

# GADAMER'S HERMENEUTIC ANALYSIS FOR DIGITAL ILLUSTRATION BARONG & RANGDA ON EMBA JEANS BY ILLUSTRATOR MONEZ

By:

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## Abstract

Emba Jeans products promoted in the July 2023 season are rich in Balinese tradition, transforming the figures of Barong and Rangda as objects of creativity. The reproduction of the meaning of the text contained in the illustrations is very unique and rich with interpretations. This study aims to describe relevant interpretations and understandings to explore the meaning and aesthetic value of Monez's digital illustrations that compose Barong and Rangda as the main characters on Emba Jeans products with the theme "Chatarsist, Music Turns Tragedy into Rhapsody" using Gadamer's hermeneutic theory approach. This research is important considering that Emba uses elements of Balinese cultural symbols as a source of creativity. The research method uses a qualitative approach, which is descriptive interpretive, with the research object of the characters of Barong and Rangda in the illustrations of Emba Jeans which are analyzed with four conceptual variables according to Gadamer's hermeneutics, namely historical analysis, dialectical analysis, prejudice analysis, and linguistic analysis. The results of the interpretation of the meaning obtained from this illustration are that Barong and Rangda are considered as symbols of catharsis, which is reflected by the activities of meditating and playing musical instruments as a representation of a means of human psychological reflection that is able to change negative things into great joy and enthusiasm.

**Keywords:** Barong and Rangda, Catharsis, Digital Illustration, Emba Jeans, Hermeneutics.

## INTRODUCTION

In the life of the Balinese people, especially in the southern part of Bali, the Barong and Rangda dance dramas have functions that are closely related to the beliefs embraced by the Balinese Hindu community. Barong and Rangda are not just spooky mythological creatures in the Calonarang dance performance. They are a symbol that is sanctified and is part of the religious ritual of the *yajna* ceremony in a temple which is accompanied by an art performance. The Barong and Rangda dances are believed to have supernatural powers that can neutralize negative forces that disturb the harmony of the universe in the form of *bhutakala* and *black magic*. In addition, the positive and negative forces of Rangda are believed to be a symbol of the element of *rwa bhineda* that balances the life cycle. (Wirawan & Sandika, 2016, p. 136)

Because of the inherent legend of the Barong and *Rangda* dances in the life of the Balinese people, a young illustrator from Bali named *Ida Bagus Ratu Antony Putra*, or better known as Monez, on a casual clothing illustration design project, composed Barong and *Rangda* into illustration characters that succeeded in arousing the audience's liking. Conceptually, Monez expresses the form of Barong and *Rangda* which in their original incarnation have horror and



mystical nuances, becoming unpretentious monster creatures, with a sense of humor, and resembling human behaviour. The novelty as well as the speciality of a Monez's work in this edition lies in his courage to simplify the form in an extreme and seemingly absurd way so that it becomes a typical and unique form visualization. This illustration work is themed "*Chatarsist*" with the slogan "*music turns tragedy into rhapsody*" which is a collaboration between Monez and Emba jeans, which is a well-known clothing brand from Indonesia. The theme raised contains a very deep meaning, where the word catharsis has a meaning as a form of releasing emotions or complaints stored in the mind. In psychology, catharsis is also interpreted as a way to vent emotions positively so that a person feels more relieved and can go about their daily activities with better feelings (Wahyuningsih, 2017).

This cathartic design was prepared by Monez with a very mature and professional illustration concept. An overview of the process has been uploaded on @monez\_ 's Instagram account on May 16, 2023 in the form of a video that tells the story of his creative process in creating this illustration work. The illustration design was created using Affinity digital devices from sketches to *finishing*. The distinctive contemporary nuances that characterize Monez's work can be seen in the workmanship, the harmony of warm colors and cool colors, the firm but still soft line pulls, able to display expressions and gestures that depict the atmosphere of catharsis or *healing* with music, which is related to the lifestyle of today's urban society. Monez succeeded in composing Barong and *Rangda* into the form of monsters that resemble human anatomy figures, stylish, eccentric and touching aesthetics because of the harmonious dynamics of colours, gestures, expressions, and compositions. Monsters are a characteristic of figures in Monez's works and are the distinguishing feature between Monez's work and other illustrators. According to Monez in his video on Instagram @monez\_ monsters are not something scary, but an explosion of energy from people who have (monez\_Bali Illustrator, 2023) *a passion* for the field they are engaged in.

