

A Critique of Global Pop Culture's Hygiene Standardization Against the Megibung Tradition in Installation Art

I Putu Yogantara ^{a,1,*}, I Nyoman Rediasa ^{a,2}, I Wayan Sudiarta ^{a,3}

^a Department of Art and Design, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha, Jalan Udayana No. 11, Singaraja, 81116, Bali, Indonesia

¹ yogantaraiputu@gmail.com; ² nyoman.rediasa@undiksha.ac.id; ³ wayan.sudiarta@undiksha.ac.id

ORCID: ¹ 0000-0000-0000-0000; ² 0000-0000-0000-0000; ³ 0000-0000-0000-0000

* Corresponding author

Article history: Received: 20 January 2025 | Revised: 20 April 2025 | Accepted: 10 May 2025 |

Published: 1 June 2025

Article type: Artistic (Practice-Based) Research Report

DOI: [https://doi.org/ 10.33292/locus.v3i01.21](https://doi.org/10.33292/locus.v3i01.21)

ABSTRACT	KEYWORDS
The communal <i>Megibung</i> tradition of Karangasem and the <i>Lawar</i> preparation at its centre are increasingly marginalised by a standard of hygiene that global popular culture presents as universal. The international gaze reads organic, hand-prepared, open-air food as unsanitary, and that verdict is now internalised by younger Balinese, who withdraw from a practice they have learned to see as dirty. Existing scholarship treats <i>Megibung</i> as a culinary and sociological object, examines <i>Lawar</i> from a food-safety standpoint, or analyses ritual as a vehicle of cultural transmission; none has treated the hygiene conflict itself as the material of an artwork. This article reports an artistic research project that designed an installation as a critical response to that conflict. The enquiry combined participatory observation of <i>Megibung</i> and <i>Lawar</i> preparation at customary events in Karangasem Regency over approximately six months, semi-structured interviews with tradition bearers and younger residents, analysis through cultural hegemony, the classification of pollution, and the tourist gaze, and material realisation in the studio. The resulting work, <i>Ritus yang Dihakimi</i> (The Judged Rite), places a full <i>gibungan</i> replica, comprising rice, three <i>Lawar</i> variants, <i>sate</i>, <i>urutan</i>, and <i>komoh</i>, at floor level and encircles it with macro-scaled green flies cast in resin and fiberglass. Because the standing viewer shares the elevation of the swarm rather than that of the dish, the audience is placed inside the structure of judgement rather than outside it. The contribution of the article is to demonstrate that hygiene standardisation can be argued spatially and materially as well as analytically.	critical ethnography hegemony installation art Megibung pop culture  This is an open access article under the CC BY-SA 4.0 license.

How to cite: Yogantara, I. P., Rediasa, I. N., & Sudiarta, I. W. (2025). A critique of global pop culture's hygiene standardization against the Megibung tradition in installation art. *Journal of Local Culture Study*, 3(1), 1–13. [https://doi.org/ 10.33292/locus.v3i01.21](https://doi.org/10.33292/locus.v3i01.21)

INTRODUCTION

Bali cannot be separated from its position as a cultural entity that continuously attracts global attention. The island's standing as a national tourism icon rests on the capacity of its people to sustain customary order, ritual, and social cohesion over time (Riswari & Faridatussalam, 2023). One representation of that socio-cultural bond is the *Megibung* tradition. Originating in the Karangasem region of eastern Bali, *Megibung* is a communal eating practice in which participants sit in a circle around a single container of shared food called a *gibungan* (Rafi'i & Masdarini, 2022). Sociologically the tradition extends far beyond the fulfilment of physical need. It functions as a space of social interaction rich in egalitarian value and solidarity, dissolving stratifications of caste and economic class; every participant, known as *sela*, holds an equal position and shares an intimate space with the others. The main dish that forms the central identity of the *gibungan* platter is *Lawar*, a mixture of vegetables, grated coconut, *basa gede* spice paste, and minced meat (Putrasatria et al., 2026). In its authentic version the preparation of *Lawar* incorporates fresh blood from a freshly slaughtered animal to intensify flavour and produce a distinctive red colour, and the work is carried out through mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), with residents cutting and mixing the ingredients manually by hand.

Read through the lens of performance studies, such a communal event is not merely a meal but a structured cultural performance with identifiable elements of script, performer, audience, and place (Sathotho, 2022). Communal ritual of this kind also operates as a mechanism of cultural transmission, in which values pass to the next generation through direct bodily participation rather than through instruction (Tama et al., 2024). Any disruption to the practice of *Megibung* is therefore not simply a change of menu or of table manners; it is an interruption of the channel through which a set of social values reproduces itself.

In the present era that channel confronts the disruption of globalisation. The influx of popular culture arrives massively, not merely bringing entertainment products but implanting an ideological hegemony that dictates urban lifestyle standards. Following Gramsci (1971), hegemony operates less through coercion than through consent, in which a dominant worldview is internalised by the subordinated group as ordinary common sense. Young people are particularly vulnerable in this regard, tending to follow consumptive trends and to prioritise material satisfaction as a life orientation (Soleh, 2023). A trend, in the theoretical sense, refers to the tendency of a society to popularise or collectively adopt something within a certain period (Budiarta et al., 2023). A significant consequence of this cultural penetration is the emergence of new standards of food culture. The Western pop paradigm constructs the understanding that ideal, civilised, and modern food must be fully sterile, clinically hygienic, packaged in factory-made containers, and isolated from the surrounding ecosystem. This is not a neutral technical judgement. As Douglas (1966) argued, what a society calls dirt is matter out of place, a classificatory verdict that reflects a particular cultural order rather than an objective property of the substance itself. The influence of globalisation, which brings competition from modern products, indirectly generates competition against local culture and local products (Sila, 2023), while the transnational flow of images and lifestyles reorganises local imagination from a distance (Appadurai, 1996).

