

CROSS-CULTURAL CREATIVITY: AESTHETICS IMPLEMENTATION OF MODERN ETHNIC STYLE INTERIOR DESIGN IN DUTCH COLONIAL HOUSE

Sri Fariyanti Pane

Faculty of Art and Design, Jakarta Institute of the Arts

e-mail: yantipane@ikj.ac.id

Abstract

Cross-cultural creativity can be traced in the development of interior design in Indonesia, especially in Jakarta. Indonesia's long history, which was influenced by Portuguese, English, Chinese, Arabic, Dutch, and Japanese cultures through trade routes, can be seen in the architectural style, interior design, and furniture products as well as other aesthetic elements. Traditional and modern styles become the theoretical foundation that generates imagination and reflection of modern interior design. The research case study takes a residential building located in the Menteng area, Central Jakarta, which has been around for almost 100 years and still survives now, which is influenced by the three cultures: Indonesia, the Netherlands, and Japan. This study tries to see how the exploration of aesthetic creativity of owners who have a Dutch heritage house, then combining several styles of furniture and aesthetic elements in Javanese, Padang, and Japanese styles inside the space as a style of can be called Ethnic Style. Creativity involves people, processes, and the environment and produces creative products. Descriptive qualitative method using traditional and modern theoretical approaches to see the development of style, and creativity as an interior design phenomenon at the end of the 20th century. Perception of universal creativity to strengthen the phenomenon in the disciplined interior design of residential houses on Jalan Pekalongan, Menteng areas are used by owners when designing their homes. The benefit of this research is the importance of creativity and the ability to capture visuals as the essence of interior design.

Keywords: *creativity, cross-cultural, aesthetic, ethnic modern*

Introduction

The long history of human life can be seen from the culture in which they live and in which area they live. Likewise, Indonesian people have a variety of traditional and modern cultures brought by foreign nations so there is adaptation and cross-cultural phenomena. Cross-cultural materials in the form of objects in people's lives can be seen in the presence of food, clothing, furniture, crafts, architecture, and other functional objects that are used daily and become essential needs. The development of modern culture continues to evolve according to the times followed by social, technological, and political developments, through a real process of adaptation and compromise.

Jakarta, after the Dutch handed back power to the Indonesian government, still uses the Dutch post-colonial paradigm, which is still practised today, especially in legal matters. In contrast to cultural ideas that are increasingly open to the presence of Western, Eastern, and Asian cultures. Edward Tylor, a British anthropologist (2017) stated, "Culture is a complex field including knowledge, belief, art, morals, customs, laws and habitual capacities acquired by humans as members of society". According to Clifford Geertz (1973), culture is a system of symbolic meanings, where symbols function to communicate the meaning of a thought that is transferred through symbols of certain objects. Koentjaraningrat (1999) stated that culture is a whole system of ideas for human actions and results in people's lives that belong to the results of human learning.

In the context of interior design and history, it can be concluded that culture is knowledge, art, customs, and rules in a social system that produces an object that becomes a meaningful symbol believed by society as a means of cultural communication at its time. The development of modern culture in the science of interior design results from a culture that is influenced by a local and foreign culture so that cross-cultural occurs; it is then applied to space, in this case, the interior design. Understanding cross-cultural phenomena in this study uses a cross-cultural approach to produce material culture in the form of man-made products. Human-made products are interpreted as the result of cross-cultural creativity that's used to produce an aesthetic in space.

Understanding cross-cultural interior design needs detailed observation through resident-based artefacts. Residential houses in Jakarta had started with the presence of traditional houses (kampoeng), where Indonesian people use natural materials with manual technology passed down from generation to generation. Slowly there was a change due to the entry of the West (colonial), which brought modern culture and technology. Colonial buildings were built with modern technology and materials to produce modern buildings, especially houses. The shape of the building is a massive acculturation of Western culture with the

shape of the high roof being an adaptation to Indonesia's hot and humid air conditions. The Dutch colonial presence in Indonesia had resulted in a mix of cultures, which eventually resulted in a new culture, known as Indies culture.

