

## Contemporary Batik as a Representation of the Domestic Role of the Family: Research Based on Art Practice

*(Batik Kontemporer sebagai Representasi Peran Domestik Keluarga: Penelitian Berdasarkan Praktik Seni)*

Nadira<sup>1</sup>, Aprina Murwanti<sup>2</sup>, Rizki Taufik Rakhman<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jl. R.Mangun Muka Raya No.11, Rawamangun, East Jakarta, Jakarta (13220), Indonesia

**Abstract.** Domestic roles are jobs or activities related to the household or domestic sphere. Domestic roles are closely associated with women due to the legacy of domestic practices. Over time, there are now men who are willing to cooperate in carrying out domestic roles, but in general, domestic roles are still more focused on women. Artists grew up in a very diverse environment in carrying out domestic roles, so the artist has a special attention to this topic. The work was created to convey how sad the artist is in responding to the situation of women who are burdened with all the responsibilities of domestic roles through contemporary batik. This research uses a qualitative research method approach and practice-based research type. The artist chose contemporary batik because of its flexibility from a conceptual, visual, and operational perspective. Contemporary batik also suits the target audience and the artist's background, who is an Indonesian citizen. Each image in the work has continuity so that it supports each other between objects. In this work, the artist uses synthetic dyes with a monochromatic color tending to blue. The work, set in a home atmosphere, is displayed in a form that resembles a film roll.

**Keywords:** Domestic Role, Women, Contemporary Batik, Synthetic Dyes.

**Abstrak.** Peran domestik adalah pekerjaan atau aktivitas yang berkaitan dengan rumah tangga atau lingkungan domestik. Peran domestik sangat erat kaitannya dengan perempuan karena warisan praktik domestik. Seiring waktu, kini ada laki-laki yang bersedia bekerja sama dalam menjalankan peran domestik, tetapi secara umum, peran domestik masih lebih terfokus pada perempuan. Seniman tumbuh dalam lingkungan yang sangat beragam dalam menjalankan peran domestik, sehingga seniman memiliki perhatian khusus pada topik ini. Karya ini diciptakan untuk menyampaikan betapa sedihnya seniman dalam menanggapi situasi perempuan yang dibebani dengan semua tanggung jawab peran domestik melalui batik kontemporer. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan metode penelitian kualitatif dan tipe penelitian berbasis praktik. Seniman memilih batik kontemporer karena fleksibilitasnya dari perspektif konseptual, visual, dan operasional. Batik kontemporer juga sesuai dengan target audiens dan latar belakang seniman, yang merupakan warga negara Indonesia. Setiap gambar dalam karya memiliki kontinuitas sehingga saling mendukung antar objek. Dalam karya ini, seniman menggunakan pewarna sintesis dengan warna monokromatik yang cenderung biru. Karya yang berlatar suasana rumah ini ditampilkan dalam bentuk yang menyerupai rol film.

**Kata kunci:** Peran Domestik, Wanita, Batik Kontemporer, Pewarna Sintetis.

Correspondence author: Nadira, [nadiiraaaa12345@gmail.com](mailto:nadiiraaaa12345@gmail.com), Jakarta, Indonesia



This work is licensed under a CC-BY-NC

## Introduction

Domestic roles refer to work or activities related to the household or domestic sphere, while public roles refer to work or activities outside the household or public sphere. The term "housewife" emerged from the large number of women present in the domestic sphere to this day (Hanum, 2017). This phenomenon is inseparable from the theory of nature. The theory of nature views the differences between men and women based on biological factors (Khuza'i, 2013).

Biologically, women possess a uterus, enabling them to conceive and give birth (Robertson, 1983). Women possess mammary glands, enabling them to love, a concept often referred to as "female nature." These facts strongly link women to the domestic sphere. This understanding often becomes distorted, as biological factors place the domestic sphere, making child-rearing a woman's responsibility and obligation (Tuwu, 2019).

Domestic roles, whether consciously or not, are beginning to shift, not only being carried out by women, but many men are also involved in domestic roles (Indah, 2013). The researcher's experience of growing up in a nuclear family where all family members work together and are involved in carrying out domestic roles. However, the father's involvement in domestic roles stems from an overwhelming sense of love for the family, rather than an awareness that domestic roles should be shared. Based on an interview with Nuzulia Rahma Tristinorum, a practicing family psychologist, Nuzulia stated that in practice, there are many cases where agreements have been made between husbands and wives to cooperate in carrying out domestic roles, but ultimately, these are not carried out properly.

