

**CHAPTER II**

**OVERVIEW ON ARTJOG ART EXHIBITION AND  
INDONESIA'S STRATEGY IN ART AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY**

This chapter will provide a general overview on the focus of this research, divided into two parts. The first part will lay down essential information for the ARTJOG Art Exhibition that will be the foundation for analysis in the next chapters. The second part will provide a brief history and current strategies on Indonesia's arts and cultural diplomacy agenda.

**2.1. ARTJOG Art Exhibition**

ARTJOG is a contemporary art exhibition held annually in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Though they do not regard themselves as an international art exhibition like an art biennale (as a biennale/biennial is held every two years and ARTJOG is held annually), the event becomes a meeting point where local talents and international ones are shown to the public. ARTJOG does not tour the world, as they are focused on bringing the newest works and developments in the contemporary art world to Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The exhibition attracts hundreds of thousands of audiences, with citizens from all around Indonesia and the world—roughly 20% of the exhibition visitors are international audiences.

ARTJOG introduces itself as an art event that creates space for new ideas in art and creativity. It also regards itself as a space to share knowledge and experience in aesthetics (from experts and practitioners alike), and where the newest developments in arts can be found. ARTJOG is an art festival that seeks to

facilitate the process of creating never-seen-before artworks, encouraging artists to keep innovating in their craft. The exhibition is not the only part and attraction of ARTJOG. Various events, such as educational programs and roadshows—along with performance arts and music—support the exhibition in creating spaces and new ways for the art community and the public to engage and experience art. ARTJOG is committed in breaking the barriers limiting the practice and meaning of art, while growing and nurturing the network of artists, market, policymakers, and the public (*ARTJOG - About Us*, n.d.).

#### 2.1.1. Brief History

The birth of ARTJOG can be traced back to its roots in Jogja Art Fair in 2008, where initially the art exhibition was a part of the 20th Yogyakarta Art Bazaar and Festival (*Bazar Seni - Festival Kesenian Yogyakarta XX*). The founder, Heri Pemas, was an art student in ISI Yogyakarta (Indonesian Institute of the Arts in Yogyakarta), then an invitation courier and middleman who brought art collectors to meet local artists and their works. Realizing the gaps and problems with the art industry in Jogja, especially concerning how the art industry is segmented and out of reach to the public, Pemas started to dedicate his life work into bringing young artists to get recognition, rather than just putting senior artists in the spotlight.

ARTJOG is, as of now, the longest running art exhibition in Indonesia with a running time of two and a half months—not including the supporting events and pre- and post-exhibition roadshows—once every year since 2010. The main exhibition attracts a high volume of the art public and general public alike,

earning ARTJOG the nickname “Eid for Art” (*“Lebaran Seni”*) by some. The exhibition itself is not a standalone event in its organisation. To further support the exhibition in creating spaces for the community and to encourage discussions and learning in the contemporary art sphere, ARTJOG holds events such as Curatorial Tours, “Meet The Artist”, Workshops, and Music and Performance Arts Festival.

Each year, a new theme is introduced to act as the main message of the exhibition and as a blueprint for the artists who want to participate in the exhibition. ARTJOG’s curatorial process involves an open call for works of artists that carries the message they are looking for. Curatorial texts and documents released along the open call announcements to guide the artists who are interested to create an artwork for ARTJOG.

The most recent exhibitions (2023-2025) are conducted as a trilogy, titled “*MOTIF*” (which can be translated into the word “motive”), divided into the themes of “*MOTIF: Lamaran*” (2023), “*MOTIF: Ramalan*” (2024), and “*MOTIF: Amalan*” (2025). Through the curatorial texts it is known that “Motive” itself cannot be defined as the theme, but the word motive itself can be thought of as both “patterns” and “intentions of artists”, encouraging artists to really innovate in their works.

