



# Contesting A Cultural Style (Makassar Painting And Local Socio-Cultural Adaptation)

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**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze: (1) the social mechanisms of contestation in the Makassar painting arena) ((2) the process of adaptation of local cultural symbols and values in the creative practice of Makassar painting) ((3) the social and artistic strategies of Makassar painters in negotiating local cultural authenticity with the demands of the art market) (and (4) the impact of art commodification on local cultural representation, symbolic meaning, and the sustainability of visual traditions. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of painting as a social practice. The research subjects are Makassar painters who are active in various art activities, supported by accompanying informants such as curators, academics, and art enthusiasts. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, observation, documentation, and analysis of artworks. To ensure data validity, this study uses source and method triangulation techniques. The results show that Makassar painting operates as an arena of symbolic contestation that is not yet fully institutionalized in a stable manner. In this arena, artistic legitimacy is formed through social relations, informal networks, and symbolic recognition mechanisms. Makassar painters adapt local Bugis-Makassar cultural symbols and values as part of their creative and social strategies to maintain their position in the art arena. The adaptation of local culture is not static, but rather undergoes a process of negotiation and transformation of meaning in line with the entry of the logic of the art market and the cultural industry. This study also found that the process of commodification of art influences the way local cultural symbols are represented in paintings. On the one hand, commodification opens up economic opportunities and the sustainability of art practices) (on the other hand, it has the potential to reduce the symbolic meaning of local culture to commercial value. Using Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, this study asserts that Makassar painting is a social practice that reflects the dialectical relationship between arena, habitus, and capital, and is a form of local socio-cultural adaptation in the context of contemporary society.

**Keywords:** Makassar Painting, Art Arena, Local Cultural Adaptation, Symbolic Contestation, Sociology of Art.

## Introduction

Painting has never existed as a purely autonomous artistic practice detached from the social structures in which it is produced and circulated. Rather than being solely an aesthetic expression, painting functions as a social practice embedded in power relations, systems of cultural legitimacy, economic interests, and symbolic hierarchies. Contemporary sociology of art emphasizes that artistic production takes place within a structured social space, or field, where various actors compete for recognition, authority, and legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1993). Within this field, artistic value is not inherent in the artwork itself but is socially constructed through interactions among artists, curators, collectors, cultural institutions, and the market. In recent decades, the expansion of cultural industries and the increasing penetration of market logic into artistic production have intensified the commodification of art. Artistic practices are increasingly shaped by demands for visibility, marketability, and symbolic capital, often blurring the boundary between cultural expression and economic production (Hesmondhalgh, 2019). This transformation has placed artists in a structurally ambivalent position: while the market provides opportunities for economic sustainability and wider recognition, it simultaneously imposes constraints on artistic autonomy and cultural meaning.

Within this global context, local art scenes offer a crucial empirical site for examining how artists negotiate the tensions between cultural identity, symbolic legitimacy, and market pressures. The case of Makassar painting is particularly significant in this regard. Makassar, as a major cultural and economic hub in Eastern Indonesia, represents a dynamic socio-cultural space where local traditions, modern artistic practices, and global cultural flows intersect. The development of painting in Makassar cannot be understood merely as a regional artistic phenomenon, but as a socio-cultural field shaped by historical trajectories, local cultural values, institutional limitations, and emerging market forces. Makassar painting has increasingly drawn upon Bugis–Makassar cultural symbols, narratives, and visual traditions as a key resource for artistic production. These cultural elements are mobilized not only as aesthetic references but also as symbolic assets that enable artists to differentiate themselves within the art field. Local cultural identity thus becomes a form of cultural capital that can be strategically transformed into symbolic recognition and, potentially, economic value. This process reflects a broader pattern observed in non-metropolitan art fields, where local identity often functions as a marker of authenticity and distinction within a competitive cultural market (Prior, 2022).

