

Environmental Art in Contemporary Art

A Case Study of the Jakarta Biennale 2015 Exhibition

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the representation of environmental art in the context of Indonesian contemporary art, using the Jakarta Biennale 2015 as its main case study. This research addresses the problem of how contemporary artworks in the exhibition reflect a critique of relevant ecological and social issues. The study employs a descriptive-interpretative analysis method of selected artworks, supported by data from the exhibition catalog and related literature. The findings indicate that the environmental artworks in the Jakarta Biennale 2015 not only function as aesthetic expressions but also serve as a powerful medium for social critique and public agitation. This finding contributes to the understanding of the role of contemporary art exhibitions as critical platforms for sustainability discourse in Indonesian art.

Keywords: Environmental Art, Indonesian Contemporary Art, Jakarta Biennale

ABSTRAK

Studi ini menganalisis representasi seni lingkungan (environmental art) dalam konteks seni rupa kontemporer Indonesia, dengan menjadikan Biennale Jakarta 2015 sebagai studi kasus utama. Permasalahan yang diangkat adalah bagaimana karya seni rupa kontemporer dalam pameran tersebut merefleksikan kritik terhadap persoalan ekologis dan sosial yang relevan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode analisis deskriptif-interpretatif terhadap karya-karya terpilih, didukung data dari katalog pameran dan literatur terkait. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa karya-karya seni lingkungan dalam Biennale Jakarta 2015 tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai ekspresi estetis, tetapi juga menjadi medium kritik sosial dan alat agitasi publik yang kuat. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi pada pemahaman peran pameran seni kontemporer sebagai platform kritis untuk wacana keberlanjutan dalam seni rupa Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Seni Lingkungan, Seni Rupa Kontemporer, Biennale Jakarta

INTRODUCTION

Environmental art is an artistic practice that places the interaction between the artwork and the natural environment at its core. In this art form, engagement with nature is seen not only as a visual inspiration or raw material but also as an inherent medium and message.

This practice is often closely associated with the concept of sustainability, an idea that seeks to create a harmonious balance between human life and the surrounding environment. As Margolin (2005) suggests, sustainability can be understood as an ethical and practical effort to achieve this harmony. Therefore,

environmental art does not merely function as an aesthetic expression but also acts as a critical practice that analyzes and responds to the state of the social environment from an ethical standpoint (Smith, 2005). In this context, the artist becomes a mediator who bridges public awareness with pressing ecological issues, transforming the artwork into a catalyst for social and environmental change.

In Indonesia, the history of environmental art has strong roots, aligned with the emergence of the New Indonesian Art Movement (Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru Indonesia or GSRBI) in the 1970s. This movement was a critical response to the dominance of conventional painting traditions, and it sought to free art from the limitations of older mediums. The GSRBI encouraged artists to interact more with social and environmental issues around them, using more diverse and non-traditional media and forms (Supangkat, 1993, 1999). This shift paved the way for more contextual and site-specific artistic practices, including environmental art. Since then, the discourse on environmental art has continued to grow and gain momentum, especially through strategic art exhibition platforms like biennales. According to Green and Gardner (2016), a biennale has become one of the most important exhibition formats in the world, serving as a venue for the exchange of ideas, intercultural dialogue, and a place for contemporary art to gain widespread public recognition. This large-scale exhibition format provides a space for artists to explore complex issues, including environmental problems, on a more ambitious scale.

The idea of the exhibition space as an art institution has a long history. Since its

emergence in the 16th century, this concept has undergone a significant evolution. In the 18th century, the exhibition space began to establish itself as a model of a specific sociality, where the public could interact with artworks. Art historian Pamela Bianchi (2023) explains that the exhibition space is a complex mechanism for the circulation and hybridization of ideas. In more modern times, the role of the museum as a "house for art" became dominant, a notion championed by renowned curator Harald Szeemann. He stated that museums were the ideal place to protect fragile art from mass consumption and reproduction (Bertrand, 2022). However, over time, the role of art exhibitions, including biennales, has surpassed this function of conservation.

The Jakarta Biennale IX in 1993 was a pivotal moment marking this shift in Indonesia. This exhibition, organized by the Jakarta Arts Council, was a breakthrough for featuring a diverse range of new media such as installations, video, and performance, alongside conventional media like painting and sculpture (Wiyanto, 2021). This shift demonstrates that the exhibition space had evolved into a primary communication medium (Greenberg, Ferguson, & Nairne, 1996), a place where the meaning of an artwork is generated not solely by the object itself but also by the curatorial context, interaction with the audience, and the discourse surrounding it. The exhibition space now serves as a platform where artists not only showcase aesthetics but also convey messages, provoke thought, and advocate for change. Consequently, contemporary art exhibitions are no longer

just static galleries but dynamic arenas for critical dialogue.

