

SMARA JANTRA

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Abstract

Smara Jantra is a contemporary dance work rooted in local wisdom, reflecting a reinterpretation of Tari Telek, one of the core elements in the mepajar ritual of Desa Adat Legian, Bali. This work emerges as an aesthetic response to contemporary challenges facing the preservation of sacred values in traditional performing arts, which are increasingly confronted by the forces of tourism commodification and shifts in meaning. Tari Telek, traditionally functioning as a spiritual medium and protective symbol, has undergone transformations in function and significance over time. In response, the choreographer seeks to transform these values into a new choreographic form that remains grounded in Balinese philosophical and spiritual foundations. This creative research examines three main aspects: (1) the creative process in formulating and developing the artistic concept; (2) the choreographic form as the result of creation; and (3) the symbolic meanings and reflective messages embodied in the work. The Angripta Sesolahan method serves as the primary approach, consisting of five stages, ngarencana, nuasen, makalin, nelesin, and ngebah, derived from the philosophy of tradition-based creative work in Bali. The outcome is a site-specific performance staged at Pura Agung Legian, offering an integrated experience of space, body, and spirituality. The novelty of this work lies in the integration of the cosmological concept of luwan-teben as the foundation for a transformative aesthetic, as well as the application of a contextual local creation method within the realm of contemporary Balinese performing arts.

Keywords: *Smara Jantra; Tari Telek; Site-specific; Contemporary; Luwan-teben.*

INTRODUCTION

Dance is a cultural expression that not only represents the beauty of bodily movement but also embodies symbolic, spiritual, and historical meanings embedded within the social structures of its supporting community. In Bali, dance serves layered functions: as an offering (wali), a ceremonial accompaniment (bebali), and entertainment (balih-bali) (Bandem & deBoer, 1995). One of the sacred dances possessing both high aesthetic and spiritual value is Tari Telek, an integral part of the mepajar ritual in Desa Adat Legian, Bali. This dance is not merely a cultural artifact but also a marker of the community's spirituality in facing metaphysical threats.

However, in the contemporary context, many traditional performing arts have experienced shifts in meaning and function due to the pressures of modernity and the commodification of tourism (Picard, 1996; Vickers, 2012). In many cases, sacredness—once guarded with strict ritual protocols, must now negotiate with the demands of stage aesthetics and tourist preferences. Tari Telek, once performed solely within ritual spaces, is increasingly presented in profane contexts and has often lost its symbolic value due to simplified and shortened staging aimed at visual consumption (McIntosh, 2010). This raises a critical challenge: how can tradition remain alive, relevant, and meaningful amid the pressures of change?

The urgency of this creative research arises from a concern over the reduction of meaning in sacred dance within contemporary contexts. When Tari Telek is perceived merely as an exotic spectacle rather than a spiritual entity, a creative approach is needed to restore its symbolic and spiritual dimensions in a new form that remains communicative to modern audiences. Smara Jantra, as a contemporary dance work grounded in local wisdom, seeks to offer a middle path through the luwan-teben aesthetic concept a Balinese cosmological dialectic between the sacred and the everyday. This concept aligns with preservation efforts based on reinterpretation rather than mere textual conservation.

The adoption of a site-specific performance approach, where the work is staged in a space with historical and cultural significance (Pura Agung, Legian), strengthens the choreographer's effort to recontextualize Tari Telek

within the community's spatial and spiritual consciousness. This is consistent with Kaeppler's (2000) theory on the relationship between space, meaning, and bodily expression in dance.

This research aims to describe and analyze the creative process in the making of Smara Jantra as a reinterpretation of Tari Telek; to elucidate the choreographic structure formed through the transposition of sacred values into a contemporary format; to explore the symbolic messages and spiritual reflections conveyed through the work; and to propose a creation model for performing arts that is grounded in local wisdom while remaining innovative and contextually relevant.

