

# Creation Process and Visual Aesthetics at Jesus and Mary Images in Balinese Wayang Characters

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Visual aesthetics of Balinese wayang has artistic and cultural values that are thick with traditional values and the richness of Indonesian culture. On the other hand, Christian images of Jesus and Mary still use a lot of Western visual aesthetics, this circumstance distances Christians from recognizing the localized visual aesthetics of Balinese wayang. Research purpose is to explain creation process and visual aesthetics in Jesus and Mary images with Balinese wayang characters. Research method is descriptive qualitative, the theory for the process of creation uses semiotic theory from Umberto Eco, and the theory for visual aesthetics uses the theory of aesthetics from Bishop Robert Barron. Research results: (1) creation process produces: Recognition of visual styles, Ostensions of character, Stylization of attribute ornaments, and Invention of image correlations; (2) visual aesthetics produces: Bhawa namely facial expressions, Arsa namely proportions and gestures, and laksa namely ornaments and attributes. Research main findings: (1) image results of creation process journey; (2) description studies of visual aesthetics elaboration. Research implications: (1) images results of creation process are used as Bible teaching media; (2) description studies of visual aesthetics are used as localized Christian visual aesthetics at Jesus and Mary images in Balinese wayang characters.

**Keywords:** *Creation Process, Visual Aesthetic, Jesus and Mary, Balinese Wayang*



## 1. Introduction

Balinese wayang is Indonesia's invaluable cultural and traditional wealth, in fact Balinese wayang is also the origin of all wayang in Indonesia (Sudarso, 1968). This certainly makes Balinese wayang need to continue to be part of Indonesian art and culture, so it needs to be reintroduced, applied in daily life, and become part and pride of the nation's next generation (Darmawan, 2015). Preserving the visual aesthetics of Balinese wayang can be done by bringing the visual culture of Balinese wayang closer to people's daily lives (Mudra, 2020). Thus, the author has a plan to use the images of Jesus and Mary with Balinese wayang characters as teaching aids and storytelling media for Christian children, so it is hoped that Christian children can recognize and grow familiarity with the visual aesthetics of Balinese wayang, which sublimated When children hear, learn, and imagine the visual aesthetic of the Bible stories.

On the other hand, in the visual aesthetics of Christians, the authors get the fact that the visualization of many Bible characters uses Western visual aesthetics (Zehner, 2005), where Jesus is often depicted with the visuals of European Caucasians, with brown hair and beard, having a tall body posture. tall, and Maria is also a European woman, who has Western facial proportions. This makes Christians, gradually, closer to the visual aesthetics of the West than to the visual aesthetics of Indonesia itself, especially the visual aesthetics of Balinese wayang (Darmawan, 2013). This author's research is also in the effort to make evangelization media with the visual aesthetics of Balinese wayang, it is hoped that the results of the images of Jesus and Mary with the characteristics of Balinese wayang can become visual aesthetics that are loved by Christian children; become a part of their daily life, and finally develop a sense of love and pride for the visual aesthetics of Balinese wayang.

The author was inspired by the work of acculturation of Balinese wayang on statues and decorative ornaments of angels at the Denpasar Cathedral church, although he has found several studies on cathedral churches from interior scholarship; starting from the discussion of the cross of Jesus on the altar of the church (Prasetya, 2022) to the discussion of colors and elements in this Denpasar Cathedral church (Putra, 2017), however, the authors have found no research that creates a visual style of Balinese wayang for Jesus and Mary, especially in the creation process based on Bishop Robert Barron's aesthetic theory; who made a correlation between the aesthetic philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and the aesthetic philosophy of Hans Urs Von Balthasar. This visual aesthetic process is divided into 3 stages; namely: the aesthetic stage called Bhawa, the goodness stage called Arsa, and the truth stage called Laksana (Barron, 2017) which is the author's main reference in applying Umberto Eco's 4 semiotic stages; which consists of: Recognition, Ostension, Stylization, and Invention; which ends with the visualization of Jesus and Mary images. From this, the author will also carry out the process of creating images of Jesus and Mary with the



