

# The Monuments Of The ‘Old-Order’ Era In Jakarta: Visual Representation Of Sukarno’s Nationalism

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## Abstract

The construction of monuments in the ‘Old-Order’ (*Orde Lama*) era in Jakarta is an integral part of the Indonesian’s struggle. This study is a qualitative study with qualitative descriptive analysis through textual and contextual analysis focused on the spirit and the visual representation of the five monuments which were built during the reign of the Old-Order in Jakarta. These monuments are *Monumen Selamat Datang*, *Pembebasan Irian Barat*, *Dirgantara*, and *Monumen Nasional (Monas)*. Monuments built in the Old-Order era in Jakarta, served as the representation of Nationalism from the first President of The Republic of Indonesia, Ir. Soekarno or better known to the Indonesian people as ‘Bung Karno’ that are reflected in the construction of monuments in his reign. These monuments are not portrayed as character, class, or certain ideology, but more as the representation of the life spirit from the Indonesian people and the values of their culture, depicted by *Monumen Nasional* as the center point of the four other monuments. Bung Karno is a consistent leader with strong character and has ability to integrate varieties of ethnic, class, religion, and ideology into one nationality. All of these are reflected in his ideas to build the five monuments, so that Bung Karno’s figure can be seen as a role model for leadership in Indonesia.

Keywords: Nationalism, monuments, spirit, visual representation

## Introduction

Sukarno, as the great revolution leader who proclaims the independence of the Republic of Indonesia, has created some great ideas and works, not only in social politics, but also in the construction of great monuments in Jakarta. Jakarta, as the capital city of Indonesia, is not only the central of the government, but also the central of political and cultural activities. According to Geldern, as the major city of nation, Jakarta is the center of magic for one nation (Geldern, 1982:6). The power of major city is significant for a newly-born nation like Indonesia, whom its independence needs acknowledgement from the world as a new nation, free from Colonialism. Sukarno declared that a great nation is capable of creating some great and impressive thing (Yudoseputro, 1979:33). Therefore, in order to highlight the power and greatness, Indonesia built some monumental buildings in the capital city as a symbol of central power of politic, culture, and image.

Monuments are buildings and places that have an important historical value. These were created with the intention of perpetuating the memory of a person or a great event. Anderson defines that a monument is not only to commemorate an event or experience in the past, but also at the same time, monument can be intended as a heritage or testament for the descendant because of its durability. Thus, monument is a way to link between certain types of past and future (Anderson, 2000:367). Monuments are often visualized through buildings, temples, statues or inscriptions, and other historical relics belonging to the monumental category. So, monument is a product of a culture that has historical value as a reminder over specific event or important character.

In more than five years, from 1961 to 1965, Sukarno (Bung Karno) was able to build some magnificent monuments in large size. The construction of these monuments was not only based on political considerations, but also representing the president's love of the art work. Bung Karno's idealism to make Indonesia a large and powerful country not only in a political ideology, but also covers many aspects of life including the construction of monuments in Jakarta. Some fundamental issues raised in this research are: (1) What kinds of the spirit that affect the development of monuments in the Old-Order era in Jakarta; (2) Why those spirit influence to the Old-Order era; (3) How the representation of Sukarno's Nationalism reflected in the monuments of the reign of the Old-Order in Jakarta; and (4) How the visual representation and the meaning of the monument during the reign of the Old-Order in Jakarta are.

Basically there are two important things in this study, first is the spirit of

Nationalism of Bung Karno as the main initiator of the construction of the monument during the reign of the Old-Order in Jakarta, that he was not only giving his ideas, but also controls every step of the process in the development of monument. Secondly is the visual representation of the monument on seeing the form of the monument from the standpoint of aesthetics, so that both sides can be analyzed in terms of linkage between major ideologies of Bung Karno and the accomplishment of a visual representation in the form of monuments.

The study is a qualitative study to obtain in-depth data and detect various things beyond visual, or in other words to uncover things that are implied under the express. Research carried out by multidisciplinary approaches through science Aesthetic, Social Politics, Psychology, and other relevant sciences. The data collection were done through interviews with actors directly participating in the construction of the monument, sculpture artists, community leaders, assistant of Bung Karno, and society. Beside interviews, the writer also conducted direct observation to observe more closely and also indirect observation through various documents, while data analysis is carried out both textual and contextual.

