

DEVELOPING *BATIK LUKIS* CRAFT AS INTERIOR AESTHETIC ELEMENT TO IMPROVE PRODUCT QUALITY IN SONDAKAN LAWEYAN SURAKARTA

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Abstract *Batik lukis* (hand painted batik) products as interior aesthetic elements have not been widely found. Batik products for interiors that are currently developing are in the forms of bed linen, pillow cases and tablecloths, and these products are still using traditional batik techniques and motifs. Some of *batik lukis* found are in the forms of wall paintings, while other products for aesthetic elements with the approach of modern painting concept have not been commonly found / produced in Sondakan batik center in Laweyan District, Surakarta. This research used descriptive qualitative method, carried out in the following steps of: 1) identifying various batik products that are produced; 2) making inventory and documentation and providing a detailed description of context analysis on each object; and 3) creating a product design that can be used as a reference for further action through implementation as a representation of further research programs. The outputs that have been achieved are the mapping of potential, product designs or design motifs, and painting motifs. The situation analysis results on Batik in Sondakan are: a). special target market segments that have high artistic taste, with middle to upper economy class, thus the motifs / patterns / colors should be made elegant, special, and exclusive, b). *batik lukis* techniques tend to be more free, not tied to traditional batik patterns, thus facilitating regeneration of batik artisans, c). Market strategy is not only through selling off, but also rental techniques for office interiors, hotels, and houses, d). Interior aesthetic elements are not limited to residential spaces, but are also developed in office interiors, agencies, hotels, homestays, even aircraft interiors, buses and trains, e). training for batik crafters is required to achieve high skills and creativity in creating up to date products, f) the design of *batik lukis* emphasizes on functional value, especially as interior complements, g) Promotion through various media is needed.

Keywords *Batik lukis*, aesthetic elements, interior, *batik Sondakan*

1. Introduction

Surakarta is one of well known producers of creative industry handicraft products that have penetrated the international market. Among the various products produced is the creative industry of *batik lukis* (hand painted batik). Fabric painting with batik technique is a product of a creative household industry in Sondakan Village, Laweyan, Surakarta. Generally the produced products are in the form of fashion products, namely clothes, shirts, blouses, headscarves and so on. These products are market products that are no different from the competitor products produced by *Kampung Batik Laweyan* (Laweyan village batik center) and other batik centers in the Greater Solo area, thus market competition is very tight.

To answer these problems, a breakthrough / innovation in *batik lukis* products is needed to make it different. Human resource (HR) potential, in the form of batik craftmen who are technically proficient in *Kampung Sondakan*, is an aspect that can be improved through the development of design motifs and innovation (product diversification). One of the product innovations in creative industry that has great

opportunities to be developed to increase the creative economy of batik crafters is *Batik lukis* products as an aesthetic element of interior. In the field observation, there were a number of business actors engaged in fabric painting. The products to date are limited to tops and t-shirts painted with floral, butterfly, landscape motifs and so on.

This research begins with the reality that batik culture is an inseparable part of the Sondakan village community in Laweyan District. The development of fashion, technology, and the global market bear impact on the existence of traditional batik craftmen. Based on these conditions, academicians have the responsibility to take part in developing the local culture as a source of the community livelihood. On the basis of these ideas, a question arises, to what extent can the potential be developed into products that have added value by developing the product motifs and diversification, as well as into products that serve as interior aesthetic elements, thus giving them added and economic values.

Seeing the existing potential, the idea to develop *batik lukis* through design innovations and product types becomes important, because it will improve economic value and craftsmen's income. This is one of the solutions that can be

pursued to face the free market policy of the Asean Economic Community (AEC). Efforts need to be done to improve both product quality and diversification to make the product superior [1].

The objectives of this research are: 1) To identify and study the potential that can be developed through product innovation; 2) to arrange concepts and designs of *batik lukis* as an interior aesthetic element; 3) to provide references to create more varied product concepts and designs that can be made into unique products that are in demand by the market

2. Method

The method used to achieve the objectives was by conducting analytic descriptive research to obtain data related to various existing fabric painting products. Qualitative research was applied as an effort to obtain data related to product quality in terms of fabric material, motifs, patterns and so on.

The stages of the process in conducting this research were both linear and parallel using combined methods as needed. The data analysis was carried out in stages according to the course of the process from preparation, data collection, to analysis of the findings.

