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## **Visual Communication and Its Relevance to Art Education on Murals at Tugu Tunas, Semarang City**

**Mas Benny wijaya<sup>✉</sup>, Syakir Syakir, Muh. Ibanan Syarif**  
Email: [masbennywijaya@gmail.com](mailto:masbennywijaya@gmail.com)

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

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### **Abstrack**

The existence of a mural at Tugu Tunas has an important role as a medium of communication in public spaces. This mural is unique because it is applied to the monument field. This is different from most murals in general, bearing in mind that most murals occupy the walls of buildings with large fields of images. The purpose of this research is to analyze visual communication and its relevance to art education in the mural at Tugu Tunas, Semarang. This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Sources of data obtained from the process of field observations and interviews with a number of informants. Validating the data in this study used three stages of validating phenomenological data. The main idea in making or having a monument is "the desire to display Semarang's local culture which is visualized through murals on the monument. Through a semiotic study, the message to be conveyed through the mural on the monument is appropriate. This suitability means that the translation of concepts from the government and artists has accuracy. Artists are able to translate the symbols attached to the murals on the monument to be depicted. Communication disorders in this study occur in elements of works of art and the art public. The public gains artistic and aesthetic knowledge as well as experience when they see and observe deeply the existence of murals in the Semarang city monument.

**Keywords:** teng-tengan tradition, educational messages, coastal culture

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## INTRODUCTION

The mural on the Tunas Monument in Semarang City is unique. At the beginning of its construction, Tugu Tunas was made in plain white on the entire surface of the pillars of the monument, and red on the surface of the walls around the circular base. The monument itself is located at the intersection of Jalan Pahlawan, Jalan Imam Bardjo, and Jalan Jenderal Supeno. The shape of the monument consists of four pillars, each of the two pillars is made to meet each other so that the shape tapers upwards to resemble the buds of a plant with a circular base at the bottom of the monument. The shape of the monument is considered to have a formal and stiff impression, therefore it is beautified by a mural decoration covering the entire surface of the monument (Yasa, 2020; Fajlin, 2020). The monument, which was built in 2013, was made to mark the birth of a new hero after the independence period (Fajlin, 2020) Around 2020, the monument will change with a mural decoration covering the entire wall surface of the Semarang Tunas Monument.

The existence of a mural at Tugu Tunas has an important role as a medium of communication in public spaces in Semarang City. The existence of monuments in Indonesia as monumental architectural buildings occupy many public spaces in urban fields. The form itself varies depending on the historical background that surrounds it. The shift of mural art to neighborhood locations and to themes that address local issues demonstrates the new role of public art and the new position of murals in relation to public spaces (Loeb, 2014). The mural art that occupies the wall of an architectural building, in this case the Tugu Tunas wall, is a type of public art work, which according to (Atkins, 1997:159) is owned and produced by a community.

The mural on Tugu Tunas provides a certain communication discourse that is able to provide an aesthetic experience through artistic efforts made by the artist or mural

maker. The mural at Tugu Tunas is an attempt by the Housing and Settlement Fields (Disperkim) Office of Semarang City to change the face of the Tugu Tunas monument. The murals at Tugu Tunas take the theme of batik configurations with various Semarang City icons including: Tugu Muda, Warak Ngendog, Lawang Sewu, Goa Kreo, Greja Blenduk, and Sampokong (Fajlin, 2020). However, what is different from the murals at Tugu Tunas is the character of the The shape of the monument, which has a narrow field and has many variations on the sides of the plane, therefore becomes an obstacle for achieving the message of communication through the mural.

This shows that the uniqueness of the murals in the Semarang City Tunas Monument lies not only in the unusual placement of mural images but also in the combination of the heroic values that underlies the creation of the monument with the formation of a mural that takes the theme of Semarang's local identity. As the identity of the city of Semarang. changing the monument with the addition of a mural is an interesting issue that must be studied.

Judging from the habit of mural images, by looking at the character of the image fields on Tugu Tunas, Semarang. it is such as something unusual. Tugu Tunas consists of four pillars, on one pillar there are four sides (fields), so that the total sides or fields that can be occupied for the mural image are 16. The character of the shape of the image field extends upwards and is limited to following the shape of the monument. There are also outer and inner sides of the drawing field when viewed from the overall architecture. Such a character of the image field makes a number of image subjects fragmented and incomplete. To be able to enjoy all the subject matter of the image, viewers have to go around the monument, even occasionally they need to get closer because on the inside of the pillar there is a mural image. This is different from most murals in general, bearing in mind that most murals occupy the walls of buildings

with large fields of image so that it is easy to see from one point of view.

