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THE ROLE OF GRAPHIC DESIGN IN STRENGTHENING URBAN ART BRANDING IN THE SOLO IS SOLO ART COMMUNITY

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This study examines the role of graphic design in strengthening identity with urban art styles in the Solo Is Solo community in Solo City. In the context of acculturation of modern culture and local traditions, graphic design serves as a visual communication medium that articulates the vision, mission, and unique character of the community through elements such as logos, murals, typography, and digital content. The research method is qualitative descriptive with an in-depth analysis of artworks that reflect the character of urban art. The results show that graphic design not only strengthens the identity of the community internally as a forum for solidarity, but also builds positive recognition and perception in the eyes of the wider public. Graphic design acts as a creative bridge that connects Solo's cultural traditions with modern styles of expression, maintaining cultural relevance through innovation and attractive aesthetics in public spaces. The application of graphic design in urban art also enriches the aesthetic value of the city while opening up opportunities for the development of cultural tourism. This research emphasizes that graphic design is a strategic tool that supports the sustainability and existence of the urban art community in the ever-evolving socio-cultural dynamics. These findings can serve as a reference for other art communities in building a strong and sustainable visual identity.

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INTRODUCTION

Along with the rapid acculturation of western culture to Indonesia, this is the reason for the increasing *euphoria* of urban art that has occurred in Indonesia, especially in the last two decades, namely in cities that have strong cultural dynamics such as Yogyakarta, Bandung, and Solo. The city of Solo, which is the center of Javanese culture, is not only known through traditional arts such as puppetry, batik, and gamelan but also through contemporary art that grows from public spaces, ranging from murals, street installations, and experimental performances. Proof of the existence of urban contemporary art that has filled the space in the city of Solo is that there is mural art that can be found in every corner of the city of Solo. A community that plays a significant role in encouraging urban arts in the city of Solo, which was established in 2018, is the Solo Is Solo Art Community.

The Art Community is an association of individuals with interests and visions that are aligned in the context of art. Communities like this usually arise naturally and rely heavily on the loyalty and solidarity of community members as well as through broad public support. Therefore, an art community needs branding or visual identity that can be the key to differentiating from other communities. Without a strong visual identity language, an arts community is prone to drowning in the growing social media crowd, and it is difficult to build influence in the long term.

(Jubilee Zefanya Sulu et al., 2024) stating that the art community is able to shape the identity of its members by providing a forum for work, for example, providing a place to work and as a publication medium. In his research, he mentioned three functions of the community, namely as identity strengthening, as empowerment and as a social network. (Jubilee Zefanya Sulu et al., 2024)

The *Solo Is Solo* community is a group of young artists who are mostly academic artists engaged in the realm of street art, muralism, installation art, and alternative performing arts. The Solo Is Solo community is also a forum that has been formed in a foundation engaged in the field of art and performance. They are active in activating public spaces through visual works that are not only expressive, but also communicative to social, environmental, and cultural issues. As the intensity

of their activities increases, the need for strengthening visual identity or branding becomes important, especially in building a professional image in the eyes of the public, governments, and collaboration partners. So it is hoped that later the Solo Is Solo community movement will be able to create tourism destinations through urban arts. However, it should be noted that the development of local cultural arts-based tourism that uses the use of public space requires a holistic approach that includes various aspects such as community involvement, preservation of original art forms, infrastructure development, and educational initiatives. (Lahpan et al., 2024)

(Abiyoga et al., 2024) explained that Solo Is Solo has a variety of artistic activities, both educational and commercial. All activities held raised the concept of Street Art or street art, which includes *Street Art Mural Gallery, Street Art Market, Street Art Performing, Street Food, Street Flower Market and Street Art Study*. This step was taken to strengthen the identity of the community that focuses on *Street Art* or street art.

An important factor that is necessary is the existence of a strategic role in graphic design. Graphic design is not only used as an aesthetic tool, but also as a visual communication medium that is able to articulate the vision, mission, and unique character of the community. Strong visual branding will clarify *the community's positioning* amid the rise of similar art groups, and can help build a good perception among the public and art connoisseurs. A graphic identity that includes graphic elements of identity, such as logos, color palettes, typography, *social media layouts*, activity posters, and *merchandise*, is an important thing that consistently forms *the community's Brand Image*.

Based on data from the Surakarta City Cultural Office in 2023, it is stated that there are more than 25 non-traditional art communities active in the Solo area. However, only a small percentage have a structured branding system and are supported by strong graphic design. The *Solo Is Solo community* includes communities that are starting to realize the importance of *Image branding*, as seen from their collaboration with local graphic designers to create logos, designing visual campaigns for events such as *Street Art Festival Solo 2022*, as well as the use of social media as a gallery of activities and visual activities of their works.