It is worth noting that COVID-19 also impacted the organizing of ARTJOG. With the theme of “Resilience”, the exhibition was held by online means through a website. A physical exhibition adhering to the health protocols was also held in order to realize the main purpose of ARTJOG—to create space for discussion in the latest innovations in the art industry. The online arrangements of

ARTJOG helped them reach more audiences internationally, and was considered as a blueprint for online exhibitions by the government and other art exhibitions seeking to present their curated works online.

To understand the development of ARTJOG more clearly, the next section will lay down the past exhibitions with the description retrieved from their ‘About Us’ section in their website, with minor grammatical changes to ensure the clarity of the information.

#### 2.1.2. Past Exhibitions

The carefully curated themes each year are part of what is attractive about ARTJOG. The theme is usually decided responding to the current situation in the art industry and socio-political conditions.

##### 1. Jogja Art Fair (JAF #1)

The very first two iterations of ARTJOG did not employ any specific themes yet, and was still held under the name of Jogja Art Fair (JAF). As a part of *Bazar Seni - Festival Kesenian Yogyakarta* (FKY) XX 2008, Jogja Art Fair #1 was the first contemporary visual art fair in Indonesia. 135 artists participated through an open call, without any selection process, and there were more than 450 works displayed alternately every week.

##### 2. JAF #2 Spacing Contemporary

Jogja Art Fair #2 left FKY and officially established itself as a separate entity. Curator Aminudin T.H. Siregar announced “Spacing Contemporary” as its theme. By the curatorial team, 3000 works were selected and categorized into four: Spacing Alternatives, Spacing New Emergences, Spacing

Critically-Politically, and Spacing Historically. 93 works were selected to represent conventional graphic art, sculpture and two-dimensional works on canvas.

### 3. ART|JOG|10 : The Strategies Of Being

With a shifting focus from being market-oriented to artists-oriented, JAF changed its name to Art Jogja or ARTJOG. Curator Aminudin T.H. Siregar announced “Indonesian Art Now: The Strategies of Being” as the curatorial theme to 160 participants. There were three commissioned works for this newly established ARTJOG, made by Eko Nugroho, Yudi Sulistyono and Budi Adi Nugroho. Aside from displaying the works, some artists were invited to participate in Merchandise|Project program.

### 4. ART|JOG|11

Unlike the previous years, ART|JOG|11 did not pick a special theme. However, ARTJOG still presented commissioned works by Eddi Prabandono and Krisna Murti, and seven artists did a special presentation. 165 artists were picked from more than 1500 applicants. ARTJOG has started gaining international recognition during this time.

### 5. ART|JOG|12 : Looking East - A Gaze Upon Indonesian Contemporary Art

Aiming for cohesion between the artworks, ART|JOG|12 picked a theme “Looking East” with Bambang “Toko” Witjaksono as the curator. The commissioned artist, Joko Dwi Avianto, discussed the diminishing of bamboo forest in Indonesia. Using broken bamboo as the technique, he wove thousands of intact bamboos to cover the facade of Taman Budaya Yogyakarta. In the

Special Presentation program, ARTJOG presented two international artists, Ashley Bickerton and Wim Delvoye. Bickerton also participated in Artist Talk program as a speaker.

#### 6. ARTJOG|13 : Maritime Culture

ARTJOG|13 selected 121 artists to explore the theme of “Maritime Culture.” ARTJOG commissioned Iwan Effendi who collaborated with Papermoon Puppet Theater in a performance of seven characters who travel across the sea of Nusantara to find a boy called Lunang. ARTJOG also invited Stefan Sagmeister, with his video works, for the Special Presentation program. This year was when ARTJOG initiated the Young Artist Award, which can be achieved by any artist under 33 y.o.

#### 7. ARTJOG|14 : Legacies Of Power

2014 was a political year for Indonesia; ARTJOG|14 represented it by displaying 150 characters made of gunnysack, made by the commission artist, Samsul Arifin, called Goni Cabinet as the facade of Taman Budaya Yogyakarta. That work responded to the party of democracy that took place. Visitors were being charged an entrance fee for the first time, to improve the visitor’s experience of the exhibition. That new policy did not change the previous running programs. For Special Presentation, ARTJOG presented five video installations made by a professor of performing arts in Hochschule für bildende Künste, Marina Abramović. The same program also presented an interactive video installation made by teamLab where the visitors could play with it.