Although the narrative of gender equality has long been echoed, in reality, domestic roles such as childcare and household management are still predominantly assigned to women based on a narrow interpretation of biological nature (Kusmana, 2014; Ilaa, 2021). There is a gap between verbal agreements and actual practice, where husbands and wives' agreements to share roles are often not consistently implemented. Men's involvement in domestic roles is often still based on individual "feelings of affection", not on the awareness that domestic matters are a shared responsibility in principle.

The root of the problem in this research stems from the strong practice of domestication in Indonesia, which positions women as primarily responsible for the household. This phenomenon is often based on a theory of nature that misinterprets women's biological functions (such as pregnancy and breastfeeding) as an absolute obligation to perform all domestic duties. Although men's involvement is now beginning to emerge, this practice is often not based on an awareness of equal roles, but

rather limited to inconsistent emotional support. This condition creates a buildup of emotions such as sadness, anger, and deep fatigue among female figures in the family (Rohmah & Ilahi, 2021).

There is an urgent need to visualize this issue beyond statistical data to engage with audience empathy. Batik was chosen for its historical value, closely tied to Indonesian identity, but contemporary versions offer a solution in the form of technical and visual flexibility that extends beyond traditional conventions (Ernawati, 2019). The use of contemporary batik is urgently needed to respond to current social dynamics more directly and expressively. Visual transformation in the work as a solution to this concern, this research follows a Practice-Based Research path to produce an artistic artifact that symbolically represents this reality (Hendriyana, 2022). The implementation of the solution is outlined through several technical and conceptual steps. In the context of this research, representation can be understood as the process of using signs, symbols, or visual images to depict and re-present existing social realities in a work of art. Representation is not simply a copy of the real world, but rather the result of this research's subjective interpretation of a phenomenon. How to express deeply personal and emotional social criticism (such as sadness at the burdens faced by women) through the medium of batik, which is often considered merely a decorative object or bound by traditional conventions.

Indonesian batik continues to develop, and currently has varied from traditional batik, modern batik, to contemporary batik (Susanto, 2018). Contemporary batik has flexibility and freedom of motifs, techniques, and visuals, and is not bound by traditional conventions (Amrulloh, 2018). The flexibility of contemporary batik and its attachment to the identity of Indonesian citizens, as well as the topics raised that occur in Indonesian society, led this study to choose contemporary batik as a medium for work. The topic raised is a representation of one of the domestic roles that occurs around this research. This phenomenon became the inspiration for this study to be able to convey the researcher's perspective in viewing one form of implementation of domestic roles that occurs around through the medium of contemporary batik.

## Methods

The research method employed a qualitative approach because the data generated in this work are not statistical figures but rather focus on opinions and their impacts. Qualitative research is distinguished by its focus on understanding the social and cultural environment, allowing researchers to investigate individuals' subjective experiences and interpretations of their existence (Ardyan et al., 2023).

The type of research employed in this work is Practice-Based Research. According to Candy (2006), Practice-Based Research is research conducted to gain new knowledge through practice and the results of that practice. Authenticity and contribution to knowledge are reflected in creative outputs, including artifacts such as drawings, music, designs, models, digital media, performances, and exhibitions. While meaning and context are outlined in the written description, a full understanding can only be gained

through direct reference to the results. This research follows the stages of the creative cycle adapted from art creation methods, which consist of:

1. Pre-Production Stage (Exploration & Incubation):
  - a. Observation: Observing the phenomenon of domestic role inequality in the surrounding environment and reflecting on personal experiences.
  - b. Interviews with psychologists, technical experts, intern resource persons, and the community (local friends).
  - c. Literature Review: Collecting theoretical data on the nature vs. nurture theory, female domestication, and the development of contemporary batik.
  - d. Visual Experimentation: Creating initial sketches and testing batik techniques (synthetic dyeing and wax-resistance) on various fabrics (silk and tencel).
2. Production Stage (Artistic Practice):
  - a. Design Transfer: Transferring the visual narrative onto a 3.4-meter piece of fabric.
  - b. Canting Process: Applying wax as a color barrier according to the designed contemporary motif.
  - c. Coloring: Using a monochrome blue color to create an emotional atmosphere in accordance with the concept of representing sadness.
  - d. Pelodoran: The process of removing the wax to reveal the final motif.
  - e. Finishing & Assembly: Adding embroidered details and attaching the fabric to a plywood tube structure resembling a film roll.
3. Post-Production Stage (Evaluation & Reflection):
  - a. Work Analysis: Reviewing the work based on the alignment between the visualization (representation) and the initial concept (domestic role).
  - b. Dissemination: Documenting and presenting the work as a research artifact.