The legacy of modern residential buildings in Jakarta can still be traced in the housing in the Menteng area of Central Jakarta. Menteng is an elite modern residential area located in the middle of the city built with the concept of the first "Garden City" in Indonesia, with a Dutch Villa building style adapted to the tropical climate. Each era has special characteristics in the buildings that are made, thus marking the development of styles and changes in life whose presence is valued (Pane, 2022), namely from the historical aspect of architecture which has high historical value.

The architectural development of the early 20th century in Indonesia, especially Batavia in a modern context, changed due to the industrial revolution (1750-1850) in Europe, resulting in a new technological culture resulting in processing techniques and the use of materials that affected spatial relations in housing, be it housing public and institutional housing. This technological culture was brought to Indonesia by the Dutch colonial authorities and was applied to modern architecture in Batavia and other areas (Pane, 2022).

In the mid-18th century, the Menteng area included *particulier land* (*Particuliere landerijen*) or privately owned land sold by individuals as part of the colonial government in Indonesia. In 1918 - 1937 Menteng was expanded to the Northeast area named Gondangdia, to the south to the border of the Tanah Abang - Manggarai railroad and the Flood Canal (1919) and until 1934 it reached the Guntur area called *Nieuw_Menteng*. In 1932 - 1937, development declined due to the worldwide economic crisis (Heuken, 2001:20-37). Until the end of the 1960s, Menteng was still a quiet, orderly, and clean settlement, but in the 1970s there was a development of urban planning, new routes were opened and a shift in transportation routes that had made the Menteng area bustling.

This research took place on Jalan Pekalongan no.11 that is in the Menteng residential area. The new owner of this particular house occupied the house in 1970 with the original condition of the Dutch colonial heritage in the style of a Dutch villa with the division of space still using the Indies house type. The homeowner worked for the state-owned company Pertamina and was often assigned to provincial areas in Indonesia and even abroad. This condition allowed the homeowner to experience various cultures in Indonesia, Asia, Europe (Western culture), and most recently lived in Tokyo-Japan for four years. The experience of travelling around the world produces a more open interpretation of culture to understand

the meaning of beauty, as Geertz stated that cultural analysis is not an experimental science looking for values, but a science of interpretation looking for meaning.

The ability of the homeowners to understand works of art, art & craft, and furniture can be seen in how the homeowners do the interior designs. This makes it interesting to study how cross-cultural artefacts can be displayed in space to produce an aesthetic that can be called a modern ethnic style. Housewives who have insight and artistic tastes can mix and match arts and crafts, and furniture styles into a single unit that produces aesthetics with a semi-formal atmosphere.

Research Method

This research on a residential design from the Dutch colonial heritage in the mid-20th century focuses on the interior and aesthetic elements. It uses a descriptive qualitative analysis method with a historical and interior design approach. The stages involved in collecting field data were field documentation, archive, literature data, and direct interviews with homeowners. Then the data is analysed to get the final result of a conclusion on how cross-cultural interior design can give meaning to interior design.

The methodological approach suggested by Edward Tylor regarding culture is used to see how seeing cultural differences that have meaning and are displayed in art objects and furniture become one. Clifford Geertz said culture is a system of symbolic means, where symbols function to communicate the meaning of a thought that is transferred through symbols of certain objects.

Discussion

Changes began to appear in the lives of the people of Indonesia in general and the Jakartans, particularly in considering the needs for housing. Cross-culturalism is reflected in the modern urban lifestyle, building style, and interior design. This research looks at how the Dutch colonial heritage is still being maintained and developed by the Jakartans. Colonial architecture in Indonesia is a unique cultural phenomenon, it cannot be found anywhere else in the former colonised countries. It is assumed that this phenomenon is due to a mixture of European and diverse Indonesian cultures. Therefore, colonial architecture in various places in Indonesia, when examined further, has its differences and characteristics.

