

Designing Avant-Garde Fashion as Symbolism of Banyumasan Punakawan Clown Puppetry Inspired by Its Spiritual Values and Cultural Aesthetics



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ABSTRACT: The development of wayang performing arts in Banyumasan in the modern era, is still preserved by the local community as a spiritual medium for socio-cultural practices such as *wayang ruwat sukerta* “ritual redemption / purification” and there are several other spiritual traditions that are still carried out by the Banyumas community today, in addition to entertainment and edification. The wayang characters who have *Dagelaning Panguripan* “hilarious healing energy” in the middle of the show's storyline are the four Punakawan comic characters: Semar, Gareng, Petruk, and Bawor. Serving as regional icons of the city in the Banyumas middle-Java region, such Punakawan puppet characters not only function as buffoon / clown entertainers in the wayang puppet show, but also as symbols of wisdom, simplicity, social commentary and criticism packaged in humor. This study aims to 1) Explore the meaning of symbolism, character and cultural values of the Punakawan clown puppetry in the study of *Rupa-Aksara-Iswara* “form-literature-divinity;” 2) Reinterpret the quartet Punakawan puppets into the visual design of Avantgarde fashion; 3) Analyze the design of avantgarde fashion based on the marketable desired design. Through qualitative methods of artistic creative theory, literary study and inspiration of Banyumasan puppet performances, this study focuses on the meaning and symbols of Punakawan, which are recreated into the visual form of Avantgarde fashion design. Thus, Banyumasan clowning puppetry manifest into marketable means of spiritual education and social reflection that remains relevant in the modern era.

KEYWORDS: Avantgarde Fashion Design, Reinterpretation of aesthetics, Banyumasan Punakawan Clown Puppets.

INTRODUCTION

Wayang Punakawan is an iconic character in Javanese puppetry that reflects moral values, philosophy of life and human relations with the spiritual dimension, in the Banyumas puppet show as a spiritual medium and spectacle and guidance (Sedana, 2016). intended for the people as a medium of folkloric art (Bronner, 2017). The form and style of the performance are still influenced by the aristocratic puppetry of the Solo and Yogyakarta palaces, due to the birth of the palace culture being the mecca of cultures outside the palace (Sutriyanto, 2010). As a result of this acculturation process, the art of puppetry has durability and multidimensional growth. The Banyumasan wayang performance art tradition is an integral part and cultural identity, which is still preserved by the local community. The spiritual tradition of wayang ruwat sukerta aims to get rid of bad luck in a person in the spiritual tradition presented a puppet show that tells how Batara kala was defeated and the figure of Semar with his children Petruk, Bawor and Gareng. In addition, the Punakawan appear in the middle of the storyline of the puppet characters in the Mahabarata and Ramayana according to the circumstances of the life cycle of the community, not only acting as entertainers but also as symbols of deep moral teaching. Semar, as the central character, symbolizes divine wisdom and spiritual guidance for humans (Izzati, 2016). Through their humor and innocence, Punakawan characters convey moral messages in a light yet meaningful way (Surachandra, 2020). Punakawan is a manifestation of local values that reflect the relationship between humans, society, and spirituality, which is relevant to be transformed into various contemporary art media (Sedana, 2021), in the context of contemporary art, the symbolism of Punakawan has a strong influence to be translated into visual avant-garde fashion design. Avant-garde is known as an experimental art expression that challenges norms and offers a wide space for the reinterpretation of traditional cultural values (Burger, 1984). The translation of cultural symbolism into avant-garde fashion design creates a visual narrative that combines philosophical meaning with artistic exploration (Putra, 2022), in this case the importance of bridging local traditions with contemporary artistic expression, creating a space for dialog between cultural heritage and creative innovation (Wijyanthi, 2023). This approach not only enriches the study of art and culture but also raises local values to the global arena (Kusmayati, 2014). This research effort aims to examine the symbolic meaning of Punakawan and identify how the spiritual value of Banyumas Punakawan puppetry through a theoretical study of artistic creation (Sedana, 2016). In producing a visualization of avant-garde fashion design design by applying design methodology, namely

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elements, principles and processes that support design design. The development of Banyumasan wayang performance art in the modern era continues to be preserved as a spiritual medium that combines spectacle entertainment and guidance (Sedana, 2016). The Punakawan characters, Semar, Gareng, Petruk, and Bawor, with the local icon Bawor, are often present as symbols of wisdom, simplicity, and social criticism packaged through humor (Sedana, 2021). Punakawan is not only an entertainer, but also represents noble values in the culture of the Banyumas community (Priyadi, 2008).

