

The Management of State-Owned Visual Artworks in Indonesia: Conservation of Visual Artworks in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study analyzed conservation practices of the state-owned visual artworks collection at the National Gallery of Indonesia and the Ministry of State Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia. Conservation practices in these two institutions are important to review in order to compare the availability of facilities and capabilities of each institution in conducting conservation of visual artworks; given the existence of state institutions that collect visual artworks but not having adequate facilities and capabilities to conduct the conservation of such works is an issue that continues to be reported. Data for this study is in the form of mass media coverage on the state-owned visual artworks collection. Data collection was conducted by recording issues of state-owned visual artworks conservation reported from 2011 to 2020. Conservation issues noted in this study include conservation efforts, conservation techniques, and the availability of conservators in Indonesia. Based on the results of content analysis towards the news, it can be concluded that conservation practices in Indonesia are still experiencing constraints in the form of lack of proper conservation space, inadequate knowledge of conservation techniques, and the absence of institutions focused on conservation practices. This can be seen from many news about the damaged state-owned visual artworks collection caused by inappropriate storage space conditions and unprofessionally storage.

Keywords: *conservation; mass media; state-owned visual artworks collection; restoration.*

1 Introduction

In general, the state-owned visual artworks collection of the Republic of Indonesia (KSRN-RI) is a collection of visual artworks acquired by the state with several procurement mechanisms. KSRN-RI is a very important and high-value country asset. Each year, financing related to the acquisition, procurement, and maintenance of state-owned goods is facilitated by the State Budget.

KSRN-RI is currently maintained by various institutions and ministries in Indonesia. Based on data owned by the National Gallery of Indonesia (GNI), the works of KSRN-RI are spread across ministries/institutions and State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN). GNI has approximately 1.847 visual artworks in 2018 [1], The Ministry of State Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia (Setneg RI) has 9.725 works, and many works of KSRN-RI are spread in several state museums under provincial and local governments. These institutions are largely not arts-focused, especially

conservation practices. It is assumed that the managing agencies for KSRN-RI differ from one another in the KSRN-RI management, which will impact on the condition of the works. As an illustration, non-visual artworks institutions (read: whose core business is not visual artworks management) that have KSRN-RI will likely depend heavily on the role of external parties in the management of their collections.

To date, there has not been a detailed inventory of KSRN-RI. Furthermore, the regulations governing an appointment of an agency to conduct data logging have not been formalized. The implication of this is the limited information available to the art public. Nevertheless, GNI lately has been doing an inventory of that spread KSRN-RI. GNI's strategy is to collaborate with Setneg RI in organizing KSRN-RI exhibition activities owned by the State Palace. Such cooperation in the exhibition allowed GNI to conduct an inventory of KSRN-RI managed by the State Palace.

So far, not many KSRN-RI that the public can enjoy. In general, new collections of GNI, Setneg RI, and some State-Owned Enterprises' museums are only accessible to the public; both in the form of temporary exhibitions and fixed exhibitions. These works are only a portion of the total number of the available KSRN-RI. Meanwhile, Aminuddin T. H. Siregar, a lecturer at the Faculty of Arts and Design of Bandung Institute of Technology (FSRD ITB), in *Kompas* daily (April 2, 2016) suggested that quite a lot of historical collections and archives are 'seized' by the state and difficult for the public to access [2]. This means that some other KSRN-RI are only stored in warehouses and only get light treatment; which is just waiting for the time for the work to look obsolete.

One of the impacts of KSRN-RI inventory incomprehensiveness was revealed in a discussion included in a series of exhibitions titled 'Transition Line', a KSRN-RI exhibition organized by GNI in August 2019. In the discussion, it was suggested that artwork from Indonesian painting maestro Raden Saleh was not well taken care of in one of the regional museums. In addition to the inventory problems, it seems to be related to the lack of understanding of KSRN-RI managers regarding the socio-historical context of the work they manage. Furthermore, the lack of understanding has implications for the lack of attention to KSRN-RI, especially which can be categorized as an old work of a maestro.

