

THE GAP BETWEEN HOPE AND REALITY AT ONLINE ART EXHIBITIONS: NON-PARTICIPATORY OBSERVATION OF ART JAKARTA 2020 AND MANIFESTO VII – PANDEMI

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Abstract: There are differences in visitors' appreciation of works of art during the exhibition of works of art displayed at *Art Jakarta 2020* and *Manifesto VII - Pandemi*. Visitors could not appreciate the artworks displayed at *Art Jakarta 2020* until concluding the artistic quality of the work observed, but only at the stage of observing the form. Some of the factors that break this appreciation process are (1) Screen viewing limits, (2) Difficulty in space exploration, and (3) No visible texture and scratch pressure on the painting. Similarly, the appreciation of *Manifesto VII – Pandemi* also only reached the stage of observing the form for different reasons, including (1) Presentations in videos can be appreciated, but do not find the work to be exhibited, (2) The videos are too random and unorganized, so choosing a video is not based on the content you want to see. *Manifesto VII – Pandemi* has a similar appearance to YouTube but has a menu bar at the right top unnoticed by users. This condition is caused by the user's familiarity with the appearance and function of YouTube's menus. The menu bar helps users select videos based on artist categories and types of art work.

Keywords: Online exhibition, observation, exploration, Art Jakarta 2020, Manifesto VII

INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the lockdown in Indonesia since the Covid-19 outbreak has limited the performance of art exhibitions to reduce the number of disease spreads. This condition makes artists, art gallery managers, and art exhibition organizers outsmart their limitations by displaying works of art through online exhibitions. However, this condition is not the only thing that triggers the emergence of online art exhibitions. The internet covers all aspects of daily human life and the features of the social expansion, technology, and accompanying materials (Tavin, 2021: 2). There is no reason not to organize and develop an online art exhibition. This platform has several advantages, such as the absence of limited space and the ability to reach more visitors, opening and strengthening the belief that online art exhibitions have room for further development. Several works of art have been displayed through online exhibitions such as *Ataraxia* at Jogja Gallery (via Mayinart), online exhibitions at the National Gallery (*Arus Timur, Udan Salah Mongso, Lawan!!!, Manifesto VII*, etc.), *Art Jakarta 2020*, *Ray of Hope* exhibition organized by AGSI (Association of Indonesian Art Galleries), and so on.

Online art exhibitions can be virtual reality (VR) or simply online exhibitions on a computer or mobile phone screen manipulated through clicks or taps on websites or applications. This latter form is more commonly used, although it is sometimes referred to as a virtual art exhibition. Some online exhibitions use a 3D layout with a sense of visiting the exhibition, so visitors feel like they are in the exhibition room without audio (as in *Art Jakarta 2020, Ray of Hope*). Another art exhibition strategy is not trying to move the exhibition space into a virtual world to get a sense of being in an actual room but exploring the possibilities offered by virtual space, as has been done by several exhibitions at the National Gallery through Galnasonline.

Two tasks can be fulfilled in implementing online exhibitions related to the visitor experience, namely presenting works of art that are the content of the collection and virtual

space that is a medium for visitors to interact. The visitors' interactions with virtual spaces presented through websites and applications are essential in implementing online art exhibitions because it is the main gate before visitors appreciate the works of art presented. The relationship between visitors and online art exhibitions is not simple, as Tavin says about the internet and humans, both of which are everlasting bonds between objects, humans, algorithms, and other non-human parties (Tavin, 2021: 2). In line with this opinion, Sherman (2003) mentions that in every information transmission, it is not guaranteed that the recipient of the information has the same experience as the communicator.

This article is part of research on art appreciation experiences and virtual presence in online art exhibitions. Research on online exhibitions generally explores new technology or application design to realize virtual space interactions. This research explores more from the user's side to complement our knowledge of human interactions in virtual spaces. The discussion in this article focuses on observations made to understand how visitors interact with the two online art exhibitions held by *Art Jakarta* and *Galnasonline*. This observation was carried out online by utilizing the share screen and recording features in the *Zoom* application with three informants. The results of this observation can provide a more detailed understanding of visitor interactions with online art exhibitions related to the flow, obstacles, and time spent browsing online art galleries by visitors.

METHOD

The research technique used in this part of the study is a non-participatory observation of the experience of art appreciation and virtual presence in online art exhibitions. Participatory observation allows researchers to engage in activities related to a social situation and observe activities, actors, and physical aspects (Spradley, 1980). Observations were conducted online using two art exhibitions, namely *Artjakarta 2020* (<https://artjakarta.com/virtual/>) and *Manifesto VII – Pandemi* held by *Galnasonline* (<https://2020.galnasonline.id/jelajah-karya>). This research is a part of ethnographic research conducted digitally. Digital ethnographic research is more or less the same as conventional ethnographic research but uses digital media instead of direct contact with informants (Pink, 2016). Observations at this stage involved three informants with the following criteria: 1. They have visited an offline art exhibition. 2. Not working as an artist. 3. Never been involved in organizing an online art exhibition, either as a manager or organizer.