## Result And Discussion

### Work Process






This section presents the results of our practice-based research, specifically a contemporary batik work entitled "Sudut Pandang." The creation of this work represents an attempt to transform personal concerns and social findings regarding the inequality of domestic roles into a tangible, tangible form. The process of creating this work relied not only on technical expertise but also through in-depth conceptual exploration to ensure that each visual element effectively conveyed the intended message.

Starting from the previously discussed issue of women's domestication, this research observed daily activities within the family environment. This reality was then extracted into six narrative fragments. The choice of film format was a crucial decision at this stage; this research views it as an appropriate metaphor for representing "memory recordings" or visual documentation of recurring events in the domestic space.

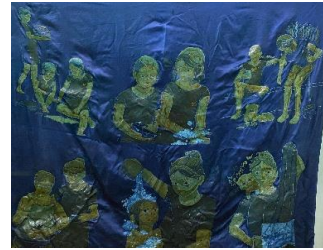
At this stage, contemporary values are implemented through the use of tie-dye batik on silk and tencel fabrics. The use of monochrome blue was deliberately chosen as an artistic solution to create a melancholy emotional atmosphere (Pane, 2023). The canting

technique is used to maintain narrative precision in each image, while the synthetic dyeing process is carried out to achieve consistent color depth, reflecting the saturation and emotional burden experienced by the female figures in the work. The process of creating the work begins with the preparation of tools and materials, which is then continued with the working process until it produces the finished work.

Table 1. Work Process Flow

Work process	Documentation
The process of creating a digital design, which is then printed and traced onto the fabric.	
Stage 1 of the batik process uses wax based on the pattern drawn on the fabric.	
The first dyeing process uses indigosol dye.	
The second dyeing process uses indigosol dye.	
The third dyeing process uses naphthol dye.	

The fourth dyeing process uses naphthol dye, followed by the melorod process.



Documentation of the work after the lorod process



Documentation of the work after sewing.



The use of a 3.4-meter film roll serves as a narrative solution to depict a series of recurring domestic scenes. The choice of a monochrome blue color scheme is an aesthetic solution to convey the atmosphere of sadness, loneliness, and solitude experienced by women when carrying domestic burdens alone. The use of these colors is based on the theory of emotional color psychology. Through six image clips, this study honestly displays the contrast between the exhaustion of the mother and older sister figures and the lack of involvement of male figures (father and son) in household activities. The combination of silk and tencel fabrics with embroidery techniques and plywood tube installations gives a new dimension to the batik work, making it a modern art installation while still possessing deep traditional meaning. Through this narrative, contemporary batik practice functions not only as a craft medium but also transforms into a communicative solution to raise public awareness of the importance of equitable distribution of domestic roles.

### Results: Description and Analysis

In this study, representation acts as a mirror that captures the phenomenon of women's domestication in Indonesia. Representation is realized through visualizations of family figures engaged in household activities, reflecting how cultural norms place the domestic burden solely on one party. Representation is not limited to what is seen (visual), but also what is felt (Mitchell, 2021). This study uses specific artistic elements to represent abstract feelings:

The choice of film is a symbolic representation of memory and documentation of events. This medium serves as an objective record through the lens of this study, witnessing how the absence of fathers or men in domestic roles impacts the household atmosphere. Contemporary batik was chosen as a means of representation due to its flexibility and freedom from traditional conventions (Ernawati, 2019). This allows this study to incorporate modern narratives and social critique into a medium traditionally considered a symbol of Indonesian cultural identity, thus creating a new dialogue between tradition and contemporary issues.



Fig. 1 work entitled "Point of View", 2026

The work, titled "Sudut Pandang," is a contemporary batik work measuring 80 cm wide and 340 cm long. It incorporates an installation to enhance the aesthetics of the work. The installation is divided into two parts: the upper body of the film roll tube and the lower part, which is the film roll. The work uses bent plywood, created into a tube shape by joining the two ends together to create a tube shape, then covering both sides with circular plywood.