The dominant colors applied to his work are a combination of warm colors of red, yellow, purple, which are combined with cold green, blue and malaccaic blue to produce a bright and cheerful color harmony. The draw of the lines in each element of the illustration is very flexible, combining horizontal, vertical, firm, and gently curved forms, resulting in vivid shapes. Expressions and gestures support each other, to present funny objects with sniffing gestures. The gestures shown by the characters are made with very flexible gestures, as if they are really alive and energetic.

The Barong and *Rangda* figures for Emba Jeans products have undergone a significant shape transformation. The transformation is in the form of shape modification according to the theme of chatarsist, music turns tragedy into rhapsody which is carried out for the illustration of Emba Jeans. Visually, the visual transformation scenario in the form of Barong and *Rangda* Emba Jeans occurs in the reconstruction of the face, body decoration, and physical structure. The visual changes to the facial and physical structure of Barong Ket and *Rangda* in the illustration of Emba jeans certainly change their symbolic function. Philosophically, Barong and *rangda* in this illustration no longer function as a sacred entity, but have transformed into an ordinary image that has a function as an illustration or decorator that becomes an icon of personification of human behavior in a cathartic activity with music and nature. The illustration of Barong and *Rangda* is applied as a decoration to beautify the appearance and add visual value to Emba jeans products such as shirts, denim jackets, hats, tote bags.

The visual changes of barong and *Rangda* in Monez's work for Emba Jeans products opened up opportunities for the emergence of diverse interpretations. The attraction of Barong and *Rangda*'s visual transformation in this work attracts the researcher to interpret the meaning implied behind the uniqueness of Monez's illustration work with the hermeneutic interpretation put forward by Hans-Georg Gadamer.



The hermeneutic theory of Hans Georg Gadamer is a dialectical ontological hermeneutics, that is, in his view, understanding is not an end, but rather a concentration on existing history and traditions. Based on the characteristics of this view, the author is interested in raising the issue of how to interpret the meaning of the text of Monez's digital illustration work intended for the production of Emba Jeans clothing in the July 2023 season using Gadamer's hermeneutic analysis. The use of Gadamer's thinking aims to discuss relevant interpretations and understandings to explore the meaning of the historical process of Monez's digital illustration works.(Y. W. Nugroho, n.d., p. 66)

Hans Georg Gadamer was born in Marbush, February 11, 1900 to a middle-class academic family. He has shifted the focus of hermeneutic research from epistemology to ontology. Gadamer views hermeneutics as an attempt to account for his understanding as a human ontological process. Understanding is a mode of human existence. Events of understanding are historical, dialectical, and linguistic processes (Susanto, 2016, p. 9). It is a pivotal moment in history and the pinnacle of contemporary hermeneutics. Gadamer rejected hermeneutics as an approach, in line with Heidegger's ideas. According to Gadamer, methods will instead hinder and hinder the truth because the effort to find the truth will become inflexible and limited by the bonds of method. Gadamer's hermeneutic theory is known as philosophical hermeneutics (Hardiman, 2015, p. 159). Gadamer says that understanding is a continuous process that involves the fusion of various horizons. According to Gadamer (2004), the horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a specific point of departure. Each prejudice raised through the traditions embedded in it determines the horizon of each person's interpretation. In tradition there is knowledge because of its breadth. According to him, the main characteristics of the horizon are wide open and not static, dynamic and constantly moving. The horizon of the past is not something that has been completed and abandoned, just as the horizon of the present is a process of formation and enrichment of the horizon of the past.

