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Interpreting Meaning in Social Criticism through Murals in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Murals, as a form of street art, are increasingly used not only to enhance urban aesthetics but also to convey social criticism. In Indonesia, this trend has gained momentum, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, when murals have become a medium for dissent against government policies, figures, and institutions. This study aims to analyze how artists use murals to express social criticism towards the government and to understand the interpretative process involved in their message delivery. Utilizing Social Construction theory, this research examines how artists construct and convey their messages through murals. The study adopts a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method, focusing on the lived experiences of the artists to gain insights into how they perceive and represent social realities. The findings reveal that mural creation is a subjective process, deeply influenced by the artists' understanding of social issues. Artists navigate through various stages of construction, incorporating words, symbols, and images to reflect their perspectives on societal concerns. The messages embedded in these murals are often open to multiple interpretations, reflecting the diverse ways in which social criticism can be communicated. This study highlights the role of murals as a dynamic form of protest and expression, revealing the complex interplay between artistic representation and social critique. The research underscores the importance of considering artists' experiences and perspectives to fully appreciate the impact and significance of their work in the context of social and political commentary.

Keywords: Social construction, meaning, interpretation, mural, social criticism

ABSTRAK

Mural, sebagai bentuk seni jalanan, semakin digunakan tidak hanya untuk meningkatkan estetika perkotaan tetapi juga untuk menyampaikan kritik sosial. Di Indonesia, tren ini semakin berkembang, terutama selama pandemi Covid-19, ketika mural menjadi media untuk mengekspresikan ketidakpuasan terhadap kebijakan pemerintah, tokoh, dan institusi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana seniman menggunakan mural untuk menyampaikan kritik sosial terhadap pemerintah dan untuk memahami proses interpretasi yang terlibat dalam penyampaian pesan mereka. Menggunakan teori Konstruksi Sosial, penelitian ini memeriksa bagaimana seniman membangun dan menyampaikan pesan mereka melalui mural. Studi ini mengadopsi pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode fenomenologis, berfokus pada pengalaman hidup para seniman untuk mendapatkan wawasan tentang bagaimana mereka memandang dan merepresentasikan realitas sosial. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penciptaan mural adalah proses subjektif, yang sangat dipengaruhi oleh pemahaman seniman terhadap isu-isu sosial. Seniman melewati berbagai tahap konstruksi, menggabungkan kata-kata, simbol, dan gambar untuk mencerminkan perspektif mereka tentang masalah-masalah masyarakat. Pesan yang tertanam dalam mural ini sering kali terbuka untuk berbagai interpretasi, mencerminkan cara-cara beragam dalam menyampaikan kritik sosial. Penelitian ini menyoroti peran mural sebagai bentuk protes dan ekspresi yang dinamis, mengungkapkan hubungan kompleks antara representasi artistik dan kritik sosial. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya mempertimbangkan pengalaman dan perspektif seniman untuk sepenuhnya menghargai dampak dan signifikansi karya mereka dalam konteks komentar sosial dan politik.

Kata Kunci: Konstruksi sosial, makna, interpretasi, mural, kritik sosial

INTRODUCTION

As one of the countries affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Indonesian government has implemented various strategies, especially those related to social and physical restrictions on a large scale. The purpose of implementing these restrictions was to reduce the spread of the virus. However, these restrictions did not only affect the level of community mobility, but also the economic sector. Community economic activities were severely limited, in terms of both large and small industrial sectors, which could not function optimally (Amindoni, 2020). This situation certainly affected the ability of the community to meet their daily needs.

