

# The Aesthetics of Sand Beds in *Kampung Kasur Pasir*, East Legung Village, Sumenep, Madura

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## Abstract

This study examines the aesthetic value of sand beds in *Kampung Kasur Pasir*, East Legung Village, *Sumenep, Madura*, by comparing the aesthetic perspectives of the Western and Eastern worlds. Sand beds are a unique cultural phenomenon that blends natural elements with local traditions, creating a rich aesthetic experience for the local community. From a Western perspective, the aesthetics of sand beds can be analyzed through the concept of visual harmony in both form and content. Meanwhile, from an Eastern perspective, sand beds represent spiritual balance and a harmonious relationship between humans, nature, and the Creator. The findings reveal that sand beds serve not only as a place for rest but also as a medium of aesthetic expression that integrates cultural, emotional, and spiritual elements. This multidisciplinary approach highlights how local aesthetic values can contribute significantly to the global understanding of aesthetics. This study aims to enrich the discourse on beauty within the context of local traditions while offering new insights into the interaction between culture and aesthetics from diverse perspectives.

*Keywords: aesthetics, sand beds, Western perspective, Eastern perspective, Kampung Kasur Pasir, local traditions.*

## Introduction

The term "sand bed" refers to a large concrete box approximately 25 cm deep, filled with sifted and cleaned beach sand. This term is used by the residents of *Kampung Kasur Pasir*, located on the Madura coast. The people who use it are known as "manusia pasir."

These *manusia pasir* carry out activities such as sleeping, giving

birth, socializing, raising children, and other daily tasks on sand mounds. According to research by Azhar (2016), East Legung Village has regional divisions related to the use of sand in daily life. The area is divided into two parts: *tana mera* (red soil) and *tana pote* (white soil). Most residents in the *tana mera* region do not use sand for sleeping, unlike those in *tana pote*. Residents of *tana pote* are referred to as *manusia pasir*

because they incorporate sand into their daily lives.

The *tana mera* area lacks sand, and because they are unaccustomed to it, residents there feel uncomfortable sleeping on sand. In contrast, *tana pote* residents express a deep connection with sand. As noted in an interview by Faiq (2019), a mother mentioned feeling more comfortable giving birth on sand with the help of a traditional midwife rather than in a clinic with medical staff. She stated, "There was no pain at all, everything went smoothly, and my body didn't feel weak—perhaps because I was supported by the sand."

The sand bed is seen as an object that brings joy to the residents of Kampung Kasur Pasir in East Legung, Sumenep, Madura. Thus, the author is interested in studying the aesthetic values embodied in sand beds.

Aesthetics, as a branch of

philosophy, addresses the experience of beauty, artistic expression, and sensory perception across various aspects of life. As Magdalena et al. (2022) stated, aesthetics as a philosophy of beauty allows for greater freedom in discussing an object. The perspective of aesthetics is not limited to formal works of art but also encompasses cultural elements in daily life that reflect values, identity, and human relationships with the environment. One intriguing example is the sand bed phenomenon in Kampung Kasur Pasir, East Legung, Sumenep, Madura, which holds unique aesthetic values from both Western and Eastern perspectives.

In the context of Western aesthetics, beauty is often associated with harmony, form, and individual aesthetic experiences. This concept emphasizes the appreciation of visual composition, texture, and functionality that meets certain standards of beauty. According to Monroe Bardsley (Patriansah & Prasetya, 2021), aesthetic aspects are crucial for artists in creating art, focusing on unity, complexity, and sincerity.

Conversely, the Eastern perspective highlights spiritual aspects, balance, and the relationship between humans and nature. In Eastern aesthetic traditions, beauty is often found in simplicity and authenticity. According to Sutarno (Marijo, M. Okta Dwi Sastra F et al., 2023), Eastern aesthetic thought emphasizes spirituality and inner harmony. In this view, symbolism is seen as part of reality, such as the Javanese *keris* believed to possess mystical power. Moreover, knowledge is not solely aimed at expanding insight but also at cultivating wisdom and noble character through deep reflection. Eastern philosophies such as Buddhism and Taoism teach unity and harmony with the universe. Everything is considered to originate from a universal source, and balanced living is achieved by following nature's rhythm and aligning with cosmic principles.