The tube on the left side can be opened and closed to allow the film roll to be inserted. At the bottom of the tube, there is a rectangular opening that serves as the film outlet. The film roll tube measures 40 cm in diameter and 80 cm in length. The film roll tube has a white base color, with dark blue stripes on both sides and the film outlet.

The roll film artwork uses a combination of silk for the batik and tencel for the background, combined through embroidery. The dyes used in the roll film artwork are synthetic indigosol blue and naphthol AS using blue salt B. The tool used is a canting (hand-drawn pen) and the work is executed using a writing technique. The artwork depicts a family consisting of a father, mother, son, and two daughters. The artwork is rendered in monochrome blue.

The artwork "Sudut Pandang" (Viewpoint) overall displays six snapshots of conditions implemented in six images. The first image from the top depicts a mother bathing her youngest daughter (the younger sister). The mother's expression is depicted as annoyed, and the younger sister is shown with fear. The second image shows the mother holding a cloth in both hands and a cat making noises.

The third image shows the mother holding a glass of hot drink and the father playing with his smartphone with an expressionless expression. The fourth image shows the oldest daughter (the older sister) holding a broom and bending over to reach for an object on the floor. The older sister's mood is portrayed with a displeased heart. The boy is depicted looking at the device and laughing.

The fifth picture shows an older sister and a younger sister sitting together and playing a puzzle. The expression shown is an expression of happiness mixed with confusion. The mother is depicted passing by carrying a pile of rubbed cloth. The mother's expression is shown as happy and looking at the older sister and younger sister who are playing. The sixth picture shows the figure of an older sister washing dishes and turning angrily towards a boy who is carrying dirty plates and glasses. The boy's expression is shown with an annoyed expression and does not look in the opposite direction of the older sister.

This work is entitled "Point of View" describing how this research's point of view looks at family conditions if the domestic role is entirely carried out by women only. The form of a film roll is used as a depiction as if it were a portrait of an incident where the domestic roles were entirely played by women that had been witnessed. Observation is likened to a camera lens and the results are imaged in the form of a roll of film. This work is the opening series of the work's flow, starting from expressing the point of view of this research regarding the conditions for implementing domestic roles which are entirely assigned to women.

The fifth picture shows an older sister and a younger sister sitting together and playing a puzzle. The expression shown is an expression of happiness mixed with confusion. The mother is depicted passing by carrying a pile of rubbed cloth. The mother's expression is shown as happy and looking at the older sister and younger sister who are playing. The sixth picture shows the figure of an older sister washing dishes and turning angrily towards a boy who is carrying dirty plates and glasses. The boy's expression is shown with an annoyed expression and does not look in the opposite direction of the older sister.

This work is entitled "Point of View" describing how this research's point of view looks at family conditions if the domestic role is entirely carried out by women only. The form of a film roll is used as a depiction as if it were a portrait of an incident where the domestic roles were entirely played by women that had been witnessed. Observation is likened to a camera lens and the results are imaged in the form of a roll of film. This work is the opening series of the work's flow, starting from expressing the point of view of this research regarding the conditions for implementing domestic roles which are entirely assigned to women.

The work "Sudang Pandang" is a representation of the perspective of the experience of this research, observing how the atmosphere at home is when all domestic work is burdened on women. The work presents emotions of anger and annoyance in female figures as a representation of the form of expression of the burden of domestic work borne by women continuously and accumulated so that it is implemented into angry emotions when carrying out domestic work. The work also shows the condition of the father who is not involved in the care and education of children which is implemented in the fifth picture. In the fifth picture, only female family members are present during the play process of the youngest child. This condition is depicted as a representation of the absence of a father figure even in the smallest moments of the child which is one form of the father's non-involvement in carrying out domestic roles and will certainly have a negative impact on the family.

Overall, although the work displays anger, the emotion that is intended to be highlighted is sadness. Anger is presented as an accumulation of unmanaged sadness that is expressed in anger and disappointment. The color blue was chosen, inspired by the sad character in the film *Inside Out 2*, which symbolizes sadness. Based on medical psychology, blue also symbolizes sadness, loneliness, and solitude. In emotional color psychology, blue is associated with sadness because it maximizes darkness and achromaticity (Liu, 2022). This is in line with this series, which emphasizes the feelings of sadness experienced by women when entrusted with full responsibility for domestic roles.

