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### Murals as Community Education Media in Surabaya: Cultural Semiotic Studies

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#### Abstract

Visual signs that are displayed often appear in mural works in Surabaya as a means of communication and expression of the artist. The mural is significant with the reality of the time when the mural was made and the subsequent time span becomes important in seeing the significance of the mural on the image of Surabaya's public space. This study aims to examine murals as a medium of education through art in society, find out various public murals in Surabaya with consideration of the cultural semiotics of the surrounding community and describe the effects that arise related to education in the community through mural media with a cultural semiotic perspective. So it can be seen that the problems studied are qualitative in nature. The locations used during the research were limited to around South Surabaya, with the mural specifications intact. What is meant by intact is that the paint in the mural is still visible to the naked eye, the forms that make up the visual elements and the text still have clear legibility to the general public. This study shows The result of the research is that murals in Surabaya tend to display a narrative image style initiated by the government/institution with an educational message that appears in the visual signs, while the expressive image style is initiated by the mural artist/community, but the visual signs that appear are more critical and expressive. The mural structure has a fairly high legibility both in terms of visual and text. The existence of the mural is perceived as a spectator reaching individuals, but the understanding of each individual is the result of the relation between visual perception and the concept adopted. The process of community education can only reach individuals but cannot yet become a collective awareness that is able to move people to change their behaviour. The signs encountered are studied through the visual semiotic approach of Saussure and Yasaraf with a socio-cultural approach in the people of Surabaya. The benefits of this research are to add to studies related to contemporary art and visual communication design, especially street art with a focus on murals, to identify mural forms in Surabaya, to become a reference material for similar research and to add the perspectives of other researchers regarding the study of cultural semiotics and to provide insights another for the learning process outside the formal environment, especially education in the community, through the mural media approach.

**Keywords:** Mural, Cultural Semiotics, Public education.

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## INTRODUCTION

The visuals displayed by Surabaya mural artists are diverse, with different styles of drawing, such as comical, decorative, caricature, or doodling. The use of colouring materials, such as wall paint or spray paint, the contents of the messages and criticisms to be conveyed are also varied. The variety of mural themes in Surabaya, including the theme of maintaining cleanliness, decorative floral themes, doll mania theme, national heroes theme. The diversity of themes that adorn the walls of settlements is seen by researchers as an interesting phenomenon to be studied and developed as a medium of education from artists to the community and the community to the community.

Community education through visual murals is part of the visual, Communication process that bridges directly or indirectly the learning events in the mural environment created and presented. There are often mural competitions held by the Surabaya city Government, related agencies, political parties and brands using murals as a means of campaign (Kusnanto, 2020). Among other things, there was a program to decorate the banks of the Kali Mas river with a mural that proclaimed "*bersih itu indah dan jagalah kebersihan*", competition held by the Surabaya General Election Commission which campaigned for health protocols and the 2020 election, as well as a mural which was a residents' initiative to beautify and education through open spaces in his area (Basra, 2020). Through graffiti, *arek Suroboyo* spurred enthusiasm among fellow fighters to continue fighting colonialism together with the words "*hidup atoe mati!*". The sentences containing invitations and appeals in it stimulated enthusiasm, so that it could move the masses at that time to continue fighting and give birth to independence. During the 1998 riots, the influence of the text "*milik pribumi*" could determine whether a building could be looted or damaged. At that time are crises were rampant in the country, starting from the

racial issues with the Chinese ethnic, The economic crisis with the weakening of the rupiah, The political crisis affecting the stability of the country, so that provocations from the text triggered people to act (Nia, 2021).

In foreign countries, the influence of the mural triggers a revolution country. As happened in the Mexican revolution, there were dominant figures like Diego Rivera who used murals as a key way of political communication with the aim of building a country's political identity. The communication model through murals is used with the reason that 90% of the citizen are illiterate person, so a visual language that is agreed and understood, is designed so it's can influence public feelings towards mass opinion (Saunders, 2013). The existing murals, aim to awaken the people of Mexico to rise up and fight for the revolution. The *arek Suroboyo* incident, the riots of 98', and the Mexican revolution, it can be assumed that murals or types of street art at that time could become a medium of communication in society. However, are murals still relevant today in the flow of mass media, how successful is communication through murals nowadays in stimulating people to carry out movements.