The Jakarta Biennale 2015 is a highly relevant case study for examining the role of environmental art in contemporary discourse in Indonesia. This exhibition was not merely an art showcase but a critical platform that specifically highlighted the tensions between economic growth, infrastructure development, and their impact on society and the natural environment. The theme of the exhibition was highly contextual to the issues facing Jakarta, a continuously growing megapolis with significant environmental and social challenges such as floods, pollution, and social inequality. Through this exhibition, environmental art received special attention as a means to speak about infrastructure, the human-nature relationship, and environmental issues in a contextual way. The artworks displayed here were not just visually appealing but also rich with messages criticizing unsustainable development, ecosystem damage, and the social injustices that often accompany them.

Based on this background, this research identifies a fundamental shift in the function of environmental art, from being a mere aesthetic expression to becoming a powerful medium for social critique and a tool for public agitation. However, to date, there is a lack of specific research that comprehensively examines how the environmental art pieces in the Jakarta Biennale 2015 concretely articulated critiques of ecological and social issues in Indonesia. This gap creates an urgent need to analyze how artists use their visual language to highlight problems often overlooked by mainstream political and economic discourse.

This research aims to fill that gap by providing a contextual, descriptive-interpretive analysis.

Therefore, this research is formulated to address two main problems: (1) How do the environmental artworks exhibited in the Jakarta Biennale 2015 reflect and critique relevant ecological and social issues in Indonesia? This analysis will explore how artists use symbolism, materials, and space to convey their critical messages; (2) How does the Jakarta Biennale 2015 function as a platform for voicing the discourse of sustainability through contemporary art practice? This question will examine how the exhibition's curation, interaction with the public, and the physical exhibition space itself contribute to shaping a narrative on sustainability and social critique.

In line with these research questions, the objective of this study is to analyze and descriptively interpret the social-environmental critiques contained within the selected environmental artworks from the Jakarta Biennale 2015. Additionally, this research also aims to identify and explain the exhibition's role as an effective strategic venue for the discourse of environmental art in Indonesian contemporary art. Thus, the findings of this research are expected to make a significant contribution to the understanding of the relationship between art, society, and the environment, as well as the role of contemporary art exhibitions as critical platforms that foster public awareness and dialogue. This research is also hoped to serve as a reference for future studies on environmental art in Indonesia, which is increasingly relevant amid increasingly complex global and local environmental challenges.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative method with a descriptive-interpretative analysis approach to fully explore the representations and meanings contained within the environmental artworks at the Jakarta Biennale 2015. Data was collected through literature and documentation studies, by identifying and gathering textual data from exhibition catalogs, academic articles, critical reviews, and relevant books. Visual data, in the form of photographs of the artworks from the exhibition catalog, was also collected as the primary object of analysis. The data analysis process followed an interactive model, beginning with data reduction, where data relevant to the research questions was selected. This data was then presented systematically to facilitate interpretation. The final stage was drawing conclusions, which were continuously verified through a source triangulation process—comparing findings from one source with another to ensure the validity and accuracy of the interpretation. Thus, this methodology not only describes the research object but also interprets its meaning contextually, providing a strong foundation for answering the research questions.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The development of Indonesian contemporary art cannot be separated from the global currents of the art world. As analyzed by Smith (2011) in *Contemporary Art: World Currents*, the 1970s became a critical period when artists in Asia rose against Western hegemony by creating a new artistic language

that was both political and local.

Meanwhile, the development of contemporary art in Indonesia is the result of a series of significant historical and theoretical shifts. The fundamental turning point was the emergence of the New Indonesian Art Movement (Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru Indonesia or GSRBI) in 1975, which was sparked by a group of young artists in response to the stagnation of the dominant conventional painting and sculpture. The prominent art critic, Jim Supangkat, in his various reviews, affirmed that the GSRBI was a bold and surprising breakthrough. This movement challenged an exclusive, confined, and monolithic aesthetic ideology, opening up space for more inclusive and multi-dimensional art practices (Supriyanto, 2013, 2015). The GSRBI artists not only experimented with new media such as installations and video but also dared to integrate social and political issues into their works, viewing art as a tool to critique reality.

This shift became a strong theoretical foundation for the development of environmental art in Indonesia. Unlike environmental art in the West, which often focuses on physical interventions in natural landscapes, in Indonesia, environmental art has developed with a stronger nuance related to social, cultural, and political contexts. This art form is not just concerned with the aesthetics of nature but also with the critical interaction between the artwork, ecological issues, and society. In line with this development, the role of art institutions has also evolved. As theorized by Dziekan (2012), museums and exhibitions no longer

function merely as passive display spaces but transform into active arenas for research and knowledge production. This transformation is increasingly crucial when institutions face complex issues such as socio-ecological imbalances—a phenomenon that Tali (2018) refers to as "difficult knowledge." Meanwhile, Hansen, Henningsen, & Gregersen (2019) explain that temporary exhibitions, in particular, play a vital role in maintaining the relevance of art institutions and serving as a platform for comprehensive discourse and analysis.