Observations were made within one hour for informants to explore the exhibition, so respondents had 30 minutes to explore the two online exhibition spaces. This observation is not aimed at tracking eye movement and duration when browsing online areas but rather at the user when browsing, so the observation does not use an eye tracker. The main points observed were the user's interaction with the virtual environment and the user with the virtual object, both virtual painting and GUI.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Art Jakarta 2020 and Manifesto VII - Pandemi

The exhibitions chosen as observation tools are *Art Jakarta 2020* (<https://artjakarta.artsphere.net/>), held from 16 December 2020 and *Manifesto VII-Pandemi* (<https://2020.galnasonline.id>), which held on 8 August, 2020. Both online art exhibitions were accessed during the research period, around 12-17 October 2021. The two exhibitions have different strategies for presenting artworks. *Art Jakarta 2020* uses a simulation of exhibition space (see Figure 1A), while *Manifesto VII – Pandemi* explores space without using a physical

sense of space (see Figure 1B). All artworks displayed at Art Jakarta are paintings, while *Manifesto VII – Pandemi* shows works in videos.

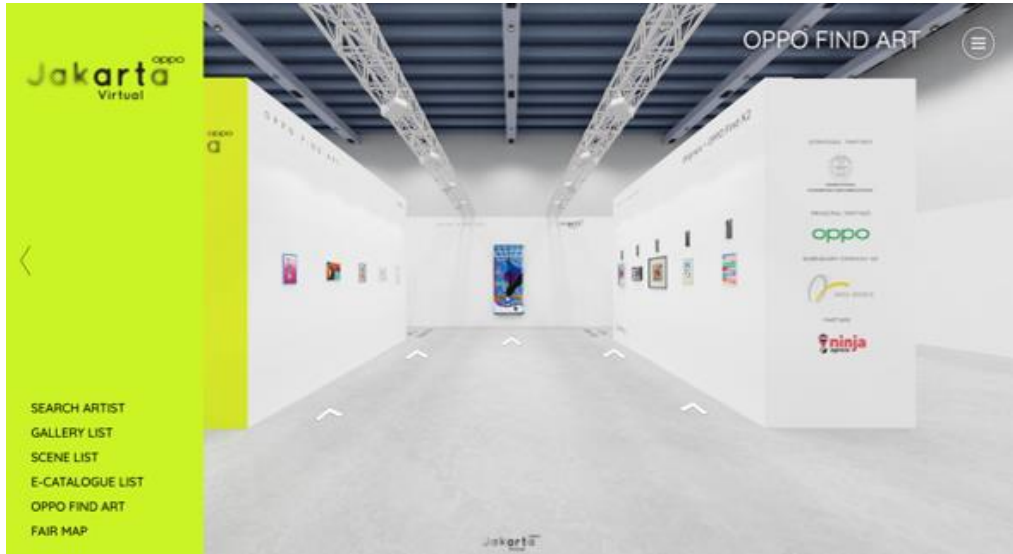


Figure 1A. Art Exhibition Art Jakarta 2020

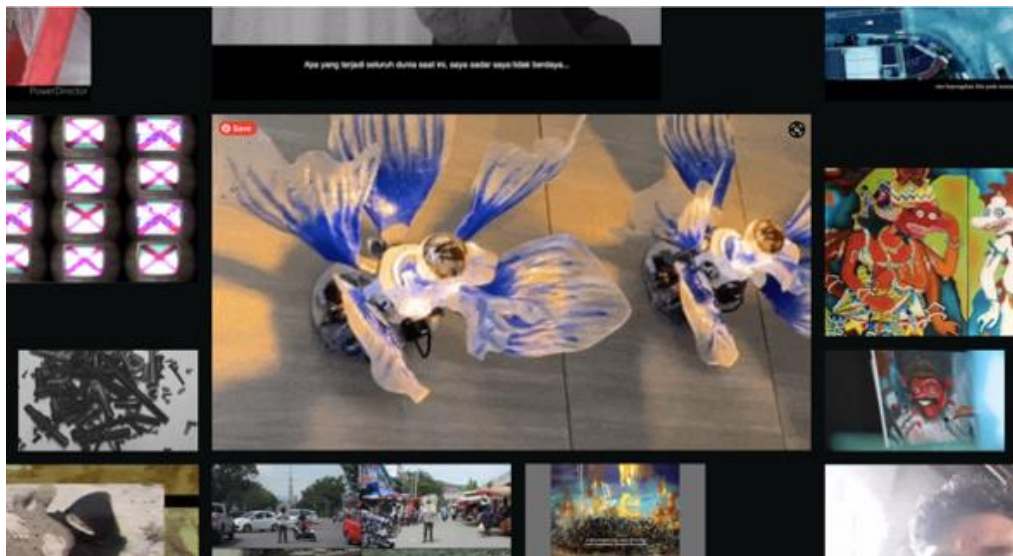


Figure 1B. *Manifesto VII - Pandemi*

The spaces at *Art Jakarta 2020* can be explored by clicking on the arrows representing the direction you can go to enter the available booths (see the circle in Figure 2A). Visitors can click on the booth they want to go to (see Figure 2B) to see in more detail the selected artwork (see Figure 2C). When visitors visit the intended artwork, they can perform several manipulations such as viewing the paintings in full size or zooming the desired size or the original size of the work, viewing artwork and gallery info, as well as a button to contact the gallery (see 2D Image). The whole process can be seen in Figure 2 below.