The creativity of the occupants of the house in displaying the aesthetics of the interior design in their house can be interpreted as a cross-cultural work taking place in a beautiful and comfortable home. Creativity is of individual effort. The creativity of designers and non-designers is of course different as they will have different approaches in seeing the concept

of beauty. In terms of psychology, creativity has a complex and multidimensional domain that has different emphases depending on the situation. The definition of creativity refers to the personal emphasis as suggested by Guilford (1950), "Creativity refers to the abilities that characterise creative people". If you look at Guilford's statement, it can be seen that every individual human being has been created with different capacities, some are creative in economic, social, and cultural thinking, as well as art and design. Art and design creativity tends to have an image of beauty that is poured into their work and the work of others.

Space in architecture is part of the building called the interior, while in science is called interior design. Interior design is the science of planning/designing space in buildings that solves space problems by uniting space elements consisting of floors, walls, and ceilings, to produce an atmosphere of space according to a theme that has aesthetic value. Aesthetics can be produced by processing interior design elements, materials, and technology that are safe and comfortable, based on the needs of the people who use them, as a complex subject that involves many related considerations.

Ismet Akil and Magliani Ismet Akil's family home was first occupied in 1970 with their four daughters. It was after 25 years the Dutch handed over power for more than 350 years colonising Indonesia. At the time it was purchased the house was still in original form, there were no changes taking place on the land of 1010 m² and a building area of 480 m². The layout inside the house still resembles the typical division of an Indies house, consisting of the main building where the homeowners live and the back/side building for the service area (Fig.1). In 1986 and 1991 when the children were growing up, house renovations were carried out so that the building area reached 800 m².

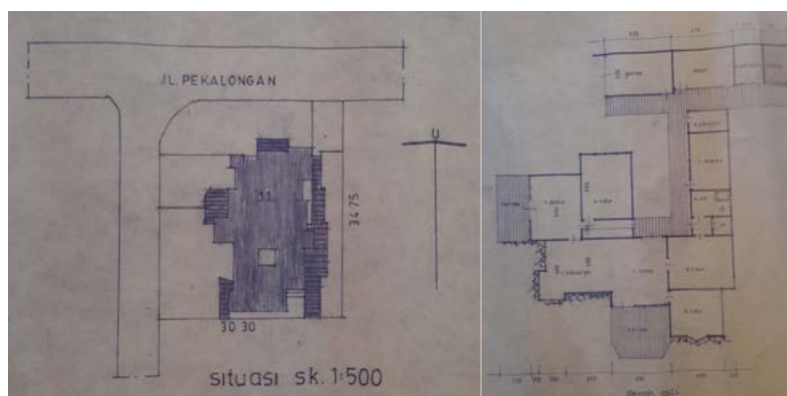


Figure 1. Building Site and Lay Out

Source: Blue Print Ismet Akil

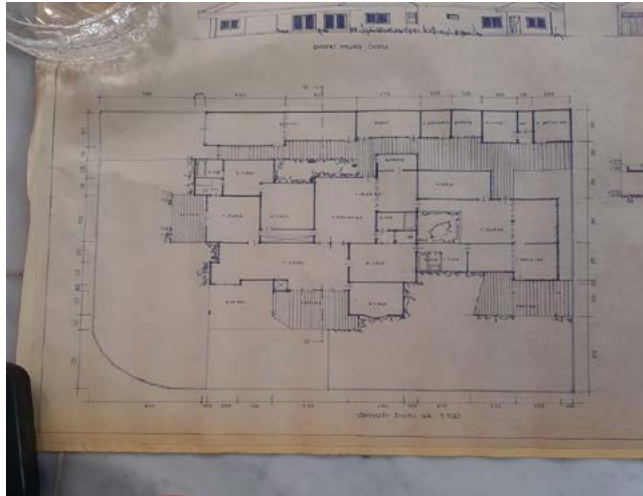


Figure 2. Lay Out after Renovation

Source: Blue Print Ismet Akil

New spaces in the house were to meet the needs and activities of every member of the family living inside the house. The new spaces created were a bedroom for the two daughters who were getting bigger. The living room and family room remain in the original building, but the dining room is included in the main building. The difference between the main and service buildings is not very visible in the new space requirements. This research focuses on the traditional and modern works of cross-cultural objects. Analysis of traditional and modern design concepts is a never-ending topic in design research. An aesthetic reflection that forms the basis of rich cultural theories and concepts for residential interior design in modern colonial-style buildings. The focuses of this research are the living room, family room, first dining room, second dining room, and TV.