#### 8. ARTJOG|8 : Infinity in Flux

In celebration of its eighth anniversary, ARTJOG picked a curatorial theme by responding to the phenomenon of selfie. The selection process prioritized the interactive works or whose forms using new media. For Special Presentation, ARTJOG|8 presented “Wish Tree”, made by an artist and a peace activist, Yoko Ono, where the visitors could participate by hanging their wishing paper. ARTJOG also brought other artefacts made by Yoko Ono, like puzzle pieces, a towel and a box filled with color pencils. This year, ARTJOG launched the program “Meet the Artist” (MTA), and two other programs, Public Screening and Curatorial Tour as a means of public education.

#### 9. ARTJOG|9 : Universal Influence

The ninth iteration of ARTJOG initiated the theme of universal influence as power supremacy. ARTJOG commissioned Venzha Christ as the special commission artist of this year, who interpreted the theme by building a 36 meters lighthouse, complete with the flare lamps with a range of 10 km. In making the work, the commissioned artist collaborated with Myung Hyun RHEE (SETI Korea Society-Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence), introduced as a platform of ISSS (Indonesia Space Science Society). From this year onwards, ARTJOG no longer holds its event in Taman Budaya Yogyakarta. Since then, they have started to hold the event in a more representative place, Jogja National Museum, which was formerly the *Akademi Seni Rupa Indonesia* (ASRI) campus building, now known as Jogja National Museum.

#### 10. "ARTJOG|10 : Changing Perspective"

Entering a decade of running the event, ART|JOG|10 picked Wedhar Riyadi for the Commission Work program. He presented the installation of gigantic eyeballs placed above the surface of a pool, representing how human beings look at and perceive each other. As a way to pay homage to the artist and the founder of ASRI, R.J. Katamsi, ARTJOG with Wahyu Santoso made a 2.5 meters sculpture made of bronze, placed at the forecourt of JNM. After the inauguration, there was this agenda of walking around the site of ASRI with Wardoyo Sugianto. ARTJOG has also started to present various art activities, from performing arts, film, music and contemporary dance in the Daily Performances program during the event.

#### 11. ARTJOG 2018: Enlightenment

ARTJOG 2018 attempted to interpret not only one art discipline. The theme of Enlightenment was a trilogy of experience that included sensory experience, universal experience and change of consciousness that would lead to the moment of enlightenment. Mulyana, the commission artist, presented the installation of the underwater world using the technique of knitting and crochet. For the Special Performance program, Papermoon Puppet Theatre (Indonesia) and Polyglot (Australia) collaborated to present an immersive theatre performance called Cerita Anak. Meanwhile, for the Daily Performance program, in its second year, it successfully worked with 88 participants. For the Merchandise Project program, 80 artists and art enthusiasts promoted their creative products.

#### 12. ARTJOG MMXIX : Arts In Common - common space

Throughout its journey, ARTJOG strives to create as wide spaces of encounter as possible for the public through artistic activities. The event successfully designing an image of joyful and enlightening festivity is confident to affirm its position as an international contemporary art festival. From 2019 to 2021, ARTJOG international contemporary art festival has a major theme of “Arts in Common” that was translated into three curatorial sub-themes in the upcoming three annual editions of the festival. The curatorial sub-theme “common | spaces” presented works that question the “shared spaces” in our daily lives. Besides the participation of young artists selected through an open call application, five cross-disciplinary artists were selected through invitations for the Special Project Program.