Although numerous studies on the preservation of Balinese traditional arts exist, most focus on conserving form (Bandem, 1983; Sanger, 2005), visual documentation, or anthropological analysis. Few have emphasized new creations based on the reinterpretation of sacred values within a contemporary framework. Previous studies, such as Ruastiti (2020), have addressed the importance of community-based revitalization of performing arts but have not extensively discussed site-specific aesthetics and the application of local creation methods such as Angripta Sesolahan in contemporary works. Therefore, this research fills a significant gap in the development of Balinese performing arts by creating choreography that transforms sacred values into expressions that are aesthetically, philosophically, and culturally relevant to the present.

METHOD

This creation research employs a practice-based research approach within a qualitative paradigm (Sugiyono, 2013) to examine and document the making of the dance work Smara Jantra as a creative practice that simultaneously constitutes the object of inquiry. This approach accords with the spirit of the Lekesan guidelines, which position artistic practice as integral to the production of knowledge (Rutherford, 2020). The study focuses on conceptual exploration, the creative process, and critical reflection on the resulting dance, grounded in the sacred values and locality of the Legian customary village, particularly through a reinterpretation of Telek within a contemporary aesthetic.

The creation of Smara Jantra rests on the *luwan*, *teben* philosophy, the Balinese cosmological dialectic between the sacred and the profane, which provides the conceptual basis for its movement narrative and dramaturgical structure. In practice, a local creative method known as Angripta Sesolahan is employed, comprising five stages:

- a) Ngarencana (planning): initial design, including formulating conceptual ideas, conducting direct observation of Telek performances, mapping Pura Agung as the site-specific venue, and forming the working team.
- b) Nuasen (ritual initiation): seeking *niskala* blessings through prayer at Pura Agung and socializing the plan with customary leaders, local artists, and prospective participants.
- c) Makalin (exploratory making): creative exploration via improvisation based on Telek movement motifs, combined with trials of musical accompaniment patterns and spatial interaction in an environmental-choreography format.
- d) Nelesin (refinement): assembling the complete dramatic structure, including spatial arrangement, lighting, costume, and synchronization of music and movement.
- e) Ngebah (presentation): premiering the work in the Pura Agung compound, accompanied by technical evaluation, corrective reflection, and narrative and visual documentation as the research archive.

Data collection was conducted using a triangulated approach through: participatory observation during the *mepajar* ritual; in-depth interviews with customary leaders, senior dancers, and the accompanying composer; as well as documentation studies in the form of performance videos and supporting literature (Tedjoworo, 2013; Wallas, 1926; Palmer, 2003).

The collected data were analyzed through thematic reduction and categorization of movement and symbolic motifs, cross-checked via source triangulation, and hermeneutically reflected upon to interpret the implicit meanings within both the creative process and the resulting work. Data validity was maintained through expert reviews involving academic supervisors, art figures, and the *Kelian* (head) of the Legian customary village.

Research ethics were a primary concern. The researcher submitted a written request for permission to the *Prajuru* (council) of the Legian customary village and obtained consent from all participants, both orally and through recorded video documentation. Consequently, the work produced is not only academically accountable but also possesses spiritual and social legitimacy within its supporting community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Creative Process of the Dance Work Smara Jantra

The creation process of Smara Jantra is rooted in the dialectic between imagination, cultural reflection, and structured aesthetic transformation, articulated through three main dimensions as described by Tedjoworo (2013): cognitive-verbal, figural-representational, and transformative-creative. These three dimensions form the creative foundation for transforming the sacred values of Telek in the Legian customary village into a meaningful contemporary expression within the context of present-day cultural tourism.

The first dimension, cognitive-verbal, represents the initial reflective and conceptual stage. The intellectual imagination of the Smara Jantra creator operates through textual and oral reference tracing of the history and spiritual values of Telek. This stage involves in-depth observation of the tripartite functions of Balinese dance, wali (sacred), bebali (semi-sacred), and balih-balihan (profane), which are then framed within the narrative concept of luwan-teben. The central theme, “the birth of new consciousness,” emerges from this imaginative work, grounded in the creator’s inner struggle with the dynamics of spirituality and profanation present in the Legian community.