This shift in perspective generates cultural friction and places *Lawar* in a dilemmatic position. When the dish is confronted with the international stage, strong resistance emerges. Global hygiene indicators, such as food-safety regulation and sanitation certification, judge the method of preparing *Lawar* as unnatural and hazardous to health (Tjoantara et al., n.d.). The use of fresh, uncooked blood, the cutting of meat on wooden boards in open air, and the mixing of spices with bare hands are classified as medically defective practices. Bourdieu (1984) demonstrated that taste in food is never innocent of class: judgements about what is refined and what is coarse function as instruments of distinction. A comparable mechanism

operates in the case of *Lawar*, transposed onto a global scale, in which the hegemony of pop-culture cleanliness ultimately labels a traditional culinary method as a form of backwardness. The situation becomes more complicated when one considers a sociological reality routinely avoided in mainstream tourism narrative. During the implementation of *Megibung* in rural settings or during customary ceremonies, the presence of green flies (*Lucilia sericata* and *Chrysomya megacephala*) around the eating area is in fact a common sight. For the local community, the interaction between the aroma of meat and fresh spices and the surrounding insect life is regarded as a natural dynamic of an open ecosystem. From an international perspective hegemonised by modern cleanliness standards, however, the presence of even a single fly destroys the aesthetic value of the dish entirely, and the food is immediately categorised as disgusting, toxic, and unhealthy (Harnani et al., 2021). The evaluative machinery at work here is what Urry and Larsen (2011) describe as the tourist gaze: a socially organised and institutionally reinforced way of looking that frames the destination according to the expectations the visitor brings, and that renders whatever falls outside that frame a defect. Bali has long been subject to precisely this dynamic, in which the island's culture has been continuously reshaped to match an externally authored image of itself (Picard, 1996; Vickers, 2012).

The resulting stigma is not confined to the international reception of *Lawar*; it begins to erode the perspective of the local community itself. Balinese youth who grow up surrounded by pop culture increasingly distance themselves from, and doubt, their own culinary heritage. Those accustomed to the visual language of air-conditioned, aesthetic, and hygienic cafés tend to view the practice of *Megibung* as dirty and archaic. The tendency is exacerbated by a contemporary preference for fast food, which is in fact low in nutrition, over local cuisine (Mulyani et al., 2020). The onslaught of imported culinary trends, framed as glamorous on social media, ultimately triggers cultural alienation, in which a community gradually distances itself from the roots of its own tradition in pursuit of external lifestyle validation. The present generation is intoxicated by trend-driven elements and regards traditional elements as archaic, which makes it more attracted to the consumption of Western or pop culture (Supir & Pageh, 2025). Comparable processes of marginalisation have been documented across other Indonesian traditional forms, where local practices are displaced not by prohibition but by a gradual withdrawal of the inheriting generation's interest (Sila, 2023; Supir & Pageh, 2025).

A survey of the existing literature reveals three lines of work and a clear deficiency between them. The first approaches *Megibung* as a culinary object or a sociological phenomenon, describing its ingredients, its procedures, and its communal function; this work has established what the tradition consists of and what it does for social cohesion (Rafi'i & Masdarini, 2022; Putrasatria et al., 2026). The second addresses the health and food-safety dimension of *Lawar* from a biomedical standpoint, establishing the microbiological risks that attach to particular preparation methods (Tjoantara et al., n.d.), and is paralleled by entomological work on the two fly species most often present at open-air communal meals (Aprianti et al., 2020; Kurnia et al., 2018; Mulyaningsih, 2023). The third examines ritual as performance and as a vehicle of cultural transmission, establishing the mechanism by which embodied participation carries value between generations (Sathotho, 2022; Tama et al., 2024). Each line stops before the point at which the others begin: the culinary and sociological literature does not treat hygiene as a contested classification, the biomedical literature treats hygiene as a settled technical matter rather than a cultural verdict, and the transmission literature does not ask what happens when the value being transmitted is itself under external judgement.

The gap, stated precisely, is that the conflict between global hygiene standardisation and communal food tradition has been described from several disciplinary positions but has never

been made the conceptual material of an artwork, that is, never moved from being reported to being staged, so that an audience undergoes the judgement rather than reading about it. This article is the first to treat the hygiene-standardisation conflict surrounding *Megibung* as the generative material of a critical art installation and to analyse the spatial configuration of that installation as an argument about cultural sovereignty. Contemporary installation art is particularly suited to the task, because it positions the viewer bodily inside the situation it depicts rather than in front of it (Bishop, 2005). The study therefore aims to design an installation artwork that responds critically to the hegemony of global pop-culture hygiene standards over the *Megibung* tradition, and to articulate, through spatial and material means, the paradox by which the authenticity of a communal practice becomes the very ground of its international rejection. The authors do not intend to become trapped in a romanticism that merely glorifies the togetherness of *Megibung*, but rather to expose its vulnerability amid the pressures of modernisation.