### 13. ARTJOG 2020 : Resilience

Following the enactment of the national emergency response period caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia, ARTJOG decided to postpone and reschedule the event of ARTJOG Arts in Common MMXX | time (to) wonder to 2021. This year, they launched an “emergency response edition” that aims to respond to the situation. ARTJOG then carries out the theme “Resilience” as a spirit to keep on moving, for artists and the arts are important elements in society. During an uncertain situation, ARTJOG: RESILIENCE exists as a project that re-examines the perseverance, endurance, fighting spirit, contribution and solidarity among art practitioners.

### 14. ARTJOG MMXXI : Arts in Common - Time (to) Wonder

Working under the auspices of Hita Pranajiwa Mandaya Foundation, ARTJOG presents itself as a festival that facilitates the latest artistic and creative process. It is realized through an online presentation that offers a new experience, as well as a physical exhibition with limited access, in compliance with health protocol according to the government directive on COVID-19.

After holding ARTJOG Resilience last year, which responded to the pandemic, ARTJOG 2021 returned to the curatorial scheme they had arranged since 2018. This year, the festival uses Time (to) Wonder as its frame, continuing the second edition of the trilogy arts in common. The exhibition carried out the issue of 'time' as the key concept and showcased the latest works of 41 (individuals and groups) artists who all live and work in Indonesia.

In addition to the exhibition program, ARTJOG will also present educational programs that were absent last year, such as the Young Artist Award, Exhibition Tour, and Meet the Artist. Furthermore, the Expanded ARTJOG program is still presented as a strategy for managing the art festival, recording its reality. The Daily Performance program presented various works of music, theatre, contemporary dance, and performance art. ARTCARE, which was initially a form of contribution of artists and art activists to humanity, improved its quality to impact the art ecosystem more.

#### 15. ARTJOG MMXXII : Arts in Common - Expanding Awareness

The subtheme “Expanding Awareness” concluded the ARTJOG arts-in-common series, which since 2019 has framed the three exhibitions in the thematic triplet of 'space' - 'time' - 'consciousness.' This theme is interpreted as an

effort to expand the accumulative and reciprocal awareness between artist and audience by reflecting on present and future reality and the hopes that must be realized.

One of the main agendas of Expanding Awareness is to pay attention to arts that support inclusivity. This spirit is also manifested in the festival's design, from concept development, artist selection, exhibition facilities, and infrastructure, to the implementation of its programs. During the preparation period, the ARTJOG curatorial team and program staff gained a lot of experience and knowledge from inclusivity advocates in Yogyakarta, including the JDA (Jogja Disability Arts) group and Sanggar Seni Komunitas Tuli Ba(WA)yang.

Bandung-based artist Christine Ay Tjoe worked on an installation as part of this year's special commission in response to the ARTJOG MMXXII: Arts in Common - Expanding Awareness theme. For the past twenty years, Ay Tjoe has been known for works that pay attention to the complexities of human life. This time she presents an interactive piece inspired by the Tardigrada (a microscopic aquatic animal that can suspend its metabolism when the environmental situation does not allow it to live). The work, which depicts an appreciation of resilience, is designed so visitors can touch, feel and even hug it.

As in previous editions, ARTJOG presents works in a variety of mediums. The exhibitors include 61 individual and group artists from across generations, including 14 child artists who participated through an open call. In addition, for the first time, we hosted ARTJOG KIDS as a program dedicated to the children's involvement, one of which was an interactive work by Tempa.

## 16. ARTJOG 2023 : MOTIF: LAMARAN

"The ARTJOG 2023 curatorial team is led by a collaboration of curators and artists: Hendro Wiyanto, a Jakarta-based curator and writer, and Nadiah Bamadhaj, a Malaysian artist based in Yogyakarta. The two chose the title "Motif: Lamaran" to connect the ideas and patterns of the artists' work while inviting them to reveal the thoughts and motivations behind their work. ARTJOG 2023 involves 73 artists, 51 adult artists from the invitation and open-call programs, and 22 child artists.

