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"MATSYA SRIYA" DANCE WORK: VISUALIZATION OF MILKFISH IN THE FORM OF PURE STUDY DANCE

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Abstrac: The dance work *Matsya Sriya* is a pure study dance derived from a local tradition in Sidoarjo, specifically the cultural phenomenon of the *Lelang Bandeng Kawak* (Milkfish Auction). The background of this creation reflects a shift in motivation for presenting traditional dance. This shift often responds to performance demands, which can reduce the essential cultural values. This work aims to show the characteristics of the *bandeng kawak* (mature milkfish) as a symbol of maturity, prosperity, and life through a non-narrative and symbolic pure dance approach.

The creation method for this work follows Construction Method I by Jacqueline Smith. This method includes initial stimulus, improvisation, evaluation, selection, and motif development. It highlights the elements of movement, space, time, and energy. The movement visualization draws from the characteristics of milkfish, such as flowing, grouping, and dynamic motions, which are then stylized into a choreographic form that matches the concept. Several previous dance works relate to this creation, including *Bandeng Nener* by Agustinus Heri Sugianto (1980) and *Banjar Kemuning* (1999) by the same choreographer.

Matsya Sriya centers on developing movement based on milkfish characteristics, adjusting to performance needs without losing its essential cultural values. The work features seven female dancers using *sampur* as a prop to represent water and fins. It incorporates the East Javanese (*Arek*) dance style, which has evolved over time. The makeup and costumes are inspired by the visual form of milkfish, with dominant blue representing aquatic life and gold symbolizing prosperity. The performance takes place on a proscenium stage, enhanced by various lighting designs and musical accompaniment that blends East Javanese gamelan with violin and flute to enrich the atmosphere.

The outcome of this creation shows that more compositional refinement is needed to make the conveyed meaning clearer to the audience. This work hopes to inspire the development of dance based on local culture and encourage cultural preservation through creative approaches.

Keywords: *Matsya Sriya*, Pure Dance Study, *Bandeng Kawak*, Visualization, Symbolic



1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional dance is an integral part of Indonesia's rich and diverse cultural heritage. Every element—movement, costume, music, and performance context—contains deep meaning that reflects cultural values, history, and the identity of a community. Sidoarjo, as a coastal region in East Java, holds a wealth of cultural traditions that are closely connected to the daily lives of its people. Local wisdom in this area functions not only as a cultural identity but also as a system that maintains ecological and social balance. It is reflected in belief systems, ways of managing natural resources, and various artistic traditions that are passed down through direct practice, such as fishing activities, milkfish auctions, and local performances. In the era of globalization, preserving local wisdom becomes increasingly important to ensure that cultural identity is not lost.

The fishing communities in Sidoarjo maintain traditions that emphasize togetherness, spirituality, and respect for nature. Before going to sea, fishermen commonly perform collective prayers to seek safety and abundant harvests. They also follow customary practices that regulate fishing methods and timing to preserve the marine ecosystem. The value of mutual cooperation plays a central role in their daily lives, fostering strong social bonds and solidarity within the community.

One significant form of local wisdom is the Milkfish Auction Tradition, which is typically held before Eid al-Fitr. This event involves the auction of high-quality milkfish cultivated by local farmers. The auction is conducted openly and serves not only as an economic activity but also as a social and cultural gathering. It strengthens relationships within the community and symbolizes prosperity and respect for tradition. At the same time, it contributes to the local economy and has the potential to attract cultural tourism.

The philosophical values embedded in this tradition have inspired various artistic expressions, including dance. One example is a dance that represents young milkfish as a symbol of growth and hope for fish farmers. Through such representations, cultural values shape human perspectives and become guiding principles in life. Cultural systems are closely related to fundamental aspects of human existence, including how people understand life, relate to others, work, position themselves in society, and interact with nature.

In contemporary practice, however, there has been a shift in how traditional dances are performed. Performance demands often require adolescent or adult dancers to perform dances originally intended for children, resulting in a change in artistic intention. In addition, the tradition itself has gradually declined due to changing motivations, where performances are sometimes carried out merely to fulfill stage requirements rather than to express artistic meaning. This situation encourages the creation of new dance works as a form of reinterpretation and revitalization of tradition. Traditional expressions

are understood to carry moral messages and cultural values that can be conveyed to future generations through creative forms. Observing the enthusiasm of communities in East Java, especially in Sidoarjo, in preserving their local culture, the author developed the idea of creating a dance work that reflects these traditions. This work aims to raise public awareness of cultural revitalization through dance as a creative medium that reinterprets local values.

