A reflection of postmodern uncertainty in the artist's perception of an art medium:

A case study of the Jakarta-based illustrators and their art media

Belle Bintang Biarezky

S4555287

bellebintangbiarezky@student.ru.nl

Master's Program in Creative Industries

Faculty of Arts

Radboud University Nijmegen

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Supervised by

Dr. Jan Dirk Baetens

Dr. László Munteán

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Abstract

Artists have various perceptions toward their art media, one of which is inspired by a belief in the medium's materiality awareness. Their perceptions relate to various degrees of political and economic conditions that surrounds them. Taking 10 Jakarta-based illustrators as a study case, this paper aimed to observe all possible art medium perceptions directly from the artists' statements through interview using Critical Discourse Analysis methodology (Fairclough 1995). Since an artist creates an artwork with two possible economic intentions: (1) as a commercial project and (2) as a personal work, an observation of the art medium perception was analyzed by relating it to the two economic purposes. Taking a fact that these illustrators stated an uncertain condition in their production modes, the characteristics of social, economic and political condition in postmodernity, especially described by Fredric Jameson (1991), were used as a reflection to the illustrators' perceptions. Finally, the conclusion of this paper reveals that the economic intention of the artwork, whether it is for commercial project or for personal work, does not relate to the illustrators's perceptions toward their art media. In addition, both their perceptual attitudes toward their art media and in their production modes reflect a small part of the idea of political and economic dilemma in postmodernity.

1. Introduction

1.1 An interest in arts and material culture

An artwork is always associated with its creator since it is considered as an expression of emotions, knowledge and attitudes of the artist. The final result of an artwork represents an artist's hard work. Behind all the spotlights given to the artwork, there are various things that have contributed to the making of the artwork. Things, such as tools and media, are also vital parts. In fact, different artworks are possibly made from the same tools and media used by the artist. How did an artist choose the best medium for his/her work? The artist should have been very careful in choosing the art medium since it would be a bridge between her/his concept and the execution. Therefore, I am curious to observe what perception toward the medium that the artists could possibly have.

Why is it important to study such topic? Art medium is an important part within the production process. According to the *Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* (Davies 2009), art medium is "something that mediates the transmission of the content of the artwork to a receiver"[1]. Indeed, in choosing the right medium for his/her artwork, the artist takes various considerations based on both practical and perceptual factors. These factors determine the successfulness of the content transmission. The content of the artwork itself also consists of various intentions from the artist, one of them is the economic intention, whether the artwork is for commercial or non-commercial use. The production process of an artwork, I presumed, is influenced by the intentions. If this

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[1] Davies, David. "Medium in Art - Oxford Handbooks." *Medium in Art - Oxford Handbooks.* N.p., 2015. Web. 21 Sept. 2016.
http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199279456.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199279456-e-9

condition is applicable, consequently, the artist should have a different preference in choosing art media for different economic purposes.

I presupposed that the artist's preference in choosing art media is not merely transactional. Since a medium is a vital part in the transmission from the conceptual idea to the physical form of an artwork, a relationship between the artist and the medium is not purely practical. The artists could possibly see an implicit potential of the medium he/she chose. A study about the relationship between the artists and their art media is not a new topic within the research field. Some studies have discussed study cases of artists from the 19th century period and below. One of them is a text from Michael Cole (2007)[2]. He observed the importance of a medium choice by examining Gianlorenzo Bernini's marble artwork, *Apollo and Daphne*. Cole argued that it was Bernini's out-of-the-box attitudes toward the medium that have made the work to be considered as one of the great art pieces. Specifically, in the case of *Apollo and Daphne,* Cole pointed to Bernini's ability to bring the maximum capability of the medium (the marble) through a lot of drilling work. Cole claimed that Bernini had successfully brought the marble "outside its own nature" (2007: 55). Bernini composed the statue in the highest zone of risk, as it was represented by several sections of the marble that dramatically seems to burst out from the core, or what Benvenuto Cellini (one of the most significant writers in the early modern) called it "extravagant and straying beyond bounds" (Cole 2007: 58). Bernini's case has shown us that a maximum effort from the artist has brought out the possibilities of the medium to realize the artistic concept.

Another study disclosing the topic was conducted by Lambros Malafouris when he described the relationship between a potter and his/her clay. He pointed that the artist and his/her

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[2] Sofaer, Joanna R. *Material Identities*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2007. Print.

medium relationship was as equal partners in which he observed from the interaction process of the materials involved in the pottery making. The hand-clay grasping that expressed by the potter's skill has provoked the agency of matter, or what he called "a dance of agency". In another study, Brian Massumi looked deeply into the materiality factor of a wood in woodworking. He was curious about how the woodworker chose the right wood for him/her work. He revealed that "the forces" had brought a connection between the worker and the wood. "The forces" here refer to various practical processes and sign productions, such as the worker's interpretation toward his/her wood and the application in processing the wood. Both studies show that a relationship between the artists and their art media truly exists. Moreover, they pointed out that the relationship disclosed a materiality revelation, or as Massumi has defined it, "the force". "The force" takes place when the artist realizes that the capability of the medium truly exists before and during the production process.

The materiality revelation or awareness is a major factor within the perception of a medium by the artist. Jane Bennett described her encounter in materiality awareness as follows:

> "Glove, pollen, rat, cap, stick. As I encountered these items, they shimmied back and forth between debris and things--between, on the one hand, stuff to ignore, except insofar as it betokened human activity (the workman's efforts, the litterer's toss, the rat-poisoner's success), and, on the other hand, stuff that commanded attention in its own right, as existents in excess of their association with human meanings, habits, or projects. In the second moment, stuff exhibited its thing-power: it issued a call, even if I did not quite understand what it was saying. At the very last, it provoked affects in me:... I also felt something else: a nameless awareness of the impossible singularity of *that* rat, *that* configuration of pollen, *that* otherwise utterly banal, mass-produced plastic-bottle cap."
>
> (2010: 4)

If unwanted, ignored, discarded stuff as Bennett mentioned could reveal an awareness, or as she described a *thing-power*, then functional stuff, such as an art medium, could provoke a similar, or probably more obvious, material awareness. To be exact, in *Material Identities*, Joanna Sofaer

(2007) reminded us that art itself was assembled by materials and provoked a physical presence of materiality potentials. An artwork is made from a physical ensemble of different materials, such as watercolors, stone, cloth, paper, etc., and various techniques. Through revealing those different materials, an artwork "proclaims" their presence" in the perception of its creator (Sofaer 2007: 2). To be considered, in material culture studies, *objects* and *things* have their own forces. Therefore, I suggest that an art medium is also able to express an "awareness", especially to the artist him/herself, because the artist and the media will be together in a journey of art production process. Material thinking approach, consequently, is important in order to understand the artist-artwork relationship, as Nancy de Freitas has argued in "Materiality of Drawing/Thinking"[3] (2010). She mentioned that, in the case of drawing, materiality existed in the media and the tools used by the artist. Additionally, Barbara Bolt (2007) in "Material Thinking and the Agency of Matter"[4] noted that an understanding in material thinking would help us to recast human-object position in the creative production. Based on this knowledge and previous studies, I presupposed that artists also experience materiality awareness in their art media.

Since there are many categories of artists, I have decided to take focus on hand-graphic illustrators. To date, only limited studies that focused on the materiality study in graphic illustrators in the modern era can be found. Beside studies about Renaissance era's works, other previous studies found, such as those by Malafouris and Massumi, only highlight three-dimensional artworks (statue and clay work). In my opinion, hand-graphic illustrators who make two-dimensional artworks should be put more into attention since studying the profession will reveal different point of view in compare to those previous studies.

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[3] *Studies in Material Thinking* Vol. 4 (September 2010), ISSN 1177-6234, AUT University.
[4] *Studies in Material Thinking* Vol. 1, No. 1 (April 2007), ISSN 1177-6234, AUT University.

Studying this topic is particularly interesting because even in the emergence of the digital era, hand-graphic illustrator is still a feasible profession in the creative industries. At least, that is what I have observed in my own country, Indonesia, though no official data could be drawn in this matter. Publications about this art profession have been done more often by the local media[5]. Some of highly experienced illustrators have gained popularity in the social media, mostly are shown by the number of Instagram followers. Indeed, not everyone agrees that the profession can further survive. According to Jacob Cass, the founder of JUST Creative Design Studio, illustrators should be seriously wary about the emergence of the digital era[6]. He stated that the rise of online stock image websites that offer various and cheaper imageries intimidated the hand-graphic profession.

Although illustrators can sell their works through stock image websites, the compensation they receive is not well-worthed. Even in a larger market, selling illustration works requires a well-built network with promising clients since early age. However, working with clients, I presupposed, suppresses the artist's autonomy since there are some clients' demands the artist needs to meet. In contrast, making works for an exhibition, the artist's self freedom should be more appreciated since he/she is not under a specific client's requirement. Therefore, I expected that the economic purposes of the artist making an artwork, whether it is for commercial or non-commercial use, should influence the way the artist works. If the artist experiences a freedom to determine their mode of production, there is a possibility that they can freely perform their working style preferences, including how they treat the medium and the

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[5] Wahyudi, Reza. "17 Ilustrator Digital Andal Indonesia." Editorial. *Kompas*. N.p., 11 Aug. 2014. Web. http://tekno.kompas.com/read/2014/08/11/12160817/17.Ilustrator.Digital.Andal.Indonesia

[6] Cass, Jacob. "The Current State of Illustration and How to Succeed in 2014." Editorial. *Just Creative*. N.p., 10 Feb. 2014. Web. http://justcreative.com/2014/02/10/the-current-state-of-illustration-and-how-to-succeed-in-2014/

tools. Then, I hypothesized that the artists apply different attitudes toward the art media according to the final economic purpose of the works.

The economic purpose of the production, I believe, also relates to the economic dimension which represents how the artist earn their income from their artworks. Working and living in the modern era, the illustrators, who are the sample of this research, are freelancers and not attached to any organization or institution. Therefore, they do not practice a traditional way to make their living and not belong to any hierarchical mode of production of a certain institution or company. Thus, in order to make ends meet, they still need the capital market and work under a unique economic dimension, and also a political dimension which points to the artist-client position in the organizational hierarchy. This condition is similar to what David Harvey has described as "postmodern flexibility" (1999 as cited in Abbinnett 2003: 43). The postmodern flexibility marked a turn in political and economic measurement within the dynamical process of capital. The turn was reflected through, one of which, a non-exact capital power and flexibility in techniques, labour markets and consumption niches (Ibid). These characteristics are similar to the economic and political condition of the illustrators described above. Indeed, the postmodern flexibility is one of various distinctive postmodern charateristics. Accordingly, I am also curious to observe whether the illustrators' attitudes toward their media substantively reflect more characteristics of postmodernity, especially in terms of economic and political dimension.

Based on above interests, this research aims to answer the following research question: how does the illustrators' attitudes toward their art media correspondingly reflect on their ideas about political and economic dimensions in postmodernity? This study follows a case-study design with in-depth analyses of the Jakarta-based hand-graphic illustrators which will be explained in the next sub-chapter. Based on the economic purposes of commercial use and non-

commercial use or a personal project, this research observes whether the attitudes toward art medium are also different according to each economic purpose. For instance, if an illustrator is working for a client's project, where he/she works under a commercial intention, would he/she leave his/her comfort-zoned medium and substitute it to the client's required medium? Would he/she perceive the new medium similarly to his/her previous mostly-used medium? If an illustrator is working for a commercial project and he/she will be paid higher for that, then would he/she use the budget for another high-functional medium rather than stick to his/her existing mostly-used medium? Or, would he/she still stick to his/her existing mostly-used medium, but treat it rather differently (such as make his/her hands work faster than usual) because there is an economic motivation behind it? The characteristics of each attitude will be determined to observe what kind of reflection represents the postmodern political and economic condition. In addition, the data for this study were collected using interview method. Since none of the previous similar studies have used this method, the interview-based analysis is one distinction of this research. This method is considered to be an effective way to gather fruitful information of perceptual attitudes toward art media directly from the illustrators.

In conclusion, a presumption about the conceptual capability of an artwork medium has provoked a curiosity to conduct a study in that area. Besides, there were only a few number of previous studies found, of which mostly investigated the creative process of three-dimensional artworks. By examining the study case of the two-dimensional artworks by hand-graphic illustrators as a focal point of this research, it is expected that this study provides an exiciting opportunity to advance our knowledge about conceptual capability of artwork media. Since an artwork is intended either for commercial or non-commercial use, this two-sided economic background indeed has a possibility to influence the artist's conceptual reflection toward the

media. In addition, this project could provide an important opportunity to put materiality awareness into attention.

1.2 Delimitation

It is impossible to generalize a very broad study about the relationship between artists and their media. Different types of artists could also have different perceptions toward their media. Therefore, I decided to specify the topic to a certain area and aspect. First, I have chosen to take a sample from young hand-graphic illustrators aged between 27 – 37 who are currently still producing illustrations and have been actively doing commercial and non-commercial projects at least for the past five years. Second, they have to reside in Jakarta, and at least 80% of their projects should also be based in Jakarta.

There are a couple of reasons why I believe that Indonesia, especially Jakarta, could be an interesting study case. Not only because it is my home country, but also because recently there was a visible attempt from the Indonesian government to improve the art industry in Indonesia. The government recently published a governmental blueprint agenda: "The National Short-Term Development Planning of 2015 - 2019" (in Indonesian "Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional 2015 - 2019/RPJMN). In conjunction with the publication, Indonesia Creative Economics Development Planning 2015 - 2019 blueprint agenda was also published as part of the bigger national planning. It consists of development planning sub-chapters, and one of them is Visual Arts Development Planning 2015 - 2019. The documentation is composed by a general introduction knowledge about visual arts and the history of visual arts in the world and in the country in the first chapters, and it continues with a list of articles detailing the development plans. In general, the development plan aims to focus in improving the economic competitive ability of the country's visual arts industry and strengthening its basic organizational structure in

order to create a conducive environment for creativity. Later on, the Jakarta Biennale Foundation

published an educational book *Our Art* (*Seni Rupa Kita)* during Jakarta Biennale Exhibition

2015 - 2016, and it was distributed to 1,000 high schools in Jakarta. The book consists of

introductory chapters about visual art and its history in a casual and illustrative way.

The reasons why I mention these two publications are, first, because they mark the

official national support for the creative industries, especially the visual art industry, to have a

proper and right publications consisting vital information about the industries. According to an

Indonesian curator, a committee member of the Jakarta Biennale Exhibition and Foundation and

an editor of National Visual Arts Development Planning 2015 - 2019, Mia Maria, she felt

unfortunate that Indonesia had never have proper and well-informed handbooks for Art subject at

school[7]. She once showed me some recent high school's Art handbooks which contents, she

suggested, were filled with "invalid and misleading information", especially the parts that relate

to art history and definition. Therefore, the Visual Arts Development Planning 2015 - 2019 is

perceived to be able to represent a serious concern from the government to provide its citizens

with well-resourced educational handbooks about Indonesian arts. Second, not only these two

publications are clearly mapping the visual art industry in Indonesia, but also the mapping is the

most recent and official one.

Since Jakarta is the launching venue for the *Our Art* book by Jakarta Biennale

Foundation, this capital city marked the first attempt to improve the national art industry through

education. It is the first reason, among the other three, why I took Jakarta as a part of the study

case. The next reason is because the city has been considered as a melting pot of diverse

ethnicities, religions and professions. People from other parts of the country come to Jakarta to

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[7] Mia Maria. Personal interview. 2015.

look for opportunities, mostly for financial improvement. I believe that this socio-cultural

condition of the city may distinguish between the illustrators from Jakarta and the illustrators

from other cities in the country. Although there is no official documentation of how many people

work as illustrators in Jakarta, the city has been considered as a promising place to build a career

in the field of creative industries. There have been a great deal number of newcomer-illustrators

from outside the city who have seen Jakarta as a place that could offer various opportunities to

expand their career. One of them is Lala Bohang, who is originally from Makassar, South

Sulawesi, and now has been residing in Jakarta for 10 years. She has considered Jakarta as a city

with various opportunities to develop herself both as an artist and a commissioned illustrator[8]. If

it is true that the city has been giving various opportunities for illustrators' career expansion, then

the competition should be really tough, especially since the city is a home for people with

different backgrounds. This challenging situation, I believe, contributes indirectly to the

illustrators' attitude toward their creative process, including all components they use to produce

artworks.

   The last reason why I chose the capital city of Jakarta is because the profession of an

illustrator, in the broader context of Indonesia, closely relates to an uncertainty since the

illustrators here are mostly working as freelancers. There are some art agencies that supervise the

local illustrators, but many times, the illustrators receive commissioned projects via their own

networks. Moreover, to be widely known in both the art and creative industries, newcomers must

build their own social and professional connections. It is probably because the development of an

illustrator professional career in the art and creative field happened sporadically, as Wahyu

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[8] Lala Bohang. Personal interview. 24 May 2016.

Aditya (an Indonesian digital artist and founder of HelloMotion Animation School) stated[9]. In other words, the development of the illustration profession in Indonesia is difficult to be properly recorded, and it happened in scattered, underground and random occasions.

How can this background condition of the art industry in Indonesia could possibly relate to the study of art medium, its materiality and postmodernity? Particularly because latter reason, which is about the uncertainty profession, is presumed to be closely related to the political and economic dilemma in postmodernity. Are the illustrators' corresponding attitudes toward this postmodern economic condition being reflected through their perception towards art media in different economic purposes? Through determining their attitudes, the process of creative production, which involves the role of an art medium, could be well understood. An observation of the illustrators' perception toward an art medium is the underlying mechanism to comprehend the materiality awareness that could lead to a possible reflection of postmodern people.

To sum up, a recent government's obvious attempt to improve creative industries in Indonesia, especially in the area of visual art industries, is one of the background reasons in choosing the study sample. Specifically, the diverse socio-cultural condition of Jakarta, characterized by the uncertainty in the economic dimension, is believed to be able to relate a very local topic in the art materiality to a broader social practice.

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[9] Budiraharjo, Sugeng. *Ilustrator, Animator, dan Karikaturis Indonesia, Men-Dunia.* Kompas: February 27, 2012. http://www.kompasiana.com/t.wibowo/illustrator-animator-dan-karikaturis-indonesia-men-dunia_550e1bf0813311c32cbc61b0

2. Theoretical & methodological framework

2.1 Theoretical framework

There are three main theoretical frameworks used in this study. First, since the study's main topic is the artist's creative process, the first part of this chapter reveals the symbolic concept in the production process of artworks in historical timeline. Second, the material culture theories, especially about materiality awareness and human-object relationship, are comprehensively described in the next part. Finally, the latest part of this chapter summarizes a number of theoretical thoughts about the political and economic dimension in postmodernity and its practices.

2.1.1. The artwork-artist relationship and the surrounding myths

The following paragraphs explain the artists' changing perception toward their artworks through various eras. I suggest that it is an important initial knowledge before continuing to further study artist-artwork relationship in the study case. Having the knowledge is, in a way, helpful to understand the possible non-logical attitudes that modern illustrators express during the production process.

Historically speaking, the perception about the energy behind the visuality of an artwork is based on a magic belief. Indeed, signification has also been a part of it since an artwork is never exhausted of its embedded semiotic (Bennett 2010: 5) which means that human always assigns various symbolizations to an object of art. Ernst Kris historically described this concept of signification in *Legend, Myth and Magic in the Image of the Artist* (1979). He revealed that a belief that an artwork release a magical power had existed since the ancient times. For example, a figure of a female cupbearer in the Grotto of Taq i Bustan was believed to have

an ability to provoke every man's lust when seeing it (Kris 1979: 72). In an anthropological

discourse, Alfred Gell gave an example about 'a magic-possessed object" from how Trobriand

Islands people in New Guinea had a tradition of placing prow-boards in their canoes. He further

argued that the remarkable carved patterns on the prow-boards were supposed to be a

"psychological weapon" to provoke inferiority toward others (Gell 1992: 164 - 165 as cited in

Rubio 2005). Here, the board was considered as an object produced by magical means because

of human's intention to make it as a "psychological weapon", and it has achieved a certain level

of "artistic sophistication" (Ibid).

      If the artwork itself was perceived to possess with a kind of magic power, thus the

creator him/herself was also recognized to be able to project a mythical power. The magical

influence of the artist in the artwork was described by Kris as an effigy magic which was a belief

that the artist's soul resides in his/her artwork. Oscar Wilde's *Portrait of Dorian Gray* was

mentioned as an example to highlight the idea that a magic could possibly control an image (Kris

1979: 73). In the historical literature, an artist was considered as a "divine creator" due to his/her

ability to create something from nothing (Ibid: 21). Later on, in the late classical period, the hand

of a sculptor was believed to be influenced by the power of God as described by Suidas, a

Byzantine lexicographer, and endowed with "His stylus" (Ibid: 44 -45, 49). Renaissance art

theory also celebrated an artist's main accomplishment as an "invention" rather than an imitation

of nature which was showed by his/her imagination expressed through his/her artwork (Ibid: 47).

Briefly, the art discourse was considered to be surrounded by myths, not only embedded within

the artworks, but also in the image of the artist him/herself.

      In classical era, an artwork was understood having an ability to project a supernatural

charm. The creator him/herself was also believed to have a divine energy. In contrast, in the

modern concept, there is no perception that an artwork is able to deliver a magical attraction as described by Rosalind Krauss' study about grids. According to her book, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modern Myths* (1985, 1994: 9 - 10), as a medium in many twentieth-century arts, the grid was perceived as a state of an autonomy in the art realm and as an emblem of a modern art product. In addition, the grid was considered as a representation of a certain reflection which was actually a myth (Krauss 1985, 1994: 12). The grid's mythical power offers its reader a concept between "materialism" (science or logic) and "belief" (illusion or fiction) (Ibid). The paradoxical elements of the grids also lead to an unconscious function that serves as a repressing tool. By applying the grids, the creator imagines to avoid conflict from the inevitable repetitions. As a result, Krauss claimed that the grids had been perceived as "autonomous and autotelic" since the artists thought that the grids were able to perform as what they naturally looked like in the spatial sense through the grids' visual appearance of flattened, geometricized and ordered (Ibid: 9 - 10).

Despite the different characteritics of the human's perception toward his/her artworks between the classical and the modern era, a human's political role certainly influences how an artwork and its elements (the concept, the medium and the tools) are perceived. The human, whether he/she is the author or the audience, is the one who assigns the object's position through perceptions, thus the human-object's political role is determined by the human's attitude.

An artwork is still a representation of the artist's intention. As described by Fernando Dominguez Rubio (2015) through an observation of the restoration of Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, the relationship between the authenticity of the artist's intention and the materiality form of his/her artwork was considered as "inviolable" (Rubio 2015). This relation is an important defining status in the art system, as he mentioned below:

> "What this means is that in order for some-thing to be considered an art object it has to be *and* remain legible as the original, unique and authentic representation of the artist's intention. In other words, it must always be *true to its author*."
>
> (Rubio 2015)

The status of an *art object* serves as an important defining status of an artwork. Accordingly, on the reflection of *Mona Lisa*, a direct link between the artist and his/her artwork could determine the sustainability of the artwork within the art industry.

The artwork-artist bonding is not the only determinant factor that maintains the art status. Another factor is that the artwork must experience some particular series of events (Ibid). This concept shows that all of those technical and chemical processes to produce the artwork matters a lot. Furthermore, twentieth-century philosopher R. G. Collingwood suggested that to produce "a work of art proper", an artist should practice the total activity (1938: 51 as cited in Rose & Tolia-Kelly 2012: 98). The total activity is the final aesthetic category, according to Collingwood, which is expressed by the use of the artist's imagination, particularly appears in his/her conscious pleasantness when making the art and the engagement of all body limbs (e.g. when the hands do the brushing, stroking, etc. on a canvas). Consequently, a finished artwork is a collaboration of changing activities over time. It is the melting pot of the artist's ideas, imagination and skills combined with a collaboration between the media (canvas, wall, stone, etc.) and the tools, as well with the practice of brushing, stroking, lining, coloring and so on.