ARTJOG invited Mella Jaarsma to be this year's commissioned artist, featuring a limasan (a traditional Javanese house) that holds her works between 2000 and 2023. Mella Jaarsma has contributed significantly to the art world over 30 years of her career. The three motifs that attract Mella Jaarsma's attention in her artistic explorations are shadow, second skin, and the relationship between body and inhabited space. In addition, in the ARTJOG Kids program, ARTJOG invited Erwin Windu Pranata to create an interactive work. This work involves children from Rumah Belajar Ummasa, Bandung, in the creation process.

This year, ARTJOG also refined its idea of involving friends with disabilities by providing a Pusat Layanan Disabilitas (Disability Service Center) so that ARTJOG can become a medium for raising awareness and understanding of disability and promoting equality and acceptance of individual diversity. The transformation of the performance program that has been present since 2017 is manifested in the performance ARTJOG.

## 17. ARTJOG 2024 : MOTIF: RAMALAN

In this edition, ARTJOG offered Motif: Ramalan as its theme, a theme that sets out to dissect the boundaries of time, space, and the relationship between the two in understanding an event. Featuring the works of 48 individual and group adult artists from local and abroad (30 invited artists and 18 open call artists), as well as 36 children and youth artists who passed the selection process. As a continuation of the Motif series from the previous year, the theme Motif: Ramalan was devised by ARTJOG curator team and a guest curator, Hendro Wiyanto (a writer and a curator from Jakarta), to invite artists to explore the past history and the possible future events. This year, ARTJOG invited Agus Suwage and Titarubi as commission artists to respond and translate the chosen theme and display their works on the façade of ARTJOG.

Apart from that, ARTJOG also invited dancer Rianto and musician Risky Summerbee & The Honeythief along with 57 other performing artists to present their ideas and works in performance. ARTJOG x Bakti Budaya Djarum Foundation program. As an effort to encourage and expand awareness of equality that started 2 years ago, this year ARTJOG launched a new program with Pusat Layanan Disabilitas (Disability Service Center) entitled Love ARTJOG. This spirit is not only limited to access to services and facilities, but also actively involves friends with disabilities in several programs, such as exhibition, exhibition tour and performance.

### 2.1.3. Stakeholders and Collaborators of ARTJOG

Heri Pemas stated in the interview that artists and the public are the main stakeholders of ARTJOG. Without artists, ARTJOG will have nothing to exhibit;

and without the public audiences, there will be no people to see the artists' works. ARTJOG can still carry on without the support of the government, as long as there are the two main stakeholders. While artists and the public are regarded as the main stakeholders, it is undeniable that ARTJOG would not be as big as it is right now if it weren't for the help of external stakeholders such as the regional and national government, international cultural bodies, NGOs, and so on.

ARTJOG appears to have a mutually beneficial relationship with the government of the Special Region of Yogyakarta. The establishment and the ever-growing ARTJOG attracts many people to Yogyakarta, improving the economy and the creative arts ecosystem in the region. While it is not disclosed how much the Yogyakarta government supported ARTJOG financially, *Dinas Kebudayaan DIY* (Cultural Agency of the Special Region of Yogyakarta) and *Dana Keistimewaan DIY* (Special Funding of the Special Region of Yogyakarta) were listed as sponsors (ARTJOG, 2024e). The government of Yogyakarta welcomed and embraced the existence of ARTJOG as part of their art tourism, and have also shown support in the form of media partnerships.

At the national level, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, along with the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, and other national funding schemes such as Dana Indonesiana, LPDP, and Wonderful Indonesia were also listed as sponsors. Several nonprofit and for-profit organizations were also listed as sponsors, namely Jogja Festivals, Bakti Budaya Djarum Foundation, Pertamina, BCA, PT Pegadaian, Greenpeace, Sekolah Cikal, Sekolah Murid Merdeka, Wardah, Makeover, Tavi (ARTJOG, 2024e). Bakti

Budaya Djarum Foundation's support in ARTJOG can be seen through the "Performa" program, presenting live performances and a space for meeting and discussion (ARTJOG, 2024d).

