

## ***Mise-en-Scène* Strengthens Conflict in the Film *God Allows Me to Sin* by Hanung Bramantyo**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research analyzes how mise en scene, particularly setting, acting, and properties, reinforces narrative conflict in Hanung Bramantyo's film *Tuhan, Izinkan Aku Berdosa*. Using a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected through repeated film observation, script analysis, documentation of key scenes, and interviews with the art director. Findings show that mise en scene elements such as narrow and dim pesantren spaces, symbolic properties like reports, phones, and hidden cameras, as well as the main actor's emotional expressions, function as visual language that conveys tension and trauma. Properties are not mere complements but narrative triggers symbolizing oppression, manipulation, and resistance, while acting bridges the emotional depth of characters without relying on dialogue. The study concludes that mise en scene effectively intensifies both internal and external conflicts, demonstrating how Indonesian cinema communicates social and spiritual issues through visual storytelling.

**Keywords:** *Acting, Conflict, Film, Mise En Scene, Setting*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Film is an art form that has experienced rapid development in today's era of rapid advances in information technology. Films produced by filmmakers always combine visual and audio elements, making them even more engaging to watch. A film consists of two elements: narrative and cinematic. Narrative is the material processed into a story in a film, while cinematic is the technique used or used as a reference in developing narrative elements during film production. Cinematic elements include various interconnected elements, including editing, sound, cinematography, and mise-en-scene.

Mise en scene is a film terminology derived from the French "putting in the scene," meaning "putting into the scene." In Indonesian, "putting in the scene" means "everything within the frame" (Bordwell, Thompson, & Smith 2020: 113). Mise en scene essentially encompasses all visible elements within the frame, divided into four components: setting, costumes, makeup, lighting, and blocking and actor movement. These components work visually to convey meaning, build atmosphere, and reinforce the narrative conflict within

the film. *Mise en scene* is a visual language in film—the director's way of speaking to the audience without having to use words. Even before the characters speak, the audience can immediately feel the atmosphere of what is seen on screen. *Mise en scene* is not only a visual aesthetic but also shapes meaning and conveys messages and emotions to the audience.

Conflict is the heart of a film story. Without it, the plot would feel flat and lose its appeal. Conflict brings a story to life, creating tension, driving change, and fostering character development. Conflict can arise from within a character, such as doubt, guilt, or a conflict between desires and moral values—internal conflict. It can also come from outside the character, such as conflict with others, social pressure, or even stressful life circumstances—external conflict. Conflict is considered a crucial element in building a strong story; without it, no story can develop. When a film presents a strong and relevant conflict, we as viewers can relate to the characters' emotions, whether anger, fear, sadness, disappointment, or hope.

Not all conflicts need to be expressed through dialogue. However, carefully designed *mise-en-scène* elements such as tense body language, harsh and dim lighting, cramped, oppressive spaces, and convincing acting allow the audience to not only see the conflict but also feel it. One element of *mise-en-scène*, setting and acting, can enhance conflict in a film's narrative. The setting provides a visual space that emphasizes the character's condition and the tension of the story. For example, a cramped, dark space can heighten the sense of pressure felt by the character, as can the setting during the conflict, and the props used. Furthermore, acting is at the heart of conveying emotion in conflict. Through eye contact, body language, gait, suppressed anger, or confusion, conflict can be clearly seen through facial expressions. Strong acting allows the viewer to understand and feel the conflict without the need for verbal explanation. The right setting and strong acting make the conflict in the story feel more real and touching.

"*God, Let Me Sin*" is a 2024 Indonesian drama film directed by Hanung Bramantyo. It is adapted from Muhidin Dahlan's novel "*God, Let Me Be a Prostitute*." It raises a very serious religious theme, yet one that resonates with humanity: people who are disappointed in God because their lives are constantly filled with problems. Furthermore, the main character, Kiran, faces challenges from those who exploit religion for their own gain.

Kiran's conflict is divided into internal and external conflicts, which influence each other. The internal conflict arises from Kiran's inner turmoil, as he loses his direction and spiritual convictions after feeling betrayed by the religious leaders who should be educating and teaching him religion according to its teachings. The conflict continues with Kiran's mother, who blames Kiran and places more trust in a religious leader; the conflict with fellow students at the Islamic boarding school who have betrayed and harassed Kiran; and Kiran's conflict with government officials who use religion for their own gain and gain public support.

