



## THE AESTHETICS OF RESISTANCE: AN INSTALLATION BY JOMPET KUSWIDANANTO

Walid Syarthowi Basmalah<sup>1\*</sup>, I Wayan Adnyana<sup>2</sup>, I Wayan Setem<sup>3</sup>, I Wayan Karja<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>Institut Seni Indonesia, Bali-Indonesia

Corresponden Email: [walidsyartowi@ikj.ac.id](mailto:walidsyartowi@ikj.ac.id)<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

This article examines how Jompét Kuswidananto formulates a counter-hegemonic aesthetics through installation works that combine spectral figures, sonic orchestration, and material icons to challenge dominant narratives of history and Javanese-Indonesian identity in the post-New Order era. The research data consist of in-depth interviews with Jompét (2024-2025), exhibition documentation, and secondary literature. The analysis focuses on Java's Machine: Phantasmagoria (2008), which presents a parade of "ghost soldiers" and hybridises marching-band sounds with Javanese symbols, and on After Voices (2016), which articulates political memory and collective movement. The findings reveal three principal counter-hegemonic aesthetic devices: (1) spectrality, which reactivates historical trauma and destabilises the authority of representation; (2) sonic-politics, which inserts irony into militaristic and nationalist forms of discipline; and (3) symbolic iconoclasm, exemplified by the use of crystal chandeliers as allegories for the collapse of colonial power. Drawing upon Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony, Stuart Hall's concept of representation, and Claire Bishop's writings on installation art, this study demonstrates that Jompét's works create a space for negotiating meaning, enriching the discourse of contemporary art in Southeast Asia. This article contributes to cultural studies by proposing the "Three S" matrix (spectrality, sonic politics, and symbolic iconoclasm) as an analytical framework for examining counter-hegemonic strategies in installation art.

**Keywords:** Jompét Kuswidananto; installation art; counter-hegemony; representation; cultural identity

### INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s, Indonesian installation art has developed as a primary medium for artists to articulate social, political, and cultural critique. The transition from modern to contemporary art practices was characterised not only by changes in media and modes of presentation, but also by a paradigm shift in how artists negotiate the relationships among art, society, and power. Installation art proved particularly suitable for such negotiations due to its flexibility: it incorporates diverse elements, objects, sound, video, performance and constructs immersive spaces for audiences. As such, it has become a crucial arena for producing counter-narratives, social criticism, and explorations of identity amidst Indonesia's rapidly changing sociopolitical landscape (Bishop, 2005; Kusmara, 2013; Suryajaya, 2016). The collapse of the New Order regime in 1998 marked a major turning point. Democratisation and media liberalisation opened new spaces for artists to address previously taboo subjects, including state violence, political repression, religion, gender, and cultural identity. Whereas under Suharto art was often instrumentalised as a legitimising tool of the state, in the Reformasi era art increasingly functioned as critique and reflection, contesting hegemonic state narratives and the expanding global art market.

Yogyakarta holds a particularly prominent place in this development. As both a cultural capital and a hub for art education (notably the Indonesian Institute of the Arts, ISI Yogyakarta), the city

became a laboratory for experimental art practice beginning in the early 1990s. The *Binal Eksperimental Art* exhibitions (1992, 1997) marked the rise of an alternative contemporary art ecosystem that explicitly rejected the aesthetic norms endorsed by the state (Supangkat, 2000). In this context, art was no longer merely individual expression, but also a cultural-political strategy: a symbolic form of resistance to state hegemony. Artists of the 1990s, such as FX Harsono, Heri Dono, Arahmaiani, and Titarubi, often produced direct critiques of state repression. Harsono's performative works addressed the violence of 1965, while Arahmaiani staged confrontations with issues of gender and religion (Harsono, 2013; Holt, 2000). By contrast, artists emerging in the 2000s encountered a different terrain. Authoritarian repression had lessened, but hegemony persisted in transformed forms: the global art market, international cultural institutions, and ongoing productions of national cultural identity.