Visitor activities in online exhibition

Space exploration in *Manifesto VII – Pandemi* exhibition uses a different exhibition strategy. Visitors can select the videos on the main page (see Figure 3A) to play the selected video (see Figure 3B). On the right side of the video page, which can be chosen to be displayed in full screen, there are thumbnail links of other videos that can be selected to play different videos in this exhibition (see the black box in Figure 3B).

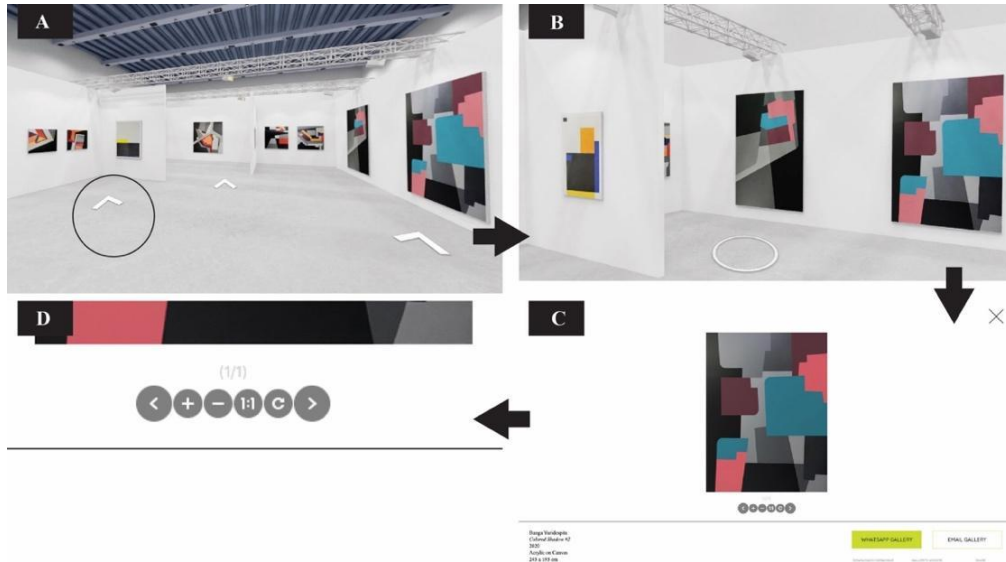


Figure 2A, B, C, D. Steps to explore the *Art Jakarta 2020* gallery space

Some points that can be underlined from the observations made at the online art exhibition *Art Jakarta 2020* are as follows:

1. The three informants needed time to understand how to navigate the virtual room, especially Informant 1 took longer because they missed the arrows on the floor of the room (see Figure 2A). They spent more than half of the observation time exploring the virtual space to understand how to navigate, so the informants did not immediately focus on appreciating the artwork.
2. The three informants had difficulty moving from one painting to another in one room (see Figure 2B). Manipulation on the next painting by clicking on the painting that looks like it does not always work, so the informant has to back off, then go back to choose the next painting.
3. The three informants did not immediately know that each painting could be selected. The painting page was opened (see Figure 2C) and manipulated (see Figure 2D) to view it in a larger or smaller size and obtain information related to the painting.
4. The three informants access the paintings through menu options, either grouped according to the gallery list, scene list, or catalogue list after navigating the room first.