All of these conflicts are reinforced through the use of setting and acting as *mise-en-scène* elements. For example, the room in the Islamic boarding school is depicted as

cramped, dim, and atmospheric, reinforcing the sense of inner pressure experienced by Kiran. The hilltop scene depicts Kiran as experiencing conflict and challenging his God. Kiran's acting provides a powerful emotional bridge, conveying both inner and external conflict without always being verbalized. The acting, displayed through blank eyes, expressions of anger, sadness, and disappointment, and the acting during the experience of persecution, when the conflict leads to abuse and violence, as well as the use of sharp objects, reinforces the conflict in the film "God, Allow Me to Sin." The setting reflects the pressures of life, and the acting provides the voice of both spoken and unspoken conflict. Both reinforce the conflict by conveying Kiran's innermost thoughts deeply, making each scene not only visible but also tangible.

The author chose this film because it demonstrates how conflict is deeply conveyed through visual power, particularly through mise-en-scène elements such as setting and acting. The emphatic setting and emotional acting heighten the tension and deepen the conflict in the film's narrative. The author's interest is also based on the film's themes, which are relevant to spiritual, social, religious, and family issues. Furthermore, the limited number of studies specifically addressing the relationship between setting, acting, and conflict in Indonesian films is an important reason for choosing this research focus. Therefore, this research will focus on identifying mise-en-scène elements, namely setting and acting, that have a direct relationship in the film "Tuhan, Izinkan Aku Berdosa."

## **METHOD**

This study used a qualitative design with descriptive methods to analyze mise en scène, specifically the setting and acting aspects, in strengthening the conflict in the film "Tuhan, Izinkan Aku Berdosa" (God Allows Me to Sin). The qualitative approach was chosen because it focuses on descriptive explanations of reality through sentences, statements, and images (Pujileksono, 2015: 35). This study emphasizes post-positivism philosophy, characterized by natural objects, the researcher as the key instrument, and purposive and snowball-based data collection techniques. Data were analyzed inductively, emphasizing meaning over generalizations. The focus of the study was directed at revealing how mise en scène, through setting and acting, serves to strengthen the narrative conflict in the film, so that the resulting conclusions are contextual and interpretive.

The data used consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained directly from the film Tuhan, Izinkan Aku Berdosa through repeated observations, script analysis, master breakdowns, and interviews with the film's art director. Meanwhile, secondary data came from library materials in the form of journals, articles, theses, and digital sources such as Google Scholar and repositories relevant to the film's mise-en-scène and conflict themes. Data collection techniques employed three methods: structured interviews with the film crew, documentation in the form of captured images from conflict scenes, and literature review to enrich the analytical framework. All of this data was systematically processed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the contribution of mise-en-scène to the intensification of conflict in the film studied.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### RESEARCH RESULT

#### 1. Setting

The research results show that the setting in the film "Tuhan, Izinkan Aku Berdosa" (God, Allow Me to Sin) is used purposefully to create an atmosphere of tension and reinforce the conflict at the heart of the story. The choice of locations in the film is not random, but rather imbued with meaning and designed to emphasize the dynamics of conflict between the characters. The hilltop is presented as an open space, visually creating a sense of expansiveness, but instead emphasizes the isolation and pressure experienced by the characters. Despite being in a natural, free space, the situation depicted remains fraught with tension, making the hill a symbol that escape or open space does not necessarily free the characters from conflict. Another dominant setting is the toilet, which is visualized as a cramped space with a tense atmosphere. The toilet in this film presents irony, as a private space, which should be neutral, is instead used to demonstrate limited mobility and the escalating pressure of conflict. Meanwhile, the studio is used as a setting to showcase the dynamics of power and manipulation, where interactions between the characters are marked by an atmosphere of tension and domination.

The atmosphere of conflict in these three settings is not only determined by the choice of space but is also reinforced by visual aspects, such as low-key lighting, which creates a gloomy and shadowy atmosphere. This lighting technique emphasizes the sense of pressure and sharpens the dramatic dimension of the ongoing conflict. Furthermore, contrasting color compositions are used to add dramatic intensity, for example through the contrast between dark areas and limited light directed at specific points, thus making the conflict's focus clearer. Thus, the setting in this film plays a dual role: as the backdrop for the events and as a cinematic instrument that reinforces the conflict. Through the use of space, light, and color, this film demonstrates that setting can be an effective *mise-en-scène* element for building atmosphere, emphasizing tension, and maintaining the consistency of conflict throughout the story.



