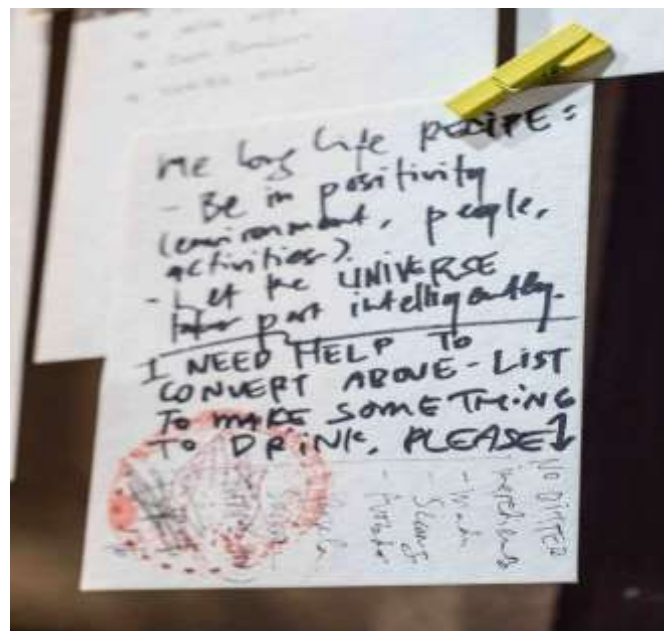


Figure 5. The Longevity Recipe

Visitors who passed by are greeted with a personal question about whether they have an authentic old age recipe of their own or not. So this basic question will trigger visitors to tell their own personal experiences and intuitively volunteer to

share their long life prescriptions in order to help each other. Which are interesting that the prescriptions the told are often a psychological suggestions such us quotes of always thinking positive.



Figure 6. Performer was Serving the Drink While Empathizing

After the participants submitted their longevity prescriptions, the performers then made a drink based on the recipe. The ingredients are herbal plants and there are also several choices of modern health products that have been manufactured. The process of dispensing will take some time so that it can be used as a moment of chatting and listening to the story of participants more deeply. The process of listening to participants releasing their problematic stories was also expected to be part of unconscious 'ritual healing'. Emotional connections are awakened because the performer did empathizing with

participants. A friendly and warm situation become the foundation of the reason why this work is made in the midst of an art market event that tends to be cold.

The talk flows organically after a trust between the performer and the participants had been developed, then a lot of new knowledges were succesfully gained by the performers from the participants. This performative activity allows each subject to become richer and more enlightened. In the end of the meeting was closed by drinking a warm drink called *jamu* or *jampi oesodo* as Javanese language which means it is a spell to seek health.



Figure 7. Sharing Experiences with One of the Participant

During four days of performative activities from 25<sup>th</sup> August until 28<sup>th</sup> August at Pasific Place Ballroom Mall Jakarta, more than 80 longevity recipes had been collected from visitors of Jakarta Bazaar Art 2016 which generally originated by urban community background. The responses of its art

scene was also very welcomed. Several good publicity from domestic and foreign press is a sign that the society needs to absorb fresh art and design work.

## CONCLUSION



Figure 8. The Participant was Tasting Their Own Recipes

In the historical context of participatory art, performance art has become a more politically operative or socially bound medium compared to painting, sculpture, or literature. Claire Bishop, a British art historian and critic, has contributed

significantly to the discourse on participatory art. In her book "Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship" (2012), she examines the relationship between the medium of art and politics, emphasizing the broader accessibility of art to

society. She also highlights collective authorship, emphasizing that participatory art started with concerns about "spectatorship" and how viewers were initially disrupted to make them an integral part of the artwork.

As a case study, Bishop criticizes participatory performance art phenomena at the time,

pointing out elements such as the instability of the work, the potential for a mere display of pleasure and entertainment. She reevaluates the meanings of 'participation' and 'collaboration' in comparison to 'interactive' and 'responsive,' ultimately questioning how participatory performance art has also become co-opted by the market.



Figure 9. Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Pad Thai* (1990) at the Paula Allen Gallery in New York

Source: <https://nevolution.typepad.com/theories/2010/06/rirkrit-tiravanija.html>

Bishop specifically criticizes the renowned work titled 'Pad Thai' by the artist Rirkrit Tiravanija. Tiravanija transformed a gallery into a Pad Thai feast, a type of fusion curry from Thailand. Bishop questions the true artistic merit of this work, stating that the communication facilitated by the shared ritual meal is what makes it considered artistic. She argues that Tiravanija's work doesn't fully emancipate or activate the audience but rather manipulates them to be objects in his work. Bishop uses Nicolas Bourriaud's theory of "Relational Aesthetics" to support her critique. This theory posits that relational art is contingent on its environment and audience, envisioning the audience as a community rather than a one-to-one relationship between the work of art and the viewer. Relational art sets up situations where viewers are not just addressed as individuals but are given the means to create a community collectively.

There are several crucial shifts in participatory art, namely:

1. Shift in the understanding of the art subject: From the artist as creator to the artist as an artistic activator.
2. Shift in the understanding of the art object: From the artwork as an object to the artwork as a social relationship.
3. Shift in aesthetic approach: From choosing artistic forms based on formal-compositional considerations to choosing artistic forms as an embodiment of socio-historical needs of society.

This artwork is the answer of this question of how to produce a protagonist participatory artwork nowadays. The development of information technology and the current globalization is happening in this contemporary era generates consequences that inevitably that is becoming increasingly elastic. The boundaries of conventional terminology that used to be very thick began to fade.

Therefore it is now important for the academy to be more flexible in order to adapt to the times, and processing collaborations should be more enhanced in order to produce new innovations. Hopefully these innovations can be used to respond the problematic of the society today with the medium of art as well as design as its vehicles.

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