These social restrictions are still in effect in Indonesia, constantly changing and adapting based on the situation and dynamics of the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Social restriction policies often change names, which are usually adapted to the conditions in Indonesia (Nurita, 2021). Malik (2022) stated that the Covid-19 pandemic situation, which has an impact on almost all sectors of life, forces the government to work hard to find a way out, through the most appropriate regulations or policies in normalizing the situation that occurs in society. There are several policy innovations carried out by the Indonesian government in tackling Covid-19, including PSBB (Large-Scale Social Restrictions), PSBM (Micro-Scale Social Restrictions), and PPKM (Treatment of Restricting Community Activities) (Badri, 2022). These restriction efforts were considered successful in reducing the spread of Covid-19 in Indonesia. However, this policy was considered to be not in favor of the community.

The Indonesian government is trying to avoid having to implement a total quarantine (lockdown) because such a policy would strongly impact the needs and interests of the people. The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) recorded that 10.14% or 27.54 million Indonesians were living in poverty, and this figure continued to increase due to the pandemic situation. Additionally, to this figure must be added the middle classes who lost their incomes due to the rate of termination of employment reaching 50%, based on data from the Ministry of Manpower. The existence of social restrictions has prevented the informal economic sector, which is still one of the main sources of income for the community, from being able to operate (Aznella, 2021). Roziqin, Mas'udi, & Sihidi (2021) also considered that policies from the Indonesian government that are directly related to handling Covid-19 tend to be top-down in nature and have adverse impacts on the social and economic side, so that the community becomes the target group of ongoing policy changes. Therefore, most people feel that this restriction is unfair.

The Indonesian government received various kinds of criticism from many groups in the society regarding the implementation of the social restriction policy. The channels used to

convey criticism are varied, whether done formally through print, electronic or digital media, or through art spaces/media. This was confirmed by Luthfi (2020) who stated that after the demise of the New Order, the Indonesian people had the same opportunity to express views and criticism aimed at the government by using a variety of available communication media. One of the media used by the public to convey messages in the form of criticism of the government is in the form of art known as murals.

Murals or wall paintings are one of the means for artists in Indonesia to depict and convey their messages through pictures and symbols. Murals are part of street art, which is a visual art whose application is carried out in public spaces such as walls, bridges and public transportation (Masnah, 2020). Placement of murals in public spaces makes messages/ criticisms conveyed easily seen and understood by many members of the public.

Murals can easily be found in every corner of the city including Jakarta because murals are not only meant to criticize something but can also be used to beautify an object. Prasiasa (2022) also emphasized that murals have an aesthetic image that attracts attention, as well as hidden messages and meanings that provide an overview of the social and cultural situation that develops around it. However, in August 2021, the public was shocked by a mural, allegedly showing the President of the Republic of Indonesia Joko Widodo (Jokowi), in the Batuceper area, Tangerang, which immediately went viral on social media.

Image 1. Criticism through Jokowi 404: Not Found mural in Tangerang, Banten Province, Indonesia
Source: (kompas.com)

The mural, which showed a person allegedly similar to the President, was accompanied by the phrase "404:Not Found," which is an error message in the HTTP status meaning that a web page one wants to access cannot be found or is unreachable (Garjito, 2021). The mural seemed to give the impression that the figure depicted could not be found or could not function properly.

The Government's response to the mural art was to remove it, because both the image and the message contained in the mural were considered disturbing. This action raised questions in the community regarding freedom of expression. Fitriani, Pawito, & Utari (2021) also stated that one of the impacts of the decision to remove the mural was the emergence of the use of the hashtag #Jokowi404notfound more than 11,000 times on social media Twitter as a form of protest from the public who considered that there was suppression of individual freedom and considered the government as being unreceptive to criticism. Recently, mural activists in Indonesia are also allowed to be creative through competitions held by several parties (such as political volunteers) which aim to produce young people who are participatory and creative in conveying messages visually (Muliawati, 2023). Yet, on the other hand, the government has always stated that it is open to criticism from the public.

Previously, there were several researches conducted and related to the use of murals as a communication medium to convey the message of the visual works displayed. Research conducted by (Radzi et al, 2020; Murtono & Wijaya, 2021; Mezzadiri, 2021; Prasiasa, 2022; Morrison, 2022; & Lennon, 2022) also see how murals can be used as a means of social criticism and garner the feeling of patriotism. However, with the limitation of researcher's knowledge, there has been no research that focuses on discussing the phenomenon of mural art being used as a means of social criticism against the Indonesian government, especially regarding the situation that occurred during the past COVID-19 pandemic.

