



CINEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF JENGKI ARCHITECTURAL INTERIORS IN *TIGA DARA* (1956)

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Abstract

Jengki architecture is a distinctive manifestation of Indonesian modernism that emerged in the 1950s, shaped by the post-independence spirit and a deliberate rejection of colonial aesthetic dominance. In the same period, Indonesian cinema developed as a visual medium capable of recording social change, cultural transformation, and shifting urban lifestyles. This study investigates the representation of Jengki architectural interiors in *Tiga Dara* (1956), directed by Usmar Ismail, using a cinematic approach and Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, the research draws on literature review, frame-by-frame visual observation, and documentation of film scenes featuring interior spaces. The analysis identifies denotative and connotative meanings of interior elements, including spatial layout, architectural components, lighting, ventilation, furniture, and furnishings as part of the film's mise-en-scène. The findings reveal that Jengki interiors are represented through asymmetrical spatial compositions, flexible layouts, slanted forms, climatic responsiveness, and hybrid furniture influenced by international modernism. At the connotative level, these visual representations articulate ideas of modernity, freedom, innovation, and national optimism in the construction of post-independence identity. This study highlights the role of film as a valuable visual archive for understanding the development of interior design and architectural discourse in Indonesia's transition toward national modernity.

Keywords: Jengki architecture; mise en scène; cinematic space; Roland Barthes' semiotics; *Tiga Dara* (1956)

INTRODUCTION

The period from 1950 to 1970 marked a critical transitional phase in Indonesian history, during which the newly independent nation began to construct and assert its national identity across multiple dimensions of social life. In the early years of independence, a political landscape characterised by instability and turbulence paradoxically fostered a strong collective drive to break away from colonial legacies. This aspiration extended beyond political and economic spheres into the domains of culture and aesthetics. President Soekarno consistently opposed colonial symbols that were perceived as perpetuating a sense of national inferiority, including those embedded in architectural practices. Such resistance was reflected in his criticism of the continued use of colonial architectural forms, such as Greek Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian columns, as well as the Amsterdam Style, which were closely associated with Dutch colonial dominance (Ardhiati, 2005).

Within this historical context, the Jengki architectural style emerged as a significant manifestation of Indonesia's transition from colonial domination toward a distinctly national modernity. Rather than adhering to rigid formal conventions, this style embraced experimentation through free, asymmetrical forms and design approaches responsive to tropical climatic conditions. Such shifts signalled a departure

from colonial architectural order toward a more expressive, localised modern language. These transformations extended beyond exterior appearances and substantially influenced the perception and articulation of interior spaces. Interiors were no longer understood merely as functional enclosures, but as cultural expressions through which ideas of freedom, modernity, and Indonesian identity were negotiated and visually communicated in the post-independence era.

Parallel to architectural developments, Indonesian cinema during the same period experienced substantial growth as both a visual and cultural medium. Films produced between the 1950s and 1970s served not only as sources of entertainment but also as social and visual records of everyday practices, social relations, and spatial representations in urban life. Among these works, *Tiga Dara* (1956), directed by Usmar Ismail and produced by PERFINI, stands out as a significant example of this dynamic. The film presents domestic settings influenced by the Jengki architectural style while simultaneously articulating shifting lifestyles, attitudes, and modes of thought within a society negotiating its post-independence identity. Through its visual depiction of interior spaces, *Tiga Dara* offers insight into how architecture and cinema intersect in expressing broader cultural aspirations during Indonesia's formative modern period.