Several previous studies have discussed murals (Gazali, 2017; Murtono & Wijaya, 2021; Oh, 2020; Prakoso, 2018; Wijaya et al., 2022; Yan et al., 2019), while those which discuss educational semiotics, culture and literacy (Arisianto et al., 2019; Bateman, 2017; Bruce, 2016; Byker, 2015; Imran et al., 2022; Lacković, 2020; Nugroho et al., 2021; Taylor & Leung, 2020; Welch, 2020; Yulaida et al., 2019) be a guideline and reference in this study.

The difference between this research and the previous, is that previous studies focused on one variable such as murals or semiotics, while this research discusses murals as a media for public education in Surabaya which is reviewed from semiotic studies of community culture in Surabaya so that it can be used as a gap between research previously.

This research is considered the mural in Surabaya's public space is a text that becomes a visual record. Interesting, because it contains various points of view that are communicated by citizen and community in addressing village, local, national and even global issues. Based on this research, it can be concluded that visual media can be used as artefacts that are worthy of research, as well as developing their uses and having effects so that their existence continues today. Cartoons as part of the contemporary art products, present new choices for the enjoyment of the general public, visual displays that are close to everyday events make cartoons easy to understand and easy to conceptualize as a means of visual communication in newspapers.

In addition, this study aims to examine the visual form of murals in South Surabaya, related to the structure of signs in mural media with a semiotic approach and examine the function of murals in public education. The benefits of this research are to add to studies related to contemporary art and visual communication design, especially street art with a focus on murals, to identify mural forms in Surabaya, to become a reference material for similar research and to add the perspectives of other researchers regarding the study of cultural semiotics and to provide another insights to learning the process outside the formal environment, especially education in the community, through the mural media approach.

## METHODS

This murals study as a medium of education through art in society, examines various public murals in Surabaya with consideration of the cultural semiotics of the surrounding community and describes the effects that arise related to education in society through mural media from a cultural semiotic perspective. So it can be seen that the problems studied are qualitative method.

The location used during the research was limited to around South Surabaya, with the mural specifications still intact. It's meant by intact is that the paint in the mural is still visible to the clear eye, the forms that make up the visual elements and the text still have clear legibility to the general public.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Location of murals in Surabaya

The targeted location has a clearly legible mural. Marked by the condition of the pictures and writing that are intact or less damaged due to obstructions such as mold, peeling walls, cracked or collapsed walls. The location is limited around South Surabaya which can be seen in Figure 1 which is the general scope of observation in this research.



**Figure 1** Mural Research Locations

(Source: Research Documents, 2022)

The distribution of the murals in figure 1 on the simplified map varies, some are concentrated on the same road section, and the other are located far apart from the nearest mural location. In Surabaya it is often found on the dividing walls of office buildings, walls of resident's houses on the side of the road, or walls of public facilities such as schools,

stations, residential alleys until under the flyovers.

The majority of the murals are found in small sizes and lined up with several panels in one location. But there are also large size murals in one panel and one location. The size that is most often found is 1.5m x 2m in murals with various panels at one location.

### Visual Mural Based on Semiotic Signs

Saussure's semiotic study in this research is a way of analyzing signs that appear in visual and written forms. Visual signs that appear are social phenomena in society. The existence of murals in various locations in Surabaya is a research fact, this point tries to discuss the similarity and diversity that appear. Grouped into several codes that are presented via charts to display the diversity of data in a simple form and easy to draw conclusions. Saussure's study of semiotics is a person's perception of reality by using signs in a social context. The most easily recognizable signs in a mural panel are the image styles (Oh, 2020; Yan et al., 2019).