METHOD

Research Design and Approach

The excavation of ideas in artistic creation is not a passive, intuitive, or random search for inspiration. It is a systematic investigative procedure bridging cognitive unease and concrete visual articulation, and it requires the artist to formulate a structured line of thinking so that every aesthetic decision can be argumentatively accounted for. The study applies an arts-based design, specifically artistic research grounded in critical ethnography. Artistic research treats the making of the work itself as a mode of knowledge production, in which the artefact and the enquiry are not separable (Borgdorff, 2012; Sullivan, 2010). The design was chosen because the research question concerns not only what the hygiene conflict is but what it feels like to be placed on either side of it, and a proposition of that kind can be tested only by constructing the situation and observing how it reads. Critical ethnography was adopted as the field methodology because, unlike conventional ethnography, it does not stop at describing a cultural phenomenon but moves from description toward an account of the power relations that structure it, with an explicit commitment to the situation of those it studies (Madison, 2020).

The theoretical framework combines three positions and is brought to bear at the analytical stage, after the field material had been assembled and before studio realisation began. Gramsci's (1971) account of cultural hegemony supplies the explanation for why an externally authored standard is accepted rather than resisted by those it disadvantages. Douglas's (1966) analysis of purity and pollution supplies the argument that cleanliness is a classification rather than a property, which converts the judgement of *Lawar* from a technical finding into a cultural verdict. Urry and Larsen's (2011) tourist gaze supplies the account of who is doing the judging and by what institutional means. The three are used in sequence rather than in parallel: the gaze identifies the agent, pollution theory identifies the mechanism, and hegemony identifies the effect on the judged community.

Site, Period, and Participants

Fieldwork was conducted in Karangasem Regency, Bali, the region of origin of the *Megibung* tradition, across a series of observation sessions carried out at customary and communal events over a period of approximately six months preceding studio realisation. Sessions were attached to events already scheduled by the host communities rather than arranged for the research, so that what was observed was the practice as it ordinarily occurs. Two categories of informant were selected purposively. The first comprised tradition bearers, selected on the criterion that they hold responsibility for organising and preparing communal meals and are recognised locally as competent in the conventions of the *gibungan*. The second comprised

younger residents of the same communities, selected on the criterion that they had participated in *Megibung* at least once and were in a position to compare it with the food cultures they encounter through social media. Informants are identified here by role rather than by name, in accordance with the consent arrangements described below.

Data Collection

Three techniques were used. Participant observation was the primary technique: rather than recording events from outside, the first author took part in the preparation of *Lawar* and sat as a *sela* within the *gibungan* circle. Attention was directed to four matters in particular: the manual processing of raw ingredients without modern equipment; the absence of any physical boundary between the food-preparation area and open space; the presence and behaviour of green flies around the served *gibungan*; and the relative participation of older and younger residents in the event. Observation was deliberately detached from the mainstream tourism perspective that romanticises cultural exoticism, and was directed instead at recording an organic reality. Field notes were written immediately after each session.

Semi-structured, dialogical interviews formed the second technique. Tradition bearers were asked about the conventions governing the composition and placement of the *gibungan* and about the origin of those conventions; younger residents were asked about their own participation in the practice, their attitude towards it, and the terms in which they describe it to others. The guide was held constant across interviews in its four topic areas but allowed follow-up in the direction each conversation took. Through this stage the artist sought to map marginal narratives capable of capturing symptoms of alienation, unease, and the ways in which the local community rationalises the cultural disruption around it.

Audiovisual documentation was the third technique. Photographs and video of preparation sequences, of the served *gibungan*, and of the insect activity around it were made with the permission of the hosts, and supplied the anatomical, chromatic, and spatial reference subsequently used in the studio.

Data Validation and Analysis

Credibility was established by three means. Source triangulation set the accounts of tradition bearers against those of younger residents on the same four topics, so that convergence and divergence between the generations became visible rather than averaged away. Technique triangulation set interview statements against what had been observed and photographed at the same events, which is what allowed the difference between stated attitude and actual participation among younger residents to be identified. Prolonged engagement across the six-month period, together with the first author's prior standing in the community, reduced the reactivity that a single visit would have produced.

Analysis proceeded in four steps. Field notes, interview material, and image documentation were first read through and segmented into units describing a single practice, statement, or observed relation. These units were then grouped into four working categories: the manual and open-air character of preparation; the classification of that character by outside observers; the internalisation of that classification by younger participants; and the spatial conventions of the *gibungan* itself. Each category was next confronted with the theoretical framework, in the sequence set out above, to establish what it demonstrated rather than what it merely illustrated. Finally, the categories were translated into visual decisions, each of which was required to carry a specific analytical claim: the category of external classification became the encircling swarm, the category of spatial convention became the floor-level placement, and the relation between them became the viewer's position. The translation was recorded as it was made, so that the reasoning behind each aesthetic decision remains traceable.

Studio realisation followed the analysis. Material exploration proceeded through maquettes before the final figures were cast in resin reinforced with fiberglass, a combination chosen for its capacity to hold fine anatomical detail at large scale while remaining light enough to be suspended. Colour was tested against reference photographs of both species. Spatial arrangement was resolved last, through trial installation of the encircling formation at varying densities and heights, with the viewing position checked at each trial. At this stage digital technology, particularly social media, contributed to the maturation of the idea: its circulation of information provided additional reference and opened space for the artist to trace critical discourse from a wider public, while also functioning as an alternative medium for distributing the work.