It is within this post-Reformasi context that Jompet Kuswidananto emerged. With a background in music and theater rather than purely fine arts, Jompet developed a unique sensibility towards sound, spatial dramaturgy, and performativity. Since the early 2000s, his installations have explored colonial history, narratives of nationalism, and the construction of Javanese-Indonesian cultural identity through distinctive strategies: spectral figures in the form of empty costumes, sonic dimensions that emphasise rhythm and resonance, and symbolic objects saturated with political meaning (Pangestu, 2017; Suryajaya, 2016). His iconic work *Java's Machine: Phantasmagoria* (2008) presents a phalanx of disembodied soldiers, equipped with Javanese court attire, military boots, and mechanised marching-band instruments. Activated by motorised technology and accompanied by martial soundscapes, these empty figures are simultaneously present and absent. The installation not only stages the hybridity of Javanese tradition and Western militarism but also destabilises hegemonic narratives of Javanese cultural grandeur, which are frequently used for political legitimisation (Pujiraharjo, 2019). By conjuring "specters of history," Jompet reminds audiences that Indonesia's past remains haunted by colonial residues, political violence, and unresolved structures of power (Danto, 2012; Kuswidananto, 2016). Jompet's aesthetic through the lens of counter-hegemony and Antonio Gramsci (1971/1999) defines hegemony as ideological domination achieved through consensus and persuasion rather than coercion alone. In the arts, hegemony is manifest when certain symbols, representations, and aesthetic values are institutionalised as "mainstream" while suppressing alternatives. Counter-hegemony, in turn, refers to efforts to disrupt and destabilise this consensus through symbolic and cultural practices. In Jompet's case, counter-hegemony is achieved through frontal resistance and subtle strategies of ambiguity, irony, and fractured meaning.

Equally significant is Stuart Hall's (1997; 2013) theory of representation. For Hall, representation is not a reflection of reality but a process of meaning-making through signs and discursive practices. Cultural identity, likewise, is not essential but always produced, negotiated, and contested. This framework is highly relevant to Jompet's reworking of Javanese symbols, court costumes, gamelan music, and trance rituals not as celebrations of authenticity, but as constructions

that reveal how identity, colonialism, nationalism, and globalisation intersect. Claire Bishop's (2005; 2012) theory of installation art further enriches this reading. Bishop emphasises that installation relies on embodied audience experience, immersive environments, and sensory interactions that shift spectators from passive viewers to active participants. In this sense, Jompet's installations are arenas of negotiation in which audiences are not simply "watching" representations but are also "haunted" by histories, sounds, and symbols that permeate their embodied experience.

Previous scholarship on Indonesian installation art has largely focused on the 1990s generation, Heri Dono, FX Harsono, and Arahmaiani as exemplars of counter-hegemonic practices (Holt, 2000; Kusmara, 2013; Agung, 2015). In comparison, sustained academic engagement with Jompet remains limited, despite his international presence in venues such as the Yokohama Triennale (2011), the Jakarta Biennale, and numerous European exhibitions. This article seeks to address that gap by analysing how counter-hegemonic aesthetics in Jompet's works operate through three interrelated devices: spectrality, sonic politics, and symbolic iconoclasm. The main objective of this article is to demonstrate that Jompet's installations are not merely aesthetic artifacts but also cultural interventions that challenge dominant narratives of history and identity in Indonesia. Conceptually, the article proposes the "Three S" matrix: Spectrality, Sonic Politics, and Symbolic Iconoclasm as a heuristic for understanding counter-hegemonic strategies in contemporary Southeast Asian installation art.

Against this backdrop, this article analyses aesthetic strategies and the representation of identity in Jompet Kuswidananto's installation works, particularly in relation to historical narratives, collective memory, and critiques of the construction of Indonesian nationalism. This study contributes to the development of Indonesian contemporary art studies, particularly by deepening the understanding of installation art as a medium for cultural articulation, social critique, and the formation of identity discourse in the contemporary era.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony: Antonio Gramsci's Perspective**

Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony has become a crucial framework for analysing the relationship between art and power. Hegemony operates not only through coercion but primarily through consensus, the capacity of dominant groups to make their social order appear "natural" and "commonsensical" (Gramsci, 1999, pp. 12-15). By institutionalising specific norms and aesthetics in museums, education, criticism, and markets, hegemony consolidates its dominance as if it were self-evident. In the arts, counter-hegemonic practices arise when artists disrupt these norms by creating aesthetic strategies that destabilise meaning, often through subtle interventions in form, space, and sensory experience. Hall (1986) emphasises that Gramsci's framework allows cultural practice as an arena of struggle, where meanings are continuously contested and never settled.

