

DALIHAN NA TOLU AS AN IDEA FOR THE CREATION OF PAINTINGS

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia is known for its diverse ethnic groups, one of which is the Toba Batak tribe. The Toba Batak community is known for its strong customs with a firm principle called Dalihan Na Tolu. The Dalihan Na Tolu principle is the foundation of social life and the key to life. The principle is based on mutual respect, upholding the genealogy of the clan and the welfare of life. This research raises symbolic meanings that visualize Dalihan Na Tolu emotionally and sacredly. This research aims to explore the meanings of each side of the Toba Batak customs and make it a form of commemoration for Batak teenagers. The research went through 4 stages, namely preparation, elaboration, contemplation and realization. The creation of surrealism flow works with the Chiaroscuro approach technique and expressive stroke technique resulted in twelve artworks inspired by obsolete Batak traditional houses, working together in events and plagues. These works are a blend of traditional and creative expression with strokes of materials and tools chosen to produce optimal and proportional visualization.

KEYWORDS

Batak Customs
Creation of
works
Cultural
Dalihan Na
Tolu

INTRODUCTION

The process of creating a painting is a reflective activity that carries a profound personal connection between the artist and their work. In this context, the ideas or themes conveyed in a painting are often rooted in the artist's life experiences, emotions, and personal perspectives on the surrounding reality. Even when not based on direct, empirical experiences, the issues or phenomena explored in a painting frequently hold strong emotional resonance for the painter. This indicates that the act of creating visual art is not merely a technical endeavor but a deeply expressive process that embodies the artist's identity, values, and subjective interpretations of the world. As such, a painting functions not only as a visual object but also as a communicative medium that represents the relationship between the artist's internal experiences and their responses to social, cultural, or spiritual environments.

Indonesia is a country rich in cultural, ethnic, racial, religious, and belief system diversity. Indonesia is a country rich in cultural, ethnic, racial, religious, and belief system diversity. One of these tribes is the Toba Batak. The Toba Batak community upholds various fundamental values in life, such as religiosity, ethics of politeness and respect, honesty, a spirit of unity and deliberation, tolerance and social harmony, collective responsibility and moral commitment, love for one another, and an attitude of gratitude for life (Situmorang, 2009)

Dalihan Na Tolu is a guide to the life of the Batak toba community which is used as a principle of life in its customs. three elements that bind the social system include "Somba marhula-hula, manat mardongan tubu, elek marboru" which is symbolized by the establishment of 3 furnaces (stones) as the foundation or social support of the Batak toba community.

Dalihan means a stone stove used to hold the cauldron when cooking in the kitchen. Na means yang and Tolu means three. So, Dalihan Na Tolu means three stone stove poles arranged in such a way that the shape resembles a long round medicine pill that has a leg length of about 10 cm (Firmando. 2021: 20).

Dalihan Na Tolu when translated directly into Indonesian is a three-foot stove, but figuratively the meaning is very broad and deep, making it interesting to be used as a painting. Such as how to treat the hula-hula, dongan tubu and boru, how the hula-hula's great influence on the blessing or sustainability of a large family, the division of labor at traditional feasts, as well as taboos and advice that must continue to be implemented. Dalihan Na Tolu is flexible because in the three positions in the structure of the Toba Batak society we can change positions, for example, at a traditional party at a certain time we can become hula-hula, dongan tubu, or boru depending on which party is ritualized or feasted. Dalihan Na Tolu is like a chain that continues to bind and protect, unbroken and interconnected in the cultural life of the Toba Batak community.

The meanings and elements of Batak poured in the form of the creation of works of art painting. The creation of artworks is poured in the form of ideas into a painting that visualizes Dalihan Na Tolu. An idea is a concept of thought that will be realized into a work, without an idea the artist will not be able to create a work of art. Ideas are important because they are the starting point for creating a work of art (Eskak. E, 2014: 68).