The purposes of this study are to identify, classify, describe, and explain about monuments in Jakarta built in the Old-Order era, with particular objectives:

- (1) To disclose the spirit of the monument during the reign of the Old-Order in Jakarta;
- (2) To disclose the socio-political ideologies that influence the development of monuments in the Old Order era in Jakarta;
- (3) To reveal the representation of Sukarno's Nationalism in monuments of the Old-Order era in Jakarta;
- (4) To explain the visual representation and meaning contained within the monument.

## Discussions

This study used a qualitative descriptive analysis, through textual and contextual analysis, considering that this research not only discussed from the viewpoint of art product, but also the spirit or motivation that drives the emergence of the art product itself. Contextual analysis regards social and political conditions underlying the establishment of monuments in the reign

of the Old Older, while textual analysis is about the visual elements, the preparation of such elements, expressions, as well as the visual perception of the monument.

### Sukarno's Nationalism

According to Bung Karno, a true Nationalism is Nationalism that works together to establish a country. It does not mean that it is similar to Nationalism that grows in Europe; Nationalism which attacks each other, Nationalism which gets their own profits, Nationalism based on the cost-benefit trade. Such Nationalism is definitely lost and perish. Indonesian Nationalism is based on collaboration, cooperation with Muslims, Marxists, and the Nationalists (Sukarno, 2005: 6). Of course the opinion of Sukarno is closely related to the condition of Indonesia's struggles in the early 1920s, in which those three components are very dominant movement classes but all three components work alone. Bung Karno sees these components are not profitable for Indonesian independence movement, so that all three classes are united together with one concept of *NASAKOM*. *NASAKOM* is an acronym based on the Indonesian words *Nasionalis* (Nationalism), *Agama* (Religion), and *Komunis* (Communism). Thoughts to unite the different concept to be one concept to the nationalist frame are also reflected in the construction of monuments in his reign.

Furthermore, Bung Karno's views, contained in *Soeloeh Indonesia Moeda* magazine and published in 1926, expressed a variety of views on true Nationalism. Bung Karno viewed that those three groups must be united to form a great power to fight the Western Colonialism and Imperialism, because the movement of Nationalism and Islamism in Indonesia have the same goal, that is to undermine the dominance of Western Colonialism and Imperialism in Indonesia. Although Islam is a globally recognized religion, Islamic community living in Indonesia should put up a struggle for getting their country to be free from the grip of foreign imperialist. Likewise, the Nationalists should be able to unite with Marxists that has been globally acknowledged. Marxists is a movement that opposed the Western power, thus Nationalism, Islamism, and Marxism are an integral part of the struggle against colonialism shortfall each other (Sukarno, 2005: 7-22).

The other thoughts of Sukarno that influence the construction of monuments in his reign is the idea of Marhaenism. Bung Karno explained that due to the domination of imperialism for centuries, the struggle of the Indonesian people is typical of small communities (Dahm, 1987: 175), a small community is not the proletariat as the view of Marxism, but a small community is "Marhaen" (Sukarno, Speech, May 26, 1958). Sukarno distinguished the term proletariat and Marhaen, proletarian refers to the workers, while

Marhaen refers to small farmers, small traders, small fishermen, as he wrote in *Fikiran Rakyat* newspaper in 1933 that "... Marhaen soldiers, soldiers who take the power from peasantry, but our pioneers are the ranks of workers, ranks of the proletariat (Sukarno, 1985: 256). "The idea is reaffirmed in his speech that Marhaen is small farmer who work in his or her own field, using its own equipments, so it is not aproletariat who sells energy to work in the industry (Sukarno, Speech, May 26, 1958). That ideology is reflected in the construction of the monument during his reign.

The thoughts of Sukarno have been heavily discussed for a long time since 1920-1945 and have been published in various newspapers and magazines, crystallized in his first speech about Pancasila on June 1, 1945. He said that "We want to establish a state for everyone. Not for one person, not for one group, neither the nobility nor the wealthy class, but all for all (Alam, 2000: 14)". In his next speech, it stated that Indonesia is rounded, not Java, not Sumatra, not Borneo, not Celebes, not Ambon, and not Maluku, but all islands in Indonesia. Sukarno's Nationalism is rounded Indonesian Nationalism and it will not be based on certain group or ethnic Nationalism. The view of Bung Karno on the intact Nationalism clearly manifested in the construction of monuments within his reign.