Figure 1. The Jengki Architectural Style in the Film *Tiga Dara*
Source: Screenshot from *Tiga Dara* (1956), accessed via Netflix

Examining Jengki's architectural interiors through *Tiga Dara* enables a closer investigation of how lived spaces and visual aesthetics were constructed and mediated within Indonesian cinematic narratives during this transitional period. This study is motivated by the need to explore Jengki's interior design by positioning film as a visual and cultural source rather than merely a narrative medium. The research aims to understand how Jengki interiors contribute to the formation of early Indonesian modern cultural identity, while also advancing interdisciplinary dialogue among architecture, interior design, and film studies. Accordingly, this study addresses two main research questions: (1) how are Jengki architectural interiors represented in *Tiga Dara* (1956), and (2) how do the denotative and connotative meanings produced through these interior representations articulate notions of modernity, freedom, and post-independence national identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Interior Design

Interior space is commonly understood as the collection of elements located within a building that shape the environment in which human activities take place. Whiton initially defined interior as "things that are inside of a building" (Whiton, 1974). Over time, however, this definition has expanded as design discourse has developed more human-centred approaches. Whiton and Abercrombie emphasise that interior design fundamentally concerns the dynamic relationship among people, space, and human behaviour within spatial settings (Whiton & Abercrombie, 2006). From this perspective, interior design extends beyond the arrangement of physical components to encompass how spatial configurations influence experience, movement, and social interaction.

In the Indonesian context, Suptandar (1999) conceptualises interior design as an artistic practice capable of revealing patterns of human life within a particular historical period through spatial media. From this viewpoint, interiors are not merely perceived as physical backdrops, but as expressive mediums through which social and cultural values are articulated. A similar perspective is advanced by Penny Sparke (1986), who argues that interior styles function as manifestations of socio-cultural values and identity, reflecting the spirit of their time while simultaneously shaping both personal and collective meanings. This theoretical position frames interior space as a visual text that can be interpreted and understood through contextual and cultural analysis.

Jengki Architecture

The post-independence euphoria and the aspiration to break free from colonial dominance generated a collective impetus to formulate a new architectural aesthetic in Indonesia. Under Soekarno's leadership, architecture was positioned not merely as a technical practice of construction, but as a symbolic and political instrument through which independence, self-determination, and national sovereignty could be articulated. The rejection of colonial architectural forms, along with the removal of colonial imprints from public spaces—such as the transformation of Lapangan Ikada into the site of the National Monument and the demolition of Wilhelmina Park to make way for the Istiqlal Mosque—demonstrates how space was mobilised as a medium for shaping national ideology (Ardhiati, 2005). This perspective resonates with Sigfried Giedion's (1971) argument that architectural change is intrinsically linked to social and political dynamics during periods of transition. Accordingly, architectural practice in this era reflects a shift in collective consciousness from colonial structures toward expressions of national modernity. Soekarno's conviction that a newly independent nation must dare to envision a grand future despite material limitations further reinforced architecture's role as a site for projecting national imagination.

The term *Jengki* is widely believed to derive from the pronunciation of the word *Yankee*, referring to the influence of American modern architecture that emerged after World War II. In the Indonesian context, this style developed during the 1950s as a response to post-independence conditions and a desire to distance architectural expression from colonial aesthetics. Shiber (2025) characterises Jengki architecture as one of the most candid expressions of the anxieties and aspirations of the Indonesian nation in the early years of independence. Through the adoption of slanted forms, geometric ventilation patterns, and the use of tropical materials unconstrained by colonial conventions, Jengki architecture signalled a departure from the symmetrical and hierarchical logic of colonial design. Instead, it introduced a more egalitarian and experimental spatial language that reflected the search for new architectural identities aligned with national modernity.

Cinematic Representation

Within film studies, cinema is understood as a medium that represents space, time, and human experience through visual imagery. Gilles Deleuze (1989) conceptualises cinema as a system of images that generates its own visual and temporal logic. From this perspective, cinematic space is not neutral or merely illustrative, but is actively constructed through framing, composition, and *mise-en-scène*. Consequently, interior space in film can be interpreted as a meaningful visual construction in which spatial arrangements, objects, and visual design function as carriers of narrative, cultural, and ideological significance.

