

## STAGING THE SPACE: SCENOGRAPHY IN EXHIBITION DESIGN

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**Abstract.** This study focuses on the shift in museum exhibition design towards a performative turn, which prioritizes audience engagement over traditional display methods. In Indonesia, however, many museums still rely on passive displays, leading to decreased visitor numbers. To address this issue, the study explores the use of scenography, a technique borrowed from theater, to create immersive exhibition experiences. The study analyzes the exhibition "Para Sekutu yang Tidak bisa Berkata Tidak (Allies who Cannot Say No)" at the National Gallery Jakarta in 2022, which re-framed Indonesia's history in the *non-Alignment* Movement 1955. The curatorial approach used scenography to frame the artwork in performative ways, incorporating staging, *mis-en-scene*, and spatial dramaturgy to create an immersive environment for the audience. The research argues that scenography can be a valuable tool for exhibition designers to evoke audience engagement and promote active participation in the exhibition. By developing a spatial metaphor within the curatorial narrative, designers can perform objects and create a more immersive experience. This approach can ultimately help museums to better communicate their collections and narratives, leading to increased visitor engagement and enjoyment.

**Keywords:** *Staged interior, exhibition design, narrative space, scenography, performative museum.*

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### 1. Introduction

Exhibition design in Indonesia is predominantly used for commercial and industrial purposes. In current studies, many design methods focused on visual merchandising and branding through several narrative techniques. However, in order to deliver educational information, such as history, there needs to be a specific method that effectively bridges the knowledge to the audience in active ways. The design method that focused on improving the audience's engagement in designing educational exhibitions is still under study. This indicates that museum culture is not popular in Indonesia. According to government data, there is a low level of interest in visiting museums and historical places in Indonesia. In 2015, only 6.43% of the Indonesian population aged over 5 years visited historical places. This percentage increased to 10.9% in 2018 but dropped significantly to 3.21% in 2021 due to the impact of the pandemic. This is also caused by a lack of human resources in the field of museum management, including archaeologists, designers, curators, and experts in museum display and innovation (Pusdatin. Kemendikbud, 2021). The lack of exploration in the design method has led the museum to lose its audience. Therefore, the designers and curators need to rethink and reframe the narrative through innovative spatial design. For example, historical narratives can be re-framed and contextualized based on our current social condition.

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In current studies, the museum positioned itself as one inclusive cultural institution that represents cultures and communities. The main focus of museums is now placed on engagement and inclusion. In current times, visiting the museum is not just a passive act to receive information without active thinking, but turns into a form of conversation, not placing the user as an empty vessel to be filled with didactic content (Black, 2018). Therefore, the design needs to stimulate the participation of the audience to part in making interpretations, producing new meaning, or accessing information. While Museum is already a staged environment, from its history of - the cabinet of curiosities, a *Wunderkammer*, a catoptric theatre, which is full of objects and details, reflections, and illusions. In current museum practice, theatricality takes many forms from the use of traditional scenic effects, such as digital scenography, and live performance. The performative turn in exhibition study, lead to the idea of how to create a relationship between body-object-time and space. It is crucial to let the audience know they are in a staged space, as it makes their act of looking performative and creates a particular atmosphere. The installations allow the spectator to become an explorer, performer, director, witness, and flaneur (Greer Crawley, 2012) . The performative quality in exhibition design, emphasizes the individual's contribution to meaning-making and learning but also underpins social interaction (Mehzoud, 2019). The idea of performativity, turns the museum into a democratic space, further becoming a catalyst of social change (Cameron, 2006). The museum is no longer perceived as a hegemonic institution, which embodied a political motivation and values that only one-sided knowledge transfer. To ensure that interactivity in art is effective, it is necessary to utilize aesthetic interfaces that engage the audience's critical thinking. This engagement leads to a physical and psychological impact on the audience, who are intentionally participating in the process (Barry, 2014). In other words, the museum should be performative. The performative museum also means that the interactivity focused on performative action, such as audience movement and interaction throughout the exhibition space, such as different modalities of looking, walking, hearing, and talking (Leahy, 2016).

Therefore, the design needs new strategies to make a space perform. For instance, in creating immersive and suggestive atmospheres, communication of content is made through the lived spatial experience, shifting the aesthetic of perceiving becomes the aesthetic of experiencing (Bruckner, 2018). Designers use quasi-immaterial interventions to manipulate and stage artificial environmental factors like lighting, temperature, and pitch to enhance the content of an exhibition and give the existing space a new performance ability. This approach, which draws on modern environmental psychology, creates sensorial and experiential interactions that promote intellectual and emotional engagement in interior and experience design (Kassem, 2022). Also, the approach of narrative design emphasizes the importance of visitors' experience, creating powerful spatial experiences, evoking emotional engagement, and creating memorable experiences (Grimaldi *et al.*, 2013). Within the exhibition trend, the unfolding narratives and sceneries are increasing interest to enrich the interactivity and experience. So, performative space in the exhibition required an immersive quality. The immersive nature of an exhibition provides visitors with a multi-sensory experience, allowing them to step into the scene (Freitag *et al.*, 2020). The immersive experience places the audience inside the story and offers a "feeling of reality" of another worldly atmosphere. The immersive exhibition turns the artwork itself, into an environment (Papadaki, 2020).