Next, in the figural-representational dimension, imagination develops through the exploration of symbols and imagery constructed in a postmodern framework. Various distinctive visual elements of Telek, such as masks, fans, gelungan (headdresses), and tiered floor patterns, are recontextualized into a more dialogic and contemporary artistic frame. Movement motifs such as nungket bangkiang, ngeliput, and mekecos are processed cinematically and fragmentarily to build dramatic tension within the sacred space of Pura Agung. At this point, imagination does not merely reproduce but recreates a pluralistic and open symbolic world.

The third dimension, transformative-creative, draws on the creator’s direct experience of participating in the nuasen ritual and engaging with the community, which becomes the driving energy of the artistic process. This spiritual journey is interpreted as a symbolic birth process, expressed through three performance acts: (1) the pre-presence of Telek as a protective entity, (2) the peak manifestation of Telek’s sacredness, and (3) contemporary reflection as an attempt to reinterpret tradition. The collaboration between gamelan babarongan and MIDI technology serves as a vital medium for transmitting emotional and spiritual layers to modern audiences, while sustaining the ongoing dialogue between tradition and innovation.

Beyond Tedjoworo’s imaginative framework, the creation process is also shaped by three principal aspects of creative work:

- a. Reflection as the foundation of creation, a contemplative engagement with the ritual atmosphere and Telek processions observed firsthand. This reflection allows deep introspection on the cultural values embedded in the tradition, which then form the conceptual foundation for structuring the performance.
- b. Reasoning in structuring, the logical and communicative construction of the performance based on empirical and cultural experiences, with careful attention to space, sacred atmosphere, and artistic intention. Here, the sacred space is not merely a venue but an active part of a living dramaturgy.
- c. Intellectual understanding of cultural values, encouraging the creator to formulate new approaches for transforming traditional forms into a site-specific performance format that remains rooted while adapting to contemporary audiences.

Through the integration of these three dimensions and stages, Smara Jantra becomes more than a mere form of performing art; it emerges as an intersubjective space to celebrate, reflect upon, and revive Bali’s cultural heritage in a fresh and meaning-laden artistic language.

B. Form of the Smara Jantra Dance Performance

The Smara Jantra dance is presented as a site-specific performance that integrates elements of tradition and innovation within a progressive dramatic structure. Staged in the area of Pura Agung, Desa Adat Legian, the site functions not only as a backdrop but also as a living cultural actor embedded in the meaning of the performance. Through the selection of this space, Smara Jantra not only offers a dance presentation but also revives the spiritual narratives, aesthetics, and cultural identity of the Legian community.

The dramatic structure of Smara Jantra is divided into three main segments. The first segment depicts the spiritual atmosphere prior to the arrival of Telek in the Legian area, with a primary focus on the mepajar ritual in the jaba tengah (middle courtyard) of the temple. This scene is performed by one principal dancer serving as the storyteller, accompanied by seven women dancers performing the sesolahan memendet ritual. The stage orientation is set facing north, symbolizing sacred communication between the microcosmic and macrocosmic realms. The movements employed are based on simple forms typical of the period, such as hand rotations resembling ngeliput kipas (folding a fan), walking steps, and ngayab (offering-like gestures). These movements are presented in slow repetition to build an atmosphere of solemnity and are combined with live chanting performed by the dancers themselves, as illustrated in the image below.



Figure 1. Sesolahan Memendet Scene in the Jeroan of the Temple
(Documentation: Mutiara Dewi, 2025)

The second section portrays the transitional phase of Tari Telek and its developmental journey up to the present day. In its early emergence, the dance was performed by male dancers, featuring the memendet movement, which indirectly became the primary source of choreographic patterns at the time. In this work, the segment is deliberately staged on a main road as an effort to revive the atmosphere of the past, when Tari Telek of Legian was once performed in the same location. The choice of venue is not merely about dancing in the street, but rather to reanimate the historical context—when the temple surroundings were not as grand or refined as they are today, and when the main road remained flexible and was not bound by the strict regulations of the present era. The presence of male dancers from that period is vividly illustrated in the following photograph, revealing the strength of character and the sacredness of movement in its time.