The construction of monuments in Jakarta, in the period 1961 to 1965, is the evidence of a peak power of President Sukarno, so that he can freely express his ideas to become reality in order to achieve certain goals. The freedom of Sukarno is the freedom framed by the values, norms and various influencing abstract ideas influenced by socialist ideas, that are all actions which include in the making of art work are a struggle to build a nation and ultimately the welfare of the people. Socialist ideology in art represented by the characteristics of people's art that has a tendency on people's side emphasizing themes of struggle aimed at the glory of society.

Bung Karno strongly rejects the Imperialism and Colonialism, not only with words full of passion and articles in magazines, books, newspapers, both before independence and after independence of Indonesia, but also in a variety of works of architecture and art. Consistency of Sukarno's anti-colonialism artistry is also reflected in his design of the architecture. Sukarno refuses the colonial architecture design by eliminating the Greek-style pillars of Ionia, Doria, Corinthian, and the architecture of *Amsterdam Style* (Ardhiati, 2005: 111). That stance is in line with his views that Indonesian nation must return to their own life, not to be an artificial nation.

The effort of Bung Karno to return to the soul of Indonesia is also reflected in his speech when he met participant of the project competition of *Tugu Nasional* at the State Palace, June 26, 1960. He stated that Indonesian

people for a long time was the nation of three-dimensional, with the ability to build Borobudur and *Prambanan* temples, but next Indonesian nation be a nation of two-dimensional due to the Dutch colonial, but in the independence of Indonesian nation must be back again to be a nation of three-dimensional (Sukarno, Speech, June 26, 1960). The statement is an attempt of Sukarno to regain the soul of Indonesian art and not to be an artificial nation, he firmly associated *Monas* with *Borobudur* and *Prambanan* Temples as an effort to find his own identity apart from the art of the colonial period.

Bung Karno has a distinctive taste of work of art, he thinks that the work of art should be able to convey the message as its character as a visual language, it should be communicative without text, without words. Sukarno is not interested in abstract art style, although he still appreciated it, he does not want the beautiful Indonesia marred by the artist of abstract style. According to Sukarno's belief that art should be able to communicate with the audience, without explanation of words, text or other explanation, because art has its own character in communication, through a visual language that is easily understood by people who do not understand art at all.

The thought of Bung Karno about entire Indonesia, that is the entire islands existing in parts of Indonesia, is reflected in *Monumen Selamat Datang*, *Pembebasan Irian Barat*, *Dirgantara*, *Pahlawan*, and *Monas*, because those monuments do not describe individual persons, not describe group per group, not depict the characters of Indonesia's fighters for freedom, not describe a general war leader, but depicts all Indonesian people, farmers, laborers, servants, fishermen, because revolution is a revolution of Indonesian people (Sukarno, Speech, June 24, 1964). The monuments of Sukarno's era describe the heroic attitude, not the depiction of one character, or a particular ethnic group. Bung Karno's attitude is in line with his idea that Indonesia is a nation that is intact from Sabang to Merauke, not a nation that is fragmented in the group of ideology, ethnicity, beliefs, and certain groups.

Bung Karno always encourages Indonesian nation to have its own ideology, "Let us back to our own spirit, do not be a clone (Sukarno, 1985: xv)," it means that Indonesian nation must have its own peculiar characteristics that are different from other nations. He laid the foundation of Pancasila ideology rooted in Indonesian culture, as well as in removing the design of the architecture colors of colonial-style buildings. In fashion, Sukarno has his own style; his own uniform complete with his *peci* (cap). Sukarno's desire to create his own style, is also obvious in the construction of the monuments in his government, that the realist or expressionist style is

represented and it is different from the art style developing in Europe or the Soviet Union.

### **The Memory and Monuments in the Old-Order Era**

Monuments are not only as a form of warning to an event of the past, but also to build future behavior, linking the types in the past and the future (Anderson, 2000: 367). A monument is as a legacy for future generation, in order to be remembered by community or the next generation (Causey, 1998: 218). The memory of past events related to the monuments of Old Older era, is no longer being remembered by the present generation, even the meaning of some monuments are accidentally deflected into the new one that has no relation with the meaning intended by the monument. For instance, *Monumen Dirgantara* is also known as *Monumen Hanuman* because his face is considerably similar to an ape. Now, that monument is known as *Monumen Pancoran* because this monument located near Pancoran, even when the G30S PKI, *Monumen Dirgantara* was rumored as a scribing eye monument. The diversion of the meaning is of course not a coincidence, but it is as a deliberate action of Sukarno's political opponents to degrade the meaning of a monument or even as a form of attack to bring down the Old Older era.

