Dessy Rachma's digital illustrations: The creative process and formal analyses

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ABSTRACT
This research aims to 1) describe the creative process of Dessy Rachma's digital illustration work, 2) describe Dessy Rachma's artistic journey, and 3) describe the marketing strategy for Dessy Rachma's work. This qualitative research uses descriptive methods to describe the results in detail. So, the final result of this research is an analysis and discussion of the results based on several art theories. Data sources were collected using triangulation techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Moreover, the validity of the data will be tested using a member check (checking research data with the data provider). The results of this research show that: 1) Dessy's creative process in working uses digital media and techniques, and the characteristics of the work highlighted are themes about feminism with the use of neon colours such as in cyber art style; 2) Dessy's artistic journey started when she was in college, continued until she was in graduate school, and now she has marketed many of her digital works on the Crypto Ar market; 3) The marketing strategy for Dessy's work is carried out by marketing her work on a platform from Crypto Art called Teia. art which Dessy not only uses as a marketing medium but also as a place for archiving her work and as a medium to increase her branding.

Keywords: *crypto art, digital illustration*

ABSTRAK
Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk: 1) mendeskripsikan proses kreatif karya ilustrasi digital Dessy Rachma; 2) mendeskripsikan perjalanan kesenimanan Dessy Rachma; dan 3) mendeskripsikan strategi pemasaran karya Dessy Rachma. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif untuk menjabarkan secara mendetail hasil penelitian sehingga hasil akhir dari penelitian ini merupakan sebuah analisis dan pembahasan hasil penelitian berdasarkan beberapa teori kesenian. Pengumpulan sumber data dilakukan dengan teknik triangulasi yaitu observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Uji keabsahan data menggunakan member check (pengecekan data penilitian kepada pemberi data). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa: 1) proses kreatif Dessy Rachma dalam berkarya menggunakan media dan teknik digital serta karakteristik karya yang ditonjolkan adalah tentang feminisme dengan penggunaan warna-warna neon seperti dalam gaya cyber art; 2) perjalanan kesenimanan Dessy Rachma dimulai sejak di perguruan tinggi, dilanjutkan hingga studi lanjut S-2, dan kini sudah banyak memasarkan karya-karya digitalnya di pasar crypto art; 3) strategi pemasaran karya dilakukan dengan memasarkan karyanya di sebuah platfrom crypto art bernama Teia.art yang tidak hanya dijadikan media pemasaran, namun juga wadah pengarsipan karya dan media meningkatkan personal branding-nya.

Kata Kunci: *crypto art, ilustrasi digital*

INTRODUCTION

Digital illustration has become integral to innovative visual arts in the continually evolving digital era. As Male elucidates (in Restuningsih, Roisah, and Prabandari, 2021), digital illustration can be defined as a form of art media that combines visual art, particularly illustration, with digital computer technology. In this context, digital illustration not only reflects technological advancements but also serves as a mirror of the ongoing evolution of art in tandem with changing times.

This research is motivated by the successful marketing of Dessy Rachma's digital illustration works in the crypto art market. Dessy Rachma is a digital artist whose works focus on themes of women and feminism. Her works are highly sought after and recognised in the digital art world. Through marketing her works in crypto art, where sales are facilitated through Blockchain and NFT (Non-Fungible Token) technology, Dessy Rachma has achieved significant income. This success has sparked interest in understanding the creative process more deeply, the characteristics of her illustrations, and the marketing strategies she has implemented in the crypto art realm. This study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of Dessy Rachma's digital art, understand the role of crypto art in her success, and identify critical factors that can inspire other digital artists to market their works effectively in this digital era.

Crypto art is a new movement involving artists creating and distributing their artworks through crypto art galleries or digital channels using Blockchain technology (Franchecet et al., 2019). These galleries or digital channels are similar to online marketplaces that specialise in marketing art products. Their unique feature is the proof of ownership of the artwork manifested in the form of an NFT token and the provenance feature of the Blockchain. This feature provides transparency and allows the entire transaction process to run online and be open for everyone to see.

Research on the creative process and characteristics of Dessy Rachma's digital illustrations not only unveils the uniqueness of individual art but also significantly contributes to understanding the development of crypto art in the context of art in Indonesia. By focusing on successful digital artists like Dessy Rachma, this research investigates the impact of crypto art on Indonesian art. It provides valuable discourse on digital art in general, including trends and innovations that may influence the development of art in the digital era. Thus, this research not only explores the uniqueness of Dessy Rachma's creativity but also significantly contributes to the broader discussion on the transformation of digital art and its role in stimulating the growth and development of the art ecosystem in Indonesia.