The above description has shown problems in the management of KSRN-RI; i.e. incomprehensive inventory, poor management agencies, and less competent human resources. In connection with this, this paper aims to analyze the news on conservation practices of KSRN-RI by various state agencies. To achieve that goal, this paper presents the results of content analysis on the news in mass media about KSRN-RI conservation activities in Indonesia in general and in GNI and Setneg RI in particular.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Conservation and Management of Collection Works

KSRN-RI management in this paper is seen through conservation practices, inventory, storage, and appreciation of artworks. Conservation itself covers efforts to restore, care, and study the value of its art objects. In the *Great Dictionary of Bahasa Indonesia*, the definition of conservation is regular maintenance and protection of things to prevent damage and destruction by preserving; preservation; conservation [3].

Conservation in this paper will be much mentioning about the restoration, preservation, and curation of conservation objects. In a book titled “Installation Art and the Museum” written by Vivian Van Saaze, it is explained about the frames and foundations of conservation history. As one of the foundations of artwork management, conservation activities are generally existing in every art management institution. Munos Vinas in Vivian (2013) stated that restoration and all other aspects of action to restore art objects in previous conditions are one of the aspects of conservation [4].

In the section “Key concept and Development in Conservation Theory and Practice” of this book, it is also described two opposite conservation paradigms from John Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc. John Ruskin held on to the opinion that conservation objects should be left as they are. That the authenticity of such conservation objects should be noted as they are. Rebuilding is not necessary, as it will change authenticity and change the signs of history. Viollet-le-Duc, meanwhile, thinks that conservation objects need to be restored as best as they can [4]. These two views differ on restoring ‘present value’ and ‘age value’.

In the development of restoration practices in the 19th century, the collaboration between art and science has taken place. In general, the use of physics and chemistry applied in the restoration practices of art objects has changed the attitude of conservators to be more technical than an understanding of conservation theories [5]. The view of ‘present value’ with its ‘age value’ is increasingly separate. On the one hand, the integrity and authenticity of conservation objects become very absolute to be maintained. On the other hand is, an assumption that the best way of conservation is through the application of science. The use of science in restoration practices seems more promising and based on objective pieces of evidence. Dykstra in his writing titled “The Artist’s Intentions and The Intentional Fallacy in Fine Arts Conservation” reinforces that the scientific approach to restoration practices can eliminate confusion and criticism of previous restoration practices which lacks systematic methods [6].

Based on the above literature studies, there are at least 3 types of conservation approaches, to make it easier, pay attention to figure 1.

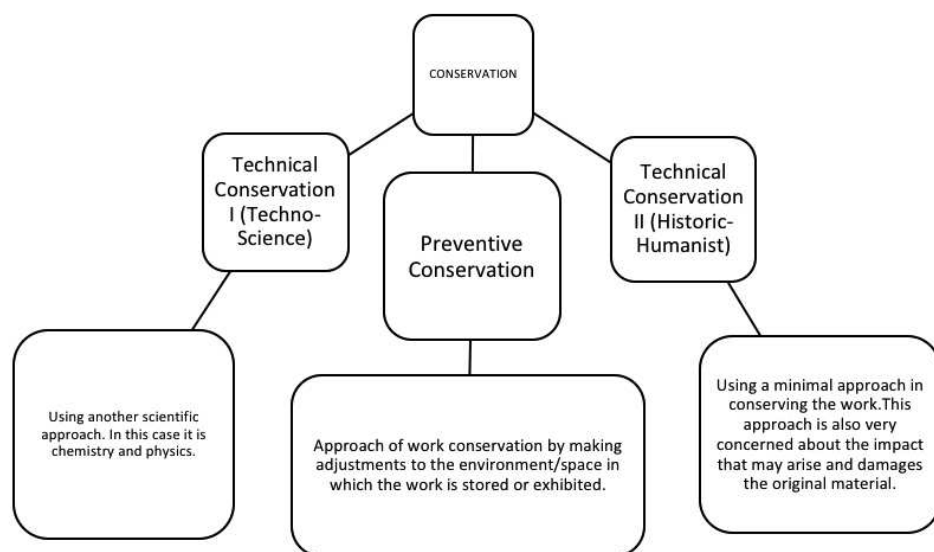


Figure 1. Approach in Conservation Practices (processed from various sources)

In addition to these three conservation approaches, derivatives of Technical Conservation that use other scientific approaches (techno-science) also think that it is necessary to clean the painting, for example lifting the dark layer of varnish to reveal the original colour. On the other hand, a more Historic-Humanist approach uses a very strict approach, taking into account the context and cultural dimensions in care. Both approaches certainly promote the authenticity and intent of artists.