Mural as a form of art really represents the delivery of a message in which this message is formed from experience and understanding of phenomena that occur in society. The delivery process which is manifested in the form of symbols related to artistic values requires the ability to interpret the messages conveyed in it. The contents of the message do not only use language symbols but are wrapped in art with a deep and critical interpretation process.

The process of conveying a message can be done through various kinds of media, both traditional ones that use writing and pictures, to computers through the digital formats, all of which depend on the sender of the message. The communication process that occurs through the use of channels is usually known as mediated communication. According to Beebe, Beebe & Ivy (2010, p. 13) "Mediated Communication is any communication that is

carried out using some channel other than those used in face-to-face communication". Thus, basically mediated communication can be said as a communication process that is mediated by alternative channels such as writing or pictures without any direct meeting between the communicator and the communicant.

As a medium for delivering messages, mediated communication is often associated with computer media, but in the process, the communication process can go through various channels depending on the sender of the message. Mediated communication has its own characteristics, namely: Anonymity, in which the communicator does not know who they will convey the message to; Personal appearance, namely communication does not pay attention to how the communicator looks like; Distance, which emphasizes that communication occurs without being limited by distance; and Time, which ensures that the communication process can be determined when it occurs. In mediated communication, even though there is no direct meeting, feedback will still be present.

Basically, communication does not only rely on language as a channel but can also be expressed through visual forms, which are known as visual communication. Lester emphasizes visual communication as "an image with a message" (1995, p. 9). This is confirmed by Andhita (2021, p. 3) who defined that "visual communication can be interpreted as a process of exchanging visual messages between the communicator and the communicant with generate certain feedback". The two definitions above show that visual communication can be regarded as an exchange of messages using image or visual media that produces a certain effect. The effect produced by visual communication is a feedback about the understanding of the meaning of the message by the communicant.

Visual communication basically pays attention to two very important and interrelated things, namely: information and linguistics. Andhita (2021) explained from an information perspective that visual communication is seen as a process of conveying ideas in a straight line without expecting any feedback, while linguistically, visual communication is said to be a process of transacting meaning. Meanwhile from a linguistic point of view, according to Barry (1997, p. 107) language is considered as "a system of verbal expressions that humans use to communicate with one another in oral or in written form". Thus the visual language appears in the form of signs/symbols. This means that when communicating visually, the communicator and communicant communicate using symbols. Based on the two opinions above, it can be concluded that visual communication is a systematic and complex process between a visual object (a sign/symbol), a visual object maker (communicator) and a visual object recipient (communicant).

Visual communication can be seen in mural art, because murals are related to visual communication, which can be seen as a process of conveying ideas in a straight line, as well as to linguistics, which is seen as a process of transactional meaning. This ensures that the mural can also be used as a process of message delivery.

Mural art is a painting that is applied to wall media. The definition of a mural is "a public, outdoor wall painting" (Greaney, 2002, p.10). Mural art is a channel for artists to convey messages to the general public through visuals. An interpretation process is needed to be able to capture the meaning contained in the images, writings or symbols in the mural. The interpretation process that occurs is largely determined by the knowledge and experience possessed by each individual who sees it.

A mural is a work of art that is full of meaning which is manifested in the form of visual communication by using visual language in the form of signs/symbols to communicate. Communication itself is a systematic process in which a person interacts using symbols to convey a meaning. This is supported by the definition of communication according to Wood (2013, p.10), namely "a systemic process in which people interact with and through symbols to create interpret meaning". Interactions carried out involve more than one party and can occur directly or indirectly which ultimately requires an interpretation.