## Conclusion

Indonesian women are closely tied to domestic roles in their daily lives. This is due to the ongoing practice of domestication, which has become a cultural norm, and individuals who do not comply with it are considered to be violating the norm. However, domestic roles are not solely the responsibility of women. Cooperation between men and women is essential in carrying out domestic roles. This research emerged from witnessing families that place domestic roles on women, even to the point where women are required to perform all domestic duties alone. This disturbed the researcher's feelings, and in this work, the researcher conveys their perspective on this situation. It is hoped that this work can disturb, or at least attract, the audience's attention, and encourage them to explore the meaning behind each visual.

## Acknowledgements

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## References

- Amrulloh, Rifqi Nashrul Fuad. "Batik Lukis Karya Guntur Sasono di Desa Carat Kecamatan Kauman Kabupaten Ponorogo Periode 2008-2016." *Jurnal Seni Rupa* 6.01 (2018). <https://ejournal.unesa.ac.id/index.php/va/article/view/22435>
- Candy, Linda. "Practice based research: A guide." *CCS report* 1.2 (2006): 1-19. .
- Ardyan, Elia, et al. *Metode penelitian kualitatif dan kuantitatif: Pendekatan metode kualitatif dan kuantitatif di berbagai bidang*. PT. Sonpedia Publishing Indonesia, 2023.
- Ernawati, Ernawati. "Kajian Estetika Seni Batik Kontemporer Melalui Karya Kolaborasi Seniman Agus Ismoyo-Nia Fliam." *Studi Budaya Nusantara* 3.1 (2019): 64-84. <https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.sbn.2019.003.01.05>
- Hanum, Septi Latifa. "Peran ibu rumah tangga dalam membangun kesejahteraan keluarga." *Academica: Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies* 1.2 (2017): 257-272. <https://doi.org/10.22515/academica.v1i2.1030>
- Hendriyana, Husen. *Metodologi Penelitian Penciptaan Karya Practice-Led Research and Practice-Based Research Seni Rupa, Kriya, Dan Desain—edisi Revisi*. Penerbit Andi, 2022.
- Ilaa, Dhiyaa Thurfah. "Feminisme dan kebebasan perempuan Indonesia dalam filosofi." *Jurnal Filsafat Indonesia* 4.3 (2021): 211-216. <https://doi.org/10.23887/jfi.v4i3.31115>
- Indah, Indah. "Peran-peran perempuan dalam masyarakat." *Academica: Majalah Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik* 5.2 (2013): 28495.
- Khuzaâ, Moh. "Problem Definisi Gender: Kajian atas Konsep Nature dan Nurture." *Kalimah: Jurnal Studi Agama dan Pemikiran Islam* 11.1 (2013): 102-118.
- Kusmana, Kusmana. "Menimbang Kodrat Perempuan antara Nilai Budaya dan Kategori Analisis." *Refleksi: Jurnal Kajian Agama dan Filsafat* 13.6 (2014): 779-800. <https://doi.org/10.15408/ref.v13i6.1000>
- Liu, Yawen. "The colour-emotion association." *Journal of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences* 5 (2022): 272-277.
- Mitchell, Jonathan. "Affective representation and affective attitudes." *Synthese* 198.4 (2021): 3519-3546. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-019-02294-7>
- Pane, D. M. "Psikologi Warna: Efek Setiap Warna dan Manfaatnya." *Internet: https://www.alodokter.com/tentukan-mood-anda-sendiri-dari-sisi-psikologi-warna* 13 (2023).
- Robertson, John A. "Procreative liberty and the control of conception, pregnancy, and childbirth." *Virginia Law Review* (1983): 405-464. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1072766>

Rohmah, Siti, and Restu Prana Ilahi. "Problem gender dalam feminisme eksistensialis Simone de Beauvoir." *Jaqfi: Jurnal Aqidah Dan Filsafat Islam* 6.2 (2021): 193-206.

Susanto, Sewan. *Seni Batik Indonesia*. Penerbit Andi, 2018.

Tuwu, Darmin. "Peran pekerja perempuan dalam memenuhi ekonomi keluarga: dari peran domestik menuju sektor publik." *Al-Izzah: Jurnal Hasil-Hasil Penelitian* (2018): 63-76. <https://doi.org/10.31332/ai.v13i1.872>