Kurator Tidak Lagi Monopoli Interpretasi

Apa sebenarnya tugas seorang kurator seni rupa? Jay Koh (51), seorang kurator asal Singapura, memberi pengertian sederhana, "pack it and make it nice" (mengemas dan membuatnya indah).

OLEH DAHONO FITRIANTO DAN PUTU FAJAR ARCANA


Jadi, kurator adalah orang yang dapat memberikan kebebasan untuk menentukan sifat dan rasa seni rupa. "Kurator adalah orang yang memberikan kebebasan untuk menentukan sifat dan rasa seni rupa," kata Jay.


Pandangan Jay bahwa kurator harus selalu mempertimbangkan kebebasan seni rupa dalam memikirkan seni rupa, dan seni rupa harus selalu dilihat dari sudut pandang seni rupa.

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Tidak benar kalau seorang kurator hanya bisa memenuhi kebutuhan hidupnya dengan menjual karya seni seorang seniman.


Mata pencaharian

Jay mengatakan, dalam dunia yang makna berlimpah dan berkepakan mungkin muncul ide, kurator harus memahami bahwa kurator memiliki dua buah hati untuk menggali kekayaan dari kekayaan itu. "Mencari kekayaan mungkin tewas, yang lebih berarti untuk mendapatkan uang," tuturnya.


Bina menggambarkan, salah satu cara untuk memahami penghasilan seorang kurator adalah dengan sering-sering memukul tentang seni, kemudian diikuti dengan berbagi. "Itu pada saat menentukan bagaimana untuk bekerja sama, karena mengandalkan sedikit bagian dari data yang dipercaya terhadap," katanya.

Semestari Jay menjelaskan, ini adalah pencaharian seorang kurator yang bisa memenuhi kebutuhan hidupnya dengan menjual karya seni seorang seniman. Banyak yang bisa dikerjakan seorang kurator untuk mendapatkan sumbangan penghasilan.


Curator no longer monopolise interpretation

What really is the work of a visual art curator? Jay Koh (51 years), a curator from Singapore, gives a simple definition, "pack it and make it nice".

BY DAHONO FITRIANTO AND PUTU FAJAR ARCANA

The above statement by one of the resource curators in the "Multi-Faceted Curator" workshop in Jakarta and Bandung, 6-11 March is an extreme simplification of a curator's job description. In reality, this simple definition really is what happens now in the curatorial world of Indonesia.

What is the actual situation of the curatorial word overseas? Is it true that to be a visual art curator one has to become a visual artist first?

Jay admits that his career in arts started when he worked in video installation media at the age of 35. But afterwards, Jay started to take up curatorship as a profession, although he refused to be called a professional curator. "I am not a professional curator. I am just playing the role as one," said the curator who is based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and manages an art space in Myanmar.

His experience in doing the work as a curator in various countries have led him to become a resource for visual art-related events. In April, he will be in New York and then in May he will be in San Diego, California to talk about his art activities, and in June he is expected to be in Mexico to give a lecture on art activities in Asia.

"Basically I am an artist, but I earn more by creating workshops, giving out lectures, and developing art projects. I use creative thinking, creative initiative and creative energy to negotiate and react to the event venue," says Jay.

However, Jay stressed that to become a curator one need not be an artist before that. "We now work in a world that is different from the past," added Jay.

He said that, in the era of modernism, an artist and a curator were in the central position that become the main attention of a visual art exhibition. Currently, artists and curators are no longer regarded as the most important components.

"There are many other components that become more important. How the audience value the creations become more important," said Jay.

According to Jay, in the current open society, everyone has the rights to perceive an art piece and has his own interpretation on the creation. "And you cannot blame anything on that individual. He has his own educational background and when he sees a creation, he has his own feel and interpretation towards the piece," added Jay.

Within this context a curator has the obligation to understand many things outside his knowledge in arts and art pieces that he curates. In this situation, the flow of information cannot be limited under one study discipline. Instead, according to Jay, it has to be negotiated with other studies. "And all of the disciplines have to be combined. We, for example, have to consider cultural studies and anthropology to see the social values and the message being
conveyed," he said.

That is why in the "Multi-Faceted Curator" many curators come from different educational background. "There are art historians, philosophers, self-learners and even art manager. What is important now is negotiation skills in interpreting the audience of an exhibition," said Jay.

Jay added that the work of a curator should be evaluated on the basis of how good he is in organising an exhibition and in translating the art knowledge into a language that is understood by common people. "It's not based on where he had his training, where he comes from and his educational background," he said.

More than just art

One of the participants of the workshop who does not come from the art world is Binna choi (29). The South Korean young curator has an educational background in philosophy and esthetics. Although, he did took a short curatorial course in Amsterdam after four years of working as a curator in South Korea.

"I don't have a background in art because I studied philosophy and esthetics. But the knowledge is very useful in the world of curatorship. Basically without a curator's critical conscience on what is happening in the world and his effort in reflecting his thoughts and positioning himself in that condition, then art creations will only become a commodity or merely a selling item," said Binna.

[zoom up text: "It's not true that a curator can only cover his living expenses by selling an artist's creation"]

The woman, who is now a curator of an art body in Amsterdam, thinks that the increase in number of curators from different educational backgrounds is a positive tendency. "On one side, an exhibition is a reflection of a curator's thoughts and what he wants, but on the other side an exhibition is also bound to the art creations and the media used. Thus, this is the place to challenge your visions. You need more than the knowledge in arts to become a curator," she said.

Her view is shared by Kyongfa Che (28) a participant with Korean-Japanese background who is now finishing her curatorial study in Sweden. "Curators are not artists. We need not be an artist because it's a different profession. I enjoy interacting and having a discussion with an artist as well as coordinating various arts into one exhibition and I articulate it myself in the organisation of the exhibition. And that's a completely different practice compared to the work of an artist," she said.

Indonesian young curator Alex Supartono said that the visual art world in Indonesia moves towards the opposite. Most artists still find it difficult to accept a curator who they think does not have enough education background in arts. "Whereas overseas, a curator has to have a skill outside the art world to understand the contemporary visual art," he said.

Bread and butter

Jay said that in the developing world where the boundaries began to disintegrate, curators were needed more to communicate various art creations from different cultures. From there, a
question arises: can a curator survive economically?

Binna said that basically to be a curator in Europe was as tough economically as becoming an art critic or an artist. "An artist has a bigger chance to earn money," she said.

Binna explained that generally the salary or commission of a curator is smaller than other professions. Furthermore, a curator is not a profession whose salary increases like other profession. "The compensation, in my opinion, is our lifestyle. Despite the small salary, a curator knows best on how to spend their money," said Binna with a smile.

Bina said that one way to supplement her income as a curator is to write on arts frequently and send them to magazines. "Or during the fund raising of an exhibition, we'll ask for some part of the money obtained," she added.

Jay said that it's not true that a curator can only cover his living expenses by selling an artist's creations. Many things can be done by a curator as a source of income.

"If a curator can organise an exhibition with a new, entertaining ideas, basically he has become a manager. So, why not a manager get paid? A curator also needs to write on those art creations. Writers and journalists get paid, so why not a writing curator get paid too?" said Jay.

Other than that, a curator can also be an agent. "If someone facilitates the relation between an artist and a buyer then he will get a commission. I will become a broker and a broker gets money, right? So, a curator is a job and a profession and everyone has to respect the profession," said Jay.

[end]