

## DEVELOPING ARTS APPRECIATION IN THE PANDEMIC: STUDENTS EXPERIENCES OF ONLINE ARTS COLLABORATION

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### ABSTRACT

*Arts and arts practices have been affected by the constraints of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Arts learning and teaching activities in the subject of art appreciation in Duta Wacana Christian universities have also been disrupted, necessitating online collaboration. There are not many studies being done that evaluationg arts learning and teaching during pandemics. Therefore this research is playing the role to contribute to the issue. This research spesifically focus to evaluate the learning and teaching method and also the concepts connected to arts practice in general and in the contextual arts learning and teaching activities in university setting. This result shows that during a situation where in-person classroom instruction is not possible, students were still succesfull increasing their appreciation of arts. Students were engaged by collaborative art projects where they had to develop a concept and produce a digital product to be shared and critiqued in an online forum. Data from a post-project mixed method survey, students indicated that this process of developing digital products enhanced their appreciation of arts. This project demonstrates that online collaborations in the arts assists in the development of forms of art appreciation in students from a variety of majors. Arts collaboration can be done via online technology by non-arts students. These types of collaborations are useful in encouraging students to adapt academically and artistically*

**Keywords :** *art appreciation, pandemic, online collaboration*

### INTRODUCTION

Arts and arts practices have been affected by the constraints of the global COVID-19 pandemic. According to General Directorate on Culture cited from online newspaper (Detiknews, Liputan6, Antara, Republika), it is estimated that around 58,000 artist from various arts scenes have been affected by the pandemic in Indonesia. The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture through the Directorate General of Culture have even planned a relief fund to provide aid to artists who are now unemployed because of the pandemic.

During pandemic period in 2019 to late 2020, the venues that artists rely on to make a living from their work are closed. Performing arts, such as live concerts taking

place in the stadiums and theaters are not feasible given rules around social distancing. During the pandemic, many arts related activities have been relocated to online spaces. This situation has also impacted arts curriculum and teaching activities in universities. Therefore it is urgent to evaluate the concepts connected to arts practice in general, especially arts learning and teaching activities in the university setting. In moving to remote learning in digital settings, there is a need to re-evaluate arts practices, the definition of the arts, and the definition of the stage as an artistic space.

In the study of arts and humanities, art is seen to reflect the life-world of human beings. Arts are also an element of culture (Prameswari et al., 2020). Arts reflect the everydayness of life. That means that discussions of the arts also touches on the broader cultural dimensions of contemporary society. From that stand point, Duta Wacana Christian University seeks to promote a love for humanities through the arts. Since 2006, The Faculty of Education of the Department of Humanities has offered student Art Appreciation as a subject of study.

Art Appreciation as a concept of study is popularly understood as a synonym of approbation. Approbation itself generally related to affection or even love. To appreciate here can be defined as liking. According to Noel Carroll, a contemporary philosopher of art, the conception of art appreciation can be traced back to 18th century philosopher David Hume. According to Hume, humans act as observers of art and judge works of arts through the way we experience them (Carroll, 2016). For Hume, our judgment of taste is subjective and fundamentally concerned with our attention to the piece of art (Hume, David - Oxford Reference, n.d.). Our attention to the object infers whether we like or 'not-like' an object.

The challenge for the lecturers who are teaching Arts Appreciation relies on convincing students to like art works. The other side lecturers have to evaluate is the learning outcomes in order to develop the curriculum and improve Art Appreciation. As we have practiced, examined and concluded, in acquiring arts appreciation students need to do study on arts. The first stage is by literature review on history and specific concepts, and theory of art studies in the classroom. The second phase is the stage of aesthetic experience that is designed so that students can experience being an audience in a set of live arts performances. Third, the artistic phase, is where students themselves create the art work. The experiment of the third phase generates a deeper appreciation than the previous two.