Figure 2. Tari Telek performance in Legian during its early period, performed by male dancers.
(Documentation: Mutiara Dewi, 2025)

In this segment, MIDI music serves as the sole accompaniment, enriched with touches of gamelan babarongan, a distinctive hallmark of Tari Telek Legian. This composition not only presents digital sounds but also constructs an atmosphere that reflects the ambiance of the past, as if reviving earlier performance experiences. The fusion of gamelan babarongan traditions with the futuristic nuances of MIDI produces a unique sonic quality, marking a moment of cultural transformation from roots to branches, from ritual to aesthetic reflection.

Over time, female dancers began to dominate the performance, bringing new color to the presentation of Tari Telek Legian while still preserving the essence of the simple movements from the past. This shift introduced a semi-sacred character, with performances now possible in the jaba sisi (outer courtyard) of the temple, as depicted

in the third photograph. In this work, that moment is visualized through mapping and accompanied by *Gamelan Babarongan*.



Figure 3. Tari Telek contemporary performance through visual mapping
(Documentation: Mutiara Dewi, 2025)

In the third segment, the creator channels their reflections on the journey of Tari Telek Legian, its birth, life, and evolution up to the present, using it as a source of light for creativity. This homage serves as a tribute to the history, values, and spirituality embedded in the tradition. The composition of 14 dancers, consisting of 7 men and 7 women, is chosen as a symbol of light born from balance, unity, and continuity. This section becomes a contemplative space for the creator, whose presentation not only looks back to the past but also envisions the future of Tari Telek without losing its roots.

In terms of accompaniment, gamelan babarongan plays a crucial role, as its expressive and dramatic character strongly supports the mystical atmosphere of Telek. When combined with MIDI, the accompaniment functions not only as musical support but also as an emotional layer that deepens the thematic resonance of the work. MIDI technology is used strategically to create a contemporary atmosphere without undermining the tradition's roots. The music also facilitates transitions between temporal fragments within the dramatic structure, reinforcing the temporal dynamics of the performance.

The visual dimension of the work is enriched through the use of video mapping. In the second act, the temple building serves as a visual canvas portraying the contemporary state of Telek dance. The *kalangan* (stage area) or ground is also used as a projection medium for Telek's footprints, which then transform into light and dancers on stage. This technique not only enhances visual appeal but also adds symbolic depth to the processes of regeneration and cultural continuity.

As a performance, Smara Jantra is designed not merely to be seen but to be contemplated. It becomes an interactive space linking audience, space, and cultural memory. It serves as both a medium for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and a creative reflection on the spiritual realities of modern Balinese society. As emphasized by Banded & deBoer (1996), performance in the Balinese context is both a social and spiritual event. In this spirit, Smara Jantra stands as a tribute to tradition and an artistic bridge toward the future.

Structure of the Smara Jantra Dance Performance

No	Structure	Composition	Location/Place
1	Presenting a retrospective of the Mepajar ritual tradition in Desa Adat Legian during the period before the birth of Tari Telek, as part of the work's opening narrative.	The movements used refer to simple forms of the period, such as rotating the hands like folding a fan (<i>ngeliput kipas</i>), walking, and <i>ngayab</i> . These movements are performed repeatedly and slowly to create a sacred atmosphere, accompanied by live chanting from the dancers. Here, the full dimension of <i>wali</i> (sacred) is presented.	Mepajar ritual in the <i>jaba tengah</i> (middle courtyard) of the temple
2	Presenting the existence of Tari Telek and its journey of development to the present day, including the shift in performers from male to female.	Changes in movement, choreographic structure, the shift in dancer gender roles from male to female, and the use of digital music accompaniment technology (MIDI) create complex layers of sound that merge traditional values with a futuristic atmosphere. This musical collaboration reinforces the moment of cultural transformation, from roots to branches, from ritual to aesthetic reflection.	In the <i>jaba</i> (outer courtyard) of the temple
3	Presenting a form of homage to Tari Telek Legian, which serves as a source of creativity.	Movements explored are derived from Tari Telek, covering both solo and group choreographic patterns. The performance features loose hair, with characteristic dominant movements of leaping and spinning, reaching for the stars as a symbol of capturing light, as well as walking and spinning movements symbolizing an ever-evolving journey. In the closing scene, the narrator character guides the choreographer into the center of the performance space, without literally dancing but appearing as a bodily representation embodying the Telek tradition.	In the <i>jeroan</i> (inner courtyard) across the street. A symbolic moment of handing over the Telek mask <i>tapel</i> from the narrator to the choreographer (dramatic climax), affirming the meaning that Smara Jantra is the result of reinterpretation by someone who has grown and lived within the tradition.