Research Ethics and Positionality

No institutional ethics board with jurisdiction over arts-based fieldwork of this kind operates at the host institution, and consent was therefore secured directly and verbally. Permission to observe, to participate, and to photograph was sought from the host of each event before the event began, and was renewed with individual participants before any close documentation of them was made. Interviewees were told the purpose of the study and the intended outcome, namely an exhibited artwork and a published account of it, and were told that they could decline to be recorded or named. No material classified locally as sacred or restricted was documented. Names are withheld throughout and informants are designated by role, since the attitudes reported by younger residents concern their own communities and could be socially costly if attributed.

The first author is a member of the community in which the shifting tradition is located and was raised in the environment where it is practised, and is also the maker of the work discussed. That relationship is the ground of the study's access and of its motivation, and it is equally a limitation: the unease that generated the work is the author's own, and the account of the tradition given here is an insider's account. It is declared here so that the reader may weigh the analysis accordingly. One further matter requires declaration. The account given below of the historical origin of the floor-level seating arrangement, associated by informants with the era of the Karangasem Kingdom and with the dissolution of the distance between ruler and soldier, is oral knowledge transmitted within the community and not a claim documented in written historical sources. It is reported in that capacity.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The process of creating an artwork often originates in an accumulation of unease, a struggle with personal experience, and the artist's sustained attention to a phenomenon. In the present work every visual element carries an interwoven philosophical charge, whether through material exploration or conceptual construction. The orientation of the work is not to romanticise or re-describe the existence of *Megibung* but to take a critical position that dismantles the hegemony and the power relations arbitrarily judging local cultural practice. The installation, titled *Ritus yang Dihakimi* (The Judged Rite), functions as a manifestation of visual critique against the shifting of cultural values in Bali. In visual form it is constructed from an assemblage of objects integrated into a single spatial dimension: a full *gibungan* replica placed at floor level, encircled by macro-scaled green fly sculptures distributed across the exhibition area, some resting on the floor and others suspended in the air. The four sub-sections that follow establish, in turn, what the fieldwork found, what the two principal visual elements argue, and what the relation between them does to the person who enters the room.

The Open Kitchen and the Clinical Standard

The field material converges on a single structural finding: every feature of *Megibung* that the community regards as constitutive is a feature that the clinical standard classifies as a defect.

Preparation observed at customary events proceeds without modern equipment, with meat cut on wooden boards and spices worked into the mixture by hand; there is no boundary, physical or conceptual, between the preparation area and open space; and green flies are present around the served *gibungan* as a matter of course. Tradition bearers described none of these as a compromise or a shortcoming. The manual work is what makes the dish an act of *gotong royong* rather than a service rendered, and the openness of the space is what allows the number of participants to expand as the event proceeds. The global construct requires the opposite at every point: that food processing occur in isolated space, with sterile equipment, eliminating direct contact with bare hands. Bali's position as an epicentre of world tourism indirectly compels its local order to adapt continuously to international expectation (Picard, 1996), and the adaptation demanded here cannot be partial, because what is objected to is not an incidental feature of the practice but its method.

The second finding concerns the generational transmission of that verdict. Interviews with younger residents and observation at the same events diverged in an instructive way. Several described *Megibung* in affectionate terms while attending it rarely, and described *Lawar* preparation using vocabulary drawn from outside the community, in which the openness of the space appears as exposure and the manual work as contamination. This is hegemony in Gramsci's (1971) sense operating at close range: the standard is not imposed on the community, it is reproduced by its younger members as ordinary common sense. The finding confirms what has been reported for other Indonesian traditional forms, where marginalisation proceeds through the withdrawal of the inheriting generation rather than through prohibition (Sila, 2023; Supir & Pageh, 2025), but it qualifies that literature in one respect. In the cases of *prasi* painting and *Endek* weaving, the displacing force is a competing product; here there is no competing product, because the same food is available. What is displaced is the legitimacy of the manner of its making. The mechanism is therefore classificatory rather than economic, which is precisely the case Douglas (1966) describes, and it suggests that interventions modelled on craft revitalisation, which work by restoring the market position of a product, would not by themselves address it.

The third finding concerns the fly itself, and it is the point at which the entomological literature contradicts the stigma most directly. *Lucilia sericata* functions ecologically as a detritivore and has been studied as an agent of organic-waste bioconversion (Kurnia et al., 2018), while studies of the bacterial isolates carried on *Chrysomya megacephala* return a more ambivalent picture than the label of pest implies (Aprianti et al., 2020). Species identification at waste-handling sites shows, further, that the presence of these flies indexes the availability of organic matter rather than the sanitary condition of any particular food (Mulyaningsih, 2023). The insect, in other words, is more interesting than the verdict attached to it, and the verdict does more classificatory work than the biology supports. That disproportion is what made the species the appropriate central figure of the work.