The development of conservation practices towards cultural work as explained earlier became the basis for seeing the issue of conservation practices in Indonesia published in many media coverage. Aspects noted in conservation practices based on the above literature review include technical knowledge and human resource competencies of conservators.

3 Analyzing Mass Media Content

The content analysis approach is a widely used approach to conclude a text content, this can refer to the meaning, context, and intent contained in a message. As this approach evolved, content analysis was widely used in social science studies and media analysis [7]. Definitions of content analysis have been widely made, for example by Krippendorff (2004) who defines content analysis as a method of researching and finding valid conclusions based on context [8]. While Holsti (1969) states that content analysis is a technique of making conclusions by systematizing the character of a message [9].

The use of content analysis methods in this study is through the stage of collecting news sources from online media with the keywords “painting conservation” and “painting restoration”. The use of these keywords is selected to get the population of news data containing those keywords. Then from each keyword, we sort out the issues that have been reported related to conservation to then analyze the news content. The news media that we analyze is online mass media from 2011 to 2020. In some cases in collecting online mass media data, we often find the same articles in different site pages. We do not include this kind of thing in the calculation of content analysis.

The following is the calculation result of conservation issues reported in the media in Indonesia.

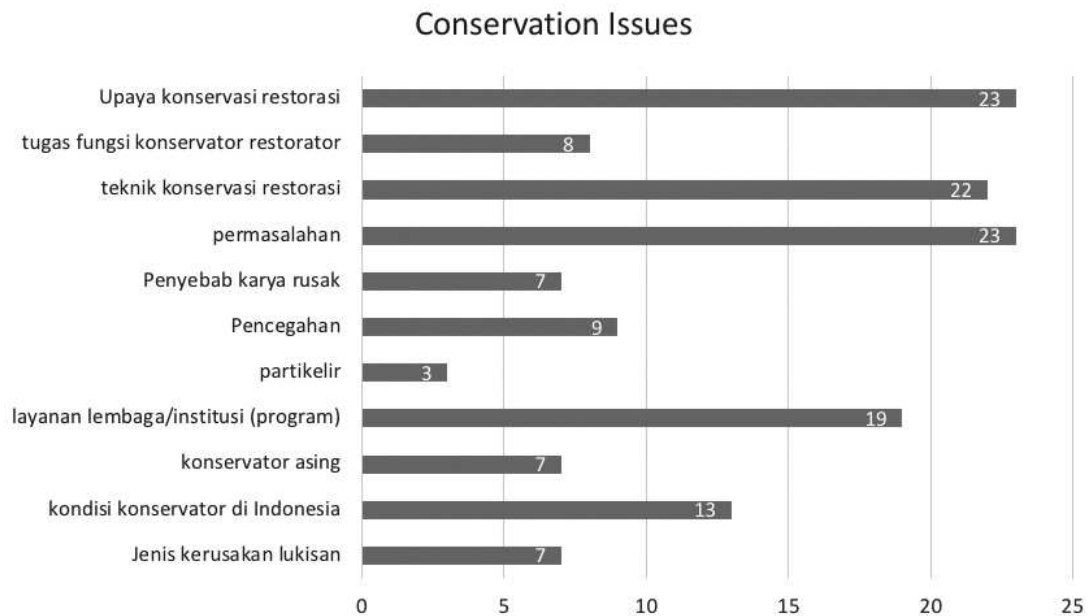


Diagram 1. Conservation issues from various online media in Indonesia
(Source: Processed from various sources, authors)

The most common problem raised by the media related to conservation practices in Indonesia is related to the lack of competent human resources in conservation affairs, non-standard conservation techniques, and the factor of the artist itself. From the artists themselves, there are also several kinds of materials used so that the artists have different work conditions with each other, although these works were made in the same year.

