

Pracimayasa Building of Pura Mangkunegaran, Surakarta

A Review from Semiotics of Visual Communication Study

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Abstract: Interior design is a work of applied art that not only talks about the problem of physical function, but also reflects the meanings to be conveyed to others. Thus, this study attempts at discussing meanings reflected from the interior of Pracimayasa building in Pura Mangkunegaran as a traditional Javanese house building specialized for the princehood lives. In answering the research questions, this study is directed by reading the signs indicating the shapes, name, and layout of Pracimayasa building interiors. In addition, this study employed a critical approach through the theory of Deconstruction and Semiotics. The data were obtained through literature study, observation, and interview. Data analysis was done by qualitative data analysis. The result of research showed that (1) The Pracimayasa building's interior is manifested as an interior design work featuring ethnic forms in a modern atmosphere to enhancing one king's leadership among other kings vorstenlanden in the event of confusion in determining the direction of art and culture, signifying a symbol of glory. (2) Pracimayasa name is derived from the phrase omah kulon has a private meaning as the residence of the Mangkuegaran royal family. (3) The location of Pracimayasainterior building is chosen based on the consideration of the secret area to build a wider communication with relatives and colleagues at the time the Pura already has pendhapa, paringgitan, dalem ageng, bale warni which mark the symbol of the Mangkunegaran noble lifestyle.

Keywords: interior; Java; Mangkunegaran; sign; Pracimayasa ;text

Introduction

Pracimayasa building is part of the whole building kapangeranan located in Pura Mangkunegaran. Pracimayasa building is a typical room as well as residential space, and is considered as the typological manifestation of Javanese house building structure, consisting of: resting room, living room, making up room, bathroom and dining room. Job Ave (1991: 14) reveals that in the middle of Pura Mangkunegaran right behind dalem ageng there is a residence Mangkunegaran family that characteristically quiet atmosphere like a house in the countryside is Pracimayasa.

As a typical building of princehood '*kapangeranan*', Pura Mangkunegaran has a core building comprising of pendapa, paringgitan, dalem ageng, on the other hand, it also has bale peni as a place of kasatriyan and bale warni as a place of keputren. Pracimayasa building's interior in Pura Mangkuegaran remains mysterious to common people who know about the existence, and the residing meanings out of its interior's design. The Pracimayasa building's interior is technically assumed as readable texts from its signs including the types, name, location, and the embodiment of Pracimayasa building.

The science about signs is the so called Semiotics. This science is applicable to many disciplines, not to mention the architecture, fine arts, and interior design. A design work which reflects functions is embodied out of certain visual elements (lines, colors, shapes and textures), all of which presents a readable composition up to producing interpretation, at the end the research goals and intentions become what to convey. Visual signals on the interior need to be analyzed, in this case, semiotics is considered most appropriate as a theoretical approach.

Umberto Eco theory of interpretation is considered most appropriate in analyzing the interior meanings of Pracimayasa building of Pura Mangkunegaran Surakarta.

Method

This semiotic interior study on Pracimayasa building is a typical cultural studies. The study includes critical thinking system, Pracimayasa building's interior is positioned into a textual phenomenon by which the residing meanings are interpretable. This study attempts at reading or unveiling the meanings, thus the data include into the qualitative data which are descriptively presented. The theory of deconstruction and semiotics of visual communication are applied to unveil

The study used a critical approach to the theory of deconstruction and the semiotics of visual communication. Deconstruction is not a simple dismantling of unloading things, however, it is a re-parsing for what has happened, in search of new meaning among the cracks of the text by means of delays of prior meaning. These signs become free signs, free speech, language which is free of meaning and automatically bring up various, multiple meanings (Lubis, 2004, p. 112-114). Semiotics of communication as the center of attention is the theory of the sign system (code) as a means of communication (Hoed, 2014, p. 36-37). In a written text case, communication occurs at different places and times, thus a situation by which the sender (author) thinks of may not the same within a communication. Thus, the recipients shall never share similar things to the other (Zaimar, 2014, p. 14-15). Communication produces not always a single meaning, many things affect the communication.

