



# Traditional Culture in Modern Bali Crafts Product Design

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**Abstract.** The design of modern Balinese craft products in the current digital era, visually still displays the cultural content of local Balinese traditions, although there are also those who break away from this traditional content. This research aims to discuss the design of modern Balinese craft products which visually still maintain the nuances of Balinese traditional culture. This research includes qualitative research, data collection was carried out by observing *on line* and *off line* and discussing applying hermeneutics paradigm. The research subjects were various designs of modern Balinese craft products from various materials that display traditional Balinese culture using a proactive sampling approach. The research results show that various modern Balinese craft product designs currently consist of wood, woven bamboo, ceramics, textiles, rocks, in general there are still displays of Balinese traditional culture to certain extents. Some traditional cultural visuals are displayed in full on the surface of the product, while others are only displayed in a small part. Besides that, there are also modern Balinese craft product designs, which break away from the traditional Balinese cultural content. The application of traditional culture plays a role in achieving the beauty and identity of Bali. The design of modern Balinese craft products, whether with traditional visuals or not, is an effort by craftsmen to meet existing consumer tastes.

**Keywords:** Design, Culture, Tradition, Modern, Craft.

## 1 Introduction

Balinese craft product designs can be grouped into two, namely traditional Balinese craft products and modern Balinese craft product designs. These groupings cannot be separated strictly, because there is still a connection between the two. The group of traditional Balinese craft product designs referred to in this article are Balinese craft

product designs that visually display the cultural content of Balinese traditions. Meanwhile, the modern Balinese craft product designs in question refer to creative designs for Balinese craft products which visually tend to break away from the content of Balinese traditional culture, but still show the roots of Balinese culture. Traditional culture is culture that is related to the heritage of the past and is still alive in its supporting communities. Several definitions of tradition explain that tradition is a legacy of the past which contains a set of ideal ideas and views of shared ideals, containing various rules regarding ideals in living life together in society [1].

Modern Balinese *kriyà* products can be grouped into the *kriyà* art of expression. Craft art as an expression is the expression of ideas, ideas, symbols and aesthetics from the craftsman's own point of view so as to give birth to new works according to the time [2]. Likewise, it is also explained that modern or contemporary craft art tends to show aesthetics as an interaction of freedom of expression [3]. The cultural content of this tradition can be seen visually from the use of culture as an aesthetic element in achieving the beauty of the work. The aesthetic understanding in question is different from the understanding of aesthetics as an interaction of freedom of expression. The use of traditional culture as decoration for modern Balinese craft products is a selective selection, processed and developed to fulfill physical and non-physical functions that are presented in public spaces as market arenas or arenas for appreciators only.

Modern Balinese craft product designs are made by large craft industry businesses, home industry, as well as individuals. The craft industry is one of the industries that dominates Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Bali in 2017 [4]. These creative businesses always develop new designs in an effort to meet market needs. These types of creative businesses consist of various fields, such as clothing businesses, batik, wood crafts, ceramics, metal and others that grow in rural and urban areas. This craft product business is spread unevenly across all districts and cities in Bali. The author's observations are that the development of the creative industry in Bali is more developed in Denpasar City, Badung Regency and Gianyar Regency, compared to other areas in Bali. These three areas are the main buffers for tourist areas so that the existence of this creative industry is easier to develop and survive. This phenomenon of the development of modern Balinese craft designs always appears every year.

The phenomenon of modern Balinese craft product design has emerged according to the times and the creativity of the craftsmen. This can be seen from the presence of new craft designs every year at the Bali Arts Festival and other exhibitions organized by craft activists. The Bali Bangkit 2023 exhibition which was held at the Denpasar Cultural Park (INBISNIS.ID, Denpasar), also featured craft products which could be characterized as having a modern design. These modern craft work appear in various forms, materials, and combinations of several materials, for example, seen from the materials consisting of wood, metal, bone and rattan, etc, even synthetic materials. The appearance of this modern craft product design in public spaces sometimes feels strange to some visitors, because the visuals are not commonly seen every day.

The aim of this article is to explain the design of modern Balinese craft products which visually still maintain the nuances of traditional Balinese culture, as well as starting to let go of Balinese cultural nuances. Modern Balinese craft products as a data source were taken as samples, differentiated based on their materials, for example

wood, ceramics, metal, wicker and fabric in the form of tapestry products. The object of discussion which emphasizes its traditional cultural content includes the values contained behind the design of the modern work, as well as other discussions according to the visualization of the product taken as the object of discussion. Product discussions are also related to the aesthetics contained in the product.