However, the strategic use of local culture in painting also raises critical questions regarding commodification and cultural meaning. When cultural symbols are repeatedly reproduced to meet market expectations, there is a risk that their symbolic depth and social significance may be reduced to visual stereotypes or decorative motifs. In this sense, the commodification of art may lead to a symbolic reduction of culture, transforming complex cultural narratives into consumable aesthetic products (Adorno, 2002). The Makassar art field thus presents a tension between cultural preservation and cultural transformation under market conditions. From a Bourdieusian perspective, this tension can be understood as a form of symbolic struggle within the art field. Artists do not merely produce artworks)

(they engage in strategic practices shaped by their habitus, available forms of capital, and positions within the field. Choices related to style, theme, and cultural representation are not purely individual preferences but responses to the structural constraints and opportunities embedded in the art field (Bourdieu, 1990). In Makassar, where institutional support for contemporary art remains relatively weak, informal networks, personal relations, and symbolic recognition play a decisive role in shaping artistic careers and hierarchies.

Despite the growing visibility of Makassar painting in regional and national art events, academic studies on this phenomenon remain limited. Existing research has largely focused on aesthetic analysis, stylistic categorization, or biographical narratives of individual artists. While such studies provide valuable insights, they often overlook the broader social mechanisms that structure artistic practice. Specifically, there is a lack of research that situates Makassar painting within the framework of sociological theory, particularly in relation to contestation, cultural adaptation, and commodification. This article addresses this gap by examining Makassar painting as a socio-cultural field of contestation. It conceptualizes painting not as an isolated artistic activity but as a socially embedded practice shaped by struggles over symbolic legitimacy, cultural meaning, and market value. By employing Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, this study analyzes how local artists adapt cultural symbols, negotiate authenticity, and strategically position themselves within a changing art field.

### **Research Problem**

The central problem addressed in this study concerns the social mechanisms that structure the field of Makassar painting and the ways in which artists navigate cultural and market pressures. While local culture serves as a key source of artistic inspiration and symbolic capital, its integration into market-oriented artistic practices generates ambivalent outcomes. On the one hand, it enables the sustainability and visibility of local art) (on the other hand, it risks reducing cultural meaning to exchange value.

Accordingly, this study is guided by the following research questions:

- How is the field of Makassar painting structured in terms of social relations, power dynamics, and symbolic legitimacy?
- How do Makassar painters adapt local cultural symbols and values within their artistic practices?
- What social and artistic strategies do painters employ to negotiate cultural authenticity and market demands?
- How does the commodification of art affect the representation of local culture and the sustainability of visual traditions in Makassar?

## Research Objectives

This study aims to achieve several interrelated objectives. First, it seeks to analyze the structure of the Makassar painting field as a site of symbolic contestation involving artists, cultural intermediaries, and market actors. Second, it aims to examine the processes through which local cultural symbols are adapted and transformed within contemporary painting practices. Third, the study explores the strategies employed by artists to balance symbolic legitimacy, cultural authenticity, and economic sustainability. Finally, it investigates the broader implications of art commodification for the representation and continuity of local visual traditions.

## Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in both its theoretical and empirical contributions. Theoretically, it extends the application of Bourdieu's sociology of art to a non-Western, non-metropolitan context, thereby enriching comparative discussions on cultural production beyond dominant Western art centers. By focusing on Makassar, this study highlights how art fields operate under conditions of limited institutionalization and strong reliance on informal networks. Empirically, the study provides an in-depth analysis of a local art scene that has received relatively little scholarly attention. It offers insights into how artists in peripheral cultural contexts actively negotiate global market forces while maintaining connections to local cultural identities. These findings contribute to broader debates on cultural globalization, artistic autonomy, and the political economy of culture. Practically, the study may inform cultural policy and creative industry development by highlighting the structural challenges faced by local artists. Understanding the dynamics of symbolic contestation and commodification can support the design of more sustainable cultural interventions that balance economic viability with cultural integrity.

## Structure of the Article

This article is organized into five sections. Following the introduction, the second section outlines the theoretical framework, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus, and capital. The third section describes the qualitative research methodology employed in the study. The fourth section presents and discusses the empirical findings, focusing on contestation, cultural adaptation, artistic strategies, and commodification. The final section concludes by summarizing the main findings and discussing their theoretical and practical implications.

## Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a case study design to examine Makassar painting as a socio-cultural field of contestation and adaptation. A qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for this research because the object of inquiry—artistic practice, cultural meaning, symbolic legitimacy, and social strategy—cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurement alone. Instead, these phenomena require interpretive analysis that attends to context, meaning, and social relations.

The research is grounded in an interpretivist sociological paradigm, which views social reality as socially constructed through interaction, discourse, and symbolic practices. Within this paradigm, art is understood not merely as an aesthetic object but as a social practice embedded in historical, cultural, and structural conditions. The case study design allows for an in-depth exploration of the specific dynamics of Makassar painting while situating these dynamics within broader theoretical debates in the sociology of art. Makassar painting is treated as an instrumental case rather than a representative one. The objective is not to generalize statistically to all local art scenes but to generate theoretically informed insights into how cultural adaptation, symbolic contestation, and commodification operate in a non-metropolitan art field. This approach aligns with sociological case study traditions that emphasize analytical generalization through theory rather than empirical generalization through sampling.

### **Theoretical Framework as Methodological Orientation**

The methodological orientation of this study is informed by Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, particularly the concepts of field, habitus, capital, doxa, and *illusio*. Rather than functioning solely as a post hoc analytical framework, Bourdieu's theory also guides the research design, data collection, and interpretation. The concept of the field is used to map the structure of relations among actors involved in Makassar painting, including painters, curators, gallery managers, collectors, cultural institutions, and informal art communities. Habitus provides a lens through which painters' dispositions, aesthetic choices, and adaptive strategies are interpreted as historically formed and socially conditioned practices. Various forms of capital—cultural, social, symbolic, and economic—serve as analytical tools to examine how legitimacy, recognition, and sustainability are produced and contested within the field.

By adopting this framework, the study avoids reducing artistic practice to individual intention or market determinism. Instead, it situates painters' actions within a relational structure that both enables and constrains their strategies. This theoretical orientation is particularly suitable for analyzing art fields characterized by weak institutionalization and strong reliance on informal networks, as is the case in Makassar.

### **Research Site and Context**

The research was conducted in Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Makassar was selected due to its strategic position as a cultural and economic center in Eastern Indonesia and its growing visibility in regional and national art networks. The city hosts various art-related activities, including exhibitions, community-based art initiatives, independent galleries, and collaborations with national cultural institutions.

Despite this vibrancy, the art field in Makassar remains relatively under-institutionalized compared to major art centers such as Jakarta or Yogyakarta. Formal art markets, standardized curatorial systems, and stable cultural funding mechanisms are limited. As a result, artistic careers and recognition are often shaped through informal networks, personal relationships, and situational opportunities. This context makes

Makassar an analytically rich site for examining how artists negotiate symbolic legitimacy and economic sustainability under structural constraints.

### **Research Subjects and Informants**

The primary research subjects of this study are painters based in Makassar who are actively involved in artistic production and exhibition activities. Selection of participants was conducted using purposive sampling, guided by criteria relevant to the research objectives. These criteria included: (1) active engagement in painting practice, (2) participation in exhibitions or art-related events, and (3) demonstrated engagement with local cultural themes or symbols in their work.

In addition to painters, the study includes supporting informants such as curators, art academics, gallery managers, and art audiences. These informants provide complementary perspectives on mechanisms of legitimacy, evaluation, and market dynamics within the Makassar art field. Including multiple categories of informants allows the study to capture the relational nature of the field and avoid a one-sided artist-centered perspective. The number of participants was determined by the principle of data saturation, whereby data collection continued until no new significant themes emerged. This approach ensures depth of analysis rather than breadth of coverage.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

Data were collected using multiple qualitative methods to capture the complexity of artistic practice and social relations within the art field. These methods include in-depth interviews, participant observation, documentation analysis, and visual analysis of artworks.