ARTJOG's team were able to disclose some of the international governmental stakeholders that have engaged in collaboration with ARTJOG, including the British Council (UK), Japan Foundation (Jepang), Erasmus Huis (Netherlands), Goethe Institut (Germany), Institut Français d'Indonésie (France), and the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth of Singapore. Collaborative programs with universities abroad have also happened in 2024, in which 2 professors along with their students from Victoria College of The Arts, Melbourne, presented their works in an ARTJOG exhibition.

## **2.1. Indonesia's Art and Cultural Diplomacy Agenda**

This section will provide an overview on the history of arts and cultural diplomacy efforts by the government of Indonesia, and current efforts through its two ministries, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (MoECRT).

### **2.1.1. Brief History**

Cohen (2019) divided Indonesia's history with arts diplomacy into three eras: 1) beginnings—or the old order era, 2) the new order era, and 3) recent years. The first era refers to after the independence of Indonesia was declared. While there are already cultural diplomacy efforts by the Dutch to send Indonesian artists internationally to justify colonization, the first president of Indonesia, Sukarno, was focused on showcasing Indonesian culture so that it can be regarded

as equal to other cultures in the world. An early post-independence cultural diplomacy effort was the ‘Dancers of Bali’ world tour, which brought Balinese dancers and gamelan music from Peliatan village to the international audience. Cohen further noted that Sukarno’s most notable contribution to arts diplomacy was the establishment of the Ramayana Ballet in 1961. In his diplomatic events, Sukarno also frequently presented Javanese and Balinese dancers to charm ambassadors and guests.

In contrast to the flamboyant and art-loving Sukarno, the president stepping in his stead in the new order, Suharto, did not have high interest in the arts and rarely attended arts shows. However, Suharto introduced the Darmasiswa scholarship scheme for foreign students—mainly ASEAN nationalities—to learn Indonesian forms of arts, such as traditional dance, gamelan, puppetry (*wayang*), and crafts. Alumni then proceeded to continue as performers or teachers in their respective home countries. In the 1980s, came Mochtar Kusumaatmadja who took cultural diplomacy seriously as a national interest. This era was also when Indonesia made a truly international event akin to an expo or biennale to further build its good image.

The third era in Cohen’s work refers to recent years starting from 1998, also known as the reformation era. In this era, work in promoting Indonesian culture has expanded to beyond traditional forms of art. Writers, filmmakers, fashion designers, and workers in other creative fields are recognized for their contribution in establishing Indonesia’s position in the global creative economy.

Indonesian embassies also played a part in presenting traditional dances, arts, clothes, handicrafts, and more, in an international scope.

Nursita & Sahide (2018) complements Cohen's compilation of Indonesia's international exposure events with an overview on Indonesia's national branding efforts in the country, one of them being Sukarno's affinity for landmarks. The authors also mentioned how international exhibitions also became a part of the nation's cultural diplomacy efforts. The exhibitions, one of them being "*Pameran KIAS (Kebudayaan Indonesia di Amerika Serikat)*"—or, Indonesian Culture in the United States—also facilitated the promotion of non-oil-and-gas natural resources export and tourism of Indonesia.

#### 2.1.2. Indonesia's Cultural Diplomacy Agenda in Recent Years

This thesis will highlight two ministries that are directly involved in the implementation of cultural diplomacy: Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (MoECRT)—now divided into three separate ministries: 1) Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, 2) Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology, and 3) Ministry of Culture. Note that the references in this subchapter are published in 2024 or earlier, therefore the use of MoECRT will be normalized.

The MoFA regards art and culture as an asset for soft power diplomacy. Arts and culture is of importance in bridging people-to-people contact between the citizens of Indonesia and other countries. The MoFA regards that the relationship built in the grassroots contributes in strengthening bilateral relations and understanding between countries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia,

2025). To further support Indonesia's relations with other countries, the ministry provides scholarships in the name Indonesia Arts and Cultural Scholarship (IACS) (*Beasiswa Seni dan Budaya Indonesia*, or BSBI for short). The program aims to strengthen interaction and cooperation between the youths of Indonesia and partnering countries since 2003.