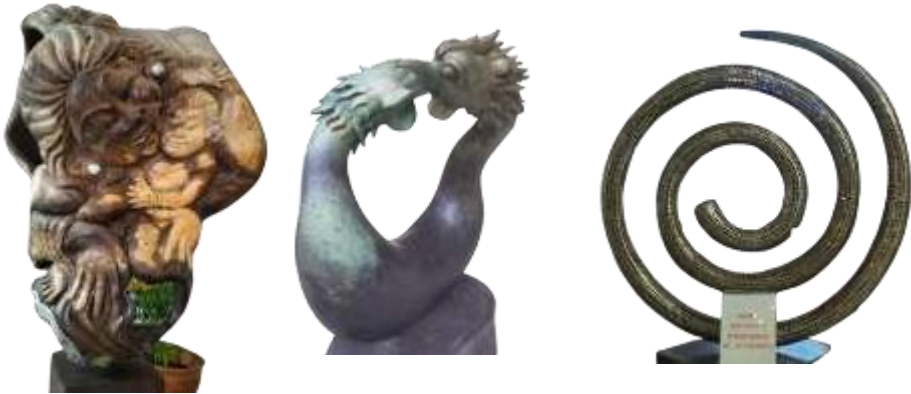
The urgency of this research is to provide readers with an understanding that the existence of craft products in Bali is currently diverse, in terms of materials and visualization styles. Balinese *kriyà* products do not only display traditional cultural content, but craft craftsmen have developed new products which do not always have to display traditional cultural content in total but are sometimes displayed vaguely and this requires a more serious and thorough appreciation to understand more depth of the work. Apart from that, the results of this research also provide readers with an understanding that creative craft development is not limited, it is very adaptive and can follow materials freely in forming a functional or decorative work. Likewise with cultural traditions, *kriyà* can adapt to existing material conditions and cultural environments, appearing close to the user and pleasing.

## 2 Method

This research uses a qualitative approach and the data source is determined by convenience sampling, also known as hazard sampling or accidental sampling, namely non-probability sampling that meets certain practical criteria [5]. The data source is the design of modern Balinese craft products from various materials such as wood, metal, clay and wicker, consisting of 7 works as samples. Data collection was carried out using observation and documentation techniques both *on line* and *offline*. Discussion applies hermeneutics paradigm & Habermas' theory. Hermeneutics means interpreting and Habermas differentiates between methods of understanding and types of understanding, and states that we cannot fully understand the meaning of a fact, there are also facts that are not interpreted, and we cannot interpret them completely [6].

## 3 Results and Discussion

The description of the results and discussion are presented simultaneously, starting with describing the data, then continuing with a discussion of each sample taken. In this research, 7 modern Balinese craft design products were determined as research samples, so that the conclusions apply according to the research sample determined. The specified samples were selected based on their material and visual diversity in three-dimensional form.



**Fig. 1.** Mother and child statue, made of wood. **Fig. 2.** Egois, statue wood material. **Fig. 3.** Spiral shape, metal material.  
 Source: Mudra Document, 2023. Source: Suardana Document, 2023. Source: Mudra Document, 2023.

Fig. 1. This sculpture visualizes the love of a mother and child, made using wood with a dominant dark brown color which is the basic color of wood and the surface texture of the statue is quite smooth. This sculptural work can be said to be a modern craft product because its creation requires precision and high hand skills. This statue is quite interesting, the visuals do not show any particular cultural tradition. Mother and child are a common theme displayed by the creator and are commonly found in various works of art. The visuals do not refer to a traditional culture that exists in Indonesia. Likewise, the color shown is the basic color of the material used for the statue. The visuals of this work are quite interesting, the emphasis on a mother's love for her child can be seen from the mother's sincere gaze and expression, as if it depicts a mother's hope that one day her child will grow and develop into a healthy and good child. Child development can be influenced by psychosocial factors, such as the stimulation provided, parental love and the child's motivation to learn [7].