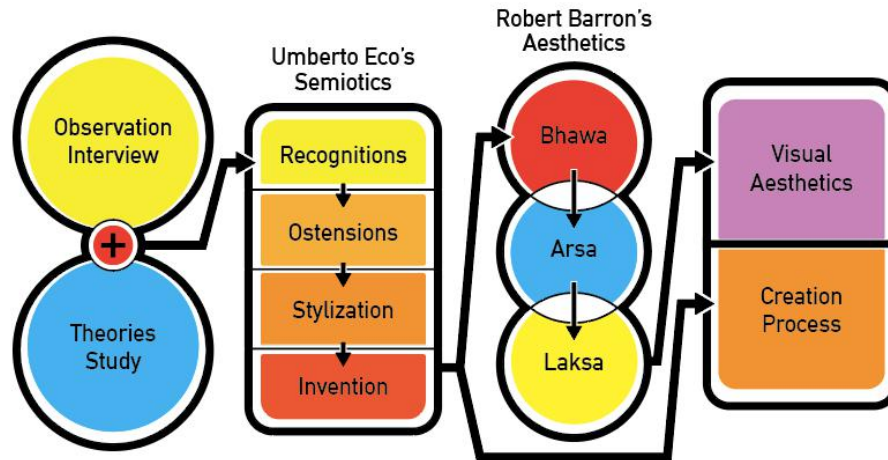
characteristics of Balinese wayang. Which applies purpose sampling, correlation of aesthetic theory, and then enters the process of visual exploration.

Research on the process of making images of Jesus and Mary with Balinese wayang characters aims to provide visual aesthetics of Jesus and Mary with Balinese wayang characters, in order to become props and media for evangelization for Christian children (Kilcourse, 2016). As well as this research process can also be a gradual example in producing visual aesthetics with the character of Balinese wayang. From the creation method which is based on the 3 stages of aesthetic philosophy and by applying the semiotics of creation, the authors hope that this research can become a tactical and open reference for the creation of visual aesthetics of Balinese wayang in other new evangelism media.

Therefore, this research based on the process of creating images of Jesus and Mary with Balinese wayang characters will be very useful in efforts to preserve, re-introduce, and use them in the daily life of Balinese wayang for all levels of Indonesian society in the future. This can happen because of the visualization process by prioritizing visual aesthetics in the images of Jesus and Mary, which are manifested in stages; starting from the process of Recognition by proposing sampling references to Balinese wayang characters, Ostension in the scope of visual aesthetics of Balinese wayang, the process of Stylization and correlation with the stages of aesthetic philosophy, to the Invention process by visual exploration of the visual aesthetic of Jesus and Mary in order to get the visual aesthetic essence of Balinese wayang characters.

## **2. Method**

The researcher conducted the creation process and visual aesthetics at Jesus and Mary Images in Balinese wayang characters, using qualitative research methods. In this study, the characteristics of qualitative research used are visual observation of angel statues in Denpasar Cathedral church and interviews with designers of digital Balinese wayang paintings, namely: Made Pande Ari Surya Diantara; these two sources become research instruments in the creation process.



Pic 1. Research Mapping Method

Source: Researcher's Work

The researcher realized that the analysis of this qualitative method would affect the quality of art creation (Suteja, 2019), so the researcher conducted a dichotomy division between data obtained from observations and interviews, with the study of semiotic theory from Umberto Eco and aesthetic theory from Robert Barron. After that, the researcher created a process for the images of Jesus and Mary; with 4 semiotic stages, consisting of Recognitions, Ostensions, Stylization, and Invention (Eco, 1984). These stages are necessary for the discovery of a continuous process; thus, the semiotics can guide a process of creation and be reused for the next process of creation and/or development (Guillemette, 2006).