While institutional issues are also one of the issues that many alluded to by the media. This relates to the efforts and programs of certain institutions in preserving artworks.

3.1 Conservation Practices of Visual Artworks in National Gallery of Indonesia

The National Gallery of Indonesia (GNI) is within the organizational structure of the Director-General of Culture. Conservation practices in GNI environment include periodic restoration, documentation, and logging activities. Programs organized by GNI include conservation practices in general. Starting from storage, logging, curation, preservation, and restoration. Also, as a semi-museum institution, GNI hosts exhibition and publication functions.

At the beginning of GNI establishment concept, Mrs. Edy Sedyawati as Director-General of Culture gave authority to GNI as an institution that played a role in inventorying the state-owned visual artworks collection. The scope includes visual artworks located in ministries/institutions, to embassies in other countries [10]. The program initiated by the Director-General of Culture at the time included research and development, documentation and logging, appreciation and publication of artwork. The regulations have not changed much. However, until now GNI has not fully functioned. Especially in KSRN-RI collection management programs located outside the Ministry of Education and Culture.

GNI has a collection maintenance section that regularly performs maintenance every Monday

for light restoration. As for the major restoration GNI targets about 10 works each year. GNI has conservators, a work storage room equipped with temperature and humidity control devices, a conservation laboratory room, and a fixed and temporary showroom. So far GNI has recorded the collections in GNI environment. Logging, curation, and publication can also be accessed on its official page.

This section will present mass media coverage related to conservation practices held in GNI environment.

In 2015, the National Gallery of Indonesia held an exhibition titled “A Prince for All Seasons: Diponegoro in the Memory of the Nation from Raden Saleh to the Present” which took place on February 6 – March 8, 2015. In the series of exhibitions, GNI in cooperation with Arsari Djojohadikusumo Foundation (YAD) held a short training on painting conservation by presenting Susanne Erhards, a conservator who once restored three paintings of Raden Saleh titled “The Capture of Prince Diponegoro” (1857), “The Tiger Drinking” (1863) and “Dutch Military Patrol on Mt. Merapi and Mt. Merbabu” (1871) in 2013 [11].

In May 2019, GNI held a painting conservation socialization. At that time GNI collaborated with Indonesia Institute of the Arts Surakarta (ISI Surakarta). This socialization aimed to give the public a deeper understanding that conservation is a practice that aims to secure collections from the threat of extinction [12]. This socialization activity continued in November 2019 at Tembi Museum Yogyakarta in hopes of inspiring and motivating participants to preserve the visual artworks [13]. Based on the two coverages we get information about conservation practices agreed in GNI environment, as follows (Pustanto in isi-ska.ac.id, 2019):

1. Observation.
2. Diagnosis of cases.
3. Material testing.
4. Documenting both writing and photographing before and after performing actions.
5. Handling with the right techniques and materials. And it should not be forgotten that every action must be corrected.
6. Preparation of reports.

In the implementation of GNI tasks and functions, several obstacles need to be considerate. First, storage room conditions are not yet representative, making it vulnerable to damage and degradation of work conditions. Second, the condition of one of the buildings (building C) which is no longer in good condition, though this building is one of the storage rooms, conservation laboratory, and showroom [14]. Although in poor condition, GNI has reliable conservator human resources. This is proven by its consistency to restore 10-12 works per year. Based on existing data in 2018 GNI has restored 12 works and in 2019 a total of 11 works. This is also as reported in *lifestyle.bisnis.com* titled ‘National Gallery of Indonesia Restores 12 Artworks Throughout 2018’ [15] and *detik.com* titled ‘11 Paintings of the National Gallery of Indonesia Collection Restored’ [16]. The restoration was carried out independently while still in agreement with other conservator experts. This can be done because since 2018 GNI’s focus is to become an Indonesian visual artworks data centre that prioritizes the management aspect and management of collections (Conservation and Maintenance) [17].

3.2 Conservation Practices of Visual Artworks in State Secretariat

Conservation in the environment of the Ministry of State Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia is within the organizational structure of the Palace Management Bureau, Deputy for Palace Administration and Management, Presidential Secretariat. In this section, the authors try to gather news coverages on conservation practices organized by the Ministry of State Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia (Setneg RI).

