

Conference Paper

Improving The Dance Performance Space in the Pandemic Era through Benjang Mask in Bandung Society

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ABSTRACT

The Benjang performance design after the pandemic has the essence of design value as a medium to get closer to God with the Benjang philosophy, "Bersih hate Handap asor." The concept of "space" and "place" in Benjang's performance during a pandemic is an essential element that cannot be separated from supporting human space. The place element is a constituent component in every performance. Currently, we are in a phase to develop a cultured life, which is Space and more as a place to prove they exist and realize the essence of everyday life after the pandemic. The use of Space in Benjang performance is by the presence of movements with various rhythms and characters who have their respective roles carried Space, which are isn from the personal feelings of each player.

Keywords: Performance, Space, Pandemic, Benjang Mask

Introduction

According to Jakob Sumardjo, performing arts in the old community were not related to place and not bound by time; the rituals could also be performed anywhere, even in places that were rarely visited or even on the streets, performances could be held. Like the existence of the Benjang show, which is also a performance performed by a group of people from the Ujung Berung area of Bandung for a long time and still survives until now. Benjang comes from 'ben' and 'jang.' Ben is taken from the word amben (bale-bale/courtyard of the house), and Jang is born from the phrase bujang (male), therefore in its early history, this show was played in the courtyard of the house and only played by men. This art ritual has developed since the 19th century, starting with the Benjang Pagelaran, which became a sign system for the people of Ujung Berung. As written by Jakob Sumardjo, every work of art and culture is born in place and Space in an area, especially the people who have ideologies in several teachings about the meaning of life and all their actions. Likewise, the Benjang performance is performed by the entire community of Ujung Berung to celebrate birthdays, weddings, circumcisions, and it is also performed at festivals held every year on Indonesian Independence Day in August.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Benjang performance design was one of the performance rituals that still survives and is carried out until now, although with restrictions on the number of players and always maintaining distance. With the functional mindset and contemporary lifestyle of Bandung youth today, the ritual of the Benjang Performance is a traditional performing art that provides a quality experience of ritual beauty, which is believed to achieve the people's life goals Ujung Berung Bandung. At the same time, it is a symbol of existence that this Benjang is a medium to get closer to God. As a body-and-soul exercise activity supporting sportsmanship with the Benjang motto, "Bersih hate handap asor," which means having a clean heart and always humble, with benjang ritual that is believed to make someone humble, responsible, have a forgiving spirit, and

grow self-confidence. That is the purpose of the Benjang Performance design. This pandemic has changed during this pandemic in that Benjang is not always performed in Ujung Berung as usual but becomes more towards spiritual cleansing for the community. It is carried out in the pavilion where they perform rituals, like the previous habit they routinely practice every day.

The essence when looking at the series of Benjang Ujung Berung art activities in Bandung is that the entire layout of the Space in this ritual performance is influenced by the structure of the movement, as well as the position of the dancers and performers, which of course is a belief system and the interests of the performers as well as the audience who are in that location. The series of Benjang performances include the Benjang Mask performance in an area or room that has been prepared, played by four characters, each of which represents a human character in general from birth to adulthood; the first one is the Emban Princess mask which has the essence of a gentle and graceful princess, the second one is the Emban mask with a female babysitter or helper character. The Baladewa mask is a white mask with a beard and a thin mustache known as the puppet character of Barata Kresna's brother. The last one is the Ravana mask, a Dasa Muka figure with extraordinary ambition, then interspersed with Benjang playing before entering the room, then closed again with Benjang Mask performed alternately.



Figure 1. Benjang Mask Performance in Normal conditions
(Source: Benjang Community. 2018)

Space of benjang mask ritual into one unit with the number of space users; the number of music accompaniment, Sinden (silencer), dancer, audience, and event team. Distance in the space user becomes the concept of existence in this show because of the average dimensional intimate length (< 25 cm) and emotional distance (< 150 cm). It can be seen in the Benjang ritual that there are two types of areas used, which are starting from the courtyard or terrace, then the use of the inner room as the last place for the Benjang Mask performances. The internal Space of a performing arts ritual is a facility used to realize society's beliefs through the interaction of the performer and the audience. During the pandemic, the Benjang Mask show is held in the room or the courtyard of the responder's house, which is equipped with camera facilities to provide a virtual performance to the public, which is held in the yard or pavilion where they practiced.