C. Meaning and Message of the Smara Jantra Dance Work

In every work of performing art, meaning is the soul that animates form. It is not always conveyed through explicit messages but often resides in the symbols, gestures, sounds, spaces, and rituals that construct the performance. According to Soedarsono (2002:77), the meaning of an artwork is the substance conveyed by the creator to the audience, be it social critique, spiritual expression, or emotional experience. This meaning is born of a creative process grounded in deep reflection, observation, and socio-cultural engagement.

Smara Jantra, as a tradition-based contemporary dance work, emerged from the choreographer's engagement with the sacred tradition of Telek in the Legian customary village. Rather than merely replicating Telek, the work reinterprets its values to remain relevant to contemporary realities. Its meaning is multidimensional, sacred, social, ecological, and even political, legible through the lenses of cultural hermeneutics and critical performance theory.

The meaning of Smara Jantra can be read through four frameworks:

- a. Cultural Hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1975; Palmer, 2003): viewing the work as a cultural text whose interpretation is shaped by the audience's socio-historical context and experiential horizon.

- b. Creative Imagination (Tedjoworo, 2013): positioning imagination as the creative spirit that translates sacred values into symbolic forms that are communicative and contextually resonant.
- c. Body–Space Theory (Merleau-Ponty, 1962): emphasizing the reciprocal relationship between the dancer’s body and the performance space.
- d. Critical Theory of Tradition (Foucault, 1977; Jameson, 1991): uncovering power relations, hybridity of form, and pastiche in the creation of works based on cultural heritage.

Sacredness in Smara Jantra is not literally reproduced from Telek but re-presented through spatial arrangements, movement patterns, and musical atmosphere. The opening mepajar scene depicts spiritual solemnity through the slow, repetitive movements of ngeliput, ngeteb, and mekecos. This becomes a symbolic trigger for the collective memory of the Legian community regarding the wali function of Telek. The meaning of sacredness here lies in the acknowledgment and respect for *niskala* (unseen) values at the heart of tradition. The *rwa bhineda* principle, harmonious duality, is embodied in the site-specific staging at Pura Agung. The dancers’ bodies traverse the *jaba tengah* (sacred space) and *jaba sisi* (transitional space), linking the inner and outer realms. The audience not only witnesses but experiences the spatial transition that invites an awareness of balance.

The meaning of togetherness is reflected in the involvement of cross-generational community members. The formation of seven male and seven female dancers symbolizes the continuity of tradition and cosmic harmony. This becomes a cultural-political statement that tradition can only endure if collectively inherited. The narrator character serves as a mediator between past and present. With minimal gestures, walking, glancing, handing over the *tapel*—the narrator weaves a transgenerational narrative of customary values. This scene signifies that tradition must be cared for by those living within its community.

The handling of Telek movements in Smara Jantra is done with great care. Classical motifs are not displayed as exotic spectacle but transformed into contemporary phrases that still retain the “sound” of Telek. This is an ethic of devotion: innovating without severing roots.

The use of open space and video mapping of Telek footprints transforming into light symbolizes the human connection with the landscape. The footprints signify a cultural journey embedded in the earth and environment. Movement in Smara Jantra functions as a readable text: slow repetition in the opening signals *niskala* silence; the dynamic pace in the *bebali* transitional section shows tradition’s openness to change; leaps and spins in the contemporary section signify vitality and regeneration. Gamelan *babarongan* blended with MIDI creates a transcendent atmosphere. In the climactic scene, low *pelog* tones of the gamelan are layered with electronic textures, forming a tradition–technology dialectic that broadens the emotional spectrum.