The result of the creation process is the first result of the research, while the second result is: regarding the visual aesthetic of the image of Jesus and Mary in Balinese wayang characters, the researcher uses Robert Barron's; which uses the aesthetic basis of Hans Urs Von Balthasar which consists of a trichotomy of beauty; a reflection of God's perfection, a metaphor of human feelings, the value of the message contained therein (Henrici, 1994), this is a refinement of Thomas Aquinas' aesthetics, but views art more from the daily application of humanity rather than a ritualistic offering. This trichotomy is bilateral, so its use cannot be structured (Roccasalvo, 2005), while this research requires stages in order to get a more chronological deepening. Thus, the researcher uses Bishop Robert Barron's development of aesthetic theory; where the trichotomy of beauty is again refined by application: Aesthetic, Good, and Truth (Barron, 2003), with a structured lateral order.

The author also correlates this lateral trichotomy with Hindu aesthetics called Sàmkhya-Yoga-Rasa, which reflects the values of: Bhawa, Arsa, and laksa (Iswanto, 2018). Barron's aesthetic philosophy is also manifested by the application of Umberto Eco's semiotic-based research method consisting of 4 stages: Recognition, Ostension, stilation, and Invention. The resulting meaning



consists of visual aesthetics in the image of Jesus and Mary with Balinese wayang characters, as well as the meaning of new evangelization media for children. And this research focuses on the process of making pictures of Jesus and Mary with Balinese wayang characters.

### **3. Result and Discussion**

The results of data collection include observations and interviews, observations made by researchers are observing, taking documentation, and discussing with Cathedral church officials in Denpasar. In this observation, the researcher found that the acculturation of the form of the statue of Jesus and Mary has not led to a close correlation with Balinese wayang. This happens because the acculturation approach to Jesus and Mary is considered not to have an acculturative need for the divine figure to be conveyed.

#### **3.1. Behind Concept**

The concept in Christianity that Jesus is the King of all nations, and Mary as the mother of Jesus, maintains more western visualization; there are also statues that have certain standards such as the statue of Mary of Guadalupe, and the statue of Mary the Blessed Virgin, where these two statues of Mary are not acculturated. However, in the six glass mosaic decorations of Denpasar Cathedral, all the figures of Jesus and Mary, including other figures have been acculturated with Balinese wayang. Returning to the statue observation, in contrast to the glass mosaic decoration, the researcher found 10 angel statues with Balinese wayang characters, one pair at each of the two entrances of the church, one pair at each of the two pillars of the church, and one pair at the exit of the church room. In addition, the researcher also found 4 sculptures of angels with Balinese wayang characters, a pair on each of the two side doors of the church altar.





Pic 2. Cathedral Church Denpasar  
Source: Jason Sipahutar's Photo Work

The results of the researcher's interview with Made Pande Ari Surya Diantara, a designer of digital Balinese wayang paintings, the researcher found that the creation process has a main element. This main element is the basis of all Balinese Aesthetic, namely Balinese artists always involve the emission of virtual energy as a charisma power (Taksu), or perfect work needs to work from both sides; for humans (Skala) and for the Creator (Niskala). The creation process that involves Taksu makes the quality of creation better and more detailed (Marianto, 2018).



Pic 3. Angel Statues at Cathedral Church Denpasar  
Source: Researcher's Photo Work

This is in line with the researcher's creation process, which has the aim of making the results of the drawing of Jesus and Mary with Balinese wayang characters as a new medium of introduction to Bible stories, especially for children. In addition, Pande Ari also explained that the process of making Balinese wayang requires deepening the character of the figure to be drawn. This is needed in order to make variations without violating the existing rules. The researcher realizes that the

change in the visual aesthetics of Jesus and Mary, from Western characters to Balinese characters, is quite significant; so, the researcher needs to evaluate in terms of visual aesthetic studies, which can provide input for the improvement of the next creation process.



