THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN'S POSES ON FASHION PHOTOGRAPHY OF FOTOGRAFER.NET'S GALLERY: ROLAND BARTHES’ CAMERA LUCIDA ANALYSIS

Inggit Fatmawati

ABSTRACT

Fashion through photography is usually related to fashion magazine or promotion of fashion line. Fashion from the pure photography’s point of view is usually discussed by the photographers as hobbyists. Fotografer.Net is a popular photographers’ community portal in Indonesia and South East Asia. It has the capability to be a reference among photographers. The paper attempts to find out the portrayal of women’s poses in fashion category of Fotografer.Net and how women displayed. Fashion is actually unisex, but female is likely being the subject of this interest, more than male. The main focus of the fashion photography is supposed to be at the clothing style, but it is finally shifted in to the exposing of women’s bodies. The photograph also reflects seductive representation towards audience. The analysis is based on Roland Barthes’ Camera Lucida as the tool-kit for photographic images analysis and Erving Goffman’s Gender and Advertisement used to reveal the meaning of women’s pose. The poses of women in three selected photographs of Fotografer.Net’s fashion category represent about how women become objectified and sometimes unidentified subject. The poses are also supported by the clothing style and settings to construct the idea of women become objectified and represent the ideal beauty in fashion photography. However, the emergence trends that varied in Indonesian fashion scene still maintain this kind of fashion photography from the hobbyists’ point of view.

Keywords: Camera Lucida; Fashion Photography; Pose; Punctum; Studium

1. Introduction

Photography has become a popular hobby among Indonesian hobbyists. The transformation of technology has turn into digital era where the activity of photographing has become more various. Fotografer.Net or simply well-known abbreviated as FN is one of the most popular online photographer community in Indonesia, even South East Asia. The popularity makes FN has the capability to be a reference for photographers. The concept of photo works’ submission is very simple. In addition, the uploader or user can define in which genre the photograph belongs. In FN’s gallery, the categorization is based on the genre in photography including fashion photography.

What fashion is, according to Kawamura (3), it is being used synonymously with clothing, even though clothing is more specifically indicate raw materials of wear, fashion stands out from clothes, garment, attire, garb, apparel and costume. In opposite, sometimes fashion is also distinguished from clothes because of the existence of clothes is earlier than fashion. In general, according to Svendsen (12) fashion can be distinguished in two categories based on our general knowledge about it. First, it refers to the clothing itself or in general mechanism, while the second is logic or ideology that occurs towards the area of clothing.

Fashion and photography are both constructed from visual aspect. Both of them are being able to make collaboration to create one of photography genres so-called fashion photography. Craik (192) believes that fashion photography has already changed from its history. Fashion photography used to portrayed and depicted about clothes as the main interest or ‘objects of desire’ then it finally shifted into the imaginary creation that being functionalized to generate the desired identity and lifestyle. Fashion photography so far has the function to display two aspects, the clothes and the models wearing the clothes. They are working together to construct the idea of fashion photography. If fashion photography is no longer focus on the clothes, is like what Craik (45) says that the models who display the clothes, when they are being displayed without clothes we are no longer figure it out as ‘natural body’. What we can find there is the fashion that already shaped the body. Moreover about the gender that being displayed, according to Svendsen (10), fashion is actually unisex. Fashion does not distinct or specialized one sex only. In fact, women are likely being the subject of this interest, more than male. It is also happens in the photographs, when photographers are trying to capture about fashion, they use women as the majority sex
that displayed as the representation of fashion. The main focus of fashion photography is supposed to be emphasized at the clothing style, but it is portrayed predominantly in their body. To define the object that becomes the focus on the photographs, this study uses Barthes’ Camera Lucida and Goffman’s Gender Advertisements to reveal the meaning of the women’s poses.

Camera Lucida is a special theory written by Roland Barthes and specifically talks about photographic image. There are two terms that named by Barthes and he realized it as something interesting to him, studium and punctum. According to Barthes cited in Allen (216), studium is attached to ‘obvious symbolic meaning’. It is also something that encourages the spectators to agree because it displays relatable cultural code. punctum which is referred from the word punctuation according to Barthes (96), it is also considered as the detail that elevate photographs higher. The studium on the photographs is the posing and the punctum covers the clothing style and setting.