Previous writings that examine an art product with Gadamer's hermeneutics have been widely published in various reputable journals. Among those close to the study of this article is "The Hermeneutics Study of Phantom Photos by Peter Lik" (W. Y. Nugroho, 2022), which interprets works of art in the form of photographic objects from the historical, social art, branding and success of their publication with Gadamer's hermeneutic analysis. The research "Gadamer's Hermeneutic Analysis of Roby Dwi Antono's Paintings in the 'Lucid Fragments'" (Noviadji, 2022). Exhibition found that "Lucid Fragments" has a historical meaning, namely telling about the reflection of the painter's past memories as the background of the works he created. These two articles focus on pure works of art that prioritize the artist's personal expression alone without the need to compromise with other parties. This is certainly different from the text studied in Monez's illustration for Emba jeans, which is oriented towards the convenience of visual communication that tends to use visual language that is easily recognizable and adapted by the intended target audience.

## METHOD

The writing of this article uses a qualitative approach with an interpretive descriptive description method. Descriptive methods are useful for depicting, describing, or describing the state of an object (reality or phenomenon) as it is, according to the situation and conditions at the time the research was conducted. So that the descriptive method in the study was used to explain the historical interpretation of the background of the use of Barong and Rangda digital illustration objects designed by Monez to promote Emba Jeans products in the July 2023 season. Hermeneutic analysis in this study is used to interpret the horizon line from the historical background of illustrator Monez to the creation of illustration works inspired by the



figures of Barong and *Rangda* specifically for Emba Jeans products. (Ibrahim, 2015, p. 59; Noviadji, 2022)

To understand this, there are four variables of Gadamer's hermeneutic concept discussed, consisting of:

1. The hermeneutic of history.

The interpretive process is based on historical understanding. History is associated with the time of the presence of an object/work. So as to reveal the background of the appearance of the object/work, and how history affects the work. The historical approach provides ease in understanding the text and interpreting. This approach also helps the interpreter to broaden the horizons in developing the text in the future

2. Hermeneutics Dialectics

Dialectics is used to achieve a truth that is understood as something hidden. In order to reveal the truth, it is necessary to refer to tradition, so it is not a method or a theory. The history and experience of the interpreter play an important role during the dialectical process/dialogue with the text, so that there is an intensive, open, give-and-receive communication. The questions of the interpreter of the object must be able to discover the essence of the text.

3. The Hermeneutics of *Prasangka*

Prejudice can be interpreted as reasoning or presupposition. Gadamer considers this presupposition to be important, because it eliminates presuppositions as well as kills thought. According to Gadamer, hermeneutics is not only looking for original meanings, but also looking for new meanings that are productive. Therefore, understanding and interpreting a text is something that will never be finished. This is where the urgency of an interpreter's presumption lies, which of course moves from its historicity when entering a text that has its own historicity.(Mulyono, 2013, pp. 152–153; Noviadji, 2022)

4. Hermeneutics Linguistics

Language is a central issue in Gadamer's hermeneutics, because language is a settled tradition and a medium for understanding so that truth must be understood through language. Languages must be understood as those that refer to their historical growth, with their historical, grammatical and syntactic histories, so that language emerges as a varied form of experiential logic, essence, including historical experience/tradition.(Mulyono, 2013, pp. 148–149; Noviadji, 2022)

## A. DISCUSSION

In 2023 Monez, a popular professional digital illustrator in Bali, successfully completed a digital illustration design project to decorate the products of Emba Jeans, a well-known apparel brand from Indonesia that was established in 1968 Clothing products from Emba Jeans are a type of clothing that is in demand by teenagers and young adults because of its (Ema, 2025) *trendy* design and comfortable. The character design designed by Monez for the illustration of Emba Jeans consists of two main characters, namely the characters Barong and Rangda, whose shape is modified anthropocentrically or resembles a human personification. The gestures of these two characters support the theme raised by Emba Jeans, namely "*Chatarsist*", with the slogan "*music turns tragedy into rhapsody*". Here is a digital illustration work designed by Monez and applied to Emba Jeans products.



Figures 1 and 2. Digital illustration by Monez applied to the Emba Jeans product "*Chatarsist, music turns tragedy into rhapsody*" (Source: Zalora.co.id).