Culture can be understood as a system of symbols that is passed down over time and continues to shape human meaning and behavior. In the context of the Milkfish Auction Tradition, mature milkfish symbolize not only economic value but also success and maturity. The transformation from young milkfish to mature fish can be seen as a representation of human development from adolescence to maturity. Based on this perspective, the creation of the dance Matsya Sriya becomes relevant. The term Matsya refers to fish, while Sriya signifies prosperity or blessing. This dance visualizes the mature milkfish as a symbol of growth, dignity, and abundance, while celebrating and revitalizing the cultural values embedded in the Milkfish Auction Tradition.

2. METODE

The dance work Matsya Sriya applies a qualitative descriptive approach in its choreographic creation process. Data were obtained through observation of milkfish movements, which were then stylized through movement exploration and supported by documentation. The choreography process employs the construction theory method. The realization of the work involves stages of exploration, improvisation, and composition. In *Construction I* by Jacqueline Smith, this process includes movement discovery, motif development, composition arrangement, and the formation of a complete dance structure.

The exploration stage begins with the formulation of the initial design, followed by improvisation as movement development, and ends with composition to produce a coherent and systematic dance work. The choreographic process can be described as follows:

(1) the initial stimulus originated from observing the Bandeng Kawak Auction tradition in Sidoarjo, which inspired the artistic concept and highlighted milkfish as a regional icon;

(2) the exploration stage involved observing and artistically representing the behavior and movement of milkfish;

(3) improvisation was conducted by developing natural movement possibilities derived from internalized observations, including variations in tempo, dynamics, direction, and energy quality;

(4) the composition stage focused on establishing movement patterns and motifs derived from stylized milkfish characteristics; and

(5) the evaluation stage refined timing, spatial direction, and body-prop interaction to achieve harmony and aesthetic clarity.

The analysis applies Sal Murgiyanto's dance composition theory and Jacqueline Smith's construction concept.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Visualization of Milkfish Movement

The visualization of fish-inspired movement in this work demonstrates the transformation of local potential into artistic symbols. Previous milkfish-themed dances tend to be illustrative and oriented toward children, with literal movement representations and limited complexity. They have not explored the mature phase of milkfish (bandeng kawak) nor targeted adolescent performers through a pure dance approach. This gap becomes the creative space for Matsya Sriya, which reinterprets milkfish movement into a more developed artistic form.

3.2 Choreographic Structure

The creation process follows stages of observation, exploration, improvisation, and composition. Observation was conducted to understand the characteristics of movement, interaction patterns, and the fish's response to its aquatic environment. The choreographer identified distinctive qualities such as fluid and continuous swimming, structured yet flexible group movement, and spontaneous surface jumps. Water dynamics—ripples, currents, and small waves—also served as important visual stimuli.

These observations were then translated into dance through imitation, adaptation, and transformation into movement language. The process emphasizes not only form but also movement qualities such as flexibility, rhythm, speed, and continuity. Exploration focused on the arms, hands, and torso to create a flowing and lightweight impression.

The choreographic structure of Matsya Sriya consists of introduction, exploration of milkfish characteristics, dynamic development, climax, and conclusion. The dramatic design does not rely on narrative conflict but follows a double-cone structure, built through the progression of movement quality, dynamic changes, and complex spatial composition leading to a peak.



3.3 Types of Pure Study Dance

Pure study dance in this work is defined as a form of dance that emphasizes the exploration and development of fundamental elements of dance—movement, space, time, and energy—as the primary media of artistic expression. Rather than focusing on

storytelling or narrative structures, pure study dance prioritizes the creation of aesthetic movement compositions through processes of stylization and abstraction. This approach allows the choreographer to investigate the essence of movement itself, highlighting form, quality, and structure as central components of the choreography. Additionally, pure study dance opens space for experimentation, enabling the transformation of simple movement ideas into more complex and meaningful artistic expressions.

In the context of Matsya Sriya, pure study dance is applied as a creative approach to symbolically visualize the characteristics of bandeng kawak (mature milkfish). This is achieved through the exploration of movement qualities, body dynamics, and spatial composition, which are developed into an artistic choreographic form. The emphasis lies not on literal representation, but on interpreting the essence of the fish's movement—such as fluidity, continuity, and responsiveness to water—into an abstract movement language. Through this process, the choreographer constructs a visual and kinesthetic experience that reflects the identity of the milkfish in a more refined and conceptual manner.