To sum up, the superstitious belief surrounding in an art object and its artist has been a common conception from the classical era until the modern realm. It also marks a vital relationship between them. Furthermore, the artwork-artist bond is considered as one of the important factors to determine the artwork's status as an "art object. Additionally, the status is

also maintained by a marriage between the artist's imagination, conscious enjoyment and body limbs movement.

2.1.2. Objects and things

Since this research discusses the artist's attitude toward his/her art medium, an understanding about an object position within a particular discourse and material awareness is necessary in order to comprehend the human-object relationship. First of all, the differences between an *object* and a *thing* should be settled. Why an artwork is called an art *object*, instead of an art *thing*? Why the word *"object"* is used, instead of *"thing"*? In material culture theories, a *thing* is a "going on"; "material processes"; a "working flow within the circuit of production, distribution, consumption and exhibition" (Ingold 2010: 4, Brown 2001: 4, Rubio 2015). Most of the time, the *thingness* of an object is realized when it stops working for us, for example when the television cannot operate anymore, it catches our attention since its phenomenological circle stops (Brown 2001: 4). As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Jane Bennett described a *thing* as a "nameless awareness" that caught our attention, even though we did not exactly understand what it is (2010: 4). She explained further by describing how she caught a "glimpse of thing" in various unwanted and discarded objects on a debris, as she stated as follows:

> "... As existents in excess of their association with human meanings, habits, or projects. In the second moment, stuff exhibited its thing-power: it issued a call, even if I did not quite understand what it was saying."
> (Bennett 2010: 4)

Rather, an *object* points to a position, a fact in which a discourse surrounds and an appearance that we have to admit through our interpretative attention (Ingold 2010: 4, Brown 2001: 4, Rubio 2015). Therefore, an *art object* is called as it is because it has placed a particular

position as an artwork within the art discourse. The *art object* itself is formed by several *things* that have been going on. In the art discourse, these things, that are going on, are the creative process of the artwork production. Accordingly, an *object* could be considered as a *thing*, and a *thing* always exists in an *object* since the *object* is never exhausted being loaded by various semiotics from humans. However, it is impossible to accomplish an exact identity between an object and a thing, since a *thing* is always changing and an *object* is always charged by various interpretation (Rubio 2015). The restoration of *Mona Lisa,* described by Rubio, is a matched example to describe the humans' attempts in keeping *things* as an *object*. The painting should undergo several stages of restoration and maintenance in order to constantly acquire a status of an *art object*. Those stages are intended to maintain its "materiality awareness" or its *thingness* (see previous paragraph). An object that reveals a materiality awareness is described by Bennett as "stuff that commanded attention in its own right, as existents in excess of their association with human meanings, habits, or projects" (2010: 4). Accordingly, the art object should constantly provoke human's attention, as what *Mona Lisa* always does to its audience.

Furthermore, there are two definitions of objects, as devided by Jean Baudrillard, i.e. mythological objects and functional objects (1999: 36 - 44). Considered to be low in function but highly meaningful, a mythological object is defined as a complete being, "a nostalgia for origins and an obsession with authenticity". In contrast, since a functional object is "effectual and absent in being", it is low in meaning. In addition, the object's function is abstracted by a condition of possession and its relation to its subject (the human). Due to the existential role of the human, the functional object represents two functions. The first one is of being practical which shows "the subject's practical totalisation of the world". In this definition, the object is being used according to its function, for example a pen is for writing or a pair or shoes are to be put on feet. The other

function is of being possessed, as the human's will to abstract him/herself outside the world. In this case, an object is used as representation by the human toward other meanings, apart from the functional factor of the object. Baudrillard described collectible items (e.g. a compass, a vintage map, or curio) as examples of possessed objects since their qualities were subjectively judged, or he explained it with a term of "passionate abstraction" (1999: 44). This is the way a human conceptually perceives meanings from the object. Consequently, it is not only the position and the thingness of the object that should be understood, but also the dominating role of the human who has put the object into the system, where in this case is the art discourse. In a glimpse, an art medium is considered to be a practical and functional object. However, there must be *something* within it that drives an artist to choose a particular medium, similar to Massumi's curiousness about how a woodworker chooses the right wood for him/her. Consequently, the possessed object reveals a "materiality awareness" since the human puts various significations into it.

Artwork is an important part of this research. Yet, art medium is the main focus of observation that will be acquired through determining the artists' perceptions. Since the artist possesses the art medium, how he/she perceives it should express a human's discernment in the object position and its thingness. The human perception is actually developed from a material awareness that has brought the art medium into leaking, into grabbing the artist's attention. According to Bennett, that awareness is called the *thing-power* (see previous quote). Human does not have to understand the provoking *awareness*, but he/she should aware to its energetic vitality since it makes the object matters. By catching the glimpse of a *thing-power*, the human is able to express the object's ability "to act and produce effects" (Bennett 2010: 6).

Furthermore, Sara Ahmed gave an idea about how human will be able to reach such *awareness*. According to her, the distance between the body and the objects also matters, as explained below:

> "Bringing objects near to bodies, which also brings bodies near to objects, involves acts of perception about 'what' can be brought near to me… Objects are objects insofar as they are within my horizon; it is the act of reaching 'toward them' that makes them available as objects for me."
>
> (Ahmed 2006: 55)

In other words, the *thing awareness* will not deliver its total vitality until the human is willing to respond to it. It is in line with Bennett's idea that "objects appear as things" is a result of the subjects' (humans) control in positioning them into various semiotics (Bennett 2010: 5). Accordingly, human acts in the highest political position where he/she is able to charge the object with various semiotics, meanings, orders, tasks and all the things that have the effects to bring the object into various discourses. In addition, there is also a need to include Marc Redfield's (2003) point of view about the role of *technics*. In the term of producing an aesthetic product, he drove his idea from a classical lexicon definition that *techne* means "inventive craft". Martin Heidegger described *technic* as a condition where human's singular ability dominate the natural world, including the culture (Redfield 2003: 19), or as "something that *goes on"*. *Technics* are the expression of the human's ability in taking control of the world of objects (Ibid). Through stages of process in the technic practice, an object is being changed, improved and developed from its previous natural appearance to something that reflects a human's intention. Thus, *technics* are ways to keep the thingness of an object because it requires constant continous processes. To conclude, it is not only the distance of the object that matters, but the human's *technic* also supports the awakening of the *thing* energy in an object.

An example of how an object could produce an *awareness* to its humans was described by Krauss' study about grids, as below.

> "While for those for whom the origins of art are not to be found in the idea of pure disinterest so much as in an empirically grounded unity, the grid's power lies in its capacity to figure forth the material ground of the pictorial surface can be seen to be born out of the organization of pictorial matter. For these artists, the grid-scored surface is the image of an absolute beginning."
>
> (1985, 1994: 158)

The perception that there was a capability to find the material ground, she argued, was probably the main reason the artist had chosen the grid as a medium to work (Krauss 1985, 1994: 158). The human's perception that the grid can awake its material ground has led to a belief that he/she has discovered *his/her* origin. The grid mediates from the sense of being born into a perception of "aesthetic purity and freedom" (Ibid). Thus, the artist felt that he or she has produced a new and innovative artwork through using the grids as his/her media. To sum up, based on Krauss' grids study, an art medium can possibly be perceived as an object with *materiality awareness* which produces a sense of redefining the artist's self-origin by constructing various semiotics.

In conclusion, the object position is justified by maintaining its thingness, in which the human's domination plays an essential role here, as seen in the observation of *Mona Lisa* restoration. Through juxtaposing the distance and applying the *technics*, humans believe to have a capability to awaken the object's thing power. In the material world, this concept matters in order to holistically comprehend the object's functions and semiotics.

2.1.3. A brief explanation about postmodernity

The following sub-chapters briefly explain the ideology of postmodernity and its practical terms. The practices in postmodernity is important to be explained to present an idea

about the postmodern application in the creative industries, especially in arts. The following part

is divided into three parts: (1) an explanation about postmodern social condition, (2)

postmodernity based on geographical era and (3) postmodernity in Asian cultural products.

2.1.3.1. Society in postmodernity

Before I move further into the practice of economic conformity, the definition of

postmodernity will first be explained. Of course, there will be no ways to have an exact

definition of it. However, this study will put some boundaries to the postmodernity definition by

comparing it with the definition of modernity. Barry Smart (1993) summarized various

theoretical thoughts about modernity and postmodernity. Postmodernity has been considered as a

shift, a break, a modification and a reflection of modernity (Smart 1993: 39, Featherstone 1998:

198, Vattimo 1998, Bauman 1991a: 257). In fact, in *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural logic of*

late capitalism, Fredric Jameson mentioned it as "the passionate hatred of the modern" (1991:

56). Indeed, one aspect that the postmodernism criticized in modernity was the "ordering"

concept. Ordering represents "a task, a condition to be reflected upon, preserved and nurtured" in

modernity (Smart 1993: 41). It reflects that modern society, together with organizations, is like a

"learning machine" to improve themselves in order to make a standard mastery (Ibid: 42). It is

the element which the postmodernism tries to cope with through freedom and an opportunity to

define self-identity within the sphere of communality. It is what Jameson mentioned as a

"politically reactionary function to modernity" in which the postmodernism tried to repress

power (Jameson 1991: 58 – 59). Therefore, postmodernity is itself a derivation of modernity.

The hegemony of the politics, expressed by the ordering practice, is a modern characteristic that

the postmodernism has tried to break through (Ibid).

Furthermore, there was a turn in the concept of aesthetics in the modernity and in the postmodernity. In modernity, the aesthetic definition was formed from newness, innovative and originality factors of the products (Murphy 1999: 251). In postmodernity, the aesthetics notion brought back a classic definition which pursued the beautiful, the decorative and the ornamental (Jameson 1998 as cited in Abbinnett 2003: 51). Since the asthetics have been "decorated", it has lost "the aura". Jameson took the field of architecture as the most striking example of the aesthetic turn in postmodernity. The critics of architectural high modernism, or so-called international style (he mentioned Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright as examples), has set an aesthetic standardization in postmodernity, represented by the publicly broadcasted formal criticism and analysis (Jameson 1991: 2).

As a result, an "aesthetic populism" has emerged to tackle previously existing "kitsch" visual and replace it with new kinds of charismatic urbanism (Ibid). Taste has become an aesthetic judgement (Ibid: 298), and at the same time has marked the power of the text. This turn is defined as a separation of the subject of the art (the text) from his/her creation, in other words, it is the liberation of sign of the artwork, the power of the text, or famously called as "the death of the author" (Jameson called it as "the death of the subject"). Victor Burgin in *The End of Art Theory* has described the term as follows:

> "The words I speak seem transparently to reveal what is 'on my mind' or 'in my heart', but once committed to writing they are separated from me; they become subject to interpretation by the reader, and thus possible *mis*interpretation; moreover, the reader cannot be certain that they are indeed *my* words -- separated from the origin, and thus from the guarantor of their meaning and authenticity, written words become doubly suspect."
> (1986: 33)

Hence, the product of postmodernity has de-centered itself from its author. It is the public opinion that matters in defining the aesthetic notion of the product.

Additionally, Jameson described two major practices or features that contributed to the aesthetic turn in postmodernity, which were pastiche and schizophrenia. He explained pastiche as a style copying other styles or "an imitation which mocks the original" which was expressed in similar manners but twisted. He also differentiated between pastiche and parody very clearly. Although both have similarities, especially in imitating two or more styles, pastiche is delivered without satirical and comical intentions. Furthermore, the second major practice is schizophrenia. Far different from its clinical definition, Jameson explained postmodern schizophrenia as "the breakdown of the relationship between signifiers" and "a missing link" which contributed to an undefined pattern of a language. This gap causes a disconnection between material signifiers, thus the sequences in the practical language become incoherent. As an example, Jameson took a poem by Bob Perelman, titled *China*. In the poem, the schizophrenic style is represented by the "free floating material signifiers whose signifieds have evaporated". However, the signifiers consist of some global meanings of the image of China, yet the representational expressions "float over the text or behind it" (Jameson 1982).

The question here is: what is the relationship between those postmodern practices in a cultural production and the society? In the term of schizophrenia's missing link, there is a sense of breaking the order, or not following the proper order in the society. That missing link reflects a contra attitude of postmodernism against modernism's ordering concept, as noticed by Smart and Jameson. This notion is apparently applied in the postmodern language practises, such as those in literature works or in performance arts which intentionally criticize the order system in the society. As time passed by, Jameson had noticed that more cultural practices became postmodern, and he argued that the stylistic transformation has been more visible. The transformation has expanded and the cultural products have become commodities (1982). As a

result, the advertising business has contributed in feeding people with this new style. In other words, the commodity has been a dominant sphere in postmodernity. Jameson has called it the time for "commodity rush" which pointed to a major consumption in commodified products (1991: x). In the field of architecture, the multinational business has controlled over the industry, marked by the existence of art buildings surrounded by commercial icons and spaces (Ibid: 5, 63). The experience of so-called artisanal culture is dependant to the surrounding commercialized environment. Hence, there is no distinction between high culture and mass/popular culture anymore in postmodernity.

　　　　In the context of the human subject, freedom in postmodernity, as Jameson stated, was a turn to a depoliticized bureaucratic society since postmodernism had always seek a way to weaken the order of power ideologically (1984, 1991: 59, 64). As a result, the ruling class becomes less visible and opportunities are gained through individualism, not only in regards to the political position within the mode of production, but also in the economic realm. However, Jameson also noted that this freedom might only be a prophetic point of view (1984, 1991: 60). If modernity was about celebrating the innovation of an individual, postmodernity marked the emersion of the "death of the subject". Therefore, the concept of individual subject no longer exists. Furthermore, Jameson also explained that, in a radical sphere, there had never been an autonomous individual subject, and it was only a "cultural mystification" in postmodernity which means the individual autonomy was actually semi/fully controlled by the market demands via the modal owners. He mentioned that late capitalism had contributed to the extinction of such autonomy since everything was "culturalized" in postmodernity (1984, 1991: 48) which means the postmodern products had been declared as a representation of a recent society's culture, although the existence of semiautonomy or relative autonomy was still possible.

Based on Jameson, the political freedom in postmodernity is relatively defined. It is indeed difficult to interpret the exact political realm in postmodernity since it always represents a "double face" which means there are always political possibilities available (Heller and Feher 1988: 7 as cited in Smart 1993: 103). As a result, this condition contributes to uncertainty, or as Bryan Smart called it "anything goes" (1993: 103). On one hand, the idea of anything goes indicates the fear of loss of prospect, security, order and all the things that relate to the traditional production mode in modernity, including not joining a political hierarchy in an organizational company. On the other hand, the idea also provoked people's self-determination as "a feeling that things will take their own course anyway, that the world will take it rationally" (Ibid). As a result, an act to be adaptive in the market, rather in the capital modifications (Jameson 1991: 325), corresponds to the attitude of self-determination and to avoid the feeling of fear of losing modern establishment.

Postmodernity has indeed marked several turns in production modes and the society. To some extent, this era also contributed to some new attitudes of human. Jameson has noted the birth of postmodern people as below:

> "... so also the "postmodern" is to be seen as the production of postmodern people capable of functioning in a very peculiar socioeconomics world indeed, one whose structure and objective features and requirements --if we had a proper account for them-- would constitute the situation to which "postmodernism" is a response and would give us something a little more decisive than mere postmodernism theory."
>
> (1991: xv)

The people who live in a postmodern society are able to adapt the peculiar or uncertain socioeconomics. They are the result of "the new social movement" and capable of "functioning" after traditional sphere and class appropriation are no longer important (Jameson 1991: 319). The new social movement marked the birth of new small groups as a result of the loss of the working

class. Therefore, a new micropolitics realm was developed in the contemporary capitalist pluralism and democracy which was represented by a growing number of "unemployable subjects" (Jameson 1991: 319 – 20). This could be both positive and negative. The new people work under their own realm of capitalism. They deny bigger capital demand above them. Since they work in uncategorized labour market, they are highly adaptive and flexible. Therefore, these people do not belong to a particular occupational group, but possibly connect to certain groups (Abbinnett 2003: 44). The groups can offer the substitution of identity through similarities between other group members, for example based on nationality or occupation, since singularity is lost in postmodernity (Jameson 1991: 345-7).

The new social movement, indeed, has an effect in various sociocultural changes in the postmodern era. I would like to propose two important elements caused by the new movement that, I believe, contributes to the analysis of the illustrators' attitudes toward their media. The two elements, as mentioned by Jameson in his book, are professionalism and the death of the subject. According to the author, professionalism in postmodernity is a response to the structure of reality by "betraying the opportunistic way" causing a will to re-adapt with the current necessities which have been considered as a crisis (Jameson 1991: 323). He took an example from Lester Thurow's *Dangerous Currents* to further explain the term, which captured professionalism of the economist that has to track down a number of problem areas until each field seems to "dissolve" (Ibid). Furthermore, the term "death of the subject" has been briefly explained in the previous paragraph through Victor Burgin's understanding, but another important point to be noticed here is the effect of the detachment of postmodern product from its initial production. The detachment evidently gives room to various interpretations to the audience. "The death of the subject" also represents the collective characters, not the individual,

of a group who appear to be a unity of dominant semiautonomous subjects. Indeed, the power of

the media in postmodernity has provoked an appealing representational image of the people

belonging to the dominant-semiautonomous group. These groups are self-determinant, but they

do not mind to conform a certain economical demand from the market. Jameson has mentioned

various labellings for these groups, such as the new petit bourgeoisie, the professional-

managerial class, or the "yuppies" (1991: 407). The characteristic of the semiautonomous

subjects corresponds the game of "political antagonism" by institutionalized authorities

(Abbinnett 2003: 44 - 45). However, as explained in the previous paragraph, the political sphere

in postmodernity is relatively defined in practice, thus the idea to be free from political

antagonism could be decided as a prophetic belief.

2.1.3.2. Geographical postmodernity

Postmodernity was indeed born in the West. Since the research question of this thesis

relates to Indonesian illustrators, how this Western ideology has influenced a part of Asia needs

to be explained. The timeline of the development of postmodernity is related to the changing

waves of Western's socioeconomic era, especially the generation of freedom in the 1960's. In

Postmodernity (1993), Barry Smart noted two historical periods that marked the emergence of

postmodernity (1993: 23 - 26). The first one was a periodical explanation by Toynbee (1954a,

1954b) who mentioned an era "at the turn of the nineteenth century and twentieth century".

According to Toynbee, it was an era where the extensive evolution of technology innovations

dominated the society, but at the same time, the human's capacity of moral and politics

experienced a slower and uneven transformation (Smart 1993: 24). Toynbee highlighted a

recovery from liberal capitalism regret through political and economic changes in a developed

public sphere. The next periodization of postmodernity was based on Wright Mill's late 1950's reflection. Mills identified postmodernity as "the end of epoch" where freedom was more visible than before and was accepted as problems to be solved (Ibid 25 - 26). Certainly, both views summarize postmodernity as a reflection of the previous era. It is also in line with Victor Burgin's idea that postmodernity has been a birth of conceptual art that emerged in the late 1960's to early 1970's as an uprising act against modernism (1986: 29).

Reflection of modernity and the opposing attitudes toward it have been considered as a major turn that marked the postmodern era. Jameson noted that the late 1950's was the economic preparation moment of late capitalism after the war time in the West. The term *late capitalism* was first offered by the Frankfurt School with two significant practices which were (1) a big interest in bureaucratic control and (2) the interpenetration of government and big business (Jameson 1991: xviii). At the same time, starting in 1960's, new products and new technologies were rapidly emerged during the great shock of oil crisis, at the end of gold standardization and at the end of traditional communism which is considered as a big turning point in the West (Ibid: xx - xxi).

These turns in hegemonic economic and politics have triggered new waves in culture. For example, the presence of Andy Warhol in pop art, Le Corbusier in architecture/design and the establishment of MTV which marked the domination of the media (Ibid: 1, 300). The growth of the new people influenced by the new social movement, on one hand, has also contributed to the economic impoverishment in the American society (Ibid: 320). On the other hand, the new group in postmodernity possessed a social power through its collective intentions to influence the political sphere, as what has happened in the 1960's era of the hippies (Ibid: 347). As a result, collective subjects were accepted as an organization of

diversity in the western society, and pluralism has become something acceptable (Smart 1993: 142). These changes marked the era of postmodernity in The West. In addition, it also marked a recovery era from several crises, including after World War II until the beginning of 1970's where free trade has expanded globally. Furthermore, The United States's domination in military, economic, politics and business gained recognition, and the country's affiliation with Western Europe and Japan was considered as a stabilizing political factor in international sphere (Panglaykim 1980, 2007: 214).

Accordingly, the changes in almost all public sphere in the US has influenced other parts of the world, including Asia, since the US welcomed more opportunities for an intercooperation with several countries from this continent. Since 2003, not only has been considered as a political driving force in ASEAN, Indonesia has also strengthened bilateral relationship with the US. Therefore, as Indonesia developed a further relationship with the US, the political and economic turning point in the West has indirectly influenced the country's public sphere.

Indonesia also recovered from a regional economic and political crisis. After the democratization in 1998, Indonesia has shown a positive resilience, including its economic growth which increased between four to six percent annually in the middle of the global financial crisis in the 2000's (Laksmana 2011: 158). This turning point of the country has incited President Yudhoyono to release a new campaign of a greater internationalism of the country (Ibid: 161). Hence, after the democratization, there were two paradoxical trends, according to Evan A. Laksmana in his paper "Indonesia's Rising Regional and Global Profile: Does Size Really Matter?" published by ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute (August 2011). Those were (1) regaining a "soft power" reputation in the world, and (2) party interest rising and the matter of public

opinion. Following the recovery from its regional crisis and the development of international relationship, the trend to be the "soft power" has been a strategy in the political field, whilst the effect of public opinion could not be avoided (Ibid).

Not only have been more open to international collaboration, Indonesia is also open to international-sourced knowledge. There has also been a positive condition regarding the acceptance of new knowledge in the country. Based on a study conducted by Department of Southeast Asian Studies at University of Bonn in 2003, Indonesia has a high dependence of outside knowledge between the years 1970 - 2000, meaning that foreign social science scholarly articles, research and printed media publications have been a main resource for knowledge in Indonesia. At the same time, the country has produced low but stable local-resourced knowledge. In other words, the country has been very welcoming to foreign-resourced knowledge, but also maintaining its local knowledge. Preserving the local knowledge could provoke a construction of local attitudes in their own society and a reflection to their identity (Evers and Gerke 2003: 15). Meanwhile, the reception of outside knowledge can contribute richer points of view of broader social context.

To admit, there was no study found that points to a direct connection between western postmodernity and the sociocultural condition in Indonesia. However, there are similar aspects that mark a possibility in the merge of a similar ideology. Indonesia had experienced a crisis that has changed its sociocultural sphere, as the western part of the world also had. Additionally, the country has been very open to the Western, specifically to the US, regarding bilateral collaboration. Likewise, the penetration of foreign knowledge should have contributed to its society structure. Accordingly, foreign ideology has possibly interflowed to the Indonesian

society, especially to its capital city, Jakarta, which has been always considered as a melting pot of various ethnicities, religions, social status and professions.

2.1.3.3. Postmodernity in Asian cultural products

The postmodern characteristics in Asia are evidently visible in the field of creative and cultural industries. Since Asia and the West have developed progressive collaborations in terms of political and economic aspects, the incubation of postmodernity in Asian cultural productions has expanded even more. The most visible example of how Asian cultural sphere has influenced by the Western is the emergence of Korean pop music or better known as K-Pop which has gained a significant attention in many parts of the world, including in Europe and the US. A study conducted by National University of Singapore acknowledged this cultural phenomenon. In "Hybridity and the rise of Korean Popular Culture in Asia" (2006), K-Pop is mentioned as a major product of globalization, referring to the condition that the world has become more integrated (Shim 2006: 26). According to Giddens (1991), globalization had been accepted as a project of modernity, while Tomlinson (1991: 90) considered it as the culture of modernity on which its changes and developments are moving toward capitalism (as cited in Shim 2006: 26). In Tomlinson's understanding, globalization has a chained process in the modern society and it is able to provoke the birth of hybridity. Hybridity is understood as new practices of cultural and performative expressions (Shim 2006: 27) and is showed by how the local community becomes more appropriating global cultures, such as food, music, film and so on. Therefore, the emergence of K-Pop has been accepted as Korean hybridity since it "appropriates global popular cultural forms to express their local sentiment and culture" (Ibid). According to Shim (2006), in order to practice the appropriation, Koreans have adapted the

American media system and made it suitable to the country's socio-cultural condition. It was a proof that media forms a powerful hegemony in the postmodern society. Therefore, the media have contributed to the international positive acceptance toward the K-Pop. It also represents that the world has become more open to diversity, and pluralism is more appreciated, similar to what Barry Smart described about postmodern production (1993: 142).