The Jakarta Biennale 2015 serves as a concrete example of how the theories of Dziekan (2012) and Tali (2018) converge: the exhibition did not merely display art objects, but designed a curatorial experience that confronted the "absence" of marginal narratives (ecological, social, political) through participatory methods—consistent with Tali's argument about museums as spaces for negotiating collective memory. This exhibition proved that art is a relevant medium for voicing socio-ecological imbalances, while also affirming the legacy of the GSRBI in contemporary art. Thus, environmental art at the Jakarta Biennale 2015 must be read as an integral part of this larger narrative: as a curatorial effort to present "difficult knowledge" (Tali, 2018) through multi-media strategies (Dziekan, 2012), making art both a mirror and a critique of socio-environmental reality.

In cultural history museums, the dynamic between "permanent/fixed" and temporary exhibitions shows significant differences, with less emphasis on short-term

temporary exhibitions. Nevertheless, there is an increased focus on temporary exhibitions, and continuous efforts are being made to find new formats that can facilitate knowledge exchange and visitor engagement. Each of these terms reflects the changing and distinct roles of museums in their relationship with the public. New exhibitions and events have become critically important for museums today to attract public and political interest.

The view that the role of museums has evolved far beyond the function of conservation and protection of art objects is reinforced by ideas in the study, "The Museum as Experience: Learning, Connection, and Shared Space," edited by Susan Shifrin (2023). This view argues that modern museums must transform from passive institutions into communal spaces centered on active and transformative human experiences. In contrast to the traditional model that regards museums as static places for storing art, this perspective focuses on the importance of learning, connection, and shared space.

Exhibitions, however, are more than just a way to keep museums relevant in the experience economy. They also serve as an arena for research and knowledge production. The external demand to strengthen academic research in museums, combined with an internal interest from museum staff to understand exhibition-making as an integral part of the research process, has significantly changed the status of exhibitions. From being a mere presentation of completed research, exhibitions have now become an important, active site for analysis and discourse itself.

The idea that exhibitions have evolved

into an arena for research and knowledge production is highly consistent with the argument that the traditional roles between conservators, curators, and artists are increasingly blurring, creating a need for a collaborative "network of care" (Vall & Saaze, 2024). In this context, exhibitions no longer just present objects, but also function as a site where flexible research practices and decision-making occur.

The theme of the Jakarta Biennale 2015, "Maju Kena Mundur Kena" (Damned if you do, damned if you don't), was taken from the title of a 1980s Indonesian comedy film. This theme reflects a local expression relevant to a quintessential Indonesian situation, urging us to focus on the current conditions and challenges around us. The lead curator of the Jakarta Biennale 2015, Charles Esche, stated, "We refuse to be stuck in a nostalgia of an unreachable past, or to hope for a difficult-to-achieve utopia" (Esche, 2015). This statement was also agreed upon by the exhibition organizer, the Jakarta Biennale Foundation, which stated, "In Indonesia, where we face a lack of and inequality in art infrastructure, we need to stop the illusion regarding an ideal condition we imagine is happening elsewhere" (Darmawan, 2015).

These statements show how these issues influence the way we think and act today. In the Jakarta Biennale 2015, environmental issues became highly prominent, especially in the context of the use and misuse of water. Issues related to the city, history, and water and the environment became central themes that connected various artworks and permeated the entire exhibition. This approach



Figure 1. Cover of the Jakarta Biennale 2015 catalog, titled: "Maju Kena, Mundur Kena: Bertindak Sekarang"

(Source: Jakarta Biennale Catalog)

of the Jakarta Biennale 2015 can be examined through the lens of Panos Kompatsiaris's (2017) book, "The Politics of Contemporary Art Biennials: Spectacles of Critique, Theory and Art." This book discusses how contemporary art biennials often struggle to balance political idealism with contradictory economic and social realities. In this context, the Jakarta Biennale 2015 can be seen as an effort to practice an authentic "politics of critique" rooted in locality.

There were no fewer than 71 artists involved in the Jakarta Biennale 2015, consisting of 43 Indonesian artists and 28 foreign artists.

The collaborative curatorial approach at the Jakarta Biennale 2015 showed a commitment to addressing environmental issues such as floods, waste, pollution, and access to clean water. By involving local communities like Lifepatch from Yogyakarta and Sanggar Anak Akar, the Biennale not only

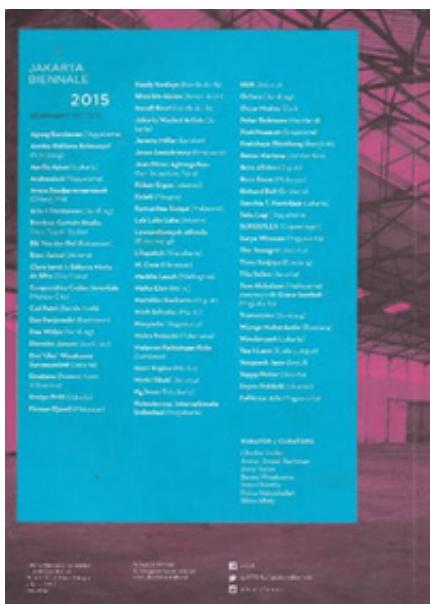


Figure 2. Back cover of the Jakarta Biennale 2015 catalog, showing the list of artists involved.

