

ILLUSTRATION OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF SEMARANG CITY

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Abstract. The cultural diversity of Indonesia is also reflected in the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) that lives and thrives within local communities. In Semarang City, various traditional customs, culinary arts, and performing arts represent cultural expressions passed down across generations. However, in the digital era, many younger audiences are less familiar with these traditions. This artistic project explores Semarang's ICH through digital illustration in the line art style, adapted from vintage postage stamps. The project aims to educate and reintroduce cultural identity visually using digital technology as a creative medium. The result is a series of artworks combining narrative, culture, and artistic expression in a communicative and aesthetic way.

Keywords: Digital illustration, Intangible cultural heritage, Semarang, Line art, Cultural education

1. Introduction

Indonesia is rich in cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible. Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) includes oral traditions, performing arts, rituals, social practices, knowledge systems, and traditional craftsmanship (Rozinda et al., 2022). In the city of Semarang, these cultural expressions are present in the form of Gambang Semarang, Warak Ngendhog, Dugderan festival, traditional wedding attire, culinary specialties like Lumpia and Roti Ganjel Rel, and many more. Despite this wealth, many residents, especially younger generations, are unfamiliar with these heritage forms even those officially recognized by UNESCO and Kemendasmen.

As a port city, Semarang has long been a melting pot of cultures. The arrival of traders and immigrants from China and Arabia led to the blending of ethnic traditions with the local Javanese culture (Triyanto et al., 2013). This historical background shaped a uniquely multicultural identity reflected in the city's ICH. Yet over time, public awareness and appreciation of these traditions have declined, especially among urban populations more influenced by modern lifestyles and digital culture.

This decline is not only anecdotal but observable in daily life. In informal surveys with residents of Semarang, many were unable to identify more than a few cultural icons beyond their names. This lack of familiarity indicates a pressing need to reintroduce local traditions in formats more accessible to younger, tech-savvy audiences (Wirakesuma & Mudana, 2022).

Visual media, especially digital illustration, provides an effective medium to present cultural narratives. Visual presentation using local idioms plays an important role in reinforcing cultural meaning and emotional resonance. Symbols processed intuitively can deepen cultural engagement through aesthetic strategies that remain accessible to broader audiences (Mujiyono & Eko Haryanto, 2025). According to Salam (2017), illustration serves various purposes: to inform, educate, preserve, and evoke emotions. Digital art also allows for wide dissemination via social media and online platforms, enabling broader reach across different demographic groups (Tasmin et al., 2022).

Therefore, this project presents a digital art approach that focuses on Semarang's ICH through illustrative visual storytelling. Using line art style inspired by vintage stamp aesthetics, this study aims to highlight heritage while adapting it to contemporary media that resonates with modern audiences. The visual format is both nostalgic and educational combining cultural preservation with modern design sensibilities.

2. Result and Discussion

The creation of this visual artwork was carried out through a structured process involving a combination of conceptual planning, technical execution, and final presentation. To support the intended visual and cultural outcomes, several tools, materials, and digital techniques were carefully selected. The following sections describe the equipment used, the materials applied in the presentation of the works, and the overall creative methodology employed throughout the project.

2.1 Tools and Materials

2.1.1 Tools

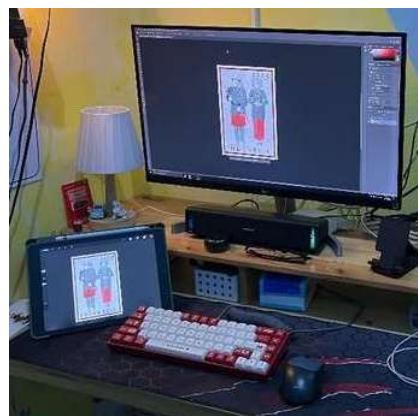


Figure 1. Tools

Source: Author's Documentation (2024)

The primary device used in the creation of this project was an iPad, which served as a digital canvas. Illustrations were executed using Procreate, a raster-based drawing application that supports high sensitivity to stylus pressure via the Apple Pencil. This combination allowed for precise and expressive line control. The final editing and layout process were conducted using Adobe Photoshop on a desktop computer, which enabled image composition, background adjustment, and preparation for print output (Janottama & Putraka, 2017).