This study employs formal analysis to analyse the characteristics of the works. This analytical process is also known as the descriptive inventory process, which involves collecting visual evidence to form an interpretation of a work with artistic considerations (Kartika, 2017). According to Feldman (in Bahari, 2008), this formal analysis can begin with analysing the main idea of a painting and proceed to the sequence of the creation process—objects studied in this formal analysis range from elements of visual art to their visual composition. For instance, it explains how visual art elements such as line, plane, colour, and texture are arranged in a painting and the composition used, including balance, rhythm, centre of interest, contrast, and unity.

This research focuses on three main aspects: the artwork, the artist's journey, and marketing in the crypto art market. First, regarding the artwork, the research delves into the creative process and characteristics of Dessy Rachma's digital illustrations. An in-depth analysis is conducted to understand the creative elements, art style, and innovations that colour her works, providing deeper insights into her artistic expression. Second, Dessy Rachma's artistic journey is another focal point, covering the timeline and stages of her artistic development from the beginning of her career to her success in the crypto art market. Lastly, the research will emphasise the aspect of marketing in the crypto art market by examining the strategies and tactics employed by Dessy Rachma to market her works effectively. By focusing on these three aspects, a comprehensive understanding is expected to be gained of Dessy Rachma's contributions to the digital art world and the role of crypto art in supporting her success.

METHOD

Research Type

The research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. This study focuses on the creative process of a female digital artist, Dessy Rachma, who has marketed her works within the crypto art market. Additionally, the study examines the aspects that contribute to Dessy Rachma's success as a female artist in the crypto art market.

Research Instruments

In this study, the researcher serves as the primary instrument. The supporting instruments include technical tools such as a smartphone for recording, a laptop for documenting research findings, and non-technical tools such as interview guidelines. The interview guidelines in this research include 1) instruments for researching the artist's career journey, 2) instruments for investigating Dessy Rachma's artwork, and 3) instruments for examining the strategies employed in marketing the artworks.

Data Sources

The data sources in this research are divided into subjects and objects. The research subject is a digital illustrator named Dessy Rachma, who consistently creates works focused on themes of women and feminism. The objects of the research are three of Dessy Rachma's latest works that have been marketed on a crypto art platform called Teia. art.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques in this research involve triangulation (observation, interviews, and documentation). Observations are conducted through casual monitoring of Dessy Rachma's artistic journey via one of her social media accounts, Instagram. Basic observations regarding the marketing of her works in the crypto art market are performed through the platform Teia. Art. Interviews are conducted with Dessy Rachma, the primary informant, to discuss her biography, artistic journey, characteristics of her works, and marketing strategies. Documentation involves recording interviews, cataloguing Dessy Rachma's artworks, and capturing her works displayed on the Teia—art platform, where her artworks are marketed.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis uses the Miles and Huberman model, including data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The data reduction process begins with summarising the results of the interviews with Dessy Rachma and reducing the artworks to be analysed. Data presentation is divided into three sections: a description of the artistic journey, the artworks, and the marketing of the artworks in the crypto art market. Conclusions are mapped into three points corresponding to the data presentation sections.

Data Validity Testing

The validity testing used in this research is credibility testing through member checking. This involves providing a summary of the research findings to the interviewee for review to ensure alignment with their perceptions. Once the interviewee agrees with the summary, they will sign the member check form.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Creative Process and Characteristics of Dessy Rachma's Digital Illustrations

In her artistic process, Dessy Rachma draws inspiration from a diverse range of female characters and the unique stories behind them. These include maternal figures, tomboys, eccentrics, and intellectuals. Dessy Rachma also finds inspiration from several feminist artists who have significantly influenced her perspective on art. One of her significant idols is Diela Maharani, an artist who has dramatically impacted Dessy Rachma, particularly in using neon colours that have become a hallmark of her digital illustrations. By creating works that embrace the diversity of women and incorporating elements from feminist artists, Dessy Rachma not only produces unique visual art but also imparts a deeper dimension of meaning to her creations.

Dessy Rachma adopts the "power-up" concept in classic cartoons such as Dragon Ball, Sailor Moon, and Saras 008. This adoption reflects the influence and inspiration from the world of

animation, which has become a part of popular culture. Additionally, Dessy Rachma's painting style follows the aesthetics of cyber art. This style represents a form of art that merges new aesthetic elements with digital technology as its primary medium. This concept encompasses visual forms and includes aspects of beauty, subjectivity, individuality, and expression in Dessy Rachma's works. This approach aligns with Amaral's (2011) view that digital art creates a harmonious blend between fine art and digital technology.