(Source: Jakarta Biennale Catalog)

promoted fine art as an artistic expression but also as a tool to spark discussion on the daily environmental problems faced by the community.

Issues like flooding and pollution in Jakarta, which were chosen as central themes, reflect the major challenges faced by Indonesian cities regarding the environment. Here, environmental art serves as a medium that not only reflects natural conditions but also highlights how humans interact with, and often damage, nature. In the context of Indonesian contemporary art, environmental art has become a vehicle for raising social and political awareness and affirming the importance of sustainability.

The environmental art approach used in the Jakarta Biennale 2015 can be more comprehensively examined through a review of Jiri Benovsky's (2021) book, "The Limits of Art: On Borderline Cases of Artworks

and their Aesthetic Properties." This view philosophically explores the idea that there is no single rigid definition for a work of art and that the boundaries of art are constantly being expanded.

Benovsky argues that a work of art can transcend traditional visual modalities, even encompassing sensory experiences like taste or bodily perception. In the same spirit, exhibitions like the Jakarta Biennale 2015 show that art can go beyond purely aesthetic functions. Collaborative environmental art, which involves the community in solving practical problems like flooding and pollution, effectively becomes a borderline case as discussed by Benovsky. In this context, art is not only judged by its beauty but also by its capacity to spark dialogue, mobilize communities, and advocate for real change. This affirms that the boundaries of art are not static but dynamic, and are continuously being redefined by social and political contexts.

Through the works exhibited, including collaborative projects that affirmed the need for clean water and environmental preservation, the Jakarta Biennale 2015 strengthened the role of environmental art in depicting the relationship between humans and nature. This placed environmental art as a vital component in the discourse of Indonesian contemporary art, where global and local environmental issues are bridged by artworks that function as a catalyst for social change.

Thus, the curatorial approach at this Biennale not only presented aesthetic issues but also affirmed the urgency of the environmental crisis facing Indonesia, showing that environmental art has become



Figure 3. Tita Salina's work "1001 Island – The Most Sustainable Island in Archipelago", Video performance, 2015.

(Source: Jakarta Biennale Catalog)

an important tool in contemporary art for raising collective awareness of sustainability and environmental justice.

Tita Salina's work, "1001 Island – The Most Sustainable Island in Archipelago," exhibited at the Jakarta Biennale 2015, far transcends its visual description as an installation. The piece is a sharp and layered social-environmental critique, rooted in the real issues faced by urban communities in Indonesia, particularly Jakarta. Analyzing this work requires a reading not only of its form and material but also of the social, political, and symbolic contexts contained within it. Through her artistic practice, Salina positions herself as an activist who uses art as a medium to challenge dominant and often destructive development narratives.

The work functions as an ironic allegory that satirizes the claims of "sustainability" often made by large-scale development projects. Its title, "The Most Sustainable

Island in Archipelago," is a direct jab at the land reclamation projects in Jakarta Bay, which are widely promoted as modern solutions for urbanization. However, these projects often ignore their impacts on marine ecosystems, the livelihoods of local fishermen, and other environmental issues. By building an "island" from collected marine debris, Salina visually unpacks the contradiction between an environmentally friendly development narrative and the hidden reality of environmental degradation. The trash, as the main material, does not only represent physical pollution but also symbolizes the "waste" of public policies that are neglectful of the environment. This pile of garbage becomes a monument to the ignored ecological crisis, a visual reflection of the true condition of the sea.

This work can be analyzed through the lens of ecocriticism, a theoretical approach that examines the relationship between cultural representation and the natural environment. In this context, Salina's work not only reflects a damaged environment but also actively places humans as the primary agents of that destruction. The artistic performance in which she invites the audience to directly view the "island" encourages interaction and critical reflection that goes beyond the confines of the gallery and museum. This aligns with the concept of critical practice in art, where the work focuses not only on the final outcome but also on the creative process that involves different stakeholders and sparks public discussion (Smith, 2005). The ecocritical analysis of Tita Salina's work can be further strengthened through the

conceptual framework presented in Branislav Jakovljević's (2025) book, *The Performance Apparatus: On Ideological Production of Behaviors*. Jakovljević argues that performance art functions as an "apparatus" that not only reflects but also actively influences and produces ideological behavior.

Beyond that, this work touches on the issue of the politics of space and power. Reclamation projects are often driven by strong economic and political interests, while the voices of local communities, such as fishermen, tend to be ignored. By creating an "island" from stranded trash, Salina gives visibility to the hidden impacts of these policies. This is a form of artistic resistance that highlights the vulnerability of nature and the social marginalization that occurs amid the rapid currents of urban development. The work becomes a powerful tool for advocacy and agitation, arousing public awareness about the importance of protecting the environment and exposing the ecological injustice that is taking place. Environmental art, in this context, is no longer just about the representation of beautiful nature but about communicating ecological challenges and encouraging critical reflection on the human-nature relationship.

Overall, Tita Salina's work strengthens the position of environmental art as a relevant and urgent tool for advocacy in the context of urban growth in Indonesia's major cities. This work does not merely present environmental conditions; it also analyzes and critiques the systems that perpetuate the crisis. Through powerful symbolism and a provocative social context, Salina successfully transforms trash into a political statement, proving that

contemporary art has a vital role in responding to Indonesia's most complex and crucial environmental issues.