The sand bed, with its simple form and profound function, offers a

unique aesthetic experience. Physically, it presents the fine texture of beach sand, harmony in its simple spatial design, and unparalleled comfort. However, its aesthetic value is not confined to visual and functional aspects but also includes the emotional and spiritual experiences it evokes. From a Western perspective, the sand bed can be seen as a form of simple and functional design. From an Eastern perspective, it reflects harmony between humans and natural elements, providing a sense of tranquility and connection.

This study aims to explore the aesthetics of sand beds from Western and Eastern perspectives, examining how these aesthetic values manifest in the daily lives of Kampung Kasur Pasir residents. Through this approach, the research is expected to enrich the understanding of beauty derived from local traditions and how these elements can engage in dialogue with global aesthetic concepts.

## Methods

This study employs a qualitative method to explore the aesthetics of sand beds in

Kampung Kasur Pasir, East Legung Village, Sumenep, Madura, based on Western and Eastern aesthetic perspectives. According to Creswell (2019), qualitative research seeks to construct meaning about a phenomenon based on participants' perspectives. In this context, the author directly observed the activities of the community on the sand beds in Kampung Kasur Pasir, East Legung, Sumenep, Madura.

The methods used include document analysis and the examination of both literature and field data. This approach is expected to provide an in-depth understanding of the aesthetic essence of sand beds and demonstrate the relevance of local aesthetic values within a global context.

## Results and Discussion

### A. Sand Beds in Western Aesthetics

Sand beds cannot be categorized as works of art in visual art, performing arts, or other artistic disciplines.

However, in the context of aesthetics, although sand beds are not considered art, they possess aesthetic values that can be examined more deeply, as their existence brings happiness to those who experience them. As George Santayana stated, beauty is the feeling of pleasure or liking experienced by a subject toward an object, which the subject then attributes to the object itself. This implies that what is considered beautiful is highly subjective. Castelvetro, on the other hand, argued that art should provide entertainment in the form of enjoyment, delight, and recreation (Sumardjo, 2000).

In the history of aesthetics, there are two main theoretical groups: objective theories, supported by Plato, Hegel, and Bernard Bosanquet, and subjective theories, embraced by Henry Home, the Earl of Shaftesbury, and Edmund Burke (Surajiyo, 2015). The sand people are the subjects, while the sand beds are the objects. The sand people find engaging in activities on the sand to be immensely enjoyable. To this day, they claim they cannot sleep unless they are on a sand bed, as it provides the comfort they need—coolness during hot weather and warmth during colder conditions. This contrasts with the residents of

*tana mera*, who feel uncomfortable sleeping on sand. As Campanella noted (Sumardjo, 2000), the material of art or the external aspects of art are neutral—they are not inherently beautiful or not beautiful. Campanella illustrated this with an example: an object might be perceived as beautiful by one person due to its cruelty, while another might find it beautiful due to the suffering of the victim. This analogy reflects how the residents of *tana mera* and *tana pote* perceive sand differently.

The subjective theory proposed by Henry Home and Edmund Burke states that the characteristics that create the beauty of an object do not actually exist; what exists is merely the emotional response within an individual who observes an object. In the case of sand beds, the definition of observation can also be interpreted as a sensory experience when the body, with all its senses, interacts with the sand, the surrounding nature, and the community around it. John Dewey

defined experience as the dynamics of life (Pangestutiani & Habibah, 2022). Artistic expression can be seen through experiences integrated into daily life. The movements of the sand people's bodies reflect a will of the heart and mind, as all the sensors in the body begin to perceive its form, touch its texture, smell its scent, and hear its sound. According to Hutcheson (Jaya CK, 2019), it is these human sensory activities that provide perception. When a person faces an artwork, their internal sense of beauty will respond with feelings of calm, peace, harmony, balance, wholeness, and happiness. This can be seen from the activities of children to adults in the Kampung Kasur Pasir, who feel happiness and tranquility when on the sand beds. In Figure 1, various expressions and activities of children to adults on the sand beds can be observed.



Figure 1. Activities and expressions of residents while using sand beds.

The image above shows children playing on the sand beds.

