

Art Fair Combines Variety of Exhibition from different Eras

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It is undeniable that art fair is a very much influencing activity in the art industry for about 3 decades before the 21st century. Art fair considered as the artist's activity for its significant role in distributing art objects to public. It is different than art institute such as art gallery, art space, art room or art shop that tend to be organized in a limited space, conceptually art fair offers a much bigger forum. Even in a giant art fair such as Art Basel, Swiss, every year there are almost 300 art institutions from all over the world participated in the exhibition. In a forum like this, people will be presented with not less than 10.000 art pieces in one event for sale.

Art fair is an art forum that conceptually leads to a sale. In Etymology the word "fair" itself clearly means "trade fair" or "big market". In Indonesian language "fair" can be meant as a market. We might remember a sentence in the old Indonesian language: "Mother goes to the fair", it means "Mother is going to the market". Whereas the real meaning of the word "fair" is a market established by a group of people and operates once in 7 days. We might remember there are special markets operated in small towns that usually open only on a certain day, and these markets are more complete, bigger and crowded compared to a regular market.

In the industry the term of "fair" has been used for a long time. We have often heard Jakarta Fair, or *Pekan Raya Jakarta*. Whereas in the foreign countries, New York Fair, Shanghai Fair, Osaka Fair, have already been famous and later known as Expo. In this event, many industrial products from various manufacturers offered and sold. This event is usually conducted once a year, and it opens 20 days for a month.

For sure Art fair generated from the same concept as industrial fair. The artists' products are simultaneously managed by various art institutions. In countries where the art are well developed and the appreciation toward art is high, an art fair usually exhibited minimum once a year. Every exhibition will run for 3 days, a week or two weeks. It depends on the committee's capability

and willingness. However, in general an art fair opened only for relatively a short period of time, around 3 to 7 days. The choice of this period of time depends on the committee's capability and willingness, but it also indicates the exclusivity of the objects offered. On the other hand, it is different than the industrial objects that have multiple numbers of quantities; the art object is usually limited to one product. Therefore, each art product can be traded in one event. It means the trading process of art products is relatively brief and simpler compared to the industrial products.

Nowadays, the art fair activity organized in a lot of cities all over the world. Even since 2000, in line with John Naisbitt's prediction that said the 21st century is the art century, the exhibition of an art fair mushrooming everywhere. There are Art Santa Fe, Ann Arbor Street Art Fair, Hamptons International Art Fair, Cologne Art Fair, Beijing Art Fair, Shanghai Art Fair, Jogja Art Fair, London Art Fair, Bazaar Art Fair. This activity, even though sometimes adopts the city's name, is usually organized by private institutions supported by government. Nevertheless, there is also one organized by local administration supported by private institutions.

The interesting part is, a successful art fair in one city, usually will attract other city to organize the same fair by inviting the committee of that successful fair as the organizer. Basel Art Fair in Swiss, for example, every year is invited to organize the fair in Miami, USA. Therefore it is called Miami-Basel Art Fair. In the 90's there was an active committee named Bradburry International. This institution gathered hundred of galleries from all over the world to exhibit a series of joint art fair called Tresor d'Art in a number of countries. Bradburry International visited Indonesia in 1994.

Now in Indonesia there is a new one called Indonesia International Art Fair. This international art fair organized by PT. Wahana Kemalaniaga Makmur (Wakeni), a company that has organized so many big exhibitions on various non art industrial for years. Its expertise in organizing various big events is certainly convinced people when this institution entered the art industry. Our society can see that the institution has mastered the principle aspects that must be owned such as skills on organizing and inviting visitors and consumers.

Behind its purpose to expand the art market, the mission to appreciate art master pieces before the public is also the main purpose of the art fair event such as Indonesia International Art Fair. Thousand of art objects exhibited in various booths belonged to the art institute to be socialized through a simultaneous and colossal art performance; it is very different compared to

when the objects exhibited in the previous exhibitions. Simulating in term of each participating art institute will present its uniqueness or specialty at the same time. Mean a while this joint effort collects a tremendous amount of art objects. It is a reality that will satisfy the art lover and public at large.