Pura Agung is not merely a backdrop but a dramaturgical actor. The dancers’ bodies and temple architecture co-shape the aesthetic experience. The spatial transition from *jaba tengah* to *jaba sisi* guides the audience along a symbolic trajectory from sacred to profane. Video mapping projects footprints, *tapel*, and Telek’s spatial orientations, employing pastiche to reintroduce old symbols through new media, generating emotional resonance for contemporary viewers. Costumes are tailored to the dancers’ social roles, with simple makeup for the musicians to emphasize their function as rhythm keepers. The seven–seven costume design at the performance’s peak fuses contemporary design with classical motifs, symbolizing unity between the old and the new.

The narrator embodies the choreographer, bridging performance segments with minimal gestures, symbolizing reflection and responsibility toward tradition. Through *nuasen* and the choice of the temple as performance site, Smara Jantra rejects the logic of commodification that reduces tradition to mere tourist entertainment, instead offering a community-based performance model.

The involvement of children as dancers is a cultural education strategy rooted in practice. They learn not only the form of dance but also the values it carries. The prominent role of women in several parts of the performance represents a gender reinterpretation in traditional arts, aligned with Butler’s theory of gender as a social construct in performance.

The meaning of Smara Jantra is that tradition is a living energy that must keep moving. Messages of sacredness, balance, togetherness, customary awareness, devotion, and ecology form a complete narrative connecting past, present, and future. Within the frame of critical theory, this work is an aesthetic-political statement affirming that preserving culture is not merely about maintaining form but enlivening meaning, a meaning born of the community’s body, transmitted across generations, and reinterpreted each time tradition encounters a new stage.

Main Messages, Artistic Elements, and Theoretical Frameworks of Smara Jantra

Main Message	Artistic Elements Used	Theoretical Framework
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Balance of Sekala–Niskala	Selection of site-specific space at Pura Agung; dramatic structure opening with the mepajar scene; Rwa Bhineda symbolism	Balinese Philosophy of Rwa Bhineda; Ethnoaesthetics Theory (Kaepler, 2001)
Togetherness & Collective Participation	Involvement of cross-generational community members; nuasen stage engaging customary and spiritual communities	Participatory Art Theory (Soewardjo, 2013); Community Theory in Performing Arts
Customary & Belief Awareness	Narrator figure; symbolic handover of tapel Telek to the choreographer; transgenerational symbolism	Hermeneutics (Palmer, 2003); Cultural Representation Theory
Sincerity & Devotion	Careful handling of traditional Telek material; avoidance of symbolic exploitation	Aesthetic Ethics; Cultural Preservation Theory
Ecological Awareness	Use of open space; visualization of Telek footprints through video mapping	Cultural Ecology; Performance Ecology Theory

A. Analysis of the Smara Jantra Dance Work

The Smara Jantra dance work is a manifestation of the dialectic between the creator's subjective body and the objective body of culture. Within the framework of critical theory, it can be read as an effort to deconstruct the symbolic structure of tradition (Telek Legian) and reconfigure its meaning in a contemporary context. Referring to Michel Foucault's concept of the relationship between the body and symbolic power (1977), the choreographer's body becomes a site of articulation for cultural memory preserved in ritual. Through the act of creation, that body becomes active, challenging the fixity of form and opening dialogic spaces for new interpretation.

As a site-specific work, Smara Jantra does not merely use Pura Agung as a backdrop; the site itself is a living symbolic subject. Movements such as ngeliput, mekecos, and the exploration of the temple's pathways exemplify how sacred space is rearticulated through contemporary motion. The sound of gamelan babarongan blended with MIDI reflects the relationship between traditional musical structure and modern industrial sound, echoing Adorno's (1941) notion of the "dialectic of form and technology" in modern art. Thus, Smara Jantra is not solely an aesthetic form but a critical discourse on sustaining tradition through body, space, and media as vehicles of cultural emancipation.