2.1.2 Materials



Figure 2. Materials

Source: Author's Documentation (2024)

Although the artworks were digitally created, physical presentation played a crucial role in the final exhibition. All illustrations were printed on Hammer paper, a textured paper resembling orange peel, which provided a tactile quality to the printed works. The prints were mounted on MDF boards (Medium Density Fiberboard) for structural stability. To support the concept of postage stamp visuals, vinyl wallpaper was also used as a display element (Ivana et al., 2023).

2.2 Artistic Technique



Figure 3. Artistic Technique

Source: Author's Documentation (2024)

This project adopted a digital line art illustration technique, which emphasizes simplicity and clarity by using lines as the primary visual component (Witabora, 2012). The approach was inspired by engraving techniques traditionally found in vintage postage stamps. These techniques involve fine, repetitive strokes that simulate texture and depth through layered lines (Ale, 2020).

Color was applied selectively using a monochromatic palette including tones such as maroon, navy, sepia, and gray to evoke a vintage, nostalgic atmosphere. This approach ensured the artworks retained visual unity while preserving the strength of the line elements (Tasmin et al., 2022). The illustration method reflects the documentation and commemorative function of illustration as described by (Salam, 2017).

2.3 Process of Creation

2.3.1 Pre-Production



Figure 4. Stamp Collection

Source: Author's Documentation (2024)

The idea development stage began with reflection and informal interviews to explore public familiarity with intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in Semarang. Visual references were sourced from Pinterest, Google Images, and personal archives. The inspiration to emulate vintage postage stamp aesthetics emerged from their ability to condense national identity and meaning into compact visual formats (Istanto, 2000).

The artist then refined the concept by focusing on central objects such as dancers, culinary elements, and iconic architecture. These were designed within a bordered frame, consistent with classic stamp layout conventions.

2.3.2 Production



Figure 5. Sketch

Source: Author's Documentation (2024)



Figure 6. Color Selection
Source: Author's Documentation (2024)

The production phase began with sketching in Procreate using tools such as the Studio Pen and Vintage Brush, which were chosen for their ability to simulate engraved textures. The line art was composed with clarity and intentional contour emphasis, inspired by engraving methods (Malamed in Ale, 2020). Compositional elements were centrally aligned, and figures or objects of cultural significance were used as focal points.

Color selection was done after completing the line work. Muted, aged tones were applied sparingly to preserve the dominance of line textures. The limited color scheme supported visual coherence across all artworks while enhancing the overall nostalgic impression (Tasmin et al., 2022).

2.3.3 Post-Production

Once digital rendering was complete, the artworks were exported in high resolution and finalized in Adobe Photoshop. Layouts were adjusted to include hallmark stamp elements such as denomination numbers, issuance year, and the word "INDONESIA" to reinforce the conceptual metaphor. The works were printed on A3 Hammer paper (29.7 x 42 cm) and mounted in envelope-style frames, referencing the theme of postage and communication (Setiaji, 2023).

2.3.4 Display and Exhibition



Figure 7. Display and Exhibition
Source: Author's Documentation (2024)

The completed artworks were exhibited in the group exhibition titled "*Red Line*", held from November 25 to December 5, 2024, at Gallery B9, Faculty of Languages and Arts, UNNES. The display arrangement considered principles of visual balance, lighting, and informative text. Each artwork was

accompanied by a title label, medium, dimensions, and year to enhance public understanding (Ivana et al., 2023).

Envelope-style frames visually emphasized the connection to postal aesthetics, while spotlighting was used to highlight texture, detail, and the engraving-inspired line quality. This setup was intended to encourage cultural appreciation while delivering an immersive visual experience.

3. Description and analysis of works

In presenting the results and discussion of this final project, the author organizes the content into the following components: (1) artwork photo; (2) artwork specifications; (3) artwork description; (4) aesthetic analysis; and (5) meaning analysis.