Based on the background above, several problems can be formulated as follows:

1. How is the existence of the 'space' usage in the Benjang Mask activities series, which are the ritual performances of the Ujung Berung community?

2. What is the meaning of ritual in the essence of the Benjang Mask performance?
3. Why does the performance space affect the existence and essence of the Benjang Mask performance?

Based on the problem formulations that have been described, there are several study objectives of this Benjang performance design, including:

1. General Objective

The general objective of this study is to look for aspects of existence contained in the elements that make up the ritual space, then find the concept of Space as the main facility in performing design activities.

2. Specific Objective

The specific objectives of this study are:

- a. It was knowing the response from the performance manager or the community of performers and the people around Ujung Berung as users of the ritual space.
- b. It knows the factors that affect the quality of Space in the ritual performance of Benjang Mask.

It is still considered necessary for the two objectives mentioned above to be developed and expanded to answer the existing problems. It is also required to find concepts and theories regarding the essence of ritual Space in a performance.

The essence of performance is in the cultural expression that is placed following the area of the original culture. The artist is the creator of a performance artwork based on society's ideology of realizing his existence with his cultural expression. Jakob Sumardjo said in the Indonesian Performing Arts that every work of art is born in the context of a specific place, time, and culture space that is by the values of the people of the region for a long time, so it carries a paradigm of values that give meaning to the art, as well as a legacy which is passed down from generation to generation. Aesthetic values, according to Kant in Aesthetics, Dharsono (Sony Kartika), are divided into:

1. Aesthetic value / pure value.

There is motion, rhythmic tempo, dialogue, Space, and movement.

2. Extra aesthetic value/ added value.

Forms of humans, nature, animals, a snatch, a cry, and a scream.

'Space' is identical with infinite Space (use of distance in space/ area by interacting with the show), Edward T. Hall, 2019, The Hidden Dimension, while 'place' is limited (the room/ area used). Humans need a place to develop their life and culture, not just a 'space' but more felt like a 'place,' Roger Trancik, in Finding Lost Space.

Material and Methods

This research method is qualitative, starting with observing the conditions in Benjang performance ritual in Ujung Berung Bandung community, which is so valuable and can be tested for the quality of the design performance art, wherein this ritual it is evident how humans understand themselves through the objectivity of life and how humans understand oneself through the activities experienced during their life. Art here has a meaning as a means of communication between individuals and other elements.

This research begins with the general topic of the need for a ritual space for a group of people living in an area, where mask dance and martial arts wrestling become more appropriate concepts when done inductively, making more profound observations of more abstract thinking (Lawrence, 2006). The methodological technique used is the descriptive research technique with purposive sampling. The research sample was taken purposively in several ritual spaces for the Benjang performance. The selection of rituals and locations is based on the complexity of the problems encountered to obtain a distinctive and unique character/pattern from each study area. In the experience of beauty and a direct reflection of philosophy, the meaning of the beauty of performing arts series will be seen. The situation of contemplation of beauty in a ritual art that is experienced directly will be highlighted. Aesthetics must depart from personal experience.

In the research methodology, direct data collection techniques are carried out in the field, where the data needed will be collected through observation, direct involvement with community managers, performers, and the surrounding community who are directly involved in the design performances, as well as players as space users, to get their point of view regarding the conditions and environment of the ritual activity of the Benjang performance.

Data collection is intended to obtain valid and accurate data to be analyzed and reviewed and then concluded as the final product of this research; therefore, data collection techniques significantly affect the results of this study.

