

Cinematography Aesthetic Analysis of the Controversial Documentary Film "Ice Cold: Murder, Coffee, and Jessica Wongso"

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Abstract: Documentary film is a medium used to present reality through visuals recorded based on existing facts. In its presentation, this film can include human thoughts, referring to documentary film theories that depict subjects in the form of real people, events or situations. This study aims to analyze the cinematographic aesthetics of the documentary film entitled "Ice Cold: Murder, Coffee, and Jessica Wongso" which depicts a horrendous murder incident in Indonesia several years ago. Using qualitative methods based on literature studies from various sources, this study found that this film uses direct recording methods and reconstruction of events to convey information and build the audience's opinion regarding the events discussed. The research results show that "Ice Cold: Murder, Coffee, and Jessica Wongso" is included in the conventional expository category, which is often used in television documentary production. This type places more emphasis on narrative and logical argumentation, with a single narrator who is often dubbed the "voice of God".

Keywords: cinematographic aesthetics, coffee, documentary film, ice cold, murder.

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Introduction

Documentary films are those that document or present reality (Nichols, 2010). Describing the visuals that are recorded are based on existing facts, but human thoughts can be included in the presentation. This refers to previous theories such as Stave Blandford, Barry Grant and Jim Hillier in the book *The Film Studies Dictionary* (Rahardjo, 2021) stating that documentary films have subjects in the form of people, events or situations that actually occur in the world of reality and outside world of cinema. Researchers chose documentary films because they were considered to represent existing reality stories because they were based on facts in the field. Documentary fiction films also tell stories or narratives, there are also dramatic aspects, only the content of the story is not fictional but based on facts (Ayawaila, 2008: 11).

Documentary films can be used for various purposes and objectives such as: information or news, biography, knowledge, education, social, economic, political (propaganda). In presenting the facts, a documentary film can use the method of recording directly when the incident actually occurred, it can also use the method of reconstructing an event that occurred (Pranata, 2019).

Documentary films are classified into six categories, namely poetic, expository, observational, participatory, reflexive, and performative (Nichols, 2010: 33-34; Nichols, 2010: 102-138). All types of documentaries have their own styles, approaches and characteristics.

The expository category is considered conventional, often used in television documentary production. This film places more emphasis on narrative and logical argumentation. Narration is important as the red thread of the story, while the narrator is a single speaker, often dubbed the voice of God (Ratmanto, 2018).

Film aesthetics is a study that looks at films as an artistic concept and artistic message. Therefore the concepts of beauty, taste and pleasure are taken into consideration when we approach films from this perspective. Here film aesthetics becomes an input into the general debate about aesthetics, as a philosophical discipline that is concerned with all forms of art. In particular, film aesthetics has two views at once, namely discussing general film issues related to aesthetic issues and special aspects discussing certain film works. This is called film analysis or film criticism in more general terms.

Film aesthetics is the study of film as an art and as an artistic message (Aumont et al., 1992). Based on this statement, it can be concluded that films produce many meanings in a series of scenes from beginning to end which aim to convey a message to film lovers or viewers so that the meanings that appear explicitly and implicitly are considered an artistic message. Through film aesthetics, it can be seen that film theories and film approaches are classified into two, namely formalist film theory and realist theory. Sergei Eisenstein's Formalist aesthetics are theories that include investigations into the beautiful, investigations into the basic principles of art, experiences related to art, art creation, assessment or reflection on works of art (Ali, 2003: 2). Aesthetics has many branches, one of which is the branch of film aesthetics. Film aesthetics is a study that looks at films as art and artistic messages (Ariansah, 2008: 46). Film aesthetics has two schools of thought, namely, realism and formalism (Rohma, 2017a; Rohma, 2017b).

Cinematography is the art and technique of filmmaking that involves the use of cameras and lighting to record scenes and create moving images. It covers a number of aspects, including visual composition, lighting setup, use of color, framing, and camera movement. Cinematographers, or directors of photography, are responsible for creating aesthetic and meaningful imagery to support the film's narrative. They use their creativity to create atmosphere, direct the audience's attention, and reinforce the message or theme the director wants to convey. Through the use of various visual elements, cinematography becomes an important foundation in conveying an immersive and engaging cinematic experience.