3.1. Artwork 1

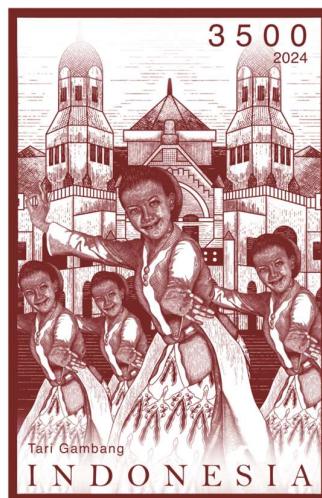


Figure 8. Artwork 1 *Tari Gambang*
Source : Author's Documentation (2024)

Artwork Description

Title : *Tari Gambang*
 Size : 29,7 x 42 cm
 Medium : Digital Printing
 Year : 2024

3.1.1 Description

The illustration portrays four female dancers in traditional Gambang Semarang attire positioned in front of Lawang Sewu, a historic building in Semarang. Each dancer wears a triangular bun (sanggul), kebaya, and flowing sampur. The background is rendered in deep red monochrome tones, with stylized stamp features such as denomination, issue year, and the word "INDONESIA."

3.1.2 Formal Analysis

Line serves as the dominant visual element, shaping facial expressions, costumes, and architectural details. Varying line thickness and density create visual depth and texture. The consistent use of a red

monochromatic palette enhances the vintage feel. Principles such as rhythm, balance, and unity are achieved through symmetrical composition, repeated motifs, and a centralized focal point—namely, the dancers.

3.1.3 Interpretative Meaning

This piece commemorates *Tari Gambang* as part of the broader *Gambang Semarang* performance art. It symbolizes joy, openness, and multicultural harmony, reflecting Semarang's social values. By placing the dancers in a postage stamp format, the artwork asserts their cultural significance and calls for the preservation of this joyful traditional performance.

3 .2. Artwork 2

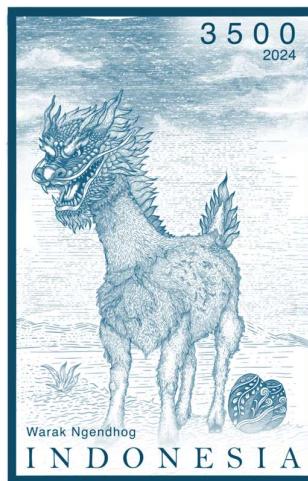


Figure 9. Artwork 2 *Warak Ngendhog*
Source : Author's Documentation (2024)

Artwork Description

Title : *Warak Ngendhog*
 Size : 29,7 x 42 cm
 Medium : Digital Printing
 Year : 2024

3.2.1. Description

This artwork presents *Warak Ngendhog*, a mythical creature combining elements of a dragon, goat, and camel, drawn in profile view on a deep blue background. The illustration follows the vertical layout of a postage stamp, with signature ornamental text elements and visual framing.

3.2.2 Formal/Esthetic Analysis

The line work emphasizes texture, especially on the fur, scales, and ornamental details. The engraving-inspired strokes evoke a tactile surface, while the symmetrical layout reinforces harmony. The monochrome blue palette ensures clarity and highlights the line art.

3.2.3. Interpretative Meaning

Warak Ngendhog serves as a symbol of cultural hybridity embodying Chinese, Javanese, and Arab influences. The creature, usually featured during the *Dugderan* festival, represents purity, faith, and the merging of cultures. Through this illustration, the artist invites viewers to reflect on Semarang's plural identity and the importance of interethnic harmony.