The data collection techniques were carried out through surveys, observations, identification of problems in the field and interviews to obtain data related to fabric painting products as data triangulation materials to strengthen the data obtained. Primary data that had been collected were presented in the form of tables for descriptive analysis. To identify internal and external factors that influence the development of *batik lukis*, IFE matrix (Internal Factor Evaluation) and EFE (external Factor Evaluation) matrix were applied, and formulation of Sondakan *batik lukis* development strategy was conducted in three stages, namely input stage, matching stage and decision stage.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Batik Lukis Art

Batik lukis is included as modern batik that developed since the 1970s. This industry was welcome by several artists and was accepted by the community. *Batik lukis* can be visualized using free and non standard techniques, and can even combine various techniques in batik such as *kerokan* (scraping), *lorodan*, *remukan*, dissolving with caustic soda and *lorodan magel*. In *batik lukis*, creativity is needed in creating motifs, as well as the ability to paint with wax and expertise in coloring. The art of *batik lukis* has developed both in terms of its artistic value and its manufacturing techniques. The use of batik tools is not limited to the conventional batik tools such as *canting* (hot wax pen) that is beginning to be substituted with other tools, such as brushes and sticks, or even splashes by using various tools, such as a cup, bottle and others. This batik technique produces special effects that are impossible to be produced with the exact

same form or motifs in the subsequent works [2].

The birth of *batik lukis* that requires techniques to present expression on the media is certainly not as smooth as it sounds. There were also ups and downs that hinder its development. Many craftsmen and art critics witnessed its potential. Indeed the batik technique offers many new artistic nuances arising from its nature such as wax cracks from the manufacturing process which cause deliberate scratches that are not possible to be made with other techniques. *Batik lukis* can bring batik art out of its conventional standards. Batik art has metamorphosed from a limited function and meaning towards multidimensional functions and meanings. Batik works in public are often surprising, because they often offer a variety of unexpected things. The value limits have been exceeded by artists who put their creativity into a work of art. In addition to batik as a craft, batik is also a technique, which is included in the group of *celup rintang* (resist dye). From this aspect, batik technique has the opportunity to become a medium for various creative expressions. This can be seen from the number of batik painters both in Indonesia and abroad who utilize batik techniques.

Batik lukis motifs that have developed until now are still in the form of abstract, geometric, and decorative patterns, as well as a combination of them can be produced from *batik lukis* techniques. *Batik lukis* techniques not only use brushes, but also coconut leaf sticks, even *canting* can also be used in making *batik lukis*. The pattern of *batik lukis* is more flexible than the pattern of *batik tulis* (traditional handdrawn batik). It can make *batik lukis* connoisseurs to have another impression on the art of making batik.

In the realm of modern art, *batik lukis* is classified as fine art. This means that *batik lukis* is created without considering its function but to be enjoyed in term of its beauty. Fine art has more freedom and usually high aesthetic value. It functions only as a display and cannot be used to facilitate our daily needs. In its development, batik art works are utilized by fashion designers as aesthetic elements of clothing, so there is a shift in the function of *batik lukis*, not as an aesthetic function but as a practical function as the appeal and differentiator of clothing products. The innovation was proven to boost sales of clothing products.

3.2. Batik Art in Sondakan

Sondakan is one of 11 sub-districts located in Laweyan district, Surakarta Municipality. This place has an area of 78.5 hectares, which is bordered by several other villages. The 10 other subdistricts are: Pajang, Laweyan, Panularan, Sriwedari, Penumping, Purwosari, Bumi, Kerten, Jajar, and Karang Asem. The border from the north to the east is Purwosari and Bumi subdistricts, while the south is adjacent to the Laweyan subdistrict and Pajang subdistrict to the west. The environment in Sondakan has structures that are quite unique and interesting. There are several houses that have various artistic styles such as Javanese, Chinese, European and Arabic houses. Each house is also surrounded by high walls to border the house from one another. This kind of architectural model is what makes people's houses close

together, and there are also formations of small alleys that can only be passed by two-wheeled vehicles or pedestrians. Nevertheless, the economic activities in this place are not limited by the environmental conditions. The daily work activities of the people run smoothly.