None of the informants chose the drop-down menu on the upper right side of the site (see Figure 3) to access the exhibition space more quickly, without browsing and finding the desired room. Observations at the online art exhibition *Manifesto VII – Pandemi* were carried out in the second half after observing *Art Jakarta 2020*. The virtual space in *Manifesto VII - Pandemi* does not imitate the actual exhibition space but utilizes space on the website screen. Visitors can explore the entire virtual area without being limited by barriers and can choose the available

content. Some points underlined from the observations made at the online art exhibition *Manifesto VII - Pandemi* are as follows:

1. The three informants did not read the information on the video.
2. The three informants did not access the video thumbnails on the right side of the site (see Figure 3B) but chose to return to the site's home page and explore the page to select the available videos.
3. The three informants used the facility to speed up the video.
4. The videos that were chosen by the informants were videos with large thumbnails.
5. The three informants did not take advantage of the menu bar facility at the top of the site (see Figure 3B point 1).

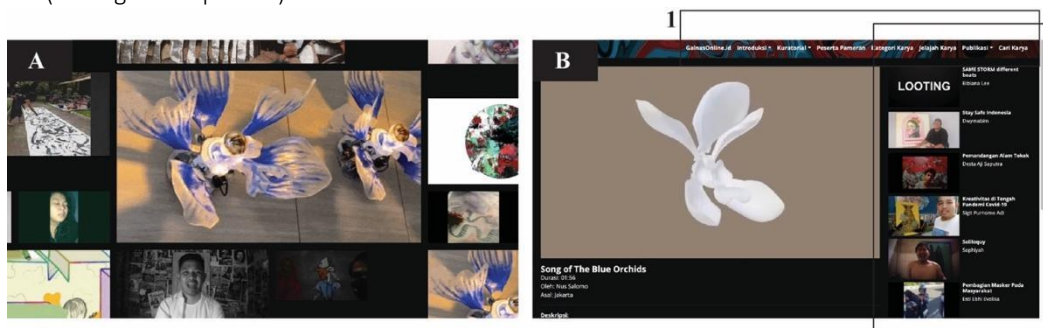


Figure 3 A & B. Steps through the gallery space of *Manifesto VII – Pandemi*

Exploration carried out at the *Manifesto VII – Pandemi* art exhibition by informants had different results. The three informants can immediately understand when exploring the virtual space in this exhibition, which does not use the logic of real space. The *Manifesto VII – Pandemi* exhibition space contains several videos centred on the main video that appears when the exhibition page is first loaded. Visitors can select other videos around the main video by sliding the view in any direction.

Some of the obstacles encountered by the informants stemmed from the time it took to load all the video thumbnails. This long loading time made Informant 1 think that there were very few videos but then realized that loading video thumbnails were incomplete. The same thing happened when Informant 1 selected one of the videos but continued exploring the initial space, thinking that the selection did not bring up the video page. Every time a visitor selects a video, the visitor will enter the video page, but this process takes a long time. Another obstacle encountered by the three informants was that the thumbnails, which functioned as a visual summary of what would be presented in the video, did not provide an accurate picture. The interviews after observations show that the informants found it easy to explore the virtual space. Still, it was less comfortable because the videos were not categorized, and the available thumbnails did not represent the content.

These points indicate that visitors cannot immediately navigate an online space and encounter some insurmountable difficulties. Visitors are more focused on interacting with the exhibition space, so it is difficult to carry out activities to appreciate the works of art. Appreciation of art is a source of appreciation of art, which is an activity of observing works of art to find aesthetics and other values to appreciate works of art (Salam et al., 2021:15). This process is carried out through several stages, namely observing the form, interpreting the content of the work of art, and drawing conclusions about the artistic quality of the observed work (Salam et al., 2021). Appreciation of works of art involves observing skills, knowledge, and skills to interpret works of art. The process of appreciating works of art online, as done in this

study, stops at the observation stage because visitors are more focused on trying to explore the exhibition space.

CONCLUSIONS

There are differences in visitors' appreciation of works of art during the exhibition of works of art displayed at *Art Jakarta 2020* and *Manifesto VII - Pandemi*. Visitors could not appreciate the artworks displayed at *Art Jakarta 2020* until concluding the artistic quality of the work observed, but only at the stage of observing the form. Some of the factors that break this appreciation process are: (1) Screen viewing limits, (2) Difficulty in space exploration, and (3) No visible texture and scratch pressure on the painting. The appreciation of *Manifesto VII – Pandemi* also only reached the stage of observing the form for different reasons, including (1) Presentations in videos can be appreciated by, but do not find the work to be exhibited, (2) The videos are too random and unorganized, so choosing a video is not based on the content you want to see. *Manifesto VII – Pandemi* has a similar appearance to YouTube but has a menu bar at the right top unnoticed by users. This condition is caused by the user's familiarity with the appearance and function of YouTube's menus.

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