Interpretation is an important process in communication. According to Beebe, Beebe & Ivy (2010) interpretation is a process when an individual is ready to give a meaning to an existing stimulus. The interpretation process is part of the individual's perception while interacting. Mulyana (2010) explains that when interpreting, there are influencing factors, namely past experiences and values held by individuals. This interpretation ultimately results in an understanding of a shared reality.

Social reality is a description of the conditions that are shared by every individual in society. The objects of mural art often describe the conditions experienced by individuals/communicators and become a form of social criticism. Social Construction Theory is a theory that tries to explain a social reality from the perspective of one's experience. Social Construction Theory is explained by Galbin (2014, p. 82) as "a theory of knowledge of sociology and communication that examines the development of jointly constructed understanding of the world". In other terms, this theory seeks to explain how social reality is formed and conveyed.

Social construction theory is an approach to communication science that was first pioneered by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, and adopted from the thinking of interactionists and constructivists. Interactionists assume that communication that occurs

daily or intensively during activities will form an understanding, meaning, norms and rules (Galbin, 2014). Meanwhile, constructivists see social construction as "the child functions in relation to its environment, constructing, modifying and interpreting the information s/he encounters in his/her relationship with the world" (Glaserfeld, 1995, p.5). Constructivists see the ability of individuals to form their own understanding of the world and believe that individuals can shape their own reality.

This theory tries to bridge the views of interactionists and constructivists. Galbin (2014) explains that social construction theory explains the understanding of "mind", "self" and "emotion" is a product that is formed from processes that come from society and not come from individuals. According to McName & Gregen, 1992) there are several principles that must be considered when looking at social construction, namely: **Reality is socially constructed** as this is the result of social life. Reality is objective and subjective (Galbin, 2014). This theory assumes that the meaning that people get for something is a construction. Meaning is said to be a product of linguistic, discursive and symbolic understanding of society (Cojocaru & Bragaru, 2012); **Realities are constituted through language** which according to Social construction theory sees that language and society are closely related and this also explained by Speed (1991, p.400) that "people socially construct reality by their use of agreed and shared meaning communicated through language "; **Knowledge is sustained by social processes** that focus on individuals which are part of a society that is bound by time, politics, and also place.

Society will always interact with one another. Social construction theory explains that "all other aspects of humanity are created, maintained, destroyed in our interactions with others through time" (Galbin, 2014, p. 85). A condition as well as beliefs and meanings that exist in society today have been maintained or even lost along with the interactions that occur in society.

Reflexivity in Human Beings is Emphazied

Society is reflected from what they form and eventually forms a reality. Everything that exists would not have existed if it had not been created by the previous society. If people live in different places, at different times, have different needs and values, then the resulting reality will have different results (Boghossian, 2001). In other words, the reality is determined by the society considering times, needs and values which existed.

The reality that occurs in society is often different from what is considered ideal and is believed to be something that must happen. This difference often gives rise to what is called social criticism. The understanding of social criticism according to Abar & Ahman (1999, p. 47) is "as a form of communication in society that aims or functions as control over the course of a social system or social process". This statement is reaffirmed by Oksinata (2014, p. 39) who stated that social criticism is "satire, response, aimed at a right that occurs in society when there is a confrontation with reality in the form of lameness or depravity". Therefore, the delivery of social criticism requires an appropriate medium in order to reach the wider community and murals are often seen as an art medium that can attract attention. The novelty and the focus of this research was happened in the Covid-19 era which considered to be more critical and worse as the government limit and restrict some activities than the previous situation in the society. The research aims is to analyze the process of conveying the meaning of messages carried out by artists through mural art as a form of social criticism against the Government.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with phenomenological method. Lichtman defined the approach as "a way of knowing in which a researcher gathers, organizes, and interprets information obtained from humans using his or her eyes and ears as filters. It often involves in-depth interviews and/or observations" (2013, p. 7).