RESEARCH METHOD

Through the qualitative method of artistic aesthetics with the approach of “Sacred Interplay Of Form-Literature-Divinity” or Sacred Interrelation in the frame of Rupa-Aksara- Iswara formulated by Prof. I.Nyoman Sedana, P.hd. literature analysis and observation of Banyumasan wayang performance art, this research focuses on the meaning and symbolism of avantgarde fashion design, with the approach of Rupa Iswara and Aksara theory can be an important foundation. this theory views that the form and script in traditional art are not only as Rupa Iswara theory emphasizes that visuals in traditional art, contain symbolic meanings related to spiritual and moral values. Iswara means the power or essence hidden behind the visual form. Aksara theory according to (Sedana, 2016) sees script as a linguistic symbol that has narrative and spiritual power, In Javanese culture, script is often not only a writing system, but also carries certain spiritual energy, as well as in producing aesthetic elements by connecting the relevance of design methodology, namely: four elements of design, 1) silhouette, 2) line, 3) texture, 4) color, and nine design principles 1) proportion, 2) balance, 3) rhythm, 4) gradation, 5) contrast, 6) harmony, 7) repetition 8) radiation, 9) unity and six design support processes 1) aesthetics, 2) function, 3) flexibility, 4) realization, 5) economy and 6) target market.



Framework.1 *Rupa-Aksara-Iswara* “form-literature-divinity;”.(Sedana,2023)

RUPA dimension of all puppetry materials and wayang paintings on cloth, bronze, and lontar in this research falls into the realm of fine arts and design.

AKSARA that records, formulates and describes forms in various lontar, ilikita, inscriptions (including Bebetin Buleleng and Matyasih inscriptions from Ancient Mataram) until now books, papers, articles, theses, theses and dissertations fall into the realm of literature, history and archaeology.

ISWARA divinity spirit element in the spiritual / metaphysical realm that is strongly built into a cross-age monumental Mythology since thousands of years justifying rupa and aksara as a life belief entered into the realm of theology mahalango religious science and accepted by the community as justified true-believe





RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Punakawan symbolism and characters and their relevance in avant-garde fashion design:

Punakawan Puppetry reflects the human relationship with spirituality (Sedana, 2017), where Semar is the main character symbolizing wisdom. Gareng, Petruk, and Bawor, reflect aspects of humanity, humor, and social criticism (Rahardjo, 2019). The approach with the theory of Rupa Iswara and Aksara in Art Creation Research (Sedana, 2023) in the research focuses on the reinterpretation of Punakawan symbolism into avant-garde fashion design, the approach of Rupa Iswara and Aksara theory can be an important foundation. This theory views that rupa and script in traditional art are not only as aesthetic elements, but also as a means of communicating spiritual, social, and cultural values, by releasing design methodology in order to produce visualizations of avantgarde fashion design designers.

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Table 1. Punakawan symbolism and characters and their relevance in avant-garde fashion design:

Character	Symbolism	The Philosopher's Way	Visual Features	Relevance in designing Avant-Garde Fashion designs
Semar 	Divine Wisdom	Spiritual protector and guide; patience and compassion	Fat body, old face with eyelash hair	The silhouette is voluminous but full of meaning, with the colors of the spiritual symbol black, white, red, gold, and silver
Gareng 	Caution and Loyalty	Caution in acting; Sincerity and honesty	Squinted eyes, crooked hands, limp legs	Asymmetrical silhouettes and disproportionate details interpret the puppet form and highlight the prudence of life.
Petruk 	Intelligence and Creativity	Intelligence, flexibility of thinking, and humor as criticism	Tall body, long nose	Asymmetrical silhouettes with fabric experiments that reflect the flexibility of thinking.
Bawor 	Honesty and Freedom of Speech	Honesty, straightforwardness, and courage to speak the truth	Round body, witty facial expressions	A bold silhouette with an expressive kawung motif experiment that highlights courage and openness.

B. Avant-Garde Fashion as a Medium of Reinterpretation

Avant-garde fashion is known as an art expression that challenges norms and presents experimental concepts (Piggioli, 1981). The meaning of cultural symbolism, including Punakawan, can be a strong visual narrative in contemporary fashion exploration. The following is a tabulation for mapping avant-garde fashion as a media reinterpretation of Punakawan puppets to make it easier to create a conceptual framework for developing avant-garde fashion design.

Table 2. Application in avantgarde fashion design

Aspect	Description	Application in Avant-Garde fashion Design
Puppetry Character	Semar, Gareng, Petruk, Bawor	The application of Silhouettes, Lines, textures and colors that represent the character of each character.