Sondakan village is an area of batik industry center that has its own charm. The attractions are in the form of tangible (material) and intangible (non-material) cultural properties as well as the batik trade industry. Tangible attractions include batik products and all its equipments, historical heritage buildings and ancient Indis-style houses (Javanese-European) owned by batik merchants, while the intangible attractions include cultural activities, batik making activities, and the community's social activities.

In the past, prior to administrative division of the area, Sondakan and Bumi were parts of Bumi Laweyan, which is a *perdikan* village, a village granted with special right of having no obligation to pay taxes, under the Kingdom of Pajang. It is said that the origin of Sondakan name comes from the name of the ancestor who lived in the village named Mbah Sondak. Sondakan Village consists of Sondakan, Premulung, Mutihan, Jantirejo, and Tegal Rejo Village neighborhood. Its area is approximately 4.4 km. It was originally classified as *Pebekalan* which means an area headed by a *Bekel*, village head, under the Government of Surakarta Palace. In 1917, the Administration of the Royal Government System changed Sondakan village status from being a *pebekelan* to Sub-District. In the past, the kingdom era, land area was called *Cacah / Bahu / Karyo*. The area of Sondakan was 7000 square meters. The royal workers at that time were paid using a *cacah / land use right* as salary. Because the land was leased later, the land was taken back by the palace and employee salaries were given in the form of money to date [3].

In 1926, the first Sondakan *Lurah* (head of village) was Raden Toto Wardoyo and in 1942 he was replaced by Mr. Siswo Suwito. Then in 1952 – 1965, it was led by Mr. Wiryo Surono and the current *Lurah* is Mr Dharji. Because it is a part of Bumi Laweyan, Sondakan Village has already been famous for its batik since colonial times, especially *batik tulis*. One of the people who pioneered batik crafts in Sondakan was KH. Samanhoedi who was the founder of Sarekat Dagang Islam (Islamic Trade Union/SDI) in 1991. He was a native who was also born in Sondakan and received the title of National Hero.

Most people assume that the batik center in Surakarta is located in Laweyan, while in fact, Laweyan batik center actually originated from Sondakan because, long ago, the batik craftsmen came from Sondakan, not from Laweyan. In Sondakan itself, there are many batik companies from large ones such as Batik Danar Hadi, Batik Kencana Ungu, to small scale ones / household convection [4].

Laweyan District is considered as the oldest pioneering area for batik before the existence of the kingdom rulers. This was also confirmed by Wijaya [5] stating that, "Laweyan is an ancient village that existed before the establishment of the Pajang kingdom." Some batik industry places in Laweyan district consist of various batik groups

that are widespread, including: Pajang subdistrict, Laweyan subdistrict, Panularan subdistrict, Sriwedari subdistrict, Penumping subdistrict, Purwosari subdistrict, Bumi subdistrict, Sondakan subdistrict, Kerten subdistrict, Jajar subdistrict, and Karang Asem subdistrict. Each of these places has a different batik history. For example, Sondakan Village has a history of contemporary batik art that was booming in the 70s. In the 1970s, batik groups in Sondakan Village, tried to start mass production of contemporary batik. Initially the production orders increased rapidly, but gradually there was a decrease. Of course the existence of contemporary batik business does not last long. Many of the craftsmen are out of business, but there are also a number of contemporary batik makers who have survived to this day. The role of batik in Sondakan Village has a big influence on the long journey in the development of classical batik art to contemporary batik art. The courage to change a standard in the rules of making classical batik art is done by contemporary batik makers. This standard change has become a distinct advantage for batik makers in the existence of contemporary batik to have a high selling value in the international market share by following current trends.