Dalihan Na Tolu is used as an idea for the creation of artworks to re-explore Toba Batak customs and genealogy and introduce symbols that are full of meaning and sacred. Nowadays, Dalihan Na Tolu is very rarely raised as a work of painting and is less understood and even less known by the community, especially the Toba Batak tribe from North Sumatra. Based on the explanation above, the author is interested in creating a painting by raising the object of Dalihan Na Tolu into visual forms to deepen understanding, sensitivity and preservation. The author wants to rediscover the social values contained in Dalihan Na Tolu in visual forms, and also help the government in cultural preservation efforts. In the creation of this work, the author uses surrealism. Surrealism is an art genre that contradicts real objects in situations that are impossible in the real world. The author uses this genre to reveal the deep meaning contained in "Dalihan Na Tolu".

METHOD

This research is a research with a structured method of painting creation by raising a title Dalihan Na Tolu. this creation research is carried out with the stages of preparation, elaboration, contemplation and realization. Stages are carried out conceptually by presenting symbolic forms in traditional Batak toba ceremonies or the warmth of social life according to the principles of Dalihan Na Tolu.

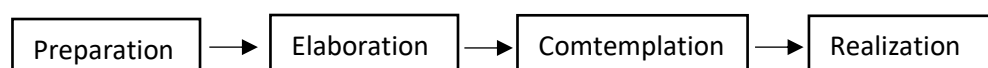


Image 1. Diagram

In accordance with the stages, the creation of artworks begins with the preparation stage. At this stage, the author collects data from several sources such as observing, reading books,

journals in the library or the internet. This information served as the foundation for developing the concept of the artwork. The elaboration stage involved exploring data and information to identify ideas that could serve as inspiration.

The author explores an understanding of the principles that form the basis of the social life of the Toba Batak community. This understanding presents a visualization of important elements that become symbols in traditional ceremonies, moral symbols and a sacred atmosphere in upholding genealogy. In the contemplation stage, reflection is done to clarify the theme and object of the work. The author develops a concept that emphasizes the element of detail by ensuring every detail has a relevant meaning. The realization process involves designing sketches based on the concept that has been designed by establishing meaningful light and darkness. The sketches are re-realized on canvas combined with the painting process using the Chiasocuro technique and expressive strokes. This method was chosen to produce bright and bold colors that harmoniously combine the object and background. The finishing stage involves adding details and refining the artwork to harmonize it with the chosen theme. The tools used in this process include brushes, palettes, palette knives, and pencils, while the materials consist of canvas, acrylic paint, oil paint, gesso, and varnish. Acrylic paints were chosen due to their quick-drying nature and suitability for wet-on-wet techniques, as stated by Pitcher (2009).

The creation of this painting was carried out at UNIMED's Baginda Sirait Fine Art Gallery, with a process that took two months, from April to June 2024. The evaluation of the work was conducted after the Green Table Session at UNIMED's Fine Arts Gallery by involving internal validators. The final work was then exhibited for feedback and appreciation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The creation of paintings through these 4 stages resulted in twelve works, three of which are; "Mara". The painting visualizes the form of anger and the consequences of the violation. Inspired by the author's imaginative story by presenting unreal forms combined with the symbolic life of the Batak toba community. The results of the next work take a parable of community responsibility by upholding customs and positioning themselves as useful as possible. Other works highlight Batak libraries that have been worn out due to neglect and fading.

These works were prepared by combining the typical colors of the Batak tribe, namely red, black and white. The three colors symbolize sacredness, blessings, courage and harmony of welfare in the context of the Batak community. This is considered with the theme, Dalihan Na Tolu, which is based on social life with full respect for each other based on genealogy.

The creation of artworks in the form of paintings is one way for artists to realize ideas through the exploration of themes, materials, tools, and techniques. In this endeavor, the author produced a total of 12 paintings with titles such as Mara, Hambirang, Manghutti Tandok, Tarulang, Dalihan Na Tolu, Hissa, Marhobas, Martarombo, Si Tiop Mik, Tatarang, Marsiogosan and Huta Na Homing. However, this article will only feature three paintings included in the journal.