In Indonesia, New Order cultural hegemony (1966-1998) was articulated through national festivals, homogenised cultural projects, and state-controlled curricula, all of which framed “Indonesian culture” within a developmentalist and politically stable paradigm (Holt, 2000). Counter-hegemonic art emerged through the New Art Movement (GSRB, 1975-1979) and experimental exhibitions such as *Binal Eksperimental Art* (1992, 1997), which rejected official aesthetics and opened alternative spaces for dissent (Mangunwijaya, 1988; Supangkat, 2000). Artists like Heri Dono employed grotesque humor, while FX Harsono directly addressed the 1965 massacres (Harsono, 2013). Jompet Kuswidananto, emerging after 1998, continues this tradition but through subtler strategies. Instead of explicit protest, he employs specters, sounds, and symbolic objects to create counter-narratives that unsettle the hegemonic “common sense” of nationalism and cultural identity.

### **Representation, Identity, and Spectrality: Stuart Hall’s Framework**

The concepts of representation and identity in Stuart Hall's thought serve as a crucial foundation for understanding contemporary installation art as a practice of producing cultural meaning. Representation is understood not merely as a reflection of reality, but as a process of meaning-making through symbols, images, and cultural practices, in relation to power relations and the construction of identity. From Hall's perspective, identity is dynamic and continuously shaped through history, collective memory, and social experience. This framework is relevant for interpreting spectrality in installation art the presence of historical traces and memories that are physically “absent” yet continue to haunt the cultural space. In Jompet Kuswidananto’s works, spectrality manifests through bodiless figures, empty costumes, gamelan sounds, and a theatrical atmosphere that represents the relationship among the body, power, and history. Thus, Jompet’s work is a representational practice that constructs postcolonial identity while simultaneously serving as a medium for cultural critique of the dominant narrative of Indonesian nationalism. For Stuart Hall (1997), representation is not a mirror of reality but a discursive practice that produces meaning. Cultural identity is never essential; it is always relational, historical, and in process (Hall, 1996, 2013). This framework is indispensable for understanding Jompet’s use of Javanese symbols, court costumes, marching bands, and trance rituals not as celebrations of “authenticity” but as deconstructed signs that reveal the production of identity under colonialism, nationalism, and globalisation.

Drawing on Derrida’s *Specters of Marx* (1994) and Avery Gordon’s (2008) *Ghostly Matters*, spectrality refers to presence marked by absence, the lingering traces of unresolved histories. Jompet enacts spectrality through empty costumes, disembodied soldiers, and bodiless drum sounds. These forms evoke ambivalence (between presence/absence, between reality/illusion) and undermine stable constructions of identity. Java here is not a pure essence but a haunted identity, shaped by colonial violence, authoritarian nationalism, and unfinished trauma. Jompet's work thus foregrounds the instability of identity and refuses fetishised notions of cultural authenticity. Drawing on the ideas of Jacques Derrida in *Specters of Marx* (1994) and Avery Gordon in *Ghostly Matters* (2008), spectrality

is a form of presence marked by absence, namely the persistence of unresolved histories, suppressed memories, and invisible structures of power that continue to haunt the present. Spectrality does not merely refer to ghosts in a literal sense, but to historical traces that refuse to disappear despite attempts by dominant ideologies to erase or stabilise them. In this perspective, the “specter” becomes a metaphor for unfinished trauma, political violence, and historical contradictions that recur in cultural representation.



Figure 1. Jompet Kuswidananto, Java's Machine: Phantasmagoria (2008).  
(Sumber: <https://ntu.ccasingapore.org/residency/jompet-kuswidananto/>)

The works of Jompet Kuswidananto strongly embody this spectral logic through empty military uniforms, bodiless performers, floating costumes, and disembodied drum and gamelan sounds. These absent bodies create a haunting atmosphere in which the audience encounters figures that appear simultaneously present and absent. The installations therefore destabilise conventional perceptions of reality, identity, and historical continuity. Rather than presenting history as fixed or complete, Jompet constructs an ambiguous space in which memory, trauma, and power circulate as ghostly residues embedded in material objects and sonic environments. This strategy of spectrality is particularly significant in relation to Javanese and Indonesian identity. In Jompet's installations, “Java” is not represented as a stable cultural essence rooted in purity or authenticity. Instead, it emerges as a haunted identity shaped by layers of colonial domination, authoritarian nationalism, militarism, and postcolonial anxiety. The empty uniforms and spectral soldiers evoke the lingering memory of colonial armies, state violence, and the disciplining of bodies under authoritarian regimes, especially during the New Order era. At the same time, the use of traditional sonic elements, such as gamelan, creates a tension between heritage and haunting, suggesting that cultural tradition itself is inseparable from political history and ideological construction.