The functions of monument are as a past memorial events and shaping the future behavior no longer achieved, because now people currently make a very new narrow meaning, like in *Monumen Dirgantara*, right now it is known as *Monumen Pancoran*, so automatically the meaning is being changed, that the meaning is to remind about the greatness Indonesia's aviators at that time, but now monument is remembered as a pointer of place. The relationship of past events to set up a behavior of the present and the future is no longer realized, because the present generation is not familiar with past events relating to *Monumen Dirgantara*, they are more familiar with the shopping center, such as *Tanah Abang*, *Mangga Dua* or recreational areas like *Taman Impian Jaya Ancol*. Other monuments in the Old Older era also have same fate, *Monumen Selamat Datang* known as *Monumen Bundaran HI*; *Monumen Pembebasan Irian Barat* known as *Monumen Lapangan Banteng*; and *Monumen Pahlawan* known as *TuguTani*.

The function of monument as a memorial ceremony of Independence of the Republic of Indonesia is to commemorate past events in order to uplift the individual's or the public spirit to act or behave based on the spirit of the struggle of independence in the future, but monuments of Old-Order era is not able to evoke the spirit of the past for future action, because this time monuments became "dead" objects that are incapable of giving



the great spirit and encouragement to both individual and society group. Visual heritage of monument as a memorial object is not sufficient, but the legacy of the form must be accompanied by a legacy of meaning contained therein. Heritage needs to be brought to life through special rituals and routines organized regularly, in order to arouse the attention and memory for individual and supporting society, so that the purpose of the monument will be achieved.

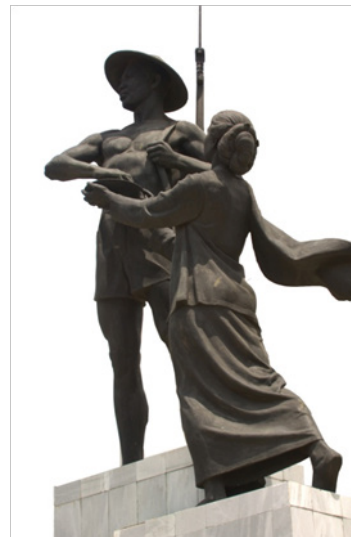


Figure 1 : The name of the bus stop next to Monumen Pahlawan as a form of 'bending' the meaning of monument

Source: personal photos collection of Toto Sugiarto Arifin (2010)

## The Visual Representation of Monuments

Monuments built in the Old Older era as work of art have the structure of a language, as well as literary work, which means that the structure of the visual language as a communication tool to convey specific messages, without understanding the structure of a visual language will be hard to read the work of art. As in the written language without knowing the definition of a noun or a verb, it will be difficult to communicate each other. If the visual language structure is not well understood, it is likely there will be inaccuracies in the arrest of the meaning of the art work. That is why it should be known accurately every element of the definition of art and the way of the organization, although the work of art does not have uncertain rules of grammar. Language in such away has broadly meaning, depends on the point of view and for what the art work is created.

Monuments of the Old Older era in Jakarta use much diagonal line motion, except in *Monas* that displays a vertical line motion in order to achieve spiritual impression. Diagonal line motion is applied to achieve the look of



dynamic motion of the monument, in contrast with the using of horizontal lines which illustrate peace and silence. Therefore, the use of diagonal lines based on the spirit of the monuments as a medium expression of Indonesia's struggle to seize and build a nation dynamically.

Monuments built in the Old Order era in Jakarta present dynamic forms, characterized by the heavy use of diagonal line motion. Dynamic properties reinforced with limb and facial expressions that give the impression of being engaged with the sturdy and strong, dynamic properties can be visually seen in the monuments that feature realistic styles such as *Monumen Selamat Datang*, expressionist style such as *Monumen Pembebasan Irian Barat* and *Dirgantara*, socialist realistic style such as *Monumen Pahlawan*, and Abstract Symbolic such as *Monas*.

Monuments during the reign of the Old-Order show dynamic motion. This motion can be achieved with three (3) ways: (1) arching limbs forward, backward or to the side, raising hand, opening mouth, and stepping foot; (2) lifting objects or accessories attached to the body, so that give impression of being floated; and (3) making parallel lines from the small to the large or from large to small.