The immersive quality turns the exhibits into a scene, pulling visitors out of the passive, one-dimensional viewing and transporting them to different time, place, or

situation where they become an active participant in what they encounter. This notion requires a certain technique of display, to trespass the boundary between spectacle and spectatorship, in exhibition means, between object-display with audiences.

In theatre and film production, this immersive quality is achieved through Scenography. Scenography activates space that holds the potentiality of event, narrative, and story, to connect with the audience (Hann, 2018). Scenography creation involves working with architecture, dramaturgy, intentional use of media, and the staging of the narrative experience in space (Lam, 2014). The way the story is told, or its narrative mode of communication, invites interpretation and interaction, and is analogous to a conversation, opening up interpretation rather than closing it down (Bedford, 2014).

Therefore, scenography also can be seen as an act of storytelling with space. Scenography is perceived as a practice that constructs spatial narratives and a spatial dramaturgy, by staging space over time (Brejzek, 2012; Thomassen, 2017). Within the theatre, the act of staging is to put an object into a stage, transforming textual narratives into space and objects. Scenography makes the object talk, develops spatial setting access to secret stories behind the objects, re-contextualizes objects by creating a multi-perspective view of trans-regional objects, and stages objects in innovative ways (Bruckner, 2018). The stage, within an exhibition, is a spatial element that differs from our real and fictional realities. "Staging" in an exhibition involves placing objects in display confinement to grab attention and convey specific narratives. (Hann, 2018). What is put on the stage is the act of storytelling. It means that narrative-based spatial experiences are crucial to creating a spectacular space, possessing performative aspect, which has a power to restructure and transform the context, and the users (Kassem, 2019). In this case, the performing space in the exhibition is meant to create an immersive environment, where all display becomes an element of narratives. According to Marlor, to enable narrative experience in space, one method is to dissolve the rigidity of architectural perimeters to create a fluid of interior mobility (Adams & Marlor, 2020). As the audience steps into that fictional environment with bodily engagement to unfold and experience the story in space. So, scenography is not simply a by-product of theatre but is a mode of encounter and exchange found in spatial and material relations between bodies, objects, and the environment (McKinney & Palmer, 2017).

In exhibition making, scenography enables performative space by perceiving space not as a functional container, but more as a construction of a situation, which requires active relation between body-time-object, and space. Therefore, in current exhibition making, the concept of aesthetics is no longer heavily relied on formal composition such as material, color palettes, composition, infographics, etc. But turn into a lived experience - something scenography could offer to create a new way of communication.

Based on this trend, many museums try to be inclusive and reflexive by making a temporal exhibition open to the public. In Indonesia, many state museums held a temporary exhibition that is more engaging with new and recent historical discourse. The temporary exhibition program helps the museum to activate the space and search for wider audiences. However, there is still a lack of research on how to develop a new display strategy for the temporary exhibition that intervene in the established museum space.

This research tries to offer a new paradigm for viewing exhibition making. Borrowed from theatre study, scenography has become a technique that allows the exhibition to be more performative. Scenography offers new design strategies, for representing, narrating, and creating engagement with the exhibition's audience.

Although in past studies, scenography has been discussed as an alternative method of exhibition making, the specificity of the design technique will depend on the context of the exhibition itself. This study tries to fill the gap on how the specificity of exhibition context influences design's strategy in scenography. The referred context consists of the critical reading on existing museum space and how it relates to the curator's narrative.

In this study, the case study is the temporal exhibition in the art museum - National Gallery of Indonesia. In addition to housing a permanent collection, the museum utilizes its main heritage colonial building as a space for temporary exhibitions. The intention behind this is to activate the space and showcase the current discourse in art. The exhibition is called "*Para Sekutu yang Tidak Bisa Berkata Tidak*" (Allies who Cannot Say No) held for a month, in February 2022.

The exhibition tries to create spatial intervention, within colonial-powerful architecture, as narratively connected to how Indonesia resisted the hegemony of West and East ideology. This exhibition showcases a hundred artworks and narrates the political movement of the Non-Aligned Movement in Southeast Asia. The exhibition tries to frame how the artist in that era, positioned themselves among liberalism and communist ideologies.

In this exhibition, the unique "resistance" on display strategies is staged to intervene in the conventional way of displaying art. Using the architectural site as a reference, the exhibition design harbours new narratives of Indonesia's history through an emergent theatrical composition. This paper will frame a relationship between scenography and exhibition narratives, through analysis of the scenography aspect translated into display strategies, involving an inquiry into medium, sensorial experiences, and how narratives interplay in space. Also, the exhibition finds that scenography has become a method to criticize power by democratizing artworks and inviting the public to view them more critically and casually, as opposed to the colonial setting of the museum.

