

*Disability Art at the Exhibition “Seni Raba Menggambar Suara”*

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**Abstract**

People who are visually impaired from birth cannot see two-dimensional visual objects and do not even have visual memories in their lives. This paper focuses on the recognition of the visually impaired (since birth). This research uses the method of literature study from the Indonesian Visual Art Archive (IVAA) and data reduction with interviews. This exhibition activity has the opportunity to provide an aesthetic experience of blind psychology as a form of education. An important finding in this research is the aesthetic experience of disability in the stage space feeling the darkness of life through dark space and audio sound. The combination of insight into the psychological experience of blindness (since birth) and the development of audio access is a way to understand the aesthetics of "Disability Art". The conclusion is the development of art as a space to recognize disability in society, and the perspective of understanding disability art. This research can be a further study for future researchers by further reviewing audience responses using questionnaires as validity.

Keywords: Aesthetic Disability, Art Disability, Blind

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## Introduction

Disability art in art spaces from the perspective of most people in Yogyakarta, such as "the artist paints with his feet", "paints with his mouth", "dances with his deafness", and "paints with his blindness". In addition to these contexts, there are also activities that invite people with disabilities that are labeled as inclusive art activities. However, there are still spaces for activities and artworks that do not consider accessibility as an important context of inclusion, as well as a large view of the context of "disability" which is highlighted only from a medical perspective with different abilities. Disability is not only the context of medically detected conditions that can affect disability artworks that the author will discuss as the focus of the research.

Disability art is by/for disability, referring to Hickey-Moody, not works that tell stories about disability but are not made by disabled artists and vice versa, disabled artists who do not depict disability topics (Hickey-Moody, 2021). The recognition of disability as part of society can be a form of public pedagogy as described by Hickey-Moody in 2009 and continued in 2021 who concluded that disability art as a public pedagogy to raise awareness of issues, theories, and the development of disability studies into a separate field. The context of Hickey-Moody's public pedagogy in the art exhibition space as an offer to view disability art will be discussed in this research.

The research on disability art in this paper is based on the exhibition "Seni Raba Menggambar Suara". The event was held at the IVAA building. Activities were held on June 15-July 15, 2022, by Muhammad Haryanto (Nanang) who is visually impaired and collaborated with Ki Samidjan, Kus Sri Antoro, Mrs. Kawit, and Bodi IA. The activities included Wayang Disabilitas held at the opening on June 15, 2022, a discussion on disability advocacy on June 24, 2022, and a discussion on disability art on July 15, 2022. The term "Seni Raba Menggambar Suara" comes from the word "Raba", which is the access of the blind in recognizing the shape/surrounding environment through touching with their hands or sticks, while "Suara" is the hearing access they use in recognizing something and expressing what they feel directly/verbally and online through voice notes on their handphones. Overall, "Seni Raba Menggambar Suara" is an artwork that represents the voice communication of the visually impaired that is realized in visuals using tactile access. The exhibition is a project of the Indonesian Visual Art Archive (IVAA) that draws on the psychology of a blind person. IVAA chose Muhammad Hariyanto who is usually called Nanang. He is a blind person who has experienced sensory visual impairment since birth and certainly has no visual memory. Interestingly, the disability art activities in this project invite visitors to recognize the disability of the visually impaired from birth through a dark room and audio sound.

Previous studies from various countries have analyzed research topics that aim to be perceived by the visually impaired. Touch as an aesthetic experience about The Blind Astronomer Exhibition (2013) by South African artist Berco Wilsenach participated in inviting visitors to engage with the works through the sense of touch, using the method of experience that blind people bring with art, a combination of insights from psychology experiments so as to encourage tactile encounters as enriching and enhancing ways of understanding aesthetics, and simultaneously visual and tactile (Lauwrens, 2019). Audio description in the visual arts, Self-portrait of Dora Maar, the research translates images into words. A case study of the Self-portrait of Dora Maar, about eye tracking is briefly described and the museum's audio description for the blind and visually impaired is introduced (Wendorff, 2021). The language of the camera in The Favourite's audio-description (El

lenguaje de la cámara en la audiodescripción de *The Favourite*), this study analyzes when and how ONCE describes the language of the camera in the film *The Favorite* (Yorgos Lanthimos, 2018) to identify the advantages and disadvantages due to sound redundancy that can interfere with the understanding of the message and the artistic experience for the visually impaired (González M.C, 2023).