Based on the background described above, the research entitled "Visual Communication and Its Relevance to Art Education in Murals at Tugu Tunas Semarang City." conducted. The discussion regarding this research is relevant to Semarang State University as a conservation university, especially the Arts Education Study Program in the Postgraduate Program. This study provides an empirical description of the murals at Tugu Tunas Semarang City which present a discourse of local identity as a form of visual communication in public spaces in the City of Semarang.

## METHODS

This study uses qualitative methods with a phenomenological approach to understand this phenomenon. Phenomenology, is used to search for what it is as a typical human way of communicating in public spaces through murals that are placed on monumental buildings.

The primary data of this research is data related to visual communication through murals at Tugu Tunas Semarang City which were obtained from field observations and interviews with a number of informants, both community leaders, academics or art observers, as well as mural artists. Secondary data was obtained from library documents related to this research.

Alidating the data in this study used three stages of validating phenomenological data (Farid et al., 2018: 50-52). The first stage is the reflection stage. Reflection on the mural phenomenon at the Tunas Monument, Semarang City, has been synthesized so that there is no emotion from the researcher. The emotional element in this case is the partisanship of the researcher, therefore the data is as it is. The second stage, the researcher asked for responses from a number of experts that the meanings that had been constructed by the researcher were true. The study of

previous research including discussions with supervisors is an effort from the second stage. The last stage is a rational analysis. At this stage the researcher examines the description of the phenomenology that has been done whether it is logical.

Data analysis in this study can be grouped into two types, namely data analysis related to intra-aesthetic data (textual analysis) and extra-aesthetic data analysis (contextual analysis). Textual analysis is a formal analysis of the visual form of the murals presented (Adams, 1996). This analysis discussing about the artistic manifestation of mural form at Tugu Tunas, Semarang which includes the elements and principles of fine art organization. The contextual analysis uses Barthes' semiotic theory, it using semiotic communication about the mural at Tugu Tunas, Semarang (Barthes, 2007). This semiotic analysis dissects the message of the murals in terms of connotation and denotations.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A glimpse of the Semarang Tunas Monument



**Figure 1.** Tunas Monument Mural

The Shoots Monument is a unique sign when crossing the hero's path in the city of Semarang. The monument, which was beautified with a fountain and equipped with decorative lights, was built in 2013. The initiator of the birth of the monument was initiated by Budi Parkoso when he was the

head of the landscaping department of the Semarang City Sanitation and Landscaping Service at that time. The idea arose because it used to be a place for students, community organizations to convey aspirations for the good of the country. (<https://www.suaramerdeka.com/semarang-raya/pr-0429603/tugu-tunas-di-jl-pahlawan-penanda-lahirnya-pejuang-kota-semarang>. Accessed on October 10, 2022).

According to Budi, the basic thing that makes the monument built are they (students) as the nation's buds, who want the country to be better. It was a form of their struggle to fill independence. Continuing, when the heroes tried to achieve independence from the invaders, he said. Indeed, there is a hero's graveyard along Pahlawan street roads, so this monument is a sign of the birth of heroes after independence.

Budi said that in the past, this place was a Fountain Roundabout. With the simplicity of its shape, the place witnessed the student movement during the collapse of President Soeharto's leadership in mid-1998. Then, the Fountain Roundabout became a reminder of the reform spirit of the students at that time.

In March 2007, when the Semarang City Government demolished and rebuilt the Fountain Roundabout in a more modern form. The development had raised pros and cons and had become a polemic in the community. Because the Semarang City Government is considered to have ignored the historical value of the Fountain Roundabout. The Fountain Circle has turned into a new billboard in the form of an electronic video (*videotron*). The *videotron* roundabout, with a triangular construction with a tower about 15 meters high, was eventually torn down and replaced with the Tunas Monument in 2013.

According to Budi, the architect for the construction of the monument was Rois from the consultant. The construction budget is around IDR 750 million, built over four months. The shape is indeed simple, but has a philosophy that has a history of the development of the Capital City of Central

Java Province. Budi added that Semarang also has a monument which is the identity of the hero's birth.