Through these spectral forms, Jompet Kuswidananto challenges essentialist and fetishised notions of cultural authenticity that often dominate representations of Indonesian identity in state discourse and global art markets. His installations refuse to romanticise “tradition” as something pure, harmonious, or untouched by violence. Instead, identity is fragmented, unstable, and continuously negotiated through historical conflict and collective memory. Spectrality thus becomes both an

aesthetic strategy and a political critique, exposing how unresolved histories continue to shape contemporary subjectivity and cultural consciousness in postcolonial Indonesia.

### **Contemporary Installation Art: Claire Bishop's Theory**

Claire Bishop (2005) identifies installation as a medium that envelops audiences, shifting them from passive spectators into embodied participants. In *Artificial Hells* (2012), she further stresses the politics of participation and affect, showing how installation art stages conditions of involvement that can either open emancipatory possibilities or reproduce ideology. In *Java's Machine*, Jompet Kuswidananto does not position the audience as passive viewers observing costumes as static objects. Instead, the installation immerses viewers within a theatrical choreography of space, movement, and sound that generates tension between visibility and invisibility, presence and absence. The empty costumes appear animated by unseen bodies, while the spatial arrangement and sonic atmosphere produce a haunting sense of instability. Audiences experience the installation not simply through visual contemplation but through embodied perception, in which uncertainty and affect become central to meaning-making. This immersive strategy destabilises fixed interpretations and encourages viewers to confront historical memories and political anxieties embedded within the work (Pangestu, 2017; Bishop, 2005).

This aesthetic strategy becomes even more pronounced in *After Voices*, where Jompet Kuswidananto shifts attention from visual spectacle toward the politics of sound. Rather than representing protest through monumental imagery or heroic crowds, the installation foregrounds residual sonic fragments: echoes of chants, murmurs, drumbeats, and broken voices that linger within the exhibition space. These sounds function as traces of collective political action that continue to resonate even after the physical crowd has disappeared. In doing so, Jompet constructs what may be a dramaturgy of affect, where meaning emerges not from direct representation but from bodily encounters with sonic resonance and emotional tension (LaBelle, 2006; Suryajaya, 2016). Such an approach aligns with Claire Bishop's argument that installation art often operates by disrupting dominant systems of representation and opening space for polysemic, unstable interpretations. Rather than delivering a singular political message, Jompet's installations produce ambiguity and multiplicity, compelling audiences to negotiate meaning through sensory and affective experience. The instability generated through sound and spatial immersion resists the closure typically associated with official narratives of nationalism, order, and historical progress (Bishop, 2005).

It is also possible to understand the significance of sound in Jompet's work through the lens of sound studies. Brandon LaBelle argues that sound possesses a distinct political and affective capacity because it goes beyond the control of vision and directly activates bodily perception. Unlike visual representation, which can often be framed, archived, and regulated, sound moves fluidly across space and enters the listener's body in intimate and uncontrollable ways. In *After Voices*, the echoes of

protest and fragmented speech suggest that political struggle does not conclude when demonstrations end or when crowds disperse. Instead, resistance survives as resonance lingering affectively within bodies, memories, and public consciousness (LaBelle, 2006).

Within Stuart Hall's theoretical framework, this sonic strategy constitutes an alternative mode of representation that resists fixed or singular meaning. Meaning remains open, contested, and continuously negotiated through affective experience. Simultaneously, from the perspective of Antonio Gramsci, Jompet's use of sound may be understood as a counter-hegemonic strategy of audibility. The terrain of political struggle shifts away from state-controlled visual archives and official historical narratives toward embodied, sensory, and affective domains that are more difficult to regulate. Through echoes, reverberations, and sonic residues, Jompet Kuswidananto articulates dissent as something unfinished and ongoing, compelling audiences to experience politics not as a closed historical event, but as a continuing process of memory, tension, and resistance (Hall, 1997; Gramsci, 1971).