In Indonesia, the postmodern characteristics have been applied in various cultural productions, especially in art. However, the postmodern applications in Indonesia does not related to hybridity as seen in K-Pop. Instead, they are related to Jameson's two postmodern characteristics: pastiche and schizophrenia, as observed by Syafril on a research at Faculty of Literature in Andalas University, Padang, Indonesia, and was published in *Jurnal Bahasa dan Seni Vol. 9 No. 2 tahun 1998* (*Journal of Language and Art Vol. 9 No. 2 year 1998*). The study reveals how an Indonesian play titled *Jalan Lurus* (1993) applied those postmodern charateristics. Syafril (1998) mentioned that the play was a form of Indonesian deconstructionism-postmodernism. The narrative of the play delivered a rebellious social condition against authoritarian hegemony. The revolt was shown in a deconstructive style through a protest to authoritarian power who created a certain modern social construction, and through an effort of fighting for a new construction of a new post-Indonesia. The narrative was performed through a postmodern aesthetic style that deconstructed a universal realism-modernism and a structural-rational formality. To deliver this narrative, idioms that expressed pastiche and schizophrenic manners were used. A traditional game, *panjat pinang*, was used as a pastiche idiom. In the play, the game was depicted in the same visual with the real practice. However, when the game entered the stage, it became only as an artistic property for aesthetic

needs. In the use of schizophrenic idioms, the play delivered a chaotic form of dialogues and act

formations. The story was also a representation of a utopian idea of modern order and stability.

The schizophrenic style was also found in Indonesian visual art practice. In "Analisis

gagasan seniman generasi milenial dalam inklusivitas seni rupa Indonesia" (translated as "A

study of the millennial artists' idea toward the inclusivity of Indonesian visual arts"), Sarah,

Damayanti and Siregar (2015) have found that the millennial artists often use schizophrenic style

in their works. Taking works from four young Indonesian visual artists as study samples, the

study found that there was a missing link between signifiers and symbolic meanings in their

artworks, thus an interpretation toward the works was impossible to be done in an objective

perspective (Sarah, Damayanti & Siregar 2015). Yet, the interpretations were still owned by the

audience. In addition, the use of unique communicative symbols in the artworks also contributed

in the emergence of various interpretations. The meaning of the works did not belong to the

creators anymore. In this case, the schizophrenic style also linked to "the death of the subject"

because the missing link between the signifiers created multi-interpretations to the audience.

To sum up, the characteristics of postmodernity in Asia are reflected through K-

Pop's hybridity. The appropriation of the American media hegemony by the Koreans to

internationalize K-Pop has created a global acceptance of pluralism and diversity. Similarly, the

postmodern practices in Indonesia are also applied in various cultural productions. Jameson's

pastiche and schizophrenia are expressed by various idioms in Indonesian play titled *Jalan Lurus*

(1993) to represent a postmodern decontructive narrative (Syafril 1998). In the field of modern

art, Sarah, Damayanti and Siregar (2015) also described a missing signifier-signified link in

Indonesian millennial artist's works which was also a particularity of schizophrenia. In addition,

the unique communicative symbols used in these artworks created multi-interpretations which do

not belong to the creators (artists) anymore. Therefore, the schizophrenic practice in these artworks links to postmodern "death of the subject" (Sarah, Damayanti and Siregar 2015).

2.2. Methodological framework

This study used a qualitative method, specifically Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by Norman Fairclough (1995). It is considered to be a proper method as CDA aims to study the relationship between discourse and socio-cultural evolutions in different social domains. According to Fairclough, the concept of discourse could be understood in three different ways (as cited in Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 66). Firstly, discourse is defined as a "language use" of a social practice. He suggested that a discourse was both *constitutive* and *constituted*. It means that discourse does not only influence the form of social practice, but also reflects it. Therefore, the use of the language represents a certain social dimension, and at the same time it is an impact from another social structure. Secondly, discourse is "the kind of language used within a specific field". Take an example in the art field, there are some terms that are rarely used in other fields, such as curator, artist in residence and solo exhibition. Lastly, Fairclough described discourse as "a way of speaking which gives meaning to experiences from a particular perspective". A discourse can be determined by distinguishing it from another discourse through its semiotic system. For example, a term "defence" has different meaning in academic discourse and in governmental discourse. Thus, discourse reflects three functions: as an identity, as a relational indicator, and as an idea of knowledge and meaning system.

Furthermore, Fairclough determined two dimensions of discourse: *the order of discourse* and *the communicative event* (1995b: 66 as cited in Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 67). On one hand, *the order of discourse* is where the *discourse types* are placed in the social practice.

Within it, the produced and consumed text and talk consist of a specific discursive practice. For example, in the art market's order of discourse, the discursive practices included are the curator-artist collaboration, or the negotiation between art gallery and buyer. On the other hand, *the communicative event* is an occasion where the language is used. It consists of three dimensions:

- *Text,* which is based on a speech of conversation
- *Discursive practice,* which involves in which discourse the texts were produced and consumed
- *Social practice*, which is an association and a structure of social and cultural that covers a wider context of the discursive practice

This study uses the dimension of *text* as the method of the analysis. Since the main data source of this study is an interview, thus the *text* dimension is perceived as the best suited element. Fairclough offered a list of tools in analysing texts which were interactional control, ethos, metaphors, wording and grammar (1992b: 152ff, 158ff, 166ff, 169ff, 190, 194ff as cited in Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 83). Accordingly, by analyzing the texts, various relations are possible to be observed, including the social relations and identity. Additionally, I apply two important grammatical elements: *transitivity* and *modality* (Ibid). In *transitivity*, the ideological concept of the speech is examined by focusing on how the events and processes are connected. In this case, the examination will focus on how the artist perceives his/her art medium as well as the process of producing both commercial and non-commercial artworks through the use of various descriptive language. Furthermore, *modality* analysis points to which level of affinity that the artist expresses for his/her affiliation to the whole creative production process.

Consequently, *transitivity* and *modality* contributes to the construction of knowledge and

meaning system in the whole discourse.

3. The summary of the illustrators' interview

This chapter summarizes 10 interviews with Jakarta-based illustrators which are arranged in an alphabetical order. The interviews were conducted through Skype video and phone calls, Google Hangout video calls, and WhatsApp calls and emails.

Angga Cipta (Male, 27 years old, via Skype phone call)

Angga Cipta, or better known as Acipdas, confessed that he was not really skillful in drawing. He has been highly interested in drawings since he was a boy, but his interest dominantly arose because he was intrigued by how the visual of the drawings turned out rather than by the methods used to produce it. Because he realizes that he does not own a great skill in drawing, he prefers to use the compose-and-trace technique. For several years, he made sketches with pencils for the first drafts. After that, he looked in the internet for some similar images he did on the sketch and downloaded them. He used the Photoshop program to compose those images then drew manually with markers based on the images he had composed digitally.

Cipta implemented those steps into his production process for several years until a friend introduced him to a Wacom tablet. For the past two years, he has considered the tablet his main medium. He had admitted that he needed a couple of months in order to get accustomed to drawing on the gadget since he used to believe that his hand-drawing tool interaction was the essence of his drawings. However, since he felt that he had already had a full control toward the gadget, he has been confident that the digital strokes now look similar to the ones he used to compose manually. This technique allows him to create a strong point to his works in terms of narrative rather than in the drawing technique, as he assumed. He prefers to catch various daily

stories as the main essence of his works and believes that the stories have become a character of his illustrations.

When he was asked if he felt the same freedom in drawing digitally as drawing manually, he did not respond directly. He stated that his preference in Wacom tablet was mostly based on technical factors, such as efficiency especially in terms of meeting the deadlines, because he can do a lot of editings digitally in a short time. Despite that, he feels that he is more free in composing. Nevertheless, although he stated that there was a sense of freedom to think about, he still highlighted more on the efficiency factor.

Besides providing illustrations, he does a lot of works as a graphic and motion designer for commercial projects. His current proportion of commercial and non-commercial projects is 50:50. As long as he could handle the clients' requirements, he does not mind taking commercial projects that are slightly different from what he has already done, because he believes that gaining new experiences will improve his knowledge. All of his current projects, both commercial and non-commercial, did not only come from his personal network. In fact, half of them came from his ruangrupa (ruru) network which is a contemporary art organization based in Jakarta supervising several cultural and business scopes. In this organization, Cipta works as an announcer and a graphic designer for RURUradio, as well as a resident artist for Art Lab (ruru's program for art projects where researches and creative collaborations are initiated). Therefore, joining a distinctive art organization also contributes prospective projects to him.

Edita Atmaja (Female, 28 years old, via Skype video call)

Edita Atmaja consistently produces botanical illustrations. She uses drawing pens because this medium can accommodate her expectation and needs in drawing. Using pen enables her to achieve all the details needed in botanical drawing. She can also produce a clean look for

the final result of her illustration which is important for her in order to highlight the details of the clear lines in the plant anatomy with pens. In addition, her academic background in graphic design, which allowed her to work a lot with grids, also has influenced her to have personal preference for clean lines.

When she was asked why she was fond of drawing plants, she stated that it was simply her personal interest and that her interest was mainly in the texture and the shape of plants. Learning that there are still countless numbers of unknown plant species on Earth also makes plants more intriguing for her because, she thinks that they represent a sense of depth, wildness and mystery. This interest is also supported by the fact that she is residing in Jakarta where the possibility of her seeing the real plants in their natural habitats is limited.

Atmaja is a type of artist who does not really believe in the concept that hands are autonomous in the creative production process. She feels that whatever her hands can do actually comes from the brain. However, she always appreciates everything made by hands. During the interview, she compared the level of perfection between handmade and digitally made products. In her opinion, a digital composition can result in a perfect output, whereas a hand process can not. Nonetheless, the imperfection of a hand process contributes to a surprising output which makes it interesting for her.

For commercial projects, she mostly works as a graphic designer since, according to her, the market demand is higher in that area. She also does several commissioned illustrations, for example murals and merchandising, but not in significant numbers. Apparently, this factor has made her feeling less confident to be called an illustrator. She feels that she has not been working enough on commercial illustrations.

Eko Bintang was previously known as a fashion illustrator. He has also been recognized simply as an illustrator. However, he stated that, lately, he had not done much drawing on papers. When he was asked to describe his medium preferences, he mentioned wood and acrylic paint as his current interests. He is now focusing on these media for his personal works including ones for an upcoming joint exhibition. He uses the distressing technique to create layers of drawing on top of the wood. He also claimed that he did not put backgrounds on whatever he drew, but he preferred to cut the outlines of the drawings to make it the final pieces.

Bintang mentioned that the reason he chose acrylic paint on wood was purely his personal preference. He is interested in the concept and the feeling of old-found stuff, so he often uses wood remnants to be used. He is also fond of the brown color of the wood, because for him, it represents a warm feeling. Furthermore, he said that, unlike the feeling he found when he tried to draw on a canvas, wood was not intimidating. It is the awareness that he *is drawing on a canvas* that makes him feel intimidated.

Another reason why he is now concentrating on acrylic-on-wood technique is his reluctance to continue being recognized as a fashion illustrator as he once did a lot of fashion illustrations for various local women and fashion magazines. Although it was not his most favorite thing to do, it later gave him a contributive artistic reference. However, he admitted that he puts a common characteristic between his fashion illustration and his current personal works. Both of them mostly depict figures which actually are influenced by his childhood habit of using his parents' pre-loved figurines to be reproduced as drawings. In fact, he especially took defected figurines, for example a figurine that has already lost its hand. What he enjoys is the distress and rustic feeling emerged from that kind of objects.

Speaking of commercial works, he is taking a profession as an art director and a graphic designer. However, when working for commissioned projects, his medium preference is very different from one for his personal works. He draws and composes everything digitally due to practicality rather than for a conceptual reason. He did not mention clearly how he divided the portion of doing commercial and non-commercial works. However, he admitted that he wanted to produce more personal works because he could feel more sense of self fulfillment from them.

Lala Bohang (Female, 31 years old, via Google Hangout video call)

Lala Bohang stated that her deep interest in the black and white visuals has made it easy for her to adapt to various media. She is able to compromise any types of any media, as long as the media can accommodate the look of black and white, but she mostly uses Chinese ink, besides watercolors, charcoal and acrylic paint on canvas. Nevertheless, although she does not mind working with various media because she has already found her "comfort" in the black and white visuals, she admitted that adaptation was always needed when facing new media. In order to adapt, she usually tries to find a "chemistry" or a familiar side of the media. She gave an example of her residency exhibition at Galeri Nasional, Jakarta (2014) titled *Written by Lala Bohang*. At that time, she faced a new medium, which were books. Although she had never worked with books as a medium before, her closeness with books (as her hobby is reading) made it easy for her to build a chemistry with them because there was a sense of comfort. In this case, she said that she had to be "honest" with that fact that she felt familiar with the new medium.

In illustrating, she admitted that she first finds comfort in the black and white style, rather than on the tool medium, such as watercolor or canvas. She is interested more in the monochromatic atmosphere. For her, it represents a statement of being to-the-point, "just as it is", and simple but lively.

Bohang really believes in her hands when drawing. She believes that the hand is smarter than the brain. According to her, even though the brain produces the concept, it is the brain that should collaborate with the hand, not vice versa. Later on the process, her drawing visually changes during the execution as a result of the movement of her hand, and these changes create a better output in the end. She stated that in this process, the ink acted as a medium of expression which mediated the concept and the execution. When the final output is reached, she changes her perception towards the medium, for instance the books she used in the previous exhibition. The medium becomes only a tool for her.

She needed a couple of years before she received offers from clients that had already understood her style very well. Before that, she did not mind to take any illustration projects offered to her, but she then felt uncomfortable doing so, so she started selecting her clients. Now, she always looks for "fit-in" clients although she never differentiates commercial and non-commercial projects. She tries to build a positive mind-set when working with commercial works, such as by considering it as her own personal works. Therefore, there is no difference in her working routine for both projects.

Marishka Soekarna (Female, 33 years old, via email)

Marishka Soekarna refused to state a particular medium. She sees herself as an artist who uses variations of medium, such as paper, vinyl, cloth and video. She also uses various techniques, and the ones she uses the most are drawing, painting, collage and printing. She still enjoys exploring various medium. Her reasons are the fact that she still enjoys exploring various medium and that she is not ready yet to put a commitment on particular media as her media choice will determine her title as an artist, for example a ceramic artist or a collage artist. For

her, it is more important to build a strong and consistent concept which in turn, will also contribute a significant identity to herself in the art world.

She described her drawings as feminine, figurative, surreal, ironic and sometimes naive. These characteristics are influenced by her childhood experience when, as a little girl, she was interested in surreal visuals appeared in movies, like in the movie *Yellow Submarine*. Her naive lines were born from her intention to avoid realistic shapes. She tends to create shapes based on what she literally sees on the first glance, for example the fingers are just five things or the eyes are always round and oval. She believes that these shapes will create odd visuals. Apparently, oddity is her concept of creating artworks as an expression of an escape from reality.

She admitted that she was currently working 80% on personal works and 20% on commissioned works. Her illustrations are mostly for commissioned works. She admitted that most of her income came from her profession as an illustrator even though she highlighted she was actually focusing herself as an artist. She stated that working in two fields as a freelance illustrator (who handles clients) and an artist is particularly necessary because she lives in Jakarta although unfortunately, she did not mention the reasons behind that statement. That is why she considers her freelance job an "additional job" to support her career as an artist.

Her decision to live with two careers was made after she left her office job. During her time as a company's employee, she realized that her job at that time was only "an obligation" that made her forget "her own self". Therefore, not being bounded to a particular company has allowed herself to freely choose projects, while doing things she likes at the same time (she did not state what are the things she likes, but I assumed it relates to her interest in painting and working as an artist).

<u>Monica Hapsari (Female, 33 years old, via WhatsApp call)</u>

Monica Hapsari stated that her preferred media were pencils, watercolors, gouache and embroideries. Especifically pencils and watercolors, she particularly considers these media because they can accommodate her needs for an expressive output. For her, a surprising characteristic of a medium creates an expressive output, for instance in the case of watercolor. She believes that watercolor has its own soul that decides wherever it wants to spread colors on a surface. This medium fits her style of drawing which she described as fast, messy, dirty, disorganize and unplanned. It also accommodates her drawing preference which does not display deep and many details (to explain what she meant by this, she made a comparison between her and a tattoo artist whom she considered having very detailed drawings).

She believes that both of her own hand and watercolor can "move" wherever they want. Watercolor can unexpectedly spread its own color on a two-dimensional medium by itself as well as her hand and all the supporting muscles are also able to move by themselves. She sometimes does not have a clear image on what to draw but, feels like her body moves by itself to create a drawing. She perceives this as a muscle memory. It is when her body has been trained to draw so many times that, subconsciously, her body moves by itself to produce a drawing. The brain only controls the limitations for the body movement, such as having the knowledge that she has to put yellow color, for example, to the canvas while the rest is done by the body itself. Furthermore, she confessed that she would know that her drawing was done when her body did not want to move anymore.

Hapsari uses watercolor for both commercial and non-commercial works. However, for her personal works, she also uses gouache. She said that the intensity of the gouache could deliver her message on the painting. Different from her commercial illustration works that

usually go through an editing and digital process before reaching their final outputs, her fine art outputs are how the paintings look like; they are what thay are which are represented by the obvious gouache colors. Therefore, the intensity of the medium is important for her when composing a fine art product.

When dealing with commercial job offers, she tends to reject projects from clients who ask her to draw outside her usual style. She has done this since the beginning of her career as an illustrator as an expression of her idealism. Moreover, she also admitted that she could not able to easily change her style since her skills are limited. Nevertheless, the limitation of her skill and style of drawing has added a significant characteristic to her works and made them easy to be recognized.

Her style of drawing has evolved in time based on her latest references. Her drawings were once influenced by her own fashion styling works. As she had graduated from Textile Design major and worked as a fashion stylist for three years, she said that her drawings at that time were based on the looks of the latest styling she had done before. Later, when she was working with embroideries as a medium, she implemented the logic of painting with watercolors when embroidering, like what she did for her latest exhibition. At that time, she intentionally made an artwork with embroidering technique that visually looked like drips of watercolors.

Muhammad Taufik (Male, 37 years old, via WhatsApp call)

Muhammad Taufik is publicly known as Emte. Pencils, pens, inks, watercolors and acrylic paint are the media he uses the most. There was a period he drew a lot of no-color illustrations by using mostly black ink because he was very much inspired by comic books which were mostly painted in black and white. His previous preference of only-black drawings back then was caused by lack of reference of other media, but since he was enrolled in Graphic Design

major at the university, he started to explore other colors and media. Even so, he still believes that black is a powerful color since it is the basic of all drawings. He always thinks that if a drawing looks really good only in black and white colors, then no other colors are needed since the characteristics of the drawing already appears strongly.

Later on, he decided not to restrict himself from exploring other media, and today, he would rather say that his media preferences are quite wide in range. For him, time is too valuable to only stick to a certain medium. However, he specifically mentioned watercolor as a significant medium. In his commercial projects, he chooses watercolor for its practicality as well as meeting the high market demand. Moreover, conceptually speaking, he recognizes the characteristics of watercolor, i.e. its unpredictability and surprise, as a positive point which contribute to the "human sense" of the drawing.

As a result of practicing drawing for a long time, he started to believe that his hands can still produce drawings even when he is not thinking about anything. In fact, he confessed that if he thought about what to draw, the output appeared to be little different from the initial concept. Therefore, because neither thinking nor thinking significantly affects the way he works, he would rather draw without thinking. His attitude of letting his hand to move freely without an initial clear concept in mind is also applied for his commercial projects. For instance, he was working on a number of revisions requested by a client when he realized that his hand was still able to draw even though he had already felt tired of all the client's demands. In order to do so, he admitted that he always tried to keep in mind that drawing was his most favorite thing to do, so he was constantly self-reminded. That is why demanding clients are not a reason for him to decline commercial work offers. He believes that he has a lot of time to explore his own creative autonomy.

Taufik confessed that his drawings depicted horror scenes and deformed human beings were his original style, and he enjoyed composing with that kind of style very much. For him, this style is original because he can draw pictures without thinking whether people will like it or not. He considers this as a statement of "whatever" but enjoyable.

Taufik is registered as one of the artists represented by Fabula, a Jakarta based art agency. Although the agency has been inactive since a year and a half ago, he feels that Fabula was very helpful in term of negotiation with clients. He was supported both in meeting the administrative needs and the pitching processes. Fabula has its own standard fee for the registered artists. Taufik admitted that this standard had been really helpful to make a clear image for the clients on how much money they would have had to spend. He thinks that it is always difficult for an artist to speak by him/herself during a budget negotiation with clients. He always feels that an artist's bargaining power is still low in the market, even if the artists already have several years of experience. Therefore, the help of an art agency along with a mature standardized administration is needed, so he can achieve a number of worthy commercial projects.

Ruth Marbun (Female, 32 years old, via Skype video call)

Ruth Marbun mentioned watercolors, drawing pen, coloring pencil and acrylic paint as her mostly used media, although she mainly uses watercolors. It is her academic background in fashion design that introduced her in watercolor technique. She now regards it as her comfort zone since she is already familiar with it. She considers that watercolor could produce a drawing with the characteristics of poetic, calm, layered and transparent. When working with watercolor, she feels that this medium has an unpredictable character. This unpredictability matches her

spontanious way of work. It allows her to discover "the elements of surprise" during working, and for her, it contributes to the "breath" of the drawing.

On one hand, she stated that she usually lets the watercolor "works" by itself. For her, it gives a sense of collaboration with the medium. On the other hand, she also believes that her hand is autonomous. One of the reasons why she owns this assumption is because she already felt tired working based on a proper process. A proper process for her means when an artist applies several routine steps, for example starting from sketching to finalizing. In her case, she has never had a clear image of her final output when she started to compose the initial concept. She just follows her feelings, for example she puts a background color first, and then what to do next will be decided along the way. She prefers to apply this process of production in order to prevent producing a stiff output. Therefore, in this case, she definitely puts a trust in her hand. She lets her hands "work" by themselves. For her, the brain only contributes to the technical factors, for example to order the hands to grab a brush and putting it in a coloring medium.

She does not desire to go back to fashion industry despite her educational and short professional background. It is not only because she did not dare to start by her own when she moved to Jakarta, but also because the production circle in fashion was tiring her. In her own experience, working in a fashion system requires a lot of collaboration with many people. In contrast, when she started to compose an illustration, she could experience a shorter production process and a direct output. She does not have to rely on many stakeholders, like in the fashion system. For her, it is like directly putting her own mind on a medium, and she could immediately see the final output. It contributes a refreshing feeling for her. In other words, she also perceives a sense of autonomy in terms of the production process.

She admitted that she currently works mostly on personal projects. Other than creating illustrations under the name of Ruth Marbun, she also produces merchandise products called "Bollu". The products are ranging from wall decoration, cushions and tableware. The brand is focused more in the production quantity; thus, it is also a prospective income for her. At the same time, she produces artworks under her own name as a way to be constantly recognized in the art industry. Interestingly, she could gain two different potential customers (or she called it as "crowd"). The Bollu customers are invited to be aware of Ruth Marbun's artworks, and vice versa. Therefore, she could reach various customers from different market.

Other than that, she still works for commercial projects from several clients. Mostly working on her personal projects, she did not deny that she is always excited working with clients. The reason is that she is able to work with things she has never done in her personal works. Although she is limited by various requirements from the clients, she learns to be creative within the limitation. Sometimes, it leads her to come up with an innovation. Therefore, she admitted that she enjoys working with limitations, rather than having unlimited freedom. For her, it is more challenging since she is afraid she could suffer from frustration if she is too confused on what to do under unlimited possibilities.