## 2. Methods

This research is conducted with critical discourse analysis, which allows a close reading of a set of works within a certain theoretical framework (Lucas, 2016). As part of qualitative study, this method operates based on cultural production as a reflection of social context. As it seeks to analyze hidden aspects of a cultural phenomenon to decipher certain phenomena. Critical discourse analysis is also inherently interdisciplinary, and problem-oriented, and always needs a fieldwork study to analyze and theorize (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). This method is not only concerned with analysis, interpretation, and explanation - but also application (Catalano & Waugh, 2021). Critical analysis discourse includes the study of how people design and interpret the meanings of texts and addresses the issue of how meanings are adapted as society changes. This different focus shows how individual creativity, changing historical circumstances, and new social identities and projects can change patterns of design and usage (Hodge, 1989). In particular, this method can be applied in constructing social knowledge to understand some aspects of reality (Gunther Kress, 2020) such as design (the arrangement, the composition, of discursive materials) and production (the material realization of a semiotic event or object).

In this study, this method is applied to one of the cultural products – the exhibition design. This study problematizes the idea of scenography in an expanded field, to be part of a method of making exhibition design. From a theatrical point of view to linguistic and

interior design theory, this study framed an idea of a new design strategy based on scenography paradigms. The interdisciplinary reading is conducted to trace the notion of a performative museum. The case study chosen is the exhibition "*Para Sekutu yang Tidak Bisa Berkata Tidak*" whose design reflects a critical reading of not only history but also the museum's space itself. By all means, this exhibition offers critical discourse upon grand narrative in both exhibition-making and re-framing history. Furthermore, the instruments used for this study are the researcher as the main interpreter, followed by visual, text recording (photo, video, exhibition catalogue), sketch, and literature studies.

Conducting critical discourse in this study involves several steps. First, the data are collected based on observation in fieldwork - the exhibition. The visual recording, text, and sketch are generated upon spatial observation. Second, the curator and designer have been interviewed to gain information about the concept, process, targeted audience, and negotiation of the museum. In this part, the interview has been recorded and reduced to several keywords that resonate with the urgency of design. Third, the analysis is conducted by interpreting the data collected with the theoretical framework. During this process, the mapping of spatial narratives, and artwork relational are made to find a pattern of spatial language, expression, and narrative keywords. Then, the data is triangulated with the theory found and interpreted to synthesize new findings on display strategies or expand a notion of scenography. At last, the evaluation is conducted to reflect further ideas and discussions that can contribute to the curator and designer's practices.

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

#### ***3.1. Exhibition: "Para Sekutu yang Tidak Bisa Berkata Tidak" (Allies Who Cannot Say No)***

The exhibition took place from January 28th to February 27th, 2022, at the National Gallery of Indonesia. It was part of a larger curatorial dialogue called 'Collecting Entanglements and Embodied Histories', initiated by the Goethe Institute. This program aimed to foster a dialogue between the collections of the National Gallery of Indonesia, MAMMOET Contemporary Art Museum, *Nationalgalerie – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin*, and Singapore Art Museum. The artworks featured in the exhibition were selected from two previous exhibitions, namely 'Paris-Jakarta 1950-1960' in 1992 and 'Contemporary Art of the Non-Aligned Countries'. This exhibition explores the intersection of history and political narratives of the non-alignment movement (*Gerakan Non-Blok*) which still echoes today. This movement was formed to resist the new imperialism and was part of the statement of independence.

According to Grace Samboh- the curator, the exhibition, features collections and archives that confront issues of history, politics, and relationships. She expects that this exhibition will open up a larger dialogue on issues of authority, ownership, and freedom of speech, while at the same time offering a new lens to view the past. The exhibition concept should prompt visitors to interact with the collection in a new way under a different narrative by applying a de-colonialized notion to the way artworks are presented. Even though the theme is heavily embodied political narratives, it does not mean the artist here becomes "politically" correct under the powerful museum institution. Therefore, Samboh offers a radical way to make the exhibition more inclusive, by presenting the artwork in more democratic ways.

In collaboration with exhibition designer Sigit D Pratama, she envisions presenting the artwork in a casual manner within the exhibition, aiming to create equality between



the artists (as creators) and the audience. This enables active participation in viewing the artwork in more inclusive ways. She prefers the audience to be immersed rather than discursive. In this case, the designer translates these curatorial narratives into a spatial dimension using scenography techniques to allow the space to perform and create an immersive experience.

### **3.2. *Scenography Concept in Exhibition Narrative***

This exhibition is divided into five theme narratives, namely: Conviviality, Festivities, Kinship, Allegiance, and Forces. These themes are based on curatorial that synthesized the narrative of non-aligned politics. These five themes, critically place artwork, and challenge the audience's view and position, as an extension of Indonesia's position toward imperial power relations.

#### **1. *Conviviality***

This theme is taken from the story of two archived photographs. The first photo depicts Indonesia's first president, Soekarno, engaged in intense discussions with his cabinet. The second photo shows a celebratory event hosted by the Foreign Minister, H. Agus Salim. Both photos are located in domestic settings -living room. These photos were captured during a politically precarious period in 1946 when the Dutch attempted to regain control, just one year after Indonesia's independence. In the photo, Soekarno discusses Indonesia's future, which reaches a critical point to act. While in Agus Salim's photo, they knew the year's celebration invited all ex-Dutch governors and at the same time shows their social status.