The explanation above is one of the most common research topics discussed about accessibility/intent to be received/felt by the blind (Wendorff, 2021; González M.C, 2023) and how the tactile understanding of the blind as an idea of aesthetic understanding (Lauwrens, 2019). In contrast to the topic that will be discussed by the author in this paper, taking from the angle of activities sourced from the visually impaired as subjects and their work as objects, Hickey-Moody continues how the artistic practice of disability art invites audiences to recognize disability as a public pedagogy and opens the discussion of disability art views more on the group view of medical inclusion spaces.

### **Focus Method**

This research focuses on using descriptive qualitative, using a case study approach by drawing conclusions or generalizing phenomena or populations from cases (Johnson, 2005) Case one is the view of disability artworks from blind psychology at the "Pameran Seni Raba Menggambar Suara" and other related cases to complement it. Other cases are related to finding out the perspective of the background activities, the perspective of performing disability artworks, and the value of disability as a public pedagogy. Using data collection from the IVAA YouTube media "Seni Raba Menggambar suara", catalog documents, and in-depth interviews. Data sources through YouTube with the title "Pementasan Wayang Disabilitas" which tells the story of Muhammad Hariyanto as a blind person who has a great interest in art and Kus Sri Antoro who assists the introduction of art media, as well as Ki Samidjan as the artist of the Mbah Ki Samidjan Wayang Waste craft. The research uses data reduction according to Miles and Huberman in Sugiyono (2005: 91) and source triangulation to determine validity according to Denzin in Sugiyono (2007).

## Findings and Discussion



Figure 1: Katalog Pameran “Seni Raba Menggambar Suara”  
Source: Indonesia Visual Art Archive

The opening performance work at the exhibition "Seni Raba Menggambar Suara" entitled "Wayang Disabilitas" is one of the cases of disability art that is mostly carried out by medical space disabilities that does not stop there later as a public pedagogy that will be discussed further. IVAA is the Indonesia Visual Art Archive the institution that conducts this project. The background of this project is based on the topic of disability, which often becomes a space for discussion, which then continues with an archive exhibition at Taman Budaya Yogyakarta in 2019. The exhibition showed that art space activities involving disability were minimal. Therefore, IVAA organized a pantomime theater performance project from the deaf and mute community entitled 'Ba(Wa)yang', and the discussion led to the planning of an experiential activity process to introduce the visually impaired.

The basic idea came about when a visually impaired person whose first profession was as a massage therapist shared his concerns. The visually impaired person, who has had a sensory impairment since birth, played a central role in the IVAA workshop project. The reason for the urgency is that blind people who have obstacles from birth cannot justify, have no visual memory in their lives, and have stories that can be shared with people as a form of social concern for disability. This provided a new idea for IVAA to open up opportunities to introduce visually impaired people to the community. Dwi Marianto, the curator of the

exhibition said, "This exhibition is a way of being. Different and unique is natural, as the potential of beauty itself," described in the exhibition catalog book, Image One. This project only uses the method of meeting one person with a visual sensory impairment since birth, and people without disabilities who collaborate to introduce elements of fine art in the making of works such as wayang, painting, and, narrating the story of the blind experience as a disability art performance. However, this paper focuses on the aesthetic of the audience through the analogy of blindness, as well as the psychology of the experience as a form of disability art.

### **1. Disability Art of “Wayang Disabilitas”**

A work of performativity in the form of a 'storytelling drama' about disability issues entitled "Wayang Disabilitas". The setting of this exhibition creates a space of disability, where the exhibition invites the audience to experience blindness. The performance does not use wayang as its medium, although there is a project to make wayang a three-dimensional work on display. In the exhibition setting, the artist creates a space of disability, where he invites the audience to experience blindness. The puppets are not staged because they use a metaphorical system of blindness in a dark space and audio access for 'storytelling drama', as well as instrumental editing. The context of wayang in taking the name of the Mahabharata story character 'Wayang Destarasta' is a metaphor for the artist's experience as a blind person, while Gandari (a puppet character who initially did not experience blindness like the audience) is a metaphor for the audience to experience blindness through the space of a blind puppet show. The characters of the artist's friends (Desta in the performance) are replaced with the names of puppet characters such as Pandu, Boris, and Sengkuni.

### **2. Disability Art of “Bayang Disabilitas”**

The name "Wayang Disabilitas" is the context of its performativity, not the physical puppets or the physical shadow of the puppets, but the shadow in the context of the imagination imagined by the audience through narratives or tales that raise issues of disability and works of art in the context of blindness. The physical position of the puppets is not visible, the audience is invited to feel the sensation of being blind. This concept invites visitors to contemplate and imagine learning aesthetics through works that have tactile access from the blind. Dwi Marianto says, "Trying different media is a virtue," he explains in the exhibition catalog book in picture one.

