

# Topeng Malangan Wall Art Design: A Practice-Based Research for Cultural Souvenir Development

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## Abstract

This study aims to explore and analyze the creative process of designing wall art featuring Topeng Malangan as a form of cultural representation and to examine its potential as a cultural souvenir supporting local tourism development in Malang, Indonesia. Using a Practice-Based Research (PBR) approach, the study involved observation and visual documentation, concept development and sketching, digital line art creation, basic coloring, digital finishing, printing, and framing. The findings demonstrate that integrating cultural observation with reflective creative practice produces a culturally accurate and aesthetically appealing artefact suitable for tourism markets. The research contributes knowledge to cultural-based design practice and offers recommendations for designers, researchers, and tourism stakeholders.

**Keywords:** Topeng Malangan, wall art, practice-based research, cultural souvenir, digital art.

## 1. Introduction

Malang is recognized as one of the cultural centers in East Java, Indonesia, renowned for its rich traditional heritage. One of its most prominent cultural icons is Topeng Malangan (Malang Mask Dance), an art form deeply rooted in local beliefs, rituals, and historical narratives that symbolize moral and philosophical values of Javanese society (Sari et al., 2021). Studies show that Topeng Malangan is not merely an artistic expression but also a medium for spiritual communication and community identity reinforcement.

In recent years, Kampung Topeng (Mask Village) has emerged as a cultural tourism destination widely known as the "Village of 1000 Masks". This village integrates cultural preservation with creative economy development, involving local mask makers and performers to showcase traditional craftsmanship to visitors (Marcianda et al., 2024). Research indicates that Kampung Topeng has a significant socio-economic impact on local communities by increasing employment opportunities, promoting cultural pride, and enhancing regional identity (Wahyu et al., 2023).

However, cultural commodification requires careful adaptation to remain relevant to contemporary society while preserving authenticity. For instance, performances and mask aesthetics have been modified to suit tourist preferences (Wahyu et al., 2023). As domestic tourist visits to Malang reach approximately 3.1–3.3 million per year (BPS Kota Malang,

2024), the demand for culturally meaningful souvenirs continues to increase. Creative products such as wall art featuring Topeng Malangan motifs can function not only as aesthetic interior items but also as cultural ambassadors that preserve and promote local identity (Antaranews, 2025).

This research was conducted to design a wall art artefact with Topeng Malangan as its main visual element using a Practice-Based Research approach, exploring its potential as a cultural souvenir that supports tourism development and enhances appreciation for local cultural heritage.

## 2. Method

This research employs a Practice-Based Research (PBR) design, positioning the creative process of wall art production as both the method and outcome of the study. PBR is appropriate for art and design research because it generates knowledge through reflective creative practice, particularly when exploring cultural representation and innovation within visual media (Candy & Edmonds, 2018). The study aims to examine how Topeng Malangan, as a cultural icon, can be visually reinterpreted into a contemporary souvenir product in the form of framed wall art.

The research process began with observation and visual documentation conducted through field visits to Kampung Topeng, Malang. During these visits, the researcher observed and photographed various Topeng Malangan to capture their physical characteristics, colors, motifs, and symbolic meanings. This stage ensured cultural accuracy and provided visual reference material for subsequent design stages.

The second stage involved concept development and sketching, where the researcher produced multiple concept sketches exploring composition, stylization, and framing to effectively represent Topeng Malangan's cultural essence in a digital wall art format. Selected sketches were then refined into digital line art, created using a graphic tablet and digital art software such as Clip Studio Paint or Photoshop. Clean and consistent outlines were emphasized to ensure suitability for high-resolution printing.

In the fourth stage, basic coloring and digital finishing were carried out. The researcher applied base colors inspired by the traditional color palette of Topeng Malangan, followed by shading, lighting, and special effects to enhance depth, realism, and visual appeal. Upon completing the digital artwork, the piece was printed in A3 size on premium art paper and framed with wood to maintain harmony with the natural material aesthetics found in Kampung Topeng's traditional crafts.

Throughout the creative process, reflective analysis was integrated by documenting each stage in a research journal. This included critical reflections on design decisions, aesthetic challenges, cultural considerations, and potential product applications within the souvenir and tourism markets. Data collection techniques comprised field observation, photography, literature review, process documentation through sketches and digital files.

Data analysis in this study combined thematic analysis to identify key cultural themes represented in the Topeng Malangan, reflective practice analysis to evaluate aesthetic and design decisions, and descriptive analysis to detail the production stages clearly for research transparency.

Finally, ethical considerations included respecting the cultural heritage of Topeng Malangan by ensuring accurate and responsible representation, obtaining permission for field documentation when required, and citing all sources appropriately. This methodological structure ensures that the research not only produces a high-quality creative artefact but also contributes academic insights into the design process, cultural representation, and practice-based research in art and design.

### 3 Result and Discussion

#### 3.1 Result

The research produced a wall art design featuring Topeng Malangan as its main visual element. The final artwork was created through a systematic process consisting of observation, concept sketching, digital line art creation, coloring, digital finishing, and printing. Field observations at Kampung Topeng Malang provided visual references of mask shapes, ornaments, and colors, revealing that red, gold, black, and white are dominant in traditional masks, each carrying specific symbolic meanings such as bravery, nobility, mystery, and purity.