Source:

<https://pekaaksara.com/6429/keunikan-dan-kearifan-lokal-wisata-kampung-pasir-sumenep/> (accessed on June 30, 2024)

The image below shows a group of mothers socializing on the sand beds.

Source:

<https://www.inews.id/travel/destinasi/kampung-unik-di-madura-yang-masyarakatnya-terbiasa-tidur-di-atas-pasir>

### Body Impression on Sand

In the creation of visual artworks, each artist has unique ideas and concepts, which are often reflected in the title of the work as a representation of the main theme. The term "significant form," introduced by Clive Bell and Roger Fry, refers to the relationship and combination of lines or colors that result in an aesthetic form. Clive Bell stated that significant form is the essential element that makes a work of art considered as art (Satria, 2020).

The patterns formed from the movement of the body in the sand, as well as those created through interaction, reflect the

harmony and order found in nature (see Figure 2). The community may create geometric or organic shapes that resonate with natural cycles, such as waves or winds that roll the sand. The movements of the sand people's bodies produce artistic and organic patterns, transforming into a beautiful work of art seemingly born from the interaction between the human body and nature. The patterns created from the movements of the sand people's bodies can fulfill aspects of beauty such as proportion, composition, depth, emphasis, simplicity, and rhythm.



Figure 2. The patterns formed from the movement of the body in the sand, as well as those created through interaction, reflect the harmony and order found in nature.

The patterns in the sand created by the movements of the sand people's bodies, when developed with several artistic effect options in MS

Word, can result in the following artwork (Figure 3):

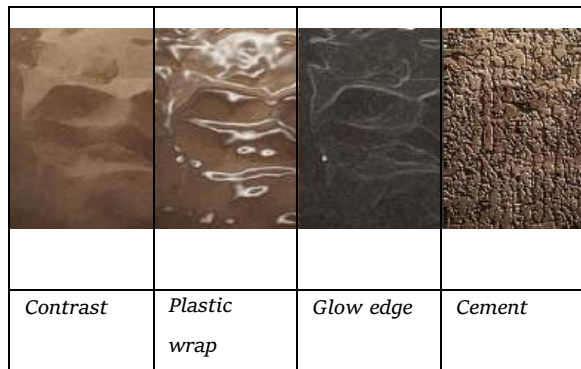


Figure 3. Sand patterns resulting from the resonance of the movements of the sand people's bodies, developed using artistic effect options.

The patterns created by the movements of the sand people's bodies produce patterns that contain spiritual values, making them difficult for the author to replicate. For example, the author once tried to create a visual artwork using sand and oil paint, with sand sourced from Kampung Kasur Pasir, East Legung Village, Sumenep, Madura (Figure 4). In this case, the author intended to create an artistic expression of the sand patterns produced by the resonance of activities of the

residents of Kampung Kasur Pasir on the sand beds, in the form of a painting. However, the patterns created were not as beautiful as those generated directly from the movements of the human body on the sand.



Figure 4. The author, as an artist, attempts to create an expression of the sand patterns left by the human body.

Unlike Hutcheson, Plotinus stated that the experience of beauty in humans is not sensory, as Aristotle suggested, but transcendental and intellectual. Plotinus believed that beauty is not only found in works of art but also in the character and behavior of humans. The experience of beauty can bring inner peace, as it allows individuals to reconnect with the One (Sumardjo, 2000). The experience of beauty is the result of contemplation, moving from sensory perception to the

One. The sand people, from birth, have interacted with sand, and their experiences or memories from childhood to adulthood are embedded in the presence of the sand beds. If beauty is a form of experience, then the sand bed is a work of art for the sand people. For example, here is a photo of a mother caring for her child on the sand, until both of them fall asleep (Figure 5).



Figure 5. A moment of a mother sleeping with her child on the sand bed.

