

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research Background

In recent years, new media art has brought a dynamic presence to the Indonesian art scene. Made of digital and electronic technology as its own medium (Paul, 2015a:8) such as Internet, AI, augmented reality, virtual reality, robotics, biotechnology, and real-time data transmission, new media art presents its medium's characteristics of "interactivity, connectivity and computability" (Steve Dietz in Graham and Cook, 2010:6). In that sense, new media art has not just transformed the methods of creating, distributing, and appreciating art, but it has also presented a bigger challenge to the role of curators than any other type of art because it is dynamic, process-oriented, or emerging (Cook 2004:16). The landscape of new media art and the suitable platforms to showcase it are continuously evolving due to the introduction of new technologies (Sarah Cook in Paul, 2008:27-28), and therefore, curating new media art requires a more intricate understanding and specialized abilities.

On one hand, new media art and its curatorial challenge has been extensively discussed, theorized and practiced by UK and US based curators and scholars over the past 20 years. From Steve Dietz (2005) who opened up the issues of collecting and preserving new media art in art museums and galleries, Christiane Paul (2015a) who conducted a thorough investigation into the progression of digital art, a term that is frequently used interchangeably with new media art, to Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook (2010) who provided opportunities to rethink curatorial activity of new media art, these curators-scholars have contributed to offering theoretical and practical tools for curating projects that exhibit new media art.

On the other hand, scholarly discourse was not the only means of addressing the issue of curating new media art; several educational programs also provided practical guidance in this area. Beryl Graham, the former professor of New Media Art at the University of Sunderland in the UK, conducted an annual one-week intensive course called "Curating Art After New Media - Professional Development Course" in London from 2014 to 2020 (Graham, 2020). The NODE: Center for Curatorial Studies in Berlin offers various short courses related to curating new

media art, including web-art, art and science, and hybrid exhibitions, through an online-based curator training program (NODE).

Unlike such international acknowledgement and movement for curator education for new media art, Indonesia has not experienced a specific established education system for new media art or its curation. Nevertheless, there is a growing, yet very limited availability of formal curatorial studies focused on contemporary art. The master's program of visual arts at Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB) offers Art Curatorship and Management as one of the concentration areas under 'research practice' starting in 2013 after the first PhD research in the field, conducted by Agung Hujatnika (2012) at the same institution. Not limited to curator training, Indonesian Institute of the Arts (ISI), Yogyakarta started to offer the study of Arts Management in 2010 for its master's program and in 2014 for its bachelor's program to support the arts managerial field in Indonesia (Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta).

In response to the limited formal training opportunities for art curators and art professionals in general in Indonesia, alternative and non-formal art education has become a crucial aspect of the development and dissemination of knowledge in the art community (Siregar, 2021:85-90). This is particularly evident through the initiatives of art incubation program for young curators, established by leading artist collectives and art organizations. For example, ruangrupa, a Jakarta-based artist collective, held Curatorial Workshops in 2008, 2009, and 2013, while Cemeti Art House in Yogyakarta organized the Young Curators Forum in 2013.

Foreign cultural agencies also had a great influence on curatorial studies in Indonesia. The Japan Foundation for Curators' Workshop in 2014-2016 and the Goethe-Institut Indonesia for CuratorsLAB in 2015-2017 offered training programs for young ASEAN curators. Around the same years, the Indonesian government has made an effort to provide curatorial training programs such as Bekraf Art Curatorial Training in 2017, organized by Badan Ekonomi Kreatif, which became the foundation of the program of Bimbingan Teknis Tenaga Kesenian Bidang Kurator Seni Rupa (Technical Guidance for Arts Personnel in the Field of Fine Arts Curator) in 2021, organized by Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology. In the same year, the National Gallery of Indonesia provided learning and

networking opportunities through a Curatorial Workshop in 2021. The latter two programs were conducted via online due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to an increased demand for art organizations to diversify their exhibition methods, particularly through online-based activities that use hybrid methods to stay connected with their audience (UNESCO Report, 2020:14). This pandemic has also encouraged exploration of online curation, making it a necessary skill for curators to possess. When implementing online curation for her hybrid media art exhibition, Korean curator Haena Noh (2022) pointed out that several key elements were required for this new curatorial approach, including how to create an immersive experience for the audience in the virtual world and how to balance the accessibility of the online space with the physical space.

The aforementioned art incubation programs for young curators offer various benefits to the participants. The Curatorial Workshop by ruangrupa stands out for its multidisciplinary approach, allowing for non-conventional and research-based curatorial projects, but its irregular programming could be a downside. The Young Curators Forum by Cemeti Art House, on the other hand, addresses the lack of critical discussion platforms for young curators in the conventional arts education sector, but its participant selection through closed invitations and recommendations could be considered a drawback. The Curators' Workshop by The Japan Foundation provides a comprehensive program for young curators from Southeast Asia, including local workshops and training in Japan, resulting in diverse forms of exhibitions, performances, and screenings. Similarly, the CuratorsLAB by Goethe Institut Indonesia promotes contemporary curatorial practices and regional networks among young curators from Southeast Asia, led by experienced curators from Indonesia and Germany. However, these two ASEAN focused programs were available to only a limited number of curators from Indonesia. The Curatorial Workshop by National Gallery of Indonesia aims to establish a network in the fine arts industry and contribute to the distribution of knowledge in curatorial practice. Nevertheless, due to limited resources and time, some technical topics were not covered (Krishbie, 2023).