The next work, namely work Fig. 2, is entitled "Egois" (selfish) measuring 70x30x110 cm by I Wayan Suardana, an academic. This work visualizes two chickens, their heads clashing as if they were fighting, made of wood and this work can also be classified as a modern craft work. According to the creator, this work aims to convey the message that humans in the era of globalization are characterized by a very tight competitive spirit in various fields of life. Many people don't want to be competed and always want to win and be at the forefront. Social attitudes decline drastically, and do not see others as friends, but as competitors. An attitude of high prestige still often appears in everyone. This behavior will present a selfish, self-centered attitude and not wanting to give in.

The creation of Egois statue is quite neat, it seems simple, but attractive with *the finishing* using a matte black color. This statue can also be interpreted differently according to the message its creator wanted to convey. For example, this statue can be

interpreted as a statue that visualizes the cultural activity of cockfighting. Because the statue visualizes two chicken heads fighting to defeat each other. This statue displays the content of Balinese traditional culture, namely the cockfighting culture called '*tabuh rah*' or '*labuh getih*'. In Balinese society, cockfighting has a religious meaning, namely as an offering of holy sacrifices aimed at *bhuta* and *kāla*, namely evil spirits and spirits embodying destructive gods [8]. Now the '*tabuh rah*' often experiences a shift in meaning, namely as a gambling event called '*tajen*' with the aim of raising funds.

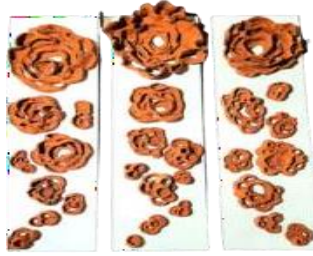
Sample Fig. 3 taken in this research is a circular work made of metal. The circular metal work has a spiral shape, which points inward and can also be read outward. This work also does not show traditional cultural content. The theme displayed is a general theme, namely a spiral shape, not a reference to a particular cultural tradition. As a work of art, this work is made quite neat, simple and elegant. This work displays the basic color of metal, namely light gray. Hery Margono & Anne Garcia explained that the more knowledge and information the human brain absorbs, the bigger the spiral becomes. Therefore, we must have resilience, namely toughness in facing changes that are increasingly difficult and complex. In this way, humans will increasingly solve problems, find solutions by adapting through all the abilities of our brain [9].



**Fig. 4.** LOS (*Life on The Sea*).  
Source: Sunarini Document, 2023.



**Fig. 5.** Guratan Cobleng.  
Source: Mertanadi Doc, 2023.



**Fig. 6.** Karang Balangan. *Earthenware* clay material.

Source: Artayani Document, 2023.



**Fig. 7.** "Sagara Abirupa" tapestry, thread material.

Source: Karuni Document, 2023.

Fig. 4 entitled "LOS (*Life on The Sea*)" measures 50 cm in diameter, the material used is white clay, wood, and rattan, made by Ni Made Rai Sunarini, an academic. This work is inspired by life in the vast ocean. Water is the source of life for all living things on earth. The important role of sea water in life must be maintained and managed well to avoid waste pollution due to human activities. The cleanliness and tranquility of sea water provides a habitat for marine biota to live freely and reproduce to continue its regeneration. The life of marine life in various types is visualized in circular ceramic objects in the center of the work, while on the outside it surrounds the circular weave of the ceramic work. This work also does not show visuals of the traditional culture of a region.

Fig. 5 is entitled "Guratan Cobleng" by ceramicist I Made Mertanadi, measuring 25x30cm, made using rotary and slab techniques. This work is inspired by the *cobleng shape*, but the visuals have been reformed into an expressive form. The body of the work is made from an arrangement of parts in an irregular cylindrical shape but still shows harmony in shape. This ceramic body has Egyptian patra motif ornaments and is evenly coated with light brown glaze. Quoted from the ISI Denpasar 2023 Kriyà Exhibition Catalog, it is explained that *cobleng* is a container for water, used as a means of *yadnya ceremonies* in Bali. The Hindu community in Bali in carrying out the *yadnya ceremony* uses several means, such as fire and water. In carrying out religious ceremonies, incense is also used to light the flame of the sacred fire which contains fragrance or *astanggi* in the ceremony. Fire *takep* is a sacred fire whose flame is made from two pieces of coconut fiber, and *pasepan* is a sacred fire place whose flame is made from

pieces of wood that emit a fragrant smell, such as sandalwood, agarwood, incense wood and others. Likewise with water, in the implementation of *the yadnya* it has a sacred function called *tirtha* and the container can be used as a coblong made of clay.