To uncover these layers of meaning, this study employs a semiotic approach. Roland Barthes distinguishes two levels of signification, namely denotation and connotation. Denotation refers to the literal and descriptive meaning of visual signs, while connotation relates to the symbolic, ideological, and cultural meanings attached to those signs (Sobur, 2003). This framework enables the examination of interior spaces in film not merely as aesthetic elements but as representational structures through which values, ideologies, and cultural identities are articulated and negotiated.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative, descriptive–interpretative approach. The qualitative approach is employed because the research focuses on the visual, symbolic, and cultural meanings embedded in the representation of Jengki architectural interiors as depicted in *Tiga Dara*. The descriptive method is applied to systematically outline and detail the visual characteristics of interior spaces. At the same time, the interpretative approach is used to analyse and contextualise the meanings underlying these visual representations within the social and cultural conditions of post-independence Indonesia.

The subject of this research is interior space as it appears in film as a visual text. The object of analysis focuses on elements of *mise-en-scène*, including spatial organisation, architectural components, furniture, lighting, and ventilation, which collectively construct the cinematic representation of Jengki's architectural interiors. This analytical framework allows interior space to be interpreted not merely as a visual backdrop, but as an integral component of narrative construction and meaning-making within the film.

Primary data were obtained from a copy of *Tiga Dara* (1956) accessed via a streaming platform and subsequently examined frame by frame. Visual data in the form of selected still frames depicting interior spaces served as the main material for analysis. Secondary data were collected through a literature review encompassing studies on Jengki architecture and interior design, the history of post-independence Indonesian architecture, theories of cinematic representation and *mise-en-scène*, Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, and scholarly works on Indonesian cinema of the 1950s. These sources functioned both as a theoretical foundation and as a historical context for interpreting the visual data.

Data analysis was conducted using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, which conceptualises film interiors as a system of signs. The analytical process consisted of four stages: (1) identifying visual elements of interior space in selected scenes; (2) performing denotative analysis to describe the literal and descriptive meanings of the interior elements presented; (3) conducting connotative analysis to interpret the symbolic, ideological, and cultural meanings embedded in the interior representations; and (4) synthesizing the findings by relating visual interpretations to the social, cultural, and architectural history of post-independence Indonesia.

To ensure data credibility and strengthen interpretative validity, this study applies theoretical triangulation by comparing the results of visual analysis with multiple theoretical perspectives and findings from previous studies on Jengki architecture, modern Indonesian interior design, and film as a form of cultural representation. This approach is used to minimise researcher subjectivity and ensure consistency between empirical data, theoretical frameworks, and interpretative conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tiga Dara is a musical film that represents the dynamics of urban Indonesian middle-class family life in the post-independence period, addressing central themes such as romantic relationships, intergenerational relations, and social pressures surrounding the institution of marriage. The narrative centres on the lives of three sisters, Nunung, Nana, and Neni, who live with their grandmother in Jakarta following the death of their mother. The primary conflict arises from the older generation's concern about Nunung, who is perceived as "late to marry," reflecting broader social anxiety that reveals tensions between traditional values and emerging modern lifestyles. The introduction of the character Toto further

complicates familial emotional relations while simultaneously exposing gender dynamics and social expectations imposed on urban middle-class women. Nunung's relocation to Bandung, intended to ease familial conflict, serves not only as a narrative catalyst but also as a visually and symbolically significant shift in living space. Within this framework, *Tiga Dara* extends beyond the portrayal of domestic drama to construct a representation of middle-class domestic life closely associated with modernity, social mobility, and changing perceptions of the home and interior space as markers of social identity.

Spatially, *Tiga Dara* presents two primary settings: Sukandar's residence in Jakarta and Tamsil's house in Bandung, both of which serve as central domestic spaces in the narrative's development and in the social relationships among the characters. These settings do not merely serve as narrative backdrops, but actively represent the lifestyle of Indonesia's urban middle class in the 1950s, a period marked by transition toward modernity. The differing spatial contexts of Jakarta and Bandung introduce distinct visual and social atmospheres, thereby enriching the interpretation of domestic space as a site for negotiating traditional values and modern aspirations. On this basis, the analytical focus of this study is on the representation of interior spaces in both residences as visual media that capture the characteristics of interior design and architectural practice during the shift from colonial influence toward expressions of national modernity. From a semiotic perspective, interior space in film is understood as a system of signs that generates layered meanings. Through Roland Barthes' two levels of signification, the interiors in *Tiga Dara* can be read denotatively as arrangements of spatial elements, including layout, furniture, furnishing, lighting, and architectural components and connotatively as representations of social values, middle-class identity, and post-independence visions of Indonesian modernity. Accordingly, interior space functions not only as an aesthetic component of the *mise-en-scène* but also as a medium through which cultural and ideological meanings are produced and circulated within the film's cinematic narrative.