According to the theory of semiotics visual communication, the meanings of sign are interpreted through semiotical processes. The semiotical process is a process of combining entities with the other, this is so called signification. Additionally, it produces an endless series of relationships, an interpretation becoming a representament, becoming an interpretant and becoming a longer representative of adifinitium. Gerakan demikian dinamakan proses semiosis tanpa batas, tidak berujung pangkal (Broadbent, 1980, p. 382-383, Ardhiati, 2005, p.47-48). Such a movement is called the infinite semiotical process, endless (Broadbent, 1980, p. 382-383, Ardhiati, 2005, p. 47-48). Similarly, what happens to the interior of the Pracimayasa building has traces of its embodiment. The data collection uses technique of observation, library studies, and interviews. The data was sourced from Pracimayasa building's interior of Mangkunegaran according to its embodiment, type, name, as well as the location.

Results and Discussion

Pracimayasa building located inside a hedge fence is configured with other buildings at Pura; it signifies part of the building at Pura Mangkunegaran Surakarta. Pura Mangkunegaran is a traditional house building associated with the Javanese king's house (Utomo, 1988, p. 94). Dipokesumo once explained, that Pura Mangkunegaran is a traditional Javanese house building of the king's family specialized for *kapangeranan* (interview, August 2016). In the traditional Javanese house building for kings and nobles, there are considered core buildings, consisting of *dalem ageng*, *paringgitan*, and *pendhapa*. At the core building there is the so called *dalem ageng* in addition to *petanen*, which is traditionally considered sacred place (Mangunwijaya, 1988, p. 105). *Dalem ageng* has always been located at the middle and is surrounded by other sustaining buildings (Soeratman, 1989, p.25-37).

However, the Pracimayasa building's interior importantly represents the Mangkunegaran's interior style. The uniqueness on the aspects of architecture, space, and interior elements of

Pracimayasa share some similarities with those of other buildings, including pendapa in Mangkunegaran and Kasunanan Surakarta as a representative of the Javanese houses interior style (Scoppert, 1997, p. 87-88). The statement indicates the important position of Pracimayasa building's interior as a prevailing interior style in Mangkunegaran.

Thus, to be able to understand the meanings of Pracimayasa interior, there is the need for further reading, i.e., a thorough reading on the Pracimayasa interior's historical embodiment, contextual circumstance and spirit of its establishment. Pracimayasa building consisting of ward (*bangsal*) for meeting rooms, dining rooms, dressing rooms, bedrooms, and bathrooms. Having understood from the existing type of space indicates the existence of a typological space as a house's structure, thus its existence signifies a house within a palace or pura / 'Pracimayasa building is a building inside the house / palace'. This what distinguishes a *kapangeranan* 'princehood' house in Kasunanan.

The Pracimayasa interior building is completed by KGPAA Mangkunegara VII by filling the entire interior in accordance with the type of space done a year before his wedding with Gusti Ratu Timur from Yogyakarta Sultanate. Pracimayasa building was used to accept the presence of Gusti Ratu Timur at the time she was brought into Mangkunegaran. On the first day of the wedding in Mangkunegaran, after the traditional ceremony was over, Gusti Ratu Timur was escorted by Mangkunegara VII to this room (Citrosentono, MS No. MN 251, p. 154). Pracimayasa was primarily built to honor Gusti Ratu Timur's family guests (Manuscript Mangkunegaran No. 84, 1972, p. 5-7).



Figure 1. Bangsal Pracimayasa's Furniture Layout at the Dinner Tour (Sunarmi: March 25, 2015)

At that time, right before Mangkunegara VII was married to Gusti Ratu Timur, there were occurring similar events related to *Java Instituut* (Larson, 1990, p. 107). Larson further explains another way Prangwadana expressed his leadership is by being a major exponent in his idea of establishing a *vorstenlanden* federation in addition to initiating *Java Instituut*. The establishment of *Java Instituut* was initiated due to the occurring confusion between art and culture. The period of Mangkunegara VII's rulling was in the era of Paku Buwana X, the contact towards western culture was closely growing. Sunan accepts the presence of Western culture. His sons and daughters were sent to Europe for school and housed in Dutch families, meant to keep their sons and daughters adjusted to the new age, because of that their position would remain socially high. However, the sending of his sons and daughters to the West made them unfamiliar with Javanese cultural works and the triumphs of some Javanese kings who were rulling to certain kingdoms in ancient times (Soeratman 1989, p. 181-182). In Mangkunegaran, there was a great occurring linguistically borrowing event of language elements from Western culture such as fashion clothing, food menu, party organizing, education, engineering advancement.