The poses on women’s fashion photographs can be defined using Goffman’s Gender Advertisement. In Gender and Advertisement, Erving Goffman’s idea about the position between male and female in advertisement was first described in gender display. Goffman argues (1) that display refers to someone’s activity that being witnessed by someone else to inform about ‘mood, social identity, intent, and expectation’. When it comes to gender display, it will portray conventionally about their usual activity that being exposed. In gender display, there’s also the term of ritualization that being related with how gender being displayed. Ritualization according to Goffman (3) is the way human behaviour is being reframed by the complication of display by human capacity, ritualization also covers about the transformation that already being transformed, ‘a hype ritualization’. Goffman also gives some portrayals about how relationship in advertisement, may cause ‘imbalance and distortion’.

If fashion photography is no longer focus on the clothes, is like what Craik (45) says that the models who display the clothes, when they are being displayed without clothes we are no longer figure it out as ‘natural body’. What we can find there is the fashion that already shaped the body. This study attempts to find out the focus of the photograph whether on the women’s bodies or the clothes. The meaning of women’s poses also need to be revealed.

2. Methodology

The primary data source is the most popular and commented photographs from the fotografer.net’s website with the domain name http://fotografer.net. FN’s gallery is divided into several categorizations; they are based on photography’s genre. The categorizations are made by the website itself. Fashion photography is also one of photography’s genres. The member of FN can upload their photographs and label it as the category provided in the gallery.

The method used to make sampling in the research is cross sampling. Jacobson (108) claims that cross sampling is method used to pick samples from different categories with one or two sources to find the representative data. There are three photographs that will be analyzed. The combination of high commented and high rated chosen because there are several photographs appear in the same order from the most to the least. The photographs are reduced into three photographs because the writer needs to get permission from the photographers’. Each of the photographs that published on FN has copyright. In addition, the writer also take the photographs that already permitted by the photographers to use their photographs for the analysis. The data of the three photographs will displayed and elaborated in the following figures based on basic information provided by the website and the popularity’s order.

The sample of photographs that has already gathered will be analyzed one by one using Barthes’ Camera Lucida as the approach. The analysis is done to find the portrayal of women’s pose on the selected fashion photographs. The analysis will divided into two steps according to Barthes’ Camera Lucida. The first step of analysis in each photograph is defining the studium contained in the photograph. Studium, as already explained takes broader scope that punctum does as the detail. It is also part of cultural connotation and how it is giving effect generally (Barthes 2000, p.26).

Therefore, in the studium stage, each of photographs will be coded culturally as the function of studium. The second step of analysis will reveal the punctum in the photographs. The analysis also involves Erving Goffman’s gender and advertisement. After analyze each photograph, there will be a process of collecting whole description of women’s pose portrayal from the previous analysis.
The Portrayal of Women’s Poses on Fashion Photography of Fotografer.Net’s Gallery: Roland Barthes’ Camera Lucida Analysis

Figure 1 & 2. GA (courtesy of Tito Rusbagja), Use Your Imagination (courtesy of Insan Kurniawan)

Figure 3. Backstage Pass (courtesy of Tommy A Siahaan)

The photographs above will be analyzed in this paper. The first photograph uploaded at July 3rd, 2009 by Tito Rusbagja. It gets the highest scores 9315 and received 2173 comments. The two photographs below become the second and third photographs that are also analyzed in this paper. The second photograph uploaded at March 09th, 2005 by Insan Kurniawan. The photo is entitled “Use Your Imagination” displayed women’s legs photographed with lingerie hanging on their knees. The photograph gets 4404 scores and received 1056 comments. The last photograph entitled “Backstage Pass” uploaded by Tommy Siahaan at May 20th, 2007. It gets 4254 scores and received 974 comments.

3. Discussion

The first level of analysis is to define the *studium* in the photographs. In *studium*, one of the terms that created by Barthes (26) in Camera *Lucida* has the function reveal the general meaning including cultural connotative and historical juxtaposition in photographs. In Indonesia, there is juxtaposition in the history of women being displayed in media and photography. The poses of Indonesian women in fashion photographs were various. It was not long before and after the independence of Indonesia, it was rare to find Indonesian women posed sensually in women and fashion magazine. The portrayal of women in women and fashion magazine was depicted in illustration picture of women with Western faces. In the colonization era, the history attached to fashion was almost the same in history of time that fashion always related to the colonizers not the colonized according to Jones (187). Therefore, the fashion media in that era mostly represents women in Western faces, clothes, and customs. In otherwise, Indonesian women were mostly portrayed as traditional women because they wear traditional clothing style such as *kebaya*. Sometimes they are being figured as mother figure by pictured with children. In a 1949 magazine *Dunia*
Wanita cover became one of a kind magazine use such kind portrayal of women. In the years around 1960s to 1970s finally fashion magazine about Indonesian women were published in print media. The existence of these magazines was no longer supported by illustration for the cover but in real photographs.