The selected concept sketch presented a frontal composition of the Topeng Malangan with stylized floral batik motifs to emphasize its local cultural identity. The digital line art was created with clean, uniform outlines to maintain clarity during printing. Basic coloring used the traditional color palette with slight adjustments in saturation to enhance vibrancy when displayed as wall art. Digital finishing included soft gradient lighting and subtle texture overlays to increase visual depth and realism. The final output was printed in A3 size on 260 gsm premium art paper, then framed using natural wood material to align with traditional aesthetics.

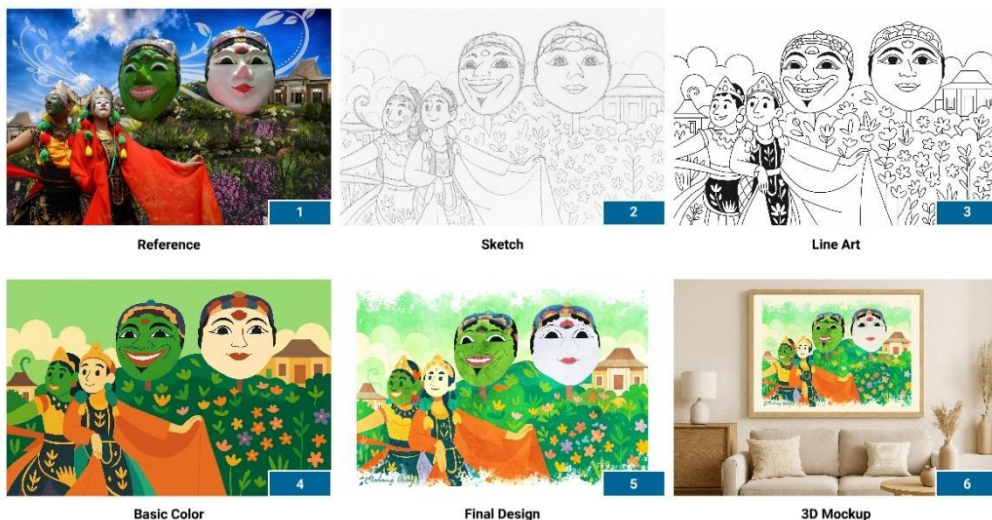


Figure 1. Design Process

#### 3.2 Discussion

The results demonstrate that Practice-Based Research (PBR) is effective for creating cultural souvenir products that integrate artistic exploration with academic reflection. The

observational stage provided culturally accurate references essential for preserving the authenticity of Topeng Malangan representations. This aligns with Dewi Kartika Sari et al. (Sari et al., 2021), who emphasized that visual documentation plays a crucial role in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage by translating it into tangible artefacts.

Furthermore, the combination of traditional motifs with contemporary stylization techniques in digital media broadens the potential audience beyond tourists to include art collectors and interior decorators. This reflects Wahyu et al. (Wahyu et al., 2023), who noted that adaptation and innovation are necessary for traditional arts to remain relevant in modern contexts without losing their cultural essence.

From an aesthetic perspective, the use of vivid yet harmonious color schemes enhances visual appeal while respecting the cultural symbolism embedded in each color choice. The clean line art and refined digital effects contribute to professional presentation quality, necessary for commercial souvenir products targeting the tourism market. This finding is consistent with Candy & Edmonds (Candy & Edmonds, 2018), who argue that practice-based research generates knowledge through artefacts, enabling innovations that bridge traditional culture and contemporary design practice.

The printing and framing process also revealed practical considerations, such as selecting paper and wood frame materials that complement the cultural theme while ensuring durability and marketability. This aligns with the concept of design authenticity and product feasibility in cultural-based souvenir development (Marcianda et al., 2024).

Overall, this research confirms that a systematic creative process grounded in field observation, cultural analysis, and digital design practice can produce a wall art artefact that not only functions as an aesthetic interior product but also as a medium for cultural preservation and promotion. The reflective analysis throughout the process provided insights into the balance between cultural accuracy, artistic expression, and commercial viability.

#### **4 Conclusion**

This research concludes that applying a Practice-Based Research approach integrated with cultural observation and digital design processes produces wall art artefacts that function both as aesthetic products and cultural preservation media. The Topeng Malangan wall art developed through this study holds potential as a cultural souvenir supporting tourism development in Malang while contributing academic insights into cultural representation and design research.

Future research is recommended to include market testing and consumer perception studies to evaluate commercial viability. Designers should continue applying field observation to ensure authenticity, while tourism stakeholders are encouraged to collaborate with local artists in developing souvenir products that uphold regional cultural identity. Interdisciplinary collaborations with cultural anthropologists or marketing experts will further enhance product relevance and market reach.

#### **Acknowledgement**

This research was funded by internal research grants from Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia. The author would like to express gratitude to Kampung Topeng Malang for their support during field observation and documentation.

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