This illustration is an illustration that carries a contemporary genre, which visually looks attractive and tends to expose its characters in a contemporary style, full of striking complementary colors, and displays some of the shapes of objects encountered in everyday life. The following is a description of the analysis of four concept variables according to Gadamer's hermeneutics related to Monez's digital illustration work in the form of visualization of Barong and Rangda for Emba Jeans with the theme "*Chatarsist, music turns tragedy into rhapsody*".

## 1. Historical Analysis

Monez is a popular name used by Ida Bagus Ratu Antony Putra as an illustrator. Born as the youngest of three children from the Balinese Brahmin social caste. Monez was drawn to the world of drawing from a young age. His artistic talent was influenced by his grandfather's upbringing who was a painter of temple ornaments and ceremonial devices, influencing Monez to grow up closely with Balinese traditions and artistic expressions. Monez grew up in the city of Tabanan, which is actually the capital of the district where the people are quite heterogeneous and agrarian. Monez's parents also expect their children to pursue economics or medicine when they grow up, and tend to disapprove of Monez pursuing the world of art. But even so, his interest in art school in college did not recede. With various efforts and approaches, Monez convinced his parents to give his blessing to enter art school. In the end, Monez was allowed to study undergraduate studies in the Department of Visual Communication Design and Master of Art at the Indonesian Institute of the Arts Denpasar.

Since college, Monez has hung out with people engaged in the creative industry. His first opportunity as an illustrator came when he worked as a reporter for Bogbog Cartoon magazine in Denpasar. Where one day his boss, who is a cartoonist and the owner of Bogbog magazine, accidentally saw his doodles on a piece of paper. The image he created caught the attention of his boss and tried to encourage him to continue developing his talent. At first Monez felt less confident in his drawing skills, but the encouragement of his colleagues and superiors who gave him the opportunity to fill one of the pages in Bogbog pushed him forward. This good opportunity became a challenge to prove Monez for his drawing skills, with all his heart finally his first work was successfully published in Bogbog magazine which at that time had readers from local and international circles. The positive response from readers to his first work convinced Monez to be more enthusiastic about his work.

After graduation, Monez continued his illustrative career by working as a textile pattern designer at a garment shop in Kuta. It happened that his boss was a disciplined person and very meticulous and critical. While pursuing his profession in garments, Monez gained a lot of

discipline and patience in calculating each pattern to meet the production criteria. Precise calculation of format, color, and shape is one of the standards that must be understood in order to produce a good pattern design. In addition to discipline, his work ethic and self-management were obtained from the experience of working with various parties as well as the managerial support of his beloved wife, Ida Ayu Yogi Utami, who assisted him professionally to encourage him to be independent and establish a graphic studio named Florto Studio. From this studio, Monez's masterpieces in collaboration with various national and international brands were created.

Monez is a figure illustrator who is constantly innovating. Spiritual adaptation with Balinese culture that is intrinsic to the environment of his nuclear family and extended family became an inspiration and source of creative ideas in the creation of his illustration works. Generic abilities and natural talents are also the main foundation to make it easier for Monez to create anything imagined in the projection of his mind. Bali's nature, which is rich in traditions, life, full of culture and rituals, is not exhausted as a source of imagination. The courage in expressing themselves is also inseparable from literacy updates and openness to the combination of art and technology. Professionalism and confidence are formed from the experience of falling up and down in the world of art practice and professional management applied in their creative business principles. With a low profile, confident, and authenticity that was formed from childhood to adulthood, Monez has managed to establish creative interactions and collaborations with various parties, one of which will appear in 2023 is an illustration work in collaboration with Emba Jeans.

In the illustration work Emba jeans with a cathartic theme, Monez was inspired by the figures of Barong and Rangda, who in Balinese Hindu culture are not just spooky mythological creatures in a dance performance set in the story of Calonarang, but include sacred symbols and religious ritual dances at a *yajna* ceremony in a temple. The Barong and Rangda dances are believed to have supernatural powers that can neutralize negative forces in the form of *bhutakala* and *black magic* found in a village and become symbolic of the *element of rwa bhineda* that balances the life cycle. (Wirawan & Sandika, 2016, p. 136)

Perhaps the ability to deal with negative things carried by the meaning of Barong and Rangda in a sacred ceremony, is the basis of Monez's philosophy to use this symbol as a modified figure as an illustration character that means catharsis or healing for self-introspection in the message of Emba Jeans' illustration.