1) Painting I “Mara”



Image 2. Mara

(Source: Leontius Sihombing, 2025)

Title	: Mara
Size	: 80cm x 100cm
Media	: Acrylic paint on canvas
Year	: 2025
Artist	: Leontius Sihombing

Description

Mara in the Toba Batak language means disaster or something that is not good. In Dalihan Na Tolu there is a principle, namely somba marhula-hula, which means hula-hula is the family from the mother, including Tulang. Inspired by the social situation when a person or group violates the principles of Dalihan Na Tolu, it will have a bad impact, this painting depicts the figure of Bere asking for forgiveness to the figure of Tulang, because he has disrespected and neglected his Tulang. Tulang is realized with Buffalo Horns which means authority in Toba Batak Culture, because when Batak people hold a Feast by sacrificing buffalo is an honor, so it is often placed at the top of a monument (Tomb) that has been or Bolon House (Toba Batak traditional house). Then the figure of Bere is realized with a hirang head (woven rattan for crop containers) as a symbol of hard work like Batak people in general. However, the hirang in this painting has been filled with sweet potatoes and bones that symbolize the disaster or Mara that he experienced. The absence of the body is a dilemma of the loss of identity and Toba Batak culture eroded over time. The red shirt symbolizes the spirit, firmness, and courage of the Toba Batak people, and black or dark pants symbolize the ability to blend or adapt to the place visited. The broken hoe symbolizes the destruction of the ability to make ends meet, due to disrespect for the bones. The twilight sky and the tendency to darken symbolize the dilemma of the end of a day and the darkness symbolizes the sacredness of Dalihan Na Tolu that always exists in life. Then the board on

the back symbolizes the former house or shelter that has been left and tries to continue to protect its inhabitants.

2) Painting II “Marsiogosan”



Image 3. Marsiogosan

(Source: Leontius Sihombing, 2025)

Title	: Marsiogosan
Size	: 80cm x 100cm
Media	: Acrylic paint on canvas
Year	: 2025
Artist	: Leontius Sihombing

Description

Marsiogosan in the Toba Batak language means rubbing against each other. The Toba Batak community has a proverb that reads “Hau na Jonok do na Olo Marsiogosan” meaning that trees that are close together are often rubbing. This proverb alludes to Manat Mardongan Tubu in Dalihan Na Tolu, which means that it is against close relatives or surnames that we often experience conflict, so we need to be careful and love each other. The dark twilight sky symbolizes the sacredness and seriousness of Dalihan Na Tolu.

3) Painting III “Marhobas”



Image 4. Marhobas

(Source: Leontius Sihombing, 2025)

Title	: Marhobas
Size	: 70cm x 90cm
Media	: Acrylic
Year	: 2025
Artist	: Leontius Sihombing

Description

Marhobas in the Toba Batak language means preparing, working together, hurrying. In Dalihan Na Tolu, the position of boru or the family of the male party, whether male or female, contributes greatly when his party is holding a party. In this context, the figure of boru is symbolized by six hands because it is so skillful and has a lot of work to do, even if it has to carry their children, everything can be done for the success of the Party. In addition, Marhobas itself is made to establish relationships and create cohesiveness, cooperation and work hand in hand for the sake of mutual prosperity. The red shirt symbolizes the spirit, firmness, and courage of the Toba Batak people, and black or dark pants symbolize the ability to blend or adapt to the place visited. The setting of the twilight sky and tends to be dark symbolizes the dilemma about the end of a day and darkness symbolizes the sacredness of Dalihan Na Tolu which always exists in life.

CONCLUSIONS

The creation of the painting entitled “Dalihan Na Tolu as an Idea for Painting” inspired by the social life of the Batak people can be concluded as follows: This painting is made with chiaroscuro technique and expressive strokes. The process includes sketching, determining the light and dark areas of the painting, followed by coloring and detailing. At this stage, the artist expresses the work using acrylic paint poured and created on the canvas that has been sketched, allowing the creation of a painting that maximizes visualization and size adjustment. This process aims to give artists the freedom to use the medium they choose.

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