

Song And Typography: Expressing The Lyrics Visually Through Lyrical Typography

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Abstract: A song is one of the media used to express emotions or convey messages. Aside of music and rhythm, the lyrics also plays an important role to convey these messages. However, song lyrics are usually written in the form of rigid text with a monotonous form, so that it only served as a pointer without any expression and emotional value. This article will discuss the way the text of the lyrics can help express the emotion and message within the song by using lyrical typography. This article discussed an experimental research method done with the approach of typography, semantics, and illustration to create a visual experience in writing the song lyrics. The result compiles the illustrations from the said experiments and show that lyrical typography can help express the song so that the audience can see the visualization created and gain a new way to experience the song through the use of this lyrical typography.

Index Terms: Lyrical typography, illustration, expression, song, visual

1 INTRODUCTION

Lyrical typography is an arrangement of letters in writing the song lyrics. The texts for song lyrics are commonly written in the rigid format, forming lines and paragraphs. Lyrical typography seeks to deconstruct this rigid format by emphasizing the visual element in writing the text for song lyrics, creating a visual illustration through the use of letters. The movement of visual illustration of the text has been long started by Guillaume Apollinaire. At that time his poems were made and written visually in a series of texts which eventually formed an illustration, creating what is known as a visual poetry. This visual poetry broke the conventions of traditional typography well before modern and postmodern forms of typography emerged [1]. Visual poetry creates a new visual experience by combining the elements of typography and illustration. In researching and experimenting with lyrical typography, this research explores the elements of typography and illustration by observing the existence of lyric video. According to O'Keeffe, the roots of lyric videos emerged in 1965, with simple handwritten cue cards in Bob Dylan's *Subterranean Homesick Blues* [2]. It was introduced to the world with the advancement of technology and the rise of multimedia communication. This kind of media can give a new experience since the auditory experience was complimented by the visual experience in consuming the lyrics of the song, strengthening the moods and emotions that was felt from the music. According to Gow, music video present aural and imagery in a manner quite different from that to which viewers of more traditional types of television programming are accustomed [3]. Lyrical typography has become a trend from time to time along with the growing market of music industry. It can be an interesting tool to communicate the meaning and context behind the music since the art of typography and illustration can evoke the emotion needed for the people to better understand the music.

As multimedia development has grown to the point of enhancing the already fun experience of music listening, the question still remains on how to further enhance the experience on listening music by engaging with other sensory receptors such as using visual elements to stimulate a visual experience of music listening. Gingras, Marin, Puig-Waldmüller, and Fitch stated in their article that the human eyes also listen to music with physiology reaction such as pupillary responses towards music [4]. Thus, this research aims to provide a new visual experience and combine interdisciplinary approaches in creating a visual project that can conform to the stimulus of music, so that the text to the song lyrics can served as not only a pointer devoid of expression and emotional value, but a visual experience to enhance the experience of music listening.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research related to typo-illustrations comes from the visualization of poetry texts. In 2001, Menezes did an experiment on poetry text to understand the trends of experimental poetics based on sound poetry today; as it is necessary first to understand in general what sound poetry is, at least by defining what is not contained within it [5][6]. In his study in 2005, Kong also stated that modern poetry ought not be read just in terms of its sound and rhythm; it needs to be viewed as well in a way similar to movies [7]. Keni then researched how a literature work can be visualized by arranging letter dynamically, employing typography as a form of illustration. He stated that typography is the art and craft of giving language a durable visual form as it has a dual responsibility to document knowledge or data and to create a visual experience [8]. In his work on analyzing the traditional Mandailing song, Dasopang cited Charles W. Kreidler (1998:3) that stated semantics was one of the branches of linguistics that study about the meaning of language and how languages organize and express meanings [9]. The semantics then can be implemented in creating dynamic visual of typographic arrangement as illustrations to give music a visual form. This kind of experiment was done recently by Bhattacharya in his research on lyrical typography. He argued that over the years, lyric videos have transformed from being a mere format for display of lyrics to become a compelling stories, adding a new depth of expression to the overall visual experience through typographic art [2].