### **3. Disability Aesthetics Encounter Techniques**

The technique used in the aesthetic meeting of disabilities with visitors is carried out in a dark room covered with a black cloth/backdrop which is carried out at the beginning of visitors entering the IVAA Building until the disability puppet performance is finished. This activity system invites visitors to recognize the dark atmosphere, and, those with disabilities who are visually impaired and rely on access to communication with sound. The Hickey-Moody perspective is an offer to open the analysis of the performativity of "Wayang Disabilitas".

Through this system, it is similar to the idea in the theory of "reverse integrity" (Hickey-Moody, 2021). The theory is a collaboration of meeting 'with' disability and 'without' disability into an inclusive work of art. The second theory "culture of intellectual disability" is introduced more specifically with an intellectual disability or Down syndrome through dance performances as a disability artwork that has the context of public pedagogy offered by

Hickey-Moody. An understanding can be drawn from Hickey-Moody's second theory, which explains the definition of what is meant by "Behavior Disabilities". This is to open up accessible opportunities and recognize the barriers experienced by people with disabilities. Opportunities that can be developed open up new discoveries for a person to justify, appreciate, and express the experience of disability as a discourse in any medium, including art. Disability art, as a medium of disability discourse to the public, can be studied as an understanding of 'public pedagogy' according to Hickey-Moody.

#### 4. The Value of the Disability Aesthetic “Wayang Disabilitas”

Disability aesthetics can influence political consciousness/decision-making policies in viewing people with disabilities or can be understood as Hickey-Moody's offer of "public pedagogy". The encounter with the audience affects the encounter of the work, where the disability aesthetic system emerges. The political consciousness/public pedagogy in the value of this project finds awareness of the story narrated through access to the dark space of the blindness metaphor.

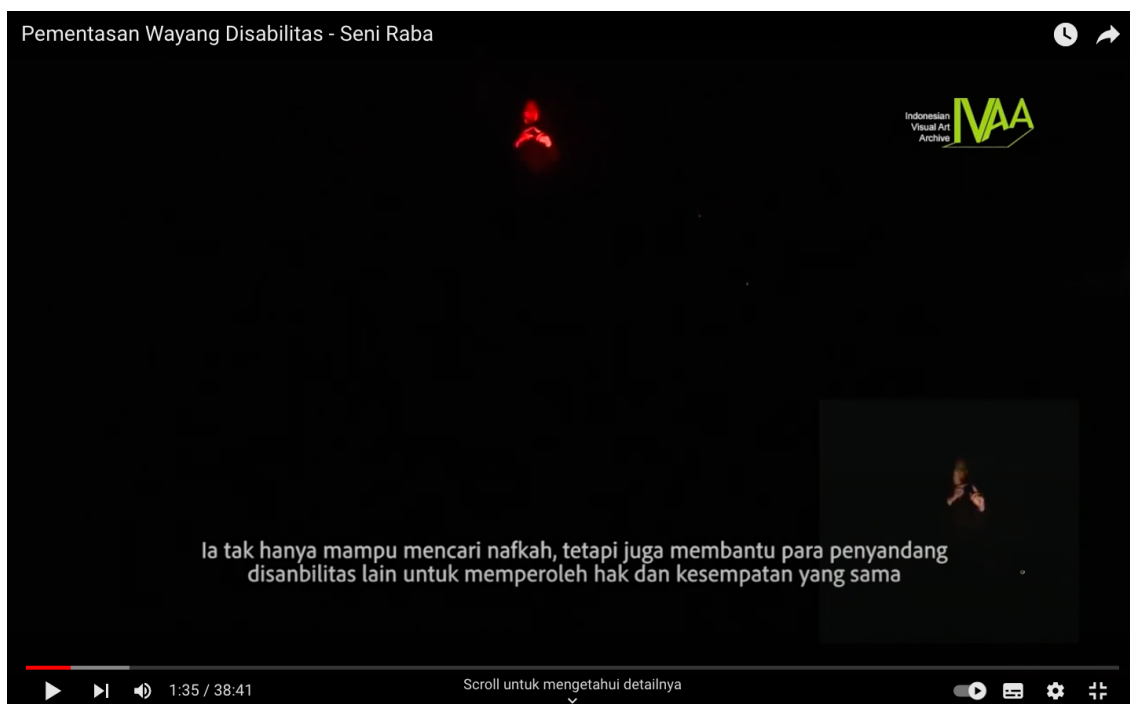


Figure 2: Pementasan Wayang Disabilitas

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTIsbcyxwMg>

The initial story tells the story of Desta, a millennial child who has not yet entered school age. One day he plays with his friends Pandu, Sengkuni, and Boris. Desta is carried on a bicycle by Pandu. Desta, who knew the thrill of cycling, wanted to feel the control of the bicycle, and after Pandu finished saying "Can you?" to him, not one minute later the bicycle they were both riding fell into the river. The other friends made fun of him by saying "No wonder you fell, you're blind" Desta who didn't know his condition and the term "blind" heard it was confused and asked about it. They laughed and answered "A blind person is disabled" and made fun of him while cheering "blind..blind..blind..blind...blind". Finally, Desta went home and told the incident to his mother. His mother explained that Desta was not disabled and only differed in the ability to see in various ways while his mother had eyes only.