Cohen (2019) mentioned that IACS complemented the still existing Darmasiswa program, which was organized by Indonesia's Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) up until 2024. By the time this thesis was written, due to changes in government and the cabinet of ministers, the Darmasiswa program postponed their registration process until further notice. While it is unclear which ministry or ministries Darmasiswa will be organized under, as *Kabinet Indonesia Maju* passes the torch to the *Kabinet Merah Putih*, and the MoECRT was split into three separate ministries, Darmasiswa is still expected to run once the organization is sorted out. (Darmasiswa RI, 2025)

Kurnia (2016) expanded on how IACS became a tool for cultural diplomacy. The scholarship's awardees consist of foreign students interested in learning the arts and culture of Indonesia. Through the program, the awardees participate in learning activities and social engagements with local communities, one of the examples being learning to dance in local dance studios. These learning activities are intended to "grow the students' love for Indonesia", which advertently results in the spreading of Indonesian culture by the students in their home countries.

It is important to note how COVID-19 affected Indonesia's diplomacy agenda in general. As detailed in their 2020-2024 Strategic Plan document, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) was assigned by the president at the time, Joko Widodo, to optimize their economy and health diplomacy as a response to the pandemic. The MoFA also enacted the 4+1 Foreign Policy Priority, which stood for the strengthening of 1) economy diplomacy, 2) protection diplomacy, 3) sovereignty and nation diplomacy, and 4) increasing contribution and leadership of Indonesia in the region and the world. The plus one stood for strengthening the diplomacy infrastructure. (*Rencana Strategis Kementerian Luar Negeri 2020-2024*, 2020) Though not included explicitly as priority in the document, culture is still considered as an important asset in diplomacy, in particular public diplomacy; and IACS is one of the manifestations of this (Ibid., p. 66).

The shift in the practice of arts and cultural diplomacy in Indonesia during the COVID-19 pandemic era can be seen through how the aforementioned programs adapted to the situation. IACS, for example, cancelled its annual call for scholarship participants in 2020. Before resuming its scholarship in 2021 by offering virtual classes and ceremonies accessible through teleconferencing tools, IACS kept the alumni network connected through virtual meet-ups, seminars, and group videos, as seen on their instagram posts (IACS/BSBI, 2020).

Nurisnaeny et al. (2024) also brushed upon Indonesia's practice of cultural diplomacy in its G20 summit presidency in 2022, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The presidency became an opportunity for Indonesia to showcase its cultural heritage and tourism through various programs, performances, and tours

(p. 24). Relevant to this study, the work also mentioned how non-governmental cultural actors such as galleries, museums, and tourism sites also participated in the G20 euphoria by attracting international and domestic tourists with music festivals and exhibitions, thus supporting Indonesia's cultural diplomacy after the COVID-19 protocols gets gradually lifted up (p. 28).

From the overview above, it can be seen that Indonesia practices arts and cultural diplomacy for several reasons, such as to boost economy and trade and further national interests. It is clear that Indonesia seeks to strengthen its international position and soft power through cultural diplomacy as a tool (Susiatiningsih, et al., 2022), although Indonesia still has a long way to go before it reaches the success level of a notable blueprint in mind, South Korea. Their music, cosmetic, and technology industry boosts their branding and overall soft power that contributes to their economy and trade (Viartasiwi et al., 2021; Yasa et al., 2023) The work of Nursita & Sahide (2018) mentioned another issue in Indonesia's cultural diplomacy agenda that is rather stuck on introducing the culture than becoming an influence to the world. Even then, only certain aspects of Indonesian culture are being owned and represented in the aforementioned programs by the MoFA and MoECRT, such as the Balinese dances and Javanese gamelan. The next chapter will argue how contemporary art as part of Indonesian culture should be recognized and prioritized in national diplomacy efforts.