Pic 4. Jesus and Mary statues, and Angel door crafting at Cathedral Church Denpasar  
Source: Researcher's Photo Work

### 3.2. Creation Process

For the creation process, we used Umberto Eco's four stages of semiotic work. Where these four processes become the reference for researchers to create. In the first process, Recognition; is an understanding or deepening of gestures, proportions, and other visual principles in the object we want to create. In this case, the researcher used a lot of data and documentation from the survey to the Denpasar Cathedral church, as well as data from interviews. With this, the researcher was able to make a sketch to get the right pose and gesture for the picture of Jesus and Mary. The gestures in this sketch also contain proportions and mimic the image of Jesus and Mary; loving and gentle. For this reason, the faces of Jesus and Mary are categorized as sweet wayang faces. In this sketching process, the researcher also added decorations such as clothing motifs and various other Balinese wayang accessories; such as bracelets, waist bands, and crowns.



Pic 5. Jesus and Mary Sketch in Eco's Semiotics Phase Recognition

Source: Researcher's Work

Entering the next process of creation is Ostension; where a selective reduction process is necessary. This reduction is needed in order to reduce irrelevant creation options, and choose to retain creations that are more suitable to the situation, purpose, and target. This selective stage was used by the researcher to reduce the ornamental details in the sketches that had been made. This reduction is intended to allow the researcher to focus on the gesture, mimic, and proportion of the figures in the image of Jesus and Mary, which are deemed necessary to strive for in order to get the right creation. In addition, the researcher will also revisit the detailing process when entering the coloring process. Thus, in this Ostension stage, the researcher enters the outline process, this is done so that the gestures and proportions that the researcher wants to achieve in the creation of the process of drawing Jesus and Mary with Balinese wayang characters receive special attention. It also helps researchers to determine the proportions between Jesus as a man and Mary as a woman, who certainly have significant differences in heights, poses, and gazes.

The Ostension process is continued into the Stylization process; which is the process of determining the style or drawing style for the images of Jesus and Mary. This process is necessary to get the character, in this study, the researcher focuses on the character of Balinese wayang inspired by the acculturation of angel statues in the Denpasar Cathedral church. The researcher realized that the Balinese wayang character chosen was not a classic Balinese wayang character. This was done in order to get a popular or modern nuance in accordance with the target and function of the image of Jesus and Mary; namely as a media communicator and props for Bible stories for children. With this determination, the researcher made a simplified selection of ornaments and symbolic approaches. One of them is the bird's head ornament on the crown, belt, and bracelet; simplified into abstract ornaments with similar shapes. This is done so that the figures



in the image of Jesus and Mary are not fragmented by the presence of secondary figures in the form of bird heads in several ornaments in the image.



Pic 6. Jesus and Mary Sketch in Eco's Semiotics Phase Ostension (left) and Stylization (right)  
Source: Researcher's Work

Entering the next stage of Umberto Eco's semiotics for creation process, is the Invention stage; which is a stage that has freedom in creating, in the context of achieving goals. The researcher made several adjustments in order to present the right figures for Jesus and Mary. The first adjustment was the choice of color; for Jesus, who is male, the researcher chose a darker skin color compared to Mary, who is female. This has never happened in Western style visual depictions of Jesus and Mary, where they are modeled after Europeans; both men and women have light skin tones. This adjustment was made by the researcher to give a local nuance to the images of Jesus and Mary, in order to form a Balinese wayang character. As compensation, the researcher maintained the dominant colors that are symbolic of Jesus and Mary; namely red for Jesus and blue for Mary. These two colors are applied consistently so that the figures of Jesus and Mary are maintained.

The researcher was not satisfied with the flat coloring results, without shading or dimensional volume. Considering that the Invention stage enforces the freedom of the creation process, the researcher added volume shading to the images of Jesus and Mary with Balinese wayang characters. This addition was done by separating the types of materials depicted in the images of Jesus and Mary with Balinese wayang characters. There are 3 different separations in terms of the

material of the drawn figures, namely: leather on the face, hands, and feet; cloth on the shoulder cover and waist-to-leg cover; and metal on the bracelet, belt, and crown. For the fabric material, the researcher also added a common Balinese motif, sigar mangsi; a decorative form of flowers and leaves, patterned with repetitive cubes. We did this to make the images of Jesus and Mary more voluminous and three-dimensional.