Dessy Rachma utilises digital tools such as a camera and iPad as hardware or devices in her artwork process. She also employs the Procreate application as her software. Using Procreate, Dessy Rachma applies layering techniques to assist in sorting and simplifying the creation of her digital illustrations. Additionally, she incorporates digital effects into each piece, such as final GIF formats, laser-like flare effects to add a superhero strength impression, lightning effects to enhance the electrical quality typical of cyber art, and mystical or magical power effects.

Below is a discussion of three digital illustrations by Dessy Rachma that have been marketed in the crypto art market:

1. Behave Your Anger
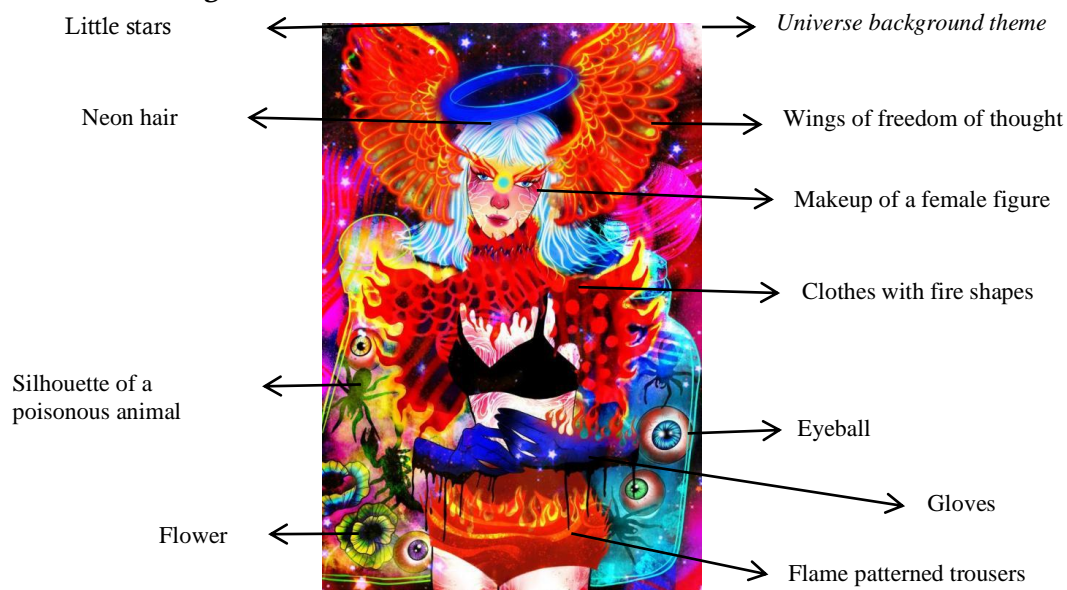
Picture 1. "Behave Your Anger" (2022) Digital media iPad and Procreate (Format: JPEG)
Source: https://teia.art/kakdesh

The piece above is personally interpreted by Dessy Rachma as "girls from hell," with flames depicted on the clothing of the female figure in the painting. The digital illustration addresses the theme of feminism, exploring images of women with freedom of thought and intelligence. The work conveys mood and emotion by portraying a woman seemingly holding back her anger. Visual elements such as angel wings, floating gloves, and mysterious objects like eyeballs help build a strong narrative.

Regarding physical-structural aspects, neon colours like red and yellow create the optical effect of blazing fire. Free-flowing curved lines depict objects, particularly the fire on the woman's clothing. The shapes in the illustration predominantly use organic forms such as flowers, venomous animals, wings, and fire. There is a sense of expansive space behind the female figure with tiny stars.

Aesthetic principles present colour unity with a neon palette, informal balance with visually weighted objects, rhythmic repetition of shapes and colours, and proportionate depiction of the female figure contrasted against the red and yellow hues.