In 2000s, the emergence of various media also influenced the existence and the increasing on post-reform women magazines. Soemandoyo highlights that women bodies were exploited through media and the models claimed that it was part of work of art (401). However, Mukhotib in Soemandoyo (393) claims that 95% women at that time still portrayed to obey traditional gender norms. While print media became more exist, after 2000s a new media so-called internet finally arrived in Indonesia. The euphoria of women’s objectification became extended into the internet. One of the kinds is through photographers’ portal.

In second photograph, it shows women’s body fragmented into the sensual part. Fuss (720) adds that the fragmentation in woman’s body typically shows legs, breasts, face, and other body parts which lead to fashion fetishism. The common fragmented part that ever happened to Indonesian women’s bodies in media is their face. The idea of putting cropped women’s body in to cover magazine happened in a 2004 Women Health magazine and a 2008 Fashion Pro magazine. The magazines were only cropped the women’s body so that it only displays lips and their body until the belly button. Both of them use minimum clothes that cover only half of their upper body.

In the third photograph, the images of women being portrayed in a group were merely different in Indonesia. In FN’s gallery itself, the first photograph displayed women photographed in group was in 2003. There was a photograph by Yasmet Nasser entitled Gadis Pinggitan. The photograph displayed a group of women wearing Javanese traditional outfits, kebaya. Their expressions are also different; they were portrayed as cheerful women having good time as peers such in Nasser’s photograph. In the opposite, this third photograph portrays women in group and merely in flat expression.

The next analysis is about the meaning of the pose in the photograph based on Erving Goffman’s Gender Advertisements. In his book, Goffman describes many poses that commonly used in advertisement. Goffman also describes the meaning in each pose. The poses described are related to how women and men portrayed in a frame and how women mostly posed. Bates (76) finds that the way someone construct their body-posture is to perform the embodying psychological attitude. The most common pose that displayed in the entire photograph is knee-bend. Goffman (45) finds that the pose can be read as a full effort of preparation to be ready in social situation currently. Goffman also associates the pose as the position of someone before they are fighting or flying. The second common post is feminine touch that focuses on self-touching in way women holds their own body. Self touching pose is the pose to perform through audience about a sense that the woman’s body is being considered as delicate and precious thing according to Goffman (31). The self touching pose displayed in the first photograph and third photograph when women touch their own head, neck, and waist.

In the second photograph, the pose is similar to the most common pose amongst all. The problem is the way women’s body being cropped and fragmented in their most sensual part. Even though the photographer tries to hide the secrecy of the women’s upper body because of the lingerie that hanging on each women’s knee. The effect is functionalized to create imagination in audience’s point of view. Svendsen (87) describes that revealing legs in twentieth century is the same as the reveal of the most erotic part of the body. The objectification and part objectification are the steps that lead to the dehumanization of the other and lead to violence according to Kilbourne in Reindl (46). McCannel in Fuss (720) uses the metaphor of ‘trash can’ to show ‘woman as generality’, seen in fragmented body in the ‘trash can of overvalued zones’. Those parts represent the phallicised that turns into the metaphor of ‘wholeness that the woman lacks’.

In the third photograph, the additional poses displayed are the finger to finger, childlike pose, and the ritualization of subordination. Finger to finger pose represented by the left models wearing lace outfits. If we take a look, her hands are joined each other. This type of pose, according to Goffman is defined as the carriage of dissociate communication (61). Goffman compared that it is almost similar to covering mouth pose and hiding emotion that symbolizes shyness or fear. The childlike pose represented by the (two from right) model. The presence of childlike pose indicates the readiness of someone to be presents in social situation. Goffman affirms that the poses suggest the readiness of someone by trying various guises to
appear in different times (50-51). The ritualization of subordination pose occurs between two models in the photograph that interact each other unlike the rest of them. In this pose, there are two binary attitudes such as the superior and inferior. Goffman (40) points out that if someone’s head is pointed upward become a sign that the subject’s feeling of unashamedness, superiority, and disdain which occurs in model B’s pose. Goffman also displays some old photographs where woman portrayed standing next to their sitting husband and put her hands at the his back. Goffman sees this to make man as central figure and woman as supporting figure behind him. Goffman states that pose is also supported by turning one’s gaze away (62).