In this exhibition, the aspect of scenography is applied in several methods: reconstruction, *mise-en-scene*, and immersive environment. The *mise-en-scene* first appears when the audience enters the space. In the entrance hall, the audience was welcomed by a window that showcased Kandinsky's painting in the distance, positioning the audience in a voyeuristic role. The idea of the *mise-en-scene* here refers to the idea of framing the object through a composition of space and window. Thus, engaging audiences to look for the best angle on viewing Kandinsky's painting from a distance.

Another technique is reconstruction, which appears in the next room. After viewing Kandinsky's through the window, the audience finds the staged living room surrounds by paintings on the wall. The living room is a reconstruction of the archived photograph of Soekarno and Agus Salim. These paintings in the photos, also reappear in this living room scene. In addition, some other paintings in the same era and issue, are also placed to complete the imagination of the living space. In the living room, there was an old TV that played a video art. The video art narrates the critics of contemporary media and blurs factual and fictional information. These works have echoed the situation in the photographs, in which the intensity is covered by the warmth of domestic space. The fictional celebration, conviviality as a guise of a critical political situation.

After experiencing this space, the audience will then be led through a dark tunnel, becoming immersed in a video projection. The immersive environment has a video installation that shows several one-scale human projections along the corridor. The projection shows each person eating a local snack as they gaze into the passer. In this space, the exchange of gazes and gestures has become an immersive quality on how the audiences feel the presence of a fictional entity. While at the end of this space, another *mise-en-scene* technique is applied to frame graphic works portraying a paradox of *the Last Supper*. In terms of narrative, this positioning is metaphorically opposed to

the previous work narratives- “Politics on Eating Snacks” - a satiric comment on conviviality under the political tension.



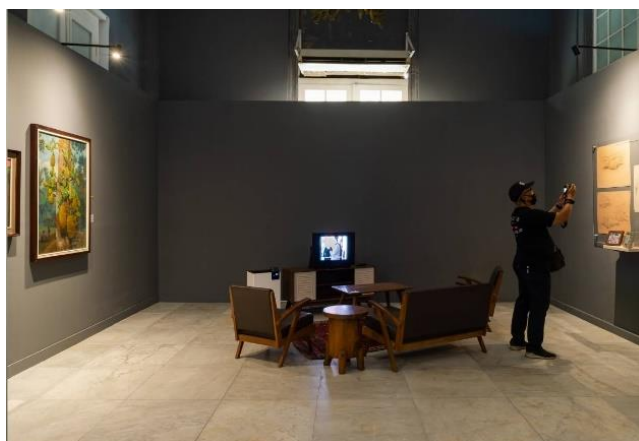
**Figure 1.** Photo Archive of Soekarno’s and his Cabinet in Living room  
(Sources: National Gallery of Jakarta, 2022)



**Figure 2.** Photo Archive of Agus Salim New Year’s party in Living room  
(Sources: National Gallery of Jakarta, 2022)



**Figure 3.** Kandinsky’s painting through the window (Sources: Widyaevan, 2022)



**Figure 4.** Living room reconstruction from the photo achieved (Sources: Widyaevan, 2022)



**Figure 5.** The Video's installation tunnel, showing one scale body projection (Sources: Nguyễn Trinh Thi, Widyaevan, 2022)

In *Conviviality*, there is no single artwork that stands alone or is “sterile”. The focus of storytelling not only relied on scene and spatial staging, but also the use of art mediums such as installation art, video, and paintings, which become media to narrate spaces. To turn the space into an other-world setting, the scene needs to become a metaphor for certain narratives. For example, the idea of memory is appeared by a reconstruction, as a doubling space. The staging of the living room extends the narrative, as artworks become a part of the furniture, and furnishing and its existence is co-dependent on other props, and spatial elements. Kandinsky's window and *Last Supper* illustrations, actively engage the audience to position themselves toward the artwork. Also, the dark immersive tunnel putting the audience into a state of limbo, both approaches of space, is a metaphor for extending the question to the audience: to choose a side, as Soekarno and Agus Salim's dilemma on choosing a political side, resonate throughout the exhibition space.

## 2. Allegiances

Allegiances, describe the political condition in the 1960s and other countries, as an act to liberate themselves from western influences. This cultural resistance resonance



around the world, to heighten solidarity in anti-colonial and anti-imperialist spirit. These movements were initiated by the global south countries, which aspires through Asia Africa Conferences, as a non-alignment country. The issue of liberation and solidarity have become a main focus of several art biennales in Ljubljana, Sao Paulo, Japan, Bangladesh, and any non-alignment country. Both artistic practices are acts of solidarity for oppressed society. Artists and allegiance are inseparable because they have the privilege of being free on expressing thoughts such as questioning, how can others categorize people critically question, on what makes an artist take a side.