Furthermore, the development of this work strengthens the conceptual foundation derived from the cultural context of the Bandeng Kawak Auction tradition in Sidoarjo. The body of the dancer functions as a transformative medium, translating the physical and symbolic qualities of the milkfish into expressive movement. Despite this transformation, the human body remains central as the primary medium of expression in pure study dance. This balance between transformation and embodiment ensures that the choreography maintains both its artistic integrity and its connection to human expressivity. As a result, Matsya Sriya not only presents a stylized visualization of milkfish but also reflects a dialogue between local cultural identity and contemporary choreographic exploration.

3.4 Visualization of Milkfish Character

The character of the milkfish in Matsya Sriya is articulated through the development and transformation of movement qualities, including strength, stillness, agility, controlled aggression, and harmony. These qualities are not presented in isolation but are integrated within a unified choreographic system. Supporting performance elements such as makeup, costume, props, lighting, and musical accompaniment function collectively to reinforce the embodiment of the milkfish character. In particular, the use of props and headpieces contributes significantly to establishing a distinctive visual identity, while also shaping the dramatic atmosphere of the performance. This integration reflects a compositional awareness aligned with both aesthetic and symbolic considerations.

The movement development in this work does not rely on literal imitation of fish behavior; rather, it is constructed through processes of stylization and abstraction, consistent with the principles of pure study

dance. Through this approach, the choreography emphasizes movement quality, continuity, and transformation, resulting in expressions that are dynamic, refined, and communicative. The exploration focuses on translating the essence of milkfish movement such as fluidity, responsiveness, and group coordination into an abstract movement vocabulary that remains rooted in observational sources while achieving artistic autonomy.

Furthermore, the use of the sampur property becomes a central component in the choreographic exploration. Unlike its conventional function, the sampur is tied to the dancer's arms, allowing it to operate as an extension of the body. This treatment enables the formation of movement motifs that visually resemble fish fins, enhancing the sense of fluidity and continuity. The emphasis on hand and arm articulation supports the creation of flowing and flexible movement dynamics, reflecting the natural characteristics of milkfish within an aquatic environment. Through this integration of body and property, the choreography achieves a balance between symbolic representation and formal exploration, reinforcing the conceptual framework of Matsya Sriya as a pure study dance work grounded in local cultural inspiration.



Sampur As Property

The makeup design in the dance work Matsya Sriya presents a visual character inspired by the form and movement of milkfish, with a decorative and symbolic aesthetic approach. The facial makeup

focuses on shaping expressions that are sharp yet flexible, in line with the concept of pure study dance which processes non-narrative forms.

The eyebrows are shaped to resemble water waves, curving dynamically along the upper line of the eyes. This line not only functions as a frame for the face, but also symbolizes the movement of water as the main habitat of the milkfish. The use of color is dominated by blue, yellow, and gold. Blue is applied on the eyelids and around the eye area as a representation of water, depth, and calmness. Yellow functions as a visual lighting accent that gives a warm and lively impression, while also strengthening contrast.



Make Up

Overall, this makeup design not only serves to enhance the dancers' appearance, but also functions as an integral element in constructing the visual identity of the work, reinforcing the concept of exploring the form of milkfish within the language of movement and dance aesthetics.



Milkfish Crown

The costume in this work adopts a stylization approach, in which the form of the milkfish is artistically transformed into dance attire without leading to a realistic representation. The milkfish crown is designed as a symbol of the fish's head, with a shape that resembles the anatomy of the milkfish but has undergone simplification (stylization) to remain aligned with stage aesthetics. This crown not only serves as a visual identity but also reinforces the character of head movements in harmony with the exploration of fish-inspired motion.



Milkish Tail

The fin and tail section, positioned at the back of the costume, becomes a crucial element in reinforcing the illusion of the fish's body. This tail is designed with flexibility, allowing it to respond organically to the dancer's body movements, so that every transition, swing, and movement accent produces a visual effect that closely resembles the swimming motion of milkfish in water. Through this responsive design, the tail is able to follow the flow of the choreography, enhancing the continuity and fluidity of the overall movement quality.

Furthermore, the presence of the tail contributes significantly to the visual dynamics on stage, as it amplifies the impression of motion and creates a more immersive representation of aquatic life. The interaction between the dancer's body and the tail element generates a harmonious integration, where costume and movement are interconnected rather than separate components. Thus, the fin does not merely function as an ornament, but also acts as an extension of expressive movement, supporting the transformation of the dancer's body into a symbolic representation of the milkfish.