2. The Spear
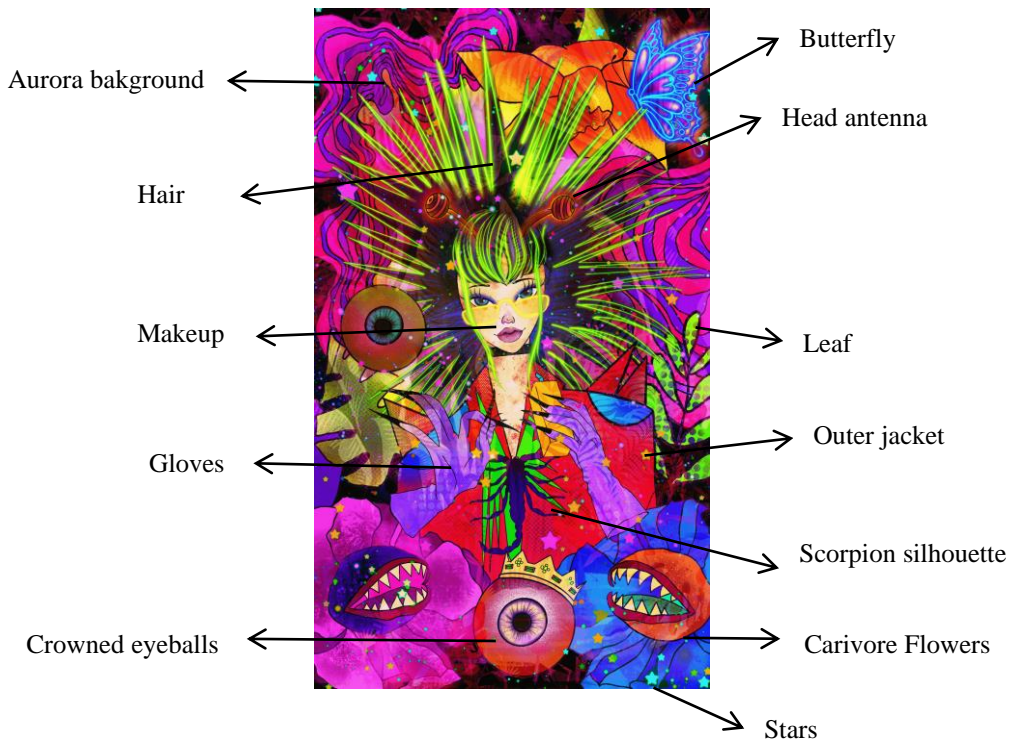
Picture 2. "*The Spear*" (2022) Digital media iPad and Procreate (Format: GIF)
Source: https://teia.art/kakdesh

This work, "The Spear," illustrates the burdens and responsibilities of the eldest daughter. In the neoplastic context, the painting features a female figure full of explosive energy yet maintaining elegance. This digital illustration depicts a fantasy world from a woman's perspective. To create a narrative, Rachma uses elements like explosive hair, sharp-mouthed carnivorous flowers, crown-adorned eyes, and floating gloves with elongated fingers and nails.

From a physical-plastic perspective, neon colours like green on the hair serve an optical function to depict explosion light. Purple, pink, and blue highlight femininity and provide a deep optical dimension. The black on the scorpion silhouette adds a venomous and deadly aura.

The illustration employs mostly bold lines, though some free-flowing curved lines are used. Organic forms such as flowers, animals, and auroras are prevalent. The illustration suggests a vast space behind the female figure.

Aesthetically, the painting achieves colour unity through neon hues applied to objects. Sharp objects like explosive hair, nails, and the carnivorous flower's teeth create a harmonious rhythm. The balance is formal (symmetrical), with a centre of balance flanked by similar objects on either side of the female figure. Manipulated proportions, such as a smaller head due to an oversized blazer, add a modern fashion touch. Emphasis is placed on the central figure and the contrast in colour on her face and hair compared to the surrounding objects, creating a rich, aesthetically pleasing composition.