Through a qualitative approach, researchers are expected to be able to provide an in-depth understanding of processes, realities, or social dynamics that take place in society. Meanwhile, phenomenology is a method used to analyze how a particular phenomenon has been understood from the perspective of a particular people, in a particular context (Smith, Flower, & Larkin, 2009, p.51). In this study, mural art is seen as a medium to convey messages in the form of social criticism. The message conveyed can be interpreted based on the perception and understanding of each individual. The phenomenological method is very appropriate to use because it tries to highlight the experiences gained by artists. Stories about these experiences are the primary data used for analysis. The primary data obtained will form a unity of meaning that emerges as a form of criticism directed at the government. Therefore, a qualitative approach with the phenomenological method used in this study is considered appropriate for analyzing and explaining this phenomenon.

Primary data in this study were collected through in-depth interviews and observations. In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner with 5 informants who

were determined using a purposive sampling technique. Creswell (2009) stated that purposive sampling techniques in qualitative research were used to select informants who were considered credible and understood the problem so as to be able to provide an overview of the phenomenon being studied. While observations were made on the activities of artists in making murals, especially those containing a social critique.

The unit of analysis is an important part of the research because it is a source of information from a study. Arikunto defines the unit of analysis as "a certain unit that is considered as a research subject" (2010, p.187). The unit of analysis in this study is the individual, particularly the artists. The artists who paint the mural art are the appropriate individual and has a deep understanding of the topic in this study.

The informants determined by the researcher were three people and consisted of various backgrounds. The first informant is an artist and mural activist as a key informant, namely La Ode Umar (LOU), while the other informant is Deka Sike (DS) who is also an artist. The final informant is a politician named Faldo Maldini (FM) as an additional informant to provide his views on the use of murals as social criticism. The three informants determined by the researcher have also given permission regarding the use of names and statements submitted during the data collection process. This primary data were then supported by secondary data in the form of literature studies to obtain research findings that are able to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

The findings in the research that have been processed are then tested for validity through a data triangulation process using open coding. Yin defined triangulation as "collecting information from multiple sources but aims at collaborating the same finding" (Yin, 2014, p. 120). From this definition it can be concluded that triangulation is a process of checking data starting from the data source and the data collection process. The researchers connected and compared the patterns found in the data from interviews with informants.

DISCUSSION

The research findings show that a mural is not a recently-appearing form of art, but in fact has existed since the 14th century. A mural is a large-sized painting or image that is applied to a public space, usually a wall or walls with the aim of attracting people's attention. The mural is often illegal, especially with regard to the placement/location of the mural. Therefore, mural artists tend to move secretly so that the identity of the muralist is not known. But on the other hand, artists feel happy if their work becomes a source polemic and attracts the interest of many people.

Other research findings also show that mural art has various functions and uses. In general, a mural is an image medium used by artists to convey a certain message/idea. Artists play an important role in determining the function of murals as educational media, commercial media, or even as media for social criticism. Therefore, artists as part of society have a role to contribute through their work to issues that are developing in society.

The messages conveyed in the form of murals depend on what is happening in society or related to actual issues that are considered potentially troubling. The message is usually in the form of the use of symbols that require interpretation from the person who sees it. The symbol can be in the form of a metaphor that represents the object being discussed or an illustration that explains the intention of the artist in his work. This is confirmed by La Ode Umar, a mural artist who asserts that:

> In murals we give freedom in interpreting our work but of course we use common and interesting symbols to make it easier to understand and sometime in our work we use language as symbols as well to make the message even stronger.

This statement also supported by Deka Sike, another mural artist who adds that:

> We are artists, so it's easier for us to create through murals because apart from being visually pleasing, we also have freedom without fear because we are considered to insult the government. Basically we leave it to the public to understand the message we convey.