Despite their role in developing and disseminating curatorial knowledge to wider art community, and also offering different models of learning methods, the main area of interest in these programs are curatorship and its discourse of the contemporary art in general. As a result, there is an absence of curatorial exploration towards more specified arts, such as new media art that is a constantly growing form of art and making a considerable influence to younger generation artists in Indonesia. Furthermore, the existing curatorial programs were held before the Covid-19 pandemic except the Curatorial Workshop by National Gallery of Indonesia, and thus new curatorial methods and platforms beyond the physical space were not explored.

The urgency of this research lies in addressing significant gaps by developing an art incubation model to enhance curators' competencies in new media art. Prior studies offer valuable insights but leave important areas unaddressed. For instance, Sarah Cook (2004) discusses content-context balance in new media art curation without practical guidelines; Beryl Graham (1997) highlights the audience's role in interactive art but lacks curator-focused recommendations; Rene Alberto Garcia Cepeda (2020a) provides practical advice through his generative manual for curator but its success needs to be evaluated because it depends on the level of user's engagement. Paul O'Neill (2012)'s study is an essential catalyst for curatorial discourse yet overlooks non-Western contexts, while Juju Masunah and Rita Milyartini (2016)'s research of incubation model, concentrated on performing arts, does not explore adapting the incubation model for different regions or art sectors. The novelty of this research is its integration of art education within a structured incubation model for new media art curation, creating a unique framework that merges practical, theoretical, and educational insights for curators in diverse contexts.

ARCOLABS, an Indonesian curator initiative, has been making a significant endeavor to the consistency of curatorial practices in new media arts in Indonesia. Their efforts are to innovate new media art exhibitions through experimenting with different conceptual, aesthetic, and practical approaches (Jeon 2019b:88). One of their key programs is XPLORE: New Media Art Incubation (XPLORE), which was originally initiated as a mentorship program for young

media artists in 2018. Since 2021, this program has provided young Indonesian curators with mentorship to help them develop their expertise in both the theoretical concepts and practical techniques involved in curating new media art.

Having serving as the director of ARCOLABS and a curator of numerous new media art projects in Indonesia, the researcher of this research has constantly witnessed the urgent need for accessible study on new media art curator education. Thus, she explored a hypothetic incubation model for new media art curators through XPLORE, held in 2022. As a pilot project, XPLORE in 2022 offered guidance and support by various experts in the field to develop the skills and competencies of young Indonesian curators in new media art. In developing contents of this art incubation, she first conducted preliminary research in October to November, 2021 to draw the 10 necessary curator competencies for new media art curation, which became the instruments for XPLORE 2022.

In this preliminary research, she analyzed and synthesized the curator competencies measured by governments of Indonesia, South Korea and the United States (indicated as G below) and those suggested by the curators actively practicing in the real field (indicated as C below). The research shows the gap between the competency evaluated by the government and the competency necessary in practical situations. The 10 curator competencies include conducting exhibition and education programs (G2), carrying out academic research on curatorial objects (G3), producing publications (G4), theoretical knowledge (C1), communication skills for collaboration and partnership (C2), spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship (C3), ethical attitude working with artists (C4), knowledge of medium/technical mechanism behind artwork (C5), exhibition design and display skill (C6), and local and international perspective (C7) (Jeon, Masunah and Milyartini, 2022).

Two competencies designated by the government, such as managing art collections (G1) and building networks (G5), were excluded from the incubation program: first, because it is designed for curators primarily working outside of museum institutions, and second, because by participating in this program, the curators are already engaging in networking. As aforementioned, in the initial research, competencies were categorized into two groups: government-required

competencies (G) and those proposed by practicing curators (C). However, in this study, all competencies have been renamed as C which means ‘curator competency’ with new numbering (Table 2.2).

With these 10 competencies as instruments, ‘Hypothetic Incubation Model (or prototype)’ was explored through the pilot project of 2022. Then, it was revised to ‘New Media Art Incubation Model I’ that was validated through Focused Group Discussion (FGD). The researcher applied the feedback from the FGD panelists to revise the model I into ‘New Media Art Incubation Model II’ that was implemented into the 2nd cycle of XPLORE: New Media Art Incubation program in 2023. The researcher collected data and analyzed them based on the instruments of 10 curator competencies and as the result of the research, she drew the ‘Final New Media Art Incubation Model’. The development of this incubation model is illustrated in the image below.

