



Digital Concept Art Reinterprets Javanese Saloka for Cultural Revitalization

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Abstract. General Background: The preservation of intangible cultural heritage in the digital era requires approaches that move beyond static documentation toward dynamic reinterpretation. Specific Background: Javanese saloka, such as Timun Mungsu Duren, embody complex philosophical meanings but face declining relevance among digital-native audiences. Knowledge Gap: Existing digital heritage practices emphasize technical preservation rather than meaningful reinterpretation, creating a disconnect between cultural depth and contemporary engagement. Aims: This study aims to transform the saloka into digital concept art through a practice-based hermeneutic approach while preserving its philosophical integrity. Results: The findings demonstrate that digital concept art functions as an autonomous form of visual knowledge, reconstructing hierarchical relations and semantic structures while generating new interpretive perspectives. The applied two-stage methodology—textual-cultural analysis and creative translation—proves replicable and maintains cultural authenticity through innovative visual strategies. Novelty: The research introduces a “hermeneutic fidelity” framework that bridges traditional symbolic systems with digital visual representation, positioning digital art as both cultural archive and interpretive medium. Implications: This approach offers a sustainable model for transforming intangible heritage into living digital forms, reinforces the relevance of local wisdom in contemporary contexts, and establishes digital conceptual art as a strategic medium for cultural revitalization.

Keywords: Digital Concept Art, Cultural Revitalization, Digital Heritage

1 Introduction

The preservation of intangible cultural heritage faces unprecedented challenges in the digital age, particularly for philosophical traditions embedded in oral and textual forms. Current heritage paradigms often privilege material conservation over the dynamic reinterpretation required for cultural continuity [1], creating what might be termed a “hermeneutic gap” in cultural transmission. This concept finds its contemporary relevance in ongoing discussions about digital cultural heritage as a strategic resource for sustainable innovation [2], where traditional knowledge systems must be transformed into active assets rather than passive artifacts. This is especially evident in Javanese *saloka*—philosophical proverbs containing complex wisdom about social relations and power dynamics—which risk cultural obsolescence as digital-native generations become increasingly disconnected from traditional knowledge systems.

Timun Mungsuh Duren (The Cucumber versus the Durian) exemplifies this challenge. The *saloka's* intricate exploration of hierarchical relationships and strategic resistance has historically been transmitted through textual and oral means, limiting its engagement with contemporary digital audiences. While digital archiving preserves content, it often fails to transform meaning for new contexts, creating what Manovich identifies as "the persistent gap between cultural depth and digital appeal" in heritage adaptations [3]. This perspective aligns with broader concerns in the domain of digital heritage, where an emphasis on technical preservation can, at times, supersede the vital need for "living" cultural communication [4]. This underscores the critical need for a theoretically grounded framework that considers digital heritage not merely as a repository, but as a dynamic site of cultural meaning-making and reinterpretation [5]. Current methodologies employed in the realm of digital heritage frequently prioritize the creation of technical documentation over the provision of meaningful reinterpretation. This tendency leaves philosophical traditions especially susceptible to becoming static digital artifacts rather than living cultural resources.

This research addresses these limitations by proposing digital concept art as a transformative medium for cultural heritage revitalization, grounded in Gadamer's hermeneutic framework which conceptualizes understanding as a dialogical "fusion of horizons" between historical texts and contemporary interpreters [6]. Philosophically framed by this hermeneutic approach and methodologically grounded in practice-based research that positions creative practice as knowledge production [7], the study documents the complete process of translating the *Timun Mungsuh Duren saloka* from traditional text into digital concept art. This creative inquiry explores the potential of visual design to revitalize ancient cultural proverbs, ensuring the preservation of their fundamental wisdom. The objective is to generate digital artifacts that serve as both compelling works of modern art for the contemporary audience and as a living, digital archive for posterity. This approach is a form of thoughtful translation that moves beyond language to convey deeper meaning, actively reinvigorating ancestral wisdom for new audiences rather than simply preserving it [8].