**Figure 1.** Mountain Peak Setting  
(source: Reksa Haditya)



**Figure 2.** Toilet Settings  
(source: Reksa Haditya)

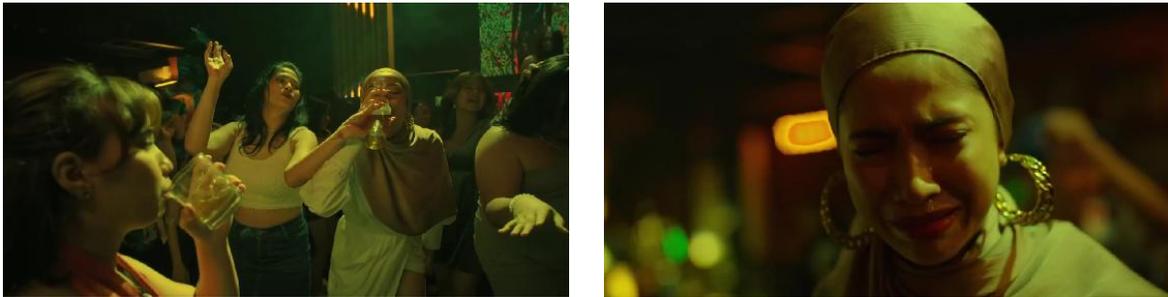


**Figure 3.** Campaign Studio Settings  
(source: Reksa Haditya)

## 2. Akting

The research results show that the main character's acting in the film "Tuhan, Izinkan Aku Berdosa" (God, Allow Me to Sin) is the most crucial mise-en-scène element in intensifying the conflict. Facial expressions, gestures, and body movements are used predominantly to convey meaning, as dialogue tends to be minimal. The main character, Kiran, is depicted with a long, blank stare, emphasizing the burden of the conflict she faces. Her gloomy and stressed facial expression serves as a visual language that depicts a difficult situation without the need for words. Furthermore, her stiff and restrained body gestures convey limitations and a desperate situation, further intensifying the conflict. At certain moments, emotional outbursts occur, such as tears or anger, indicating that the character is not completely resigned but is attempting to resist the pressures imposed on her. The minimal dialogue in this film actually reinforces the principle of "show, don't tell," where the character's feelings and conflicts are more strongly conveyed through body language and visual expressions. This creates consistent tension, as the audience is directed to grasp the meaning of the symbolically rich gestures and facial expressions. Small changes in

gesture or gaze become important markers of the development of the conflict, while also emphasizing the intensity of the situation the characters face. Thus, the acting in this film plays a dual role: as the primary means of conveying the conflict, and as a visual instrument that maintains a consistent tense atmosphere throughout the story.



**Figure 4.** Kiran's acting dancing then crying  
(source: Reksa Haditya)



**Figure 5.** Kiran's blank stare underscores the weight of the conflict.  
(source: Reksa Haditya)



**Figure 6.** Kiran's acting on a motorbike with a tired gaze  
(source: Reksa Haditya)



**Figure 7.** Kiran's crying acting in a violent scene  
(source: Reksa Haditya)

### 3. Properti

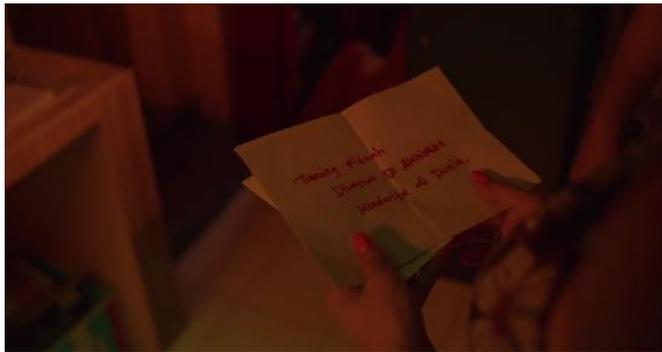
The research results show that the props in the film "Tuhan, Izinkan Aku Berdosa" (God, Allow Me to Sin) function not only as visual complements, but also as crucial elements that reinforce the conflict. One prominent prop is a matchstick-shaped camera, used symbolically to reinforce the storyline. This camera serves as both hidden evidence of the violence and a symbol of the truth being concealed. The presence of the matchstick-shaped camera escalates the conflict, as it creates a clash between those attempting to conceal the truth and those seeking to reveal it. Thus, this camera not only propels the storyline but also emphasizes the film's social critique. Another important prop is the mobile phone, which appears as both a communication medium and a means of spreading slander. The mobile phone in the film is not portrayed as a neutral object, but rather as a tool that can be used to manipulate information and direct opinion. Through the mobile phone, the conflict is intensified by the emergence of fabricated evidence, the spread of false news, and the pressure experienced by the main character. The presence of this prop demonstrates how modern technology becomes part of social conflict, where communication tools are transformed into means of power and control. In this context, the mobile phone demonstrates the dark side of technology, namely how it is used to trap individuals in more complex and stressful situations.