Film aesthetics is a study that looks at films as works of art and a means of conveying expression. There are many concepts about beauty, taste, technique that go into film works. There are many important aspects contained in the scope of art as an area that can be said to be free. Understanding the creativity of each human being in creating art, especially through the medium of film, has many

things that strengthen how the content of films creates aesthetics. There is an element of logic in the story which aims to make film viewers know the logic of the story line in this film, about the causes and effects that occur. What should be used as reflection or reflection is actually the aim of starting to examine or re-understand the purpose of art based on the understanding or beliefs held.

Cinematography is a shooting or visual that uses various angles and shooting techniques that can show the role of an object in creating the atmosphere desired by the director. Meanwhile, the cinematographer is the person who is responsible for all the visual aspects of making a film which makes the film interesting and pleasing to look at. This includes the scenario, choosing the type of camera to be used, selecting lenses, lights and their types are also given great attention so that the director's concept obtained from the scenario produces very interesting and good visualizations. A cinematographer must be able to help the director's vision and scenario.

The author has the fascination of analyzing highly controversial documentaries in 2023. The documentary entitled "Ice Cold: Murder, Coffee, and Jessica Wongso" is a true crime documentary in 2016 which explores the famous case involving Jessica Kumala Wongso (Jessica/Jessica Wongso), an Indonesian woman who was convicted of killing her friend Wayan Mirna Salihin (Mirna), by poisoning coffee with cyanide. This incident, often referred to as the "coffee cyanide case," attracted significant media and public attention in Indonesia and beyond.

This film has a storyline, detailed chronology of events before and after the murder with the background and relationship between Jessica Wongso and Wayan Mirna Salihin. This documentary film narrates the investigation and trial process, highlighting key evidence and testimony. The role of the media in shaping public perception and close monitoring of this case. Interviews with people involved in the case, including legal experts, friends, and possibly family members. This documentary film visualizes trial evidence, CCTV evidence, interviews from various family members and lawyers. The case that really shocked the people of Indonesia and abroad regarding the case of murder by mixing cyanide into coffee which took the life of a woman named Wayan Mirna Salihin, this incident occurred in a very famous cafe in Central Jakarta called Olivier. In this special case, the suspect has been identified, namely Jessica, who is one of Mirna's close friends. This film provides an impression from a different perspective from cases that have been broadcast in the mass media.

Methodology

This research uses a qualitative approach which aims to understand symptoms that do not require quantification. According to Sugiyono (2018: 213), qualitative research methods are research methods based on philosophy that are used to research scientific conditions (experiments) where the researcher is the instrument, data collection techniques and qualitative analysis emphasize meaning. Qualitative research methodology aims to analyze and describe phenomena or research objects through social activities, attitudes and

perceptions of people individually or in groups. Qualitative researchers, those who engage in this form of inquiry have assumptions about testing theories deductively, establishing safeguards against bias, controlling for alternative or counterfactual explanations, and being able to generalize and replicate findings.

This research uses a qualitative descriptive research method. It aims to make description in an orderly and logical manner so as to form a complete system. This means that this research was conducted to describe the problem which is the main topic of discussion in this research. According to Kirk & Miller (1986), descriptive qualitative research is a particular tradition in the social sciences which fundamentally relies on observations of people around themselves in its discussion and terminology.

Results and discussion

Film is a social communication medium that is formed from the combination of two senses, namely sight and hearing. Films have the core or theme of a story which reveals many social realities that occur around the environment where the film itself grows (Pranata, 2019). In a journal article written by Nathaniella & Triadi (2024) which analyzed controversial films, what can be concluded from the documentary is that it is not intended to help or harm certain candidates in the election, as Ika claims. In fact, it would be more accurate to say that this documentary is a critical analysis taken from various journalistic sources. According to Amanah (2023), "Ice Cold: Murder, Coffee and Jessica Wongso" is a film that presents unanswered questions about the trial that Jessica Wongso went through. By presenting a new perspective, this film comes years after the death of Jessica's best friend, Wayan Mirna Salihin. This film depicts how Jessica invites her friends, including Mirna, to meet after not seeing each other for a long time. The meeting at a cafe in the capital's mall went smoothly, before Mirna finally fainted shortly after drinking the coffee that Jessica had previously ordered. This documentary also presents CCTV footage at the time of the incident, various news footage during the trial, and exclusive interviews with several sources, including Jessica Wongso (Larisu, 2024).