Interior design is a complex field of science because it discusses the processing of finishing elements of floors, walls, ceilings, furniture, and aesthetics, and has relationships with other sciences, especially architecture. The field of interior design faces a divide between a focus on historicism through decorative reproduction of the historical developments of interior styles most commonly seen in residential homes and architectural orientations allied with the early 20th-century movement known as Modernism (Pile, 2003). Pile's statement regarding the aesthetic elements and furniture, which had a relationship with building style, can be seen from the selection of furniture and aesthetic elements in Ismet Akil's family home. Early settling in the house selection of furniture with a classic European style can be seen in the living room. Killmer said that style can be defined as the expression,

execution, and construction of a specific or distinctive design in any art form and period. Style is associated with social life, literature, personal expression, lifestyle, and behavior of individuals and groups.

A. Furniture

To understand and interpret the thoughts of homeowners in arranging, it is necessary to observe the style of each piece of furniture and aesthetic elements in the interior design of each room as the focus of the research. In figure 3. The Louis XVI style of the sofa and single chair in the sitting area is characteristic with the curved shape of the armrests representing one of the characteristics of Louis XVI. Besides that, you can see geometric shapes, straight lines, on the backrest of the chair, and a little ornament.



Figure 3. Ambiance a Living Room
Source: Document of Sri Fariyanti Pane



Figure 4. Ambiance a Living Room and Louis XVI Style Furniture
Source: Elizabeth Pash

The selection of the coffee table in the living room area also received several stylistic influences and became a new style. The homeowner said the table was purchased on their

return to Indonesia after living in Japan for almost four years. The low guest table is a typical Japanese dining table. Why is it low? Japanese people don't sit on a chair; traditional Indonesian culture doesn't sit on a chair either. The Japanese still maintain the culture of sitting on the tatami floor. Tatami is part of the physical ecology of traditional Japanese buildings and was raised on the floor (Hein, 2016). Because they sit on the floor, the dimensions of the table are lower, in contrast to European society, which has a culture of sitting on chairs, and the tables are also high.

The Japanese table doesn't have carvings; it's so rare to find carvings on dining tables that are used by the middle-class. While the typical Jepara table that was found also had no carvings, it is possible that the table in the living room was influenced by the French Rococo style and was given carvings. It is necessary to further study the aesthetic elements of the carving, but I assume that the aesthetics of this coffee table has Jepara, French, and Japanese influences. The homeowners just regard this table as good and suitable to be combined with a Louis XVI-style sofa chair. The homeowner's ability along with their good taste in art makes the arrangement harmonious.

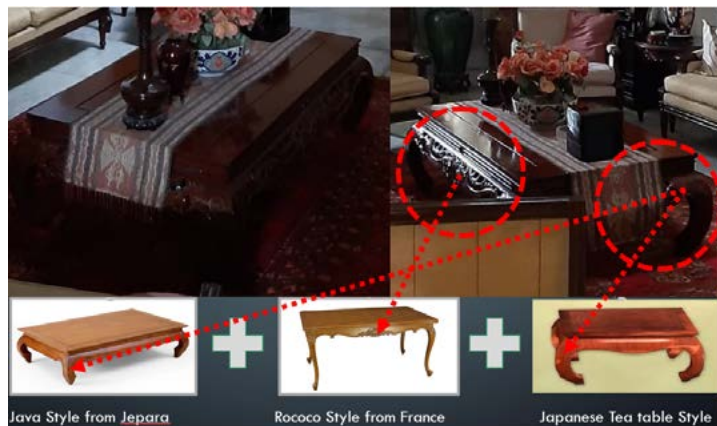


Figure 5. Japanese and Jepara Influence Guest Table

Source: Document of Sri Fariyanti Pane

Furthermore, in the "Blue Corner" section, there is a combination of traditional Javanese, Japanese and French-style furniture as seen in the carved glass frames hanging on the walls, wooden console tables, round side tables, and single French chairs (Fig.6). The upholstery is in blue. The aesthetic elements supporting the furniture can be seen in Japanese and Sulawesi jars combined with a matching blue color. The homeowner uses this combination as an accent to avoid a monotonous view.