### **Indonesian and Southeast Asian Contexts of Installation Art**

One can trace the origins of Indonesian installation art back to the New Art Movement (GSRB) of the 1970s, which rejected conventional artistic forms and encouraged conceptual practices that engaged with social and political realities. During the 1990s, installation art became an important medium of resistance against the New Order regime, especially through experimental exhibitions that challenged state control over public space and artistic expression. After the Reformasi period, installation art grew rapidly because of its flexibility in combining sound, video, performance, and objects to address issues of identity, politics, and social change. In the post-1998 era, artists such as Jompet Kuswidananto encountered different forms of hegemony. Instead of confronting direct authoritarian repression, they responded to the pressures of globalisation, international art markets, biennials, and cultural branding. As a result, resistance shifted from explicit political protest to more subtle strategies grounded in ambiguity, memory, and affect. Jompet's ghostly soldiers, fragmented sounds, and broken chandeliers demonstrate this transformation, employing spectrality, sonic politics, and symbolic iconoclasm to question dominant narratives without resorting to direct slogans or confrontation.

Jompet's work also resonates with broader developments in Southeast Asian contemporary art. Artists such as Montien Boonma in Thailand explored social trauma through spiritual and sensory installations, while Apichatpong Weerasethakul investigated political memory and haunting through film and installation. In the Philippines, Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan addressed migration and diaspora using everyday materials. These practices demonstrate that Southeast Asian installation art offers original perspectives on global discussions of memory, identity, colonialism, and power rather than merely following Western artistic models. In terms of participation, Jompet's installations relate

to relational aesthetics. His works create immersive environments where audiences interact physically and emotionally with sound, objects, and space. However, unlike relational art that emphasises harmony or social connection, Jompet uses participation to intensify uncertainty and reflection. Audiences are confronted with traces of history, unresolved tensions, and unstable meanings, making the installation space a critical arena for negotiating memory, identity, and power. Overall, the Indonesian and Southeast Asian contexts demonstrate that installation art functions not only as an aesthetic practice but also as a cultural and political strategy. Through immersive and multisensory experiences, artists like Jompet Kuswidananto challenge dominant narratives and open new spaces for critical engagement with history, society, and contemporary power structures.

Together, these frameworks offer a matrix for analysis: (1) Gramsci (Hegemony/Counter-Hegemony) reads Jompet's works as *wars of position*, cultural struggles that destabilise common-sense narratives of history and identity. (2) Hall (Representation/Identity): reveals how Javanese symbols are not essentialised but reworked into ambivalent meaning, identity as a process rather than a substance. (3) Bishop (Installation Art) illuminates the embodied, affective, and participatory politics of installation, highlighting how immersive experience disrupts dominant narratives. Augmented by Gordon's spectrality, LaBelle's sonic politics, and Bourriaud's relational aesthetics, this synthesis positions Jompet's aesthetic as a unique counter-hegemonic practice. His installations summon ghosts of history (spectrality), displace political struggle into affective audibility (sonic politics), and subvert symbols of power (iconoclasm) while embedding audiences in ambivalent experiences that compel reflection on memory, identity, and power.

## METHOD

This study employs an interpretive, qualitative approach, grounded in visual culture studies, to analyse Jompet Kuswidananto's installation works as cultural texts that represent the interplay of power, memory, and identity. A case study method was chosen, focusing on three major works: *Java's Machine: Phantasmagoria* (2008), *After Voices* (2016), and the crystal lamp installation series (2016-2018), all of which demonstrate counter-hegemonic aesthetic strategies through spectrality, sonic dimensions, and material symbolism. The research also employs critical hermeneutics to connect visual symbols with socio-political contexts such as colonialism, nationalism, and post-Reformasi transformations.