Sanchia Hamidjaja (Female, 33 years old, via WhatsApp call)

Sanchia Hamidjaja described Indian ink, watercolor and gouache the media she used the most. However, she admitted that she had not yet master the use of watercolor. She mentioned that mostly used ink up until now because she had initially been interested in cartoon illustrations, while she drew on a paper medium due to its practicality. Being a mother and currently living in Jakarta where a lot of traffic jams occur (she previously lived and studied in Australia), she considers two-dimensional media, such as paper and canvas, the best media to

accommodate her current condition, so she mostly prefers to work from home with friendly-sized media.

Since she decided to work professionally as an illustrator, almost all of her works were dominated with only black and white colors. It is an expression of a rejection to produce a too-much decorative drawings. Although she is currently exploring other colors, she used to think that applying other colors than black could give drawings some additional information to the drawing which is actually not necessary. She later admitted that it was her own misconception; however, she still agrees that black is a statement of straightforwardness and firm. Recently, she has started to apply colors other than black because she was intrigued by the feeling of awe in experiencing new visuals. She also stated she did not want to stick only in the monochromatic style because it would be a tedious idea.

When she was asked about her opinion of the concept that hands are creatively autonomous, she agreed. It is based on her understanding of the concept of sensory play. She has seen how her little daughter has learned new things by touching, provoking a new knowledge in the brain. However, she later mentioned that the hands still needed to collaborate well with the brain. She once experienced an artist's block, but she managed to solve it by writing every morning after getting up. She said it had been an effective exercise to rebuild a collaboration between the brain and the hands.

She realizes the essence of working with hands rather than working digitally. Even though she has a background in Graphic Design study and used to work as a graphic designer at an advertising company, she stated that drawing digitally prevented her from expressing the emotion of the drawings because there is no intimacy between the media. For instance, when drawing, she needs to control her breathing in order to produce lines with different kinds of

thickness. That moment is the time when she feels the sense of presence. It gives her the sensation of meditation, and she enjoys it.

Hamidjaja produces illustrations for both commercial and non-commercial projects. In regards to her commercial projects, she said she has never minded to take a project offer that required her to draw with a slightly different style or outside her comfort zone. These kinds of project give her time to refresh her mind, and at the same time, she can learn new things in terms of working condition, media, or the characteristics of the clients. Therefore, she does not want her works to be exclusive or only for limited types of clients because she does not want to be stucked in her comfort zone. It is her way to keep both her commercial and idealistic sides. She will maintain her significant drawing style, but she never puts limit on herself to try new things. Furthermore, she admitted that she took commercial projects more than non-commercial ones, and she did not hesitate to state that it was because she needed an income.

Ykha Amelz (Female, 33 years old, via Skype video call)

Ykha Amelz described pencils, brush pens and acrylic paint as the media she used most. However, she stated that she had not yet mastered the acrylic paint application yet. Having had worked a lot on paper, she experienced an adaptation moment when she was working on a canvas for the first time. She felt nervous because she thought it would be a more "serious" artwork rather than an illustration. However, she applied the same technique as the one she used when she was working on a piece of paper by drawing thin outlines with a pencil first.

She had a difficult time when she was asked to describe her drawing style. Even though she did not give an exact answer, she stated that she always preferred to produce flowy and fluid lines on her drawings. It is influenced by her academic background in Architecture where she was supposed to make straight lines all the time. She really wants to escape from that

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custom, so she often adds some cloudy elements and saggy shapes. For her, fluid shapes give her the sense of freedom beyond the decision of where she should stop (making the lines).

She clearly stated that she preferred to produce illustrations manually rather than digitally, because by producing it manually, she can sense different feeling. She feels that she has more control when working with hand because there is a textural interaction between her pencil and her paper. Furthermore, she believes that her hand is not separated from her brain as it is difficult for her to start to draw and just let her hands move if she does not have any idea yet about what to draw.

Other than working under her own name as her brand, Amelz also has a second illustration brand, called "Babbot". Babbot is a ready-to-order illustration depicting a comical figure of a French bulldog. The character is inspired by her own dogs, and actually born from an unintentional doodle. Since it has gained a lot of attention, she decided to offer it as a seperate product which has a simpler visual and is more affordablee. Therefore, for prospective clients who seek for funnier, pop and more cartoonish illustration, there is the "Babbot" brand. Nonetheless, for the illustrations under her own name, she is open to any kinds of request. She even said she did not mind to be "tortured" by various clients' requests.

Besides those two brands, Amelz is also working under an art agency, Verve. She sometimes has difficulties in handling projects from the agency since she has to interact with two parties, both the agency and the clients. Along with more big projects coming from the agency, she has to experience having a number of of revisions. However, if she handles the clients by herself and does not go through the agency, she does it better because she receives the requests directly without a mediation. In this case, the client's demands are delivered directly to her and through a less complicated communication. Consequently, she considers all of those commercial

works similar to her own projects because the production processes are less different. She tries not to differentiate between her commercial and non-commercial projects because she feels that she has currently gained a lot of trust from her clients for commercial projects. Trust here means that the clients are ensured by Amelz' style of drawings. Thus, most of the time, the clients also ask for a visual recommendation from Amelz which, in turn, allows her to have the sense of freedom to express.

4. The art medium perception

The illustrators appear to have different perceptions toward their media. According to the interviews, some of them stated a belief that their media release their own energies and have certain humanly characteristics. Others see their media only as practical tools. Therefore, the first part of this chapter discusses those concepts separately, while the second part observes the artists' perceptions towards their bodies and limbs as media to produce artworks. The analysis of another form of medium which is a non-material sensible medium (Davies 2009) is revealed in the third part. Lastly, the final part discusses the connection between all of the illustrators' perceptions and the economic intention of the artworks.

4.1 The coloring and two-dimensional media, between conceptual and practical

All 10 illustrators have their own reasons in choosing the media they choose the most. Apart from the functional factors, some of them expressed more conceptual reasons. Monica Hapsari, Ruth Marbun and Muhammad Taufik share similar view about their preference for watercolor as below:

> "Watercolor has an unpredictable characteristic. When I start working, I already have a plan for the work. But, when I wet the surface (of the two-dimensional medium) with watercolors, it is like they have their own soul. It is like wherever the watercolors 'want' to spread their colors. That is a kind of surprising element for me. A style that fits for me is the unpredictable way of working."
>> (Monica Hapsari. Personal interview. 4 August 2016)

> "Watercolor matches my work style, which is spontaneous and less-controlled. There is a sense of collaboration with the medium (the watercolor), with a surprise in the middle (of the work). It is less homework for me, just let the watercolors do the job"
>> (Ruth Marbun. Personal interview. 3 August 2016)

> "Watercolor is unpredictable. I always feel I can get unexpected things from it, and it gives a sense of humanity'"

In their opinions, watercolor has the characteristics of unpredictability and surprise which have created a particular interest to the artists. It is what Jane Bennett called *thing awareness* (2010: 18), an arising status of an object which has gained human's immediate attention. Its characteristics have made watercolor come to the artists' attention. Watercolor has a basic function as a coloring tool, but is apparently able to unveil a phenomenological energy, as the illustrators understand. This energy has outstepped the practical side of watercolor and then, it comes into awareness when the watercolor is being used, when it is applied on a canvas or a paper, when it is performing its function. It is in line with what Stephen Bahn call "the quickening sense of the materiality of things" where the authors (the illustrators) bring the "physical constitution of the object" (of watercolor) to life through exposing the materials and techniques of which functions they were intended to (Sofaer 2007: 2). Therefore, these illustrators are aware of the energy when they encounter the liquid of the watercolor interact and spread on a canvas or a piece of paper. It is when they realize that the watercolor is functioning as a coloring equipment, and that the medium is able to act unpredictably and surprisingly, according to what they have visioned. The unpredictability is revealed by the way the watercolor spreads its colors without any controls from the artists' hands. It reveals new forms and shapes in the eyes of the illustrators who did not imagine before that. Therefore, the illustrators consider it as the element of surprise of the medium.

Two of the three illustrators indeed agree with each other that the liquid of the watercolor can spread very easily without any efforts from their hands, as if it is the watercolor's "desire". The condition suggests that the illustrators have a concept that the medium is autonomous. Hapsari clearly stated that for her, watercolor had its own soul, and it was as if it

could do whatever it wanted to spread its colors. Similarly, Marbun confessed that she mostly "let" the watercolor doing the job. These illustrators are not only aware of the energy of the medium, but also give the medium some space to express its energy. It is the space to let the *thingness* of the medium goes on and processes its materials (Brown 2001: 4). By giving a room to the medium to maintain its thingness, the illustrators assume that the watercolor can express its own autonomy to decide how to express its function.

As a result, the illustrators ascribe various human characteristics to watercolor and even believe it to have the same abilities to human beings. For Taufik, the visual tendency of watercolor, which is unpredictably scattered, is what makes watercolor has a human side. He did not explain it further, but it is my assumption that the watercolor has been perceived as having a contribution to highlighting the impression of handmade works that his works are truly created by hands without any digital touch. It seems that Taufik does not give his full autonomy during the production process as an artist should. Instead, he lets the characteristics of watercolor add the "human" side to his works. A medium's interference in the artwork production as such is also similarly described by Marbun. For her, the unpredictability of watercolor contributes to "the breath of the artwork" (although she did not further discuss this). Moreover, Marbun feels that there is always a sense of collaboration with the medium, where she does not need to work 100% on her on-going artwork since the watercolor will do the rest. In other words, these given human characteristics are also the way for the illustrators to "communicate" with the medium instead of merely working with them. This reciprocal assignment of the artist and the medium to produce an artwork has become a part of their production process.

Another human attribute of the medium was recognized by Lala Bohang. In terms of facing a new medium, for example a book (she referred to her 2014 exhibition at Galeri

Nasional, Jakarta), Bohang mentioned a particular adaptation strategy. She should not only be well-informed in advance of physical characteristics of the medium, but also find "the comfort side" first.

> "What I did was literally going out of my comfort zone. There was a feeling of fear since I never did any non-drawing artwork. I have never done a non-drawing installation before. But, I knew that I am close with books (she referred to her reading hobby), so there is a comfort zone."
>
> (Lala Bohang. Personal interview. 24 May 2016)

"The comfort side" is important for Bohang since there is always a feeling of being afraid of facing a new medium due to lack of previous experience. To cope with the feeling, she tries to communicate with the medium by finding a comfort in it and building a collaborative relationship. This challenge-based relationship was discussed by Jean Baudrillard (1999: 24) to explain a more interesting way to reveal the awareness of a thing. According to him, in building a human-object relationship, a form of challenge or play appears to be more appealing to the human. Facing new media, which in this case are the books, was a challenge for Bohang. Therefore, what she meant by *finding a comfort* is actually her way to build a relationship with the object.

There are two other illustrators who have also experienced an encounter with a new medium which in this case is a canvas. However, in contrast with Bohang, they reacted negatively. For Eko Bintang who prefers wood as his main medium, canvas is considered as an intimidating medium.

> "Unlike wood, canvas is intimidating. It is like, *'this is already the canvas'*."
>
> (Eko Bintang. Personal interview. 4 August 2016)

Although Bintang did not describe further and in details, he emphasized the way he perceived a canvas with an exclamatory sentence, "*this is already the canvas*". It represented a form of expression of anxiety toward a challenging situation where he had been offered to make an artwork on a canvas. Whereas according to Ykha Amelz, working on a canvas represents a more serious art than merely an illustration.

> "The first time working on a canvas, I felt nervous because I would enter a more 'serious' art than illustration."
>
> (Ykha Amelz. Personal interview. 1 August 2016)

Her perception of "a more serious art" is a form of expression of being intimidated. Because of its intimidating characteristic, working on a canvas was considered as a challenge for these two illustrators. However, they preferred not to take that challenge. The canvas was still perceived as an object that has the *thing awareness*, yet these illustrators preferred not to act toward the awareness. Different from Bohang, they chose to give a contradictory attitude toward the medium.

Based on the interview, canvases are frequently involved in the production of personal artworks for exhibition, as stated by Hapsari, Amelz, Taufik, Bohang and Bintang (although the last person does not prefer to use it). In general, they have different proportions of commercial and non-commercial projects. For example, approximately 60% of Hapsari's works are for commercial used, but Marbun mostly works on personal projects. However, the illustrators do not seem to differentiate the use of watercolor between the context of commercial and non-commercial although the medium is being appointed due to its various meanings and attributes. Therefore, their *thing* perception toward the medium is a general attitude and independent from the economic context, whether it is commercial or non-commercial.

However, some of the illustrators still see their media in a more practical way,

especially if their works are dominated by commercial projects.

> "For commercial use, all of my works were done digitally… It is more
> practical for revisions."
>> (Eko Bintang. Personal interview. 4 August)

> "Yes, it is based on efficiency. And, after continuously working on it
> (Wacom), I feel there is more freedom and opportunities to compose."
>> (Angga Cipta. Personal interview. 2 August 2016)

> "I have done, once, a huge acrylic painting which took three months in the
> making. At that time, I was not yet a mother. Then, when I moved to Jakarta and I
> knew the traffic jams here are horrible, I was thinking about other media that I can
> work at home, in my own room. So then, I prefer tactical medium, especially paper
> medium which is friendly in size."
>> (Sanchia Hamidjaja. Personal interview. 10 August 2016)

Eko Bintang sees himself as a freelancer in art direction and graphic design in the

context of commissioned projects. He does all ordered projects digitally in order to be efficient in

making revisions. Similar to Bintang, Angga Cipta who has an equal number of commercial and

non-commercial projects, also prefers to work digitally (Wacom tablet). Basically, his preference

is based on the efficiency because working on a digital gadget allows him to do revisions quickly

and easily. In addition, he experiences more freedom in composing an artwork with a gadget,

since his way of work stresses more on composing rather than drawing from scratch. Meanwhile,

the reason for Sanchia Hamidjaja to use mostly friendly-sized media, such as canvas and paper,

is tactical. As a mother and a person who is living in Jakarta where there are a lot of traffic jams

that consume a lot of her time, she prefers to work with a more practical medium.

4.2. The hand versus the brain

The hand of an illustrator is an important part in the creative production process.

Like watercolor and canvas, the hand mediates the creative concept inside the artist's mind into

the creation of an artwork. If various significations can be attributed to both two-dimensional media (such as canvas and paper) and coloring media as a result of human's perception of the media's thingness, I presume that the hand will possibly experience a similar condition. Back in the late classical period, the hands of an artist were believed to have a magic power from gods (Kris 1934: 44 -45, 49). According to Suidas, a Byzantine lexicographer, gods blessed the hands of a sculptor to be able to create sculptural works (Overbeck, nos. 1164 & 800 as cited in Kris 1979: 44). The hands were perceived as a separate medium which had an ability to produce creative outputs. It is a similar belief expressed by these modern illustrators that will be explained in the following paragraphs. However, the ability of these illustrators' hands does not mean a magical blessing, but it would be because the hands are perceived to be autonomous.

A number of illustrators shared different views about this perception. Muhammad Taufik stated that he did not have to think about anything (what to draw, which color, etc.) and just lets his hand move by itself. Similarly, Ruth Marbun prefers her hand to do whatever "it wishes", while her brain only function as a support to technical duties. Their statements were expressed in the interviews as follows:

> "My hand is very used to it (to draw), so I believe that hands are creative. When I am not thinking about anything, rather than contemplating all along, I let my hand to just draw. Sometimes, if I am thinking about what to draw, the output looks different with what I have visioned. So, I prefer not to think about anything on what to draw."
>
> (Muhammad Taufik. Personal interview. 3 Agustus 2016)

> "When I work on an artwork, I start from zero without knowing how it will look like at the end. I just follow my feeling. I put the background color first, for example. But, when it comes to what I want to do after that, whether adding another color or making it negative, I will decide later during the process. In this case, I trust my hand so much. If I have thought about it (the artwork) very carefully, the result would not be that 'revealing', or it will look stiff. So indeed, I believe that hands are separated (from the body). Then, it is like it is 'up to you' because what the brain does is only helping to lift the hand grabbing the brush and putting it in your chosen color. What is next just comes by itself."
>
> (Ruth Marbun. Personal interview. 3 August 2016)

These illustrators in above quotes believe that their hands have the power to act by themselves. According to Jane Bennett, the human power is also a *thing-power* (2010: 10). Based on her statement, the *thing-power* is born not only because human beings are constituted by various materials, but also because "these materials are not passive mechanical parts under the order of a nonmaterial or called it as a soul or mind". Rather, these materials are "active and self-organizing" (Ibid). Therefore, as a part of the human body, it is likely that the illustrators can feel that their hands reveal their *thing-power*. Interestingly, these illustrators do not perceive the hand as a part connected to the body, but as a separated object, as if it has its own desire which is similar to watercolor.

The other illustrators believe that their hands are the main source of their creative ideas, especially in executing a concept into a final artwork. They stated it as follows:

> "What makes manual different from digital is the feel. With hands, I can feel to control what I want to draw from the meeting of both textures of the pencil and the paper, rather than by digital. I feel more familiar (working) with hands."
> (Ykha Amelz. Personal interview. 1 August 2016)

> "Working with hands means that I have to control my breath. Thin or thick lines are produced from how I adjust my breath because it influences the steadiness of my hand. That is the enjoyment, the sense of presence. It is like a mediation."
> (Sanchia Hamidajaja. Personal interview. 10 August 2016)

The working hands let the illustrators feel the process of making an artwork step by step. For example, when the hand is moving from side to side or when it is detecting the texture of the coloring tools merged with the two-dimensional medium. Ykha Amelz stated that through her hand, she could feel what she was working on because there was a sense of familiarity with her own hand that it is a part of her body. Therefore, she is able to control what she is working on. A similar experience was also reported by Sanchia Hamidjaja. There is a sense of presence

when her hand is working. She even has to control her breath when she works with her hand in order to control her line stroking pressure. How Hamidjaja perceives this condition is in line with what Collingwood indentified as "the total activity" in making an art. The feeling of self-engagement, including the birth of a concept and the participation of the body limbs, is considered an important stage in "the work of art proper" (1938: 51 as cited in Rose & Tolia-Kelly 2012: 98).

For Lala Bohang, although the concept is always born of the brain, when the hand is involved, the artwork concept always looks better than she imagined before in her mind. Angga Cipta also supports Bohang's perception with the statement that he used to feel that his hand was the essence of his artworks before he now prefers to work digitally. Both statements are delivered as follows:

> "The image (of the artwork) is always produced in the brain at the first place, but when it comes to the execution, it can be more or less similar (to the concept). But, it always looks better (than the concept in the brain) because it involves the hands that are moving."
> (Lala Bohang. Personal interview. 24 May, 2016)

> "I used to think that my hands are the essence of my drawings, before I received a recommendation to use Wacom."
> (Angga Cipta. Personal interview. 2 August 2016)

As far as I am concerned, these perceptions are developed because all of them are capable of practicing a *technic*, especially technic in drawing. According to the philosopher Martin Heidegger, *technic* represents a human's will to control over the object world (Redfield 2003: 19). Actually, their skills and techniques in drawing and composing image have built a belief in them that the power of the hand is strong. When their hands touch the medium, they realize that the hands have a full control of moving since the hands will be the ones that perform the

techniques. Therefore, the artists become aware that they have a dominant position toward objects especially the artwork media which is represented by the hands.

Most of the illustrators mentioned above entrust their human power more on the hands, but for Monica Hapsari, it is a different situation. She did not only mention the hands specifically, but more generally about her body. Not only some parts of her body do the work for an artwork, but the whole body does, as she described as follows:

> "Sometimes I have no idea on what color I should use, or what visual I want to make. But my body just moves to a certain point. The brain's function is only to set a limitation, for example to put colors on the medium's surface. After that, my body will just move wherever it wants."
> "To know if my artwork is finished is by realizing that my body is hesitant to move. Sometimes, the artwork might still look raw, or sketchy, but (I) do not want to move anymore. It is intuitive, unplanned. I just do not feel to add something more (to the artwork)."
> (Monica Hapsari. Personal interview. 4 August 2016)

During the interview, she described that she could feel her body's ability to move without a direction from the brain. There is also a sign from her body that indicates when her artwork is done. Therefore, Hapsari perceives the whole body as a reflection of *thing-power* (Bennett 2010: 10). She considers her body an autonomous being which is separated from the brain. Furthermore, she stated that her body's autonomous movement was possible because there was a muscle memory. According to her, the muscle memory records bodily activities that have been practiced very regularly many times, so the body moves subconsciously without a literal order from the brain. Hapsari has been drawing and illustrating since she was a child, and since 2009, she has been doing it professionally which means that her skills in drawing have been developed through years of practice, and she is still constantly doing it. Practicing is related to *things*, as Rose and Tolia-Kelly mentioned in *Visuality/Materiality* (2010), since it is an expression from the human that he/she is able to make *things* visible. In Hapsari's case, the *thing*

that should be made visible is the ability of her body in contributing to the creative process. Her skills that have been developed for some years are expressed by her body movement. For her, the body movement is not merely an energy to create an artwork, but also a form of autonomy of her own human power.

Not all of the illustrators believe in the autonomous power of the hands and the body. Some of them understand that the center of their creativity still lies in the brain. For Edita Atmaja and Ykha Amelz, their hands will not be able to move if they have no idea in mind about what to draw, as they mentioned below:

> "If I do not have in mind on what to draw, then my hands will be just held back. So, it should be initially visualized in the mind, or else I would end up keeping contemplating." (Ykha Amelz. Personal interview. 1 August 2016)

> "I always feel that whatever I am working on, it always comes from the brain, even though the hands can do a lot of stuff."
> (Edita Atmaja. Personal interview. 9 August 2016)

For them, the brain is the source of the hands' capability of working with media. Therefore, they show the comprehension that the brain is a human being's *thing-power* (Bennett 2010: 10) since they perceive that the brain is a part of the human body which has a working system. Jane Bennett has clearly described it as follow:

> "In other words, human power is itself a kind of thing-power. At one level this claim is uncontroversial: it is easy to acknowledge that humans are composed of various material parts (the minerality of our bones, or the metal of our blood, or the electricity of our neurons). But it is more challenging to conceive of these materials as lively and self-organizing, rather than as passive or mechanical means under the direction of something nonmaterial, that is, an active soul or mind."
> (Bennett 2010: 10)

Similar to the hands, the brain is perceived to have a *thing-power*. Moreover, it is believed as the center creativity by the latter two illustrators. At a glance, it seems like the

concept of the brain is similar to the autonomous hands which is considered to have *thing-power*. What makes both concept different is that the illustrators who believe that their brain is the source of their artistic activity did not state that they perceived the brain as a separate single part of the body, while the other illustrators believe that their hands are separate from the body and can act by themselves. In addition, Atmaja and Amelz addressed the ability of their brains as their own ability, and this ability is a unity of all body parts that has an ability to produce creative outputs. Therefore, these two female illustrators prefer to have a clear concept and plans in the mind before starting to produce an artwork because they believe that the brain is the most important tool in their creative process. If they do not have an initial concept in their mind, other body parts (such as hands and eyes) will not able to contribute to the creative process properly.

Nonetheless, unlike Atmaja, Amelz did not deny the role of her hand in contributing to the creative process since she can feel a sense of familiarity in using her own body parts directly although she later stated that a clear concept in the brain influenced the movement of her hands. Some of the illustrators who highlight the autonomous power of the hands actually indirectly pointed out the role of the brain as well. Sanchia Hamidjaja mentioned that sensory play enabled her hands to acknowledge and perceive the media (the idea of sensory play was emerged from witnessing her little daughter learn new things through hand contact). Monica Hapsari admitted that her subconscious hand movement had been developed from the muscle memory, so I argue that the memory is strongly related to the mind. For Hamidjaja and Hapsari, there is a sense of collaboration between their brains and their bodies (or hands). The role of the brain in the creative process is in line with Alfred Gell's idea that an artist's creativity is born from the collaboration between the mind and the medium (Gell 1998: 236 as cited in Chua & Elliott 2013: 10). In other words, the artist's ability to creatively create and innovate an artwork

is developed from "physical traces of his previous mental activity". In this case, the mental activity starts when the illustrator thinks about his/her concept of artwork then uses the media (including the hands), and that is when the creative process begins. Therefore, according to Gell, an artwork is a *person-thing* (Ibid) that awakens its own energy to proceed its surroundings with a cognitive ability.

