
Plan Overview

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Title: The Aesthetic Characteristics of Indonesian Independent Film

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Project abstract:

ABSTRACT

The Aesthetic Characteristics of Indonesian Independent Film

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This research seeks the aesthetic characteristics of independent films in Indonesia that focus on short, marginalised, and regional films in the reformation era. It is expected to be an alternative reading of Indonesian cinema using form and style analysis. The study aims to fill the gap in formalist readings of film aesthetics and take another route from most of Indonesia's film scholars' offer on socio-political and discourse outside the film itself (Barker, 2011; Van Heeren, 2012; Paramaditha, 2014).

After the end of the authoritarian New Order regime over three decades in 1998, Indonesia entered a new era of freedom of expression, democratization, and decentralization called *Reformasi*. Political change in the reformation era provided a conducive context for young filmmakers to experiment and develop the parameters of a coherent image of the nation marked by regional autonomy and independent production through digital technology (Paramaditha, 2011, p. 501). Regardless, Paramaditha claimed that Jakarta, as the capital city, remains central on the screen to counter the dominant narratives of the New Order. I argue that the number of productions in regions outside Jakarta, such as Yogyakarta, Bandung, and Purbalingga, arose in the reformation era. The growth of an independent spirit among Indonesia's young filmmakers prompted several film communities outside Jakarta. The record in 2020 found that 206 short films have been produced in Indonesia (<https://blog.algorit.ma/data-industri-perfilman-indonesia/>). On the other hand, the monopoly of the cinema chain system is increasing the initiation of alternative community screening. From short to experimental, comedy to horror, various films and genres were shown, and multiple places were used: cultural centres, small cafes, festivals, village meeting halls, and cine clubs on campus.

I found the phenomenon to be a significant growth of independent films. In terms of multiculturalism, the filmmaker community came from different geographical areas. They made films based on themes and issues related to their culture and beliefs. They used their local language. The community made its hacks in the mode of production, using traditional resources and limited budget equipment. The crews were non-professional and unpaid. However, their films were humble, pure, and innocent. The story about body, sexuality, and identity is exposed. Many films criticised the rage from authorities—political figures, the army, or the police. They might not have made a film for commercials, but their films always met the audience. The films take on sides of resistance, reflection, or exploration as reformed citizens. Moreover, several independent short films received recognition from prestigious festivals such as the Cannes Film Festival, the Berlin International Film Festival, the Venice International Film Festival, the Rotterdam International Film Festival, and other prestigious Asian film festivals. It means that independent films resonate with wider audiences despite their niche market, limited distribution, and particular content.

The record of achievement, uniqueness, and difference determined my hypothesis about the multidimensional aspect of Indonesian independent film. Furthermore, I come with an assumption that there is peculiar characteristics (s) exist in Indonesian independent films. This characteristic allows independent films to find their distinctive screen and spectator. From this assumption, I develop three research questions. First, what are the characteristics of independent multidimensional Indonesian films? Second, how those characteristics formed and are found on the screen. Third, to what extent will those characteristics define the Indonesian independent film aesthetic?

This study began with collecting the film data to map film productions and titles during Reformasi. This

data will be collected from the community archives, film festival catalogues, film schools, and alternative film screening posters or programs and reviewed by an independent zine or magazine. Collecting data continues by accessing the films and clearing the consent of film copyright. The film sample will be limited to the film, and full accessibility will be granted. After all the film is gathered, a close reading of the formal aspect of the film will be done by identifying the presentation on the screen, both visual and audio notetaking. The screen will be captured, and dialogue will be transcribed if needed. The classification of data started by finding a pattern and/or ambiguity. With the indication of similarity in pattern and found differences, the first question of this research will be answered. The second question will be answered by elaborating on the first finding and describing what it will indicate on screen. Finally, the third question will be answered by concluding the meaning or interpretation of the style and characteristics found in the first and second questions. The conclusions of this research will be developed into film essay(s) and considered as publication along with a dissertation.

This research will help contribute to film aesthetic discourse, world cinema readings, and film pedagogy. The film aesthetic findings will guide early filmmakers and students to use this research or film essays as their reference in filmmaking. Since there are few references in practice-based research, this research might be the first milestone in encouraging filmmakers to make artwork based on research findings. As a practitioner, I believe this research is one of the critical steps in developing the following film project.

Keywords: aesthetic characteristic, independent film, style.

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Data description

What types of data will be used or created?

Main data

- The main data is from films or digital audio-visual-based material (mp4, mpg, other formats).
- If applicable, shorter or edited film data will be needed for in-depth analysis.
- Screen captured of films into visual material (jpg, jpeg, png, other formats).

Secondary data

- Publications (book, academic journal, book review, conference proceeding, research report, magazine, and any other printed or digital publications)
- Film posters and film stills from secondhand resources (not from the activity of data collection)
- Interview transcript, text or message summary, and other verbal or textual communications.

How will the data be structured and documented?

Workflow of structuring data:

1. Watch the film in digital format to determine the visual key.
2. Edit the film to a shorter duration and classify it based on the visual key or stylistic elements.
3. Screen grab the film and convert it to picture files.

Workflow of documenting and classifying data:

1. Film file (main folder)
2. The visual key (branch folder tier 1)
3. Classification based on findings/characteristics (branch folder tier 2)
4. Classification based on elements (branch folder tier 2)

Data storage and archiving

How will your data be stored and backed up?

All the data will be stored on my personal computer's hard drive, backed up to an external hard drive, and uploaded to the cloud (Microsoft OneDrive) system.

Is any of the data of (ethically or commercially) sensitive nature? If so, how do you ensure the data are protected accordingly?

Not applicable

Where will your data be archived in the long term?

In the external hard drive and UoB BEAR Archive.

Data sharing

Which data will you share, and under which conditions? How will you make the data available to others?

Shared data in any conditions:

- Published papers (journals, book reviews, research reports)
- Manuscripts of theses
- Other dissemination material (conferences, workshops, talks, or any other public engagement)

Available in the Open Journal System (linked to Google Scholar and ORCHID), indexed in a catalogue, the University of Birmingham's eData repository, and any professional outlets such as the official website of associations, institutions, or organisations.

Planned Research Outputs

Dissertation - "The Aesthetic Characteristics of Indonesian Independent Film"

This title might be changed during the PhD process

Planned research output details

Title	DOI	Type	Release date	Access level	Repository(ies)	File size	License	Metadata standard(s)	May contain sensitive data?	May contain PII?
The Aesthetic Characteristics of Indonesian Indepe ...		Dissertation	Unspecified	Open	None specified		None specified	None specified	No	No