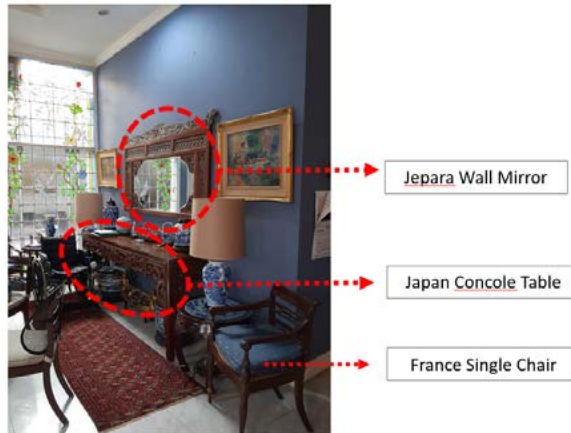


Figure 6. Blue Corner Mix of Styles: Javanese, Japanese, and French Style
Source: Document of Sri Fariyanti Pane

The family sitting area is the area most often used by families to gather and to have a discussion. The homeowner never forgets the cultural roots of the family and other Indonesian cultures. In this room, the homeowner chose rattan material for single chairs and sofas with adaptations of modern and traditional styles. Processing of rattan material with a screw technique makes a single chair look modern. The three-seater sofa is the result of an exploratory design from the Regency style with tall and thick arms. This style was a trend in the 1990s. The over used classic style had urged the product and furniture designers to look for new techniques and materials.



Figure 7. Family Room
Source: Document of Sri Fariyanti Pane

The wardrobes located in the family sitting area are two cabinets that were not purchased together but they are both of late 1980s production. The cabinets on the left are the originally purchased (finished products) brought from Japan, while the cabinets on the right are made in Jakarta. The quality of the two cabinets up close can be seen to be different,

the original one is of better quality (refined quality) and the one made in Jakarta is of less refined quality, which is found at its top. The ability to craft Japanese furniture is far more refined than that of Indonesian.

B. Aesthetics Elements

The aesthetic element is the part that enlivens the atmosphere in a space, which consists of paintings, artworks as craft products, or a machine production with high precision in shape. The paintings in the house are the works of artists from Indonesia, Japan, and painters from Europe which were purchased while travelling abroad (Fig.8). Aesthetics come from the processing of materials and technology that are safe and comfortable, based on human needs and related industries that use and produce.

Aesthetics in interior design includes style and design, which includes specific or distinctive expression, execution, construction, design, art, period, work, or any work. The word "design" can mean many different things. Style has always been associated with various issues of social, production, personal expression, and behaviour (lifestyle) which reflects the complex relationship of trends and their influence on an individual's way of life, time, or philosophy. This will refer to aspects of the cultural period, which are associated with the country or region that uniquely expresses that style (Killmer, 2014).



Figure 8. Living Room Aesthetic Elements

Source: Document of Sri Fariyanti Pane

Apart from being related to aesthetics, works of art using various media also have symbolic meanings. One of the obvious combinations of symbolic meanings can be seen in the aesthetic elements in the living room (Fig. 9), Japanese paintings are combined with the "Loro Blonyo" artwork of Javanese culture. A series of Japanese paintings as backgrounds divided into four parts and can be folded or bent is combined with a statue of a bride and groom or in Java it is called "Loro Blonyo" on the table. Figure 9 on the right is a statue

of a Japanese bride and groom, where the painting is not placed on the wall, but stands on a flat plane as a background for the statue as if it were in space. The Japanese bride statue is a symbol of happiness as is the case with the Javanese bride statue. Inspired by Japanese culture, the homeowners replaced the statue of the Javanese and Balinese bride Loro Blonyo. The two statues are the symbol of a male and female pair and are only owned by the nobility, just like in Japan. As stated by Subiyantoro (2011), Loro Blonyo is a symbolic phenomenon that symbolises the idealism of Javanese life with a peaceful life as a positive milestone after being married.