This study aims to examine the role of graphic design in the *branding process* of the Solo Is Solo *urban art community*. The urgency of this research is to provide insight into how the role of graphic design can be a cultural strategy in strengthening the *brand image* of the art community at the local level, as well as a reference for other communities who want to build a strong visual identity.

METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative research method. The focus of this study is to examine the role of graphic design to strengthen the character of urban art in the Solo Is Solo art community. Data collection techniques through observation, interviews, archives and documents. The data analysis technique uses the Miles & Huberman Model, which includes 3 stages of data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawn. Data validity techniques through data triangulation and informant review.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Graphic Design Concept, Urban Art and Branding Solo Is Solo

Graphic design is a branch of the visual discipline that has a function as a communication tool using visual elements to convey information, messages and ideas through graphic works. These elements include color, shape, typography and composition (Landa, 2019). In the context of branding, the graphic design aspect is the main weapon in building the visual identity of an entity, whether an individual, organization, or a community. According to visual identity, it is processed into a branding strategy that is able to create a consistent impression and perception for the audience or art connoisseurs. (Wheeler, 2009)

In the context of the art community, graphic design acts as a link between the community and the public and the wider community. *Branding* With a consistent and characterful design, it can strengthen the appeal of the community and expand the reach of their target market, including in terms of collaborations, partnerships with external parties,

promotions, and promotions. *Event*, and fundraising activities (Clifton & Simmons, 2003).

(Abiyoga et al., 2024) The Solo Is Solo Artist group has adopted the concept of *Street Art* as an idea in an art management that is applied to several positive activities so that the community gets to know the culture of marginalized groups through better packaging, so that it can become a tourist destination to increase the attraction of tourists to visit the city of Solo.

Community branding will not be separated from the graphic design elements that support the movement of a community. One of the supporting elements of visual identity is the existence of a logo. Visually, the logo of the Solo Is Solo community strongly reflects the urban art culture, which is to adopt the style and characteristics of urban art in the form of graffiti art. The logo used by Solo Is Solo is a Wordmark Logo that reads Solo Is Solo in an urban art style.



Figure 1. Solo Is Solo Community Logo
(Source: Solo Is Solo, 2025)

Analysis of the Solo Is Solo Logo with Charles Sanders Peirce's Theory, namely the aspects of Representation, Object and Interpretant:

- (1) Representations (Physical Marks of the Logo): Dynamic hand-lettering, contrasting colors of white on a black background, and flowing artistic curves are representations of logos. This is the real element that the audience sees. The relationship with urban art from the logo is to prioritize free

expression and community identity through media such as graffiti and murals. This logo mimics a dynamic handwriting style similar to a signature or character stamp in graffiti art, conveying an informal and creative spirit.

- (2) Object (Meaning Represented by the Logo): This logo represents the identity and pride of the city of Solo. The word "Solo is Solo" confirms that Solo is unique and independent. The object is a message of locality and cultural exclusivity.
- (3) Interpretant: Viewers capture the message of local pride and uniqueness of Solo. The graffiti and handwriting forms give the impression of freedom, creativity, and the spirit of urban art, matching the lifestyle and culture of street art. The use of strong and easily recognizable visual elements supports an urban message of pride in local identity as well as a rebellion against commercial visual homogeneity.

The "Solo is Solo" logo semiotically acts as a bridge of visual communication that brings culture, emotions, and urban art identity to life very effectively.

Urban Art Design in Solo Is solo

Urban art is a branch or type of derivative of fine arts in Indonesia and abroad. Actors who are involved in the world of urban art are people who have a passion for their environment. Basically, the emergence of urban art is closely related to the needs of humans who hope for something ideal.

According to urban art, it is considered a pragmatic, materialistic, and capitalistic manifestation of urban culture, including murals, graffiti, and other forms of street art as artistic expressions as well as socio-cultural discourse. The emergence of Urban art, especially in the city of Solo, developed uniquely. This is due to the richness of traditional culture which was then re-explored by young academic artists in the city of Solo. The large number of academic artists in the city of Solo has led to an increase in Urban art culture that has sprung up in every corner of the city of Solo. (Aru Wiratno, 2023) (Harjanto & Sabana, 2013) Explaining that street art or urban art is very synonymous as a means to interact with each other, communicate symbolically through visual works on the streets with various topics including social criticism with

various thematic, symbolic, political, as well as entertaining or recreative visual packaging. Based on this, it can be concluded that the facts that we often encounter in the field related to urban art, both in the form of mural art and the like, often have messages in the form of social criticism or moral messages.