The next analysis is the second level of analysis to define the punctum. La Grange describes that punctum has the power to expand, including the ability to tell the detail of the whole photographs. In each of the photograph, the detail aspect will cover the clothing style, the colour that embedded in the photograph, and the setting of where the photograph takes place. First of all is the clothing style that worn by the women in the photographs. Starting from the first photograph, it displays a woman wearing two pieces of clothes that cover half of her upper body and very short tight hot pants. There is a confusion to define the woman’s upper outfit. In a glance, the clothes look like a blouse because it doesn’t have collars and not as loose as T-Shirt. Meanwhile, Ambrose and Hairis defines blouse as loose and fit shirt that the length covers right until the waist or below.

If we take a look at the way it fastened it might referred to an outerwear. People these days are familiar with the booming of cardigan and bolero that worn as an outerwear. It is very similar with the outfit in the photographs because of the shape that also fit in the body. Stalder (47) defines it being functioned as jacket that being cropped high within rib cage. It can be made with closed-buttons or lies open against shirts. In the photograph, bolero does not functioned as the main function as outerwear. It is worn as a single outfit without a piece of shirt inside. The colours of the outfit are also play important roles to reveal the meaning hidden in the colours that being used. The bolero that used by the model is yellow, which is very contrast with the colour of the setting. It is the colour that related to sun, heat, vitality, energy and light. Even though it represents light, yellow also expresses the need of enlightenment, energy, and curiosity. Eiseman (19) adds that he warmth in the colour also encourages imagination.

The second is the usage of short pants used as the coverage of the model’s lower part body. Stalder (76) defines these pants as a short that traditionally fit high on the waist and near the belly button. In otherwise, the pants that showed in photograph fits below the belly button. There is another term for it that Stalder (79) calls it as Daisy Dukes. The pants are made of jeans and denims but it is still being part of hot pants. It is known as the popularisation of 1979 TV shows entitled The Dukes of Hazzard. The type of hot pants itself according Stalder (79) had already worn in 1920s and 1930s among European ladies of the night including prostitutes and night club dancers). The use of hot pants in Indonesia among women recently is varied in the responds. The application of wearing hot pants in public spaces especially in Indonesia according to Wahyu (78) it is still conflicts. Based on his field research on Surabaya female teenagers, he finds that there are two binary aspects following the usage of hot pants that is between the social norms of modesty that occurs and fashion trends. It shows that in our society, people do not fully disregard the social norm of modesty.

The clothing that attached in the second photograph is only a piece of underwear. Ambrose and Harris describe that G-String and thongs are being part of lingerie as tiny piece of garment that being connected by a band around a hip. While the coverage of thong is a bit wider than G-string which it also covers genitals and sometimes attached by laces. Craik (280) describes about G-String and what is perceived from it, G-String is actually a dance wear in 1980 and gained popularity in 1990s. Craik (290) adds that it is also associate the wearers as erotic, transgressive sexuality, and images of prostitution which lead to fetishism.

The colors of the G-strings displayed; they are ivory or cream, green, brown, blue, and pink. Each of the colors has its own meaning. The discussion starts from the ivory or cream color that represented by the model’s G-String of model A. Chapman describes it as a sophisticated color that adopts the warmness of brown and the coolness of white. It symbolizes the quietness, calm, pureness, and adopts the white’s elegance. Green according Ambrose and Harris defines the positive of green represents health, new beginnings, possesses charming quality to give balance, and stability. While the negative sides of green
are jealousy, envy, and inexperience. Ambrose and Harris defines that black symbolizes the ability to empower, opulence, exclusivity, and luxury goods. According to Sutton and Whelan (64-65) describes blue as a pleasing and restful. The brighter the blue represents the likeable attitude and friendly, while lighter blue represents charm and sweetness. Ambrose and Harris claim that blue lead to mysteries and power of natural world, constant, vital, replenishing, and life preserving connotation. The last G-string’s color worn by model E is pink. Sutton and Whelan (168-169) associates pink color as pleasant and discourage aggression. It symbolizes energetic and, eye-catching and attention grabber. Ambrose and Harris describe pink as strongly associated in love, romance, and good health.