Figure 3. The figure of Barong and Rangda in a performance (Bali Safari Park, 2025)

In his historical horizon, Monez, who indeed grew up in Bali since childhood with the tradition of Barong and Rangda, eventually composed the figures of Barong and Rangda into



illustration forms that succeeded in arousing the audience's liking. According to Gadamer, intrinsically knowledge and our entire lives are influenced by the histories we live in the past; So that the horizon in the past has a great influence on the expression of our life in the future. Because the Barong and Rangda traditions are so attached to the life of the Balinese people, Monez, who is one of the original Balinese descendants, was inspired by the series of memories to create an illustration of the contemporary form of Barong and Rangda Emba Jeans. The novelty as well as the speciality of his work lies in his courage to simplify the form in an extreme and absurd way so that it becomes a visualization of distinctive and unique forms. (Gadamer, 1976, pp. 8-9)

## 2. Dialectical Analysis

Visually, the visual transformation scenario in the form of Barong and *Rangda* carried out by Monez for his collaboration with Emba Jeans tries to adapt to the theme "*Chatarsist*" with the slogan "*music turns tragedy into rhapsody*". Monez translates catharsis as a way of relieving stress that is diverted through musical activities, playing in nature, and meditation, represented by Barong and Rangda-inspired monsters from Bali combined with a contemporary style that is acceptable among modern society. The transformation of Barong and Rangda's characters is evident in the reconstruction of the face, body decoration, and physical structure. The element of surprise in the facial visual features a reconstruction of Barong that resembles a *tape recorder*, which is patriced to the face and *sound system* as a decoration of the neck (*father*), then a cable plug hanging on the left and right sides of the ear.

However, even so, these elements of electronic devices become Barong's camouflage that produces expressions and messages that are in sync with the theme, namely related to music as a cathartic medium. The visual elements of Barong Ket and Rangda that are maintained as their philosophical visual characteristics on the face are the shape of bulging round eyes, canines but only the top, open mouths, long sticky tongues, black striped legs and hands with red stripes, flat expressions, as detailed as Barong and Rangda in the performance of the dance fragments.

The striking colors typical of Monez used in the illustrations of Barong and Rangda for Emba Jeans are a combination of warm, bright colors such as blue, green, red, yellow, and purple that are bright and black and white as complementary colors that depict optimism and joy.

## 3. Analysis of Prejudice

In the illustration work "*Chatarsist*" with the slogan "*music turns tragedy into rhapsody*". It contains a very deep meaning, where the word catharsis contains the meaning as a form of release of emotions or complaints stored in the mind. In psychology, catharsis is also interpreted as a way to vent emotions positively so that a person feels more relieved and can carry out daily activities with better feelings such as telling stories or confiding with friends, sports, singing, shouting, writing, and other artistic expressions. This cathartic attempt is made solely to cleanse oneself of negative feelings such as anger, resentment, sadness, inner wounds, and so on, which refers to the (Adrian, 2024).etymological meaning of catharsis derived from the word "kathoros (Greek) which means "to purify" or "to cleanse". The term catharsis was first introduced by the philosopher Aristotle in the Classical Greek era, and in the modern era it began to be introduced as part of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, which states that catharsis is the constructive channeling of aggressive impulses. In this theory, it is explained that humans have the instinctive impulses eros (constructive) and *thanatos* (destructive). When this aggressive impulse arises due to the existence of tension that accumulates so that it needs to be reduced, restrained, or eliminated through sublimation and fantasy in the expression of art, religion, ideology, fantasy, dreams and jokes (Wahyuningsih, 2017, pp. 39-50). In the illustration expression of Emba Jeans, Monez designed a monster figure in the form of Barong Ket and



Rangda was used as a figure representing the duration of the catharsis. This can be attributed to the function and symbol of the Barong and Rangda dance fragments which function as a cure for all kinds of plagues that disturb the peace of human life. The illustration of Barong and Rangda for the Emba Jeans product was then modified according to the *theme of chatarsist, music turns tragedy into rhapsody* that was carried.