Table 1. Interior Setting of the Sukandar Family Residence in Jakarta

| Identified Visual Elements | Denotative Meaning | Connotative Meaning |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Building Façades | The building façades depicted in the film continue to exhibit characteristics of Colonial Modern Architecture from the 1915–1940 period. Visually, the structures reflect principles aligned with the <i>form follows function</i> and a <i>clean design</i> approach, emphasising simplicity, rationality, and the minimisation of ornamental elements. This architectural expression suggests that, at the exterior level, traces of colonial modernist influence remain, | This architectural expression signifies social status and embodies the notion of stability associated with white-collar employment. The building's visual representation conveys a sense of respectability and economic security, positioning its occupants within the established urban middle class. As such, the architectural setting functions as a visual marker of social standing and professional identity within the socio-cultural context of post- |



| Identified Visual Elements | Denotative Meaning | Connotative Meaning |
|--|--|--------------------------------|
| | <p>particularly in the prioritisation of functional clarity and structural logic. Such characteristics indicate a transitional architectural condition in which earlier modern colonial paradigms coexist with emerging post-independence aspirations, creating a layered visual language that frames the interior transformations explored within the film.</p> | <p>independence Indonesia.</p> |
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Figure 2. Façade of the Sukandar Family Residence in Jakarta
 Source: Screenshot from *Tiga Dara (1956)*, accessed via Netflix

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| <p>Layout</p> | <p>Although the architecture and façade of Sukandar’s house retain characteristics of colonial design, the interior spaces depicted in <i>Tiga Dara</i> reveal a significant transformation through the adoption of the Jengki style. Traditional colonial residential layouts typically employ a system of grouping and zoning that emphasises high levels of privacy, in which semi-private spaces, such as family and dining rooms, are clearly separated from semi-public areas, like the living room, both visually and through circulation patterns. In contrast, the cinematic representation of Sukandar's house in <i>Tiga Dara</i> demonstrates a tendency toward greater visual openness between semi-private and semi-public spaces. The replacement of solid partition walls with transparent or permeable dividers marks this shift. Despite this visual openness, the overall circulation</p> | <p>The Jengki style represents a symbol of spatial novelty characterised by dynamism, while simultaneously signifying a rejection of the rigid spatial hierarchies inherent in colonial architecture. Over time, this style also functioned as a marker of social status and material stability, particularly among office workers and economically established social groups. Sukada (2004) notes that in its early phase of development, the adoption of the Jengki style was predominantly undertaken by affluent communities as a means of expressing social position. Consequently, the appearance of Jengki-style dwellings during this period can be understood not only as an architectural expression of modernity but also as a visual symbol of prosperity and an articulation of upper-middle-class</p> |
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| Identified Visual Elements | Denotative Meaning | Connotative Meaning |
|--|---|--|
| | <p>pattern largely continues to follow colonial spatial organisation. Consequently, the transformation foregrounded in the film primarily manifests as a change in visual articulation and spatial experience rather than a complete reconfiguration of the underlying spatial structure.</p> | <p>social identity.</p> |
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| <p>Figure 3. Living Room and Dining Area with Open Partitions Source: Screenshot from <i>Tiga Dara</i> (1956), accessed via Netflix</p> | | |
| <p>Architectural Components</p> | <p>Architectural components such as flooring, walls, and ceilings continue to utilise the building's existing structural framework; however, design interventions are evident, particularly in the treatment of wall surfaces. These interventions include adding wooden wall borders that vertically articulate the wall planes. The application of darker finishes to the lower sections of the walls, combined with lighter tones above, creates a psychological perception of a more balanced, proportionate spatial volume. Furthermore, the wall treatment adapts the characteristic slanted geometry of the Jengki style, as nearly all interspatial openings are designed in pentagonal forms. This approach reinforces the visual departure from rigid colonial conventions while enhancing the interior space's expressive quality.</p> | <p>These transformations can be interpreted as symbols of novelty, freedom, and modernity that reflect the nation's spirit in the post-independence era. The use of pentagonal forms, which visually resemble the Indonesian Air Force emblem, evokes associations with patriotism and nationalism. Visually, the application of such geometry within interior spaces refers to the expressive character of Jengki architectural façades, which embody ideals of independence, modernity, and freedom of expression. At the same time, this design strategy indicates an intentional effort to translate architectural formal language into the interior domain. Consequently, the adoption of this design approach carries connotations of the Indonesian <i>zeitgeist</i> of the 1950s, a period marked by an ongoing search for national identity following</p> |