Pic 7. Jesus and Mary Images in Eco's Semiotics Phase Invention

Source: Researcher's Work




### 3.3. Visual Aesthetic Evaluation

The research continued by looking for visual aesthetics in the image, the researcher evaluated based on Robert Barron's 3 stages of aesthetics. Barron's stages consist of aesthetic called Bhawa, goodness called Arsa, and truth called Laksana. In this picture of Jesus and Mary with Balinese wayang characters, the researcher divided it into: Bhawa for aesthetic evaluation of face and expression, Arsa for aesthetic evaluation of gesture and proportion, and Laksana for aesthetic evaluation of ornaments and attributes. The results of the evaluation at the Bhawa stage; the researcher found that the expression of tenderness has been radiated from the images of Jesus and Mary, but Jesus needs to be strengthened with a thicker mustache, Mary should not look sad, and both eyes on Jesus and Mary should be made brighter.

The evaluation results at the Arsa stage; the researcher assesses that overall, the proportions and gestures of Jesus as a man and Mary as a woman have received the right portion, but revision is

needed on the pose of the hands or fingers on both hands of Jesus; which is not too clear and still more inclined to the visual style of Javanese wayang characters than Balinese wayang characters. And for the evaluation results at the Implementation stage, the researcher found that there is still a need for the addition of Balinese ornaments; sigar mangsi to decorate the fabric and metal materials in the image of Jesus and Mary with Balinese wayang characters.

The addition of the sigar mangsi pattern in the form of a repeating cube is considered quite good, although a little stiff, this is because the flat effect on the ornament makes the efforts to form dimensions and volumes that the researcher is trying to do seem contradictory. The researcher considers the results of this evaluation as valuable input, as the goal of the research is to achieve maximum visual results.

Stages	Visual	Evaluation
Bhawa		Jesus needs to have a thicker mustache, Mary should not look sad, and both eyes should be brighter.
Arsa		Need to change hand poses or fingers on both hands of Jesus; which base Balinese wayang.
Laksana		The sigar mangsi pattern is considered too rigid, and it is necessary to add Balinese sigar mangsi ornaments to decorate the metal material that seems still empty.

Pic 8. Evaluation Table of Jesus and Mary Images in Barron's Aesthetic Phase

Source: Researcher's Work



Based on the evaluation results, the researcher made changes at the Bahwa, Arsa, and Laksana stages; at the Bhawa stage, the researcher made many changes to the faces of the pictures of Jesus and Mary in Balinese wayang characters; including the thickened mustache of Jesus, the two eyes of Jesus and Mary added white fields to make them brighter, the shape of Mary's eyebrows made more parabolic so that Mary's gaze did not look sad, also added wrinkles to the edges of Mary's eyes to make them look older, and finally the researcher changed the shape of Mary's face to make it look thinner.

At the Arsa stage, the researchers improved the shape of Jesus' hands, so that all the finger positions on Jesus' hands were clearer. While at the Laksana stage, the researcher made improvements by adding lines to metal materials including bracelets, belts, and crowns; besides that, the researcher also added a stretch effect to the repetitive sigar mangsi cube pattern motif, so as to create the impression of fabric pull that supports the 3-dimensional approach to the image of Jesus and Mary in Balinese wayang characters.



Pic 9.

Revised Image of Jesus and Mary Based on Barron's Aesthetics

Source: Researcher's Work





#### **4. Conclusions**

The researcher concluded that the use of Umberto Eco's semiotics of creation, which consists of 4 stages: Recognition, Ostension, Stylization, and Invention; greatly helped the creation process, this happened because the stages provided became a guide for researchers to create images of Jesus and Mary with Balinese wayang characters. In addition, Robert Barron's visual aesthetics approach, which consists of being able to present an in-depth evaluation, so that researchers can make revisions consisting of aesthetics called Bhawa, goodness called Arsa, and truth called Laksana. All these processes were carried out by the researcher with the aim of presenting the images of Jesus and Mary with a new visual style approach, unlike the usual Western visual style. With this goal, the researcher gained the spirit called Taksu in the creation process and obtained the visual aesthetics of the image of Jesus and Mary with Balinese wayang characters.

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