One of my hypotheses argued that there was an existing relation between the thing-power of a human being and the economic purpose of the artwork (whether it is for commercial or non-commercial projects). It was my assumption that, instead of being burdened by various requirements for commercial use, the illustrators experienced more autonomy on what their body could do creatively when working on a personal project, so they who responded to the body autonomy would have more personal projects than client-based works. Indeed, Marbun and Bohang currently work on mostly personal projects. However, commissioned works are what Hapsari and Hamidjaja are currently working on the most, and Taufik has a balance number of commercial and non-commercial projects. Accordingly, the economic purpose of the projects does not seem to influence the illustrators' attitudes toward their body and hands as art media.

4.3. The sensible non-material media

According to the *Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* (Davies 2009), an art medium is "something that mediates the transmission of the content of the artwork to a receiver"[10]. Furthermore, it is said that "mediums could range from various materials of physical kinds (e.g. watercolors, acrylics, canvases, marbles) to sensible determinables realizable in material or

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[10] Davies, David. "Medium in Art - Oxford Handbooks." *Medium in Art - Oxford Handbooks*. N.p., 2015. Web. 21 Sept. 2016.
http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199279456.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199279456-e-9

physical kinds (e.g. tone, texture, color)". Based on this definition, the signature drawing style of each illustrator can also be observed as an art medium. Each signature drawing style is the extent to which several characteristics of an artwork visually appear very often, and that forms an identity to the artist. Although each signature style is categorized as a sensible non-material medium, it should be noticed that those elements which belong to this category (e.g. tone, texture, color) are also parts of the final artwork. It means that the illustrator's signature style does not only mediate between the initial concept and the final execution of an artwork, but also the physical parts of the final product where the audience of the artwork can obviously see them. In order to discuss specifically about the role of a concept-execution mediation, each signature style has to be perceived as something that regularly occurs in the artist's creative process. In other words, this style appears as a habit or a tendency to constantly practice a particular physical artistic appearance.

A previous study about non-material media and their relation to the artist's perception toward them was conducted by Rosalind Krauss in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (1984, 1995) where she deeply observed grids in modern arts. According to her, one reason why artists choose grids as their medium is because they think they will find their originality through peeling back the grids layer after layer of representation (Krauss 1985: 158). Here, the grids place a similar position to the sensible non-material medium because many of the twentieth-century artists showed a dominant tendency to use grids to mediate between their initial artistic intention and the final execution of a modern artwork. Since the grids constantly re-appeared in the modern art scheme, they represent a distinctive characteristic, a signature style of twentieth-century modern artworks. Inspired by the study, the following paragraph will observe sensible non-material media which are used the most as the

illustrators' signature styles. The styles which are color and shape will be closely discussed on

their relation with the creators' perception.

Three illustrators mentioned their particular and dominant interest in the color of

black. Muhammad Taufik, Lala Bohang and Sanchia Hamidjaja express various opinions on why

they thought black had stronger characteristics than other colors.

> "It (black) is the basic. All drawings, even though consisting of other colors,
> always come first in black. Some might say that if an image already looks good in
> black, then it needs no other color to make it better. It already appeals strong."
> (Muhammad Taufik. Personal interview. 3 August 2016)

> "Black represents a to-the-point statement, just as it is since there are no
> other layers (colors) behind it, simple but lively."
> (Lala Bohang. Personal interview. 24 May 2016)

> "I used to think that adding other colors after black will contribute new
> information or message on the artwork. Black and white style appeals firm for me, a
> to-the-point statement."
> (Sanchia Hamidjaja. Personal interview. 10 August 2016)

Undoubtedly, the three of them did catch what Bennett called "a glimpse of thing

awareness" in the color black. All the significations assigned to the color black were actually

obtained because they had compared it to the other colors. Therefore, although they did not

specifically mention which ones, the colors other than black are also assigned with meanings and

representations.

Of course, each of them has different motives behind their perception of the color

black. Taufik and Hamidjaja were initially exposed to the use of a black ink medium (Taufik

uses Chinese ink, while Hamidajaja uses Indian ink) because their first interest becoming

illustrators was born from their childhood interest in comics. However, slightly unlike them,

Bohang clearly mentioned that her comfort in drawing actually lied in the combination of the

colors black and white. She perceives the color black is her main medium, and black and white

artworks her signature style. As her most preferred medium, the color black does not only give her the feeling of comfort, but also represents a value of honesty which means that the concepts of her on-going artwork were exactly produced by her own thought. Therefore, there is a sense that she should make something original and that it will represent her own-self. Bohang's concept expresses a similar idea to Krauss' study about grids that a medium is able to make an artist believes that he/she has found her originality.

> "Perhaps it is because of this sense of a beginning, a fresh start, a ground zero, the artist after artist has taken up the grid as the medium within which to work, always taking it up as though he were just discovering it, as though the origin her had found by peeling back layer after layer of representation to come at last to this schematized reduction, this graph-paper ground, were *his* origin, and his finding it an act of originality. Waves of abstract artists "discover" the grid; part of its structure one could say is that in its revelatory character it is always a new, a unique discovery.
>
> (Krauss 1995: 158 - 159)

However, although in Krauss's grids, the artist redefines his/her own origin by peeling back the layers into layers, in Bohang's case, she noticed that the color black is unlayered, and this elicited her interest. Therefore, the color black represents something that is as it is or the honesty that develops the *thing awareness* which Bohang has caught. It is the *thing-power* that has caught Bohang's attention that she is truly making something (her artwork) original, which is a result of her own idea as a representation that she is being honest to herself and the audience of the artwork she has made.

Besides the color black, another sensible non-material medium that was significantly mentioned by some of the illustrators was the shape of their drawings. Ykha Amelz admitted that she often made flowy and fluid lines in order to escape from her obligations to make straight lines during her study in Architecture. For Marishka Soekarna, she intentionally wants to create naive and odd shapes. For her, oddity is an expression of avoiding realistic visuals since creating

an artwork is perceived as a way to escape from reality. Both statements are described as follows:

> "Personally, I like to produce fluid and flowy lines a lot. It is because when I studied Architecture, it was always an obligation to make straight lines, and I always wanted to get away from it. So, I prefer cloudy elements, unravel and flowy. Fluid shapes make me feel more freedom, instead of deciding where to stop (drawing the line)."
>
> (Ykha Amelz. Personal interview. 1 August 2016)

> "Talking about lining, I tend to make naive lines. I make lines literally based on what I see in the first hand, for example hand has five fingers, eyes are rounds and ovals, etc. Indeed, I avoid to make something realistic. For me, making an artwork is a kind of escaping from reality, so it could be that wild and very odd."
>
> (Marishka Soekarna. Personal interview. 7 August 2016)

Based on Amelz's and Soekarna's views, on one hand, there is a sense to be free in choosing where to stop and to escape from realistic visuals. That signification makes them aware of the energy of their signature styles which is represented by the shape of their lines. Amelz particularly feels her autonomy in creating endless lines. In contrast, Soekarna's concept of escaping from reality is unclear although she stated in the interview that creating odd shapes was her own decision – her own free will. However, taken together, the feeling of autonomy in creating an artwork lies in their preferences of shapes. In addition to this, various questions can be derived from her concept of escaping from reality. Is there an obligation to create natural shapes in reality? Does reality repress her? Or, is there any political power behind the realistic shapes in an artwork? Unfortunately, answering these questions fall outside the scope of this study.

On the other hand, both Amelz and Soekarna's statements also embody a sense of avoidance. Amelz avoids creating straight lines, while Soekarna keeps creating naive lines to evade realistic shapes. These illustrators act as if both the line and the shape contribute to full freedom in creating an artwork. However, the avoidance attitude might be an indication that

something is being repressed. Again, this is similar to Krauss' description of the myth of the grids. Although the artist feels that he/she has found his/her own origin through the grids, unconsciously, there is something that being repressed (1995: 13). In this case, although both illustrators mentioned that they worked autonomously, they are actually being repressed by their avoidance of creating particular shapes which, in this case, are straight lines for Amelz and realistic forms for Soekarna.

To sum up, the color black mediates between the illustrators' perceptions of firmness and directness, as well as the final appearance of the artworks. Particularly in the case of Bohang's black and white style, the color black is perceived as a representation of honesty which she believes that she has created an originality through. Unlike this concept, the concept of autonomy is more visible in the shape as a medium. Amelz and Soekarna confirmed that there was a sense of freedom when they were composing their signature shapes. Even so, this also shows an act of avoidance of creating particular shapes.

4.4. The non-related relation between autonomous media and the economic purpose of the artwork

Some of the illustrators' statements seem to convey that they "give" an autonomy to their media, especially in the case of Monica Hapsari's, Ruth Marbun's and Muhammad Taufik's watercolor, as well as in the case of Marbun's hand and Hapsari's body. Although they did not explicitly state it, but they are pretty confident that these media *are* indeed autonomous. If this is related to the economic purpose of the artworks that they work on, as I previously hypothesized, those who work on more commercial projects with various client-controlled requirements should not have as much freedom as those who produce more personal projects. If this is indeed the case, the commercial-based illustrators must have less autonomy on themselves which makes it

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difficult for them to "give" their autonomy to a separate medium. However, with one exception, this is a different case in the situation of Hapsari who has a dominant number of client-based projects, but still lets her hand and body "do" the work. In contrast, while Marbun's case is similar to Hapsari's, Marbun works more on personal projects. Due to different economic purpose between these two illustrators, my initial hypothesis which predicted that the illustrators who work a lot on client-based projects are not able to "give" the medium an autonomy is only supported by the case of Marbun, but does not match the case of Hapsari.

The observation on the first part of this chapter further supports the rejection of this hypothesis. Taufik, Marbun and Hapsari, who believe that watercolor has the ability to "perform by itself", work with a different proportion of personal projects and commercial works. Marbun works more on personal projects, while Hapsari has more client-based works, and Taufik works on both project types of projects equally. In addition, those who prefer more practical media, such as Eko Bintang, Edita Atmaja and Sanchia Hamidjaja, handle more client-based projects, except Angga Cipta who has a balanced proportion between personal works and commercial projects. Except Hamidjaja who later expressed a conceptual perception toward the color black which does not contribute much to this part of analysis, these illustrators did not mention anything related to a conceptual perception of an art medium. Therefore, on one hand, the illustrators who have a conceptual perception toward their media appreciate the concept of an independently autonomous medium and also have the tendency to separate the medium from a bigger unity (e.g hands are separated from the body) although it does not determine whether they work more on personal projects rather than commercial works, or vice versa. On the other hand, those who prefer practical media work more on commercial purposes and did not mention

another reason, especially conceptual reason than the fact that they choose highly functional media.

A mixed result also appears in the third analysis of this chapter. The illustrators' choice of working either on commercial or personal projects apparently is not influenced by the their perceptions toward their style of drawings. Bohang, Taufik and Hamidjaja share similar views of the perception of the color black, yet they work on different proportions of economic purposes. Bohang has more personal projects, but Hamidjaja is more into commercial artworks. However, Taufik focuses on both types of projects. A similar situation also appears when the medium is expressed by each of the illustrators' signature style in the form of lines and shapes, as expressed by Ykha Amelz and Marishka Soekarna. Although both believe that shapes are able to perform the attitude of avoidance, Amelz works more on client-based projects while Soekarna prefers more personal projects. To sum up, Hamidjaja and Amelz believe that they can present their non-material sensible medium's ability although they work under another higher political power (the clients and their requirements), yet this perception is also owned by the illustrators who do a lot of personal projects (Bohang and Marishka).

5. Toward a political and economic dilemma

The perceptions and attitudes toward the art media form a major tool in this research to picture the creative mode of production of these illustrators. In chapter 4, I concluded that their attitudes were mostly related to the perception of autonomy. Moreover, the illustrators expressed the tendency to "give" their autonomy as artists to the separate media during their production processes. Since the economic purpose of the artworks is not influenced by the perception of autonomous medium, does it reflect what Jameson's stated as the new social movement in postmodernity? Does the way these illustrators understand their modes of production have any characteristics which are related to Jameson's new people? Although it would be unwise to constantly judge that these illustrators *are* what Jameson has described as the new people, there is one keyword that creates a red line to relate them. The keyword is *uncertainty*. These Jakarta-based illustrators live in an uncertain economic realm as mentioned in the Introduction chapter, so do the new people according to Jameson where he used the term "peculiar socioeconomics" (1991: xv). Therefore, without trying to make an overstated conclusion, I was intrigued to observe whether these illustrators reflect postmodern new people based on their responses during the interviews.

These illustrators work as freelancers. They do not belong to any particular company or profit organization. Some of them are registered in art agencies, but are not tied with a typical company-employee agreement, such as monthly wages, annual leaves, exact working hours at the office, etc. Therefore, working on projects that involves an art agency, like Muhammad Taufik and Ykha Amelz do, is rather a collaborative work for them. Accordingly, they probably

identify themselves with a certain occupational title (illustrator, graphic designer, graphic artist, etc.), but they do not belong in the same group, in the sense that their regular job descriptions are not under a single hiring company. They can work for anyone, any company, any organization and any governmental institution. Therefore, they can make their own decisions in the way they work to produce creative outputs, or in other words, their own modes of production. These characteristics appear to have similarities with Jameson's vision described as follows:

> "... the substitute for a disappearing working class, makes the new micropolitics available for more obscene celebrations of contemporary capitalist pluralism and democracy: the system congratulating itself for producing ever greater quantities of structurally unemployable subjects."
>
> (1991: 320)

> "Ultimately, the postmodernist attempt to valorize the feelings of diversity, limitlessness and evanescence that accompany the disembedding of human subjects from their established forms of community and recognition, is understood as a determination to have done with the political antagonism of the mode of production."
>
> (Jameson 1991 as cited in Abbinnett 2003: 44 - 45)

Self-determination is a way for them to confront their position in the market without any absolute capital power above them as has been suggested by Jameson as well:

> "It is within the possibilities of late capitalism that people glimpse 'the main chance', 'go for it', make money and reorganize firms in new ways (just like artists or generals, ideologists or gallery owners)."
>
> (1991: 408)

Although they do not prefer to be attached to a certain traditional institution, they can enter the market through various commissioned projects. At the same time, they are also involved in the less profitable industry, which is the art industry, as artists who produce personal works.

Through this study, I hypothesize that there is a link between attitude of assigning an autonomy toward the art media and the political and economic context in postmodernity, since the concept of autonomy is related to a power position in the political hegemony of a certain discourse. This hypothesis is based on an assumption that if an illustrator works mostly on personal projects, he/she is more capable of receiving an autonomous energy of him/herself and the art media. Art media, including hands and the tools, are the extension of human being's ability to create a creative output (Sofaer 2007: 2). Therefore, it is related to the autonomous attitude of the owners. Jane Bennett has noted that the *thing-power*, in this case is how an art medium channels its striking awareness, is a game of human power (2010: 17). Marc Redfield added that *technic* (the practical skill and knowledges) is an expression of the domination of human beings to the material world. Accordingly, the perception of autonomy in the mode of production is more possible in the context of personal projects because an artist will have more opportunities to mediate the ability of his/her art media.

Observing the variety of answers from the illustrators, it is apparently difficult to confirm that hypothesis. Moreover, there are several similar statements on the attitudes toward a medium in commercial and non-commercial contexts. In order to gain a depiction of it, the following paragraphs will conclude all of the artists' attitudes divided between the commercial context and the personal project context.

Above all the illustrators, Lala Bohang, Marishka Soekarna and Ruth Marbun admitted that they worked mostly on personal projects with a portion of either 60:40 or 70:30 compared to commercial projects. The similarities between them are not only on the project proportion, but also on how they have similar attitudes toward the art media which are the hands (Marbun and Bohang), the material medium (Marbun) and the sensible non-material medium

(Bohang and Soekarna). Based on Marbun's confession, she mostly "lets the watercolor doing the job". To her hands, she acts similarly, and she clearly stated that she really "trusted" her hands while working. The attitude of trusting the working hands was also shown by Bohang. Furthermore, she stated that it was the brain that should collaborate with the hands, not vice versa, not both-sided. For her, the brain should consciously feel the need in collaborating with the hands since the hands are more creative than the brains, as she perceives. In terms of a sensible non-material medium, Bohang highly favors the color black to express her signature style of black and white drawings. Although she works with other colors too, black is still her artworks' dominant visual appearance. In her opinion, the unlayered and seen-as-it-is visual characteristics of the color black represent an honesty in which she believes that she has found her own origin of creative ability. Soekarna also gives a dominant meaning to her sensible non-material medium which is the naively odd shapes. However, her perception is more about the freedom of creation, rather than finding her originality, since her naive shapes express an independence from a reality postulate. In this case, the watercolor and the signature styles (the line and the shape) represent a perception of autonomy in a different context.

Regarding the context of commercial projects, I observed three illustrators who work mostly on client-based projects with a proportion of 60:40 compared to personal projects: Monica Hapsari, Sanchia Hamidjaja and Ykha Amelz. Apart from that, although all of them feel that their media provoke an autonomous power, they have different attitudes in responding to it. Hapsari embraces the autotelic perception of her body. Moreover, to decide if she is finished with an artwork, she depends on her hesitant body movement as a signal that her artwork is done. She also highly appreciates the way watercolor "works", similarly to Marbun. Unlike them, Hamidjaja respects the creativity of her hands, but still considers the role of the brain as a

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knowledge recorder. In terms of the material media, she does not set any fixed preference, but chooses a particular medium based on tactical and practical reasons. However, she appreciates the power of signification in the color black as an expression of a firm statement in the artwork, similarly to Bohang. The third illustrator, Amelz shows the tendency to be independent by producing fluid and flowy lines as her signature styles. The lines keep her away from the decision on where to stop. These illustrators show various perceptions that describe how a medium is able to outstep its practical function. However, Hamidjaja's preference of material medium is based on technical reasons. Also, she showed a balanced perception toward both the hands and the brain.

Apparently, the illustrators who work more on commissioned projects expresses a similar perception with the others who work more on personal projects, toward the autonomy of themselves and their media. Not only that, the way they work with a particular art medium is expressed in an erratic system with a nonspecific method. This is reflected by the way Hapsari, Marbun and Taufik working with watercolor, although Taufik works on a balance portion of personal and client's projects. Based on the interviews, they prefer not to have initial clear plans for the first step when working on an artwork. Their preferred style of working resembles a schizophrenic manner in postmodernity where there is no exact pattern in the process of creative production and no particular sequences in the production steps.

In addition, during the interview, both personal project based and client-based illustrators described how they positioned themselves in the mode of production of the commissioned projects.

> "I had some experiences where the client asked me to draw something based on their reference, but that reference was way different from what I usually do. So, I rejected the project. I am not that mastery, I cannot just change my style directly.

My skill is limited. But, my limited ability is a kind of gift to me. Since it is limited, I can easily prospect my signature style… The first time I received quite many illustration projects, there were some clients directly requested various requirements. But, I already stated that I was not capable (to meet their requirements), I was not interested. I think that is my idealistic side. I also apply it even to big clients."

<div align="right">(Monica Hapsari. Personal interview. 4 August 2016)</div>

"I do not mind to take projects that offer different things from what I usually do. For me, it is refreshing, a time to challenge myself."

<div align="right">(Sanchia Hamidjaja. Personal interview. 10 August 2016)</div>

"As time goes by, my illustrations become more acknowledged, and people start to have a trust to hire me. So, nowadays the projects I receive are able to give me a space to feel free in expressing my illustrations. They (the clients) just briefly stated what they expected for the output, and they let me handle the rest. Moreover, sometimes they ask for suggestions."

<div align="right">(Ykha Amelz. Personal interview. 1 August 2016)</div>

Since the day she decided to be an illustrator as her freelance profession, Hapsari has never been hesitant to reject any projects that require different visual styles from what she always does. She is confident with her own signature style of illustration. In contrast, Hamidjaja admitted that she did not feel bothered by that kind of offers since they are a kind of refreshing moment for her. As for Amelz, in the past few years, she confessed that most of her prospective clients had understood her style of drawings well. Speaking about profession, as freelancers, they do not belong to a certain occupational group, but they are indeed involved in the industry. They are attached to clients only for a temporary period of time, and they are not a part of the client's institution. These illustrators' confident statements act as if that institution no longer exists in their professional work. In postmodernity, as Jameson noted, the ruling class becomes less visible in the society and individualism gains more recognition (1991: 342). Similarly, these illustrators feel that they are able to stand for themselves without the necessity to belong to a particular group or institution. To some extent, they are still capable of answering a capital demand through various client-based projects.

Hapsari believes that her stubbornness is what has brought her to working with mostly client-based projects. Being consistent to only what she is able to produce has resulted in the growing number of clients which is focused on her drawing style. She expresses an attitude that she does not need to conform to the market because she prefers to work freely and is doing only what she is capable of. As mentioned in the previous chapter, when she works, she highly embraces the autonomy of watercolor and her body. This attitude is apparently in line with how she is positioning herself in the market. She described that when she was composing a work, she just let the watercolor work by itself and her body decide when the work was finished. She feels as if her body is a separate part from her whole self, but she does not show (including through interview) an act of giving an order to her body. The act of letting go (of the media to work by themselves) signifies that she does not intentionally push the conceptual capability of the media. In other words, she does not intimidate her media, hence her autonomy as an artist can be transferred easily to her separate media: watercolor and her body. To some extent, based on the way she described her relationship with her clients, she also prefers a non-intimidating production mode. It is a context where she can express that she believes in her capability. Accordingly, there is a sense that she avoids other political power beside herself, and her description about it is similar to what Jameson called "political antagonism" (Abbinnett 2003: 44 - 45). Although I do not have the capability of making a judgement, there is sense of reflection in her statement that the political game in the production mode is a something to be avoided.

In contrast, there was an expression of displeasure toward client-based projects stated by Hamidjaja and Amelz. When Hamidjaja was asked on how many commissioned projects she was currently working, she replied:

"The commissioned works are now in a bigger portion than my personal
projects, unfortunately. I do still need some money to earn *(laughing)*."
(Sanchia Hamidjaja. Personal interview. 10 August 2016)

On a continued short interview session via WhatsApp messenger, Amelz also made a statement which is similar to Hamidjaja's (she ended her answer with a sobbing expression *"hiks"* and a laughing *emoji*, which expressed a contradictory feeling). On one hand, she does not feel comfortable with the fact that she works more on commissioned projects (expressed by the sobbing phrase). On the other hand, she feels amused by this reality. Through Skype interview, she further explained this situation where a large number of revisions which often happens in commissioned works tires her the most. In conclusion, their contradictory expressions correspond to the uncomfortable feeling with the higher political position played by the clients, and they lamented their current condition. Being involved in an organized capital mode, although not belonging to a particular labour group, seems to constitute an unideal situation for them.

Unfortunately, it is obvious that some statements made by Amelz show an inconsistency. She confessed that she received a deep understanding from her clients. However, the clients' requirements resulting in a number of revisions have created a feeling of discomfort for her although relatively, she also stated that she was ready to be "tortured" by the clients. Apart from the inconsistency, however, her positive perception toward her client-based works make a good comparison to Hapsari's attitude. Based on their positive perceptions, there is a sense of trust in the illustrator-client relationship. Amelz stated that her clients sometimes asked for creative suggestions for their following projects. In this context, she is given the freedom to speak her mind and use her ability and capacity as the creator of the creative output. In other words, Amelz wanted to describe that she received the freedom from the capital owners. In Hapsari's case, the trust exists not only in the artist-client relationship, but also in the context of

herself and her media. She receives an understanding attitude from her clients, so she is able to express her total capability as she has set her own political position within the mode of commissioned-work production.

Hamidjaja's and Amelz's discomfort and Hapsari's positive attitude toward client-based works signal a reflection of a relative political condition in postmodernity. Although I cannot not empirically argue about the exact condition in the real application of their production process, based on these illustrators' confession, there seems to be a reflection on how difficult it is to define their political position in the production mode. It is a similar characteristic with what Heller and Feher called "a double face" (Heller and Feher 1988: 7 as cited in Smart 1993: 103), which points to the political possibilities that are always available. Not only that, the expression that it is quite unfortunate for them to have more client-based projects rather than personal works, illustrates how their creative ability has been culturalized and fell into the late capitalism realm. Even though Hamidjaja and Amelz did not mention that they would intentionally settle this current condition, their statements portray the will to be adaptive in the market. In this case, these illustrators reflect the characteristics of Jameson's new people who try to repress the political realm in the production mode and are highly flexible in the market.