In such, it can be said that the organizing of this art fair is a different type of exhibition compared to other art exhibitions that have been organized in Indonesia. In relations to the difference and to focus on how different is this art fair exhibition compared to other exhibitions, it is wise to learn the character of the exhibitions that have been organized in Indonesia. Actually, it shows that the art fair is a compilation of main concept and character of the exhibition in various eras.

The *Kunstkring* Era:

The price:

The growth and development of art in modern Indonesia in the last 80 years cannot be separated from the exhibition organized by the institution that holds the exhibition. Through the exhibition the artworks presented to public. The idea of the artists communicated to public and their works distributed to a lot of parties. In the history, Indonesian art exhibition shows diverse character on each era.

In 1930's the leading exhibitor in Indonesia was *Bataviasche Kunstkring*. Moreover, this "Batavia Circle of Art" owned a building that specially built by PAJ Moojen, on Heutszboulevard street (nowadays Teuku Umar street). This building later converted into the Immigration Office and then transformed into the controversial Buddha Bar. *Bataviasche Kunstkring* was specially aimed to the Dutch Indies' artists, even though once in a while "very selectively" hosted exhibition for native Indonesian painters.

This institution is Dutch Indies' top art Institute since it supervised other *kunstkring* in other areas such as *Bandungsche Kunstkring*, *Semarangsche Kunstkring* or *Surabayasche Kunstkring*. Therefore, this *Bataviasche Kunstkring* institute very often exhibited the best works of its

kunstkring's members from various areas in a package called "*Bondscollectie*". A significant *Bond's* exhibition held on 11 March to 11 April 1937.

For sure *Bataviasche Kunstkring* was prestigious. Moreover, this institution who had Jan Frank as its curator and led by Mrs. J De Loos-Haaxman exhibited collection of P.A.Regnault that presented Van Gogh and other painting artists. As a result, the exhibition was always an interesting show that attracted people to come. For this reason, it charged 25 cent gulden admission ticket for one entry. Anyone who entered had to dress nicely, formally, behave politely and speak Dutch as possible. As told by the late painter Omar Basalmah, the poor native Indonesians were not able to visit the exhibition.

How are the information and appreciation tools? *Bataviasche Kunstkring* published a black and white catalogue where at that time was considered very nice. Usually inside the catalogue there was a welcome note from the gallery's management. However, the writing of participants' bio data was very thorough even though it was not written in a big column. The interesting part was on each right side of the painting's title a price was always posted. For example: Emil Rizek, "Hanengevecht - Bali", olieverf, paneel.... f. 75,- Or : L.Van den Berg, "Straatje in Oud-Batavia", olieverf, doek f.125,- For them, exhibition was also a trading forum.

In Jakarta at that era there was also an active gallery owned by Kolff publisher and bookstore named Kunstzaal Kolff, on Noordwijk 13 (now H.Djuanda street). Mean a while in Bandung the most famous one was St Lucasgilde. Since they adopted the organizing of *Bataviasche Kunstkring*, therefore all program styles and its appreciation tools are alike as well as its discrimination policy on native Indonesian.

The Japanese Era:

For public.

The activity of *Bataviasche Kunstkring* exhibition ended in 1942 when Japanese came over. The Japanese saw the discrimination created by Dutch institution and decided to establish *Keimin Bunka Sidhoso*, or Japan Culture Institute. This institution established an art training center by involving senior Indonesian artists such as Basoeki Abdullah, S.Sudjojono, Agus Djaya as trainers.

Moreover, *Keimin Bunka Sidhoso* provided an award to the winner of the best painting exhibited. Therefore, artist such as Henk Ngantung and Hendra Gunawan who had won the contest were very proud.