| Identified Visual Elements | Denotative Meaning | Connotative Meaning |
|----------------------------|--|---------------------|
| |  | independence. |

Figure 4. Slanted Openings and Wall Finishes Articulated by Wall Borders
 Source: Screenshot from *Tiga Dara (1956)*, accessed via Netflix

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| <p>Furniture and Furnishing</p> | <p>The furnishings in the living room consist of single-seat sofas with curved armrests and a loveseat, which simplify the Westminster style and indicate the influence of American mid-century modern design. The sense of modernity is further reinforced by interior elements such as a radio, electric lighting, curtains, display cabinets, magazine racks, upholstered chairs, and indoor planters, which contribute to visual comfort and freshness. These findings suggest that the spatial furnishings are not entirely detached from Western influence; rather, they articulate a hybrid stylistic character in which international modern aesthetics are selectively adapted within the context of post-independence Indonesian domestic interiors.</p> | <p>This stylistic approach reflects a critical stance toward the rigidity of colonial aesthetics while simultaneously expressing a sense of tropical optimism that characterises the emergence of an independent, modern, and educated young nation aspiring to stand on equal footing with other countries. The hybridity inherent in this style should not be regarded as a limitation; rather, it indicates that national identity is shaped through a fluid, adaptive creative process. This condition underscores the confidence of a young nation in interpreting modernity through its own visual language, negotiating global influences while articulating locally grounded cultural meanings.</p> |
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Figure 5. Interior Furnishing Elements Influenced by American Mid-Century Modern Style
 Source: Screenshot from *Tiga Dara (1956)*, accessed via Netflix

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|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <p>Lighting and Ventilation</p> | <p>Lighting and ventilation are</p> | <p>The treatment of lighting and</p> |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|


| Identified Visual Elements | Denotative Meaning | Connotative Meaning |
|---|--|--|
| | <p>achieved through wide openings, such as glass doors and windows, allowing natural light and air to enter the interior spaces effectively. In addition to daylighting, the interiors are equipped with artificial lighting powered by electrical technology, systematically organised into general lighting from ceiling fixtures and task lighting from pendant lamps and wall sconces. These lighting elements support daily activities, enhance visual comfort, and clarify the functional organisation of interior spaces.</p> | <p>ventilation reflects a modern and rational design consciousness that is responsive to Indonesia's tropical climate. The use of wide openings connotes openness, transparency, and a harmonious relationship between interior space and the external environment. Meanwhile, the planned management of artificial lighting signifies technological advancement, efficiency, and the modern lifestyle of post-independence urban society. The resulting lighting effects function not only at a technical level but also in shaping a comfortable, representative spatial atmosphere, thereby reinforcing the image of the interior as a symbol of modernity, stability, and optimism for the future, as represented in <i>Tiga Dara</i>.</p> |
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| <p>Figure 6. Natural Lighting and Ventilation and the Use of Electricity Reflecting Technological Progress, Efficiency, and Modern Lifestyle <i>Source: Screenshot from Tiga Dara (1956), accessed via Netflix</i></p> | | |