Salina's artistic approach in "1001 Island," which focuses on socio-political critique and advocacy, can be enriched by comparing it with other environmental art practices. For example, the book *Between Species / Between Spaces: Art and Science on the Outer Cape* (Sullivan, Kendra & Dylan Gauthier, eds., 2020) shows a different approach but with a similar goal: exploring environmental change.

Instead of direct critique of policy like Salina's, this residency emphasized an interdisciplinary collaboration between art and science to study "ongoing changes" caused by natural factors and climate change. The resulting projects, such as a banner about whales by Marina Zurkow or paintings that blended scientific observation with personal reflection by Mark Adams, showed new ways of depicting and communicating environmental issues. This comparison highlights that environmental art can operate through various methodologies—either as a provocative activist critique like Salina's work or as a reflective interdisciplinary collaboration as documented in the book. Both approaches are equally important in strengthening the role of art in responding to contemporary ecological challenges.

Tisna Sanjaya's work, "Rumah Ibu (Imah Budaya)," exhibited at the Jakarta Biennale 2015, is an installation and performance piece held at Gudang Sarinah. This installation carries a symbolic social-environmental critique, which differs from the direct approach often seen on pollution issues. Tisna

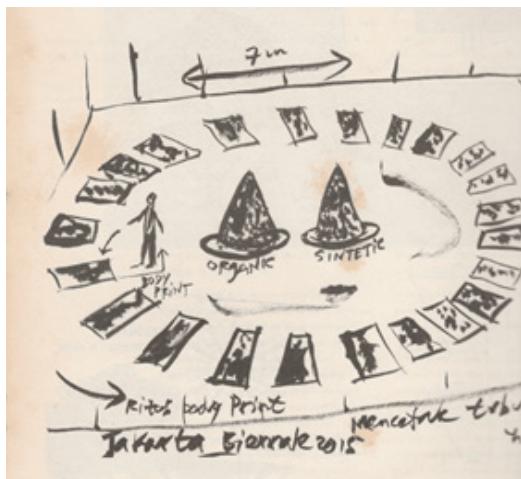


Figure 4. Tisna Sanjaya's work, "Rumah Ibu (Imah Budaya)" (Mother's House / Cultural House), Installation, performance, 2015. (Source: Jakarta Biennale Catalog, 2023)

presents the environmental crisis not just as a physical or economic problem but as a spiritual and ethical crisis rooted in the shifting human relationship with nature. An analysis of this work demands an understanding of the materials, symbolism, and socio-cultural context that are intricately intertwined.

The core of this work lies in its use of materials and symbolism. Tisna imprinted his body 33 times onto canvases using spices and organic materials that he cultivated with local farmers from Cigondewah-Bandung. The number 33 explicitly refers to the number of times Allah's name is mentioned in zikir, a spiritual practice in Islam. This symbolism transforms the artwork from a mere physical representation into a spiritual meditation. Tisna not only immortalizes himself but also his spiritual relationship with nature. He implies that caring for nature is as important as worship and that the environmental crisis is a human failure to maintain spiritual harmony with its creator. Thus, this work argues that

the solution to the ecological crisis lies not only in technology or policy but in spiritual contemplation and a change in ethics regarding how we interact with the environment.

Involving local farmers in the creative process is a crucial aspect of Tisna's approach. This places his work within the realm of critical practice (Smith, 2005), which prioritizes collaborative processes and social intervention. This action is not merely aesthetic but a political statement that affirms the importance of local wisdom and the role of grassroots communities in maintaining sustainability. In the Indonesian context, where farmers are often marginalized by development policies, Tisna elevates their voices and places their traditional knowledge at the center of contemporary art discourse. This involvement transforms the artwork from a passive object into an active dialogue among the artist, farmers, and the audience, where knowledge is formed through collaboration.

This work also effectively bridges local tradition and contemporary art. The use of organic materials and spiritual references connects Tisna's work to Indonesia's rich cultural traditions that hold a holistic view of nature. He shows that solutions to modern environmental problems can be found in traditional local wisdom, a perspective often overlooked in Western-oriented development discourse. Tisna asserts that art can function as a bridge that communicates the complexity of this relationship, inviting the audience to trace and interpret the hidden message. The artist's desire to immortalize, express, and communicate "something" that is "stored" in his work is why he continues to create to

voice this hidden message. Once the work is in a public space, it becomes the audience's task to trace, discover, or interpret that hidden message (Wisetrotomo, Paramastuti, 2022).

Overall, "Rumah Ibu (Imah Budaya)" is an exceptional example of environmental art in Indonesia that not only focuses on visual depictions of environmental damage but also delves into its deeper root causes: the spiritual crisis and the disintegration of the human-environment relationship. This work proves that contemporary art has a vital role in voicing environmental issues from a unique perspective, linking ecology with spirituality, and affirming the importance of collaboration and local wisdom in achieving sustainability.