Results and Discussion

The most important thing about the space usage existence in the ritual activities' series of Benjang Mask performances is the meaning of the ritual appreciation. The most important series of Benjang performances are the movements with various rhythms, as well as the presence of each character in a space that is born from the personal feelings of the performers, namely the performer, dancer, and musician, which is then absorbed and enjoyed through the senses of sight and hearing. All activities are carried out regularly in expressing the performers' feelings, intentions, and thoughts, so they produce a beautiful visual space. Various kinds of behavioral tendencies and human nature can improve the quality of artistic activity in design performance. Thus, it takes several stages to determine the direction of these behaviors under any conditions. Here are the locations:

1. Observation of spiritual qualities, such as likes, habits, physical dimensions, and other physical reactions.
2. The results of the observations are then compiled and organized in a rhythmic pattern and form to provide inner and outer satisfaction.
3. Observations from stages one and two are then connected with emotions or feelings then expressed through a medium to become aesthetic works that others can enjoy as observers.

From these behaviors, the performance ritual exists in realizing the life principles of the people of Ujung Berung Bandung. Many related factors affect a space as an art facility, including economic, cultural, technological, ergonomic, anthropometric, and psychological factors. Therefore the performance space affects the existence and essence of the design performance of Benjang. The aesthetic attitude is one of the subjects of value and quality in aesthetics, in addition to other topics that complement aesthetic perspectives, including the formulation of works of art, critical considerations and arguments, styles, forms, interpretations and expressions, emotions, symbols, and metaphors, imitation, the meaning of reality, intent and purpose, art, society and morality, art, and religion.

An intimate distance of or about 25 cm can present an exaggerated sense of very high sensor input (Edward T. Hall, 2009), in this case, a close-up position, especially as in the Benjang Mask ritual, which has a detailed impact in providing a space with a visual expression that cannot be done in other areas that have no intimate dimension. The voice is no longer prioritized in this expression, especially for the athletes/ performers. As a ritual expression for the audience, the audio messages from the gamelan performers reinforce the philosophical message from the movement to its appreciation.

The use of Space becomes more comprehensive, but it must be a unity between the accompaniment of the music accompaniment, Sinden (silencer), dancer, audience, and the event team. Distance in the user's Space is the essence of the concept by applying social reach on the show with a minimum length of 100 cm and a maximum distance of 300 cm. With the addition of green carpets, the use of top lighting, and elevated audio resulted in the atmosphere still existed. The ritual philosophy was still carried out. During the pandemic, the only rituals performed were Benjang Mask performances. These two things were the principal appreciation in achieving the philosophical goals of the Ujung Bering community. In these ritual performances, many elements and meanings contribute to human awareness of the Space

used, any effects can be identified, and the boundaries of interaction between performers or between performers with the audience can be felt through direct touch or related to responses that are present in all personality situations of the performers. In a concept regarding the close distance of the ritual space, if there are individual performers who fail to bring out their personality when carrying out all their activities, then the public Space that presents the interaction of suggestions cannot be fulfilled.



Figure 2. Benjang Mask Performance in pandemic conditions
(Source: Benjang Community. 2021)

Conclusion

Benjang performance is a work of art that involves a group of people or society in a particular space and place. With the complexity of causality, the Benjang ritual performance art has several performances, namely the Benjang Mask dance martial art. In this case, Benjang is dance, music, and acting, in which the works of art from the combination of several branches of art can be said to be complex works of art.

This Benjang ritual performance has a level of sharpness and understanding that can vary depending on the cultural background of the audience, as well as the level of involvement in the understanding process. Even though they are classified as performers, they still need a level of understanding based on experience from the relative intensity of their relationship with each other or with their community, which consistently fosters ritual beliefs in the near term and is routinely carried out. Although in the pandemic still maintains the essence in preserving existence, in achieving life's goals. Space is an essential element in a ritual; it cannot be separated in an event and its changes in a series of performance activities. The supporting elements facilitated in the implementation are the human element as a user, the distance element, which refers to the interaction or involvement of the performer with the audience, and the place element, a constituent component in every ritual event performance. Other terms, such as spatial dimension, a term for Space, and temporal dimension, are a term for time. All these elements and things will support

forming a new theory and concept of Space that has a shape and pattern that follows the meaning of Space in achieving the philosophy of life for its end of Bandung.

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