The placement of colors in the photograph may symbolize the degrees of each color’s characters that lead to the wearers’ character. So, it starts from the calm character in to the attention grabber character. The similarity in all of the colors is that each of the colors shows the various characters of calm, warmth, balance, powerful, pleasing, and attention grabber. The strongest character constructed in black color is being placed in the middle of the photographs as if it is become the centre. Meanwhile, at the stronger character is in pink, it is discourage aggression. The color’s symbolizations lead to the wearers’ character, women are being suggested to have such colors’ character. In the end, they are being able to be powerful as long as not exceed the limit of aggressiveness.

All of the clothing styles are in white color. There are three main styles in the dresses. First, there is a model wears an outfit that made of lace fabric. They fully cover the model’s body with long sleeves and fit pants. There is also a shawl that outflow from the model’s back. The second outfit that worn by model B is a one shoulder dress. The difference between this outfit with ordinary dress is the number of the straps. In this dress, the strap is only one hang in one of the woman’s shoulder. From the dictionary of Fashion History, the tube dress is an unshaped garment with simple cutting, strapless, and elasticized top worn. The uniformity of the dresses’ color which is in white is contrasted to the setting in low light and almost dark. White color, according to Ambrose and Harris symbolizes cleanliness, goodness, purity, simplicity, weddings, bride, and something that associated with celestial.

The last aspect as the detail of *punctum* is the setting in each photograph. In the first photograph, the presence of natural aspects such as water and leaves indicates the setting of the photograph that occurs in natural background. Spellman and Bayer (5) state that there is a correlation between landscape, natural beauty and arts. Nature, in one of photography genre is often displayed in landscape photography, which captures natural phenomena and natural scenery around. Spellman and Bayer (34) state that nature represents the ‘personification of maternal figure’. It can refer to built-in behavior as a character, human, and another living organism. If nature is become the correlation with maternal figure, it attempts to associate the characteristic of nurturing. Nature is also associated with life and energy according to Spellman and Bayer (34). This is where the maternal figure plays, to give life and energy to all of living organisms so that everything depends on nature.

In the second photograph, the location is set at common studio for indoor photography. It can be displayed from the lighting’s reflection on the model’s skin. Bate (68) points out that the studio setting is an environment simulation. The construction consists of electricity and artificial lighting. It is also the best place to take photograph because of the convenience technically and practically. Bate also adds it as a standard set to produce ‘people-pictures’. In the last photograph takes place in the backstage. It usually associated with a place to make preparation before the show or after the show by dress up or make up. It is represented by the presence of the mirrors behind the models and a glimpse of a cosmetic brand behind model E. It uses minimum light to emphasize the backstage that identical with off from the show even though in fact, backstage is not always dark and foggy like in this picture. Zaslow (55) describes that backstage is where long preparation occurs and soon transformed into the acceptance, appreciation, and applause of audience. Backstage area in the audience’s point of view becomes mystery as an entrance before the performers being on stage.

Another component that also important is the lighting, even though the lighting in previous photographs are merely not influence the atmosphere of the photograph. What make the lighting in the third photograph become special are the technique and the result. On the second photograph the lighting’s effect is like common studio’s photographs result. On the third photograph, the lighting affects the display of merely dark tone in it. The main lighting on the photograph comes from right direction where all of the
models’ faces are pointed at the main light. Here to make the discussion clear, the models will be labeled as model A-B-C-D-E-F in clockwise order. Then, the second source of light comes from model B’s back and gives impact to light model C’s arm and model F’s dress even though not in a high intensity. The effect of the main light directly irradiate model C’s face and body. Model C is the only model that does not represent Indonesian face. She placed at centre and gets more light intensity than the others Indonesian models.

4. Conclusion

The portrayal of women’s pose in FN’s gallery makes the women as the subjects in the photographs being transformed into objects. They are being positioned in such ways which is aim to provoke desires and turns them into the ideal object which can be loved. The objectification also turns them into sexualized object by the clothing style that reveal erotic parts of women’s bodies. The choice of clothing style on the first photograph shows in the real function of the clothing style. It is became the proof that they are merely emphasized on the pose rather than the outfit. The knee-bend and self-touching poses are both construct the idea of women’s submissiveness in society. The photographs are also represented the portrayal of women in idealized beauty. The models are the preference of perfect body in thin, fair skin, sexy, and attractive which are not owned by the majority of Indonesian women.

5. Works Cited