Tisna Sanjaya's approach in "Rumah Ibu (Imah Budaya)" aligns with the themes raised in the study, "Living Art: Indonesian Artists Engage Politics, Society and History" (Kent, Hooker, & Turner, eds., 2022). The research asserts that Indonesian modern and contemporary art cannot be understood separately from its historical, social, and political context. Tisna's work, with its critique of the environmental crisis rooted in spiritual and ethical issues, directly reflects several key issues discussed in that study.

Tisna expresses his artistic ideology by positioning himself as part of the community and using his art as a tool to challenge destructive development narratives. The representation of art and politics is also strongly felt; this work shows a powerful interaction between art and daily life, where the participation of local farmers becomes an important political statement. It also addresses art and identity, as Tisna's approach



Figure 5. Leonardiansyah Allenda's work, "Rumah" (House), installation of objects of varied dimensions, 2015.

(Source: Jakarta Biennale Catalog, 2023)

of combining spiritual and local wisdom elements (zikir, organic spices) reflects an exploration of religious and regional identity, which is one of the focuses of the study. Tisna Sanjaya's artistic ideology, which places him as part of the community and uses his art as a tool to challenge destructive development narratives, can be understood as a form of contemporary iconoclasm in a cultural context. As discussed in Image Controversies (Mersmann, Kruse, & Bartetzky, eds., 2024), iconoclasm does not always mean the physical destruction of a monument but can also be the act of challenging or deconstructing a dominant narrative.

Leonardiansyah Allenda's work, "Rumah" (House), exhibited at the Jakarta Biennale 2015, is an installation that intelligently and sharply critiques unsustainable development practices, particularly in the context of ecotourism and

urbanization. This work cannot be understood solely from its physical description; its primary meaning lies in the social context and the symbolism of the materials used. Allenda utilizes art as a medium to deconstruct the contradiction between a "green" or "eco-friendly" image and the reality of the ecological damage that occurs on the ground.

The core of Allenda's critique lies in the materials he used: discarded wood blocks from the remnants of homes affected by development projects. These materials aren't just inanimate objects; they are silent witnesses to a process of destruction. The wood blocks symbolically represent the physical traces of displacement and habitat destruction, of both humans and nature. By placing these materials in the exhibition space, Allenda effectively moves a reality that is often hidden—behind development projects—into the public sphere to be seen and contemplated.

This work directly critiques ecotourism practices in Indonesia, which often serve as a mere "surface layer" for development. As revealed in the text, ecotourism is not as simple as being labeled "green"; it must be accompanied by a deeper awareness of sustainability. Allenda shows that many ecotourism projects are solely profit-oriented, building facilities within natural landscapes without considering the life cycles and balance of the ecosystem. His work serves as a visual reminder that every development, even when packaged with a positive narrative, always has a real and often destructive impact on the environment.

"Rumah" also touches upon the issue of hypocrisy in the development discourse.

The portrayal of cities that highlights the beauty of buildings often conceals the environmental damage behind them. Allenda uses his installation to break this illusion. By displaying a "house" made from the remnants of destruction, he forces the audience to confront the neglected consequences of these projects. This aligns with the view of Burhan, Anusapati, & Morin (2021) that contemporary art can transcend conventional boundaries to expand discourse through the exploration of a work's ideas, mediums, and functions. Environmental art, in this context, becomes a powerful tool for highlighting the contradiction between the promise of development and the reality of destruction.

Ultimately, Allenda's work is not merely a visual documentation of a phenomenon but a means to convey social critique and spark a shift in perspective. The installation invites the audience to think more deeply about the imbalance between urban progress and the often-overlooked environmental damage. Through this critical practice, Allenda affirms that contemporary art in Indonesia has a vital role in responding to complex environmental issues, highlighting that behind every "development" narrative lies a story of destruction waiting to be uncovered.

Artworks that explore environmental issues like this invite the audience to think more deeply about the imbalance between urban development and the often-overlooked damage to nature. Contemporary art that highlights these themes does not merely act as documentation but also serves as a means to convey social critique and trigger a shift in perspective toward the environment.

Leonardiansyah Allenda's artistic approach in his work "Rumah" can be contrasted with environmental art practices that place more emphasis on personal health and sustainability. The study, "Arts in Nature with Children and Young People: A Guide Towards Health Equality, Wellbeing, and Sustainability" (Moula & Walshe, eds., 2024), offers a different perspective. This research focuses on the collaboration between art and nature to improve the well-being of children and adolescents.

While Allenda's work uses art as a sharp critique of the destructive impacts of development, Moula and Walshe's perspective highlights the therapeutic and ecological educational potential of art in nature. Allenda's approach is confrontational, using the remnants of destruction as material to deconstruct the hypocrisy of "green development."

This comparison shows the broad spectrum of environmental art. Allenda represents the side of art as activism that highlights structural and policy failures. Meanwhile, the approach outlined in the study by Moula and Walshe shows art as a means for healing, education, and the restoration of a spiritual relationship with nature. Both approaches are equally important in the contemporary art discourse on the environment, offering different yet complementary ways to respond to ecological challenges in the modern era.