The Surabaya mural is dominated by expressive and narrative styles with a percentage of 28% or the equivalent of 27 mural panels. Expressive drawing styles are often found in locations that have long walls near residential areas, not main roads or residential alleys. Most of them are in the form of parapets of office buildings or freeways such as those on *Jl. Gayung Sari* near *Masjid Agung*, *Jl. Ketintang PTT / Jawapos* and *Jl. Dukuh Mengal*.

Narrative drawing style has the same percentage as expressive drawing style. This type of mural is usually found in the same location as expressive and comical murals. Each location with a wide wall scale presents a variety of panels, it is important for creators to present different shapes and compositions so that their work becomes the most viewed.

Most of the murals with narrative drawing style can be found on *Jl. Gayung Sari* near *Masjid Agung*, *Jl. Dukuh Menanggal* and *Jl. Dinoyo*. In contrast to the expressive drawing

style, this type of styling is the easiest for the spectator to understand, Because the signs that appear are conventional signs, not easy to change, constant, and have been agreed with the social environment as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 2** *Sumpah Pemuda* (Youth vow) Mural  
(Source: Research Documents, 2022)

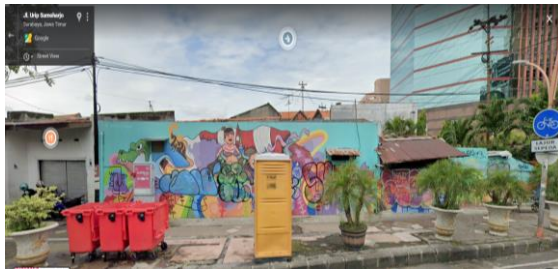
Based on Figure 2, murals tend to display visuals as the main attraction, but in this panel the focus shifts on the presence of visuals so that the spectator focuses on two things, namely the writing or the bustling decorations on the background. The enthusiasm of the youths that should have been shown on the visuals was covered by the writing explaining the situation. In fact, elementary school students do not yet have many syllables and precise meanings, so that excessive use of writing like this is seen as reducing its essence.

This type of mural contains visuals that tell a certain event, sometimes using a bit of writing to provide supporting information for the image. So that the events in the mural can be more easily interpreted, because there is a common sign that can be mutually understood between the creator and the spectator (Gazali, 2017).

The second position with a percentage of 23%, equivalent to 22 murals is a decorative image style. This type of mural is often found on *Jl. Wonokromo Station* and *Jl. Kangean*. The existence of a decorative drawing style usually faces the sun or is on a wall covered with shady trees so that the diversity of decorative shapes and colors attracts the spectator to see further. Murals with this styles is often standing alone, some are combined with other



image styles such as narrative-decorative. An example of this type of mural can be seen in Figure 2 and Figure 3.



**Figure 3** Street atmosphere in Surabaya  
(Source: Research Documents, 2022)

Based on Figure 2 and Figure 3, the decorations that appear on murals in Surabaya are often in the form of doodling characters with several basic shapes decorated, the use of traditional motifs combined with basic shapes, as well as the basic shapes in the form of floral and green plants supporting the exterior.

The 12 % percentage ranks third in the chart, equivalent to 12 comical drawing styles. In addition to the use of a narrative drawing style, the comical drawing style on murals quite often displays a balanced visual and written composition. This image is often found near *Jl. Wonokromo Station* and *Jl. Dinoyo*.

Several images with comical style use two panels at once in one mural. Conversation using bubbles is a feature of this drawing style. It's common in one wall panel only one scene is found, but some of them break a panel into two to four parts. An example of this type of mural can be seen in Figure 4 and Figure 5.



**Figure 4** *jl dinoyo 3* Mural  
(Source: Research Documents, 2022)



**Figure 5** in *jl Dukuh menanggal 5* Mural  
(Source : Research Documents, 2022)

Based on Figure 4 and Figure 5, this drawing style uses writing, but the diction shown is sometimes in the form of satirical sentences. It is not uncommon for the spectator to only understand the outer shell of his conversation due to differences in perception and culture. The sign obtained by the spectator is less than the narrative style which has quite high visual and written synchronization. Spectators with the same experience as creators make it more easy to understand murals with comical drawing styles (Gazali, 2017; Oh, 2020; Prakoso, 2018; Wijaya et al., 2022; Yan et al., 2019).