People's interpretation of mural works tends to be completely open and mostly based on their understanding. Explanation of the meaning of the message in the mural serves to explain the reality that occurs in society where this reality can be objective or subjective. This can be seen from the explanation put forward by Berger & Luckmann (1991) which explains that reality is divided into objective and subjective reality. Objective reality is seen as a reality that has been formed and occurs in society (Galbin, 2014). Meanwhile, subjective reality which is the emphasis of Berger & Luckman is a process of how individuals create a reality that is believed to exist in society through 3 processes called externalization, objectification and internalization (Karman, 2015). The social reality that wants to be conveyed in the form of a mural is a social message/criticism that arises from the basis of the understanding and evaluation of the artists.

This study uses two examples of murals that have become viral on social media because they depict recent social realities and are considered as a social criticism of the creating artists, namely: the mural "God, I'm hungry" in Tigaraksa, Tangerang Regency and the

Criticism of the Police mural that won the Bhayangkara Festival Mural Competition on October 30, 2021.

Image 2. Conveying a message of social criticism Through the "God, I'm Hungry" mural in Tangerang, Banten Province.
Source: (www.detik.com)

Both of these murals are loaded with criticism against the Government of Indonesia (first mural), and the Indonesian National Police institution (second mural). The artists' process of interpreting the social reality that occurred during the pandemic became depictions of symbols aimed at social criticism of the Government.

The subjective reality that emerges from the artist in the mural "God, I'm hungry" mural was created from three processes, namely externalization, objectification and internalization. The process of externalization is an expression of ideas that are owned by individuals to the outside world. In this study, the artist expressed an idea in the form of a message of social criticism in a visual form, namely mural art. The message was obtained from what the artist believed was happening to him and society. In the case of the "God, I'm hungry" mural, the artist Deka Sike explained:

Well, about the God, I'm hungry mural, at first, my friends and I actually just wanted to express what we felt during this pandemic. It's hard to make a living [to obtain food], and there was much grief, so we put it into the mural, which went viral.

The mural "God, I'm hungry" was explained as a form of pouring out the feelings of the painter and also his friends who at that time felt hungry. The painter did not know who to ask for food other than God. They express their grievances in the form of hunger in the form of a painting, a mural art on a wall where they usually make their works.

Meanwhile objectification is a form of ideas conveyed by individuals and spread in society. In the end, it was believed that this idea actually happened and was spread. In this section the mural "God, I'm hungry" is a form of objectified idea in society. The mural is not only a topic of conversation among residents of the Tigaraksa area, where the mural was found. The idea of the artist's hunger pangs continued to spread through social media and was responded to by many parties. The idea that was originally just an outpouring of the artist's feeling became alive in the community and is believed to be a reality that happened between them.

While in the final stage, namely internalization, ideas that have been circulating in society are finally reabsorbed by individuals through an internalization process. Internalization is a process of absorbing ideas that have been objectified in society (Galbin, 2014). In this discussion, the idea of the mural "God, I'm hungry" which tells a complaint about an empty stomach and can only ask God is felt to be something that really happened in society. Many individuals felt this idea themselves in the social life they lived at that time. The idea of the difficulty of getting adequate food during the Covid-19 pandemic forced people to limit their activities due to government policies. The high number of layoffs in August 2021 reached 538,305 based on data from the Ministry of Manpower (Persada, 2021). The difficulty of making a living and the economic situation made this idea more alive in the community and the mural became viral.

Another mural is Criticism of the Police, which was deliberately exhibited in a mural competition held in commemoration of Bhayangkara Day (the anniversary of the Indonesian National Police) on July 1, 2021

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Image 3. Conveying a message of social criticism through a mural, by La Ode Umar, on Bhayangkara Day, July 2021
Source: (www.instagram.com/La_Ode)

This mural was a work by the artist La Ode Umar, with the theme of criticism of the Republic of Indonesia police institution, which was considered unable to protect and create order in society. The police was still prone of using violence in dealing with issues that concern the public interest.