In 2020, with the mission of beautifying the face of the lumpia city, the head of Dinas Perumahan dan Kawasan Permukiman (Disperkim), Ali said, the face of the Tunas Monument initially seemed empty and stiff without a touch of art. To fill the void on the surface of the monument, it is equipped with a mural painting. Murals are made all over the surface of the beam-shaped pillars. Apart from that, murals were also made on the fins and on the foot of the circular monument. Because of that, the head of Semarang's DISPERKIM team asked an artist to paint a mural on the monument's surface.

Head of Parks and Cemeteries of the Semarang City Disperkim, Murni Ediaty explained, the decorative concept of the mural takes the theme of a batik configuration with various Semarang City icons, namely the young monument, Warag Ngendok, Lawang Sewu, Kreo Cave, Blenduk church, Sampokong. By changing the face of the Tunas Monument, according to him, people who pass by can enjoy the view of the monument during the day and at night. During the day, the public can enjoy the configuration of the concept of the painting, while at night the painting will seem as if it is lit up using the playing of lights. (<https://jateng.tribunnews.com/2020/09/29/disperkim-percantik-tugu-tunas-di-jalan-pahlawan-ternyata-ini-makna-tugu-tunas> accessed on 10 October 2022).

### Idea

The monument mural in the city of Semarang, in the view of communication science, presupposes three main components, namely the artist as the sender of the message, art as the medium for conveying the message, and the public as the recipient of the message. These three components complement each other so that communication occurs, if one of these components is not present, the message delivery will not occur. For example, if there is

no work of art, then the delivery of the message does not occur in this context.

The message in the context of this research is the idea that you want to convey to the public. The idea in question is the initial idea about the intent, purpose, reasons and the need for a budding monument to be made, and after that the monument is muraled. By knowing the idea, you will know the actual message you want to convey. Based on the results of an interview with "Surya" said that the existence of a mural adds aesthetics to the monument which was originally empty, besides that it can provide information and education regarding the local culture of Semarang and become its identity.

Through the statement above, the main idea in making or having a monument is "the desire to display Semarang's local culture which is visualized through murals on the monument. From the presentation that has been explained, the question arises whether the main idea that has been explained is represented by the embodiment of the mural form at Tugu Tunas, Semarang. This question arose because the idea came from the municipal government, while artists act as translators of ideas through their work. Therefore, to answer this question, it will be explained in the following discussion using semiotic theory

### **Semiotics (Syntax, Semantic, Pragmatic)**

Humans are creatures that cannot be separated from signs in their lives and through signs humans can interact with the environment and each other through symbolic expressions. It is said (Subiyantoro, 2011: 1) that humans in the understanding of philosophy are symbolic animals and are said to be high-level animals because they are able to distinguish between reality and ideals or between facts and possibilities. On the other hand, he is also able to formulate ideas and actualize behavior in an unlimited time and space.

The term semiotics comes from the Greek word *sema* which means "sign". Signs are everywhere in the form of language, form, movement, sound and so on. Meanwhile, Eco defines a sign as anything that can be considered as a substitute for something else.

Meanwhile, if we follow Charles Morris's semiotics, the semiotic stage can be divided into three stages, namely Syntactic, Semantic, and Pragmatic. (1) Syntactic or syntax, a semiotic way to study "the formal relationship between one sign and other signs", (2) Semantics, a semiotic analysis method that studies "the relationship between signs and designate (meanings of signs) before it is used in certain utterances) or the objects it refers to, (3) pragmatics, a way of semiotic analysis that studies "the relationship between signs and interpreters or users" users of signs (see Hoed, 2014)

### **Syntax**

In accordance with the explanation that has been done that Syntax is related to the formal relationship between one sign and another sign. Syntax is simply a picture that looks like it is and that looks real in its form. This is in the context of the mural on the Semarang Tunas Monument as a whole, meaning that it is related to the monument which is a three-dimensional work and the mural attached to it. For that reasons the relationship between the two cannot be separated from one another.

The mural on the bud monument displays two subject matters, namely a monument and a mural. The monument has a conical upward shape with four pillars. On each pole there are two fins. At the base of the bottom of the monument there is a circle that connects the pillars. At the ends of the pillars, the opposite pillars merge with one another, so that the east pillar connects with the west one, and the north pillar connects with the south one.