Generally, the shape of the monument during the reign of the Old-Order in Jakarta refers to the human form, except *Monas* refers to Symbolic Abstract style. *Monumen Selamat Datang* shows realist style, while *Monumen Pembebasan Irian Barat* and *Dirgantara* tend to show Expressionism style. *Monumen Pahlawan* shows more Socialist Realism style. Those styles are suitable with Bung Karno's view, because he thinks that art should be easily captured by the illiterate meaning even by blind people, because the essence of work of art seen without text, without words, then the most appropriate for such an ideology is a fine art of realist style.



Figure 2 : The visualization of the realist style in *Monumen Selamat Datang* (1) forward to expressionism style in *Monumen Pembebasan Irian Barat* (2) and *Dirgantara* (3)

Source: personal photos collection of Toto Sugiarto Arifin (2010)

Bung Karno always states that Indonesian nation must return to their true identity and not to be an artificial nation, but because Indonesia was colonized by the Europeans for long time and the rules of art had been taught by Western artists to Indonesian artists. Almost three-quarters of the contemporary era, the world has been controlled and influenced by Imperialism and Colonialism, so the artistic process were controlled by codes of Europe, as well as the monument of the Old-Order era in Jakarta. It cannot be back to the purity of Indonesian art. Nevertheless, Bung Karno is able to guide the sculptors to discover their own identity, because the Realism of *Monumen Selamat Datang* or Expressionism of *Monumen Pembebasan Irian Barat* and *Dirgantara* are different from the concept of Realism and Expressionism developed in the West.

Space is an important part of a three-dimensional work such as monument. It is not only in its work or inside space, but also outside monument or outside space. Inside space is permanent or unchanging, but outside space is always changing, in line with the development of the local environment. Inside space is not only to achieve aesthetic impression, but also to provide quality of monumental perception of the monument, as the foundation or base of *Monumen Selamat Datang* and *Pembebasan Irian Barat*, because if the space in the base is closed, automatically the monument will look shorter and lost connection with the environment. In addition, space in the monument base will physically reduce the wind pressure.

Outside space becomes a crucial issue in the existing monuments in Jakarta, because environment changes rapidly, in line with the development of industrialization in the major cities. The acceleration of developing city does not count the environmental harmonization. The construction of buildings is like competing to be higher and bigger without considering the unity with the surrounding of the building. Monument previously located in vast empty space, then 'sink' in skyscrapers such as buildings around *Monumen Selamat Datang* and *Dirgantara*. They 'moved' from empty and wide space to narrow and congested space. At last, monuments look smaller, isolated, lost the connection with surrounding environment and reduced the monumental character.

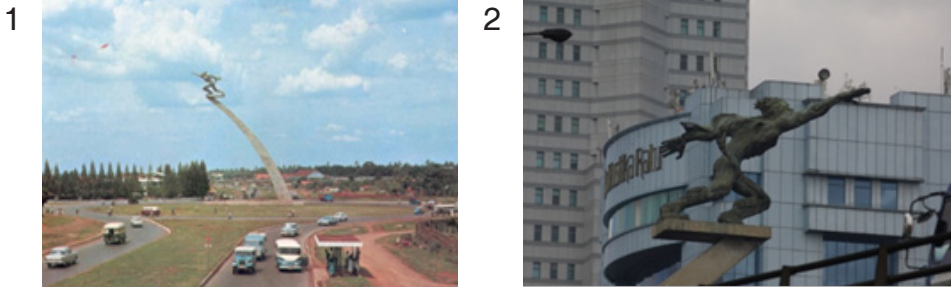


Figure 3 : Monumen Dirgantara 'moved' from empty to crowded space

Sources: (1) personal photo collection of Edhi Sunarso (1970) and (2) personal photo collection of Toto Sugiarto Arifin (2010)

Monument is a combination between personal expression of the artist and the customer, both implicitly 'hidden' in a monument, like the shape of the face in *Monumen Pembebasan Irian Barat* with opened mouth showing a screaming expression and having similarities with the face of the sculpture work from Edhi Sunarso. It is very possible because the details of the face of that monument done by Edhi Sunarso, except the cultivation of the face of sculpture of *Monumen Selamat Datang* done by Trubus. An artist requires a signature in his or her works, which means that the resemblance of the face of the monument statue with the artist as a deliberateness to show his or her presence in the work. And if the work is personal, the artist can easily put their signature or name in the work. But if the monument is a work belonging to public and funded by the state, then the personal right of the work will be lost.