The presence of Western culture was finally perceived to have undermined the noble values and norms of Javanese lives. For it was visible from Javanese values and moral live degradation due to the inclusion of Western culture in the land of Java as illustrated by the poet Ranggawarsita in *Serat Kalatidha* and further quoted by Soetomo Siswokartono, which reads: "Mangka darajating praja wus kawuryan wus sunya sunyi" / That the country has lost its dignity and looks nothing before its people (Siswokartono, 2003, p. 507). In such a situation, Mangkunegara VII initiated a movement that sought to study the culture of ancient times to determine which direction would be further developed in the future (Mangoenkoesoemo, 1939, p. 45-46). The movement initially proposed by KGPAA Mangkunegara VII and was called *Java Instituut* (Larson 1990, p. 107). The movement result was marked by the reviving of Javanese cultural lives as were seen in various artworks i.e., building, *karawitan*, dance, theatrical, and Javanese literature. The Western culture might not remain damaging the Eastern culture if the Javanese were able to culturally and normatively adapt anything came out of Western culture without necessarily losing their own.

This as can be seen in one of the type and shape of building works relevant with the visual interior of Pracimayasa building as initiated by KGPAA Mangkunegara VII and Thomas Karsten as the architectural initiator. The archipelagic ethnic variation was internalized as an interior element of Pracimayasa building to be adjusted with modern materials and construction. The rustic atmosphere of Bali, the picture of Nusantara performing arts were presented into specific ornamental themes nuancing the dining room. The shape, size, and layout of the chairs in the Pracimayasa ward are especially designed taking into account the hierarchical concept of placing people according to their positions. Attitudes and gestures of the bathing decoration and make up style were according to *stimpuh* referred to the basic embodiment of shape and size nuancing the interior elements in the building. The visual embodiment indicates a strong desire and intention of Mangkunegara VII in reviving the ethnic Nusantara embodiment as materialized through the interior style.

KGPAA Mangkunegara VII maintained specific shape and location likewise the *pendapa*, *paringgitan*, and *dalem ageng* into the sustaining space at the core building of traditional Javanese house. The attitude as shown from the shape and location of the core building was primarily maintained without necessarily demanding further changes as other buildings of *kapangeran*. To accommodate a number of urgently conducted activities, then the Mangkunegaran initially built Pracimayasa building. According to Hari (interview, August 9, 2017) Mangkunegaran understood its position as a Mataram dynasty which role is preserving the Javanese-Mataram customs by positioning the core building of *pendhapa*, *paringgitan*, *dalem agen* as a manifestation of honoring the Javanese sanctity. These three buildings might not always fit to accommodating the needs of Mangkunegaran, for the Mangkunegara I had an open nature for the progress of Mangkunegaran advancement.

Kuntawijawa (2004, p. 43) explores that the typical Western culture thought and attitudes adopted by Mangkunegaran indicate its being openness and let people sitting face to face at chairs, receive the Dutch guests serving them with tea and on Sunday regularly, and economic progress. For that reason it is deemed necessary to build a building that can accommodate these activities without having to sacrifice the core building's position. However, it is necessary to understand tea is not just a European tradition. When it comes into honoring for guests, the Javanese people and tradition have their own way as known *aruh*, *gupuh*, *rengkuh*, *lungguh*, and *suguh* (Sutarjo, interview, July 2017). Tea dinner activity is a typical Javanese cultural preservation in the present, since it has been a part of the Javanese tradition to respect the guests by giving a treat or banquet. The attitude is traceable from a quote about *wewarah Jawi* derived

from Serat Centini which reads: “*titikane mitra darma, kaladuking panyuba-suba/ limitless treatment can be granted to a true friend*” (Rukmana, 1987, p.68). The meaning of the quotation is interpretable that the Javanese positioned their guests as a good friend as it signifies with respect by way of welcoming and having treat them in bes way. The welcoming attitude shown from attitude of being content in sacrificing time and materials is a manifestation of how one should behave with the best etiquette to the other people. That is why it is a Javanese tradition, if in relationship *sonjo* (visiting) and *tinamu* (accepting the presence of guests) there should be accompanied with welcoming the guest in best treatment that served with banquet.