The final position is occupied by a figurative drawing style with a total of nine murals, equivalent to 9% of the total population. This type of styling is often found in the alleys of *Jl. Ketintang*. The figure shown is usually a single image of a national hero, with a few names written on it, a plain

background composition or the appearance of an event, as well as iconic properties. The use of iconic events can help the spectator recognize figures more easily, for example the figure of *Bung Tomo* with a hexagonal flag in the background in mural figure 6.



**Figure 6** Indonesian heroes Mural  
(Source: Research Documents, 2022)

Based on figure 6, the mural on this panel shows the situation of a man wearing a turban with a white robe, *keris* at his waist, riding a horse, pointing his forefinger towards the front. The proportions of this figure show inequality, so that the human figure looks imperfect and asymmetrical. It can be seen in the head that looks bigger than the horse's head, while the right hand is very small like a child's hand. The placement of facial features is also unsightly because it is disproportionate.

On the visual face it has been contaminated with worn out walls, so it is covered in stains and mold and the walls are peeling off. Apart from the face, wall damage also occurred at several panel locations. This damage causes the image to look dull and unsightly. However, the figure displayed can still be recognized by the characteristics of the figure.

The percentage is dominated by murals that fill the panel with 34% equivalent to 33 murals, while murals that do not fill the panel are 16% equivalent to 16 murals. Murals with panels that fill the wall are usually done by a community of muralists with quite a lot of members, not an individual or a group of muralists with only a few members (Bateman, 2017). On the other hand, murals that do not

fill the panel are usually initiated by individual muralists or small groups (Lacković, 2020).

The existence of full-panel murals is often found on walls with a height that can be reached by humans or simple tools. Murals like this are kind of murals that are found in the majority of the data. Panels with full walls of existing data are often 1.5m x 2m. Large-sized murals with a height of more than two meters, are often found that the top is not covered by paint and only shows the original color of the wall (Welch, 2020).

This size affects the range of view so that it remains at eye level. The existence of murals that are located outside the viewpoint of the spectator is often overlooked, not fully read and does not receive attention. Examples of murals with full panels can be seen in Figures 7 and Figures 8 while murals that do not fill the panels are shown in Figures 9 and Figures 10.



**Figure 7** Landfills Mural 3  
(Source: Research Documents, 2022)



**Figure 8** Landfills Mural 7  
(Source: Research Documents, 2022)





**Figure 9** Jawa Pos 2 Mural  
(Source: Research Documents, 2022)



**Figure 10** *jl dinoyo 1* Mural  
(Source: Research Documents, 2022)

A mural with a dominance of symmetrical image composition of 26% is equivalent to 25 murals. The difference between the symmetrical mural and the asymmetrical mural is only 1 mural. The choice of format displayed is the majority of the concept of the mural, but it is not uncommon to find asymmetrical murals that are the result of images of several people with expressive styles in one large wall panel. The empty space on the wall makes the illustration and the remaining whitespace lame when viewed as a whole, an example of the depiction can be seen in Figure 11 and Figure 12.



**Figure 11** *Jl. Taman Indah 1* Mural  
(Source: Research Documents, 2022)



**Figure 12** Street atmosphere in Surabaya  
(Source: Research Documents, 2022)

The mural initiator in Surabaya indirectly influences the theme displayed. Several murals with the same theme are often created by the same creator, even though he has a variety of mural works, from the available data, the tendency of the themes used can be grouped. The data in the chart presents the diversity of mural themes and their initiators as well as the number of works by each creator on a particular theme.

Visual semiotics pays more attention to the meaning of messages and how messages are conveyed through visual signs. This method can be seen through the application of the theme starting from the sports community initiator. If there are a total of 5 murals, this group is dominated by PERSEBAYA supporters, namely *Bonek*. Murals initiated by *Bonek* are often found in a variety of different locations and in almost every location in the research. An example of this *Bonek* mural can be seen in Figure 13, Figure 14 and Figure 15.