Research data through in-depth interviews with Jompet Kuswidananto, direct exhibition observations, audiovisual documentation and document analysis of exhibition catalogs, curatorial essays, academic articles, and historical archives. The reduction, presentation, and drawing of conclusions from the data were all part of the data analysis process. Critical hermeneutics, thematic coding, visual-material analysis, and discourse analysis were among the methods utilised. To ensure the accuracy of the findings, the use of audit trails and source triangulation was highly effective. At the same time, researchers use reflexivity to reduce the risk of interpretive bias. It enabled the



research to produce a critical, contextual, and in-depth understanding of Jompet Kuswidananto's installation works within the landscape of contemporary art in Indonesia.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Java's Machine: Phantasmagoria became one of the most important works in Jompet Kuswidananto's artistic career. The installation presents bodiless soldiers wearing Javanese court costumes and military boots, and carrying musical instruments, all of which are moved by machines. Inspired by stories of "phantom drum bands" in Yogyakarta, the work creates a haunting atmosphere where sound and movement exist without human bodies. Through these ghostly figures, Jompet questions the notion of Javanese cultural grandeur and exposes the close connection between tradition and colonialism, militarism, and unresolved historical trauma. The empty uniforms symbolise the fragility of authority and criticise romanticised nationalist narratives.

While Java's Machine focuses on visual haunting, After Voices emphasises sound as a political force; the installation uses fragments of speeches, crowd noises, and repetitive rhythms to recreate the atmosphere after political demonstrations. Instead of showing direct images of protest, Jompet highlights the remaining echoes and emotional resonance left behind after the crowd disappears. Audiences experience the sounds physically through vibration and immersion, creating a strong affective response. The work suggests that political struggle does not end when protests stop; rather, it continues through memories, echoes, and unresolved demands for justice and reform.

The chandelier series (2016-2018) introduces another strategy through symbolic iconoclasm. Jompet presents broken and suspended crystal chandeliers inspired by histories of anti-colonial resistance, particularly the destruction of elite colonial symbols during the Banten Peasant Revolt. Chandeliers, often associated with aristocratic and colonial power, are transformed into fragile and fractured objects. Through this strategy, Jompet reveals that power is never permanent or untouchable. The works also revive suppressed histories of resistance and expose the instability behind symbols of authority. Together, these three works demonstrate Jompet's consistent counter-hegemonic aesthetic through what can be called the "Three S Matrix": Spectrality, Sonic Politics, and Symbolic Iconoclasm. Rather than using direct political messages, Jompet employs subtle, multisensory, and ambiguous strategies that encourage audiences to reflect on history, identity, and power. His installations create spaces where meaning remains open and contested, allowing viewers to experience tensions between presence and absence, sound and silence, and grandeur and fragility.

In conclusion, Jompet Kuswidananto's installations function not only as artistic works but also as cultural interventions that challenge dominant narratives in Indonesian society. Through ghostly imagery, immersive sound, and fractured symbols, he opens critical spaces for questioning history, authority, and cultural identity. His work demonstrates how contemporary installation art can become a powerful medium for counter-hegemonic expression in Indonesia and Southeast Asia.



Figure 2. Jompet Kuswidananto, *After Voices* (2016).  
 (Sumber: <https://ntu.ccasingapore.org/residency/jompet-kuswidananto/>)

The findings of this study demonstrate that Jompet Kuswidananto's aesthetic strategies do not operate through frontal critique but through what might be called a politics of ambiguity. Whereas the generation of Indonesian artists active under the New Order, such as FX Harsono, often employed explicit criticism of state violence, Jompet instead deploys layers of symbolic gestures that compel audiences to confront ambivalence: presence and absence, beauty and fragility, sound and echo. In Antonio Gramsci's (1999) terms, this may be a *war of position*: an ideological struggle not conducted through confrontation but through the repositioning of meaning within the cultural sphere. By mobilising spectral figures (*Java's Machine*), residual collective voices (*After Voices*), and fragile icons of authority (the chandelier series), Jompet unsettles hegemonic "common sense" that treats Javanese identity as stable, demonstrations as reducible to visual spectacle, and colonial symbols as unassailable.

In *Java's Machine: Phantasmagoria*, spectrality is performed through the parade of bodiless soldiers. The uniforms, boots, and drum-band instruments remain, but the corporeal subjects are absent. This absence enacts what Derrida (1994) calls *hauntology*: a presence always marked by absence. Politically, this strategy destabilises the hegemonic myth of Javanese court grandeur as a stable and timeless center of cultural identity. For Gramsci (1999), hegemony functions by constructing a collective memory that makes a given order appear natural. The court, as a hegemonic cultural symbol, is reinforced through education, tourism, and official historiography. By presenting "ghostly soldiers," Jompet reveals the fragility of that narrative, haunted by colonialism, militarism, and unresolved trauma. The installation thus produces a counter-narrative that not only discloses hidden histories but also emphasises the openness and vulnerability of cultural identity. Hall (1997) has argued that identity is not an essence but a process of becoming never finished, always negotiated. In this framework, Jompet's ghostly figures serve as metaphors for incomplete identities: "Javanese" is not a pure entity but a discursive construction forged by colonialism, nationalism, and globalisation. Representational spectrality here functions as a form of resistance to essentialist hegemony that seeks to stabilise cultural identity. Bishop (2005) adds that installation art works through embodied