Furthermore, the slander letter is a crucial prop because it presents a concrete and direct form of conflict. This letter serves as a symbol of social pressure, where the main character must confront the stigma legitimized through written text. The slander letter is not simply a narrative object, but rather a representation of symbolic violence that undermines the main character's dignity in the eyes of society. The presence of this letter intensifies the conflict because it demonstrates how written discourse can be used to oppress individuals morally and socially. The letter serves as a turning point in the conflict, leading the plot to its climax. Overall, the props in this film operate on two levels. First, on a narrative level, the props drive the plot by presenting evidence, manipulation, and slander that fuel the conflict. Second, on a symbolic level, the props represent the film's overarching themes of power, manipulation, and resistance. Thus, props such as the lighter camera, cell

phone, and slander letter not only function visually but also have meanings that emphasize the conflict and maintain the film's dramatic atmosphere.



**Figure 8.** Camera shaped matchstick properties  
(source: Reksa Haditya)



**Figure 9.** Property letter of slander accusation  
(source: Reksa Haditya)



**Figure 9.** Mobile phone properties as a medium for spreading slander  
(source: Reksa Haditya)

## DISCUSSION

This research shows that the mise-en-scene in the film *Tuhan, Izinkan Aku Berdosa* functions predominantly in strengthening the conflict. The settings shown through the hilltop, toilet, and studio not only serve as backdrops but also build an atmosphere of

tension that directs the story. The hilltop emphasizes isolation, the toilet presents the impression of a cramped space that adds pressure, while the studio represents a space of control and manipulation. The acting of the main character, Kiran, relies more on non-verbal expressions such as blank stares, stiff body gestures, and emotional outbursts that show conflict without requiring much dialogue. Props such as a match-shaped camera, a cellphone, and a slander letter serve as symbols that strengthen the conflict as well as trigger the narrative. The camera represents hidden truths, the cellphone is used as a means of manipulating information, while the slander letter symbolizes social stigma that worsens the character's situation. This finding is important because it proves that conflict in the film is not only constructed through the storyline, but is also visualized intensely through *mise-en-scène*.

The results of this study are consistent with the research conducted by Husnil Fajri (2019) on the film *Penyalin Cahaya*. In his research, *mise-en-scène* is analyzed as the main element that builds dramatic conflict through setting, lighting, and character performance. He emphasized that *mise-en-scène* is not merely an aesthetic complement, but works actively to create narrative tension. This is similar to the findings in the film *Tuhan, Izinkan Aku Berdosa*, where the stressful setting, Kiran's non-verbal acting, and symbolic props such as a lighter camera, cellphone, and slander letter serve to directly strengthen the conflict. This similarity shows that *mise-en-scène* is an important strategy in contemporary Indonesian cinema to emphasize the conflict and message of the film. The difference lies in the focus of the analysis: this study emphasizes the integration of setting, acting, and props as a whole that presents conflict, thus adding a new contribution to the study of *mise-en-scène* in Indonesia.

This study has several limitations that need to be considered. The analysis focuses only on three elements of *mise-en-scène*: setting, acting, and props, leaving other aspects such as costumes, cinematography, and sound design unexplored. The study's object is also limited to a single film, making the results unable to be generalized to other works with different themes or visual styles. Furthermore, the theoretical framework used is Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith's *mise-en-scène* theory, which certainly limits the analytical perspective. Using other approaches, such as semiotics or feminist theory, would likely yield different results. Therefore, these limitations should be noted so that future research can broaden the scope of the study and produce a more comprehensive understanding.

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## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the *mise-en-scène* in the film "Tuhan, Izinkan Aku Berdosa" (God, Allow Me to Sin) functions predominantly in intensifying the conflict. The hilltop, toilet, and studio settings serve not only as visual backdrops but also as a building block of tension, emphasizing isolation, pressure, and control. Kiran's non-verbal acting, through gaze, gestures, and emotional expressions, powerfully conveys the conflict without relying on dialogue. Props such as a lighter camera, a cellphone, and a slander letter serve as symbols of manipulation and drivers of the conflict, thus conveying the conflict not only through the story but also through cinematic visualization.

This study confirms that *mise-en-scène* serves not only as an aesthetic element but also as a crucial instrument in the film's dramatic construction. A limitation of this study lies in its focus on only three elements of *mise-en-scène*, leaving other aspects such as costumes, cinematography, and sound unanalyzed. Future research is recommended to expand the study of these elements or compare this film with other works with similar themes. Practically, these findings can provide input for filmmakers to utilize *mise-en-scène* more strategically to construct conflict and strengthen a film's message.

Thus, this research contributes to Indonesian film studies by emphasizing the importance of visual analysis in understanding conflict. This study demonstrates that a film's strength lies not only in its storyline and dialogue, but also in its cinematically designed visual details. Therefore, the results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for the development of film analysis in the academic field, while also encouraging filmmakers to be more creative in utilizing *mise-en-scène* as a primary means of constructing conflict and conveying social messages.

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