The visual forms of classical batik art began to be replaced with contemporary batik art. This happens because the forms and motifs of contemporary batik art are not completely bound. Motif and color freedom is more attractive to the wider community. Generally traditional batik motifs are dominated by animal and plant pattern. This, in *batik lukis*, has now shifted to abstract motifs such as clouds, temple reliefs, *wayang* (Javanese Shadow Puppet), and abstract motifs. In principle, seen from the form of contemporary batik art, *batik lukis* has two function, namely: as an applied batik art that tend to be usable as functional objects, and as a pure batik art that is only enjoyed in term of its artistic expression such as batik in the form of paintings. Contemporary batik art is different from batik in general, both in terms of techniques and creation ideas. The technique is very liberated in contemporary batik art making, with a reference to the previous idea. So many people think that contemporary batik art is the same as batik or *batik lukis*. *Batik lukis* is different from batik in general. It is more focused on: the creator's or artist's ideas, creation towards something else or different, and expressions as pure inner expressions. The originality in terms of creation forms and techniques is discovered by the artists themselves. Contemporary batik art or *batik lukis* has the functional value that leans to fine art. Even the idea to be expressed is freed according to the artist's wishes. Some batik groups or batik artist communities support the development of contemporary batik art in Sondakan Village. For the batik artist community, contemporary batik needs to be maintained and further developed in the future because the main goal of the contemporary batik artist community in Sondakan Village is to maintain batik art as a cultural heritage from the ancestors that needs to be preserved and introduced to the younger generation. *Canting Kakung* is a community of contemporary batik artists in Sondakan subdistrict that pioneered the birth of a new style of batik in Surakarta in the 70s. This community consists of

several members including: Bambang Tedeng, Chosaeri, Cuk Sugiarto, Lestari, Sumarsono, Suparman, Suratman, Tanto Suheng, Wiryanto, Warno Gombor, Perdana Kusuma, and others. Their main activities are joint work and management in contemporary batik production to make batik cloths that are full of contemporary style for the people of Surakarta. The changes in the style of contemporary batik art or known as *batik lukis* art are very different from the traditional or classical batik art which already has a special *pakem* (standards) in the making of its patterns. Contemporary batik art can actually be categorized as a style today. The shape of the motif depends on the expression of the artist in making it. The beauty of different motifs makes contemporary batik art much in demand by the public. One of the places that dared to start a new breakthrough in an effort to introduce contemporary batik art to the community was Sondakan Village, precisely in Tegalrejo, RT 02 / RW II. A pioneer named Tanto Suheng, an activist in the Canting Kakung Community, drives the birth of contemporary batik art in Sondakan Village.

In Kampung Sondakan to date, there are still at least eight productive batik craftsmen. All *batik lukis* works produced are oriented towards the functional aspect, especially for clothing. From the field research results, the following conclusions were obtained:

1. *Batik lukis* has a special market segmentation; those who have high artistic taste, coming from middle to upper economic levels, thus the motifs / patterns / colors are made elegant, special, and exclusive.
2. The target market for contemporary painting is aimed at young people, especially generation Y (born between 1975 and 1995) that is an important segment compared to the previous generations.
3. The making of *batik lukis* is more free, not tied to traditional batik patterns, thus facilitating regeneration of batik artisans.
4. Batik craftsmen in Sondakan already have good skills in making *batik lukis*, thus it can be a capital for the development of batik innovation.
5. Market strategy is not only through off sales, but also through rental techniques for office interiors, hotels and residences.
6. The designing innovative of batik product development emphasizes on functional value, especially for interior complement.
7. The development of market segmentation in the upper middle class is carried out through a rental system, especially as aesthetic element of the interior in hospitality industry.
8. Branding and promotion through various media needs to be done.

3.3. Developing *Batik Lukis* Crafts as Aesthetic Element for the Interior to Improve

The analysis of the condition and existence of *batik lukis* Sondakan, as well as the analysis of product development

opportunities to improve the image and welfare of batik SMEs in Sondakan, conclude several points that must be pursued immediately:

1. Creating *batik lukis* product designs for various interior elements
2. Marketing development through branding and promotion.

The designing of *batik lukis* as interior complementary products adapts Veronique Hillen's design thinking method which is adjusted to design process conducted by the author with the following description:

a. *Inspiration*

Getting inspiration was the initial step conducted by the author to identify problem, find solutions and collect data related to product design that will be made. The steps were outlined in 3 points namely Understand, Observe, and Point of View (POV). At the Understand stage, an understanding was made related to problems that need to be resolved in term of design. Understanding was conducted by exploring related data through literature and field reviews. After all the data had been collected, the process continued to the observation stage to look for supporting data for the modular product design using several methods such as browsing websites, library research, and online journal reviews. The supporting data were in the form of dimensions, ergonomics, material physical data, sustainability, system construction and typology. At the POV stage, a comparison of data related to trends and literature was conducted to determine the target problem, design target, and the most potential target market.