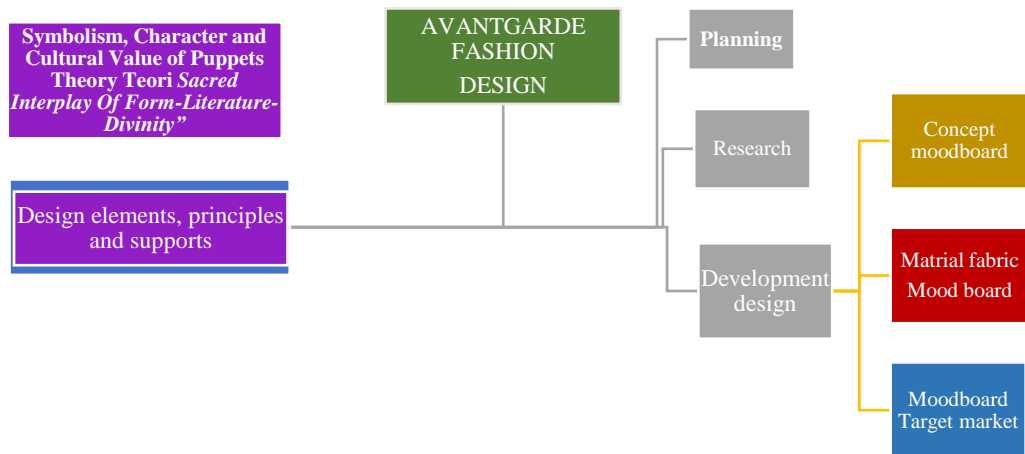
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Aspect	Description	Application in Avant-Garde fashion Design
Spiritual Symbolism	Divine wisdom, life balance, social criticism, and humor as a medium for conveying moral messages.	Design design with aesthetic elements, principles and design elements resulting in duality, color, texture and contrast for the symbol of Proportionality, Balance, Harmony, Harmony and unity
Rupa Iswara Theory	Visual as a means of communicating spiritual and social values in cultural traditions.	The application of design elements and principles inspired by elements of the face, posture, and gestures of Punakawan.which results in the design of avantgarde fashion design
Aksara Theory	The Javanese script carries a deep cultural narrative and holds a philosophical meaning.	Script ornaments on embroidery or kawung motifs to strengthen the narrative of Javanese culture.
Social Function	As a medium of education, entertainment, and social reflection in puppet performances.	The design structure is spiral or symmetrical to depict the concept of spiritual and social harmony. The design features asymmetrical pieces and caricatural motifs to represent social imbalances.
Visual Reinterpretation	The transformation of traditional elements into experimental and contemporary avant-garde forms.	Experiments with non-conventional pieces, application of deconstructive patterns and zero waste pattern techniques
Aesthetic Approach	.A balance between cultural symbols and design innovation.	The use of kawung motifs transformed into manipulating fabric combined with modern techniques (laser cut, pleating and pachwork applications)).
Spiritual Narrative	Conveying moral messages through humor and Punakawan's visual symbols.	Design design presentation with a performance narrative that resembles a puppet plot.
Cultural Context	Wayang Banyumasan as a means of spiritual education and social reflection.	Design design presentation with a performance narrative that resembles a puppet plot.
Purpose of Reinterpretation	Maintaining the relevance of traditional culture in the global realm through the medium of fashion.	Bringing the collection to national and international exhibitions as a representation of modern Javanese culture.

C. Reinterpretation of Punakawan Puppet Symbolism in Avant-Garde Fashion Designing

This research combines Punakawan symbolism with aesthetic elements such as Rupa, Aksara Iswara, and avant-garde design principles), this combination is able to create visuals that are not only aesthetic, but also full of philosophical meaning. Wayang Punakawan is a symbol of Javanese culture that is full of spiritual, social, and moral meanings. Figures such as Semar, Gareng, Petruk, and Bawor are not only present as entertainers in puppet shows, but also as conveyors of moral messages in a lighthearted way through humor. The reinterpretation of their symbolism into avant-garde fashion designs offers a new perspective on cultural narratives by combining tradition and creative innovation. Here is the conceptual framework in development:

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Framework 2. in the design developer avantgarde fashion design (Yuniarti,2024)