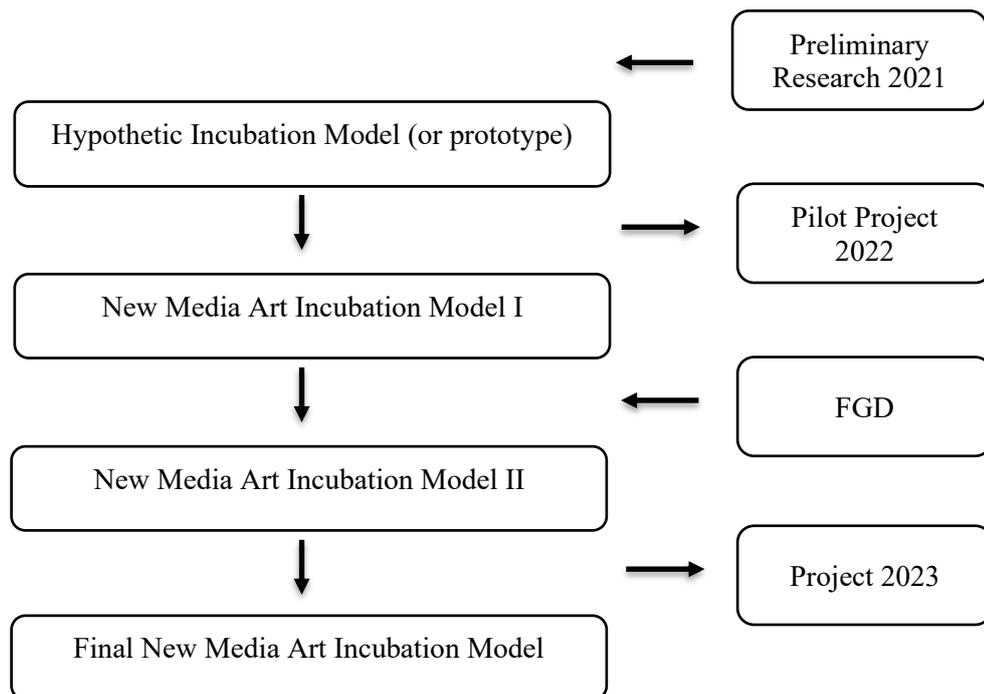


Image 1.1 Development of Incubation Model

The focus of this study is to discuss the XPLORE: New Media Art Incubation program that was redesigned and reimplemented in July, 2023 to January, 2024. The outcome of this study is a theory of new media art curation and

art incubation model of curator training program by which Indonesian young curators can easily access to study, exchange knowledge, and stay current in the most up-to-date issues in new media art and its curatorial works.

1.2. Problem Formulation/Research Questions

1. How to explore a concept of developing an art incubation model to improve curator's competencies for new media art curation?
2. How to design a content of learning in the art incubation model to improve curator's competencies for new media art curation?
3. How to implement the art incubation model to improve curator's competencies for new media art curation?
4. What are the results of the art incubation model to improve curator's competencies for new media art curation?

1.3. Research Objectives

This research aims to develop an art incubation model for new media art curators to be trained to improve curator's competencies on new media art curation. Specially, this research aims:

1. To explore and analyze a concept of developing an art incubation model to improve curator's competencies.
2. To design and construct a content for learning module within the art incubation model to improve curator's competencies.
3. To describe and analyze the implementation of the art incubation model to improve curator's competencies.
4. To analyze and evaluate the results of the art incubation model to improve curator's competencies.

1.4. Benefits/Significance/Urgency of Research

The benefits of this research are divided into two aspects:

- 1) Academically, the theory of new media art curation will be established in Indonesia, which will pave the way for further study by future researchers of the same field.

2) Practically, there are benefits for diverse stakeholders:

- For the researcher, she will become a more solid curator-educator who possesses both theory and practice.
- For the Indonesian curatorial study, more diversified curatorial learning programs that are suitable for the 21st century will be provided.
- For young curators, they will acquire practical and applicable knowledge and skills for their profession in the digital age.
- For education institutions, various learning platforms for non-formal education will be suggested.
- For government policy makers, they will strengthen the curator education system and improve its quality, which can lead to a more skilled and knowledgeable workforce in the field.

1.5. Writing Structure/Organization

The dissertation is structured into five chapters: the introduction, literature review, research method, findings, and conclusion. In the Chapter I, the introduction will provide an overview of the research by presenting the background and problems to be addressed, specific objectives, and the significance of the study. In the Chapter II, the literature review will explore the theoretical foundation and previous studies related to the topic, highlighting the current state of knowledge and presenting a framework of concepts and ideas. In the Chapter III, the research method will describe the research design, participants, location, research instrument, research procedure, and data collection and analysis technique, with the use of images and tables to enhance clarity. In the Chapter IV, the findings and discussion will be presented with detailed results of the research, providing a thorough analysis of the data collected. In the Chapter V, the conclusions, implications and recommendations will summarize the results of the study and provide recommendations.