The second subject is related to the mural image that fills the field of the monument. There are several mural subjects depicted, including Gereja Blenduk, Sam Poo Kong, Tugu Muda, Warag Ngendog, Masjid Agung Jawa Tengah, and Lawang Sewu. These subjects are the main subjects depicted repeatedly but have different manifestations. This adjusts the existing image field. For example, the subject of Warag Ngendok is sometimes only depicted on the head, or the subject of Gereja Blenduk is only depicted on the tower.

In addition to the main subject, there are supporting subjects that become the background of the main subject. These backgrounds include tendrils or plants, flowers, leaves, clouds, scales, swastika shapes, spirals. These shapes fill in the empty space on the main subject, so the mural feels full.

### **Semantic**

Semantic is (the study of relations with its interpretation), namely the study of signs that highlight the relationship between signs and their references and the interpretations they produce. The semantic meaning that can be expressed based on syntax is. The subject of the monument has a total of four pillars which are fused at each opposite end and each pillar has two fins. The monument gives the shape of a kind of shoot that is starting to grow or is just coming out of the ground. The main subjects related to the forms and buildings that exist in Semarang and are described repeatedly emphasize to show the identity of the city of Semarang. Meanwhile, the background on the mural emphasizes and strengthens the main subject, namely identity.

The harmonious blend of three- and two-dimensional works of art, namely in the form of monuments and murals, gives a new, harmonious and unified impression. Various forms of murals such as churches, mosques, pagodas which are depicted repeatedly apart from being an identity give the image that the monument belongs to all (various) layers of

society, not just one group. The various colors that appear tend to be bright colors in the mural to fill the field of the monument giving the impression of new enthusiasm, or joy or happiness. The shape of the background mural which is made with various natural forms gives a cool and diverse impression.

The embodiment of the shape of the monument that tapers upwards with a circle below it shows the shape of a shoot that begins to grow upwards which has a strong foundation or image of roots. Various mural subjects that are something that is in Semarang show that the identity of the city of Semarang is diverse and cool.

### **Pragmatic**

Pragmatically, the Tugu Tunas Semarang, which is filled with murals on each side, means youth. The youth in question is the youth of Semarang. Youth who do not forget the diversity in Semarang. The young man is not only required to understand that Semarang has wide diversity, but also has a cool soul that one day can become the successor to the nation's leader.

Through a semiotic study according to what has been explained in the previous discussion, the message to be conveyed through the mural at the monument is appropriate. This suitability means that the translation of concepts from the government and artists has accuracy. Artists are able to translate the symbols attached to the murals on the monument to be depicted. Accordingly, the mural on the monument as a medium to convey the message is properly described.

### **Communication Disorder**

Communication media is a means used to produce, reproduce, distribute, disseminate and convey information (Suranto 2005). In the context of this study, murals on monuments in the city of Semarang have a role as above. Murals as message carriers can contain identity, economics and politics (Armstrong, Rice, & Warwick, 2022: 1 ) made by artists as

message makers addressed to the public as message recipients (Langdon, 2016: 91).

According to (Sumardjo, 2006) the uniting of the elements of art communication such as artists, art objects, and the art public in an art event will give birth to what is called an art experience. This experience can occur when a person comes into contact with a work of art so that a feeling of pleasure arises or vice versa (Haug, 2016: 812). Artworks in this context murals on monuments created by artists will receive value from the art public in their socio-cultural contests, and this indicates successful artistic communication (Fitriyah, 2021:37).

When there is successful artistic communication, of course there are also those that fail. The failure of art information can be influenced by two elements of art communication, namely the artists, works of art, as well as the public or recipients of art. Artists can make artistic communication fail when they are unable to create symbols or translate the message they want to convey through their artwork. However, in the context of this research, it is not included in the work of interference art in this study. This has been explained in the previous discussion that artists are able to translate messages through murals on monuments after being studied with a semiotic approach.