Philosophically, Barong and Rangda in this illustration no longer function symbolically as sacred icons, which depict the element of *rwa bhineda*. However, in its entirety it turns into an ordinary image that has the function of an illustration or decoration, and also a personification of human behavior releasing *the stressors* of life. In the Emba Jeans collection, the illustrations of Barong and Rangda are applied as decorations to beautify the look and add visual value to Emba jeans products such as shirts, denim jackets, hats, tote bags.

#### 4. Linguistic Analysis

The text that raises the figures of Barong and Rangda as Monez's inspiration in the design of product illustrations for Emba jeans is useful as a spark for new discoveries regarding the composition of local Balinese traditions as a source of inspiration for artworks and designs. This text can inspire and give a real picture that the local cultural wisdom of a community can be developed and disseminated globally in the form of multimedia art and design creativity. Monez's ability to process local wisdom into a global and universal visual communication expression can bring a change in thinking in a more positive direction, namely helping to increase people's appreciation and love for the preservation of their traditional culture in a humble acceptance, so that it is flexible according to the times.

At the level of promotion in the field of cultural tourism, the Barong and Rangda texts can be a reference about the diversity and beauty of Balinese cultural arts which is one of the reasons for domestic and foreign tourists to visit Bali. Meanwhile, on a philosophical level, people outside Bali can learn that the concept of dualism of life (*rwa bhineda*) symbolized by Barong and Rangda can create a balance in the religious order of Balinese people's lives. This awareness of *RWA Bhineda* is what leads Bali to become a safe and comfortable place to be visited by the world community. And most importantly, to be universally realized, this illustration reminds that culture is a *cultural identity* or national identity, which distinguishes it from other nations in the world. The characters of Barong and Rangda, composed by Monez become an effective visual language, which brings the millennial generation of Emba Jeans lovers closer to the values of local wisdom of Bali, Indonesia, with a touch of unique and attractive contemporary style.

### CONCLUSION

The results of the interpretation of meaning in the illustration text of the figure of a witty monster with faces resembling the figures of Barong and Rangda were analyzed based on four concept variables according to Gadamer's hermeneutics, namely historical, dialectical, prejudice, and linguistic analysis. The characters of Barong and Rangda, who come from the classical dance performance of Calonarang, were adopted as the main characters to visualize the theme "*Chatarsist, Music Turns Tragedy into Rhapsody*". Using Gadamer's hermeneutic analysis, this study reveals that based on historical analysis, the background of the use of the Barong and Rangda icons as the main characters was found based on the belief of the Balinese people that the two creatures have supernatural powers that can neutralize negative forces. The origins of Monez, who is a native Balinese who knows and loves the culture of his ancestors very well, inspired him to imaginatively compose the characters of Barong and Rangda as new and more contemporary figures. With his imagination and creativity, he cultivates the two characters into funny monsters that attract the attention of millennials. Dialectical analysis interprets the meaning of joy and optimism in relation to musical activities, which is reflected



in the expressions, gestures, bright colours, and properties of musical instruments that are modified as decorations for Barong and Rangda. The analysis of prejudice concludes that the meaning of the figures of Barong and Rangda in this illustration has undergone a change of function from a sacred object to a profane one; From *the symbol of RWA Bhineda* to the image of decorating objects (tote bags, t-shirts, hats, and others). And linguistic analysis interprets that the illustration character of Barong and Rangda on Emba Jeans can be an expression of love for local wisdom as well as cultural *identity* or national identity that can be understood by millennials, who are the main market for Emba Jeans products. The meaning of Barong and Rangda in the theme "*Chatarsist, Music Turns Tragedy into Rhapsody*" is a form of psychological disorder represented by the figure of Barong and Rangda meditating and playing musical instruments as a symbol that is able to neutralize psychological anxiety into a great and enthusiastic expression of joy, in the form of musical works (rhapsody).

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