**Figure 13** *bonek* in Jl. Dinoyo 1 Mural  
(Source: Research Documents, 2022)



**Figure 14** *Jl. Dukuh menanggal 4* Mural  
(Source: Research Documents, 2022)



**Figure 15** *Masjid Agung, bonek* Mural  
(Source: Research Documents, 2022)

The varied themes displayed, including heroics supporting their favorite team, criticism of club management, community initials such as 'forever green' and the characters *Suro* and *Boyo*. The visuals that are presented and easily recognized are the characteristics of the *Bonek* murals, which are the similarity of the images that are repeated (shape and color), constructed, and patterned. Apart from *Bonek*, there were also other sports communities supporting school basketball in one mural.

### The Message Structure of the Spectator's Perception

In the interview results, the first spectator with the code *MAS-Samsul* prefers and likes murals with strong visual characters. The existence of a character figure as the main focus is an important point for the spectator in choosing a good and popular mural. The spectator has interacted with the murals, around his neighborhood or while on his way to work. He pays attention to the drawing process and the process of making it near the village where he lives or on the streets when a community is drawing murals on the walls, but this is not something he does often. He have seen murals in his neighborhood, the *Masjid Agung*, *Jawa Pos*, *Wonokromo* and so on.



**Figure 16** The Choice's of Spektator 1  
(Source: Research Documents, 2022)

The first spectator, besides visuals with strong characters, he was more interested in *Bonek* themed murals and environmental campaigns. An icon with a *Bonek* theme is preferred by the first spectator, because he is a fanatical supporter, so he often observes the murals of *Bonek*. He is concerned with personal taste, so the mural that he thinks is good is one that suits the taste of the spectator. Whether or not there is a message in the mural is not the main thing, what is most important is the interest in the theme.

Based on the results of the interview, the second spectator with *SD-Fitria* code had interacted with the murals, around the road leading to *Jawa Pos* and around *Wonokromo*. The mural on this panel is a relatively new mural compared to the other two locations



that the spectator encountered. When curated by the mural at this location, the spectator feels they have never seen or encountered him on the way, even though his domicile is close to where the mural is located.

After observing for a while the mural in figure 16 is the mural that the spectator considers the most interesting, with the reason being that he doesn't like history so he chose a mural that he feels has a more neutral theme. After having a conversation regarding other murals and suitable ideas for the next mural theme at school, the researcher concluded that the spectator prefers murals with the theme of social relations between humans, such as how to make friends, anti-bullying and other small things. The visuals related to historical themes may recall the spectator's past memories, but only present simple and faint flashbacks.



Figure 17 The Choice's of Spektator 2  
(Source: Research Documents, 2022)

Based on figure 17, The spectator's initial interest in murals refers to context, interest, and then visuals. The existence of murals with general context visualization is preferable rather than leading or specific to certain theme characters. The legibility of the fonts on the other panels is quite clear, but there are panels that are not legible because of the color and contrast with the background. Because art is considered as a creator's self-actualization, murals with bad words or graffiti in public spaces must be regulated by the government because they can have a negative impact on generations of

children who do not understand the context of what happened. Restrictions are deemed inappropriate but it is better to make legal regulations regarding the use and placement of murals. According to the spectator, the existence of a mural can affect an individual, but if it affects a wider scope, this seems a bit difficult.

In the results of the interview, the third spectator with the SW-Amira code stated that she had interacted with the mural, but only as a distraction while waiting for traffic jams on the street. Have you ever seen the mural under the *Wonokromo* overpass and *Jl Ngagel*. So never looked into the details, nor paid much attention to it. Not a connoisseur of art or design, so he is not interested in appreciating it, except when the work happens to be nearby.

The main element of the spectator's interest is when the panel presents a fresh impression, judging from the color composition which tends not to fade. Apart from color, the second element that is considered attractive is the visual character displayed. Whether or not there is a message in the mural is not a problem, what is most important is the visual interest. Fonts are a tool for explaining visuals, so the compositions on the panels are considered good and complement each other. There is no distinct uniqueness for the fonts on the panel.