Ceramic Fig. 6 is entitled "Karang Balangan" by Ida Ayu Gede Artayani, an academic, made in 2023, measuring 120cm x 150cm, earthenware material, earthenware type, making techniques using *pinching*, sticking and slab, fired at a temperature of 800°C with a display brick red color. This work is visualized in the form of three parts in a vertical position in one unit and is inspired by the beauty of the coral reefs of Balangan beach in the Ungasan Jimbaran area of Bali. The object of beauty of coral reefs is visualized with a circular geometric pattern with varying sizes from large to small which is composed regularly from top to bottom in three separate parts.

The work "Karang Balangan" is discussed from the visuals, it is a work of art with a contemporary appearance, the aim is to express the creator's idea of capturing the visual beauty of coral reefs presented again in ceramic media. The visual work does not display traditional Balinese culture, but highlights the potential of Bali's natural beauty related to the sea. The visuals of this work can also be interpreted as the shape of a rose from the visual curves of lines resembling rose petals with varying sizes offered to show beauty to the appreciator. This understanding can be done because the interpretation method explains a hermeneutic understanding something without having to have an explanation tied to a particular scientific diagram [10].

Fig. 7 is entitled "Sagara Abirupa". which is taken from Sanskrit, 'Sagara' means sea and 'Abirupa' means beautiful. The work belongs to Ni Kadek Karuni who is also an academic. This tapestry work was made in 2022, measures 120cm x 165 cm, and is made of cotton. Soelistyowati and Julia dalam Puspitasari dan Adam explains that tapestry is a technique for making textile works by weaving threads, fibers and other materials[11]. The tapestry structure consists of woven warp and weft threads which are made into certain items or art objects. The warp threads are threads that face vertically, while the weft threads are threads that point horizontally and are part of the threads that form a certain image area [12].

This work was inspired by observations of the phenomenon of marine pollution caused by industrial and household waste dumped in rivers. This pollution can damage the coral reef ecosystem as a place where a variety of marine biota such as snails and shellfish, sea urchins, sea anemones, sea cucumbers, starfish and sea lilies live, as well as other small fish. This tapestry is made from threads of various colors using a knitting technique. The crashing of the waves is visualized by knitting white T- shirt waste to create a clean and peaceful impression. The stretch of beach sand is depicted by harmonizing knitted t-shirt waste colored light gray and dark gray. The blue color gradation is a visualization of the meeting of sea water and sky. Coral reefs are displayed with various patterns of knitted thread. Applying the *crochet technique* to display the shapes of seaweed that live on coral reefs with a combination of *earth tone* colors that imitate the colors of coral reefs.

The researcher observed that Segara Abirupa's visual work was able to display the beauty of the sea atmosphere surrounding the coral reef object in the center which is dominated by brown. This work has a modern nuance because the coral reef figures depicted tend to be abstract. This is supported by the composition of the material used

in the form of thread which will form an object shape that is difficult to make in a realistic form. Therefore, this visual tapestry work can be categorized as a modern craft work. A description from the creator of the work is very necessary to be able to understand the message of the work displayed, so that there are no errors in interpreting it. Tapestry works do not display traditional Balinese culture, but take Bali's potential in the form of coral reefs and the beauty of the sea which are processed and displayed according to the interpretation and skill of the maker.

## 4 Conclusion

The conclusion that can be conveyed from this research can be stated that based on the selected samples, most of the modern Balinese craft design data, the visuals do not contain traditional Balinese culture. The themes visualized in this modern craft design are predominantly general themes, not referring to a particular cultural tradition. Even though the themes are general, some of these modern crafts are inspired by Bali's natural phenomena and potential, for example the beauty sea of Bali, damage to the marine ecosystem due to waste disposal and other interesting themes. The traditional cultural content is less conveyed in modern craftsmanship, because the concept of modern craftsmanship prioritizes freedom of expression from its craftsmen. In this way, works of expression emerged that emphasized freedom. The author views that these two types of work do not clash with each other, but rather enrich the diversity of modern craft product designs in Bali and also provide potential users with more opportunities for choice.

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