3. YOU, Jessy Jeanne

The piece "YOU, Jessy Jeanne" depicts a fairy in the Web3 (virtual/metaverse) world. The idioblastic concept emphasises feminism and portrays the female figure as a symbol of strength capable of guiding in the Web3 world. The digital illustration adapts the design of a female fairy guide with imaginative elements such as butterfly wings on her back and a crescent moon tiara signifying a fairy's existence.
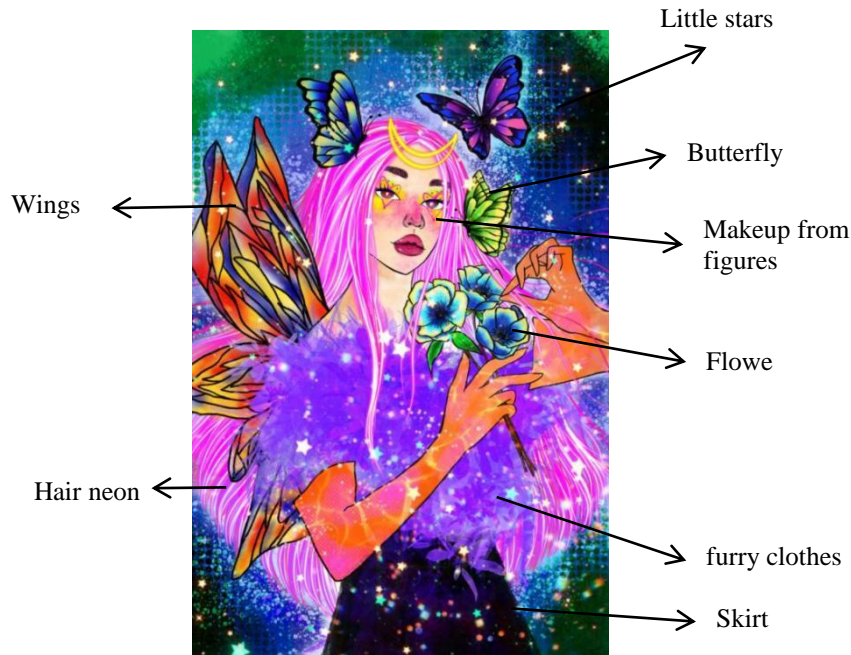
Picture 3. "YOU, Jessy Jeanne" (2022) Digital media using iPad and Procreate (Format: JPEG)
Source: https://teia.art/kakdesh

From a physical-plastic standpoint, bright colours like pink and purple give the female figure a feminine and magical impression. Other colours like blue, green, and black in the background create the virtual world atmosphere where the fairy resides. Aesthetically, the illustration shows unity through the distribution of stars, creating a cohesive rhythm and radial balance with the circle of colour behind the fairy figure. The female body is depicted realistically, with emphasis achieved through negative space, directing focus to the fairy figure and producing an engaging circular effect.

Artistic Journey

Dessy Rachma, born in Madiun on December 17, 1992, began her artistic career during college. There, she experienced the significant impact of visual arts education, gaining a deep understanding of art theory and philosophy. For Rachma, college was not just a place for technical skill development but also a source of profound artistic knowledge. During her studies, she used her works for academic assignments and commission projects, including notebook illustration design, local brand logos, and illustrations for magazines and books. Later, while pursuing a master's degree at *ISI Yogyakarta*, she focused on developing her branding as a digital artist working through digital mediums. Rachma began uploading her works to various social media platforms such as Path and Instagram, aiming to build her artistic reputation, connect with a broader audience, and expand her presence in the digital art world.

From the beginning of her artistic severe endeavour, Dessy Rachma has consistently focused on female figures as reflections of herself and channels for expressing her anger towards women's issues around her. Additionally, her painting media evolved from traditional mediums like watercolour and pencil to digital media using iPads and Procreate. This evolution reflects her adaptation to current trends to keep her work relevant. Today, most of her work is in the form of digital art.

As an artist, Dessy Rachma has received various accolades in the art world. In 2016, her achievement was marked by winning a competition held by 2Madison Gallery. This opportunity led to a collaboration with five artists and a fashion designer named Mel Ahyar, resulting in her work becoming a fabric pattern for a dress designed by Ahyar. In 2021, she entered the crypto art market, and her works were reviewed in an article titled "UNDRGRND DIGS 005" (Tottie, 2021). Subsequently, in 2022, a book reviewing NFT works detailed her career journey and digital

illustration. In the book "100 WOMXN ARTIST To Follow in NFT Space," Dessy was the only Indonesian artist reviewed by the book's team (Stern et al., 2022)

Picture 4. Commission artwork by Dessy Rachma
Source: Instagram @dessyrachms and http://geaxenalevina.weebly.com

Picture 5. Mel Ahyar's clothing design collaboration with Dessy Rachma's illustrations
Source: Instagram @dessyrachms

Marketing Strategies in the Crypto Art Market

Regarding marketing, Dessy Rachma identified herself as a social media-oriented artist before entering the crypto art market. She frequently posted her works on social media rather than participating in physical exhibitions. One reason is her negative experience with physical exhibitions, where her artworks were lost and damaged. Consequently, she chose social media as her marketing platform.