### **In-depth Interviews**

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews constitute the primary data collection method. Interviews were conducted with painters and supporting informants to explore their experiences, perceptions, and strategies within the art field. The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility, enabling participants to articulate their perspectives while ensuring coverage of key themes related to cultural adaptation, symbolic legitimacy, and market negotiation. Interview questions focused on topics such as artistic background, sources of inspiration, use of local cultural symbols, experiences with exhibitions and markets, relationships with curators and collectors, and perceptions of cultural authenticity. Interviews were conducted in a conversational manner to encourage reflexive and narrative responses, which are essential for understanding habitus and practical sense.

### **Participant Observation**

Participant observation was conducted during exhibitions, art events, community gatherings, and informal interactions within art spaces. This method allowed the researcher to observe social interactions, evaluative practices, and symbolic hierarchies in situ. Observation focused on how artworks were displayed and discussed, how recognition was distributed, and how actors positioned themselves within the field. Field notes were recorded systematically to capture both descriptive details and analytical reflections. Participant observation provided valuable contextual data that complemented interview

narratives and helped identify discrepancies between articulated discourse and practical action.

### **Documentation and Archival Analysis**

Documentation analysis included exhibition catalogs, promotional materials, artist statements, media coverage, and institutional documents related to art events in Makassar. These materials were analyzed to trace patterns of representation, thematic emphasis, and discursive framing of local culture within the art field. Documentation served as an important source for examining how cultural symbols are publicly articulated and how legitimacy is constructed through textual and visual narratives. It also allowed for historical contextualization of the development of Makassar painting.

### **Visual Analysis of Artworks**

Artworks produced by participating painters were analyzed as cultural texts. Visual analysis focused on themes, symbols, stylistic choices, and modes of cultural representation. Rather than evaluating aesthetic quality, the analysis examined how visual elements function as symbolic resources within the field. This approach treats artworks as both products and producers of social meaning, reflecting the interplay between habitus, cultural capital, and field dynamics.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Data analysis was conducted iteratively and reflexively, following qualitative analytical principles. Interview transcripts, field notes, documents, and visual materials were coded thematically using a combination of deductive and inductive strategies. Deductive coding was informed by key theoretical concepts such as field, habitus, capital, legitimacy, and commodification. Inductive coding allowed for the emergence of themes grounded in empirical data, such as informal networking, aesthetic flexibility, and pragmatic adaptation. This dual strategy ensured that analysis remained theoretically informed while being sensitive to contextual specificity. Analytical memos were used to develop connections between themes and to refine interpretations. Throughout the analysis, attention was paid to relational patterns rather than isolated variables, consistent with a Bourdieusian methodological approach.

### **Validity and Trustworthiness**

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed triangulation of data sources and methods. Interviews, observations, documents, and visual materials were cross-checked to validate interpretations. Triangulation helped reduce the risk of bias associated with relying on a single method or perspective. Reflexivity was also an integral component of the research process. The researcher continuously reflected on their positional, assumptions, and potential influence on data interpretation. This reflexive stance is essential in qualitative research, particularly in studies of cultural practice where meaning is negotiated and contested.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations were addressed throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their consent was obtained prior to data collection. Anonymity was maintained where requested, and sensitive information was handled with care. The study adhered to ethical standards for qualitative sociological research.

## **Limitations of the Study**

While the qualitative case study design enables in-depth analysis, it also entails limitations. Findings are context-specific and not intended for statistical generalization. However, the analytical insights generated through theory-driven interpretation provide transferable understanding relevant to similar art fields in non-metropolitan contexts.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **The Structure of the Makassar Painting Field**

The findings reveal that the field of painting in Makassar is structured as a relatively autonomous yet weakly institutionalized cultural field. Unlike major art centers in Indonesia, such as Jakarta or Yogyakarta, Makassar lacks a stable and formalized art market, permanent galleries with strong curatorial authority, and consistent cultural funding mechanisms. As a result, symbolic legitimacy and recognition are not primarily produced through formal institutions but through informal networks, personal relations, and episodic cultural events.