The figure sculptures of four monuments built during the Old-Order era are *Monumen Selamat Datang*, *Pembebasan Irian Barat*, *Pahlawan*, and *Dirgantara* but none of them shows a figure of Sukarno or other figures who struggle for Indonesia's freedom. Bung Karno is more interested in promoting the spirit of nationality, the spirit of the nation in seizing and filling the independence, because independence is not the result of individual person, or just certain group, but the result of the sweat and the spirit of all Indonesian people fighting for the freedom. The attitude of Bung Karno in avoiding the characterization in his work of monument thinking by himself shows his consistency with the Nationalism values that he believes since his youth, that Indonesia is not a class or a particular ethnic group, but it is whole area of Indonesia from Sabang to Merauke. Monuments in Old-Order era in Jakarta are serving as a silent testimony of important past events, either event or tragedy adjacent to the time of the construction of the monument, such as *Monumen Selamat Datang*, *Pembebasan Irian Barat*, *Pahlawan*, and *Dirgantara* as well as recall memory, values or limitless past tragedy with the construction of monuments, such as *Monas*

and *Pahlawan*.

*Monas* is the central point that unites *Monumen Selamat Datang*, *Pembebasan Irian Barat*, *Pahlawan*, and *Dirgantara*, and all monuments face to *Monas*. *Monumen Selamat Datang* does not face to the former Kemayoran International airport, at that time it is to greet guests coming from abroad, but it faces to *Monas*, as same as *Monumen Pembebasan Irian Barat* does not face to the West Papua or Papua region, but it faces to *Monas*. *Monumen Dirgantara* does not face to Head Quarters Air Force of the Republic of Indonesia at the time, but it actually faces to the north of *Monas*, as well as *Monumen Pahlawan* facing to the west of *Monas*. *Monas* placed as the central point of monuments built in the Old-Order era, so that monument is a magical center for Indonesia, because *Monumen Selamat Datang*, *Pembebasan Irian Barat*, *Pahlawan*, and *Dirgantara* are the representations of the spirit from Indonesian people.

The unsmooth governmental transition from Old-Order to New-Order is one of the cause that leads to the lost of meaning of “warning” of those monuments, as well as used as a part of a political attack. *Monumen Pahlawan* had once been rumored as a symbol of *Angkatan Kelima*, that is the power of armed labors and peasants in the past communist rebellion, or more popularly known as *Gerakan 30 September/PKI* and the meaning is sustained by the New-Order government by naming the bus stop near the monument as *Tugu Tani* bus stop, while *Monumen Dirgantara* also has same fate that had been implicated as a statue of scribing eye or *Monument Hanuman*. Trans Jakarta Shelter near *Monumen Dirgantara* called Pancoran Shelter not *Monumen Dirgantara* Shelter, so it seems like there is no government’s effort to keep the memory of those monuments, in contrast, it looks as if the government tries to dismiss the true meanings of those monuments built in the reign of the Old-Order and they have been replaced with new meanings that do not have the relevancy to the initial spirit of the monuments.

## Conclusion

Monuments built during the reign of the Old-Order are representation of Nationalism in eliminating colonialism in Indonesia and around the world. Bung Karno has a strong and broad power under the Guided Democracy administration style, so the idea that has been suggested for a long time, that is to build the construction of great and large monuments can be realized within five years from end of his reign. Bung Karno in the Guided Democracy era has rediscovered his lost power, so the pressure to the

West, particularly on the issue of the returning of West Irian territory to the unitary Republic of Indonesia and the fight against Neocolonialism, Colonialism, and Imperialism has been done more progressively. Better pressure was carried out in home affairs and international forums. He has expressed his idea of Nationalism proactively through the construction of monuments in Jakarta. Bung Karno wants to show the world that Indonesia is a large and prosperous country that can produce great works on its own merits.

Monuments of the Old-Order era in Jakarta show own expression that supports the whole expression. Hence, monuments during the reign of the Old Order contain four aspects of expression: (1) Monument is as a personal expression of the artist; (2) Monument is a medium to deliver the emotion of the artist to the public; (3) Monument is an embodiment of emotion through objects; and (4) Monument is an expression of the contributor, in this case the Old-Order government represented by Bung Karno's figure. Therefore, it can be generalized that a monument is a combination of the representation of personal expression of the artist/ maker and buyer/ ruler/ contributor.

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