The installation by Komunitas Quiqui, titled "Kunang-kunang" (Fireflies), exhibited at the Jakarta Biennale 2015, is a highly poetic and symbolic social-environmental critique.

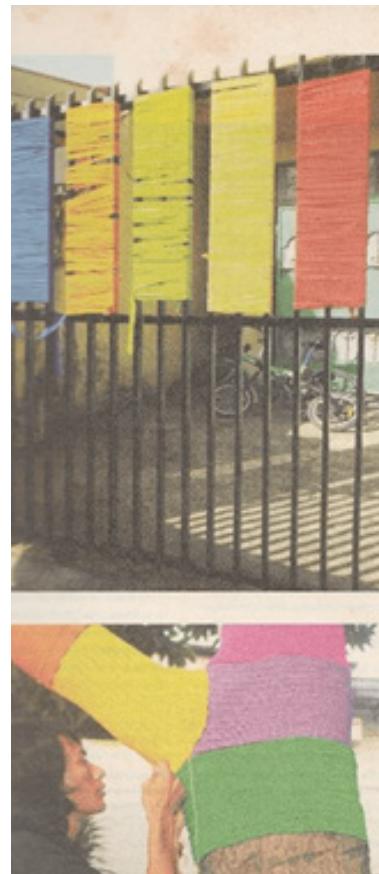


Figure 6. Komunitas Quiqui's work, "Kunang-kunang" (Fireflies), fiber art, installation of objects of varied dimensions, 2015.
(Source: Jakarta Biennale Catalog, 2023)

Instead of using a conventional narrative or statistical data, Komunitas Quiqui conveys its message through sensory experience and powerful metaphors. An analysis of this work requires an understanding of the intricate interplay of its use of space, material, and symbolism. The work not only presents environmental conditions but also triggers critical reflection on how urbanization and neglect have damaged the beauty and harmony of nature.

The core of Komunitas Quiqui's critique lies in its use of the firefly symbolism, which contrasts with the neglected urban context. Fireflies universally symbolize natural beauty,

wonder, and a healthy environment. Their presence indicates a preserved ecosystem balance. However, in densely populated big cities like Jakarta, fireflies are increasingly rare, almost extinct, due to light pollution and habitat destruction. By creating artificial "fireflies" from knitted yarn coated with phosphorus and installing them in poorly lit or neglected areas in Penjaringan, North Jakarta, Komunitas Quiqui effectively highlights the loss of natural beauty caused by neglect and environmental damage.

The placement of this work in a densely populated area also holds a profound social meaning. It is an artistic intervention that brings environmental issues from the abstract realm into the daily reality of the community. By utilizing spaces that are often overlooked and hold no aesthetic value in the public eye, Komunitas Quiqui symbolically transforms these spaces into a focal point for reflection. This work invites both local residents and visitors to re-examine their environment, not just as a place to live but also as a vulnerable ecosystem.

The "Kunang-kunang" installation is a critique of the loss of harmony between humans and the environment. The glowing knitted yarn in the darkness symbolically reminds us of the remaining beauty that can still be saved if there is collective awareness. This critique is not explicitly directed at a single policy but at the widespread mentality of neglect in society. The work highlights that environmental damage often begins with small-scale indifference and neglect.

Through this approach, Komunitas Quiqui demonstrates that environmental

art has a vital role in arousing collective awareness. This work invites the audience to reflect on fundamental questions: why is natural beauty disappearing? What is our role in its loss? And how can we restore it? The installation proves that contemporary art can be a powerful tool to spark a shift in the community's perspective on the environment, transforming neglected spaces into a canvas to convey a message of hope and protection. Komunitas Quiqui successfully transforms simple objects into a critique that is both poetic and contemplative, asserting that beauty and harmony can be rediscovered if we are willing to see and act.

The installation "Kunang-kunang" by Komunitas Quiqui shows alignment with the concepts put forth by Marlène Harles (2019) in her book, *Collectives, Localities, Networks*. This work highlights how art collectives can operate outside of formal institutions to create new platforms—namely, public installations in neglected spaces—to communicate social and environmental issues. Through the work "Kunang-kunang," Komunitas Quiqui effectively addresses social problems (neglect) and environmental ones (pollution) with a community-based approach. The use of symbolism relevant to daily experience proves that collective art has an important role in shaping contemporary art discourse from the "grassroots," despite having different aesthetics and local contexts.

Firman Djamil's installation, "Menggantung Air" (Hanging Water), exhibited at the Jakarta Biennale 2015, is an intelligent social-environmental critique. The installation visually and conceptually



Figure 7. Firman Djamil, "Menggantung Air" (Hanging Water), installation of objects of varied dimensions, 2015.

(Source: Jakarta Biennale Catalog, 2023)

highlights the failure of Indonesia's urban systems to manage water resources—a fundamental issue that directly impacts the survival of the community. An analysis of this work requires a reading of the symbolism of its materials, the gestures it mimics, and the social contradictions it contains. This work not only documents a phenomenon but also confronts the audience with a sharp comparison between traditional wisdom and modern-day failures.