Table 2. Interior Setting of the Tamsil Family House in Bandung

| Identified Visual Elements | Denotative Meaning | Connotative Meaning |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| <p>Building Façades</p> | <p>The plan configuration and façade composition of the house exhibit defining characteristics of the Jengki architectural style, particularly through asymmetrical arrangements that reject a central axis. Spatial organisation, especially in areas such as the</p> | <p>The asymmetrical plan configuration and the absence of a central axis can be interpreted as symbols of detachment from the rigid spatial hierarchies characteristic of colonial architecture, while simultaneously representing a spirit of freedom</p> |

| Identified Visual Elements | Denotative Meaning | Connotative Meaning |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| | <p>living room, terrace, and garden, is designed with a high degree of flexibility, with the building orientation adjusted to respond to site conditions. This approach stands in marked contrast to colonial architecture, which typically relies on symmetrical grid systems and strong axial emphasis.</p> <p>The use of slanted forms as a principal feature of the Jengki style is clearly articulated in the design of the pillars, which simultaneously function as portals or jambs for the main entrance. On the right side of the building, a veranda serves as a transitional reception space and provides shading for the interior areas (Wibowo, 2011). This Veranda is articulated with a flat roof, creating a distinct visual contrast to the primary building mass, which is covered by a gable roof. Such compositional strategies reinforce the expressive, non-hierarchical character of Jengki architecture, emphasising spatial dynamism and climatic responsiveness.</p> | <p>and a willingness to experiment in formulating new architectural expressions in the post-independence era. The adaptive orientation of the building to site conditions reflects a contextual and rational design approach, marking a shift toward modern ways of thinking. The slanted forms applied to pillars and the main entrance portal serve not only structural and visual purposes but also connote dynamism, movement, and optimism, aligning with the Indonesian <i>zeitgeist</i> of the 1950s. The presence of a veranda with a flat roof, visually separated from the main building mass, is an expression of renewal in the articulation of the transitional space between exterior and interior realms. This differentiation in roof forms signifies an intentional separation of functions while reinforcing a modern, non-colonial architectural language. As noted by Kusno (2010), such architectural strategies depart from formal symmetry and emphasise the expression of identity and emergent national values during a period of active nation-building.</p> |



Figure 7. Façade of the Tamsil Family Residence in Bandung
 Source: Screenshot from *Tiga Dara (1956)*, accessed via Netflix



| Identified Visual Elements | Denotative Meaning | Connotative Meaning |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Layout</p> | <p>The spatial layout follows an open-plan design, enabling flexible relationships between interior spaces. This configuration allows functional shifts from more personal areas toward spaces that support communal use. The living room, in this context, functions not merely as a reception area but also as a social space that accommodates interactions among family members and between residents and guests.</p> | <p>The implementation of an open-plan layout can be interpreted as a representation of values associated with openness, egalitarianism, and shifting patterns of social relations within post-independence urban society. The living room's role as a social space signifies hospitality and openness toward the outside world, while simultaneously marking a departure from the hierarchical spatial arrangements characteristic of colonial domestic architecture toward more fluid and democratic configurations. Within the cinematic context of <i>Tiga Dara</i>, this spatial openness reinforces the narrative of familial dynamics and social interaction, emphasising interior space as a medium for representing the modern middle-class lifestyle of the 1950s.</p> |
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| <p>Figure 8. Open-Plan Spatial Design with the Transformation of Personal Space into Social Space <i>Source: Screenshot from Tiga Dara (1956), accessed via Netflix</i></p> | | |
| <p>Architectural Components</p> | <p>The spatial-forming elements display a dynamic pattern through variations in formal treatment and design components. This dynamism is evident in the slanted angles of openings between spaces, as well as in the treatment of floor surfaces through the addition of textural elements such as woven carpets, which function as imaginary boundaries to differentiate spatial functions.</p> | <p>The treatment of slanted angles and the use of non-permanent spatial boundaries represent a critical stance toward colonial aesthetics, which tend to be rigid, symmetrical, and hierarchical. The flexibility of spatial elements reflects values of freedom, experimentation, and individual expression that characterise the Jengki style. Within the cinematic context of <i>Tiga Dara</i>, this</p> |