The objective reality can be seen from the trend of decreasing public trust in the institution of the National Police, and this has even been acknowledged by the National Police Chief General Listyo Sigit Prabowo. One evidence of this trend is the result of cases of violence (bodyslamming) demonstrators by the police, the emergence of the hashtag *#percumalaporpolisi* (useless to report to the police) and negative news about the Indonesian National Police. This was also felt by the artist La Ode Umar who finally raised the events into an idea which was poured into the form of a mural containing a message of criticism. La Ode Umar explained:

> The issues were at that time there was injustice in the enforcement of law, extortion, and also the well-known persecution of the demonstrators in Tangerang, who were bodyslammed by the police. Then there is the problem of people's fear of the police when they criticize something that smells of injustice on social media.

From this statement it can be seen that the issues raised placed more emphasis on the inability of the Indonesian Police to provide justice in law, the acts of violence committed against the civil society and also the existence of illegal fees and the public's anxiety in expressing criticism.

The mural has become a topic of discussion within the event committee who consisted of police officers, even since when La Ode was still painting his mural. La Ode said that "usually there were police who come for interviews, but when was I painting this mural, no one came, maybe because the message in my painting was too vulgar and they were not convenient about it". The committee felt that they did not dare to ask about the purpose of the mural made by La Ode.

However, when the mural was finally finished, and placed on the courtyard of the National Police Headquarters in Jakarta, it won first place. The social criticism of the mural was well received by the National Police Chief who also attended the event and realized that changes were needed within the Polri institution. The Indonesian National Police feel that they have to start improving based on the messages of criticism conveyed by the public.

The two examples of murals taken above have one thing in common, namely: there is a message that the artist gets from the social reality that exists in society and must be conveyed as a social critique. The messages are formed from how the artists understand and feel the social reality which consists of subjective and objective realities that occur within the artists as members of society. Finally, the messages are conveyed in visual works in the form of mural arts, which function as symbolic language for the artists to express their thoughts and feelings to the public space. The hope is that the messages will be received by the wider community who have the same belief in the ideas they are conveying.

Basically, mural art becomes a medium for artists to convey messages in the form of ideas that they have. This idea will be interpreted again according to the context contained in the idea, whether it is just a form of expression, emotion or a social critique. Oksinata (2014) explained social criticism as a satirical message that is shown to someone, either individually or in groups, about a condition that is considered wrongful or should not occur in society. Social criticism seeks to point out a state of affairs that is wrong in a society or a system.

Various interpretations emerged and were disseminated to the public regarding the two mural paintings and the responses given by the public varied regarding the pros and cons of the murals. The interpretation that occurs in the use of mural art, whether supporting the message or against the message, is a feedback from visual communication. The research

findings also illustrate that the interpretation or meaning that occurs is no longer the responsibility of the artist. Artists have carried out their role as conveyers of ideas as well as offering a form of beauty so that people do not only receive a message but also enjoy a visual work. Artists no longer need to explain and force the meaning of mural art to people who see the mural. This free interpretation makes the delivery of critical messages difficult to understand. According to Faldo Maldini as a government spokesperson:

> The government is not raising the issue, and is aware that there is a message of criticism, but are fellow artists ready to be invited to debate their aspirations, so let's have a discussion because we already have the answer and at that time I was indirectly a spokesperson for the palace but it was difficult because they are also not ready to have a discussions.

This statement shows that the Government cannot stop the freedom of artists in conveying messages and criticism through mural media because it requires an interpretation process. La Ode also admits that the interpretation of mural art is in the hands of the public, but according to him if a message contains criticism it is better to hold a mediation or discussion to gain mutual views on something being criticized. The mural with a tone of criticism towards the police immediately conveyed the meaning of each element and its symbols to the chief of the Indonesian National Police. The Police Criticism mural, for example, was made with the aim of being a reflection for the police institution on a current situation in the field so that criticism can be well received and the message conveyed.