Methodologically, the creative process of Smara Jantra follows both the Angripta Sasolahan stages and Wallas' creativity framework, while also being illuminated through the lenses of cultural and corporeal critical theory. In the ngarencana/preparation stage, the choreographer engaged with archival spaces and field observation as a form of "reading cultural reality" (Habermas, 1987), re-mapping Pura Agung not as a neutral venue but as a historic-spiritual site carrying traces of symbolic power and the collective memory of the Legian community. The nuasen/incubation stage became a reflective and internally resistant process, wherein the body not only absorbed the spatial experience but also challenged the codified boundaries of Telek as a closed ritual. Within Merleau-Ponty's (1962) embodiment theory, the creator's body operates as a sensory medium that experiences sacred spaces—such as the jaba tengah and jaba sisi, which are subconsciously transformed into choreographic structures. Ritualistic movements like nungket bangkiang and ngeliput are reimagined as contemporary motifs that integrate with the temple stairs and MIDI soundscape. This reflects creativity as an emancipatory act, reinterpreting cultural heritage not as passive reconstruction but as aesthetic revitalization.

In the illumination stage, choreographic ideas emerged from the prolonged internalization between body and cultural space. Through the lens of embodied cognition (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999), the body is not merely a medium but the center of perception and meaning-making. The dancer's body integrates with the contours of Pura Agung, the pathways, stone steps, shrines, and courtyards, generating floor patterns that are both artistic and reflective of sacred spatial structures. For example, ngeliput was modified into a flowing sequence tracing the temple path, creating a kinesthetic relationship between the body and the sacred site. The verification stage involved site-specific performance experiments (Pearson, 2010), treating space not as a passive backdrop but as an active dramaturgical actor. The dancers adjusted their movements to the uneven ground and dynamic audience orientation, subverting conventional proscenium staging and critiquing spatial alienation in modern performance (Marcuse, 1964).

From a cultural hermeneutic perspective (Gadamer, 1975), Smara Jantra functions as a performative text containing symbolic layers. Its dramatic structure incorporates the symbol of regeneration through the representation of seven female and seven male dancers, signifying generational continuity in Telek tradition. The sekala–niskala balance is articulated through the use of sacred (jaba tengah) and profane (temple entrance path) spaces as dual choreographic domains. The gamelan babarongan–MIDI collaboration embodies the dialectic between ritual sound and digital sound, reflecting Adorno's (1941) tension between tradition and modernity. Video mapping serves as pastiche, reintroducing classic Telek symbols (footprints, east–west orientation, tapel) through light projections and temple architecture, situating the work within postmodern hybridity (Jameson, 1991).

The aesthetic of Smara Jantra resonates with Jean Baudrillard's (1994) notion that in the age of hyperreality, "reality has lost its secret" and shifts into simulation without a singular meaning. The work transforms Telek's sacred elements, mask (tapel), ngeliput movement, ritual costume, into contemporary visual media, movement, and dramaturgical space. In the final scene, the symbolic handover of the tapel Telek from narrator to choreographer is not framed as absolute sacredness but as a simulacrum, a symbolic form detached from its original ritual yet retaining spiritual potency when read reflectively. The costume, once used solely in the mepajar procession, is now layered with contemporary designs while retaining classical motifs, marking a postmodern pastiche (Jameson, 1991).

Through Barthes' (1977) semiotic theory, makeup and costume in Smara Jantra are representational devices that produce social and ideological meaning. Visual differentiation among children, mothers, youth, and adults reflects not only age segmentation but also the living social structure of the Legian customary community. The seven–seven formation symbolizes "the light of heritage," with the number seven referencing classical Telek formations, and the gender balance affirming the rwa bhineda principle (Lansing, 2006).

The narrator character plays both a narrative and ideological role. In Judith Butler's (1990) theory of performativity, the body is an active agent shaping cultural identity. Through minimal gestures, walking, glancing, handing over the tapel, the narrator embodies the choreographer's reflective presence, functioning as an internal narrator bridging past, present, and imagined futures (Ricoeur, 1984).

Musicians are integral to the collective performance body. Within Nancy's (2007) performativity of sound, music becomes embodied in the audience's affective experience. Simple attire for the musicians, combined with udeng and sapat, reinforces their role as "keepers of the performance's inner rhythm." The gamelan babarongan–MIDI fusion exemplifies postmodern musical hybridity (Born, 2005), blending traditional tabuh durma and gending telek with electronic textures to produce a transcendent atmosphere.