One of the signs of the emergence of Urban art in the city of Solo is the many murals and graffiti with the theme of *street art* decorating the city of Solo. Starting from the rampant acts of vandalism carried out by irresponsible individuals by channeling ideas and inspiration through graffiti mural art that is not conceptualized. The action is detrimental to several parties due to the lack of arrangement and lack of concept so that the existence of urban art through murals and graffiti causes pollution of the visual system of the city of Solo.



Figure 2. Stencil Mural Art
(Personal documentation, 2025)

(Ramadhana & Sattar, 2015) stating that the characteristics of Urban art are one of them using stencil techniques on canvas or walls, the stencil technique is very identical to the characteristics of urban art characteristics. In making stencil artworks, an artist involves spray techniques in his work, where this spray technique is very synonymous with graffiti art which is characteristic of urban art.

Based on the analysis of one of the stencil mural works in the Gatot Subroto corridor in the *Street Mural Gallery Solo Is Solo area*, the nuances of urban art culture are very strong, which is characterized by stencil techniques carried out in front of the work. The work is on the side of the road right at the door of the work on Gatot Subroto street.

This is very synonymous with the urban street art style.



Figure 3. Urban Street Art Style on Posters
(Source Solo Is Solo, 2025)

Solo Is Solo also applies the urban art style in all graphic content, both in the form of promotional content, education and information on Solo is Solo activities. Some graphic works that adopt the urban art style are very thick with contrasting and assertive typography characters. The use of complementary colors is often applied in graphic design styles, as in the above work there is a combination of bright blue and green, red and yellow colors and the dominance of black as a background color.

The Solo Is Solo community is not just about giving *Branding* communion with street art through digital content that is widely disseminated on social media, but all activities carried out by Solo Is Solo always involve public spaces such as road corridors, highways, empty space walls and other public spaces. stating that this unconventional choice of space provides a different feel for visitors and participants, as well as opens up a wider space for creative expression. It also serves to bring the art of graphic design closer to the wider public, (Setyoko et al., 2025)

The choice of public space as a place to create and perform arts by Solo Is Solo because it reaches a wider community. In line with the opinion (Asri et al., 2020) that public spaces outside buildings can be in the form of *open space*, pedestrian, outdoor common spaces, both social or economic or ecological activities. This is in line with the concept that has been designed through graphic works such as logos, activity posters, graphic content in general and physical locations. Artworks in public spaces have also proven to be a vehicle for various interactions, participations and collaborations of people who live in urban cities. The following are the field findings regarding the activities carried out by Solo Is Solo with the branding of Urban Arts: (Manggala, 2023)



Figure 4. Street Performance Music
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2025)



Figure 5. Street Art Market
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2025)

The Role of Graphic Design Work

The Solo Is Solo community is known for its movement of artists who care about fine arts in the

context of public space. One of them is to organize acts of vandalism into organized art. In order to increase its existence, Solo Is Solo strengthens the branding of urban art in line with the vision and mission of Solo Is Solo. Through *strong branding*, Solo Is Solo packs all components with an urban street art style, so that the impression of *the street art* style of urban art is so thick.

Based on the results and findings in the field as well as interviews with the director of Solo Is Solo, several points can be concluded regarding the role of graphic design works in strengthening the identity of the Solo Is Solo Community through the urban art style as follows:

1) Strengthening community identity

Graphic design is one of the important tools in building and strengthening the identity of the Solo is Solo community. These graphic design works include logos, mural artworks and various visual works that are representative of urban characters or art styles. Graphic design is a solution for the Solo Is Solo community to assert its existence in a public space that is increasingly visually competitive. A strong identity not only serves as a symbol of identity, but also as an internal forum that unites the idealism, vision and mission of community members by providing a sense of solidarity.

Graphic design strengthens the external perception of the general public and art lovers about the Solo Is Solo community as an integral part of the cultural life of the city of Surakarta. The public began to get to know the Solo Is Solo Community with its street art characteristics because of the consistency in the application of urban art concepts which include logos, distinctive typography, colors and graphic motifs that create the character of Solo is Solo in every creation of digital and physical content works.

2) Forming easily recognizable visual characteristics

The Solo Is Solo community creates unique and distinctive visual characteristics through graphic design with an urban art style. The use of this Urban art style was chosen because it is in line with the art activities as

well as the vision and mission of Solo Is Solo, it becomes a contrasting visual character in the Solo City environment so that it is easily recognized by the community. Graphic design that adopts semi-urban styles such as mural art, graffiti art, hand lettering art, and the use of contrasting color palettes create aesthetically appealing visual characteristics and serve as markers of differentiation from other communities.