The result of the process of interpreting a mural can be classified into three categories of persons. The first is a person who understands the message in the mural and agrees with the situation depicted in the mural. The second refers to people who do not understand the message in a mural. Third, people who understand the message of the mural but do not feel concerned about the reality that is happening. Therefore, the process of interpreting the meaning contained in the mural is not necessarily in accordance with the intended message that the artists want to convey. This happens because mural art is in a public space where the interpretation of the meaning of the message cannot be regulated by the artists. Every member of society can freely interpret and interpret a mural either negatively or positively
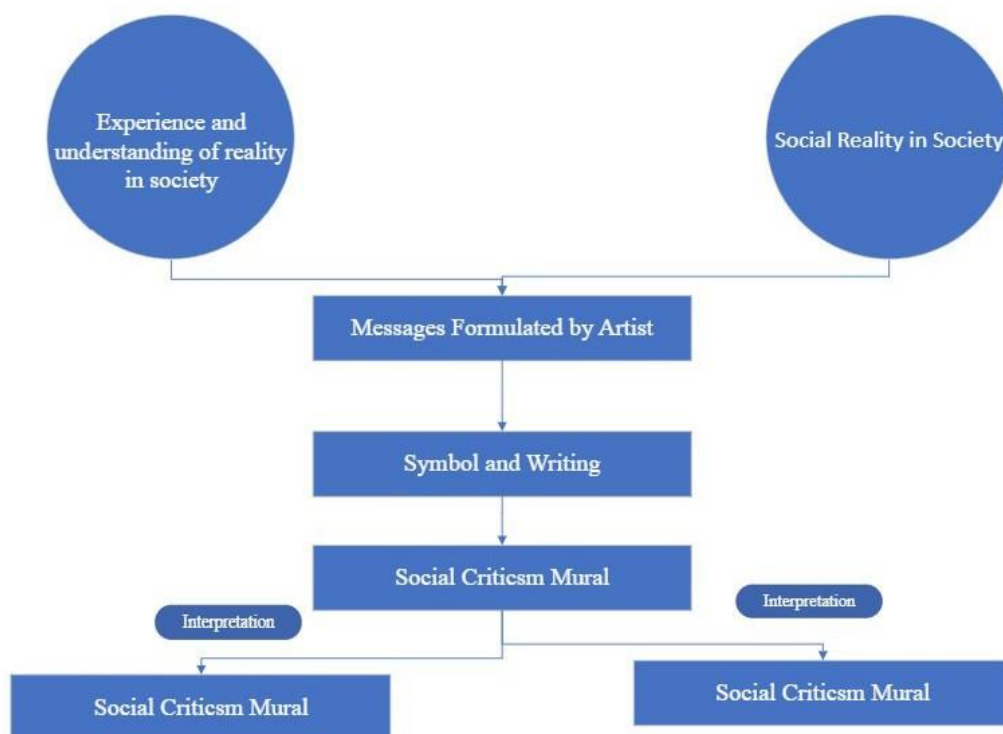
Image 4. Model of Research Findings
Source: (Researcher)

CONCLUSION

Murals as a work of art can be a channel for conveying messages used by artists as a form of visual communication. Visual communication talks about art that uses symbols to convey a message. The symbol can be in the form of language in written form or the use of illustrations in the form of metaphors to describe an object that has a similar meaning. Metaphors are used as a form to avoid vulgarity and avoid offense.

The process of creating a mural is carried out through a construction stage which is subjective in nature, starting with an externalization process, namely: how social reality that occurs in society influences and gives meaning to the artists. Then proceed with the next stage, namely: Objectification in which at this stage the artists try to convey ideas, ideas and social criticism through mural art. The final stage is internalization which refers to the process of interpreting the murals exhibited in public spaces, which is also the process of conveying messages.

The content of the message conveyed has a nature of criticism that comes from the reality that occurs in the surrounding community. As part of society, artists feel and also see this situation for themselves and formulate it into an idea that they want to express or

convey. The idea is conveyed in a form of mural art which then aims to be seen by the public and interpreted by those who see the mural. It is society that ultimately interprets openly, either positively or negatively.

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