## METHOD

This study is a classroom action research. This study based on experiment in shifting the art appreciation course to project based learning. The new approach includes new teaching methods, new learning activities and theoretical contents in the of Art Appreciation course syllabus. This effort has intention to achieve what we as the lecturers have termed "deeper appreciation". This research, is based on a semester-long learning process. In the process of learning as an aesthetic experience, and the artistic experience, students are the subject of this research. Art Appreciation is a humanities selective course, therefore the students who took this class are from various major and faculties in Duta Wacana Christian University. Research main tool in gathering the data is relied on questionnaire. This study uses the Likert Scale to test students' attitudes, opinions and behaviors toward class activities and their art projects. It was completed by a total of 67 students from two classes. The questionnaire

was designed to measure student opinions, attitudes, and behaviors toward art. This questionnaire also helped the lecturers to evaluate the content (practice and concept) of the syllabus and class scenario in the learning process for future development.

At the end of the semester students in two sections of the Art Appreciation class were asked to fill in a survey. Each class contained 35 students or less. Group A, the first class, consisted of 35 students. Group B, the second class, consisted of 32 students. We used the data from the questionnaire filled out by the students to interpret both quantitatively and qualitatively that artistic experience assists in the development of art appreciation in students from a variety of majors. To understand the students' perception and sense of appreciation, the questionnaire uses the Likert Scale. According to Sugiyono, (2016) the Likert Scale is useful to measure attitude, opinion, and perception of phenomenon. The result of the quantitative measurement was then qualitatively interpreted to find the underlying meaning and significance of this learning process through the art projects. We also observe qualitatively their experience through monitoring and evaluating their weekly reports. This research was conducted from the first class meeting in February 2020 until July 2020. Student's collaborative projects were completed within six weeks. We planned to exhibit the collaborative projects in the UKDW hall, but this was not feasible due to the restrictions on gathering because of pandemic. Therefore, we shifted to using Youtube and social media as platforms to promote the arts to university audiences and the public at large.

There are three stages in this new course syllabus. The first stage is learning art through reading textbooks, reviewing, watching art works from the internet. Students are given four basic concepts to understand the arts. The first concept is the element of culture. Classes contained an elaboration of what is art, and how it functions in certain societies. Second stage is exposing student to be audience of art event. This stage seeks to develop their appreciation of art by experiencing live performing arts. Students were asked to watch live performances of collaborative work featuring music, poetry and dance. The third stage of the class is where students acquired artistic experience through creating their own original ideas and produce their own project. During the first half of the semester, students gain knowledge and an introduction to arts and arts scenes, basic concepts of arts, theories of arts, and to a sufficient review of literature on social and cultural contexts of arts (Schabmann et al., 2015). This includes arts in popular culture, specifically in Indonesia. The curriculum is designed to have three stages that have been mentioned earlier. The first stage is learning art through reading textbooks, reviewing, watching art works from the internet. The second stage is to add to their sense of the arts by engaging them to watch live performing arts. The third stage is for them to acquire artistic experience through creating their own original works.

In this last stage, the students are divided into small groups. Within their groups, they are asked to come up with ideas and concepts. They are trained to think artistically. Students choose which art form (poetry, painting, music, spoken word, animation, visual art) to focus on for their collaborative projects. When they are certain about the concept and their chosen art form, they have to produce a story board and a script. They submit the weekly report about their progress. We as the lecturers train them to have a broader understanding that meaningful signs are everywhere in everyday life. That understanding includes the basic study of signs

from semiology so that they can translate the scripts into detailed expression of their art works.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This research is about finding out students' opinions and beliefs in order to show that they are increasing their art appreciation. The process of learning in class through doing art projects reveals their development in art appreciation. In the middle of the semester we observed growth in the students' appreciation for art. Here are the three stages:



Figure 1.



Figure 2.