In a particular condition of a commissioned project, the illustrators' perceptions that clients have a higher political position in the mode of production and require a number of demands which need to be realized do not influence their attitudes that much. It is shown particularly by Muhammad Taufik. As an artist who works on an approximately balanced proportion between commercial and non-commercial projects, he stated that he never felt annoyed by the clients' requirements, including frequent revisions, as stated below:

> "I do not feel bothered if the clients ask a lot of requirements. Although sometimes I feel annoyed with a number of revisions, but my hand is able to just keep drawing."
>
> (Muhammad Taufik. Personal interview. 4 August 2016)

Another illustrator who does not feel bothered too much with working with clients is Ruth Marbun.

> "An interesting part when working for client-based project is that I can do things that I usually do not do when working for my personal works. Sometimes they ask specific things I have never done. But, I will learn. For me, it is more interesting to find a solution in limitation, rather than being given an unlimited freedom. Sometimes, being absolutely free is not comfortable. I think working on a personal project also reflects an act of finding a certain limitation… To some extent, I enjoy working on commercial projects a little bit more. Because sometimes, when working on my own projects, I feel too much freedom, it makes me frustrated on what to express."
>
> (Ruth Marbun. Personal interview. 3 August 2016)

Although the proportions of commercial and non-commercial projects handled by Taufik and Marbun are different, they tend to have similar attitudes toward commercial projects. To some extent, their attitudes reflect what Jameson called "professionalism" (although in more general definition, I believe that all illustrators are professionals in their work) which is an effect of the emergence of the social movement. Professionalism is an ability to be compatible with the "structure of reality" by adjusting to the current necessities, which are perceived as a problem (Jameson 1991: 323). The structure of reality is a condition where the illustrators are facing a higher authority in the mode of production, which are the clients. Based on the illustrators' confessions, "the current necessities" are well-described by all the requirements and demands from the clients that they receive from the clients which, most of the time, are considered as burden. Taufik and Marbun stated a tendency to re-adapt with this burden or problem in order to correspond with the condition of working on a commercial project. Taufik's way of embracing

his hand's autonomy and Marbun's positive perception when working under limitations are their manners expressed to correspond with the situation of working under the authorities' demands.

Is the reflection of professionalism also represented by the practical media users? Based on the interviews with them, Edita Atmaja, Eko Bintang and Angga Cipta do not show the intention to be conceptual in perceiving a medium. They prefer more practical media for commercial purpose in order to meet the deadline and the tight-time requirements. As confessed in the interview, Cipta used to believe that his hand was an essential part in his own production mode. However, he has just recently started to use Wacom tablet a lot, and he now thinks that the gadget has given him a lot of freedom to compose drawings. Each of their decisions reflects the activity of "adjusting to the current necessities" in Jameson's professionalism notion. Furthermore, as Atmaja stated in the interview, one reason she works as a graphic designer in the commercial projects is the fact that the market demand is higher in that field. Her declaration sounds like a contemplation of the power of the market in postmodernity (Jameson 1991: 325, 349). Hence, I conclude that these illustrators have decided not to acquire the conceptual material capacity of their art media more than their practical context because in order to meet the market, they think about media that can meet the technical needs.

Although these illustrators work as freelancers, some of them also belong to particular art agencies. For example, Muhammad Taufik was registered in Fabula (although the agency has been absent for about a year and a half when the interview was held), and Ykha Amelz is represented by Verve. Below is Taufik's response when he was asked why he needed an art agency although he was already established.

> "I needed Fabula to handle projects with big brands with bigger
> responsibilities. Most of the time, it took a very complicated administration process,
> and it was where Fabula took a role. So, I did not need to feel unconfident during

the pitching process. It was for a standardization. So, illustrators could have a strong bargaining power, so we can be in that position and are not always considered only as hard-skill workers."

"I have to admit that we (illustrators) have a low bargaining power, especially if we work individually. There are several big projects which have a good flexibility in requirements, but it is not always there. I am probably already established in this industry, but it is a different case when I am facing the clients who are the business owners because they own the capital. We might think that a thing is good, but for them, it is a cost."

(Muhammad Taufik. Personal interview. 4 August 2016)

Taufik mentioned two reasons behind his decision to join an art agency: (1) to handle the administrative parts and (2) to help the pitching process. Based on his description, he apparently has experienced an uncertain political position in the hegemony of the industry, and according to him, the capital is a major factor behind this condition. In other circumstances, Ykha Amelz confessed a similar opinion to Taufik, as follows:

"I feel that the demands in commercial works are really difficult, especially if it is from clients mediate by the agency. Clients are the second party, but they are the most powerful side. So, it is more difficult."

(Ykha Amelz. Personal interview. 1 August 2016)

Based on her statement in the interview, it seems like she is repressed by the demands. According to the fact that Amelz has more client-based projects than personal works, it appears that she still expresses a perception of being unfortunate in facing her current production mode. Previously, both illustrators made the statements that they felt autonomous in regards to their media and perceives to have freedom in working for commercial projects. However, they later stated that it was difficult not to receive an independence in their production mode of commercial projects. Again, both illustrators' descriptions portray a relative and uncertain political condition in postmodern production. Moreover, the absolute power of the clients is perceived as a difficult thing, so they need(ed) the role of the agencies. This condition is a

reminder of Jameson's view that the profit motive behind the private enterprise cannot be challenged on a local level (1991: 330).

If there is a chance that some of the illustrators have difficulties in raising their "bargaining power" in the market, does the feeling that they are endowed with a high political position in the production mode really exist, as Hapsari has described previously? It is impossible to prove the reality only based on these illustrators' statements however, the liberation of the political realm in the production mode is a postmodern "prophetic faith" (Jameson 1984, 1991: 61). Furthermore, Jameson has defined that semiautonomy (between the illustrators and the clients) is impossible to survive due to the domination of the capitalism (1984, 1991: 48). Taufik's and Amelz's statements somehow pictures this condition since they uttered the importance to collaborate with art agencies due to the belief that it is difficult to determine their own production mode in the market.

To sum up, based on what these illustrators described in the interview, there are some of their experiences that reflect a small part of Jameson's new social movement. They stated that they recognized the non-existence of the ruling class and were able to adapt to professionalism's current necessities. They also expressed various affirmations which reflected a feeling of discomfort with a higher political realm (the clients), as well as a hope and a trial to change, or even depoliticize the reality. This part also portrays Jameson's description of the postmodernist characteristics although he further mentioned that those hopes were impossible to be realized (1984, 1991: 48).

6. Conclusion

Initially, this research was motivated by an interest to observe the relationship between art-related objects and human beings based on the studies of material culture. In the introductory chapter, I mentioned several previous studies disclosing the topic. The fact that none of them has taken an illustrator as the study case has drawn my eagerness to take the profession into the highlight of this research. I decided to limit the study to only interviewing Jakarta-based illustrators aged between 27 - 37 years old in order to be focused. There were various reasons why I took Jakarta-based illustrators as the main data source. It was not only due to the fact that Jakarta is my original hometown, but also because recently Indonesian government has produced an official blueprint for a global step to expand the art and creative industry in Indonesia. Based on the interests above, this research aimed at answering the following research question: how does the illustrators' attitudes toward their art media correspondingly reflect their ideas about political and economic dimension in postmodernity?

In the next chapter, I took material culture studies, especially theories about objects and things, as one of the theoretical frameworks. Meanwhile, an observation of the artists' conceptual perception during their production processes from different eras have given a historical perspective that it is possible to relate this study to the current era. Furthermore, Jameson's insight on a new social movement in postmodernity was used as a reflection on how that notion could probably exist in the discourse of art. Finally, by using a text analysis based on Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis as the method, a deeper and conceptual observation of the interviews as the main data source of the research could be attained.

The summary of the illustrators' interviews was revealed in Chapter 3. The illustrators were asked questions that were mostly related to their working attitudes toward their art media and the economic intention in the on-progress artworks.

In Chapter 4, the analysis was divided into four parts. The first part consisted of two different perceptions of the art media: conceptual and practical. The second part observed the artists' perceptions toward their bodies and limbs as media to produce artworks. After that, the non-material sensible media (Davies 2009) were analyzed based on how the artists perceived the media during the production process. Lastly, the final part discussed all of those perceptions and their connection to the economic intention of each illustrator. Furthermore, inspired by Jameson's notion of postmodernity, Chapter 5 looked deeply into the illustrators' interviews to observe the philosophical tendencies behind their expressed attitudes.

In the last two chapters, the term "autonomy" has been used a couple of times. In Chapter 4, in the discourse of the art medium, the idea of autonomy was described by the illustrators as the freedom to do the work by putting trust to the material capability of non-human elements (e.g. the hands and watercolor) and by not being under their human conscious will (as represented by the brain). Some of them also defined autonomy as a work process without a clear and exact initial concept, as stated by Ruth Marbun and Muhammad Taufik. These illustrators have assigned a context of autonomy to their media, resulting in a belief that the hands, the coloring equipment and the sensible non-material media are separate from their own-self and can be active by itself. There was a sense that these illustrators had lost their whole-artist autonomy since they had "given" it to the separate media, then was it still considered an autonomy? I argued that losing and giving an autonomy reflected an ability to be autonomous in deciding how to express the conceptual material capability of both their media and their whole artist-selves.

As stated in Chapter 5, the illustrators who have more client-based projects expressed a similar concept of autonomy in their production mode. They showed the tendency to ignore prospective-clients who asked them to manage works outside their comfort zones. These illustrators represented an attitude of avoiding burdening requirements of the clients who have a higher political position. The decision to avoid such clients' requirements was a way to show their autonomy as an artist. Hence, in this context, an autonomy in the production mode was represented by an attitude of ignoring "the bureaucracy society", "the ruling class" and everything that was related to it.

I have previously mentioned that my hypothesis, that those who work more on commercial projects should not receive much freedom compared to those who do more personal projects since there should be various client-controlled requirements did not match the analysis result in Chapter 4. In addition, the illustrators with a dominant project number from clients, who perceive that they can "give" an autonomy to separate media, also stated that they received the freedom from the clients to work with their own production mode. In other words, the perception about the autonomous media and the feeling of being autonomous in the clients' production mode apparently exists in the awareness of the illustrators. I argued that the contrasting result between my initial hypothesis and the latter analysis was derived from the fact that these illustrators mostly worked in a casual, non-specific methodological and erratic way which has been acknowledged as an ordinary condition in the creative process by both the illustrators and other parties that work together with them (including the clients). This unsystematic way of working reflects Jameson's postmodern schizophrenia where there are no particular orders in the language practice (in this case is the practice in producing arts). Various statements from the

illustrators representing those styles of work were described by Taufik's and Marbun's unplanned concept, as well as Hapsari's and Marbun's spontaneous working attitude.

The idea that these illustrators receive a freedom from the clients has created an understanding between themselves that as an individual, it is possible to be free from the ruling party (Jameson 1991: 342). Moreover, some of them, especially Monica Hapsari, expressed the idea of avoiding the political bureaucratic parties, who were the clients offering non-familiar drawing styles requirements. Therefore, a perception of autonomy within the art media reflects an autonomous attitude in the production mode of commercial projects, and this also represents a similarity with Jameson's new social movement in postmodernity. Because, in the case of personal projects the illustrators believe in the same notion of art medium autonomy, they admitted that they sought a respect in individual opportunities by not joining a particular institution and this characteristic is also similar to that of "the new people".

However, I suggest we do not draw a conclusion that these illustrators truly receive such autonomy in the client-based projects in reality, not only because the analysis was only based on the illustrators' interviews, but also because there was a possibility that their perception was merely utopian. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, the liberation of the political realm in the production mode is a postmodern "prophetic faith" (Jameson 1984, 1991: 61). Accordingly, it is possible that the illustrators perceive their autonomy in the production mode with the higher political authority (the client) as something uncertain and vague although they have practiced the concept of autonomous media (especially in the case of Taufik's watercolor and hand, and Amelz' fluid lines). This belief had led them to a decision to join an art agency in order to gain a bargaining power, as claimed by Taufik.

In the case of a preference of a practical medium, I did not find any concept of autonomy mentioned by the illustrators who are involved in this context (Eko Bintang, Sanchia Hamidjaja, Edita Atmaja and Angga Cipta). The most interesting finding in this case is that most of these illustrators work more on commercial projects (except Cipta who has a balance work proportion with personal projects). In addition, their attitudes toward the clients are similar to the client-based illustrators who perceive the concept of an autonomous medium (Ykha Amelz and Monica Hapsari). The difference is that in the instance of the client-based illustrators who perceive an autonomous medium, they avoided clients with high requirements. In the case of the client-based illustrators with the preference of practical media, their decisions are not based on an avoidance attitude, but due to the fact that they have placed themselves to be fit in the market. Accordingly, in this case, their attitudes reflect the characteristic of professionalism in the new social movement which means was adjusting to the current necessities (Jameson 1991: 323). The decision to adjust is supported by various indispensable-based reasons, such as to meet the deadlines and to fulfill the tight-time requirements.

Indeed, the result of the analysis in Chapter 4 and 5 is not as simple as I hypothesized. I pre-suggested that there was a correlation between the autonomous perception of the art media and how these illustrators perceived their political and economic position in the mode of production. A theoretical framework of material culture studies and a historical knowledge about the previous studies have contributed to the emergence of an understanding in the autonomous medium perception among these illustrators. The correlation apparently exists, but it is not as simple as it was only one dimension as I explained in the previous paragraph. In fact, the most provoking finding is that some of the illustrators who dominantly work on client-based projects expressed the perception of autonomous medium, and at the same time, were also

aware of their autonomous position in the mode of production (although it is arguable since it was only based on one party, whereas a production mode ideally involves a number of parties). Thus, it is surprising that they can gain such perception that is similar to one which belongs to the illustrators who dominantly work on personal projects. No matter which projects are more dominant, these illustrators are all untied to any institutions, organizations and corporations, so in other words, they are already accustomed working by themselves and defining their own political position in the mode of production.

I have mentioned several times that the conclusion drawn from this study should not be used as a reference that these illustrators' attitudes *are* the reflection of Jameson's postmodern people. The reason is because the main data of this research was based only on the perceptions expressed by the illustrators on the interview. Therefore, further study related to this topic should include cunducting a field study on site besides interviews. Field study will enable the researchers to observe the artist' production mode closely, thus the human-object perception can be reflected through the production practices.

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Appendices

A. <u>The illustrators' artworks</u>
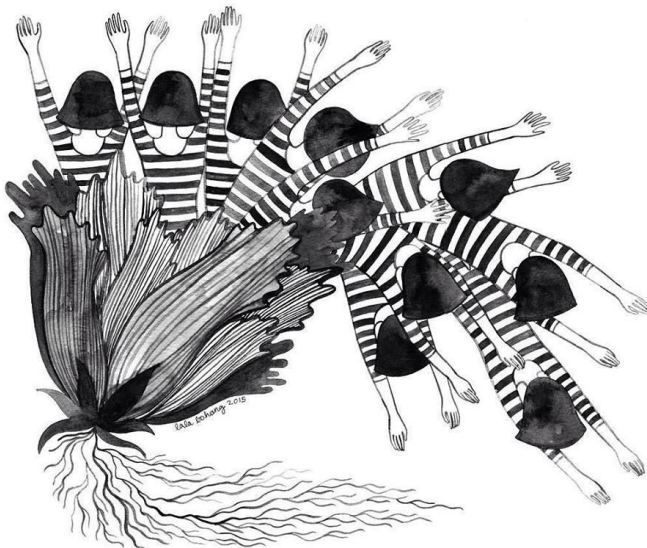

Angga Cipta
Image source: Instagram

Edita Atmaja
"Sans Titre"
Image source: Instagram

Eko Bintang
Image source: Instagram

Lala Bohang
"Fiona Apple emotion covered with Rihanna attitude"
Image source: Facebook

Marishka Soekarna
Mural
Image source: www.sonsbeek.org

Monica Hapsari
An illustration for Elle Indonesia Magazine
Image source: Instagram

Muhammad Taufik
"Menunggu Perayaan" (Waiting for the Celebration)
Watercolor on paper
Image source: www.kopikeliling.com

Ruth Marbun
"Heaven is closed on Mondays"
Artwork prints
Image source: Instagram

Sanchia Hamidjaja
Brush pen & watercolor on paper
Image source: Instagram

Ykha Amelz
An illustration for Frank & Co. Jewelry
Image source: Instagram

B. The interviews (in Bahasa Indonesia, unedited)

Angga Cipta, 2 August 2016. Skype phone call
Selain freelance, apa aja kegiatan sekarang? Masih di ruru radio?
Iya, ruru artlab, ruru radio juga, dan cut & rescue.
ruru artlab sebagai seniman, ruru radio sebagai penyiar dan desainer untuk acara yang butuh desain poster, dan sempat di ruru gallery untuk satu tahun tapi berganti-gantian dengan desainer lain.

Untuk pekerjaan *commissioned,* apakah ditawarkan berkat koneksi sendiri atau karena tergabung di ruru?
Dari dua-duanya. 50-50 dari ruru dan sendiri, juga dari teman-teman di kampus.

Kalau commissioned, scoop kerjanya apa aja?
Graphic designer, motion graphic. Porsi 50:50 motion dan design

Kalau klien yang datang sendiri, mereka datang karena sudah tahu style atau mereka masih banyak yang meminta macam-macam?
Ada juga sih yang datang dapat rekomendasi dari orang tapi tidak tahu background saya. Tapi sedikit, cuma 20%, rata-rata sudah tahu style. Yang terakhir buat ilustrasi merchandise buat band, mereka datang juga karena sudah tahu style.

Sekarang medium yang Anda pakai apa aaja dan bagaimana akhirnya bisa cocok dan tetap di medium ini?
Kalau dari awal sebenarnya skill gambar saya tidak jago sekali, dan yang seperti saya bilang kalau saya lebih suka compose and trace. Awalnya pakai pensil, jadi gambarnya sudah saya compose dulu di Photoshop, lalu sktech sambil lihat di layar, lalu ditebalkan pakai spidol. Tapi sekarang pakai Wacom tab. Itu gadget, tablet buat gambar.

Berarti prefer gambar digital dibanding tangan?
Iya krn berpikir efisiensi. Dulu merasakan sentuhan tangan karena itu sebenarnya yang jadi esensi gambar saya. Akhirnya, dapat rekomendai wacom, awalnya tidak yakin. Baru 1-2 tahun pakai Wacom, setelah sudah lancar. Adaptasi lumayan lama. Sekarang benar-benar bisa mendapetkan ekspresi yang tadinya dihasilkan dari tangan, skrg bisa dapet di digital. Ekspresinya sudah sama, semacam kontrol stroke sudah bisa.

Apakah alasannya benar-benar karena efisiensi?
Iya, efisiensi dan setelah pakai itu, ada merasa lebih leluasa untuk compose, lebih ada dan besar. Misalnya baru dapat gambar, compose, udah jadi, udah gambar ulang juga. Bisa suka-suka, kalau merasa kurang pas dan ingin tambah gambar lagi sangat memungkinkan kalau digital. Apa yang tidak bisa manual, lebih dapat dari digital.

Merasa jadi kreatif/bebas di digital atau sebenarnya sama saja dengan manual?
Lebih banyak hal teknis, misal deadline mepet. Karena efisien dan secara waktu dia cepat sekali karena tinggal langsung ikuti gambar saja.

Karena dominan digital, apakah percaya kalau tangan bisa bekerja sendiri?
Percaya juga tapi itu berlaku buat "mereka" punya skill gambar tinggi, yang memang areanya gambar. Kalo saya lebih lihat 1 scene di jalan, misal kejadian di jalan, ada lampu merah, ada pedangan asongan, ada motor yang bentrok. Lebih kuat untuk capture keseharian.

Pengalaman dengan medium baru?
Ada tapi field-nya masih sama, misalnya mural, dengan sangat gampang dilakukan karena ada bantuan proyektor.

Jadi sekarang sudah tidak ada sentuhan tangan?
Tidak.

Bagaimana tahu karya uda selese?
Lebih seringnya intuitif. Kadang karena komposisinya sudah penuh penuh, kadang hanya 1 objek tap sudah selesai. Prosesnya dari bangun mood, entah nonton film atau mendengerkan lagu atau tidur. Dalam 1 proses kerja itu semua selesai. Jarang break dulu lalu besok lanjut lagi karena nanti akan berasa beda lagi.

Pernah atau tidak, proyek komersial, klien minta gambar di luar style? Untuk saat ini, tetep diambil atau berusaha meyakinkan klien atau kasih ke illustrator lain?
Tergantung, kalo masih bisa saya kerjakan, ya diambil. Misalnya, klien sudah saya kenal dari lama dan saya pun pernah pengalaman sama digital art. Kadang muncul lagi permintaan seperti itu. Diambil karena dulunya adalah mainan lama.

Pernah tidak mengerjakan proyek klien yang tuntutannya membuat feel sama karya ilang?
Pernah, salah satunya ilustrasi & topografi. Lebih ke layout, beberapa kali revisi, kekuatan gambar jd hilang karena layout. Ada juga karena miss di berita awal. Saat dibuat ternyata bersinggungan dengan hal-hal sensitif.

Merasa opportuniti di Jakarta besar padahal ada saingan banyak?
Untuk sekarang iya kesempatan masih besar karena kebutuhan industri masih besar. Dapat cerita dari seniman luar Jakarta kalau kliennya pun banyak dari Jakarta.

Edita Atmaja, 9 August, Skype video call
Sejak kapan tertarik menjadi ilustrator?
Merasa kurang legit dipanggil ilustrator karena jarang ilustrasi utk kepentingan komersil. Jadi lebih banyak gambar untuk kepentingan pameran dan seni kontemporer.

Kalau gambar tangan lebih ke personal work ya?
Lebih ke personal work.

Medium andalan?
Drawing pen.

Alasan?

Sempat mencoba-coba tapi yang paling mengakomodasi hal yang diinginkan, yaitu drawing pen. Karena banyak gambar botanical dan pakai pen bisa achieve detail yang paling ok. Bisa overall look-nya clean.

Kenapa prefer look clean?
Karena yang menarik dari gambar botanical adalah detail. Untuk lihat detail, surrounding harus clean. Makanya, pakai pen yang point-nya kecil.

Maksudnya clean?
Garis-garisnya kelihatan jelas.

Kalau mewarnai pakai pen juga?
Pernah juga gambar pen warna merah dan biru. Selain itu, pakai silk screen. Pernah juga etching, tp tetep 1 warna.

Mengapa banyak gambar botanical?
Pertamanya karena interest sama tekstur dan shape. Karena bentuknya aneh, menurut saya itu seru menggambar itu. Intrigue sama alam yang deep and wild dan asing. Apalagi tinggal di Jakarta yang sehari-hari tidak banyak lihat tanaman unik. Dan saya baca kalau spesies yang sudah di-list hanya 13% jadi masih banyak sekali di luar sana yang belum ditemukan. Alam misterius sekali, makanya tertarik.

Apakah percaya jika tangan bisa bergerak sendiri tanpa pikiran (otak)?
Kalo yang saya tahu gerak tangan basically dari otak. Anggap apa yang saya kerjakan selalu dari otak walau tangan bisa membuat banyak hal.

Bagaimana Anda tahu sudah selesai dengan karya?
Perasaan sudah nih. Kalau tidak dengan perasaan, ya karena deadline. Kalau deadline masih jauh, susah sih, ada rasa ingin menambahkan.

Sebagai graphic designer kan terbiasa digital, kenapa personal work Anda pakai tangan? Apa beda esensinya?
Suka proses gambar pakai tangan, beda sama klik-klik komputer. Saya suka dengan handmade, Suka dengan result handmade yang beda dengan digital yang perfect. Kalau handmade, end result tidak bisa se-perfect apa pun. Mungkin itu yang membuat saya suka dengan result handmade. Handmade bisa tidak seperti yang dipikirkan, maka tidak perfect. Yang tidak perfect itu surprising.