Within this field, painters occupy differentiated positions based on their accumulated forms of capital. Senior painters with long-standing reputations tend to possess higher levels of symbolic capital, derived from exhibition history, peer recognition, and associations with cultural elites. Younger or emerging painters, by contrast, rely more heavily on social capital in the form of community networks and collaborative initiatives to gain visibility. This stratification illustrates Bourdieu's assertion that artistic fields are structured spaces of positions rather than collections of individual actors (Bourdieu, 1993).

The absence of a dominant institutional authority results in a fluid hierarchy that is constantly negotiated. Recognition is situational and often contingent upon participation in specific exhibitions or cultural events. This condition intensifies symbolic contestation, as artists must continuously reaffirm their legitimacy through visible engagement within the field. Consequently, artistic practice in Makassar is characterized by strategic flexibility rather than rigid aesthetic positioning.

### **Local Culture as Cultural and Symbolic Capital**

A central empirical finding concerns the strategic use of local Bugis–Makassar cultural elements in painting practices. Painters frequently incorporate symbols such as traditional boats, mythological figures, local rituals, and maritime landscapes into their works. These cultural references function as a form of embodied cultural capital, reflecting painters' familiarity with local history and social values.

However, the findings indicate that local culture is not merely reproduced but selectively adapted to suit contemporary artistic and market contexts. Artists reinterpret traditional symbols through modern visual styles, abstraction, or conceptual framing. This process allows them to maintain a sense of cultural authenticity while aligning their work with contemporary art discourses.

From a Bourdieusian perspective, this adaptation represents a strategic conversion of cultural capital into symbolic capital. By emphasizing local identity, painters distinguish themselves within the field and position their work as culturally meaningful and authentic. This distinction becomes particularly important in exhibition contexts, where curators and audiences often seek artworks that represent “local uniqueness” as a marker of value.

At the same time, the repeated mobilization of similar cultural motifs produces a homogenizing effect within the field. Several informants noted that certain symbols have become “expected” or “marketable,” leading to aesthetic repetition. This finding highlights a tension between cultural differentiation and symbolic standardization, suggesting that local culture operates simultaneously as a resource and a constraint.

### **Habitus and Artistic Dispositions**

The analysis of painters’ narratives reveals that artistic practice in Makassar is deeply shaped by habitus formed through social background, educational experience, and prolonged engagement with local cultural environments. Many painters describe their artistic choices not as calculated strategies but as “natural” or “intuitive,” reflecting what Bourdieu terms practical sense.

This practical sense manifests in painters’ sensitivity to audience expectations, exhibition opportunities, and cultural norms without explicit strategic planning. For instance, artists often adjust thematic emphasis or visual style depending on the exhibition context, while maintaining a coherent artistic identity. Such adjustments are not perceived as compromises but as legitimate adaptations consistent with their artistic dispositions.

The findings suggest that habitus enables painters to navigate structural constraints creatively rather than mechanically. Artists internalize the logic of the field, allowing them to respond flexibly to changing conditions. This supports Bourdieu’s argument that habitus mediates between structure and agency, producing practices that are neither fully determined nor entirely voluntary.

### **Market Negotiation and Artistic Strategy**

Market dynamics play an increasingly significant role in shaping artistic practices in Makassar. Although the art market remains relatively limited, opportunities for sales through exhibitions, commissions, and private collectors influence artistic decisions. The findings indicate that painters adopt varied strategies in response to market pressures.

Some artists consciously produce works that are more accessible and visually appealing to broader audiences, particularly those incorporating recognizable cultural motifs. These works are often described as “safe” or “sellable,” providing economic stability. Other artists attempt to balance market-oriented production with more

experimental works intended for symbolic recognition rather than immediate economic gain.

This dual strategy reflects a pragmatic orientation toward artistic sustainability. Rather than rejecting the market outright, painters negotiate its demands while seeking to preserve artistic autonomy. Such negotiation challenges simplistic dichotomies between “art for art’s sake” and “commercial art,” revealing a more complex field logic in which economic and symbolic interests coexist.

However, the findings also show that prolonged exposure to market logic can subtly reshape artistic habitus. Over time, painters may internalize market preferences, leading to self-regulation and anticipatory adaptation. This process aligns with critical cultural economy perspectives that emphasize the normalization of commodification within cultural production (Hesmondhalgh, 2019).