This documentary takes a critical approach to how mass media influenced public perception of this case. By featuring news clips, interviews, and analysis, the film shows how the media can guide opinion and how information can influence people's decisions and even the justice system. One of the most interesting parts of the film is its in-depth exploration of the technical aspects of the case. Through interviews with experts, the documentary tries to answer questions about how cyanide can be present in coffee, what impact it has on the body, and how this investigation was carried out. This gives a more scientific and objective feel to a case that is often surrounded by emotion and speculation. Interviews with parties directly involved, such as Mirna's family, Jessica's lawyer, and even cafe employees provide emotional depth to the film. Through this interview, the audience can feel the pain, doubt and uncertainty experienced by those involved. In this case, it is a very big question mark if it is determined from one side, with the emergence of this film, many people think that the director,

Rob Sixsmith, is very partial to one side, but from the results of the analysis of the writer who made observations in reviewing in this film, the director was very cooperative in packaging this case into a documentary.



[Source: "Ice Cold: Murder, Coffee, and Jessica Wongso", 2024]

Figure 1. Several scenes in the documentary film "Ice Cold: Murder, Coffee, and Jessica Wongso"

In this documentary, many people received appreciation for the visual composition, point of view, and even the lighting in the film. The author can analyze several very interesting shots which really make the audience assume that there is something behind this case, so that the director and

cinematographer can package it very nicely and be very interesting for the audience.

This film also shows how visual effects were used to display news that was broadcast on television in 2016. Jessica, a close friend of the victim, was identified as the perpetrator who previously witnessed her friend's death. However, from this visual show, many people stated that Jessica was a cold-blooded killer who was very calm when facing the trial. As for interviewing Jessica's lawyer, where the shots were taken at eye level and using the composition of medium shot, medium close up and close up, it can be seen in the visual that the lawyer explains very firmly and still gives real responses.

Interviewing Wayan Mirna Salihin's father and recording some of her father's activities could lead to different opinions regarding the trial that took place in 2016. The results of the interview were very inversely proportional to the reality of the incident at that time.

Having interviewed Jessica in detention, where she used English in a very short conversation with the director, the information obtained was very helpful in supporting this film to be completed from an information gathering point of view. The shot used is an investigation that uses a hidden camera to obtain information. However, the officers did not let the detainees talk to the director for too long.

This shot shows a visual of a chemist explaining the various effects of cyanide, using scientific language in chemistry he explains it very clearly without cutting anything at all. This shot uses various visual compositions, medium shot, medium close up and close up. The eye level point of view, showing several parts of the footage where he is in the chemistry lab, can be conveyed that in this visual he is an expert in the field of chemistry

Conclusion

Through an analysis of cinematographic aesthetics in the documentary film "Ice Cold: Murder, Coffee, and Jessica Wongso", it can be concluded that the use of various visual techniques such as shot composition, point of view, and narration play an important role in conveying messages and building stories. This film succeeds in leading the audience's opinion through interviews, reconstruction of events, and the use of clear scientific language. This film utilizes various cinematographic techniques to create a deep atmosphere and support the narrative being built. For example, in several parts, this film shows the atmosphere of Jakarta using high angles and extreme long shot compositions which give the impression of a busy big city. Visual effects are used to display news broadcast on television, giving a strong sense of reality.

Interviews with various parties, including the chemist, Jessica's lawyer, and Wayan Mirna Salihin's father, strengthen the film's narrative with a variety of different points of view, providing the audience with comprehensive and in-depth information about the case discussed. Direct recording techniques and reconstruction of events are used to provide a clear and realistic picture of the events that occurred.

Overall, this film shows how cinematography can be an effective tool for conveying meaning and artistic messages in a documentary. The use of cinematographic aesthetics in this film succeeded in leading the audience's opinion in a subtle but big impact, showing that documentaries not only function as.

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