Kitsch and Scale: The Swarm as the Form of the Judging Gaze

The presence of macro-scaled green fly entities in the installation is not intended to be read literally as biological pest. Materially the figures are constructed from resin combined with fiberglass. Empirically, green flies, particularly *Lucilia sericata* and *Chrysomya megacephala*, are indeed classified as insects that provoke an impression of disgust. Although superficially similar, the two species differ in colour spectrum: *Lucilia sericata* presents a golden metallic green, while *Chrysomya megacephala* tends toward a bluish-green gradation (Mulyaningsih, 2023). Both were modelled, and the chromatic difference between them is retained in the finished figures, so that the swarm reads as a population rather than as a repeated motif. The negative stigma attached to these insects is rooted in habitats associated with dirty, damp, and

hot environments, and is reinforced by the health risks posed when the insect lands and breeds on food (Harnani et al., 2021).

Through a contemporary aesthetic lens the visual form of the flies is explored through a *Kitsch* approach in order to trigger a sensation of visual disgust. The impression is deliberately produced as irony, sharpening the external stigma that labels the making of *Larwar* as dirty and unhygienic. Kitsch is useful here precisely because it is the aesthetic register of the pre-digested and the effortlessly legible (Kulka, 1996); rendering the judging gaze in that register makes the shallowness of the judgement part of the work's form rather than merely its subject. The choice answers a difficulty that the field material had exposed. A judgement delivered in the name of science cannot be answered by counter-evidence alone, since the entomological findings reported above have been available throughout and have not displaced the stigma. Rendering the judgement in the register of kitsch answers it instead at the level of form, by showing the verdict to be an aesthetic reflex rather than a finding.

The decision to cast the sculptures at gigantic scale carries a further conceptual weight. The macro scale functions as a metaphor for the clinical cleanliness regulations and food-safety standards constructed unilaterally by global pop culture, and the combination of enlargement with synthetic industrial material represents a dominant, artificial, and intimidating foreign power. The swarm becomes the physical embodiment of the world's judging gaze, an aestheticised regime of looking that demeans local culinary practice (Urry & Larsen, 2011). Enlargement serves an argumentative function as well: the issue of global standardisation, routinely dismissed as trivial, is in fact an urgent threat with destructive effect, triggering a shift in the community's values and the increasing marginalisation of communal spaces such as *Megibung*. Here the work departs from the tourist-gaze literature in an instructive direction. Urry and Larsen (2011) analyse the gaze as directed at a destination from outside it; the swarm, by contrast, is installed within the space it judges, which is the condition the fieldwork actually found, where the standard is enforced by residents upon themselves.

The Gibungan Replica as Cosmological Text

As the epicentre of the installation the artist places a replica of the culinary arrangement served on the *gibungan* platter. The central object represents the existence of local wisdom and of inclusive collective value within Balinese society. Its position, circularly encircled by giant fly figures, symbolises the vulnerability currently experienced by local tradition. The siege formation is constructed as a visual analogy for the way traditional culinary heritage is confined, alienated, and rejected on the international stage for failing to meet sterility standards formed by an external culture. In form and arrangement the replica adheres to the authentic conventions of the original presentation, and the fidelity matters to the argument: an approximated platter would have reduced the tradition to an emblem, which is the reduction the work exists to contest. The constituent elements are as follows.

White rice

Placed at the central point of the *gibungan* container, the white rice serves as a visual articulation of purity and of the blessing of life. Theologically it is understood as a manifestation of Ida Bhatari Sri, who represents prosperity. Its central position functions as the axis binding the surrounding side dishes, carrying the philosophical message that the movement of life must remain centred on gratitude to the Creator for the sustenance that nourishes the community. The element carries a further irony in the present context, since purity is exactly what the external standard claims the platter lacks, and the platter's own iconography places purity at its centre.

Lawar

Lawar is a concrete embodiment of harmony amid heterogeneity. Its preparation combines highly contrasting materials: raw vegetables, grated coconut, minced meat, and the sharp spice blend called *basa gede*. Their integration becomes a metaphor for the community's capacity to unite differing characters, potentials, and social groups toward collective peace. The colour spectrum of *Lawar* is further correlated with the guardian deities of the cardinal directions (*Dewata Nawwa Sanga*), making the dish a miniature of cosmic balance. Three variants appear in the work: *Lawar Merah*, *Lawar Putih*, and *Lawar Daun Belimbing*. The use of fresh blood in *Lawar Merah* symbolises courage and the manifestation of Dewa Brahma, while *Lawar Putih*, entirely bloodless, symbolises calm, purity, and the manifestation of Dewa Siwa (Karja, 2021). The meeting of the two echoes the concept of *Rwa Bhineda*, opposing entities completing one another as the foundation of true harmony. *Lawar Daun Belimbing*, using boiled vegetables, completes the composition as a balancing element. The inclusion of all three is deliberate, since the food-safety literature concerns itself with the blood-bearing variant alone (Tjoantara et al., n.d.); the platter shows that the element under biomedical suspicion is one term of a cosmological pair and cannot be subtracted without collapsing the scheme.

Sate

Sate Pusut, a variety of *Sate Lilit*, is prepared by pressing minced meat and grated coconut onto a bamboo skewer (*katik*). The method of wrapping carries a philosophy of the resilience of communal bonds that refuse to be broken; the adhesion of the mixture to the stick becomes an analogy for a community that embraces its members in joy and sorrow alike, consistent with the essence of *Megibung*. It is paired with *Sate Asem*, straight in form with a pointed tip, whose sharpness represents the weapons of the guardian deities of the cardinal directions (*Dewata Nawwa Sanga*) (Sulistyawati, 2020) and which functions as a spiritual fortress neutralising negative energy (*bhuta*) in the surrounding environment. Following the proportional convention of the region of origin, the work presents five skewers of *Sate Pusut* and five of *Sate Asem*.