This new colonial always organized a serious exhibition. While the Dutch designed the art exhibition exclusively, the Japanese opened the door widely to public. Sudjojono said that this was the Japanese's way to "gain trust". The Japanese political slogan that aired at that time was "Asian Unity". Whereas the more specific slogan, among others, that related to culture was "*Ajia-no Ajia*" or "Asia for Asian".

The Japanese was very active in stimulating exhibition in various public easy access places. Since March 1942 to April 1944, there had been 14 exhibition programs conducted. This was a tremendous number for a very short time. In Japanese era, the reputation record of visitors attended the exhibition was broken. "*Tenno Heika : Techo-setsu*" the exhibition in 1944 in celebrating the birthday of the Japanese Emperor was attended by 11.000 people for 10 days! The exhibition that involved 60 Indonesian painters held in *Keimin Bunka Sidhoso* building, on Noordwijk 39 street, Jakarta.

The exhibition in Japanese era also published a catalogue, even though the number was not many and in a simple printing. Therefore, the catalogue was only seen as a formality and documentation. There was also a sale. However, since at that time the Indonesian social economy was in a difficult condition, the painting or sculpture sold considered as "extra ordinary piece". That's the reason the artists of this era always remembered 9 Indonesia's paintings in the exhibition bought by the Japanese Government and participated in *Asia Timur Raya* road tour.

The Independence Era:

people's celebration.

The spirit of Japanese managed to touch heart of the Indonesian artists during the independence era. As a result, the artists who were also independence fighters did not really want to exhibit their works in the building considered as exclusive. But in a special place, these artists opened the door widely to public. For example was the Exhibition of Hendra Gunawan.

This painter held a single exhibition at *Gedung Komite Nasional Indonesia Pusat (KNIP)*, on Malioboro street, Yogyakarta. The exhibition that held in the 1946 was the first painting exhibition in Indonesia independence era. During this event, Hendra involved some homeless as “receptionist” to welcome President Sukarno who would officially open the exhibition. Hendra’s idea for sure was not to gain sensation, but to continue the bonding spirit between the artist and poor people. Then the exhibition became people’s celebration.

The vision of this exhibition also influenced Dullah, a former President Sukarno’s Palace Painter. The spirit was on all the way to his artwork in the 1970’s. He chose to hold his exhibition at Aldiron Plaza, Blok M, Jakarta rather than in a secure gallery. In Yogyakarta, he chose to hold an exhibition at Gedung Agung that can be attended by public. The exhibitions conducted by Hendra and Dullah only published a limited edition of catalogue. Moreover, the reproduction of work was made in the form of flyer, since it was a mass product.

The 1950’s Era:

Return to Exclusivity.

In the 1950’s the vision of exhibition organized by painters and exhibitors shifted. Since 1955, the exclusive art galleries had boomed that purposely positioned the artwork (especially painting) as consumption for a certain level of society. The gallery owner conditioned artwork as a precious object that was supposed to have a special place, and had potential bargaining rights. The popular paintings and artworks at that time were served as “cultural icon” that had to be owned by high social class, educated, broad minded Indonesian. Moreover, painting offered as consumption for expatriate and first class tourist. The vision of art as an entertainment for public was left behind.

This vision encouraged President Sukarno to ask James Pandey, the manager of Thomas Cook travel bureau in Indonesia to open a gallery in Sanur beach. Paintings supplied from Jakarta, Surabaya and Ubud. In the capital, in 1958 Merdeka Gallery opened on Tibah street, South Jakarta. In Menteng’s area there was Banowati Gallery. These Galleries started a regular exhibition program and only well dressed people could enter. Even though, its purpose was clear but the exhibitor did not have a strong taste of art, since its intention only to distribute artwork extensively with a price that presented a special image.

The Hadiprana's Era :

Specialty.

In 1962 Prasta Pandawa Gallery on Paletihan street, that later turned into Hadiprana Gallery, started its distinctive tradition. From here the gallery's character as a special art house strengthened. Above all, Hadiprana Gallery offered an unambiguous selection; there was decorative art as a representation of Hendra Hadiprana's spirit as an architect and interior expert. During the 1970-1980 decade this institution continued to organize the exhibition program. A nice and colorful catalogue began to be published.