In this theme, we encounter a big space full of artworks. The artworks were from Indonesia, Chile, Spain, and Eastern Europe, and narratively resonate with the liberation of oppressive power. In this space, the artworks tend to place in a scattered, asymmetrical way on the wall, floor, table, crate boxes, or even hang on the ceiling. The artwork was made by maestro artists from several countries, but it was presented as it was unpacked from the box's crates. At a glance, these artworks are personified, resembling a crowd of people shouting. At the end of the room, there is a wall with Kandinsky's painting hanging, facing the window. The window framed people in the entrance, as reversely gazing back to the audience within.



**Figure 6.** The artwork put in scattered position, personified the demonstration  
(Sources: Widyaevan, 2022)



**Figure 7.** One of the installation artworks highlights the personification of silent voices during demonstrations. (Sources: S. Teddy, Widyaevan, 2022)

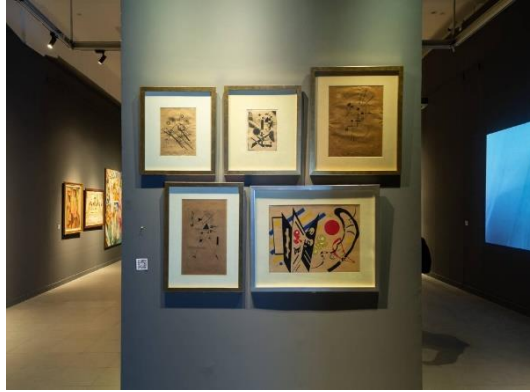
In *Allegiances*, scenography is applied in the manner of staging. The artworks personified people who did a demonstration, stage facing several orientations as body talking in every direction. The theme of allegiance shows how these artworks shout a similar message to each other. By eliminating the idea of the conventional pedestal, the artworks tend to perform as equal to the audience. Here, the idea of democratizing the work is appearing. Although there is still no touching sign, the audience can investigate the artwork 'naked' not being showcased by the illusive atmosphere as the first theme. Each of the artworks treats equally, as the room has diffuse lights, with no focal light. The space focused on the literal narrative message, in which the cultural resistance act upon the artist's activism. In that sense, the artwork appears truthfully, as it positioned itself as the agent of people, sounding an act of liberation and solidarity, extending the theme into the act of staging.

However, the display strategies in this theme, heavily relied on static display, in which the artworks are put in a certain position, so the audience gets an optimal view. The narratives might relate under the linear time and historical period. Unless, in the end, the strategy of scenography transforms again into spatial narratives. It is when Kandinsky's window reverses the audiences gaze from the entrance position. This ending, create a subtle reflection, after immersing in the "demonstration", at the end the audience is asked to decide their standpoint to view the past narratives or history.

The designer decides to frame Kandinsky's works this way, as a binder between two spaces - Conviviality and Allegiance both are expressing the issue of identity and political standpoint upon colonialism. As Kandinsky's wall ask the audience- which angle did you choose, as which side are you on? The performative aspect lay on reverse gaze putting the audience in double of space, as they are once again thrown into the space of transition. Blurring boundaries between two spaces, the spatial metaphor lies in the language of transition. This spatial expression is also concerning how the audience constantly feels at the edge, put in the transitory places. It all becomes a metaphor for "taking a side" as the narrative embarks on the artist position toward oppressive power.



**Figure 7.** The Kandinsky's painting behind the wall facing the window to entrance  
(Sources: Widyaevan, 2022)



**Figure 8.** The Kandinsky's painting seen in front of the window, as a reverse gaze  
(Sources: Wassily Kandinsky, Widyaevan, 2022)

### 3. Festivities

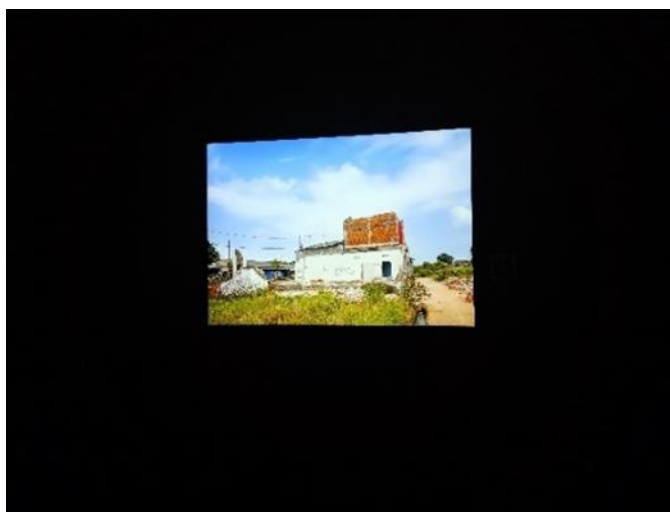
*Festivities* narrate the cultural event of a social gathering held by the authority in the archipelago's culture. Apart from casual gatherings, *Festivities* also have political intentions, propaganda, and a tool for validating power. In practice, this event aims to unify people and homogenize their influence on people. The shift of cultures and influences, make this gathering has varied names, including in Indonesia, known as *kenduri*. *Kenduri*, focused on expressing gratitude to transcendental power such as God, the king, etc. It aims to gather and mobilize people at the same time. *Kenduri*, embodied a political power, by turning the participant role into a political agency.