### **Symbolic Contestation and Legitimacy**

Symbolic contestation emerges as a defining feature of the Makassar painting field. Painters compete not only for economic resources but also for recognition, prestige, and interpretive authority. Legitimacy is constructed through participation in exhibitions, endorsement by curators, media visibility, and peer acknowledgment.

The findings reveal that curators and cultural intermediaries play a pivotal role in shaping symbolic hierarchies. Their selection practices, curatorial narratives, and aesthetic preferences influence which forms of cultural representation are valorized. As a result, painters often align their work with curatorial discourse to enhance visibility and legitimacy.

This dynamic underscores the relational nature of symbolic power in the art field. Legitimacy is not inherent in artworks but emerges through social recognition. Painters who successfully align their cultural narratives with dominant discourses gain symbolic advantage, while others may remain marginal despite artistic competence.

### **Commodification and Cultural Meaning**

One of the most significant findings concerns the impact of commodification on cultural meaning. While the incorporation of local culture enhances visibility and market appeal, it also risks reducing complex cultural narratives to visual signifiers. Several informants expressed concern that repeated representation of certain symbols leads to superficial interpretations detached from their original social context.

This process reflects what critical theorists describe as cultural simplification under commodification. Cultural symbols become exchangeable aesthetic elements rather than carriers of social memory or collective meaning (Adorno, 2002). In Makassar painting, this tendency is evident in the standardization of visual motifs for market consumption.

Nevertheless, the findings also reveal forms of resistance. Some painters consciously reinterpret cultural symbols in critical or reflexive ways, challenging stereotypical representations. These practices demonstrate that commodification does not entirely eliminate cultural agency but reshapes the terrain on which symbolic struggles occur.

## Discussion

### **Makassar Painting as a Field of Adaptation**

Taken together, the findings illustrate that Makassar painting operates as a field of adaptation rather than simple cultural reproduction. Artists navigate a complex interplay of cultural identity, symbolic legitimacy, and market logic. Their practices are shaped by structural constraints yet mediated by habitus and strategic improvisation.

Applying Bourdieu's framework allows for an understanding of how local culture functions as both capital and contested meaning within the field. The Makassar case demonstrates that cultural adaptation is not merely a response to external market forces but an internally negotiated process embedded in social relations and symbolic struggles.

This study contributes to the sociology of art by highlighting the dynamics of artistic production in non-metropolitan contexts. It shows that peripheral art fields are not passive recipients of global cultural trends but active sites of negotiation, adaptation, and contestation.

Contemporary painting in Makassar has been described as a key arena where identity is actively contested at personal, communal, and national levels (Faisal et al, 2018). Local culture—such as Bugis–Makassar myths, costume, and maritime symbols—functions as a major visual resource for painters in the city (Iqbal, 2022) (Jayadi, 2013). This resonates with wider discussions of art and identity in Southeast Asia, where visual practices mediate the negotiation of tradition and modernity (Subagio, 2020). At the same time, the field of contemporary art in Eastern Indonesia is shaped by uneven access to institutions, networks, and forms of capital (Latief, 2019). The history and role of the Makassar Arts Council show how formal institutions help frame and legitimize particular aesthetic tendencies in the city (Makassar Arts Council, 2019). As a cultural hub, Makassar has been positioned within a broader “cultural cities” agenda that links heritage, creativity, and urban development (British Council, 2021). Within this setting, pilgrimage practices such as the journey to Bawakaraeng Mountain illustrate how Islamic and local identities are contested and re-articulated, providing a rich socio-religious backdrop for visual representation (Pabbajah, 2021). The much older visual legacy of Sulawesi, spanning from prehistoric cave art to contemporary imagery, underlines the depth of visual culture that artists can draw upon (Pusat Penelitian Kebudayaan Makassar, 2015).