Dessy Rachma began marketing her works in the crypto art market as time progressed. The COVID-19 pandemic led her to resign from her job and explore crypto art, then known as NFTs, through Twitter. She delved into this new art trend, joined community forums on Clubhouse and Discord, understood how it worked, and eventually began marketing her works on a marketplace called Teia. art. Teia. art is an online platform for marketing NFT digital assets. Its interface and marketplace contracts operate on the Tezos Blockchain, which originated from NFT hic et nunc

and has been further developed and managed by the Teia community. As a result, the marketplace is owned, maintained, built, and enhanced by its community members (Teia Community, 2023).

Dessy Rachma also uses Teia. Art as a repository for her new works. Social media platforms like Instagram, previously used for archiving her works, became mixed with other activities such as moderating or hosting auctions. Additionally, she can market many works, ranging from 2 to 100 pieces per minting of the same artwork, with prices varying from 1 Tezos (Rp10,000) to 100 Tezos (Rp1,000,000).

Picture 6. Display of Dessy Rachma's teia.art account page
Source: https://teia.art/kakdesh

Over time, her marketing efforts in the crypto art market have been successful. Her works quickly gained recognition among collectors, partly due to the timing of her marketing during the peak popularity of crypto art and partly because many collectors of her works are feminist activists. She noted that many collectors appreciate her works due to the sense of feminist rebellion in each piece.

Dessy Rachma's crypto art marketing outcomes can be categorised into financial, artistic career, and artwork protection. Financially, she claims that her earnings can sustain her for two years without a regular job. Specifically, she explains that if she focuses solely on producing one to two works per week in crypto art, she can cover five months of living expenses. Her income is not exclusively from minting but also from royalties applied to each work, with Dessy Rachma setting a royalty rate of 10-15%.

Regarding financial comparison, Dessy Rachma states that her earnings in crypto art are significantly higher than in traditional markets due to lower artwork delivery costs, which involve framing, shipping, and packaging expenses in conventional art. Conversely, in crypto art, buyers only need to download the works from the marketplace.

Regarding her artistic career, Dessy Rachma observes that her popularity as an artist increased after transitioning to crypto art. Her Twitter followers grew to 1,500 and her Instagram followers to 2,600.

Regarding artwork protection, Dessy Rachma reports that despite the prevalence of fraud and plagiarism in the NFT world, she has not experienced these issues. Her strategy to avoid such problems involves careful monitoring of her work. When collectors offer high prices, she prefers to confirm their legitimacy with peers. Furthermore, physical artworks often need to be maintained and conserved over time. In contrast, digital artworks in crypto art maintain their quality as long as they exist, which she considers advantageous.

CONCLUSION

Three key conclusions can be drawn from Dessy Rachma's digital illustration works based on the findings presented. Firstly, in terms of the artworks, Dessy Rachma focuses on themes of feminism and the exploration of women's power in her three pieces: "Behave Your Anger," "The Spear," and "YOU Jessy Jeanne." She portrays intelligent women with unique styles and strengths, utilising digital tools such as iPads, cameras, and the Procreate application. The digital techniques include layering for separate editing and special effects such as glitches, darkening, flares, and light flashes. Formal analysis reveals meticulous attention to detail, good proportions, and neon colours, creating a cyber art visual style. She also employs free-form lines and visual symbols such as flowers, butterflies, and bold makeup to convey feminist messages and fantastical beauty. Dessy Rachma's works can be seen as representations of natural objects.

Secondly, from the perspective of her artistic journey, Dessy Rachma has been actively creating art since her time in university. During her studies, she began building her branding as a critically and creatively thinking artist, focusing on distinctive works highlighting themes of feminism, fantasy, and technology. She initiated her branding by uploading her works on social media platforms. Her artistic career further developed, earning various accolades, including the opportunity to collaborate with renowned fashion designer Mel Ahyar. Additionally, after entering the crypto art market, Dessy Rachma was nominated in the book *100 WOMXN Artists To Follow in NFT Space* for 2021-2022.

Lastly, regarding her marketing strategy, crypto art has played a significant role financially for Dessy Rachma and in the development of her career as a digital artist. Financially, the platform provides opportunities to achieve high artwork prices and obtain more significant net income as there are no costs for framing, packing, and shipping as in traditional artworks. Moreover, Dessy Rachma's works gain additional recognition through the royalty system implemented in crypto art. Regarding artwork protection, crypto art is a secure archiving medium for her works, protecting them from physical damage and plagiarism as all her works are digital and tokenised. Additionally, regarding her artistic career, Dessy Rachma's presence in the crypto art market has enhanced her branding as a digital artist, reflected in the increase in followers on Twitter and Instagram after her involvement in the platform.

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