Urutan

This traditional Balinese sausage is conceptualised as a symbol of prosperity and of social cohesion, and its production is likewise rich in collective labour. Its anatomy, formed by filling a length of intestine, conveys the continuity of life's circulation, the flow of fortune, and a bond of kinship expected to remain unbroken among residents.

Komoh

This broth of meat and fat serves as the fluid element of the platter. Functionally and philosophically *komoh* moistens and balances the drier components, namely the rice, the *Lawar*, and the *sate*. Its significance completes the larger narrative of the offering as a celebration of togetherness within diversity.

Taken together, the five elements demonstrate a point that the sociological literature on *Megibung* records but does not press (Rafi'i & Masdarini, 2022; Putrasatria et al., 2026): the platter is not a menu but a text, in which each component holds a position within a cosmological scheme. This is what makes the hygiene verdict more consequential than a matter of taste. A standard that removes the blood from *Lawar Merah*, encloses the preparation, and replaces the shared container does not modify a recipe; it dismantles a system of reference, and it does so without engaging that system at any point.

Floor Level and the Position of the Viewer

Read through a contemporary aesthetic lens, the *gibungan* replica represents a Balinese cultural identity occupying an inferior position under the pressure of pop-culture hegemony. It is positioned not as complementary ornament but as a monument of traditional identity. The

spatial decision to place it at floor level is not an arbitrary preference of arrangement but adherence to an inherited convention. The lowered positioning articulates egalitarianism, social cohesion, and mutual cooperation, a space in which caste, hierarchy, and status privilege dissolve until all individuals stand as equals. Within the oral tradition of the community, as reported by informants during fieldwork, this spatial order is traced to the era of the Karangasem Kingdom and to a deliberate effort to break down the exclusivity separating ruler from soldier, fostering brotherhood and solidarity in the field. Whether or not the genealogy can be corroborated in written sources, its persistence as a community explanation is itself significant, since it indicates that the arrangement is understood locally as a carrier of social meaning rather than as mere convenience, which is precisely the mechanism by which ritual transmits value across generations (Tama et al., 2024).

Positioning the encircling flies above and around this floor-level centre produces the work's central spatial argument. The standing viewer occupies the elevation of the swarm rather than that of the dish, and is therefore placed, uncomfortably, on the side of the judging gaze rather than the judged. The one bodily adjustment available, lowering oneself to the height of the platter, is the same adjustment that *Megibung* itself requires of every *sela*, so the work offers the tradition's own posture as the only exit from the position it has assigned. This is the sense in which the installation does not illustrate the argument of the present article but performs it: the audience is enlisted into the very position the work criticises and must recognise itself there. The finding extends what Bishop (2005) establishes about installation art, that it constructs a situation the viewer enters rather than an image contemplated at a distance, by specifying a case in which entry is not neutral but assigns the entrant a side in a conflict. Contemporary artworks are frequently mobilised as instruments of critique in this way, and their socio-cultural effect manifests in the recovery of a collective memory that had nearly faded, shifting the public from passive observer to participatory agent directly involved in sustaining the continuity of tradition (Rahadian et al., 2025). In line with the paradigm of contemporary art, visual-art practice has evolved into a medium of articulation that responds to the dynamics of its era; its existence no longer stops at the level of the beautiful object but functions actively as an instrument for dissecting increasingly complex and multidimensional human problems (Suartini, 2022). The transformation of cultural pressure into a work also creates a cathartic space that rebalances the artist's psychological condition in the face of conflicting realities (Rediasa, 2021), and every individual is endowed with the capacity to construct a value system, worldview, and aesthetic articulation that materialises through the evaluation of real action (Suartini & Supir, 2024).

Taken as a whole, the installation records a bitter reality: in the name of modernisation and of compliance with global standards, a community is slowly uprooted from the ground of its communal interaction without recognising that it is happening. The swarm quarantining the traditional dish operates as an alarm, indicating that contemporary Balinese culture is besieged in its own homeland, marginalised by an artificial narrative of sterility, and confronting the greatest threat of all, abandonment by its own inheriting generation.

CONCLUSION

The hygiene standard that global popular culture presents as a neutral technical requirement operates, in the case of *Megibung*, as a cultural verdict that condemns a communal practice for the very features that constitute it. Manual preparation, open space, and the shared container are not incidental to the tradition and cannot be surrendered to the standard without dismantling what the tradition does; and the verdict is enforced least by outsiders and most by the community's own younger members, who reproduce it as common sense. The installation *Ritus yang Dihakimi* states this spatially. The *gibungan*, configured as the epicentre of the work, represents a socio-cultural identity grounded in egalitarianism, collectivity, and

social harmony, and the giant green flies encircling it exceed their reading as biological pest to function as a metaphor for the clinical sanitation regime of global pop culture, which invades, intimidates, and implants a stigma of dirtiness that further marginalises local wisdom.