Further interference with the artwork. In fact, works of art cannot be an interruption of communication, because the entity of art is presented by the artist, then read by the art public. However, in the context of this research, artwork becomes a communication disorder when it comes to position, location, and the media used to create artwork. Like **results** interviewed by Junet on December 27, 2022, following his words

For a foreigner like me, murals are difficult to understand because they are rarely fully depicted. Moreover, the field is made relatively narrow so that if you look at it at a glance, the main subject is not visible. My impression is only unique when I see this

monument. because it is filled with varied images. (Interviewed by: author)

Based on the results of the explanation from the interview above, it shows that the failure of communication originates from the work of art. This happens because of the limitations of the field in the manufacture.

Communication disturbances can also occur from the art public as appreciators.

The art public is unable to grasp the message that the artist wants to convey through the Tugu mural. As in this interview;

Since I'm from here (Semarang), I know these murals. this picture is a picture of Gereja Blenduk, Warak Ngendog, the grand mosque, pagoda and many others. I recognize the pictures but I don't know what they mean, maybe just to make it full and beautiful. Because it's more beautiful like this compared to the previous plain white (laughs) interviewed on (27 December 2022).

Based on the results of the interview above that communication failure occurred to the recipient. Failures like this often occur in artistic communication, because not everyone is able to read the signs or symbols created by artists. Because it can be influenced by several factors including knowledge and psychological factors.

Communication disorders in this study occur in elements of works of art and the art public. Artwork can be a communication barrier when it is placed in a place that is difficult for the eyes to reach. Or more simply the wrong place. Meanwhile, disturbance to the public occurs when the appreciator knows the subject of art thoroughly but has difficulty guessing the message to be conveyed

### Public Space as a Media for Art Education

As with other cultural fields, arts education has been shaped in previous years (Stabler, 2021). Education in all its forms and characteristics can occur anywhere, including in this case public spaces where people gather to carry out an activity. Interaction is the essence of education in the public sphere, because in essence the essence of education is

interaction. Interactions can occur in various forms and types, including symbolic interactions that are created between humans and humans and humans with the symbols that are created. One thing that is no less important than the interaction of art in public spaces is being able to provide cultural experiences (Linderman & Linderman, 1984). According to Hein (1996) the existence of public space art has a context with society. The role in this research is as a conceptual basis for public space art.

The Semarang City Tunas Monument which is located in the public space of Semarang City as the context in this study is a form of art education which can be seen from the pattern of interaction. If borrowing the concept offered by (Soehardjo, 2011: 95) that the purpose of art education is an attempt to influence students through teaching art. Influencing in this context is utilizing the characteristics of art to increase aesthetic awareness (Morgan, 2018). One of the characteristics of art related to the context of this research is the nature of art as a medium of communication.

Almost all works of art, including in this case the mural at Tugu Tunas, Semarang City, are made to convey certain messages or information. The mural is attached to the Tunas Monument in Semarang City which occupies a densely populated field so that it is full of people's mobility. When observed by the public, these murals can provide individuals with artistic and aesthetic appreciation. According to Soehardjo, 2011: 111 this experience is an experience gained by art observers or appreciators, namely experiences that are informative and experiences that are stimulative.

Informative experience may have an equivalent with artistic experience meaning that the public of the Tugu Tunas mural in Semarang City can observe shape, color, image subjects, and composition, while aesthetic experience is a subjective experience that is obtained from interaction with the

mural work, for example recognizing Semarang culture through seeing the mural.

Isn't the core of education essentially requiring changes in students, whereby the public becomes aware of and has experience of art through the existence of murals at Tugu Tunas, Semarang City. Especially if the public is able to read the mural so that the meaning to be conveyed can be clearly understood. In this way, the public can gain artistic and aesthetic knowledge as well as experience when they see and observe deeply the existence of a mural in the Semarang city monument.

## CONCLUSION

The visual communication referred to in this study is the compatibility between message makers and message recipients through murals on monuments in the city of Semarang. This is done because the creator of the message is not someone who makes the mural. This means that there are artists who translate messages through murals. Therefore, it is necessary to look at the message that you want to convey by visualizing the mural through semiotics.

Through a semiotic study according to what has been explained in the previous discussion, the message to be conveyed through the mural at the monument is appropriate. This suitability means that the translation of concepts from the government and artists has accuracy. Artists are able to translate the symbols attached to the murals on the monument to be depicted. Therefore, the mural on the monument as a medium to convey the message is properly described.

The existence of a mural in the Semarang city monument has relevance to art education, namely providing knowledge as well as artistic and aesthetic experience when seeing and observing in depth.



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