This research introduces a "hermeneutic fidelity" framework, which acts as a guiding compass to ensure the core philosophy of a cultural tradition remains intact as it's reimagined for the digital age. This method uniquely bridges the rigorous documentation practices of tangible heritage (like preserving a historic site) with the fluid, living nature of intangible heritage (like a philosophical proverb). It offers a new model for keeping culture alive online, an approach supported by recent scholars who emphasize the need for such innovative methods [9], provide modern tools like 'scaled reading' to understand digital meaning-making [10], and is evidenced by successful case studies in digital cultural revitalization [11]. The study's contributions are threefold. First, it provides a practical, reusable blueprint for transforming textual traditions into visual digital art through a thoughtful, interpretive process. Secondly, it demonstrates how practice-led artistic inquiry can operate as an effective bridge between cultural memory and contemporary creative expression. This approach demonstrates that direct engagement with artistic processes facilitates the re-experiencing of tradition, rather than its mere conservation. The model delineates a sustainable pathway for ensuring the continued cultural relevance of inherited

knowledge. This pathway ensures that such knowledge persists and continues to resonate, adapt, and enter into meaningful dialogue with emerging generations within an increasingly digital cultural landscape.

2 Method

This research applies practice-based research as its core paradigm, positioning the creation of digital art as a form of knowledge production [7], [12]. This methodological stance is further grounded in Digital Heritage theory and innovative practice, which conceptualize digital creation as both a mode of cultural transmission and a legitimate strategy for preserving and reinterpreting intangible heritage in contemporary digital environments [13]. This approach was chosen because the research question—how to transform the philosophical meaning of *saloka* into a digital visual form—can only be answered through the creative process itself. The resulting digital concept art artifacts are not only the final product, but also serve as instruments and primary data sources for analyzing the effectiveness of cultural translation. This process is documented reflectively to record every artistic decision and how those decisions seek to maintain the philosophical integrity of *Timun Mungsuh Duren*.

Operationally, this methodological framework unfolds through two sequential yet iterative phases. In the preliminary stage, a thorough examination and cultural interpretation of the proverb are conducted, incorporating a lexical investigation with Saussurean semiotics [14] particularly the interaction between signifier and signified—and Geertz's thick-description cultural analysis [15], [16]. The integration of these approaches enables the identification of proverbial fundamental metaphors, recurrent narrative patterns, and underlying philosophical tenets. The result of this stage is a “philosophical blueprint” that serves as a creative guide. The second stage is creative translation and visual prototyping, where the blueprint is realized as digital concept art through an iterative process consisting of rough sketches, line art refinement, coloring, and final rendering in digital illustration.

Through this approach, the research not only produces digital cultural artifacts relevant to contemporary audiences but also builds a replicable methodology for transforming other textual and oral cultural heritage into digital formats [17]. Critical reflection during the creation process will reveal specific strategies for bridging the gap between cultural depth and digital appeal, thereby making a methodological contribution to the field of intangible cultural heritage revitalization.

3 Result and Discussion

This study produced three main findings that answer the research question regarding the transformation of the philosophical meaning of *saloka* into a digital visual form. These findings were obtained through an analytical and creative process described in the methodology.

First, the digital concept art work *saloka timun mungsuh durian* successfully proved itself as an autonomous form of visual knowledge. This work not only represents existing philosophical meanings, but also actively produces fresh perspectives through visual experimentation. This creative process transforms *saloka* from a passive warning into a dialectic of interpretation and a dynamic space of meaning. Through its challenging visual strategy, the hierarchy of binary oppositions in the power relations inherent in *saloka* is successfully unraveled and presented in a way that opens up new understandings.

Second, the methodological approach applied in this study—which combines textual-cultural analysis with creative translation—proves effective as a replicable strategy for revitalizing cultural values. Maintaining the authenticity of the cultural visual code, while making innovative compositional interventions, does not destroy the “cultural genetics” of *saloka*, but rather opens up new horizons of interpretation. This process operationally embodies three specific strategies to bridge cultural depth with digital appeal: (1) a strategy of challenging the dominance of established discourse through compositional form, (2) a strategy of flexible body penetration representation, and (3) a strategy of visual composition that deconstructs narrative determinism. These findings provide concrete methodological contributions to the field of cultural heritage revitalization.

Third, this study demonstrates the universality of the conflict pattern and binary opposition scheme between *Timun* and *Durian*. This scheme of relations and power hierarchies has proven to be applicable in various contexts of conflict.