The contribution of the study is twofold. Analytically, it shows that the hygiene conflict, previously examined separately as a culinary, a sociological, and a biomedical question, is a single classificatory process in which a cosmological system of reference is dismantled without ever being engaged. Methodologically, it shows that such a process can be argued through spatial and material means, by placing the audience within the structure of judgement rather than outside it, and that the argument so made is available to viewers whom the scholarly literature does not reach. For communities, curators, and cultural-policy bodies the implication is that programmes modelled on craft revitalisation, which restore the market position of a product, are unlikely to address a displacement whose mechanism is classificatory rather than economic; what is required is work on the terms in which the practice is described, which is the register in which art operates.

The study has clear limitations. It rests on fieldwork in a single regency over approximately six months, conducted by a researcher who is a member of the community and the maker of the work, so that the account of the tradition is an insider's and the unease that generated the installation is his own. The historical genealogy of the floor-level arrangement rests on oral testimony that written sources have not been consulted to confirm. The reception of the work, moreover, is argued here from its construction rather than measured from its audience. Further creation might extend the line of enquiry to other Indonesian communal food traditions facing comparable pressure, and further research might examine empirically how the attitudes of younger participants towards *Megibung* shift after they encounter such a work, which would test directly the claim that the position assigned to the viewer does the work this article attributes to it.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors thank the tradition bearers and residents of Karangasem Regency who permitted observation of and participation in their communal events and who generously shared their knowledge of the conventions of *Megibung*. The authors also thank the Department of Art and Design, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha, for institutional and technical support during the realisation of the work, and the studio assistants who contributed to the casting and finishing of the sculptural elements.

DECLARATIONS

Author contributions. I.P.Y. — conceptualisation, methodology, investigation, artistic practice and production of the work, writing (original draft); I.N.R. — formal analysis, validation, writing (review and editing); I.W.S. — supervision, resources, writing (review and editing). All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding. The research received no external funding.

Conflict of interest. The authors declare no conflict of interest. The first author is the maker of the installation discussed in this article; that relationship is declared in the positionality statement in the Method section.

Ethical approval and informed consent. No institutional review board with jurisdiction over arts-based fieldwork of this kind operates at the authors' institution. Informed consent was obtained verbally from the host of each observed event and from every interviewee, who were informed of the purpose of the study and of the intended exhibition and publication of its outcome. Consent to publish images was obtained from those depicted, and no material classified locally as sacred or restricted was documented.

Data availability. Field notes, interview recordings and transcripts, and photographic and video documentation are held by the first author at the Department of Art and Design, Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha. Materials that do not identify participants may be consulted on reasonable request to the corresponding author. Recordings and images that identify individuals are restricted, because consent was given for publication of the work and not for third-party access.

Use of generative artificial intelligence. The authors declare that no generative artificial intelligence tool was used in the conception, research, analysis, or creative realisation reported here. The authors take full responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

REFERENCES

- Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Aprianti, A. T. D., Hidayati, E., Faturrahman, & Jupri, A. (2020). Kemampuan antibakteri dari isolat bakteri pada tubuh lalat hijau (*Chrysomya megacephala*) asal Tempat Pembuangan Sampah Akhir (TPA) Kebon Kongok, Lombok Barat. *BIOMA: Jurnal Biologi Makassar*, 5(1), 79–87. <https://journal.unhas.ac.id/index.php/bioma/article/view/9506>
- Bishop, C. (2005). *Installation art: A critical history*. Tate Publishing.
- Borgdorff, H. (2012). *The conflict of the faculties: Perspectives on artistic research and academia*. Leiden University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste* (R. Nice, Trans.). Harvard University Press. (Original work published 1979)
- Budiarta, I. G. M., Witari, N. N. S., & Sutrisno, L. B. (2023). Penerapan elemen tipografi pada desain logo karya mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Seni Rupa dalam kuliah Desain Komunikasi Visual. *Jurnal Pendidikan Seni Rupa Undiksha*, 13(1), 60–69. <https://ejournal.undiksha.ac.id/index.php/JJPSP/article/view/60973>
- Douglas, M. (1966). *Purity and danger: An analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks* (Q. Hoare & G. Nowell Smith, Eds. & Trans.). International Publishers.
- Harnani, Y., Susanti, N., & Rasyid, Z. (2021). Sosialisasi insektisida organik yang ramah lingkungan sebagai rapellent vektor lalat hijau dan lalat rumah. *Jurnal Pengabdian Kesehatan Komunitas*, 1(3), 163–174. <https://jurnal.htp.ac.id/index.php/jpkk/article/view/1019>
- Karja, I. W. (2021). Makna warna. *Prosiding Bali Dwipantara Waskita: Seminar Nasional Republik Seni Nusantara*, 1. <https://eproceeding.isibali.ac.id/index.php/bdw/article/view/260>
- Kulka, T. (1996). *Kitsch and art*. Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Kurnia, N., Baharuddin, R., Ngitung, R., & Auliah, A. (2018). Lalat hijau *Lucilia sericata* sebagai agen biokonversi sampah organik: Pengamatan siklus hidup. *Prosiding Seminar Biologi dan Pembelajarannya*. Universitas Negeri Makassar. <https://eprints.unm.ac.id/18705/>
- Madison, D. S. (2020). *Critical ethnography: Method, ethics, and performance* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Mulyani, P. A., Sudiartini, N. W. A., & Sariyani, N. L. P. (2020). Perilaku masyarakat Kota Denpasar dalam mengkonsumsi makanan cepat saji (fast food). *JUIMA: Jurnal Ilmu Manajemen*, 10(2). <https://e-journal.unmas.ac.id/index.php/juima/article/view/1398>
- Mulyaningsih, B. (2023). Identifikasi spesies dan indeks keragaman lalat pada fasilitas penampungan sampah rumah sakit umum di Yogyakarta. *Jurnal Skala Kesehatan*, 14(2), 119–128. <https://www.ejournalskalakesehatan-poltekkesbjm.com/index.php/JSK/article/view/410>
- Picard, M. (1996). *Bali: Cultural tourism and touristic culture*. Archipelago Press.