Karya komersial pernah dikerjakan dengan tangan?
Komersial selalu sebagai graphic designer karena demand-nya lebih besar. Pernah juga klien meminta ilustrasi, seperti untuk mural dan baju.

Bagaimana approach ke medium baru, misal mural, selain penyesuaian bidang besar?
Tidak bisa pakai teknik yang sama yang dipakai di kertas. Otomatis berubah juga style gambarnya.

Style gambar berubah bagaimana?

Jadi beda eksplorasi, feeling-nya beda. Kalau di atas kertas cenderung rapi karena beda teknik, bisa take my time. Kalau mural jadi lebih spontaneous, pengerjaan pun harus lebih cepat.

Porsi proyek komersial dan non-komersial?
Kommercial and non sekita 50:50 or 60:40. Kebanyakan graphic design utk komersial, banyak digital.

Kalau sebagai graphic designer, adakah style sendiri?
Sometimes tergantung permintaan. Kalau dibebaskan, pakai gaya sendiri yang simpel dan clean. Tapi sometimes banyak permintaan juga.

Eko Bintang, 4 August 2016, WhatsApp phone call
Medium andalan apa saja?
Saya comfort dengan akrilik on wood. For no reason, ngga suka sama canvas. Comfort di wood karena dulu suka mengerjakan tugas di sekolah. Wood bisa cut out, jadi tidak pakai background. Jadi ilustrasi dipotong. Manualnya di situ.

Awalnya cocok di medium ini? Sempat mencoba medium lain?
Pernah coba-coba karena jaman dulu kalau tugas-tugas pakai medium macam-macam. Awalnya ke kayu karena dekorasi. Kayu tidak intimidating. Ada grain jadi suka, the fact that brush bisa diclap lagi.

Intimidating maksudnya?
Intimidating karena "ini uda kanvas". Kalo kayu awalnya dr sisa-sisa, menemukan tidak sengaja, dicoba lalu jadikan wood panel.

Bagaimana menemukan medium kayu?
Praktisnya, kayu beli di toko material atau bekas bongkaran (walaupun belum terlalu explore kecuali untuk eksperimen). Kalau karya pakai yang baru. Saya suka dengan nostalgic feeling, old-found stuff. Bisanya saya distressed, gambar ditiban-tiban lagi, lalu diwarnai.

Pemilihan teknik seperti itu awalnya bagaimana?
Karena personal preference. Waktu kecil suka ambil figurine ibu yang sudah tidak terpakai, misalnya yang tangannya patah, tapi saya simpan. Cari yang sudah tidak sempurna di toko loak. Suka sama distress feeling, rustic. Saya juga mengisi studio dengan hal-hal seperti itu. Unintentionally juga. Sukanya warm color, tidak suka yang vibrant. Kayu sendiri karena based-nya sudah cokelat.

Apakah memakai kayu buat komersial?
Memang suka di kayu, tapi tidak pakai di komersial karena tidak praktikal. Komersial pakai digital, brush preference-nya yang disuka yang ditemukan di kayu, ada "ngelotek"-nya.

Medium komersial?
Jujur digital.

Percaya sama persepsi tangan bergerak sendiri ketika menggambar?

Terus terang tidak percaya dengan "let the brush flow". Tidak pernah approach teknik seperti itu. Mungkin karena background graphic design. Proses berkarya saya: beberapa sketch disortir, lalu "yang ini saja deh jadi karya". Jadi approach-nya tidak terlalu organik.

Bagaimana tahu karya sudah selesai?
Kendala sekarang karena merasa kurang produktif dan kebanyakan kerja. Baru sadar untuk meluangkan waktu berkarya. Yang saya sadari karena jarang membuat karya ya itu, tahu karya sudah selesai atau belum. Jadinya explore, berputar-putar, selama sampai bilang "sudah ah" berarti tidak akan selesai.
So far, yang membuat stop adalah deadline, misalnya akan pameran, harus submit commissioned work segera. Beberapa tahun agak mengecilkan porsi commercial, biar membuat apa yang saya mau.

Permintaan klien yang menuntut apakah masih ada?
Masih sekali, ada beberapa di media yang minta lagi untuk fashion ilustrasi. Dulu masih approach-nya seperti. Kalau sekarang, kirim reference di runway. Lalu ada juga request, sudah bilang tidak biasa membuat, tapi tetap terus bermunculan.

Yang seperti itu tetap diambil atau tidak?
Lebih baik tidak sama sekali karena tidak worth smuanya. Sisi komersial tidak worth, self fullfilment juga tidak.

Mengapa langsung memutuskan berkarya di Jakarta, tidak coba tempat lain?
Sebenarnya kesempatan yang diambil bukan dari yang datang tapi yang dikejar, jadi saya merasa pasif. Makanya sekarang saya mulai aktif lagi, supaya bisa di platform yang lain. Di Indonesia, memang specifik di Jakarta. Karena sudah tahu klien based-nya itu, media publication-nya sudah ketakar.

Lala Bohang, 29 May 2016, Google Hangout video call
Bagaimana pertama kali come up dengan medium yang sekarang?
Kalau gambar sudah dari kecil sekali, dari TK sampaei serius, yaitu tahun 2009, sudah mencoba semua medium yang orang biasa pakai gambar, misalnya pensil warna, crayon, cat minyak, cat air, spidol, you name it. Pernah juga menggambar sangat full color. Kesukaan hitam-putih dari tinta cina muncul karena waktu SMA dan kuliah sempat vakum gambar. Setelah kuliah, lalu kerja, Cuma sesekali gambar, tapi cuma main-main. Bosan kerja, lalu mau gambar karena tidak pernah bosan. Pas awal mencoba gambar lagi pakai digital karena orang semakin tua semakin malas.
2008 mulai buat outline digital di Photoshop. Pakai spidol hitam biasa, pakai metode sewaktu masih kecil, di-scan lalu diwarnai di Photoshop. Sempat seperti itu lama. Lalu ada fase di mana hanya pakai 3 warna: hitam, merah, abu-abu. Lalu pada 1 titik merasa muak dengan komputer karena masih berkantor dan pakai komputer terus. Awalnya gambar pakai drawing pen karena cuma ada warna hitam jadinya terlihat lucu, lugas, tidak banyak tedeng aling-aling, to the point. Lalu gara-gara lihat seniman luar, Ruben Toledo dr NY, buat gambar hitam-putih dari skala kecil sampai besar. Melihatnya seperti hidup sekali hanya dari 2 warna. Lalu coba cari tahu, menemukan tinta cina. Mencoba lalu suka.

Bagaimana tahu kalau fit sama style? Which comes first?

Lebih kenyaman dengan hitam-putih, suka nuansa, to the point, tidak ada layer lagi. Walau awalnya suka tinta cina, sekarang jadi coba watercolor dan suka, charcoal, akrilik on canvas juga. Tapi menemukan kenyamananya di hitam-putih.

Kalau kertas dan kanvas ada beda rasa?
Kanvas dan kertas sama kecuali ukurannya besar. Kalau personal ketakutannya karena skala, misalnya mural pressure-nya besar sekali. Awal-awal coba di kanvas, besar juga lihatnya, waktu itu dengan acrylic dan charcoal. Agak parno karena permukannya beda sama kertas karena kain. Permukaannya tidak halus. Tapi ketika menemukan celah, nyaman lagi. Jadi yang membuat ngeri adalah skala.

Ada beda perasaan dengan medium lain?
Sama saja. Sudah tidak takut ganti-ganti lagi karena sudah pernah mencoba pakai semua. Jadi gambar saya lebih rich kalau dicampur semua. Karena tahu kalau gradasi atau cair yang tidak blok bisa pakai watercolor, untuk guratan pakai charcoal.

Anda pernah bilang tangan ada otaknya sendiri, apakah maksudnya?
Tangan kan diperintah otak. Tapi misalnya ada di pikiran ada image, dieksekusi, saat eksekusi bisa lebih bisa kurang tapi selalu lebih bagus. Ketika otak bekerja dengan motorik tangan karena tangan bergerak. Tinta hanya tools untuk menyampaikan bentuk.

Bagaimana dengan klien?
Awal-awal mulai jadi ilustrator masih menjadi kacung kampret, misalnya buat cover buku. Seiring berjalan waktu, biasanya sekarang klien dapat refesensi dari karya saya sebelumnya, bukan dari referensi lain.

Setelah berapa tahun dapat klien yang cocok?
Mulai di akhir 2012. Tapi karena di awal-awal jadi kacung, tidak tahan. Lalu berpikir tidak bisa jadi orang yang disuruh-suruh yang hanya buat uang. Lebih baik kerja saja deh, jadi ada penghasilan tapi bisa pilih sendiri proyek yang fit in, tidak dipaksa keluar dari diri, itu pilihan juga. Dan ternyata attitude itu yang buat client jadi sadar, kalo hire ilustrator yang sudah punya kekhasan/style yang disukai, kalau hire lihat dari karya sebelumnya, atau kasih referensi yang dekat. Kalau orang creative, kalo di-brief dengan kaku, dikungkung, hasilnya malah jelek. Karena merasa tidak bisa mengekspresikan dirinya.

Literally dibebasin sekarang?
Iya, contoh Giordano. Dikasi tema: Bunaken dan Jakarta, terserah saya seperti apa.

Pengalaman di medium baru?
Di Galeri Nasional membuat pameran tentang buku.

Caranya menyesuaikan medium baru?
Awal ketakutan karena tidak gambar, belum ada pengalaman tapi ada comfort zone, harus ada kejujuran, ada di kepala tidak dibuat-buat. Jadi, lama-kelamaan medium itu jadi alat juga untuk saya mau cerita apa. Berusaha buat karya yang organik karena buat karya tidak bohong, apa yang ada di otak karena terpikirkan.

Hal seperti itu bisa diaplikasikan ke semua pekerjaan, termasuk klien?
Untuk comissioned, dulu sempat sudah malas, inginnya bekerja saja di Arbor & Troy dan fokus berkarya. Tapi setelah berpikir, sebenarnya comissioned bagus juga, selain dapat uang dari hal yang saya suka, bayangkan betapa beruntungnya. Bisa dijadikan personal asal saat mengerjakan, mindset-nya tetap "ini karya saya", ada rasa memiliki. Sangat membantu. Sebelum itu, stress dan malas. Ternyata semua itu dari mindset. Jadi commissioned tidak buruk, asal komunikasi enak, bisa jadi proses belajar, buka kesempatan lain-lain. Berpameran ternyata sama dengan commissioned, banyak hal yang sama, budget, komunikasi, bagaimana memperlakukan orang.

<u>Marishka Soekarna, 7 August 2016, Email</u>
Bisa tolong deskripsikan medium-medium yang biasa Anda gunakan?
Medium yang saya gunakan variatif, karena saya masih sangat suka untuk bereksperimen dengan banyak media dan saya juga tidak (belum) mau terpatok pada satu media/tehnik yang akhirnya menjadi identifikasi saya sebagai seniman. Tapi tehnik yang biasa atau sering saya gunakan saat ini drawing, painting, kolase dan cetak, mediumnya bisa di kertas, vinyl (semacam decosheet), kain, bisa juga kadang video.

Awalnya bagaimana Anda pertama kali merasa cocok dengan medium tersebut?
Seperti yang tadi saya jawab di atas, saat ini saya masih tidak mau terikat dengan satu macam medium saja, hmmm mungkin bisa dibilang saat ini saya masih menemukan kenikmatan dengan coba sana coba sini, dan belum siap dengan komitmen dengan satu medium YANG sampai akhirnya nanti ada sebutan (misalnya) "seniman cetak", "seniman kolase", "seniman keramik" dll. Karena, saya walaupun saat ini cukup nempel dengan tehnik drawing misalnya, tidak menutup kemungkinan misalnya saya nanti akan membuat keramik, video atau performance art .... misalnya :D Setidaknya itu jawaban saya untuk saat ini. Justru yang ingin saya kuatkan adalah bangun adalah kekuatan dan kekonsistenan di konsep, yang akhirnya cukup mengindetifikasikan saya secara kesenimanan.

Apakah pernah berpikir jika tangan Anda bisa bekerja sendiri tanpa otak?
Menurut ku mungkin ini tergantung dari senimannya, ada seniman yang punya gaya berkarya yang ekspresif, atau bisa dibilang tanpa berpikir cukup panjang untuk menyapu kuas atau menciprat cat di kanvas nya. Ada juga seniman yang terstruktur dengan ada pertimbangan estetika, komposisi, warna, tema, penempatan dan lain-lain. Ada juga seniman yang cukup ekspresif/spontan tapi pun cukup terstruktur. Jadi menurut ku, sejauh tangan bergerak pasti ada keterlibatan otak disitu, sekecil apapun x)

Adakah pengalaman mengerjakan artwork dgn medium baru yg sama sekali belom pernah sebelumnya?
Ada beberapa medium yang memerlukan penyesuaian waktu dalam pelatihan dan pengerjaannya, kalau hanya sekedar mencoba-coba saja tentunya tidak ada menghasilkan sesuatu yang maksimal. Saya sangat percaya dengan ungkapan "practice makes perfect", jadi memang diperlukan konsistensi dan komitmen untuk belajar, berlatih dan mencoba.
Pengalaman mencoba medium baru, pernah waktu mengerjakan karya untuk OkVideo 2015 lalu, walaupun sudah beberapa kali membuat karya video, tapi baru yang karya kemarin ini saya mengerjakan semuanya sendiri, sampaipun akhirnya saya harus belajar mengedit video.

Bisa deskripsikan sebenernya style ilustrasi Anda itu seperti apa? H

mmm iya mungkin memang gaya ku itu sangat feminim, figuratif, surreal, ironis dan kadang naif. Bisa dibilang kecenderungan ini berangkat dari masa kecil. Karena dari kecil saya cukup banyak dikenalkan dengan visual-visual yang surreal (mungkin sangat surreal bagi ku saat kecil), misalnya waktu kecil saya suka banget sama The Beatles, khususnya film "Yellow Submarine", akhirnya membentuk ketertarikan ku terhadap sesuatu yang bizzare dan terbawa dalam pemilihan film yang saya tonton dan musik yang saya dengar. menurutku ini semuanya berkaitan.

Kalau berbicara tarikan garis, bisa dibilang memang tarikan garisku cukup naif. Garis yang saya buat sesuai apa yang saya lihat. misalnya.... tangan itu jarinya lima, mata itu bulat dan oval, dan seterusnya. Jadi memang saya menghindari sesuatu yang realistis. Bagi ku berkarya itu adalah pelarian dari realitas, jadi bisa seliar dan seaneh mungkin.

Bagaimana Anda tau kalau artwork yg sedang dikerjakan sudah selese? Selesai dalam arti it's a wrap, tidak ada yg perlu ditambahkan/dikurangi?
the feeling just there..... :D

Berapa kira-kira persentasi Anda mengerjakan proyek klien (commissioned) dan proyek pribadi?
hmmm commisioned 20% personal 80%

Bagaimana sikap Anda jika ada klien yg meminta artwork di luar style Anda?
hmm... biasanya sih klien yang kuterima memang sudah mempercayakan tugasnya pada ku, jadi memang mereka yang memang menaruh kepercayaan secara estetika kepada saya.

Kalau mengerjakan artwork utk klien tentunya ada requirements yang harus dipenuhi, bagaimana supaya hal ini tidak membebani dan bagaimana Anda sebagai seniman tidak merasa dibatasi kreativitasnya? Termasuk dalam hal pemilihan medium.
Perlu sekali ada nya negosiasi dan sebagai ilustrator harus bisa memberikan keyakinan kepada klien untuk memberikan kepercayaan estetika kepada ilustrator. Namun tetap dari pihak ilustrator tentunya juga harus menghargai ketentuan dari klien yang memang ingin mereka hadirkan pada sebuah ilustrasi. Intinya adalah negosiasi, mencari titik temu dan toleransi. Negosiasi disini diperlukan untuk bisa menjembatani kebebasan berekspesi ilustrator dan materi yang di berikan klien. Kalau memang kita menyadari keprofesian sebagai ilustrator, tidak bisa untuk egois dalam berkarya, karena ada dua pihak atau lebih yang terlibat.

Monica Hapsari, 4 August 2016, WhatsApp phone call
Medium andalan Anda apa saja?
Pensil, cat air, dan bordir

Awalnya bisa cocok dengan ketiganya?
Awalnya dari sebelum kuliah, sudah suka menggambar. Seiring perkembangan, ternyata tidak telalu detail menggambarnya. Jadi butuh media yang ekspresif. Yang hasilnya cepat, berantakan, blecetan, tidak rapi. Terutama cat air dan pensil. Kalau bordir karena kuliah jurusan tekstil. Awalnya mencoba kolase, patchwork, surface/structure design, lalu tertarik dengan bordir.

Yang dimaksud dengan ekspresif?
Kalau cat air sifatnya tidak bisa ditebak, misalnya berencana apa, saat membasahi surface punya jiwa sendiri, terserah larinya dia ke mana. Sebenarnya itu yang buat saya terkejut. Karya yang

cocok bagi saya adalah yang tidak bisa direncanakan. Tidak bisa ditebak, tiba-tiba warnanya blending dan keluar warna baru, atau tiba-tiba warnanya keluar dari outline. Jadi suka yang seperti itu.

Setuju dengan persepsi tangan bisa bekerja sendiri?
Walau orang bekerja beda-beda, saya percaya dengan muscle memory, yang bisa dicapai dengan latihan berates-ratus kali. Seperti kung fu. Anda latihan sampai Anda tidak tahu kalau sebenarnya Anda sedang latihan, jadi akhirnya gerak sendiri kan. Sudah tahap itu yang kerja adalah subconscious. Jadi kadang saya tidak tahu mau pakai warna apa, mau seperti apa. Tapi badannya geraknya ke sini. Fungsi otak hanya menaruh batasan saja. Saya menaruh warna kuning/merah/biru, nanti badan saya sendiri bergerak terserah dia. Prakteknya akan intens jadi mengalir.

Tapi memang percaya tangan dan cat air punya jiwa sendiri ya?
Iya, tapi ada beberapa background yang membuat saya mebordir. Ada disorder psikologis. Salah satunya insomnia. Walau mix diagnosa, sudah cek ke psikiater. Intinya, saat ini, berkarya jadi terapi. Orang berkarya bergantung tujuan, misalnya fame or money. Sekarang ini saya seperti art therapy, jadi lupa semua gejala. Ada meditatif, untuk mengurangi anxiety parah. Makanya mediam juga ada jiwa sendiri.

Bagaimana Anda tahu karya sudah selesai?
Badan tidak mau gerak lagi. Kadang gambar masih raw, masih sketch, tapi sudah tidak mau gerak lagi. Intuitif, tidak terencana. Sudah malas menambahkan.

Bagaimana perasaan Anda jika bertemu medium baru?
Pengalaman bertemu medium baru, yaitu bordir. Terbiasa pakai cat air yang tidak terduga. Akhirnya hasil bordir punya logika cat air. Cat air warnanya cenderung gradasi. Setelah dibordir, dilihat dari jauh seperti cat air.

Porsi proyek yang dikerjakan?
Lebih banyak komersial.

Bagaimana klien yang datang? Langsung mencocokan gaya atau bagaimana?
Dulu banyak yang datang memberi referensi yang jauh dari gaya saya, saya tolak. Saya tidak jago, bukan tipe yang bisa gonta-ganti gaya. Saya terbatas, skill terbatas tapi bisa jadi anugerah. Saking terbatasnya, lebih mudah dapat signature style. Di industri ini, signature penting sekali. Tergantung tujuan, mencari duit dan bisa semua gaya tentu tidak apa-apa. Personally, saya prefer tidak mendapat duit terlalu banyak tapi nyaman mengerjakannya.

Berapa porsi komersal dan non?
Komersil 60:40.

Ada alasan tersendiri banyak komersil?
Saya membedakan karya ilustrasi dan art. Karya idelisme adalah fine art. Jadi tujuannya beda. Kalau komersil adalah ilustrasi yang tujuan awalnya illuminate, mencerahkan orang, lebih pop, sekali lihat sudah tahu. Tapi kalau fine art, harus membuat bahasa baru, berlayer-layer, tujuan dan maksud tertentu, untuk membangunkan conscious sebagai orang/manusia (tuntutan lebih

berat di situ). Ilustrasi lebih terpakai banyak hal, misalnya klien dari fashion. Yang fine art proyeknya sedikit, sekalinya terbeli harganya lebih besar, 1 karya bisa 2-3 klien ketutup.

Mengapa setelah lulus dari Bandung memilih untuk berkarya di Jakarta?
Sebenarnya saya tidak ambisius. Selepas lulus, saya tidak berpikir harus melakukan apa. Sampai Jakarta ketika disuruh pulang oleh orang tua, lalu disuruh bekerja kantoran. Tapi ternyata tidak suka, awalnya hanya berpikir berkeja apa saja yang mudah. Saya pikir menjadi stylist mudah, ternyata tidak. Baru sekarang merasa kalau ambisi perlu juga. Jadi merasa membuang waktu 10 tahun dengan tidak melakukan banyak hal.

<u>Muhammad Taufik, 3 August 2016, WhatsApp phone call</u>
Medium apa yang selalu dipakai?
Selalu pakai pensil. Untuk sampai hasil akhir, ada masa-masa di mana pakai tinta, watercolor, kalau berkarya pakai acrylic. Beda-beda sih, tapi yang selalu dipakai ya tinta cina. Karena basic-nya gambar comic, gambar hitam putih. Itu awal ketertarikan dan seneng gambar. Sesimpel kerana belum tahu banyak medium lain sewaktu kecil, jadi gambar hitam putih lebih sering. Tahu tinta cina karena lihat komik-komik yang dibaca, pernah juga lihat ilustrator bekerja live.

Mengapa suka hitam putih?
Sewaktu kecil suka corat-coret, belum tetlalu banyak kenal warna karena alasan praktis untuk dibawa jadi cukup 1 warna: hitam. Dan sewaktu kecil tidak pernah pakai pensil, selalu pakai pen atau tinta. Di mata saya, warna hitam lebih strong, lebih catchy. Karena pakai buat belajar gambar, jadi keasikan. Karena itu basic sekali. Kalau pun udah ada warnanya, awalnya pasti hitam putih. Konon, kalau gambar sudah bagus hitam putih saja, tidak usah diwarnai warna lain juga sudah kuat.

Jadi menurut Anda hitam lebih kuat dari warna lain?
Pada waktu itu merasa hitam lebih kuat dari warna lain. Seiring berjalannya waktu, tertarik mempelajari warna lain.

Tapi sebenarnya ada yang Anda anggap medium andalan?
Sebenarnya cat air. Tidak pernah mematok 1 medium karena waktu terlalu berharga untuk medium yang itu melulu. Lebih ke metode berkarya saja, 90% hand drawing. Pernah mencoba pakai Wacom, tapi komputer hanya tool. Untuk saat ini, andalan hand drawing. Walau belepotan, repot, tapi tidak apa-apa.

Bagaiman menghadapi request klien?
Banyak request tidak masalah karena tangan tetap gambar.

Tadi sempat menyebut kalau tangan Anda "ya sudah gambar saja". Berarti setuju tangan bisa jalan sendiri?
Tangan sudah terbiasa. Lebih percaya tangan kreatif. Daripada saya bengong-bening, tapi tidak usah berpikir apa-apa, jadi tangan gambar aaja. Terkadang apa yang saya pikirkan sama yang saya gambar jadi beda. Jadi tidak usah mikir.

Tapi commissioned work kan harus dipikirkan dulu?

Berpikir tapi berpikirnya lebih tentang mau gambar apa. Harus dipikirkan karena ada kepentingan beberapa pihak. Kalau untuk sendiri, berpikir cukup sekian persen, sisanya mengalir.

Bagaimana tahu karya sudah selesai?
Batasannya mudah-mudah susah. Yang pasti tidak pernah puas. Tolak ukur pakai perasaan, kalau sudah maksimal, sudah ok. Mungkin masih ada kurang tapi rasa itu sudah sedikit, jadi menyatakan sudah selesai. Kalau ada yang mengganjal, berari belum selesai.

Maksudnya mengganjal?
Misalnya gesture tidak suka, warna tidak sesuai bayangan, komposisi kurang enak.