At the POV stage there were several findings including:

- 1) The design was adjusted to the tastes and abilities of the craftsmen.
- 2) Craftmen regeneration was conducted as an effort to conserve batik crafts
- 3) Formulation of *batik lukis* techniques and materials as creative interior aesthetic elements.
- 4) The formulation of a marketing strategy that is creative and effective on target

b. *Ideation*

Ideation is the stage of generating ideas on various aspects such as forms, materials, construction functions and etc. as a solution to the existing problems. The existing design ideas were managed using scamper brainstorming techniques through sketches, schematics, and documentation [6]. After going through several stages of development and sorting, the designs to be realized into prototypes were chosen. The idea visualization stage with 1: 1 scale was supported by a schematic that is equipped with more detailed explanations related to construction, functional systems, working drawings, and usage guidelines. The next step was the test step related to the concept, working drawings, strength and product quality. This test phase aimed to generate feedback / responses from mentors, examiners, and users [7].

Design alternative development materials are as follows:

1) Material

The materials used for interior aesthetic elements are different from the ones used for clothing. The choice / selection of materials for interior aesthetic elements was based on the following properties; strength, thickness, having strong texture, plastic, ergonomomy. Based on these considerations, several types of materials (fabrics) that were adapted to the function were chosen, including calico fabric, canvas fabric, and cotton fabric. Canvas cloth, for example, has the character of thick and stiff fabric with the texture of the crudest woven structure designed for the manufacture of vitrage, wall hang, and shutter, using canting (wax pen) and brush batik techniques. Calico fabric is a thinner fabric with plastic character designed to function as wall hang, lamp shade, and others using canting and brush batik techniques, as well as patchwork and trapunto techniques.

2) Technique

In addition to hot wax drawing and brush techniques, some products were given artistic touches using patchwork, slice and trapunto techniques. Patchwork technique is a technique of combining pieces of cloth that have been patterned (batik) with one another that have different motifs or colors and then combined into a new form.



Figure 1. Design and patchwork technique

Trapunto is one of sewing arts that has existed for a long time. This ethnic sewing art is done by filling the fabric with stuffing like dacron or cotton, so that the fabric will arise and swell according to the pattern made. The classic Trapunto technique is easy to practice but can be applied to objects around us such as chair cushions, jewelry boxes, placemats, bags, table lamp covers, and etc.



Figure 2. Example of an image with acceptable resolution

c. Implementation

Implementation was the final stage of the designing process that is divided into 3 steps, namely Storytelling, Pilot Project, and Business Model [8]. The storytelling stage was the implementation phase which explains the background and objectives of product designs. While the next stage, the



pilot project, was carried out to provide an overview to the public / users related to product through product branding and value. In the final stage, a business model was designed that can be used as a guide / illustration of the next commercial product production.

Figure 3. Implementation of wall hang design in a living room

4. Conclusion

Batik activities in Sondakan have become a part of the residents' lives, and even become the sole economic support for most local people. As time goes by, there is a shift in culture, economy, and politics which more or less affect the people's income. Further, among the young people in Sondakan, batik is not an option as the main source of livelihood. This problem causes the decline in Sondakan batik positioning compared to other batik areas in Solo such as Kampung Laweyan and Kauman.

The development of batik motifs and techniques in interior functions is an effort to revive the existence of Sondakan batik. From the results of field data analysis, several things were found namely;

1. The objective conditions of Sondakan batik include products, craftsmen, and the effect of product position-

ing on the society's economy.

2. The creation batik motif designs and technique development on *batik lukis* as interior aesthetic elements are conducted by adopting preexisting patchwork and trapunto techniques. The designation is based on: a). special target market segments that have high artistic taste, coming from the middle to upper economic level, thus the motifs / patterns / colors are made elegant, special, and exclusive. b). *Batik lukis* techniques tend to be more free, not tied to the traditional batik patterns, thus facilitating the regeneration of batik craftsmen. This is a strategy to maintain regeneration of batik craftsmen that have been considered to be less attractive to young people.
3. The dissemination of the findings is in the form of design application and marketing strategies.

The findings are in the form of references which can then be developed into a model. The implementation of the created designs serves a down-streaming activity of the research results. The result down-streaming activity can be conducted through training for batik craftsmen to improve high skills and creativity in creating up to date products. Finally promotions through various media to improve the image and existence of Sondakan batik need to be pursued.

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