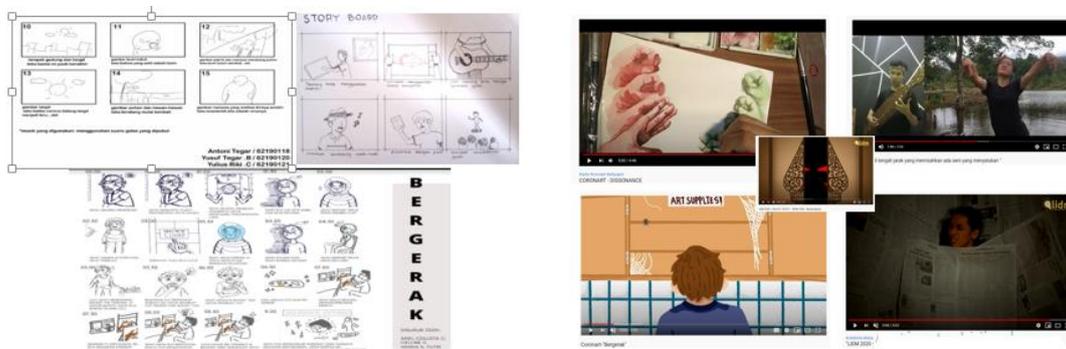


Figure 3.

Figure 1 to 3 display the stages of learning process in art appreciation class using project based learning method. Photos and screenshots taken during the course of semester activities. In Figure 1 we can see that the first stage is learning art through reading textbooks, reviewing, watching art works from the internet. Students are given four basic concepts to understand the arts. The first concept is the element of culture. Classes contained an elaboration of what is art, and how it functions in certain societies. Understanding art through socio-cultural aspects is based on understanding symbolic interaction. As Clifford Geertz said, man is an animal suspended in webs of significance that he himself has spun (Geertz, 1977). Understanding art can utilize this notion of culture. The analysis of art should be an interpretative endeavor to search for meaning. In the attempt to do that, students have to comprehend how signs function in our culture. The process of learning basic semiology in this way is beneficial for students.

The second stage of the class seeks to develop their appreciation of art by experiencing live performing arts. Students were asked to watch live performances of collaborative work featuring music, poetry and dance. Students had an opportunity to discuss the performances with the artists directly. They were able to observe and understand the processes behind an art performance event. This stage was purposely

designed for students to reach the “aesthetical experience”. This is the second condition to assure students reach the status of liking art. Experience is always richer than knowledge derived from cognitive capacity (Melnick et al., 2011). This stage in the class gave students the ability to engage with artworks comprehensively.

The third stage of the class is where students acquired artistic experience through creating their own original ideas. This stage had two main activities: first, they conceptualized their own original idea for their art projects. Second, they produced their own projects working in small groups. Production is at the heart of making art. In art scenes and fields of study production is important for artistic action and artistic exploration. In this last stage, each group has to come up with the concepts that following their script and storyboard as evidence of well planned art work. Students were instructed to follow the story boards and scripts they wrote to guide their production process. These students came from a variety of majors, and displayed some interesting ways of describing art. We observed that through this process, the students improved their abilities to describe what art is, and to express the quality of art in more advanced ways. How they narrated and curated their projects was a window into their subjective experience. Despite the fact that art appreciation is related to “liking“ the arts are still about subjectivity. In observing the learning process of the students some insights emerged. The common understanding of arts appreciation is that is can and should be based on facts. By that sense arts appreciation isn’t a completely subjective perception. It involves objective knowledge. What is objective is the intended purposes of the works (Carroll, 2016). Students objectively evaluated the appropriateness, adequateness, and their evaluation of art itself as the object. For Noel, this is called the “art-evaluative heuristic”.

Tabel 1. Survey Result (Questionnaire Completed by 67 students)

Questions	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
Did this project improve your appreciation of art	52.24	46.27	1.49	-	-
Studi art should be done thorough experiential project	20.9	40.3	23.88	5.97	2.99
It is enough just to observe when studying art	2.99	11.94	32.84	43.28	8.96
Theories and concepts of art are important in art project	40.3	47.76	8.96	-	-
Practice is more important than theories and concepts	23.88	25.37	32.85	14.93	2.99
Technical skill is more important than the concepts and theories	16.42	19.4	37.31	23.88	2.99