This exhibition asks the audience to re-think the role of festivities as a part of power agency, The theme offers an alternative space for the audience's reading, by embracing a multicultural view of festivities in the contemporary situation. In this theme, some artists' works provoke the audience's critical interpretation by using the propaganda of the current socio-political situation.



**Figure 9.** The photo boxes surrounding the paintings (Sources: Widyaevan, 2022)

In *Festivities*, the audience enters a room that is surrounded by photos in neon boxes. The photos, titled “Traces of Home” shows the house’s ruin in urban settings. It embarks a feeling of displacement, nostalgia, and loss. While in the middle of this room, four paintings are hanging on the wire mesh panel, which show the traditional version of festivities such as rituals, dancing, village gathering, and so on. The two of them, are Gauguin’s paintings which express the idea of festivities through geometry abstraction. While toward the door to the next room, there were also some paintings of Balinese dance and a conference gathering in 1945. In addition to these two-dimensional works, the sound installation is placed with a surround speaker. The sound mumbling the gestural sound such as “*ah, ehm*” in a rhythmical manner, as follows the audience in critical gestures.



**Figure 10.** The photo of the house ruin (Sources: Ary Jimged, Widyaevan, 2022)

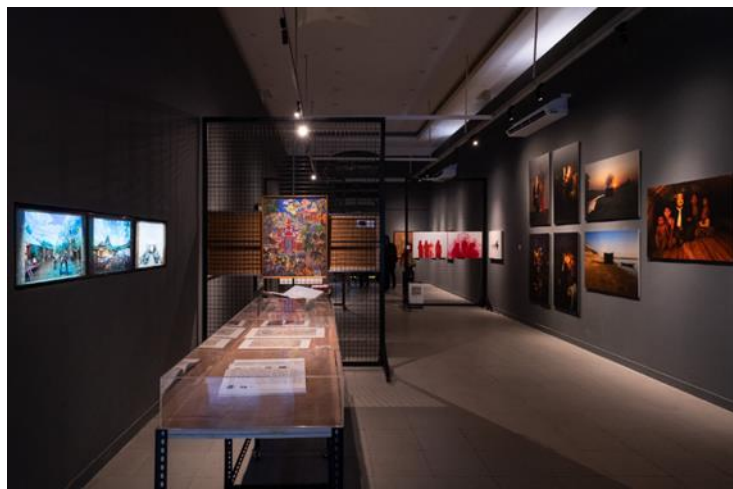
The scenography technique re-enacts the urban environment within the space. It borrows an aesthetic of advertisement that dominated our daily space. The neon boxes shine brightly, shouting “consumerism” while at the same time, showing the sadness of house ruin. The placement of other works follows the contrasting narration. The designer chose to place festivities and cultural celebrations in the centre of the photo boxes. These stagings highlight the irony of festivities that represent the reality of how invisible power governs our daily lives. Moreover, the sound installation, which rhythmically resonates throughout the space, follows the audience’s movement. As the audience watches the paintings and photos, seems like somebody follows them, making the critical gesture by commenting “*ah, ehm*”. The sound disturbs the audience to contemplate the works, but this situation is intended, implicitly show an odd reality of invisible power behind the cultural festive facade.

#### 4. Kinship

The theme of *Kinship* focused on the idea of familiarity. After the festivities, the narration of social gatherings extends to the idea of connection. Familiarity refers to how humans relate to one another, and how a relationship is defined. Based on the archival and historical reading of Kathe Kolwitz, Tina Haim Wentscher, and Dolorosa Sinaga’s works, which talk about the human condition of power oppression, it shows how familiarity were appeared to be a binder. In this reading, the exhibition curator explores

the concept of familiarity. The curator assumes that this sense of familiarity is rooted in the human condition. People become part of social groups, but the extent to which these relationships are taken for granted is questioned. This theme tries to explore the literal to an expanded definition of familiarity which became another aspect of political relations that enables a social and individual agency. Within this theme, the artworks related to the theme of family, a relationship to the self, spiritual, animal, environment, or other people.

The room of this theme is a hallway, filled with paintings, videos, archives hang on the wire-mesh panel, wall and put on the table. The designer divides the space into three sections or areas. The first section, filled with paintings, and photos, shows family bonding. The second one is all works related to individuals bound to self, and spirituality. Next to it, is the painting that represents the individual relation to the environment. The last section then consists of two separate rooms filled with a multimedia installation that talks about the idea of dwelling- a house as a universe.