3.3. Artwork 3

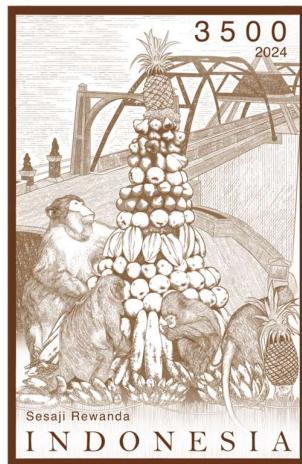


Figure 10. Artwork 3 *Sesaji Rewanda*

Source : Author's Documentation (2024)

Artwork Description

Title : *Sesaji Rewanda*
 Size : 29,7 x 42 cm
 Medium : Digital Printing
 Year : 2024

3.3.1. Description

This vertical composition adopts the form of a postage stamp, framed with a dark brown border and rendered in a monochromatic brown palette. The central subject is a cone-shaped offering arrangement (*gunungan sesaji*) composed of fruits, which is being presented to four monkeys, situated around the base. In the background, a bridge structure referencing the actual ritual site is illustrated with horizontal linear textures to suggest depth and space.

Text elements include the number "3500" in the top-right corner, "2024" below it, and the inscription "Sesaji Rewanda" in the lower-left, with "INDONESIA" in bold capital letters at the bottom center of the image, echoing the typographic conventions of vintage stamps.

3.3.2. Formal/Esthetic Analysis

The aesthetic strength of this piece lies in its compositional harmony and intricate line-based rendering. The artist uses line variation to achieve visual texture, especially in depicting the fruits and fur of the monkeys. These elements simulate a tactile surface, enhancing the illustration's engraved quality.

Depth and space are constructed through foreground-background layering, notably the offering at the front and the bridge structure behind it.

Visual unity is achieved through the consistent use of line art and a single-color palette. Symmetrical balance is established by placing the offering and monkeys centrally, creating a solid, grounded feel. Rhythm emerges through the repetition of fruit forms and curved monkey figures. The focal point rests on the central offering pile, surrounded by the four monkeys making it visually dominant.

Contrast is created through the difference in line density, generating shaded versus highlighted zones that enrich dimensionality. Proportions between the monkeys, offering structure, and background elements are realistically scaled, resulting in a composition that feels both natural and cohesive.

3.3.3. Interpretative Meaning

Sesaji Rewanda is a cultural ritual held annually at Goa Kreo, rooted in the local legend of Sunan Kalijaga, who was aided by four monkeys in transporting teak wood for the construction of the *Great Mosque of Demak*. This artwork visualizes the offering as a sacred act of remembrance and spiritual reverence.

By presenting the tradition in the form of a vintage style stamp, the piece functions both as a cultural archive and a visual call to action. It invites the public to engage with, appreciate, and preserve this unique tradition, ensuring that the values and stories behind it remain relevant and respected in contemporary society.

3.4. Artwork 4

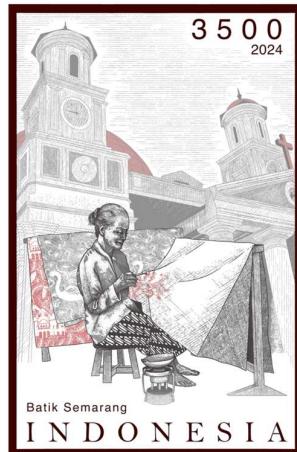


Figure 11. Artwork 4 *Batik Semarang*
Source : Author's Documentation (2024)

Artwork Description

Title	: <i>Batik Semarang</i>
Size	: 29,7 x 42 cm
Medium	: Digital Printing
Year	: 2024

3.4.1. Description

The image features a senior female batik artisan holding a *canting* tool while applying wax to a patterned cloth. The background shows *Gereja Blenduk*, a colonial era church in Semarang, representing the blend of traditional craftsmanship and urban identity.

3.4.2. Formal Analysis

A gray and red palette dominates the composition, with vibrant color accents on the batik motifs. Detailed linework constructs both the artisan's expression and intricate fabric design. The artist utilizes foreground-background depth and textural contrast to highlight the act of making.

3.4.3. Interpretative Meaning

This illustration symbolizes the living tradition of batik-making in Semarang. The featured patterns represent local icons such as *asem trees*, *blekok birds*, and *Lawang Sewu*. Through this work, the artist underscores batik as both a cultural legacy and a form of resistance to cultural homogenization.