This questionnaire uses the Likert Scale to test students' attitudes, opinions and behaviors toward class activities and their art projects. It was completed by a total of 67 students from two classes. The questionnaire was designed to measure student

opinions, attitudes, and behaviors toward art. This questionnaire also helped the lecturers to evaluate the content (practice and concept) of the syllabus and class scenario in the learning process for future development. The quantitative result shows that the class's level of art appreciation improved. 52.42 % of the students strongly agreed that the art project they did improved their appreciation of art. 42.27 % agreed that the experience of doing an art project improved their sense of art appreciation. 40.3 % agreed and 20.9% strongly agreed that studying art should be done through experiential projects. This is a positive indication that students believe that through the experience of doing an art project, they increased their understanding of art. Therefore this survey demonstrates a positive change in their in level of art appreciation.

Evaluation of the learning process of art appreciation is about testing the class activities for a semester. At the end of the semester, students expressed diverse feelings about learning art appreciation. The results from the survey demonstrate that 43.28% disagree that studying art is only about observing the literature and seeing arts. 32.84% gave neutral answers, answering that art appreciation can be developed both by observing art and creating art projects. The last two questions on the questionnaire support the idea that practice is more important than learning about the arts only by reading and understanding the arts through thought exercises. 23.88% strongly agreed and 25.37% agreed that the practice of creating art is important in developing art appreciation. Some other questions show different preferences between skill based art and concept based art.

This result and finding are bringing up more question about art appreciation when art is mediated by technology. Art Appreciation as a concept of study of is generally understood through the concept of "attention" - liking and not liking. In our attention to objects, we rely on our judgment of liking it or not liking it. The liking judgement is merely subjective. Through this research we found affirmed what Carol (Carroll, 2016) proposed, in that art involves objective knowledge. What is objective is the intended purpose of the art work, which requires appropriateness, adequateness, and an evaluation of art itself as the object for the artist. Subjective and objective qualities of art appreciation are part of the "art-evaluative heuristic" in Carroll's theory (Carroll, 2016). The incorporation of these two epistemic elements of art appreciation supports our findings that in understanding the results of the student learning process (Shaw & Valerie, 2019). Student responses to the questionnaire about the book learning and project phases of the class demonstrated that the process allowed them to apply the art-evaluative heuristic. The collaborative art project completed online successfully developed their appreciation of art. From the first to the third stage of the semester activities served to support them in utilizing the approaches of appropriateness, adequateness and evaluation of art as an object for the artist. This allowed them to understand that art appreciation is also rests on securing various objectively determinable facts, and that art appreciation should be understood comprehensively (Leder et al., 2012).

The students' deeper appreciation of the of what was proposed in the class lectures seems correlated to the art evaluative heuristic. The experience of being part of an audience watching performing arts, reading about the theory of art, and producing art are all necessary to give the students a more heuristic understanding of art. Students were observed using the subjective approach in the first and the second stages of the semester. The expansion of their abilities in art appreciation occurred practically and

theoretically in the third stage where they produced their own artworks. The evaluative heuristic that uses the objective condition of art appreciation can be found in the third stage. Students focused on objective facts and information. They questioned what kinds of genre of arts they were capable of producing. They also had to evaluate what type of concept was feasible in order to produce collaboratively. On addition, they had to think about what context, story and message that should be brought up and expressed through their art works. All those consideration represent the objective manner of appreciating art.

In order to develop art appreciation and its goal of reaching an art evaluative heuristic in this course, students were required to arrange a collaborative project. Students learned to understand art as one of the elements of culture. Understanding culture means understanding the how webs of significance work in certain society and tradition. In the collaborative project, they were encouraged to play with signs according to their concept and the message they want to bring up with the audience. In the course of the project, the lecturers as facilitators worked to monitor how the production process proceeded. Facilitators evaluated the concepts, story boards and the elements of art that were composed to represent some meaningful detail in the expression of art.