Source:

[https://tugujatim.id/maduras-hidden-gem-menemukan-pesona-kampung-pasir-sumenep/#google\\_vignette](https://tugujatim.id/maduras-hidden-gem-menemukan-pesona-kampung-pasir-sumenep/#google_vignette) (accessed on June

30, 2024)

From the perspective of the author as an art enthusiast, the moment of a mother and her child sleeping on the sand is a work of art that carries

deep meaning, particularly regarding the meaning of affection. Affection is something intangible, a feeling, metaphysical in nature, which Plotinus described as the pinnacle of experience. Therefore, some famous works of art, such as Pablo Picasso's painting "Mother and Child" (Figure 6), illustrate maternal love, depicting the love that a mother feels for her child. The affection expressed in Picasso's painting is an object, and thus the subject may have different perceptions depending on their individual experiences. Similarly, in Figure 5, the photo is a mimesis of an event that occurred in a specific moment. It captures the shared moment between mother and child, who are building their aesthetic experience on the sand mound through the interaction of their sensory systems. In the painting, each element within it can evoke various perceptions.





Figure 6. Pablo Picasso's painting titled "Mother and Child"

Source:

<https://www.carredartistes.com/en-fr/blog/mother-s-day-painting>

(accessed on September 28, 2024)

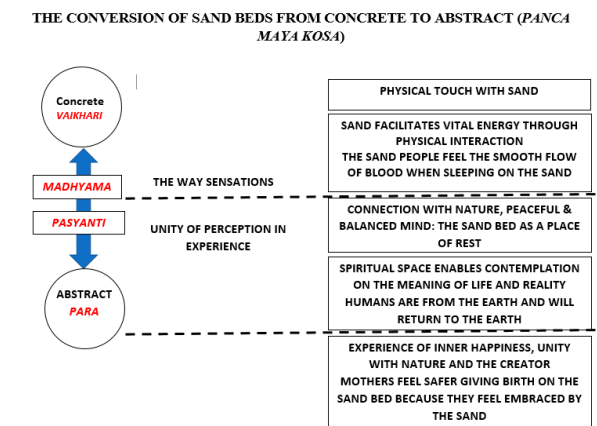
### Sand Beds in Eastern Aesthetic Theory The Conversion of the Aesthetics of Sand Beds from Concrete to Abstract

According to Yusuf & Anggraini (2024), Eastern philosophy, when viewed from a geographical and topological perspective, is a way of thinking developed by societies living in the Eastern part of the world. This way of thinking is rooted in religious views, as well as moral-ethical values

and the way of life of Eastern societies. Therefore, Eastern philosophy generally has religious, mystical-magical, cosmic, social, and moral-ethical characteristics. Eastern aesthetics views beauty as something abstract and symbolic that is regarded as a form of reality. The sand bed, as a concrete artifact, can transform into something abstract based on the perception of its user through several stages, as explained by Dalela (2008). An artifact can be analyzed not only from its concrete form but also through four stages of form recognition, as described in the Vedas, representing different levels of perceptual development: Vaikhari, Madhyama, Pasyanti, and Para. Vaikhari is the most tangible or physical level, while Para represents the most abstract aspect. Para indicates the recognition of emotions, while Pasyanti provides a unified perception within the experience. Madhyama involves various ways in which sensations occur, and Vaikhari ultimately represents the objective nature.

Thus, the idea of personal experience is marked by Para, the recognition of individuality by Pasyanti, while

recognition of form, size, and color, such as round and red, are characteristics of Madhyama, and physical characteristics, such as length, are traits of Vaikhari. The development of the concept moves from the abstract to the concrete, as also illustrated in the Vedic theory of perception. This shows that we experience the world not only as a series of sensations but also at a deeper level that occurs simultaneously with the recognition of those sensations. The conversion of the sand bed from concrete to abstract in the context of Eastern aesthetics can be explained in the diagram below:



Scheme 1. The Conversion of the Aesthetics of

Sand Beds from Concrete to Abstract

### Conclusions

The sand bed in Western aesthetics can be examined in both its form and content. Objectively, the sand bed already possesses beautiful qualities due to its flexible character, where the traces of the human body's movements upon it create interesting compositions and unity. Subjectively, the sand bed brings happiness to the residents of Kampung Kasur Pasir, as it evokes beautiful memories experienced by them since childhood. One of these moments is the bond formed between parents and their children. In Eastern aesthetics, the beauty of the sand bed is viewed as a process of transformation from a concrete sensation (physically felt) to a more abstract feeling, evoking happiness when merging with nature and the Creator.

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