Figure 18 The Choice's of Spektator 3  
(Source: Research Documents, 2022)

Based on Figure 18, having a mural is considered better than shabby or plain white walls to relieve fatigue during traffic jams. The use of thematic murals has a plus, but when there is a mural that is an expression (criticism, excitement, emotion) it doesn't matter where it comes from or where it goes. The embedding of the word *Suroboyoan* in the mural is not a personal matter, but when it is located in a public space it is better to compose it again considering that it is passed by many people of various ages. Should be replaced with words or visuals that are not too frontal. Example: *Jancok* >> *Janc\*k*; *Wik Wik* >> *omitted*.

The spectator considers murals to be a place for artist's aspirations to convey their sadness towards a problem or issue they are currently facing. The legibility of the writing in the mural panel is clear enough, but the use of diction and context of the writing still needs to be processed again to be displayed in public spaces. The use of murals is quite effective in conveying criticism, especially politics. However, there is no specific message that is felt to influence the individual to do something more just by the existence of the mural, except for the individual's own awareness.

### Mural in Surabaya

Murals in Surabaya cannot be separated from the presence of street art, in this study one can also find murals side by side with graffiti or overlapping in a panel. Outdoor art such as murals, monuments, sculptures and other installation art usually uses several similar places to maximize visual appearance.

The mural itself is made from various considerations of vertical plane criteria to meet the requirements as an image plane. The opinion that is often used by street artists is that, "*roads belong to the community*", therefore various types of forums and communities can be used to express various anxieties or ideas related to urban problems that they encounter.

The condition of street art in various locations in Surabaya is actually a tool for artists who cannot afford or do not have the opportunity to stage and exhibit their works in formal spaces. The outdoor location was chosen as an alternative means of showing their work. This research is devoted to exterior murals in the city of Surabaya. It is often found on the dividing walls of buildings, riverbanks, or residents' houses. Drawn using wall paint, spray paint or a combination of the two. A mural in Surabaya can contain full-text images, images alone or a combination of writing and images in one panel.

### Means of Access to the Location of the Mural

Locations with easy access have proven to be of interest to creators because they make the creative process easier. In addition, difficult conditions such as the presence of drains and gutters that are several centimeters from the location of the image area affect the visual results. Can be seen in the mural at the location *Jl. Dukuh Menanggal* is a mural collage with distorted visuals. This is influenced by the breadth of the image field and the limited range of the eye's view of space. The communication that wants to be channeled is disrupted with distorted visual results, but several murals in the same location have different results with normal proportions.

It turns out that the image area is on a wider footprint than the baseline. The height of the wall on the mural panel also affects the ease of access, the more parallel the height of the wall with the creator, the more desirable it is. Access difficulties caused by the height of the wall or the image area above the location of *Jl. Dinoyo* caused the mural that was displayed to not fill the room optimally so that

it displayed leftover wall paint or a different color from the artwork.

After discussing the locations that are difficult to reach, the researcher will describe the condition of the murals in locations that are easy to reach. Each of these locations has at least two or more characteristics that facilitate the process of making a mural. These characteristics include a footing area that is wide enough at least 1 meter from the wall, blocked from environmental disturbances (trees, grass, rivers, gutters, etc.), the size of the wall with a height of 1 meter - 2.5 meters, parallel to the driver's line of sight as well as pedestrians, have limited visibility / point of interest compared to the surrounding environment. In this study can be found on *Jl. Wonokromo* Station which is adjacent to the station, the murals in this location are communal murals made by several communities.

#### 1. Strategic Location

Murals in Surabaya are dominated by the presence of mural panels in strategic locations, with a total of 14 strategic locations, while 4 non-strategic locations. There is a location that has the criteria of not being easily accessible and not strategic, namely *Jl. Dukuh Menanggal*. The feature that distinguishes the points of discussion of strategic locations with ease of access in this research is the mobility of the spectators which indirectly affect the continuity of the learning process from the information conveyed. This is trigger a stimulus to continue education in the community through murals in Surabaya. This mobility is also influenced by the width of the road used by the community, the number of directions that can be traversed and the visibility of the mural visualization on the location.