- Putrasatria, B., Mureen, S. P., Rahadityo, M., & Almadia, I. F. (2026). Studi Lawar sebagai primadona makanan Bali. *Gastrodemica Journal*, 1(1). <https://gastrodemica.com/index.php/gdc/article/download/36/3>
- Rafi'i, A. A., & Masdarini, L. (2022). Tradisi Megibung pada budaya Hindu dan Muslim di Desa Tumbu Kecamatan Karangasem Kabupaten Karangasem. *Jurnal Kuliner*, 2(1), 21–29. <https://ejournal.undiksha.ac.id/index.php/JK/article/view/40756>
- Rahadian, B. T., Fardian, F., Jodog, I., Rediasa, I. N., Hermansyah, K. D., Rahayu, M., Wardaya, M., Sari, N. L. D. I. D., Juniati, N., & Sunarini, N. M. R. (2025). *Jejak lama, tafsir anyar*. <http://repository.ubaya.ac.id/id/eprint/50774>
- Rediasa, I. N. (2021). Karya perupa Bali dalam merespon pandemi Covid-19 dengan analisis semiotika Roland Barthes. *Jurnal Pendidikan Seni Rupa Undiksha*, 11(3), 103–112. <https://ejournal.undiksha.ac.id/index.php/JJPSP/article/view/39765>
- Riswari, N. E. A., & Faridatussalam, S. R. (2023). Kontribusi sektor pariwisata terhadap pendapatan asli daerah kabupaten/kota di Provinsi Bali tahun 2017–2021. *Business and Economics Journal*, 3. <https://ejournal.penerbitjurnal.com/index.php/business/article/download/287/254>
- Sathotho, S. F. (2022). Mandiek anak as performance at Salareh Aia. *TONIL: Jurnal Kajian Sastra, Teater dan Sinema*, 19(1). <https://doi.org/10.24821/tnl.v19i1.6933>
- Sila, I. N. (2023). Eksistensi tenun Ende Buleleng di era postmodern. *Jurnal Adat dan Budaya Indonesia*, 5(1), 53–60. <https://ejournal.undiksha.ac.id/index.php/JABI/article/view/62044>
- Soleh, M. S. (2023). Youth, religion, and pop culture: Modernitas dalam gaya hidup hedonisme remaja dan budaya populer versus eksistensi agama jaman now. *SEMAR: Jurnal Sosial dan Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 1(2), 35–44. <https://jurnal.kalimasadagroup.com/index.php/SEMAR/article/view/303>
- Suartini, L. (2022). Konsumtifisme peran gender dalam karya seni rupa Ni Nyoman Sani. *Jurnal Pendidikan Seni Rupa Undiksha*, 12(2), 142–152. <https://ejournal.undiksha.ac.id/index.php/JJPSP/article/view/49223>
- Suartini, L., & Supir, I. K. (2024). Lingkungan sebagai sumber dan media pembelajaran seni rupa di sekolah dasar lingkungan seni Kabupaten Buleleng. *Jurnal Pendidikan Seni Rupa Undiksha*, 14(1), 154–161. <https://ejournal.undiksha.ac.id/index.php/JJPSP/article/view/78055>
- Sulistyawati, A. (2020). Berbagai makna sate pada upakara umat Hindu di Bali. *Journey: Journal of Tourismpreneurship, Culinary, Hospitality, Convention and Event Management*, 3(2), 65–80. <https://ojs-journey.pib.ac.id/index.php/art/article/view/86>
- Sullivan, G. (2010). *Art practice as research: Inquiry in visual arts* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Supir, I. K., & Pageh, I. M. (2025). Marjinalisasi seni prasi: Genealogi seni lukis wayang Bali di daun lontar. *Jurnal Humanitas: Katalisator Perubahan dan Inovator Pendidikan*, 11(3), 441–454. <https://ejournal.hamzanwadi.ac.id/index.php/jhm/article/view/28878>
- Tama, K., Sathotho, S. F., & Sahid, N. (2024). Transmisi budaya masyarakat adat Batak Toba dalam pergelaran budaya Ulaon Unjuk di Tapanuli Utara. *TONIL: Jurnal Kajian Sastra, Teater dan Sinema*, 21(2), 126–140. <https://doi.org/10.24821/tnl.v21i2.13759>
- Tjoantara, A. N., Surudarma, I. W., Wiryanthini, I. A. D., & Sutadarma, I. W. G. (n.d.). Deteksi bakteri enterohemorrhagic *Escherichia coli* pada lawar merah babi dengan menggunakan teknik polymerase chain reaction (PCR) pada warung di Denpasar. *Jurnal Medika Udayana*. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f4f0/c9f9e56254878230c6ce87dff08f16c10d04.pdf>
- Urry, J., & Larsen, J. (2011). *The tourist gaze 3.0* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Vickers, A. (2012). *Bali: A paradise created* (2nd ed.). Tuttle Publishing.