audience experience. *Java's Machine* is not simply viewed but felt: the haunting rhythms of drums, the mechanical gestures of empty costumes, and the immersive spatial arrangement produce both awe and unease. This multisensory condition politicises the audience's body, making them experience the fragility of hegemonic narratives. Spectrality, then, becomes a counter-hegemonic strategy not by delivering frontal critique but by staging an ambivalent affective disturbance.



Figure 3. Jompet Kuswidananto, *Terang Boelan (Moonshine)*, 2022, crystal chandelier installation series.

(Sumber: <https://universes.art/en/bangkok-art-biennale/2022/jompet-kuswidananto>)

The three case studies converge into what this study calls the “Three S” Matrix: Spectrality, Sonic Politics, and Symbolic Iconoclasm. Through this framework, Jompet Kuswidananto challenges dominant cultural narratives not through direct political statements, but through experiences of space, sound, rhythm, and material. Spectrality evokes unresolved histories and unstable identities; Sonic Politics turns sound into a form of resistance beyond visual control; and Symbolic Iconoclasm fractures symbols of authority, revealing their fragility. Together, these strategies create spaces of ambiguity where meaning remains open and contested, encouraging audiences to reflect on memory, power, and cultural identity. Theoretically, Jompet’s work shows how installation art can function as a counter-hegemonic cultural practice through affective and immersive experiences. His works move beyond fixed representation, engaging audiences physically and emotionally and allowing identity, history, and power to be continuously questioned and renegotiated. The installations transform aesthetic experience into a space of reflection, tension, and critical awareness.

Contextually, Jompet reflects the changing landscape of contemporary Indonesian art after the fall of the New Order. Unlike earlier artists who often used direct political protest, Jompet employs subtler strategies grounded in ambiguity, resonance, and symbolic fracture. His works respond to new forms of hegemony shaped by globalisation, cultural branding, and international art institutions, making his approach relevant within contemporary global art discourse. More broadly, Jompet’s practice resonates with developments in Southeast Asian contemporary art, where many artists use

sound, memory, and symbolic intervention to address trauma, violence, and cultural transformation. The “Three S” Matrix therefore offers a useful framework for understanding contemporary counter-hegemonic aesthetics in the region. Ultimately, this study affirms that Jompét Kuswidananto’s installations are not merely visual artworks but important cultural interventions. Through spectrality, sonic politics, and symbolic iconoclasm, his works challenge dominant narratives and open critical spaces for negotiating history, identity, and power in contemporary Indonesia and Southeast Asia.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Jompét Kuswidananto articulates a distinctive counter-hegemonic aesthetic through installation practices that merge spectrality, sonic politics, and symbolic iconoclasm into immersive and affective cultural experiences. Rather than relying on direct political confrontation or singular ideological statements, Jompét constructs spaces of ambiguity and negotiation in which audiences encounter the instability of history, identity, and power with the crystal chandelier installations as a conceptual framework explaining how spectral bodies, acoustic atmospheres, and fractured symbols work together to destabilise hegemonic narratives and expose the fragility of dominant cultural structures. The findings further reveal that Jompét’s installations transcend representational function by transforming the audience’s bodily and sensory engagement into a political field. His works demonstrate how installation art can operate as a space of counter-hegemonic struggle through affective experience, ambiguity, and participatory meaning-making. At the same time, the study situates Jompét within the post-New Order trajectory of Indonesian contemporary art, highlighting how his subtle and cosmopolitan strategies differ from the more direct critiques associated with earlier generations of artists. His practice reflects a transformed political landscape in which hegemony increasingly operates through globalisation, cultural branding, and institutional networks rather than solely through authoritarian repression.