During this decade at TIM (*Taman Ismail Marzuki*), that housed DKJ (Jakarta Art Council) also presented strong character programs. Potential modern artists from all over Indonesia were housed. Therefore, it could present various mature arts all the way to the progressive and innovative ones. Ajip Rosidi, Zaini, Oesman Effendi, Umar Kayam succeeded to implement their choices strongly that created a trademark for TIM. However, so far TIM did not provide a literary appreciation guideline in its catalogue. It only included formal welcome note from the institution's committee. It can be said that the existence of TIM gallery only served as a phenomenal event regardless many experts at TIM and DKJ who could speak broadly in seminar or discussion forums.

The 1990's Era:

Artist as an object.

In the 1990's exhibition institutes were more dominant compared to their artists. In line with the booming of art in 1987, a painter's presence was seen more as an object. Gallery chose painters to be promoted. And painters waited for a visit and offer from a gallery. During this time, literary appreciation started to be included in almost all of the published catalogues. The author was art observers and critics who were expected to mediate the artwork and the potential art buyer.

However, even though one of its purposes was to sell, the exhibitors were reluctant to put a price in their catalogues as in the old *Bataviasche Kunstkring* era. "We are a shame if it is too obvious", said an exhibition institute's owner where in reality h/she was a very aggressive in chasing buyers. The exhibitor on this era only printed a price list on paper and hid it inside the folder

therefore the package looked elegant even though it is a bit hypocrite. While the typography is good in small letters but the price is very expensive.

The Second Millennium:

For a small community.

The exhibitors and artists started to stand equally since the early second millennium. The artist (painter, sculptor, ceramics artist, art installation, and graphics) owns a bargaining position over the exhibitor. On the other hand, beyond the artist and exhibitor there is other high up party, the curator. The gallery and artist then ruled by the curator who officially regarded as a new profession to earn a living. This awkward situation does not matter as long as all of them are mentally ready and the presented exhibition generates an added value. In this partnership, curator, artist and exhibitor uphold 5 principles. There are: art achievement, existence of the artist, promotion of the artist, extending the idea of the artist and curator, and market building. These five principles are sign of development.

But one thing forgotten by the exhibitor in this era is to uphold the 6th principle: how to promote artwork to be presented as entertainment for public. So far we often see exhibition arranged seriously only to be viewed by a limited community, and only during the opening. On week days, due to lack of promotion, people are hardly notice it. Furthermore, there is an exhibition in a big gallery opened for a week, night and day, attended by invited guests during the opening, but in the end the total visitor was only 117 (as listed in the guest list). It seems that an exhibition is only aimed to a handful of art lovers.

The good thing, since 2000 the catalogue published has always been in a good appearance, even it is extra ordinary. Unfortunately, this good look has not been accompanied by a strong character of each exhibitor. Almost all exhibitors only present the famous name in the market or the art genre that is popular in the market. Besides that the “personal” character of the exhibitor is not important. Therefore, the homogenous atmosphere emerges.

The Art Fair Era:

Combining All.

By understanding the exhibition's character of each era and by learning the art fair character, then it can be concluded that the art fair concept combines the main positive aspect of each exhibition's character of those eras.

The intention to distribute the artwork through a business concept that was pioneered by *Bataviasche Kunstkring*, seems to be adopted. The intention to invite as many visitors as possible as occurred in the Japanese era after the independence has also been adopted. The intention to provide an image of exclusive artwork, special and "the state of art" such as occurred in the 1950's seems to be implemented. The intention to package the artworks aesthetically and first class inside the room and in a special art house, as organized during the Hadiprana era, seems to be developed. The intention to place the artist as a research object of the curators as occurred in the 1990's era seems to be accomplished.

As a result, the organizing of Art Fair such as Indonesia International Art Fair is the best way to distribute and appreciate artworks democratically in a broader community.

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