Berarti sudah tidak pernah ada masalah pegang medium baru?
Adaptasi tetap dan perlu waktu. Saat pelajari yang baru, tidak bisa menyamakan rasa estetis dengan medium sebelumnya. Misalnya watercolor tidak bisa ditebak tapi kalau dikasih air masih bisa larut lagi. Karena karakter beda-beda.

Gaya menggambar Anda yang asli sebenarnya seperti apa?
Yang agak horror, gigi tonggos, banyak kutil, dst. Saya sebut itu asli karena saya bisa menikmati gambar tanpa memikirkan orang lain suka atau tidak. Seperti sebuah statement "masa bodoh".

Personally mengapa cat air?
Secara teknis bisa cepat, rata-rata kebutuhan industri saat ini bisa disalurkannya pakai watercolor. Misal sering buat majalah, secara layout teratur. Sementara saat buat gambar, ingin ada balance. Padahal watercolor tidak bisa ditebak, selalu mendapat hal di luar dugaan, lebih muncul sisi human.

Mengapa tetap memilih berkarya di Jakarta padahal saingan banyak?
Makin ke sini banyak yang baru dan lebih jago, memang. Sisi positifnya harus mem-push dan explore, evolving diri terus. Jangan anggap saingan banyak jadi pensiun dini. Saingan justru jadi termotivasi.

Klien sendiri memang banyak di Jakarta?
Iya, tapi dari luar banyak juga. Tapi ada kendala: tidak punya representatif, AE, untuk mengurusi tetek bengek. Tapi tidak mudah menemukan karena susahnya based on trust. Karena dia yang akan deal dengan klien.
Saya gabung di Fabula karena itu juga. Kalau di agency, ada sistem yang fokus urus di luar fokus berkarya. Walau Fabula vakum setaun lalu.
Butuh Fabula untuk proyek-proyek dari brand besar, tanggung jawab besar. Biasanya urusan admin repot, jadi itu urusan Fabula. Tidak perlu propose harga a lot-alotan, ada rasa tidak enakan. Untuk standardisasi. Supaya posisi ilustrator bargaining powernya kuat, biar tidak seperti tukang.

Jadi menurut Anda ilustrator bargaining power rendah?
Bargaining power kurang terutama kalau sendiri. Ada proyek-proyek yang memang nominal besar dan fleksible, tapi tidak selalu ada.

Tapi kan Anda sudah ada nama.

Punya nama dan punya kualiti yang buat dibanggakan, kekuatan saya, tapi kalau berhadapan klien sebagai pemilik modal adalah bisnis. Apa yang menurut kita bagus, di mereka adalah cost. Jadi lihatnya nominal. Walau ada yang bisa dikasih penjelasan, misalnya mural, ada yang mengerti, ada juga yang tidak. Jadi terkadang tidak peduli nama.

<u>Ruth Marbun, 3 August 2016, Skype phone call</u>
Medium yang paling sering dipakai?

Kebanyakan cat air, sebenarnya pakainya agak brutal. Jatuhnya lebih ke mix media, ada tambahan drawing pakai pen atau pensil warna dan akrilik. Karya besar pakai acrylic. Tergantung karya. Kalo cat air di medium besar, terlalu costly. Saya sudah mulai dari dulu pakai cat air.

Bagaimana akhirnya cocok pakai cat air?

Akhirnya cocok dengan cat air karena background fashion, buat ilustrasi untuk pelengkap proyek saja. Awalnya diajarkan pakai spidol, cat air, atau gouash. Awalnya karena kebiasaan di fashion, misalnya full body illustration. Paling mudah, mobile. Padahal tidak pernah belajar secara benar. Beruntung dan tidak beruntung mengeksekusinya, agak sok tahu, somehow jadi karakter. Sebenarnya tidak dari coba-coba, karena diajarkann jadi kebiasaan.

Selain dari segi teknis, apakah Anda punya feel yang beda-beda terhadap masing-masing medium?

Hasil berbeda-beda tiap medium, dan menangkap emosi yang berbeda juga. Kalau akrilik lebih ekspresif krn agak abusive (sebenarnya dalam smua hal), agak hajar, awal-awal tidak perhatikan tekanan. Benar-benar rusuh. Baru sekarang paham kalau ternyata tekanan berbeda menghasilkan feel yang berbeda. Kalau watercolor lebih poetic, karena karakter berlayer, syahdu, transparensi, pasti menghasilkan karya yang tidak seekspresif akrilik. Watercolor untuk saya lebih safety net, lebih ke kebiasaan.

Yang menarik, buat orang lain lebih susah. Karena cocok ke saya yang kerjanya lebih spontaneous karena watercolor tidak bisa dikontrol, ada cilukba. Ada sense of kolaborasi sama medium, kejutan-kejutan di tengah, dan less homework. Maksudnya biar catnya saja yang mengerjakan to get the whole feeling. Kalau buat orang lain yang biasa sistematis, jadi anxious karena they can't get it right. Karena you shouldn't get it right, menurut saya. Karena kalau yang kebisaan akrilik yang rapi dan flat, ya mereka anxious dengan watercolor. Buat saya karena saya kerja rusuh dan spontaneous, cocok. karena ada kejutan-kejutan yg memberi napas, lebih pas kerja dengan watercolor.

Dari statement biar cat yang mengerjakan, kalau persepsi soal tangan, apakah sama?

Sangat percaya tangan kerja sendiri. Karena sudah semakin mengerti cara kerja sendiri, semakin embrace whatever strong point of it. Saya menyerah mengerjakan sebuah karya dengan proses yang seharusnya, misalnya start from sketching, develop ke proses tengah, lalu finalize, step by step. Saya bisa kerja seperti itu, tapi napas karya jadi berbeda sekali, jadi stiff. Jadi wannabe, looks trying too hard. Kalau sekarang, saya merasa harus menceritakan ini dengan karya tapi biasanya dimulai dengan trial and error. Tetap ada sketching tapi tidak develop ke karya akhir, lebih melatih otot, misalnya mau gambar hutan, coba-coba gambar pohon, berbeda aspek dan cara. Tapi nanti saat mengerjakann final artwork, start from zero tanpa tahu hasil akhirnya seperti apa, mengikuti feeling. Misalnya saya lempar saja warna background dulu, apakah nanti mau

ditimpa atau dinegatifkan, lihat nanti di tengah jalan. Dalam hal itu saya harus sangat mempercayakan tangan. Kalau saya pikirkan baik-baik, malah tidak keluar atau tidak jadi, terasa kaku sekali atau wannabe. Jadi setuju tangan terpisah, kadang-kadang jadi terserah saya saja, jadi otak hanya membantu mengangkat kuas itu menaruh ke sebuah warna. Selanjutnya dengan sendirinya.

Bagaimana tahu karya sudah selesai?
Tantangan. Karena suka going over the board. Masih ada kepercayaan kalau tidak ribet, tidak usaha padahal tidak harus seperti itu. Semakin ke sini semakin bisa, menganggep hal ini seperti self editing. Karena itu penting, tahu where to stop, mana yang harus ditambakan, mana yang harus dikurangi. Tahunya adalah dengan mengambil jeda di proses, jadi tidak bisa dikerjakann 3 atau 4 hari berturut-turut. Harus ada ruang di antara itu, misalnya berhenti tidak menyentuh karya 1-2 hari. Tapi sudah estimasi karena pasti ada deadline. Biasanya beberapa hari sebelum selesai, dipakai untuk memastikan apakah itu sudah "selesai" atau belum. Tahunya dari feeling, intuisi. Jeda 2-3 hari itu waktu yang tepat untuk tahu sudah selesai atau belum.

Pernah mengerjakan pakai medium baru?
Medium baru bikin frustasi. Kalo commisioned work cenderung tidak berani ambil, unless orangnya sudah kenal, karena challenging, bukan karena uang. Kebanyakan untuk pameran dengan tujuan. Butuh proses perkenalan yang lebih panjang. Menyenangkan tapi crappy.

Dari fashion ke ilustrasi terlihat lebih bebas. Dengan embrace "kemalasan" jadi merasa lebih jujur?
Sebenarnya embrace kemalasan merasa bersalah tapi ya itu cara kerja saya. Bagaimana caranya tetap malas tapi produktif. Malas tidak literal. Harus ada ide, kontinuiti, itu tantangannya. Sudah tahu cara kerja malas, tidak boleh niat. Tapi harus memposisikan diri di state yang tenang, chill, tidak anxious. Sedangkan waktu berjalan, untuk deadline. Itu tricky, walau sudah menemukan celah cara kerja. Dibanding 2-3 tahun lalu.

Sejak kapan mulai dapat klien yang sudah tahu karya? Dan apakah masih ada yang belom tau style tp tetep nawarin?
98% udah tau gaya. Krn ga versatile, yg bisa ganti2 gaya. Makin ke sini makin menemukan gaya. Slalu make sure klien utk mengerti gaya. Walo masi parno, terkadang minta hal yg bukan karakter, contoh portrait, pdhl ga merasa bisa. tp tetep ada tp boleh dicocokin gayanya sndr. Ga mgkn dateng ga tau apa2. Ga sebanyak yg komersil, kebanyak personal work. Dan tnyt beda2 ilustrator beda2 proportion. Itu yg menarik, ilustrator beda sawah.
Baru aja ada yg dateng krn orang yg dateng bilang emg suka gaya gw dan tau dr sosmed

Bagaimana dengan Bollu?
Masih tapi lagi cool down.

Bagaimana cara membedakan brand Bollu dan by Ruth Marbun?
Dalam Bollu tidak ada "by Ruth Marbun". Cita-cita saya, walau Bollu pindah tangan tetap bisa berdiri sendiri, seperti Marimeko. Ada orang yang menawarkan dengan napas yang sama. Mau dipisahkan memang untuk lebih produksi. Influence dulu di fashion lebih tertarik ke ready to wear, untuk menghasilkan sesuatu. Saat awal-awal mau buat produk, memperhatikan pasar dan banyak produk yang mirip (merchandising), misal motif chevron. Tidak ada yang salah tapi

gayanya mirip. Buat produk yang saya senang, bukan tanpa peduli pasar, tapi tanpa niat untuk menjawab pasar. Untuk bisnis tetap harus melihat pasar. Yang paling penting ingin buat dengan jujur karena kalau jujur bisa dijual, orang bisa cium barang lo se-genuine apa. Senaif itu saja. Untuk mendatangkan duit, trying my luck in the art world.

Ruth Marbun sebagai seseorang yang usaha di art. Menariknya, Orang approachnya di dua channel. Ada orang yang attach di Bollu tapi tidak attach di Ruth, tidak related. Yang sudah kenal Ruth, langsung cepat relate ke Bollu. Makanya alasan membedakan untuk mencuri 2 crowd. Saling membawa crowd, hopefully. Lumayan, could work. Tapi harus juggling karena sendiri. Dan harus diprioritaskann. Sekarang memilih untuk off Bollu. Membedakan itu secara "diam-diam"

Mengerjain untuk klien, masih bisa merasakan kebebasan saat mengerjakann Bollu dengan personal work?
Yang menarik dari mengerjakann pekerjaan klien adalah bisa mengerjakan hal-hal yang tidak ada di karya-karya sendiri. Biasanya kan mereka minta hal spesifik, kadang belom pernah saya buat. Tapi kan belajar. Karena mencari celah di keterbatasan lebih menarik, daripada dikasih kebebasan segede lapangan. Terkadang terlalu bebas jadi tidak enak. Berkarya sendiri pun cari batasan. Karena dengan batasan itu jadi mencari celah dan mencari hal-hal yang mau tidak mau Anda pelajari/kerjakan, dan malah come up with something new. Yang Anda tidak akan pernah tahu/blajar pada saat tidak ada permintaan-permintaan absurd itu. Jadi sebenarnya menikmati. Karena kliennya tidak terlalu commercial, tidak pernah komentar sperti, "Ini tidak bisa diterima masyarakat umum". Jadi 98% tahu karya saya. Jadi mereka cuma lempar task, judi-judi gembira, tinggal menunggu dari saya hasilnya bagaimana.
Saya menikmati kedua-duanya. Bahkan mungkin sedikit lebih menikmati yang commisioned karena harus menantang diri sendiri. Karena kalau yang sendiri jadi bebas saja kadang-kadang jadi frustrasi bingung mau menyampaikan.

Sanchia Hamidjaja, 10 August 2016, WhatsApp phone call
Medium yang selalu dipakai?
Untuk sekarang ini indian ink, cat air (juga lumayan tapi belum memegang krn dulu bertahun-tahun mengerjakan tidak berwarna, hitam putih saja), sehaabis punya anak, baru explore misalnya ke gouache.

Bagaimana pertama kali cocok dengan medium ini?
Pernah mencoba macam-macam. Pernah les lukis. SMA di Australua ambil Art, coba keramik, screen printing tapi tidak terlalu didalami karena ribet terutama chemicals dan lain-lain. Linocuts juga pernah. Makin ke sini rasanya makin tidak punya waktu, atau mungkin males. Karena misalnya linocuts butuh waktu, butuh energi untuk cukilnya, harus dipikirkann positif/negatif Karena suka gambar detail dan ribet susah interpretasikann itu jadi sesuatu yang printable, yang simple. Karena teknik itu terbatas, harus dipikirkan.
Sempat buat lukisan akrilik yang besar, habis waktu 3 bulan, waktu itu belum punya anak. Ada faktor di Jakarta, ke mana-mana macet. Apa yang bisa dikerjakan di kamar? Jadi itulah medium saya tactical, kertas yang tidak terlalu besar, cepat kering, pakai pensikl tinggal ditinta. Karena interest ke komik jadi tinta dipilih. Jadi medium itulah yang tepat.

Awalnya apa yang membuat tertarik dengan hitam putih?

Karena background graphic design, untuk edit sesuatu gambar down to the core message. Tidak mau mau dekoratif. Dulu mikirnya warna lain menambah informasi lagi. Kalau hitam putih lebih saklek, cuma mau membicarakan ini. Kalau ada warna ada informasi lain. Sebenarnya not necessarily begitu. Sebenarnya bisa saja ganti warna misalnya jingga, itu tidak terlalu mengubah informasu. Waktu itu masih idealis saja. Jadi hitam putih lebih saklek. Jadi edit-edit, sudah, saya hanya mau ini.

Pernah memegang digital dan kerja di agency, tapi apa yang membuat Anda kembali ke gambar tangan?
Emosinya kali ya, digital tidak merekam emosi. Sounds romantic. Dari brush stroke. Karena kalau tangan, pernapasan harus diatur. Karena pakai tinta kan. Tebal tipis diatur pernapasan, seberapa steady tangan. Nikmatnya di situ. Ada pernapasan yang involve. Sense of presence. Dan meditasinya di situ. Digital tinggal semua diatur di komputer. Dan permukaan di atas kertas/canvas tidak ada, so tidak intim kalau digital.

Percaya kalau tangan bisa lebih kreatif?
Percaya, terutama lihat dari anak, belajar sensory play. Kalau misalnya dari lahir anak saya dikasih iPad, akan ada sesuatu di otaknya yang tidak tumbuh. Serem ya. Semua yang dia raba, dipegang, misal main tanah, playdough, atau beras menambah knowledge, ada cabang-cabang baru di otak, itulah yang namanya creativity.
Pernah artist's block, tidak bisa berkarya/menggambar, keadaan emosi amburadul. Dikasih tahu seseorang untuk menulis 3 halaman per hari tiap habis bangun, the 1st thing to do. Karena di saat otak dan tangan menyambung, bekerja dengan baik, jadi ada flow lagi. Lalu jadi tidak block lagi. Badan pun connect.

Jadi kalau sebelum gambar harus rencana di otak?
Merencanakan di otak. Tapi tidak boleh sebenarnya. Karena cat cair tidak bisa segitu kakunya. Padahal watercolor tidak predictable, mau ke mana menyerapnya, harus latihan yang bagus. Coba tangan dulu yang bekerja lalu lihat bisa jadi apa.

So far apa yang dibayangkann di otak sama dengan hasil akhir?
Beda juga sih, kadang konsep awal di akhir suka gagal total. Mau gambar ini tapi pas gambar kok tidak bisa dikeluarkan.

Lebih banyak personal atau commercial?
Lebih banyak commissioned, sayangnya, butuh duit.

Pernah terima orderan yang berbeda referensi? Atau dari awal menolak?
Sempat. Diambil karena refreshing, "eh bisa tidak ya." Dari situ dapat ilmu baru. Misalnya ada referensi jadi bisa seharusnya. Semuanya berguna, tidak mau gengsi cuma mau gaya sendiri. Karena tidak mau stuck, misalnya Picasso tidak stuck di 1 gaya, bisa realist jg. Mondrian juga, bisa kotak-kotak seperti datang dari masa depan tapi untuk hidup menjual lukisan bunga-bunga. Harus ada sisi komersial dan idealis dan harus ada tempat untuk berubah. Kalau tidak, stuck karena zaman berubah jadi harus ikut berubah. Style ada terus, tapi harus ada ruang untuk coba.

Kalau sekarang klien datang karena sudah mengerti gaya Anda?

Ada sih yang tidak tau. Pernah di-email, bisa tidak gayanya seperti Ykha Amelz, ada yang sebodoh itu.

Ada juga yang sudah perna bekerja bersama sebelumnya, minta mural. Kebetulan ada tim. Misalnya sudah ada logo lalu buat di mural dengan fee hanya pengerjaan, yang turun karyawan saya. Kan kalau memang lagi butuh uangnya tidak apa-apa, toh saya juga tidak harus tanda tangan di karyanya. Karena kalau lagi sepi, why not. Tidak menutup diri, tetep saja jasa adalah jasa. Doesn't matter.

Bagaimana akhinya explore warna lain?
Ternyata warna seru. Mungkin karena lihat anak dengan dunianya yang baru, ingin merasakan apa yang dia rasakan. Mungkin dengan warna jadi bisa. Segalanya wow, ini wow, merasa butuh itu di dunia ilustrasi saya. Dan saya suka lihat children's book. Maka harus brani pake warna. Tidak bolhe terlalu comfort zone di monokromatik. Tidak boleh berhenti explore on the site. Kalau tidak, ya basi.

Bagaimana tahu karya sudah selesai, selain deadline?
Hmmm ada rasa takut untuk menambahkan malah jadi jelek. Ada rasa hesitation. Kalau sudah punya rasa takut menambahkann, takut rusak. Terutama karena di kertas. Karena tidak bisa undo. Awalnya digital bisa undo. Karena mulai contemplative, mending tidak. Kalau di kanvas beda, kalau akrilik bisa ditiban tapi juga bisa hesitant. Kalau kelamaan berpikir, dirampungi saja. Kalau sudah ingin mengerjakan yang lain, langsung mulai saja mengerjakan yang lain. Sekarang ada anak jadi selalu ada urusan lain.

<u>Ykha Amelz, 1 August 2016, Skype video call</u>
Prefer digital atau pakai tangan?
Photoshop buat warna, revisi, merapikan. Semua manual, tidak bisa benar-benar menggambar mulai dari digital. Harus mulai sketsa pensil.

Medium preference?
Sejauh ini yang baru bisa pensil, akrilik, brush pen. Media lain masih ingin belajar segala, misalnya oil painting. Bahkan akrilik belum terlalu bisa. Jadi satu-satu dulu bisa.

Mengapa prefer manual daripada digital?
Beda feel, lebih mudah mengendalikan apa yang saya gambar dari tekstur pensil bertemu tekstur kertasnya dibanding lewat digital. Lebih familiar dengn tangan sendiri.
Brush pen untuk doodling di waktu luang.

Pernah bertemu media baru?
Pertama kali mengerjakann lukisan dari kertas ke kanvas saja lumayan kaget.
Beda sih. Lebih deg-degan ke kanvas karena masuk ke seni yang lebih serius, daripada ilustrasi. Begitu permintaan klien minta lukisan dan kekeuh, lumayan deg-degan. Jadinya lama karena harus menyesuaikan.

Yang buat deg-degan?
Karena belum pernah. Kalau gambar harus pakai outline tipis-tipis dan detail, sementara belum bisa mengontrol itu pake kuas. Karena based-nya biasanya selalu pakai pensil.

Jadi akhirnya coba gambar pakai pensil di kanvas. Ya karena teksturnya jelas-jelas beda. Lumayan juga perjuangan, tapi lama-lama ketemu juga, ketmu juga cara catnya menyatu dengan pensil, jadi mengulik 'sesuatu" yang baru lagi.

Percaya tidak kalau tangan bisa bekerja sendiri?
Kalau tidak tahu apa yang mau saya gambar, tangan hang. Jadi harus benar-benar terbayang apa yang saya gambar, kalau tidak, ya bengong saja.

Di antara komersil dan non, kebebasan ekspresi berbeda atau tidak?
Berusaha, makin ke sini, makin tipis perbedaan itu. Walo soal kebebasan pasti beda, karena tuntutan pihak lain pasti ada. Karena semakin waktu orang semakin familiar dan percaya mengapa hire saya, jadi semakin ke sini proyek-proyeknya semakin membebaskan. Mereka hanya bilang apa yang diinginkan, sisanya dikasih saja. Justru mintanya malah "dari sini yang kira-kira bisa dituangkan ke ilustrasi apa."
Cuma masih ada yang suka revisi sampai 20x, membuat hilang feel. Intinya, kalau komersil sangat sulit, apalagi kalau via agency karena ada pihak keduanya, yaitu klien. Klien adalah yang utama. Makanya, itu sangat sulit.

Bagaimana untuk order yang diminta di luar style?
Yang sudah diminta di luar style, sudah pasti tidak personal.

Masih suka diambil?
Sudah jarang banget. Misalnya yang minta tolong adik sendiri, jadi tidak enak kalau menolak. Sebisa mungkin dihindari. Sekarang kenal banyak ilustrator yang style-nya beda. Kalau pribadi, daripada saingan, malah jadi saling support. Jadi kalau klien minta gaya lain, saya alihkan ke ilustrator lain yang memang gayanya itu. Daripada memaksakan diri, jadinya nanti mereka tidak puas, saya pun tidak puas. Jadi sebenarnya saya hindari.

Bagaimana tahunya kalau artwork sudah selesai?
(berpikir lama) Feeling, sudah senang. Atau tanya klien. Kalau buat diri sendiri, tanya suami.

Gaya ilustrasi Anda?
Selalu susah jawab ini. Karena basednya bukan seni and design. Berasa sambil jalan, selalu belajar.
Personally, mengeluarkan garis-garis mengalir dan fluid. Gara-gara saat arsitek harus garis tegak lurus, ingin keluar dari situ. Suka banyak elemen awan, jatuh, mengalir. Bajunya lebih flowy.

Alasannya?
Bentuk fluid merasa lebih bebas, daripada menentukan harus berhenti di mana.

Dengan medium apa pun, alasannya sama?
Iya, pakai cat akrilik, daripada color blocking, prefer gradasi atau wet on wet memang yang lebih ke mana-mana jadinya. Lebih seperti mewarnai awan.

Tentang brand Babbot?
Itu juga terbentuk sendiri. Babbot tadinya hanya doodling saat stress dengan pekerjaan.

Mengapa Babbot kartunik?

Karena karakter anjingnya komikal. Kalau buat tampak serius, tidak pantas. Karena itu sebenarnya momen istirahat, tidak mau gambar serius.

Karena banyak yang suka, jadi dipisahkan. Kalau minta mural belom berani, karena bidangnya besar, custom hand juga belom berani. Akhirnya ditawarkan Babbot karena lebih simpel, lebih mudah buat saya juga, dan murah.

Kalau kerja sama menawarkan 2 brand?

Atas nama Ykha, boleh menyiksa. Yang lebih lucu, pop atau karton pakai Babbot. Kalau bisa terus-terusan yang itu saja (sambli tertawa). Masukin ada unsur kekanak-kanakkan ke karya, tapi sekarang bener-benar dibagi 2.

Babbot tidak terlalu banyak tuntutan karena langsung jadi?

Brand Babbot tidak banyak tuntutan. Tapi kalau keseringan, takutnya lupa gambar yang complicated. Kadang lama tidak terima proyek, jadi lama kalau gambar. Seperti oran yang tadinya les piano sudah jago, tiba-tiba berhenti 2 tahun lalu bego lagi. Jadi harusk diasah.