For that reason, it is quite possible since Mangkunegaran wishes to build a broad communication with relatives as well as colleagues that demand the existence of secret private space. Thus, Pracimayasa was built and selected amidst the north-west building rows. In addition to the core building of Pracimayasa is surrounded by other sustaining buildings, thus the Pracimayasa building is viewed from a very closed location among other buildings. Pracimayasa building which is placed in the right rear position designates a very private place that is private, in Javanese society it is known as *gandhok tengen*.

In regard of the name, Pracimayasa derived from two words of *pracima* and *yasa*, *pracima* is *kulon* and *yasa* is *gedhong* or *omah* ‘house’ (Atmodjo, 1994, p. 57). The word *pracima* is used to describe the *Qiblah* through the dialogue between *Ismaya* and *Manikmaya* in *Serat Pramayoga*, *Ismaya* describes the *Qiblah* for Javanese: *purwa* (east), *nawitri* (southwest), *utara* (north), *narasunya* (northeast), *pracima* (west), *byabya* (southeast), *raksira / duksina* (south), *kaneya* (northwest), *gegana* (above), and *pratala* (below) (Endraswara, 2006, p.8). *Omah* is a place of residence in Javanese culture, thus from its name signifying an important position of the Pracimayasa building is the Mangkunegaran family residence located at the western side of the building composition at Pura Mangkunegaran. Pracimayasa building can be seen in the picture below.

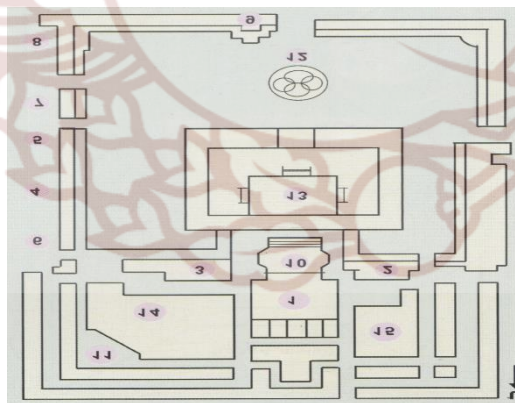


Figure 2. The Location of Pracimayasa Building

J. van Gelderen expressed his response towards the attitude of Mangkunegara VII in determining the direction of Javanese culture. The attitude is considered correct and precise, Mangkunegara VII may initiate and set a good example, such attitude is not an easy matter. Mangkunegara VII is a modern colonial leader and the driving force of Javanese cultural advancement with Western ways along with their application. The Javanese cultural values are preserved in addition to other Eastern peoples in determining their own destiny (Mangoenkoesoemo, 1939, p. 146-147). This is traceable from the embodiment of typical space, name, location, and visual manifestation of the Pracimayasa’ interior building.

Conclusion

This study reveals that the Pracimayasa building interior is adopted the archipelago ethnic embodiment nuanced with modern materials and techniques into high value artwork, which was initially used to strengthening the power relation of the king at that time against the other kings *vorstenlanden* as a symbol of glory in the moment there is confusion in the direction between the art and culture in the archipelago. The naming selection and location of the Pracimayasa building's interior positioned the residence in the secret area signifying a private symbol. Its embodiment in Pura Mangkunegaran is considered as a step to maintaining the grandeur's tradition of traditional Javanese housing core building *pendhapa*, *paringgitan*, *dalem ageng*, *bale warni* as well as signifying for symbols of the Mangkunegaran noble lifestyle, which is essentially different from other *Kapangeran* houses in Surakarta.

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