There is not much news regarding conservation practices or in this case the restoration of visual artworks. However, there are several articles from the newspaper, relating as part of the cooperation of the state collection exhibition between the Museum of State Palace, under the Ministry of State Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia, with the National Gallery of Indonesia in 2017 in August. Wartakotalive on August 7 reported the news titled 'Here's How the Palace Cares for 1,5 Billion Paintings'. From the news, we get some information about conservation practices in the Presidential Palace under Setneg RI. The collection of the presidential palace is preventively conserved and in the event of damage, then curative conservation and restoration will be carried out to the collection [18]. The same news was also published in medcom.id titled 'The Palace Conserves the Painting by Basoeki Abdullah' [19], Okezone.com titled 'Conservation of Paintings By Basoeki Abdullah, The Palace: The Painting is able to Awaken the Love of the Motherland' [20], and CNN Indonesia with the title 'The Palace Conserves Painting by Basoeki Abdullah' [21]. The online news conveys relatively similar information. This can be understood when the source of the news comes from a press release published by the Presidential Secretariat Press Bureau.

In the press release, they explained conservation stage of Basoeki Abdullah's painting titled 'Flores Beach' collected by Bung Karno since 1942 which was estimated to be around 1,5 billion and at that time was being damaged by up to 70 per cent. The restoration steps are as follows (Presidential Secretariat Press Bureau through CNN Indonesia, 2017):

1. Light cleaning. The painting is cleaned using a brush and vacuum.
2. Cleaning using safe chemical solvents.
3. Reframing and tighten the slack canvas (restretching).
4. Inpainting.
5. Repainting by considering the shape-texture-color.
6. Retouching.
7. Varnishing.
8. Stripping (lifting overpaint/inappropriate paint).
9. Consolidation (reinforcement of brittle paint).

Regarding the exhibition of the Palace collection in 2017, there is a painting that failed to be physically displayed in the exhibition. It is a painting with oil paint media on canvas by Russian artist Makovsky, titled Pribite Nevesti or Traditional Russian Wedding, dimensions of 295 x 454 cm, made in 1881. The painting is very large and was restored in 2004. The painting was eventually displayed virtually through LED projection [22]. Still from the same source, budgeting for management and maintenance of state art objects has been budgeted and allocated to all five Presidential Palaces by Setneg RI. The self-budget is provided to take more quickly conservation measures without the need to wait for the central government.

Conservation practices at the regional Presidential Palace are governed by the Regulation of the Minister of State Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia No. 26 of 2015 on 'Standards of

Service of Presidential Palaces in the Region'. In its appendix it states that competency standards by conservators include knowing museum management techniques, maintenance of art objects, having a conservation certificate of art objects, having an appreciation for art objects, being able to compose framework related to budget projections, implementation schedules, activity support facilities, working methods, and the application of art object maintenance technology, and being able to operate Microsoft Office program computers and access the internet [23].

Conservation practices by the Ministry of State Secretariat also involve many private parties, such as Renate Kant Studio who was once invited by Goethe Institut Jakarta to restore Walter Spies painting collected by the Palace [24] and Arsari Djojohadikusumo Foundation which once restored paintings by Raden Saleh of the Palace collection. But it was prioritized for works with high levels of damage.

Conservation practices of Visual Artworks became a way to bridge the knowledge of visual artworks from earlier eras. The path taken by some museum-gallery institutions, in general, is to do preventive conservation. Similar things are done in both institutions, GNI (National Gallery of Indonesia) and MIN (Museum of State Palace). That is, by setting the temperature of the environment where the work is kept and coating the works with varnish to withstand degradation of visual artworks. Today's more advanced conservation also involves computerized technology and digitization of works. For example, in the practice of digitizing works in GNI that engage Google company to record details of their collections that can be enjoyed virtually.