The location is not strategic on *Jl. Dukuh Menanggal* itself is the entrance to a settlement from *Jl. Ahmad Yani*. The road around the mural is a two-way lane that can actually be passed by cars, but this road has narrowed due to the presence of illegal car parks by the river and pedicab or online

transportation mass stands so that there is only one lane left. The focus of someone who goes through this route is more extra on the road than enjoying the scenery or murals due to being blocked by illegal parking. The existence of the river also increases the visibility of the spectator to reach the visual access to the mural.

Other locations that are not strategic due to the existence of these locations are on a road that is only passed by residential residents, of *Jl. Ketintang*. Where the mural is located, is in a narrow alley with a width of approximately 1.5 meters and can only be passed by pedestrians or motorbikes. This can still affect the exchange of information but the spectator is limited to the environment around the mural (exclusive). This conditions the mural on *Jl. Ketintang* has the same theme on the walls. Murals in a narrow alley usually occur as a result of the consensus of the residents, so they make them in mutual cooperation and voluntarily.

#### 2. Application of Vertical Media

Mural creators in Surabaya are more often found displaying their works on road dividers in a number of locations, then on equal footing on the walls of residents, houses, and the walls of agencies / offices. This gives researchers the view that the existence of a mural image area is also a factor that must be considered when they want to make a art work. Other conditions such as surface flatness, the presence of holes/ruins, humidity, wall textures also influence the creator's interest in using wall media in certain locations.

The road dividing wall is most desirable because this media is often found in good condition, in the sense that the wall is smooth and not damp because it is on the side of the road where the general conditions in Surabaya are hot. This condition affects the need for base paint which usually has to be layered to provide resistance to damp walls. In addition, when the wall is damp, the paint on the mural does not appear optimally, easily moldy and peels off. This situation has gradually caused



the message in the mural not to be fully conveyed because there are parts of the wall that have peeled off, or are covered in fungus.

As well as being an art medium in the way of murals, it is considered as a function of branding to create the meaning of a particular place, on the one hand, and the power to create a distance between representation and community reality, on the other hand. Oh (2020), Discursive currents have not only persisted in the media sphere, but are reshaping the cultural economy of particular places by attracting tourists and driving up property values.

### **Research of Sign Structure on Murals Using Semiotics**

The appearance of murals in Surabaya has affinity with various visual and text displays related to urban problems found in the images. The role of mural in this study is as a message medium, the origin of the word mural is *murus* which is adapted from *Latin* with the meaning of a large painting made to support architectural space. A painting that is made directly or indirectly on the surface of a building wall, which indirectly has something in common or is similar to the term *fresco*. The difference lies in the specific requirements that must be met by the wall painting.

The visual elements and text that appear on the murals in Surabaya include figures of national heroes such as Prince Diponegoro, Ki Hajar Dewantara, Ir. Soekarno, Moh Hatta, General Sudirman, Bung Tomo, etc. In addition to national hero figures, there are also other human-shaped visuals such as the governor-general leading forced labor, fictional characters adapted to the theme of the mural, male portraits on murals with the theme of *Bonek*, or a combination of human and animal forms.

Saussure's semiotic study in this study is a way of analyzing signs that appear in visual and written form. Visual signs that appear are social phenomena in society. The existence of murals in various locations in Surabaya is a research fact, this point tries to discuss the

similarities and diversity that appear in the data presented in the previous chapter.

The highest usage font is in San-Serif types while the least use is in Stencil and Arabic types. This number is influenced by the attributes used in the typeface such as decorations on letters, uppercase / capital letters, italics, and bold. The readability level of murals in Surabaya is quite high with a percentage of 62% which is equivalent to 25 murals with writing. A medium legibility level of 28% is equivalent to 11 murals, while a low legibility level of 10% is equivalent to 4 murals.

Aside from the internal visual condition of the mural, sometimes the readability level is influenced by external elements. These external elements include the appearance of mold on the walls, peeling paint, stains or other mural paint. Based on research from Wijaya *et al.* (2022), have similarities with the results of this study, namely murals have a fairly high level of legibility in terms of visuals and text.