3.5. Artwork 5

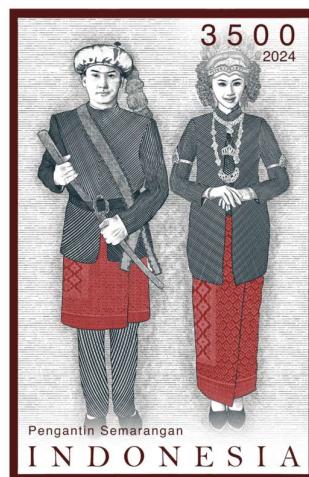


Figure 12. Artwork 5 *Pengantin Semarangan*
Source : Author's Documentation (2024)

Artwork Description

Title : *Pengantin Semarangan*
 Size : 29,7 x 42 cm
 Medium : Digital Printing
 Year : 2024

3.5.1. Description

This artwork showcases a Semarangan bridal couple in full traditional wedding attire, placed centrally in a vertical format reminiscent of a postage stamp. The composition is rendered in monochromatic maroon tones, with the couple facing forward in a formal pose. Behind them stands a decorative backdrop featuring carved wooden panels and floral elements, evoking a ceremonial setting.

The stamp features include the number "5000" in the upper-right corner, and the year "2024" below it. At the bottom center of the artwork, the word "INDONESIA" is prominently placed in capital letters,

while the left-hand corner contains the title "Pengantin Semarangan."

3.5.2. Formal Analysis

The piece uses precise line art techniques to emphasize intricate details such as the bride's sanggul (bun), kebaya embroidery, and the groom's blangkon and beskap patterns. The maroon palette reinforces the regal and sacred nature of the attire. Line thickness variation is applied to differentiate texture and fabric layering, creating a sense of material depth.

The overall symmetry of the composition reflects harmony and unity, essential values in marriage rituals. The positioning of the figures within the frame, as well as the use of architectural motifs in the background, establishes visual hierarchy with the couple as the focal point. Contrast is achieved through the interplay between the detailed ornamentation and the simpler background textures.

Rhythm is introduced through repeated line motifs in the clothing and accessories. The framing of the artwork with floral accents and curved lines softens the composition and adds ceremonial warmth. The typographic elements are visually balanced and integrated into the design to resemble official postage stamps.

3.5.3. Interpretative Meaning

This artwork celebrates traditional Semarangan wedding customs as an expression of cultural identity and familial unity. The attire worn by the couple is specific to the Semarang region, marked by distinctive patterns and symbolic accessories that signify marital roles and spiritual readiness.

By preserving these visual traditions through illustration, the artwork serves as a cultural documentation and reinterpretation. The use of a postage stamp motif further emphasizes the intent to "send" or "deliver" cultural memory to future generations. It also highlights the importance of honoring tradition within modern identity, showing that ceremonial practices continue to hold meaning and relevance in contemporary society.

4. Conclusion

This artistic creation project presents a visual exploration of Semarang's intangible cultural heritage (ICH) through a series of digital illustrations in the style of vintage postage stamps. Utilizing line art techniques and a monochromatic palette, each artwork interprets a specific cultural tradition ranging from performing arts, rituals, culinary heritage, to traditional attire with attention to form, symbolism, and historical context.

The process of creation integrated digital tools with traditional aesthetics, combining personal research, cultural observation, and symbolic design. The selection of postage stamp visual elements served both as a conceptual metaphor and a design strategy positioning the artworks as portable carriers of cultural memory, visually "delivered" to broader audiences.

By portraying local heritage within an accessible and contemporary medium, the project aims to bridge generational gaps in cultural awareness. It reintroduces traditions that are often overlooked or forgotten, inviting viewers particularly younger generations to engage with their cultural identity through visual storytelling.

Ultimately, this project demonstrates that digital illustration can function not only as an artistic expression, but also as a cultural preservation tool. Through carefully crafted imagery, it affirms the relevance of Semarang's ICH and encourages active appreciation and conservation of local values in the face of rapid modernization.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors state that there is no conflict of interest in the publication of this article

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