In practice, based on mass media coverage of conservation practices in Indonesia, overseas conservators often regret previous conservation practices. For example, in the news titled "Restoration of Raden Saleh Painting, Keraton Jogjakarta Engage Experts from Italy" in Radar Jogja. Michaela Anselmini explained that the collection of Keraton Yogya has been maintained but in a non-professional way, which is only limited to maintaining its condition in order to remain good. Anselmini further explained that conservation previously used inappropriate materials so that total restoration is required [25]. Besides, the availability of infrastructure and also the knowledge related to conservation practices are still very lacking [26].

State Collection Paintings that have been restored and reported include:

1. Collection of State Palace: Raden Saleh's paintings titled "The Capture of Prince Diponegoro" (1857), "The Tiger Drinking" (1863) and "Dutch Military Patrol on Mt. Merapi and Mt. Merbabu" (1871) by Arsari Djojohadikusumo Foundation with restorator Susanne Erhards in 2013 [11].
2. Collection of Fatahillah Museum: S. Soedjojono's painting titled "The Battle Between Sultan Agung and Jan Pieterszoon Coen" (1973) by the Conservation Center of DKI Jakarta Tourism and Culture Office in collaboration with Heritage Conservation Center Singapore in 2008 [27].
3. Collection of State Palace: Basoeki Abdullah's painting titled "Flores Beach" (1942) by the Ministry of State Secretariat in 2017 [21].
4. Collection of Keraton Yogyakarta: Raden Saleh's Painting "Portrait of Sri Sultan HB VI and Kanjeng Ratu Hageng Painting (1968) by Michaela Anselmini [28] in 2019.
5. Collection of Visual Artworks and Ceramics Museum: Hatta Hambali's painting, geometric ornamental painting, Henk Ngantung's sketch "Profile of Mr. Mohammad Roem's Face" (1946), S. Soedjojono "Paris Sketch" (1973) by the Cultural Heritage Conservation Center of DKI Jakarta Tourism and Culture Office in 2019 [29].
6. Collection of State Palace: Egrovich Makovsky's paintings titled "Pribite Nevesti" or

“Traditional Russian Wedding” (1881) and “Vakchanalia” (1891) by Vladimir N. Anisimov in 2004 [22].

Conservation practices are an effort to preserve the art objects of cultural heritage to the next generation. Conservations conducted by some of the state institutions involve many expert conservators from abroad. As stated in many news, conservation practices conducted independently (locally) to date still need to be improved, both in terms of methods and techniques. So the effort to bring in conservators from abroad with huge financing feels worthy while being matched with very high-value collections.

4 Conclusion

Based on the mass media content analysis that has been done, conclusions can be drawn towards two aspects often reported in the mass media:

1. Human Resources of conservation in Indonesia
 - a. Technical knowledge
 - b. Conservation training institute
2. Institution Programs and Services
 - a. Physical facilities
 - b. Cooperation between institutions

While based on the emerging news, conservation practices in these two state institutions have similar tendencies. It is preferable to be preventive and then to restore if necessary. Conservation practices in both state institutions, based on the collected news show a growing lack of technical knowledge and restoration methods. Efforts to restore paintings are also one of evidence that preventive conservation practices are not optimal in the run. Therefore, when involving expert conservators from abroad it is revealed that facilities for the conservation of artworks are inadequate. With limited facilities and availability of human resources, collaborating with private and foreign conservators is what should be done to safeguard cultural heritage from the threat of extinction, while conservation institutions in Indonesia have not been fully developed.

In general, based on the content analysis of media coverage related to the issue of artworks conservation in Indonesia, the problem started from the lack of attention of artists and collectors (private or institutions) in providing a proper space to care for the artwork. The use of humidity and temperature control technology in collection rooms is often overlooked. Then periodic maintenance, which is often done by human resources with no proper knowledge in caring for the work, such as a simple thing: using gloves. Next is, the damaged work that was restored by a non-expert, so there are unnecessary interventions such as repainting, colour piling, and beautification. When conditions get worse, then collectors call experts both from home and abroad. At this stage, professional certification of conservators is needed, in addition to the long experience of caring for the artwork.

Therefore, the existence of institutions that focus on conservation practices is absolutely needed in Indonesia. Competent conservators are required to maintain Indonesia's valuable visual artworks collection.

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3. Head of Palace Management Bureau, Ministry of State Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia.

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