Figure 9. Cross-Cultural Aesthetic Elements

Source: Document of Sri Fariyanti Pane & <https://bp-guide.id/>

The visuals resulting from the arrangement of aesthetic elements in the living room show the homeowners' ability to capture the visuals that came from personal experiences, which are then self-taught in their homes. This becomes an ability that is not learned through formal education, which is not generally shared by other people. Cross-cultural visual experiences that are experienced directly can stimulate one's creativity.

Conclusion

In the discussion above, it is revealed that individual ability to perceive visuals could come from great taste in art and design. This visual ability produces a special visual experience. Such experience is then developed inside a colonial-style house, which maintain the link of several styles taken from the furniture and aesthetic elements across cultures, resulting in a new symbolic meaning that characterises the composition of new works of beautiful interior design in the house.

The ability of homeowners to mix and match styles is a self-taught personal visual experience by interpreting other people's works and is expressed through other people's technical abilities to become new works. The development of modern culture in the science of interior design results from cultures that are influenced by local and foreign cultures so that cross-cultural events occur which can be seen in interior design.

References

- Geertz, Clifford. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gutterman, Alan S. (2016). *Cross-Cultural Studies, A Library of Resources for Growth Oriented Entrepreneurs, Cultural Dimension*. International Center for Growth - Oriented Entrepreneurship.
- Heuken SJ, Adolf. (2001). *Menteng'Kota Taman'Pertama di Indonesia*. Jakarta: Yayasan Cipta Loka Caraka.
- Killmer, Rosemary. (2014). *Designing Interiors*, second edition, John Wiley & Sons Inc. New Jersey, p.23
- Kim, Young Yun. (2001). *Becoming Intercultural: An Integrative Theory of Communication and Cross-Cultural Adaptation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Koentjaraningrat. (1999). *Manusia dan Kebudayaan di Indonesia*. Jakarta: Djambatan.
- Lombard, Denys. (2005). *Nusa Jawa Silang Budaya, Batas-batas Barat* (Jilid 1, Terjemahan oleh Winarsih Partaningrat Arifin, dkk.) Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, Forum Jakarta-Paris, dan EFEO
- Pile, John F. (2003). *Interior Design, 3rd edition*, Pearson/Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Subiyantoro, Slamet. (2011). *Simbol-Simbol Kebudayaan Jawa. Loro Blonyo, Joglo dan Ritual Tradisional*, Surakarta: UPT Penerbitan dan Pencetakan UNS Press.
- Tylor, Edward. (2017). *Religion and Culture*. Bloomsbury Academic An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.
- Yulianto Sumalyo. (1993). *Arsitektur Kolonial Belanda di Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Pers.

Scientific Journal

- Hein, C. (2016). Tatami. In A. C. de Ridder (Ed), *Kyoto Design Lab.: The tangible and the intangible of the Machiya House* (pp. 9-12). The Delft University of Technology.
- Kim, Young Yun. 2006. "From Ethnic to Interethnic: The Case for Identity Adaptation and Transformation." *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 25, 3:283-300.

Undergraduate Thesis/Master Thesis/Dissertation

- Pane, Sri Fariyanti (2022). "Keterhubungan Ruang Pada Interior Arsitektur Di Perumahan Pegawai Kereta Api *Staatsspoorwegen* (SS) Manggarai dalam Kehidupan Sosial Budaya Di Batavia Pada Masa Kolonial Belanda 1914 – 1942". Disertasi. Depok: Program Studi Sejarah, FIB, Universitas Indonesia.