Overall, the makeup and costume in Matsya Sriya are not illustrative in nature nor do they imitate the physical form of the fish in a literal manner; instead, they present a symbolic representation through a stylization approach. The integration of beauty makeup, the milkfish crown, the tail, and the sampur as fins, along with the visualization of water elements, reflects a strong conceptual awareness in processing visual components as part of the choreographic structure. This approach emphasizes transformation rather than imitation, allowing visual elements to function as expressive symbols within the performance.

Furthermore, the harmony between these elements demonstrates a deliberate compositional strategy, where each component supports and reinforces the overall artistic concept. The costume and makeup are not treated as separate decorative aspects, but as integral parts that interact with movement, space, and dynamics. This interconnectedness enhances the visual coherence of the work and strengthens the audience's perception of the milkfish-inspired character without relying on direct representation.

Thus, the makeup and costume not only serve to enhance the visual appearance of the dancers, but also play a significant role in reinforcing meaning, character, and the identity of the work. They contribute to establishing Matsya Sriya as a pure study dance, grounded in the exploration of form and symbol, while maintaining a balance between aesthetic refinement and conceptual depth.

4. CONCLUSION

The dance work Matsya Sriya is a form of pure study dance that originates from the cultural phenomenon of the Bandeng Kawak Auction in Sidoarjo. However, it is not realized through a narrative or illustrative approach, but rather through the exploration of form and symbol. This can be observed in the treatment of movement, which emphasizes the characteristics of the milkfish, as well as in the use of abstract floor patterns combined with group compositions that represent the collective behavior of fish. Through this approach, the choreography shifts from representational depiction toward a more conceptual and interpretative mode of expression.

Conceptually, this work demonstrates a strong consistency between the initial idea and the final visual outcome of the performance. This is particularly evident in the integration of supporting elements such as makeup, costume, hairstyling, the sampur as a property, lighting design, stage setting, and musical accompaniment. Each element is carefully considered and interconnected, contributing to a cohesive artistic structure that reinforces the thematic and symbolic framework of the work. The synergy between visual and movement elements highlights the choreographer's awareness in constructing a unified performance language.

Nevertheless, within the creative process, certain challenges remain, particularly in maintaining a balance between abstract formal exploration and the readability of meaning for the audience. The abstract nature of pure study dance often requires a more refined compositional strategy to ensure that symbolic messages can be effectively communicated without relying on literal representation. Therefore, further development in compositional clarity and structural refinement becomes essential in order to optimize the delivery of meaning.

In this regard, Matsya Sriya not only stands as an exploration of form but also represents an effort to reinterpret local cultural phenomena into the language of pure study dance that is both contextual and reflective. The work embodies a dialogue between tradition and contemporary artistic practice, offering a nuanced interpretation that expands the possibilities of dance creation rooted in local identity.

SUGGESTION

Based on the results of the creative process, several aspects require further consideration and development. The abstraction inherent in pure study dance needs to be balanced with artistic strategies that assist the audience in grasping meaning, without diminishing the freedom of formal exploration. This can be achieved through a more deliberate emphasis on movement clarity, dynamic variation, and the structuring of visual cues that guide audience perception while maintaining the integrity of abstraction. In addition, the use of symbolic elements may be further refined to create stronger associative connections between movement and meaning.

The integration among performance elements—particularly movement, floor patterns, and lighting design—still holds potential for deeper development. Rather than functioning in parallel, these elements should be more cohesively interconnected to build a unified dramatic and visual composition. A more synchronized interaction between spatial design and lighting dynamics, for instance, could enhance the depth of atmosphere and strengthen the overall stage presence. Future works may benefit from a more intensive exploration of how these elements can interact responsively in real time, creating a more immersive and layered performance experience.

Furthermore, in developing works based on local cultural phenomena, a more critical and in-depth research approach is essential. The transformation from reality into artistic form should not be limited to visual symbolism alone, but should also engage with deeper conceptual and contextual dimensions. This includes examining cultural meanings, social relevance, and philosophical perspectives that can enrich the artistic outcome. By doing so, the work can move beyond surface representation and offer a more profound interpretative framework.

For future dance practitioners and creators, it is important to continuously cultivate the courage to explore new forms and movement possibilities. However, such exploration must be accompanied by a strong awareness of compositional structure and conceptual clarity. A well-balanced combination of experimentation and theoretical grounding will ensure that the resulting work is not only visually compelling but also academically robust and argumentatively sound. In this way, dance creation can contribute not only to artistic

innovation but also to the development of scholarly discourse within the field of performing arts.

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