| Identified Visual Elements | Denotative Meaning | Connotative Meaning |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| | Furthermore, the use of curtains enables flexible reconfiguration of space, allowing areas to shift from public to more private settings in accordance with functional requirements and activities. | dynamic spatial expression not only enhances the visual quality of the mise-en-scène but also reinforces the role of interior space as a representational medium through which shifting social and cultural values of post-independence Indonesian society are articulated. |



Figure 9. Slanted Wall Treatment, Textured Floor Surfaces, and the Use of Curtains to Transform Space from Public to More Private
 Source: Screenshot from *Tiga Dara (1956)*, accessed via Netflix

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| Furniture and Furnishing | The furnishing elements in the living room are presented through the use of rattan and wood as primary materials, employed across various furniture types, including lounge chairs, coffee tables, standing lamps, and cabinets. Visually, these furnishings exhibit characteristics including geometric and tapered forms, slanted planes, curved intersections between vertical and horizontal elements, and the repetition of components to articulate empty surfaces. Such formal attributes reveal affinities with the Streamline Deco style, which emphasises dynamism and the expression of movement. These findings indicate that the Jengki style operates as a hybrid design language, selectively absorbing and adapting international modern aesthetic influences within a localised | These similarities indicate the openness of the Jengki style to international modern aesthetic influences, particularly those originating from the United States, which were subsequently reinterpreted and reworked in accordance with local contexts. Such hybridity does not signify mere imitation; rather, it reflects a process of creative adaptation that underscores efforts to formulate a new design language. Within the cinematic context of <i>Tiga Dara</i> , the representation of these furnishings functions as a visual marker of modernity, urban middle-class lifestyles, and the evolving dynamics of Indonesian interior design identity during the transitional post-independence period. |
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| Identified Visual Elements | Denotative Meaning | Connotative Meaning |
|--|---|---|
| | architectural and interior context. | |
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| <p>Figure 10. Rattan Table, Chairs, and Standing Lamp Influenced by the Streamline Deco Style <i>Source: Screenshot from Tiga Dara (1956), accessed via Netflix</i></p> | | |
| <p>Lighting and Ventilation</p> | <p>The treatment of lighting and ventilation demonstrates an awareness of tropical climatic conditions through the use of wide openings in doors and windows, allowing natural light and airflow to enter the interior spaces optimally. Artificial lighting employs electrical technology that is systematically managed through general lighting in the form of ceiling fixtures and task lighting provided by standing lamps, thereby supporting spatial functionality and enhancing interior comfort.</p> | <p>The treatment of lighting and ventilation reflects a modern understanding of residential comfort and spatial efficiency, contextualised for Indonesia's tropical climate. The use of wide openings signifies design principles of openness and rationality, while the application of artificial lighting reflects technological advancement and the modern lifestyle of post-independence urban society. Visually, the articulation of doors and windows through asymmetrical geometric forms underscores a critical stance toward the rigid symmetry of colonial aesthetics, while simultaneously reinforcing the Jengki style as a dynamic, expressive, and modern architectural language.</p> |
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| <p>Figure 11. Wide Openings in Doors and Windows and the Use of General and Task Lighting on the Veranda</p> | | |

| Identified Visual Elements | Denotative Meaning | Connotative Meaning |
|---|--------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Source: Screenshot from Tiga Dara (1956), accessed via Netflix</i> | | |

Synthesis of Meaning

At the denotative level, the interiors represented in *Tiga Dara* exhibit defining characteristics of the Jengki style, including asymmetrical spatial compositions, the application of open-plan concepts, the use of slanted angles and openings, and the dynamic and flexible treatment of spatial-forming elements. Floor surfaces, walls, and openings are articulated expressively through variations in texture, the use of non-permanent partitions, and the presence of furnishing elements made of rattan and wood featuring tapered and curved forms. Lighting and ventilation demonstrate awareness of tropical climatic conditions through wide openings that allow natural light and airflow into the interior, complemented by artificial lighting systems. Visually, these elements collectively construct an interior character that differs significantly from colonial spatial arrangements, which are typically symmetrical, hierarchical, and rigid.