Conceptually, this research contributes the “Three S Matrix” as a broader analytical model for understanding counter-hegemonic aesthetics in Southeast Asian installation art. Empirically, it expands scholarly discussion on Jompét’s work, which remains relatively underexplored despite his international recognition. Methodologically, the study demonstrates the importance of integrating visual-material analysis, artist interviews, and historical contextualisation in interpreting installation art as a cultural text. Nevertheless, the research also acknowledges several limitations, including its focus on a limited number of works, its dependence on exhibition documentation, and its reliance on predominantly Western theoretical perspectives. These limitations suggest the importance of future comparative studies, audience-centered analyses, and the incorporation of decolonial and local Indonesian intellectual frameworks. Ultimately, this study affirms that Jompét Kuswidananto’s installations are not merely aesthetic objects but strategic cultural interventions that challenge dominant structures of meaning. Through spectrality, sonic politics, and symbolic iconoclasm, his works create spaces where historical memory, cultural identity, and ideological power remain open to

contestation and reinterpretation. In doing so, Jompet demonstrates the continuing potential of installation art as a transformative cultural practice capable of shifting the terrain of hegemony within contemporary Indonesia and Southeast Asia.

## REFERENCES

- Agung, A. 2015. *Seni rupa kontemporer Indonesia: Politik, estetika, dan identitas*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius.
- Asia Society. (2016). *After Voices by Jompet Kuswidananto*. Exhibition notes, Asia Society Triennial.
- Bishop, C. (2005). *Installation art: A critical history*. London: Tate Publishing.
- Bishop, C. (2012). *Artificial hells: Participatory art and the politics of spectatorship*. London: Verso.
- Bourriaud, N. 2002. *Relational aesthetics*. Dijon: Les presses du réel.
- Danto, A. C. (2012). *What art is*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Derrida, J. 1994. *Specters of Marx: The state of the debt, the work of mourning, and the new international*. New York: Routledge.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2018). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gramsci, A. (1999). *Selections from the prison notebooks* (Q. Hoare & G. N. Smith, Eds. & Trans.). London: Lawrence & Wishart. (Original work published 1971)
- Gordon, A. (2008). *Ghostly matters: Haunting and the sociological imagination* (2nd ed.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Hall, S. (1986). Gramsci's relevance for the study of race and ethnicity. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 10(2), 5-27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019685998601000202>
- Hall, S. (1996). *Questions of cultural identity*. London: Sage.
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. London: Sage.
- Hall, S. (2013). *The work of representation* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Harsono, F. X. 2013. *Testimonies: FX Harsono*. Singapore: Singapore Art Museum.
- Heryanto, A. (2014). *Identity and Pleasure: The Politics of Indonesian Screen Culture*. Singapore: NUS Press.
- Holt, C. 2000. *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and change*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Kartodirdjo, S. (1966). *The peasants' revolt of Banten in 1888: Its conditions, course and sequel; A case study of social movements in Indonesia*. 's-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-015-0796-2>
- Kusmara, R. 2013. *Seni rupa kontemporer Indonesia: Identitas dan globalisasi*. Bandung: ITB Press.
- LaBelle, B. 2006. *Background noise: Perspectives on sound art*. New York: Continuum.
- Mangunwijaya, Y. B. 1988. *Seni rupa baru: Sebuah gerakan*. Yogyakarta: Bentara Budaya.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pangestu, D. 2017. *Narasi hantu dalam seni instalasi Jompet Kuswidananto* (Master's thesis, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia).
- Pujiraharjo, S. (2019). Memori, identitas, dan estetika kontemporer dalam karya Jompet Kuswidananto. *Jurnal Seni Rupa*, 12(2), 55-72. <https://doi.org/10.24821/resital.v12i2.2893>
- Ricoeur, P. 1976. *Interpretation theory: Discourse and the surplus of meaning*. Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press.
- Rose, G. (2016). *Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials* (4th ed.). London: Sage.
- Supangkat, J. 2000. *Indonesia modern art*. Jakarta: Gramedia.
- Supangkat, J. 2011. *Indonesian Contemporary Art in the Global Context*. Jakarta: Nadi Gallery.
- Suryajaya, M. 2016. *Sejarah estetika: Era klasik sampai kontemporer*. Jakarta: Gang Kabel.
- Suryajaya, M. 2016. "Postcolonial Aesthetics in Indonesian Contemporary Installation Art." *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture*, 8(1), 1-12.
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.