The core of artist Firman Djamil's critique lies in his choice of materials: one hundred young coconut water containers hung from one hundred bamboo poles. These materials are not merely a medium; they are symbols laden with meaning. Coconuts and bamboo are powerful representations of natural abundance, local wisdom, and tropical culture. Their use in this work serves as an antithesis to the modern materials often used in urban infrastructure. Through these materials, Firman Djamil brings the narrative of village life, where the relationship with nature is

direct and sacred, into the contemporary exhibition space.

The gesture mimicked by this installation—the traditional pose of villagers carrying water from a well—is a very powerful allegory. This pose reflects the hard work, patience, and respect for water as a precious source of life. Firman Djamil effectively contrasts this gesture with the mentality of consumption and convenience inherent in city life. In the city, water is often considered a limitless and easily accessible commodity, which diminishes the awareness of its value. Through the title "Menggantung Air" (Hanging Water) in these simple containers, he visually conveys the message that water, while abundant in nature, becomes something vulnerable and difficult to access within a failed urban system.

This work explicitly critiques the failure of urban systems to manage water resources. The "Menggantung Air" installation is a visual metaphor for a precarious and unstable situation. Water, the most fundamental necessity, is depicted as "hanging" in simple containers, vulnerable to spilling or running out at any time. This represents the paradox of the clean water crisis plaguing many Indonesian cities, where distribution is uneven, pollution is rampant, and communities must struggle to obtain it.

This critique aligns with the viewpoint of ecocriticism, which examines the relationship between cultural representation and the natural environment. Firman Djamil uses cultural heritage (the gesture of carrying water, natural materials) as a lens to critique the failures of modern systems. His work

doesn't just present a problem but also offers the reflection that local wisdom may hold overlooked solutions. The installation invites the audience to re-examine traditional ways of valuing and managing resources while questioning why urban systems, with all their sophistication, have failed at the most fundamental level.

Overall, Firman Djamil's work is a brilliant example of environmental art that coherently combines aesthetics, symbolism, and social critique. He successfully transforms simple objects and everyday gestures into a powerful political statement about the urgency of the water crisis. His work affirms that contemporary art in Indonesia has a vital role in bridging the past and the present, as well as local wisdom and modern challenges, to spark collective awareness of sustainability.

An analysis of Firman Djamil's work, "Menggantung Air," can be enriched with the conceptual framework from the book, "Infrastructure Aesthetics" (Daugaard, Schmidt, & Tygstrup, eds., 2024). This book argues that contemporary art often operates by blurring the boundaries between the artwork itself and the surrounding infrastructural framework. Firman Djamil's work perfectly illustrates the concept of "infrastructural inversion," where an artist makes an infrastructure that is usually invisible or overlooked the center of aesthetic attention.

Firman Djamil's work performs an "inversion" of urban water management infrastructure. Instead of making art about water as a natural resource, he creates art about the failure of the infrastructure that is supposed to distribute water. By displaying

water "hanging" in simple containers, he visually exposes the fragility and instability of a complex system that is often invisible to the public. The installation makes the audience contemplate not only water but also the political, social, and economic systems that govern its distribution—the infrastructure itself. Firman Djamil successfully transforms infrastructural failure into an artistic medium, affirming that art can serve as a critical lens to reveal and question the very foundations that support modern life.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the works exhibited at the Jakarta Biennale 2015, it can be concluded that environmental art has transcended traditional aesthetic boundaries and serves as a vital critical platform for the discourse of sustainability and social justice in Indonesia. This research finds that these works effectively reflect and critique specific ecological and social issues in Indonesia, from land reclamation to water management failures.

The artworks analyzed—such as the installations by Tita Salina, Tisna Sanjaya, Leonardiansyah Allenda, Komunitas Quiqui, and Firman Djamil—show that environmental art has become a powerful medium for critiquing real issues. Artists use material symbolism (trash, spices, used wood) and cultural gestures to deconstruct the contradiction between a "green" development narrative and the reality of environmental damage. This proves that art not only reflects conditions but also serves as an advocacy tool

to voice ecological injustice.

Through its role, the Jakarta Biennale 2015 successfully positioned itself as an arena for knowledge production and activism. With a curatorial approach focused on local issues and collaboration, the Biennale became a strategic platform that bridged theoretical discourse on the environment with the realities experienced by the community. The exhibition proved that art institutions can play a significant role in triggering collective awareness and encouraging critical reflection on pressing environmental challenges.

Through the use of material symbolism, cultural gestures, and powerful narratives, these works are able to trigger collective awareness and encourage critical reflection on urgent environmental challenges. This finding affirms that contemporary art in Indonesia has great potential as a catalyst for social change, proving that the legacy of the Indonesian New Art Movement (GSRBI) lives on in a critical and relevant artistic spirit.

Overall, these findings affirm that contemporary art in Indonesia, through exhibitions like the Jakarta Biennale 2015, has great potential as a catalyst for social change that can raise public awareness about the urgency of the environmental crisis.

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