Visual strategies in Makassar painting often dialogue with other forms of contemporary practice, including the curatorial and display logics seen in Indonesian art galleries (Subagyo & Pramudita, 2023). Comparative work on intricate pattern traditions in Indonesia and Kazakhstan highlights how ornamental systems can embody intertwined cultural histories, which is relevant to painters working with textile and motif references (Tassygozhina & Astuti, 2024). Studies of local wisdom in South Sulawesi demonstrate how values, narratives, and symbols are transformed into contemporary visual culture across media (Iqbal & Yusuf, 2020). On the level of public space, mural art has been used as a tool of visual communication, carrying social messages while also asserting local identity within Indonesian cities (Pratama & Sari, 2024). In Makassar, the evolution of one graffiti artist's work over more than a decade shows how street-based practices negotiate style, authorship,

and urban context (Nur, 2024). Broader studies at the intersection of visual symbolism and design remind us that choices of form, color, and composition act as carriers of complex psychological and cultural meanings (Siregar, 2023). Similarly, work on the “art-as-identity” function of traditional weapon motifs, such as keris blade patterns, demonstrates how heritage forms can be integrated into modern abstract painting without losing their emblematic charge (Hasan, 2025). In Eastern Indonesia, curatorial experiments and thematic recurrences in contemporary art have brought region-specific histories and concerns into national and international conversations (Rumata’ Artspace, 2019).

Theoretically, these developments are connected to larger debates on ideological contestation and nationalism in Indonesian visual narratives, including film (Waluyo, 2020). Post-colonial critiques of Indonesian national identity show how competing discourses of ethnicity, religion, and citizenship are negotiated in various cultural arenas, which parallels what is happening in visual art (Sodiqin, 2023). Within Makassar itself, studies on urban stigma, disability, and representation reveal how social hierarchies and spatial politics shape who is visible and how they are seen in the city (Taufik, 2023). City-level work on socio-cultural digital innovation suggests that creative and cultural practices—including art—are central components of new models for Indonesian “creative cities” (Pusat Inovasi Kota, 2022). Historical and contemporary accounts of Macassan journeys and merantau speak to longstanding patterns of mobility that have shaped Makassar’s cosmopolitan character and its visual imagination (Garland, 2016). In this wider Southeast Asian and Indonesian context, innovative practices of cultural identity in contemporary art show how artists adapt traditional forms to new media, platforms, and audiences (Rahman, 2023). Theater practices such as the Petta Puang group further demonstrate how visual aesthetics—through costume, gesture, and staging—participate in constructing and performing local identities (Yusran & Nurdin, 2015). Collectively, these studies indicate that Makassar’s painters operate within a dense web of religious practice, heritage, urban policy, public discourse, and regional mobility, all of which inform the “contesting cultural style” visible in their work (Faisal et al, 2018) (Iqbal, 2022) (Jayadi, 2013) (Latief, 2019) (Pabbajah, 2021) (Pusat Penelitian Kebudayaan Makassar, 2015). Finally, adherence to APA 7th-edition referencing guidelines ensures that these diverse sources are cited consistently and transparently throughout academic writing on Makassar painting and socio-cultural adaptation (Pancasila: Jurnal Keindonesiaan, 2024)

## Conclusion

This study has examined Makassar painting as a socio-cultural field shaped by symbolic contestation, cultural adaptation, and market negotiation. Departing from an aesthetic-centered understanding of art, the research conceptualized painting as a socially embedded practice, structured by power relations, forms of capital, and historically constituted dispositions. By applying Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practice, this study has demonstrated that artistic production in Makassar is neither a purely autonomous cultural expression nor a simple reflection of market forces, but a dynamic process of negotiation within a relatively weakly institutionalized art field.

The findings show that the field of Makassar painting is characterized by fluid hierarchies and situational legitimacy. In the absence of strong formal institutions, symbolic recognition is largely produced through informal networks, exhibition participation, and curatorial mediation. This condition intensifies symbolic struggles among artists, compelling them to continuously reaffirm their positions within the field. Artistic legitimacy, therefore, emerges relationally rather than intrinsically, confirming Bourdieu's argument that value in art is socially constructed through recognition and distinction.