At the time this course was offered, the COVID-19 pandemic was making traditional face-to-face classes impossible. We turned to online collaboration as students moving back to their hometowns and the exhibition that planned for the end of the semester was cancelled. Another difficulty faced by students and lecturers was how to bring the “real” stage online, and how to collaborate in the digitization of their projects. The main difficulties which communication online, technical issues, and the quality of art elements were things they needed to consider in order to collaborate. The challenge when thinking about art and its transformation into the online forum brings up other questions about how art is being shaped by digital technologies.

There are three common theories of how digital technology shapes art learning. First, technology functioning as a supplement. In this view, digital technology is used as an additional tool to extend the life of the performance beyond the boundries of physical space and time. Technologies in this theory do not restructure the art-performance (Wake, 2018). In the second theory, technology functions as infrastructure, which means that technology becomes a medium to produce digital performances. For example, when a synchronous networked link between two distant sites enables participants to communicate and collaborate.

Digital technologies are shaping arts in line with what theorists in cyberformance call networked performance (Birringer, 2002) (Birringer 2002:87, Jamieson 2001). Cyber and networked performance can simply be defined as live performance using the internet (Birringer, 2002; Cyberformance in the Third Space: A Conversation with Helen Varley Jamieson – H+ Media, n.d.) There is a sense of a shift in understanding about art and space. Art changes the definition of the traditional art stage. Phenomenologically there is difference in experience, or how humans experience the world mediated by technology which creates new experiences. Digital technology becomes the medium where art is performed and experienced (Morie, 2007). Digital technology becomes a new kind of stage and space. But there is a need for interpretation from audiences to experience the arts as reality. Digital experience is

experience shaped by the condition that the human experience of art is mediated and within the opacity of technology.

Based on the learning and teaching activities on the course syllabus students need to have both the aesthetic and artistic experiences. The quality of both experience need to be studied future related research. For more qualitative explanation there is a need for further studies of how students gain both kinds of experiences. Since those experiences are now mediated by digital technologies, a new quality of experience is also emerging. The performing arts are now being experienced through the medium of technology. There is a new kind of process of perceiving and grasping the arts itself. Audiences experiencing art works through digital technology is engendering new kinds of subjective and objective art appreciation. If art appreciation is about liking and not liking, it also affects to a certain degree the quality of the experience. There is a need to elaborate more carefully the hermeneutic aspect of experiencing art. The art collaboration project done by the students shows that artistic experience and aesthetic experience still exist but in a more complex level of experience through being both artist and spectator themselves. This phenomenon challenges traditional definition of beauty. There is need to understand art instrumentally, conceptually, and pragmatically. Does experiencing art through digital technology unsettle the ontological definition of beauty and art as it has been understood so far.

## CONCLUSION

The quantitative result shows that the class's level of art appreciation improved. Students are mainly strongly agreed and agree that the art project they did improved their appreciation of art. They also believe that the experience of doing an art project improved their sense of art appreciation. Experiment of changing the Art Appreciation course syllabus showing that studying art should be done through experiential projects. This is a positive indication that students believe that through the experience of doing an art project, they increased their understanding of art. Therefore this survey demonstrates a positive change in their in level of art appreciation. Through this assessment of how to teach art appreciation online. most of the students agreed that learning and appreciating arts is better done through experiential projects. In this art appreciation course, we used new methods and class activities that aligned with the theory of "art evaluative heuristic". By the end of the semester, students displayed art appreciation in the subjective and objective manner.

The unexpected circumstances brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically the need to reimagine the course for the digital space, also led to re-evaluation of our understanding of the art space. This experience led to a new understanding of the definition of the traditional art stage. Phenomenologically, there is difference experience. How humans experience the world when it mediated by technology creates new experiences. Digital technology becomes the medium through which arts are performed and experienced. Digital technology becomes new kind of stage and space. This phenomenon needs the interpretation of the audiences to experience the arts as reality.

Digital experience is human experience shaped by the opacity of technology. A new quality of experience is emerging through the mediation of digital technology. The performing arts are now being experienced through the medium of technology.

This new kind of process of perceiving and grasping the arts itself became the focus of our pedagogical approach to art appreciation.

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