At the connotative level, the Jengki architectural interiors depicted in *Tiga Dara* can be interpreted as a critical response to colonial aesthetics and as a statement of post-independence novelty and modernity. Asymmetrical spatial compositions, flexible layouts, and the use of non-permanent elements connote freedom of thought, egalitarian values, and shifting patterns of social relations within an urban society undergoing modernisation. Furniture with hybrid characteristics that absorb international modern influences particularly from the United States represents cultural openness and a process of creative adaptation in the formation of a national design identity. Meanwhile, the treatment of lighting, ventilation, and expressive geometric openings reinforces notions of optimism, rationality, and self-confidence, reflecting the ability of a young nation to interpret modernity in a contextually relevant way, in relation to Indonesia's tropical climate and social realities.

Accordingly, the synthesis of denotative and connotative readings demonstrates that Jengki's architectural interiors in *Tiga Dara* function not merely as narrative backdrops but as visual texts that articulate the Indonesian *zeitgeist* of the 1950s. These interiors serve as a medium for expressing a national identity in formation, conveying values of novelty, freedom, and hybridity through the visual language of urban middle-class domestic space. Through the articulation of spatial organisation, architectural elements, furnishings, and lighting and ventilation strategies, Jengki interiors in the film document a shift in societal perceptions of modernity one that is no longer rooted solely in colonial aesthetics but is reinterpreted in the context of post-independence Indonesian social and cultural realities. In this context, *Tiga Dara* functions as a visual archive of historical and cultural significance,

representing not only transformations in architectural and interior design aesthetics but also broader changes in Indonesian social values during the transition from colonialism to national modernity.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that *Tiga Dara* (1956), directed by Usmar Ismail, functions not only as a cinematic work but also as a visual archive that records transformations in aesthetic practices and social values during Indonesia's early post-independence period. Using a qualitative descriptive approach and Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, the study demonstrates that Jengki's architectural interiors in the film function as a system of signs that produce both denotative and connotative meanings, revealing the relationship among domestic spatial representation, modernity, and the formation of national identity.

At the denotative level, Jengki interiors are represented through asymmetrical spatial compositions, open-plan layouts, slanted angles and openings, and flexible spatial elements. The use of rattan and wooden furniture with tapered and curved forms reinforces a dynamic interior character. At the same time, lighting and ventilation strategies demonstrate responsiveness to tropical climatic conditions by optimising natural light, complemented by artificial lighting. These visual characteristics clearly differentiate Jengki interiors from colonial domestic spaces that are typically symmetrical, hierarchical, and rigid.

At the connotative level, the representation of Jengki interiors articulates values of novelty, freedom, and modernity associated with a society undergoing post-independence transformation. Spatial asymmetry and flexibility signify a departure from colonial aesthetics, while the hybridisation of spatial forms and furnishings reflects the creative adaptation of international modern influences within a local context. In this sense, interior space functions not only as a marker of urban middle-class lifestyle but also as a medium for expressing ideological positions related to optimism, self-confidence, and social change in 1950s Indonesia.

In conclusion, Jengki architectural interiors in *Tiga Dara* represent the post-independence Indonesian *zeitgeist*, positioning domestic space as an important arena for articulating identity, modernity, and social transformation. This study highlights the potential of film as a relevant source for interior design and architectural research. It underscores cinema's value as a visual archive for examining the historical development of Indonesian interior design during the transition from colonial influence to national modernity.

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