A key contribution of this study lies in its analysis of local culture as both cultural and symbolic capital. Bugis–Makassar cultural elements function as strategic resources that enable painters to differentiate their work and assert authenticity within competitive exhibition and market contexts. However, the study also reveals that the repeated mobilization of local symbols generates ambivalent outcomes. While cultural identity enhances visibility and marketability, it simultaneously risks aesthetic standardization and symbolic simplification. This tension highlights the fragile balance between cultural preservation and commodification in contemporary artistic practice.

The analysis of habitus underscores the importance of embodied dispositions in shaping artistic strategies. Painters' adaptive practices are not merely rational calculations but are informed by practical sense developed through long-term engagement with local cultural environments and art communities. This practical sense enables artists to navigate structural constraints flexibly, adjusting to exhibition contexts and market demands without necessarily perceiving such adjustments as compromises of artistic integrity. In this regard, habitus operates as a mediating mechanism between structure and agency, allowing for creative adaptation within constraint.

Market negotiation emerges as another central dimension of the Makassar painting field. Although the local art market remains limited, economic considerations increasingly influence artistic production. Rather than adopting a binary stance toward commercialization, painters develop pragmatic strategies that combine market-oriented works with more experimental or symbolic productions. This dual orientation reflects a broader transformation of artistic practice under conditions of cultural commodification, where economic sustainability and symbolic legitimacy coexist in tension rather than mutual exclusion.

Importantly, the study demonstrates that commodification does not entirely erode cultural meaning or artistic agency. While market logic encourages the simplification and repetition of cultural symbols, artists retain the capacity to reinterpret and recontextualize these symbols in reflexive ways. Such practices reveal that symbolic struggle continues even within commodified cultural spaces, suggesting that artistic fields remain sites of contestation rather than passive arenas of market domination.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the sociology of art by extending Bourdieusian analysis to a non-metropolitan, non-Western context. It challenges the tendency of art sociology to focus on dominant cultural centers by demonstrating that peripheral art fields possess their own internal logics, forms of capital, and mechanisms of legitimacy. The Makassar case illustrates that local art scenes are not merely derivative but

actively negotiate global and national cultural forces through localized practices and meanings.

Methodologically, the qualitative case study approach proved effective in capturing the relational and processual nature of artistic practice. By combining interviews, observation, documentation, and visual analysis, the study was able to examine both articulated discourse and practical action, revealing the often implicit strategies through which artists navigate the field. The integration of theory into the research design strengthened the analytical depth and ensured that empirical findings were situated within broader sociological debates.

Despite its contributions, this study is not without limitations. Its findings are context-specific and do not aim for statistical generalization. Future research could extend comparative analysis to other regional art fields in Indonesia or Southeast Asia to explore similarities and differences in cultural adaptation and market negotiation. Longitudinal studies may also provide insight into how artistic habitus and field structures evolve over time under increasing market integration.

In conclusion, this study affirms that Makassar painting constitutes a field of sociocultural adaptation marked by ongoing symbolic struggle. Artists operate within structural constraints but actively negotiate cultural identity, legitimacy, and economic sustainability through embodied practices and strategic choices. Understanding these dynamics is essential for appreciating contemporary art not merely as aesthetic production, but as a socially situated practice deeply intertwined with cultural meaning, power, and change.

### **Suggestion**

Future research on contesting cultural style in Makassar painting should undertake long-term, multi-site studies that compare studio-based works, public murals, and community art projects to see how local symbols, religious practices, and urban policies differently shape visual identity, while also examining how digital platforms (social media, online exhibitions, NFTs) transform the circulation and meaning of Makassar-based imagery) (practically, stakeholders could develop structured collaboration programs between painters, cultural institutions (such as arts councils and local heritage centers), schools, and city government to co-create exhibitions, residencies, and curriculum materials that explicitly foreground Bugis–Makassar visual heritage, encourage youth participation, and support artists with training in curation, documentation, and international networking so that local sociolect-cultural adaptation is not only represented on canvas but also embedded in sustainable cultural policy and creative-economy planning.

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