Drawing on Tedjoworo's (2013) creative imagination theory, Smara Jantra emerges as a meeting point of intellect, intuition, and embodied experience, transforming historical reflection and collective memory into symbolic performance. It stands as a counter-hegemonic act against the commodification of tradition, reaffirming that tradition is a living light guiding contemporary and future artistic steps.

CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that the creation of the Smara Jantra dance work was carried out through a creative process using the Angripta Sesolahan method, which consists of five stages: ngarencana, nuasen, makalin, nelesin, and ngebah. This process is firmly rooted in the philosophy of tradition-based Balinese creative practice, while simultaneously developing its aesthetic relevance within the context of contemporary performing arts.

The process unfolded in sequential stages. The ngarencana (planning) stage served as the conceptual foundation, integrating literature review, direct observation of the Telek dance in Legian, and spatial mapping of Pura Agung as the site-specific performance venue. This stage formulated the cosmological concept of luwan, teben (sacred profane) as the axis of a transformative aesthetic idea. In the nuasen stage, the creative process was anchored in ritual practice to seek niskala (unseen) blessings while engaging the customary community, local artists, and prospective participants. The makalin stage became a space for movement and music exploration, in which classical Telek motifs such as ngeliput, mekecos, and nungket bangkiang were combined with experimental accompaniment blending gamelan babarongan and MIDI technology, creating a dialectic between traditional sound and modernity. The nelesin stage crystallized the results of exploration into a complete dramatic structure, encompassing spatial design, lighting, costuming, and synchronization of movement and music. Finally, the ngebah stage was realized in the premiere performance at Pura Agung, which functioned not only as a presentation of the work but also as a space for technical, aesthetic, and reflective evaluation.

Smara Jantra was conceived as a site-specific performance that treats Pura Agung not merely as a backdrop, but as a living dramaturgical actor. The dramatic structure is divided into three main segments: (1) a depiction of the spiritual atmosphere prior to the arrival of Telek, marked by the mepajar ritual in the jaba tengah; (2) the sacred profane transitional phase, reflecting the dynamics of Telek in the contemporary era, accompanied by a collaboration of traditional and digital sounds; and (3) the reflective segment culminating in the symbolic handover of the tapel Telek from the narrator to the choreographer. The choreography integrates traditional movement elements with contemporary processing, utilizing floor patterns that follow the contours of the temple space, and arranging dancer orientation to build symbolic communication between the microcosm and macrocosm. The use of a seven-male and seven-female dancer formation reinforces messages of regeneration and cosmic balance.

The Smara Jantra dance carries multidimensional meanings. Sacrally, it revives the niskala values of Telek without being bound to literal reproduction, instead reinterpreting its symbols, movement patterns, and musical atmosphere. The principle of rwa bhineda is articulated in the spatial journey from the jaba tengah (sacred) to the jaba sisi (transitional), philosophically representing harmony between the inner and outer realms. Socially, the involvement of a cross-generational community reflects a commitment to preserving tradition as a collective responsibility. Ecologically, the use of open space and video mapping of Telek footprints transforming into light underscores the connection between tradition, landscape, and the natural environment. Politically and culturally, the symbolic act of handing over the tapel Telek from the narrator to the choreographer affirms the rights and responsibilities of the next generation to reinterpret cultural heritage in the context of their time.

The novelty of this work lies in the integration of the cosmological concept of luwan–teben as the basis of a transformative aesthetic that links sacredness and profanity within a unified dramaturgical flow, as well as in the application of the local Angripta Sesolahan creation method within the framework of contemporary Balinese performing arts. The combination of traditional elements (movement motifs, gamelan, costumes) with modern technology (MIDI, video mapping) not only broadens the spectrum of artistic expression but also offers a creation model that is contextual, rooted in local wisdom, and relevant to today's audiences. It unites body, space, and spirituality in an integrated reflective aesthetic experience. Smara Jantra thus stands as a bridge between past and future, between inherited forms and creative interpretation, and as a declaration that tradition is a living energi, continuously moving, adapting, and illuminating the artistic path of generations to come.

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