Table 3 Reinterpretation in avantgarde fashion design

Aspect	Banyumasan Punakawan Clown Puppetry	Reinterpretation in Avant-Garde Fashion Design
Figure and character	Semar: Wise, humble, spiritual protector.	A loose silhouette with soft fabrics and elements of duality (dark-light colors) to represent the balance of life.
	Gareng: Honest, careful, reflective humor.	Asymmetrical pieces and unique textures that reflect human limitations yet full of wisdom.
	Petruk: Imaginative, critical, communicative.	Design of geometric line elements and dynamic details, depicting creativity and freedom of thought.
	Bawor : Funny, intelligent, socially critical.	Volume silhouettes and circle pattern games to show witty and bold characters, and the meaning of the wheel of life
Philosophical Symbolism	Wisdom, life balance, humor as a means of moral transmission.	Selection of Kawung motifs with the transformation of fabric manipulating techniques.
Rupa Iswara (Visual)	Visualisasi tokoh dengan ciri khas fisik dan atribut yang penuh simbolisme.	Experiment with body proportions, fabric textures, and ornamental details based on Punakawan's visual elements.
Aksara and Narrative	Javanese script that represents the values of life in puppet stories.	The script ornaments on fabrics and accessories convey a spiritual narrative through modern visual elements.
Engineering and Materials	Puppet and kawung motifs as material cultural heritage.	Combining the characteristics of traditional motifs such as kawung with modern techniques such as laser cut, pleating and application

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Aspect	Banyumasan Punakawan Clown Puppetry	Reinterpretation in Avant-Garde Fashion Design
Aesthetic Avant-Garde	According to Maestro, puppet artists from form puppets, punakawan, ornaments, and storylines that are played in accordance with the development of the period of the times and multidimensional and are avantgardes, puppet performance art has philosophical value that can be contextualized.	Experimental structures, extreme layering, and non-conventional shapes to accentuate symbolic meaning.
Social Messages	Social criticism, self-reflection, and harmony of life.	Designs with motifs and textures that convey social and spiritual messages through fashion show presentations.

Table 4. Avantgarde fashion design development

Avantgarde fashion design development: Mood board concept
 <p style="text-align: center;">Picture 1, Yuniarti 2024</p> <p>Mood board concept: Provides an atmosphere of symbolizing spirituality for reference design development from silhouette design elements, colors, line textures and design principles of balance, unity, harmonization and repetition</p>
Avantgarde fashion design development : Mood board fabric
 <p style="text-align: center;">Picture 2, Yuniarti 2024</p> <p>Moodboard matrial fabric: Planning matrial fabric that will be applied in the design by applying color, texture detail motifs, gradation, Repitis, so as to give emphasis to the design that produces balance, harmony and unity in the design of avantgarde design.</p>

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Table 5. Avantgarde fashion design development : Mood board Target market



Picture.3

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<https://images.app.goo.gl/31LAXMHsVJyoLDJx6>
<https://images.app.goo.gl/5MaZcAYwdX9jULDv8>
<https://images.app.goo.gl/wJBK9S8cr3kzqZAY9>
accessed on feb 28th 2025

Demographic Factors, such as establishing consumer positioning aged 20-35, for androgyny with middle to upper status aimed at Artists, Designers, and people who are enthusiastic about fashion Psychographic Factors: Lifestyle Urban creative, open-minded, and value self-expression, Interests: Art, local culture, experimental fashion, and spirituality Personality: Innovative, youthful, appreciative of cultural heritage, and seeks originality in fashion style Geographic Factors: Region: Urban areas with rapidly developing creative industries Location Specific as well as international markets in Asia, Europe, and the Americas Climate: Adapted to tropical conditions in Indonesia and temperate climates in global markets, this avant-garde collection targets culturally aware individuals who are interested in the reinterpretation of traditional values in modern fashion, as well as those who want to highlight their identity through unique and meaningful aesthetic expressions.

Table 6. Development design avant-garde fashion



Picture 4. Yuniarti 2024





CONCLUSION

This article discusses the symbolism of Punakawan Banyumasan in the visualization of avant-garde fashion design as a form of reinterpretation of spiritual values and cultural aesthetics. The quartet Punakawan comic characters such as Semar, Gareng, Petruk, and Bawor, became a source of inspiration in designing a fashion collection that not only highlights aesthetic elements but also contains a deep philosophical narrative. Through the application of design elements such as silhouette, line, texture, and color combined with design principles such as proportion, balance, and harmony, a design that reflects the values of life taught by Punakawan is created. This design also shows how local cultural elements can be reinterpreted in a modern context without losing its spiritual essence. The design support process, from aesthetic considerations, function, to the target market, ensures that this fashion collection has a contemporary appeal as well as being a medium for cultural education. The success of this design shows that cultural heritage can continue to be relevant and evolve in the dynamic world of fashion. Thus, the design of avant-garde design based on the symbolism of Punakawan Banyumasan along with its hilarious healing energy is able to bridge traditional values and to contemporary innovation, presenting cultural identity in the global realm and providing a new appreciation for local wisdom through the

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