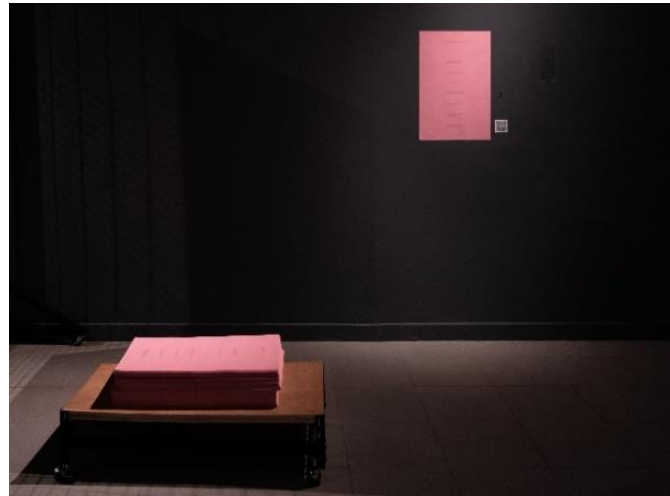
**Figure 11.** The Kinship exhibition space, divide into three sections (Sources: Widyaevan, 2022)

To connect the *Festivities* space to *Kinship*, the sound installation was also placed in this space. It can be heard throughout the space, until the work of Bruce Neuman. His works are only text that is filled with instructions on how our body is responded to the wall. Next to the text, there was an empty wall, a place for the audience to follow the instruction. At the same time, the sound will be heard on the wall, saying “ah, ehm” suggesting the haptic sensation of the body feeling the wall. These two elements give a motif to the audience, to performing the wall as the text instructs.

In this room, one of the most important aspects of the scenography techniques lies in the instruction of the text for the audience’s invitation to perform the wall. The dramatization of space appears via instructive artwork, coherence with the notion of gesture, and relations as a central issue. Meanwhile the sound installation gives a silver lining, that transforms the context of meaning. In *Festivities*, the “ah, ehm” sound, first appears as a commentary on the paradoxes of reality. In this room, the sound is heard next to the text, inviting the audience to perform the wall with their body. Another scenography aspect also appears by creating an immersive environment. The audio visual of installation, and art shows the animated projected video toward the surrounding toom. Once again, this room becomes a “tunnel of time” which questions the notion of dwelling.



This installation introduces a feeling of tactical quality, as the video changes the ambiance in the room with textural graphics, as its part of an extension of the object installed.



**Figure 12.** The instructive text and empty wall next to it (Sources: Bruce Neuman, Widyaevan, 2022)

Although this room is filled with a linear narrative, the scenography provides a haptic expression of space through text and installation art. Resonating the narrative on being connected or familiar with, the mode of display chooses more bodily and haptic sensations to the space. This strategy evokes a feeling of security and belonging.



**Figure 13.** The installation art filled the space with haptic sensation (Sources: Marintan Sirait, Widyaevan , 2022)

### 5. *Forces*

*Forces*, occupy the last section of the room in this series of exhibition's theme. In contrast to *Kinship*, *Forces*, bring the audience into a critical condition, unpleasant and disorienting sense. Once again, the audience is asked to choose their position and standpoint throughout the artwork. It resonates with the narrative of *Forces*, which all the artworks try to resist against the global forces.

The narrative of *Forces* starts with the notion that the contemporary body has become a part of foreign culture. The locality trespasses into a global world. This room is populated by many contemporary media, such as digital work, video, multimedia installation, site-specific installation, and so on. The works evolve in issues such as non-anthropometric, post-feminism, hybrid culture, capitalism, and cybernetic politics. In this room, the audience will see various works which seem randomly arranged.

In this space, the designer applies scenography by staging the artworks. The object's staging here is more symmetrical, as one of the centre points presents the installation about hybrid identity. Around the entrance, there was a site-specific work, the replica of a cow's feet hanging, next to the chicken's feet. Then, underneath, there was a chicken's step trace that walks from the other room. The artist tries to perform the chicken feet, by creating an illusion of motion. The chicken feet traces lead to another artwork that talks about a video of performance arts. The video shows the performance of the artist mimicking his pet bird's gesture. The chicken feet's traces somehow look like the bird's feet. In connecting these two works, the narrative tells that this artist's bird gets out from the screen, walks into the gallery space, and turns into the sculpture of chopped hanging feet. These installation arts comment on banal consumerism of animals. The question of humanity is translated into spatial dimension by creating an intervention and relational staging objects.



**Figure 14.** The installation cow and chicken's feet (Sources: C. Astria Johansjah, Widyaevan, 2022)



**Figure 15.** The chicken feet's traces on the floor toward the video next to it  
(Sources: Widyaevan, 2022)



**Figure 16.** The performance of artist and bird in the video  
(Sources: Wantanee Siripattananuntakul, Widyaevan, 2022)

The idea of scenography techniques here is acutely aware of how each work is related to the other in term of narrative and technique. Creating a staging based on relationality on issues, themes, and mediums can become an assemblage of new narratives. These techniques are adopted to resonate with the hybrid culture in which every medium, image, and information becomes a continuous collage. The exposure of random artwork put the audience feel confused, empty, and unable to understand things, in the in-between crowd. The audience is Forced to become strangers once again. This theme seems to become an antithesis of the first theme, that to overcome colonialism power, we must strengthen solidarity between the oppressed. This brings us back to the first question of the exhibition theme to reflect: are we independent? What if colonialism

turns into the invisibility of forces as global influences? The exhibition left the audience to wonder, about what we are becoming.