### **The Existence of Murals for Communities in Surabaya**

The existence of a mural in a public space is a social reality that occurs around it. Initiators and creators consist of various walks of life. Signs have a structural relationship, in which the sign is seen as a unity between something material in nature, or often known as a signifier and something conceptual (signified).

Apart from connoisseurs of Surabaya residents, some of them are also the initiators of their residence murals. The murals found in the settlements in the data presentation are located on *Jl. Ketintang*. From observations, it can be seen that residents usually carry a single theme to display harmony in their residence, at this location the theme raised is heroic, totaling seven murals, with depictions of national hero figures, independence events and the struggles of Indonesian heroes.

The majority of spectators also believe that change occurs in a person based on the

individual, not the mural media directly. The process of social change in the social environment occurs slowly and must become a collective and sustainable awareness. When this happens, social changes in society can be seen and felt.

Learning is an activity that involves two elements of body and soul, in learning conditions it takes synchronization of the two. In order to obtain changes in behavior as a result of individual experiences in interactions with their environment which involve cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects. The conclusion is that mural is the right medium to provide information, but the changes that occur are due to individual awareness.

The results of this study are similar to Gazali (2017), mural plays a central role when it is in public space, because public space is one of the centers of social interaction for society, especially urban areas. The existence of a mural in a public space certainly has a function as a medium for conveying aspirations, as an aesthetic, economic and educational function. The artist's idea in creating murals is so that the city environment can be maintained and preserved together.

This research examines the visual form of murals in South Surabaya, examines the structure of signs in mural media with a Semiotic approach and examines the function of murals in public education. The benefits of this research are to add to studies related to contemporary art and visual communication design, especially street art with a focus on murals, to identify mural forms in Surabaya, to become a reference material for similar research and to add the perspectives of other researchers regarding the study of cultural Semiotics and to provide insights another for the learning process outside the formal environment, especially education in the community, through the mural media approach. With this research it is hoped that it will be able to provide benefits and contributions, namely being able to increase the artistic power and imagination of the

audience, as well as a medium for conveying a separate message to the public through the image of an image produced to the public domain.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study is that murals in Surabaya have a variety of visual appearances, this is influenced by various signs that are visible physically (material) and signs in the form of interpretations of meaning (conceptual/non-material). The signs found are examined through a visual semiotic approach with a socio-cultural approach in the Surabaya community.

The form of visual murals in Surabaya tends to prioritize the selection of locations that are easy to access, strategic and located on a road dividing wall with a size of 1.5m x 2m, so that they are able to influence the shape, size, readability, ease of access, rich processes in order to affect the dissemination of information will be communicated to the spectator. The tendency for narrative-style murals is initiated by agencies/government with signs and messages that tend to be more educational, while expressive styles are initiated by artists to provide space for self-expression with signs and messages that are more veiled.

The application of the sign structure to murals in Surabaya, shows the dominance of asymmetrical murals, the composition is obtained from the presence of visuals, typing and white space in the mural. The theme of the mural is dominated by criticism and heroism, this is influenced by customs and concepts inherent in Surabaya. The categories of third level signs or symbols in the critical and heroic murals are quite dominant compared to the existence of indexes and icons. The use of typical Surabaya visual signs such as the *Suro Boyo* icon, the use of green *Bonek*, and the *Suroboyonan* diction. The use of type and letter attributes in the mural tends to use San Serif letters in the headline and body text, while the accompanying attributes tend to

use bold and capital letters. The readability of the letters on the murals tends to be high, this is influenced by the choice of letters, the use of contrast in the background colour with the letters, and the size of the letters in the panel composition.

Spectator mobility that influences the continuity of the learning process indirectly from the read information on the mural. This is what stimulates ongoing education in the community through murals in Surabaya. The function of the mural is only as a reminder in carrying out existing concepts and understandings. It is felt that the decision to change/influence the concept is not enough through mural media alone, moreover changing society. However, individual change comes from within himself, created from the concepts and understandings held by each other.

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