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3 METHODS

This research particularly employs visual methodology to do experiment in creating a visual project. Rose argued that the method for the production processes of the image itself relies on the method of understanding the compositional interpretation such as the visual effect used, the layout composition, and the visual meaning [6]. In this research, the students were made to applied lyric with an unusual form. A few steps through experimental approaches laid out below:

1. Students choose their favorite song and analyze the lyrics found within to see the intended meaning and messages communicated through the song.
2. Choosing typefaces, after the meaning was derived from both of the songs, the next step is choosing which typefaces to be used in order to communicate that meaning. The script family was used because the script family can better express the dynamic mood and feelings found within the song. Generally, script family has a flexible, attractive, creative, and feminine typeface. Script typefaces are designed to imitate handwriting so that when printed the characters appear to be joined up. As with handwriting, some variations are easier to read than others [8]. Legibility was not constrained.
3. Drawing a sketch. The next step is drawing a sketch to visualize the song. The sketch was approached with many different angles and layout to find a suitable form that can fully express the meaning found within the song. Sketching alternatives. The next step is to sketch some alternatives typographic composition. The sketches were done to bring out creativity and as a base to finalize the result.
4. Supervision Process. Here, the alternative sketches were supervised and the decisions over which sketch will go to be finalized was made.
5. The Final Artwork. The last step is finalizing the accepted sketch. The finalized typo-illustrations was done in A3 paper format and was handwritten and arranged manually.

In this research observed song found in case study of student experimentation in doing illustration lyrical typography. In figure 1 we can see lyric song with title Angin Pujaan Hujan is a song by Indonesian group Payung Teduh. This song depicts a longing feeling that ends in sadness. Using semantics approaches, the meaning was then derived from both of the songs.

Angin Pujaan Hujan Artis: Payung Teduh

Datang dari mimpi semalam
Bulan bundar
Bermandikan sejuta cahaya
Di langit yang merah
Ranum seperti anggur
Wajahmu membuai mimpiku

Sang pujaan tak juga datang
Angin berhembus bercabang
Rinduku berbuah lara
Sang pujaan tak juga datang
Angin berhembus bercabang
Rinduku berbuah lara, uh lara

Sang pujaan tak juga datang
Angin berhembus bercabang
Rinduku berbuah lara
Sang pujaan tak juga datang
Angin berhembus bercabang
Rinduku berbuah lara, uh lara
Uh lara...

Figure 1: Angin Pujaan Hujan Lyric

4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The experiment for this paper was done in the span of two weeks where students choose their favorite song, delve within the music and creates sketches of typo-illustrations to be supervised. The first week observed the student listening to the music while mind-mapping their interpretation and semantic expression as a base for sketching the alternatives. This process can be seen in Figure 2 and Figure 3.



Figure 2: Student listening to the music and draw sketch

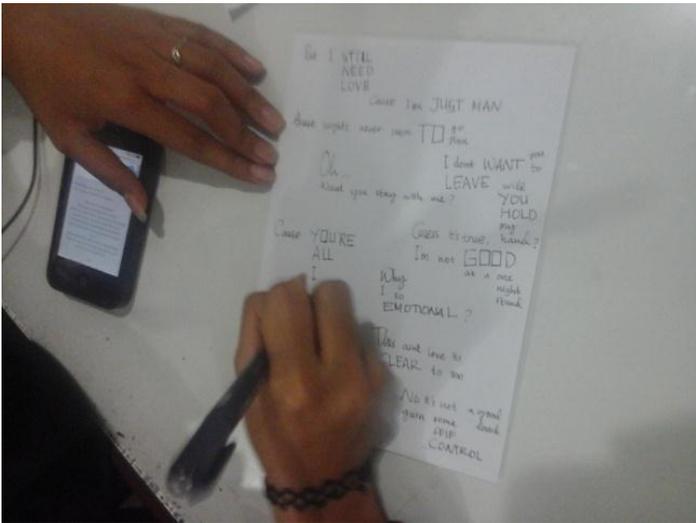


Figure 3: Student were made mind mapping

Over the span of the second week, the student then did some supervision of their sketches and revisions were made to be finalized. The second week sees the student finalizing the experiment on creating the typo-illustration artwork. The result of this experiment can be seen in figure 3, and 4. These two figures show three different compositional interpretations of typographic illustrations. The first one focused on the form of umbrella amidst the rain. The second one focused on the form and layout of the typefaces used by using blank spaces.