### ***3.3 Scenography as Spatial Intervention***

Based on the result, the exhibition has been adapting the scenography technique, concerning a site-specific method to the existing location. The exhibition design here gains an important aspect of spatial intervention. The design of the exhibition has intervened temporarily in the established place- the museum (National Gallery). In that sense, the stenographic techniques allow the design to become an intervention upon existing space. Therefore, the scenography also allows the performative turn of a display, into performing a space. The term "performing" in this context encompasses not just the audience's active engagement but also the adjustment of the exhibition's form to fit into the existing spatial characters. The exhibition was created temporally, so spatial intervention has become a particular technique in scenography, to turn the museum into another worldly environment.

Borrowed from spatial installations, the idea of intervention is creating an active dialogue between existing places and works. The works will never be the same if we move it. The works and place are one interconnection of meaning. Apart from theatrical production, scenography is seen as a revelation of the potential within space. But here, the space is not empty, it already embodies a certain context or even physicality. In this case of the exhibition, the design, placement, and sequence-making are always in constant negotiation on what already exists in the place. Furthermore, on narrative levels, the idea of a curatorial theme critically examines the existing space in terms of historical relations. Instead of displacing a thematic otherworldly environment, these methods allow the narratives of place to be exchanged in two-way dialogues. The intervention technique needs to consider the coherency of spatial language. Not only this, but also the method of intervention found in the exhibition, such as juxtaposition and assemblage, serves as a metaphor to resonate with the implied narrative. In this exhibition, we can see, that the curatorial narratives question power relations. These narratives dissect into several layers of metaphors: power relation in places, curatorial theme, and method of display. The exhibition deliberately conducts in the National Gallery, metaphorically intervening in the colonial architecture which resonates with colonial power to frame Indonesian history in their view. While in the other hand, this exhibition tries to decolonize the space, opening the museum to be more democratic. The method of display, as mentioned above in various way of scenography tactics - from staging object-relational, installation art as a medium, a personification of the object, framing object and juxtapose placement, and reconstruction - all of this has become an integral part of the critical reading of the text within the expanded space.

The exhibition design plays a critical role in spatial interpretation, followed by a critical examination of Indonesian narratives within the context of the *Non-Alignment Movement*. In this case, the exhibition itself becomes site-specific, as the dialogue not only occurs actively between the audience and the object but also between the existing place and the exhibition design itself. The exhibition did not aim to provide a themed experience that immerses the audience in a fictional or simulated colonial history. Instead, the exhibition design aligns with a critical approach to viewing overarching narratives and establishing context. The design interventions within the exhibition defy the spatial language of power in colonial architecture and become a form of resistance.

#### 4. Conclusion

The focus of this research aims to find a display strategy that is considered performative, engaging the audience as active participants toward the display object. Therefore, through scenography approaches this research has found several techniques: Firstly, the relationship between artworks, furnishing objects, and interior elements becomes a crucial technique in creating specific scenes and situations. Second, dramaturgy space is achieved by reconstructing space, based on a related narrative. For example, in the *Conviviality* theme, reconstructing the living room from the photos along with the paintings as a background, creates a nostalgic ambiance as recollecting a memory. Third, the exhibition tries to re-enact certain atmospheres by using multimedia installation art such as audio-visual installation, and site-specific. Furthermore, staging the object, such personified the artwork or putting the artwork in contrast placement, resonates with how the narrative text is being extended to a certain spatial scene. In "*Allegiance*," the audience is positioned between the artworks, acting like demonstrators. Fourth, to connect the narrative in each theme, the exhibition uses a technique of *mise-en-scene*, where the space and object are framed from a certain point of view or perspective. At this end of the *Allegiance* room, for example, Kandinsky painted a view in two separate rooms, creating an effect of reverse gaze, connected to the critical question of point of view in the related narrative. Fifth, the haptic sensorial quality is introduced in *Allegiance's* theme by sound installation and performative text.

Beyond all these strategies of display, the way to communicate the story is also based on how the curator was re-framing history's narrative. The design strategy needs to become an allegory of the narrative's point of view. As in the exhibition, the scenography strategy was an analogue to a critical view of the colonial's gaze on Indonesian history. Therefore, the exhibition was made performative to challenge the notion of a stable place. Then, the notion of scenography finds its specificity with a method of spatial intervention. The exhibition's performative design intervenes in the colonial architecture museum and shows a pervasive spatial expression on the object's display. Also, in this exhibition, the idea of democratizing display is not limited to the idea of making the object accessible to touch, but it manifests in how the object is being presented. As applying certain metaphors of events, such as time tunnels, social protest, advertisement, etc. The artwork is not treated as a contemplative object but is transformed into an object of examination. The way the atmosphere was built was under metaphor chosen to extend the narration to scenic space. The scenic space allows the audience to engage with the artwork differently. This strategy allows two ways to dialogue applied in both spaces making and production of meaning.

However, this research is limited to one temporary exhibition in National Gallery. Further studies are needed to examine the design methods used in temporary exhibitions and their application in different contexts within national museums. Thus, aim to gather insight into methodological approaches in making the expanded scenography. The notion of performative exhibition needs to be further researched in terms of the creative process between designer and curator, the medium's exploration, and the spatial strategy to narrate the space.



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