Growing up, Desta Melenial Usia Anak learned about her blindness during junior high school, because her teacher taught her to use a cane. When Desta asked, "Why do I use a cane mom"? His teacher replied, "You are blind, so you have to learn to use a stick". This made Desta realize his different condition. After graduating from school, Desta could paint, read, and write. When he got home, Desta asked his mother how his friends were doing. Suddenly, his mother did not mind explaining that Pandu had glaucoma, so his sensory vision was impaired. Then there was another friend of his who had a disability due to an accident, such as a broken leg and a broken hand. After a few days, Desta visited his friends to invite collaborate in painting the art of touch. In the end, Desta the Adult Millennial did not carry his heartache and invited his friends who had made fun of him in the past to be creative without being burdened by his limitations according to most people. That is the essence of the story of "Wayang Disabilitas" by Muhammad Haryanto (Nanang).

The above discussion of the narrative flow of the drama "Wayang Disabilitas", the representation of issues and experiences of blind artists so that there is an encounter that raises the aesthetics of disability that can be taken as a public pedagogy for the audience, which makes Hickey-Moody an offer of understanding in this discussion. Another case of the disability aesthetic encounter system, borrowing the perspective of Sigmund Freud through the unconscious relationship between the artist and the audience forms an unconscious encounter of imagination. The artist's personal unconscious while telling the story in the drama performance "Wayang Disabilitas" in remembering his experience and vice versa for the audience in accepting it into the atmosphere as a blind disability. The Hickey-Moody working system relationship that meets between the theory of unconsciousness and the meeting of the theory of "reverse integrity" then shows novelty as a pedagogy when finding things that are accessible to someone who has a disability and do not impose and does not harm.

The condition of the wayang story is bullied which can be learned as public pedagogy, that a person's condition is not a mistake and cannot be used as an exception in socializing, but how we recognize them so that they can be part of the social community. Disability, of course, everyone can experience, such as when someone has a certain disease/accident so that they have limitations told in the performance of "Wayang Disabilitas" by Desta's friends as adults. Everyone unconsciously has limitations/disabilities, how to choose friendships, companions, and limited interactions or places that are excluded by someone, as well as religious space groups, economic classes, ethnicity/race, and customs. These have unconsciously created appropriate inclusion spaces in their groups since humans have existed.

Syntagmatic through three analyses of disability artwork, system, and aesthetic value of narrative as public pedagogy. Art has a role as a connector to recognize everyone's "behavioral disabilities" so as to open up inclusion policies to find offensive subversions. There is also the problem that most of the views of disability artworks in the medical space inclusion group (physical and mental barriers) can be said to be different disabilities/disabilities. This can affect unique findings due to medical group conditions such as the introduction of blindness, painting using feet, hands, mouth, or affect techniques. Sigmund Freud's offending perspective asserts that the "disability" movement grows out of group barriers that are not accepted by society in socializing which of course concerns all humans (Oliver, 2012). Therefore, disability art is not limited to the medical disability group, although most belong to that group.

## **Conclusion**

The introduction of the experience of people with visual impairments who have experienced obstacles since birth as public pedagogy through the disability artwork of the Wayang Disabilitas performance by inviting visitors to enter the experience of "Aesthetic Disability" in a dark room and audio sound access, as well as sign language translator facilities for deaf people. An important finding in this paper, "Behavior Disability" is the author's proposed understanding of the two-source theory by Hickey-Moody in 2021. The opportunities that can be developed open up new discoveries for people to justify, appreciate, and express the experience of disability as a discourse in any medium, including art. Here, disability is present in all humans who have unconsciously categorized themselves/limited themselves and have exceptions to social barriers since humans have existed. So disability art can be raised from various categories of race/ethnicity, religion, economy, education class, and other social categories. This makes disability art a channel for public pedagogy in the context of disability itself. The research limitations add the context of understanding disability art to Hickey-Moody's theory in 2021 and open the view that disability art is not only in the medical space.

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