This visual character makes the Solo is Solo community easy to recognize, coupled with the massive spread on social media so that it reaches all circles. The application of graphic elements with the Urban art style has a role as a visual short hand that activates memory and association, thereby accelerating identity recognition and facilitating the spread of the Solo Is Solo community branding. These visual characteristics also carry symbolic value that reflects energy, the spirit of novelty and freedom in expressing expressions and opinions, as well as a medium of communication of the uniqueness of the local culture of Solo City which is maintained and developed by the community.

3) Communicate the local values, character, and narrative of the community

Graphic design has a function as an effective medium in conveying local ideologies, values, characteristics and narratives brought by the Solo is Solo community. (Peterson, 2017) explains that a community plays a dual role in meeting the needs of aesthetic expression of a person or group of people and also preserving culture and art. The existence of the art community as a forum for a group of people from various backgrounds to gather with one common goal, which is to revive artistic values.

Through urban artworks that are expressive, educational and communicative, visual works that contain profound messages about history, collective spirit, and social and cultural aspirations of the community. Works produced through graphic design are able to become a medium in conveying positive criticism, suggestions and messages of kindness, so as to create a more positive culture.

- 4) Being a bridge between local and modern traditions

In the context of urban art, the role of graphic design in the Solo is Solo community is as a creative link between so many local cultures and traditions and modern expressions that are dynamic. Graphic design works integrate traditional elements such as traditional batik motifs, heritage architecture and cultural symbols into more attractive and modern urban art visual works. These works include mural works, graffiti works and expressive typography. Through this approach, it is possible to preserve local culture through public dialogue spaces to promote local culture or culture to the wider community, including young people and visitors from outside the Solo City area.

Thus, graphic design is not only a tool for documentation, but also a medium of cultural evolution that is flexible and adaptive, introducing community identity with a modern face without losing traditional roots and values.

- 5) Increase aesthetic value

The last point is that graphic design plays an important role as the aesthetic value of public space in the city of Solo. The resulting Urban artwork is designed to beautify the urban environment, turning spaces that were previously monotonous or abandoned and subjected to vandalism by irresponsible individuals into attractive and aesthetically pleasing visual destinations. Supported by technological advances, (Alamanda, 2016) it is stated that the behavior of artists is influenced by technological innovations that produce slicker art products so that the public can appreciate and the artist's work can be transformed into images to beautify the atmosphere of the public order into a city gallery. Aesthetics with complex colors, menter, dynamic shapes, and unique compositions are able to provoke social interaction, creating a more friendly, creative and educational urban art atmosphere. Art can strengthen the city's attractiveness as an arts and culture area, as well as make it a tourism destination. Tourism bridges the preservation of traditional cultural arts and commonalities by helping to develop

the tourism industry in the cultural sector. (Zulyan & Setiawati, 2020)

Therefore, graphic design does not only talk about visual beauty, but is an integral part of a sustainable community and city development strategy that places art as the main subject in socio-cultural development.

CONCLUSION

Graphic design has a very important strategic role in strengthening the identity and *branding of the* Solo Is Solo urban art community in the city of Solo. With a consistent and strong visual style typical of urban art, graphic design is an effective communication tool that is able to articulate the vision, mission, and unique character of the community. Through elements such as logos, distinctive typography, color palettes, and mural and graphic works in public spaces, the community is able to differentiate itself from other art groups and build widespread recognition in the community. In addition to being a symbol of identity, graphic design also serves to strengthen a sense of internal solidarity and strengthen the public's positive perception of the community.

The graphic design in the urban art of Solo Is Solo is also a bridge that maintains a balance between local traditions and modern expressions, so that local culture remains relevant and alive in the context of the present without losing its roots. In addition to the identity aspect, this design also increases the aesthetic value of public spaces, making the city of Solo more visually appealing and encouraging creative social interaction. Strong visual branding in the urban art realm contributes to cultural preservation as well as the development of art-based tourism in the city.

Through a design approach that focuses on urban art, the Solo Is Solo community not only presents artworks, but also builds an expressive, inclusive, educational, and communicative creative ecosystem that strengthens the existence of communities at the local and national levels. The consistent application of graphic design has proven to be important in building a professional image and opening up wider partnership opportunities, as well as being able to maintain the sustainability of the urban art movement in the community, especially in the city of Solo.

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