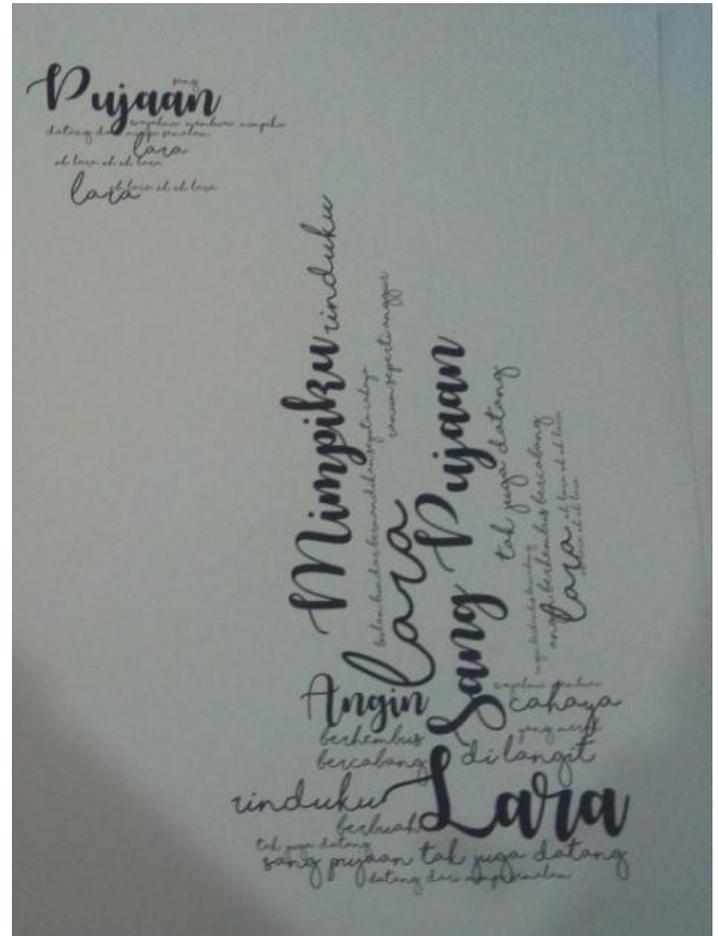


Figure 5: Final Result Angin Pujaan Hujan 2

Figure 4 shows the typographic illustrations for the song Angin Pujaan Hujan. The composition focused on illustrating the umbrella shielding one's emotion from the rain. Serif typefaces used in the word "angin" (wind), "langit" (sky), "mimpiku" (my dream), "rinduku" (my longing), and "lara" (emotional pain) was shown in the umbrella to express the emotive aspect of the song. The umbrella made from those words express the longing feeling which hurts oneself. This composition also expresses how by experiencing a longing feeling, one is living through the difficulties, as is conveyed by the typefaces illustrating the rain. Figure 5 also shows the typographic illustrations for the song Angin Pujaan Hujan. This figure was different from the composition done in figure 4 as it was focused on the contrast shown by blank spaces and the different composition of typefaces in the form of horizontal versus vertical layout. The two contrasting element of spaces, groupings, and directions formed the longing effect that assert the emotion of one who want to connect but living in a different world. The composition in figure 5 shows that typographic illustration can show an alternative semantic meaning even though the illustration was derived from the same song.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Lyrical typography done through experimental methods can be applied to the song to give a whole new visual experience in expressing the song. The boring formal layout of song lyrics writing and the monotony of the word repetition can be eschewed to achieve an emotional appeal that is more



Figure 4: Final Result Angin Pujaan H

expressive. By narrating the lyrics of the song using lyrical typography, the author can express a more personal semantic meaning and give the audience a visualization of how the author feels about the song. Layout arrangement and typeface choices will affect the narrative greatly in communicating the semantic meaning derived from the song. The author can opt for a more general meaning or a more personal one. By incorporating lyrical typography into the song lyrics writing, the audience can see the visualization created and gain a new way to experience the song and the emotion within as intended by the author. Thus, lyrical typography can provide a new way in experiencing the song through the arrangements of song lyrics, conforming to the stimulus of music so that it was not only pleasing to be heard but also to be seen visually.

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