For example, the brief yet intense direct war between Iran and Israel in June 2025—an open, 12-day military conflict from 13 to 24 June—vividly demonstrates the universality of this opposition scheme. Israel's strategy of using high-tech conventional strikes against military and nuclear targets can be described as “*Durian*,” characterized by structural strength, dominance, and rapid power projection. In contrast, Iran's response—which combines asymmetric missile barrages, cyber offensives, and strategic mobilization of regional proxies—represents “*Timun*,” with fluid, adaptive, and penetrative tactics to counter a conventionally superior adversary.

This visual and conceptual translation has two strategic functions. First, it reinforces the local wisdom of *saloka* as a lens that remains relevant and authentic for reading the dynamics of current forces, including in complex armed conflicts. Second, it affirms the role of digital art as a powerful link between ancestral philosophy and pressing socio-historical realities. Thus, this artistic practice serves as a vehicle for visual investigation. The approach applied is comprehensive, enriching aesthetic principles and critical theoretical frameworks through direct interaction with contemporary geopolitical dynamics. The works born from this synthesis feature a combination of visual power, analytical depth, and critical socio-political concerns that are relevant to their context. Digital art practice is then interpreted as a hermeneutic space—a vehicle that allows for the renewal of meaning without sacrificing the integrity of cultural values.

This strategy employs fluid, indirect, and adaptive penetration techniques to counter a more rigid adversary. The visual and conceptual translation fulfills two strategic functions. The first function is to affirm the validity of local wisdom *saloka* as an analytical lens that remains relevant and authentic for understanding the current

configuration of power. The second function is to position digital art as a powerful link between philosophical heritage and the pressures of the current socio-historical context. In parallel, this artistic practice embodies a mode of visual exploration. Its foundation is not merely aesthetics and theory, but also direct dialogue with actual geopolitical discourse. From this synthesis are born works that unite visual acuity, depth of analysis, and contextual and critical socio-political concern.

Figure 1 presents the foundational analysis and exploratory process for the *Timun Mungsu Duren* project: (a) the conceptual mapping for visual deconstruction; and (b) the initial thumbnailing phase for compositional experimentation.

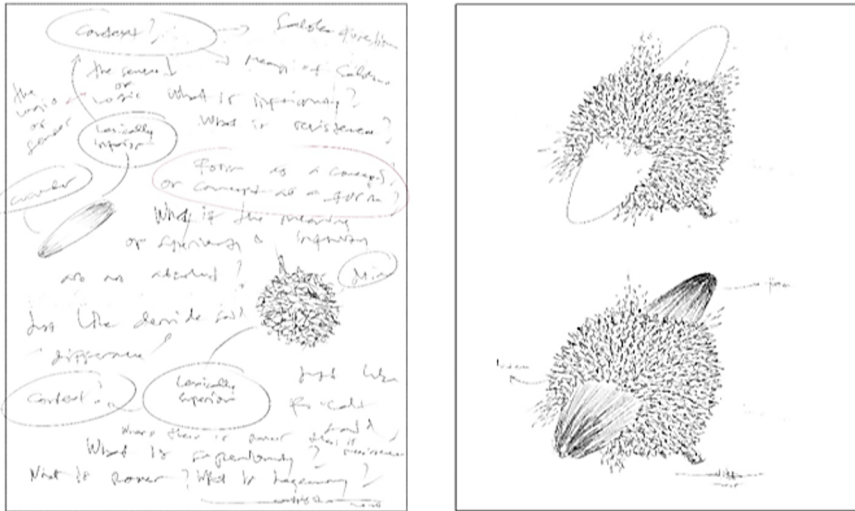


Fig. 1. Foundational analysis and exploratory process for *Timun Mungsu Duren*.

- (a) Conceptual Foundation : Visual mapping for deconstructive analysis.
- (b) Exploratory Thumbnailing : Initial compositional experimentation.

Analytical Note. The present compositional study employs systematic visual experimentation in order to examine proportional relationships and power dynamics.

Critical Reflection. In this creative process, I realised the dual position I was in: as a researcher who wanted to analyse systematically, and as an artist who created based on intuition. The process of “observing” the dynamics of power turned out to be not just a neutral act of observation, but an active act that helped shape reality. My personal perspective, cultural experiences, and artistic instincts have unconsciously framed the “systematic experiments” I have conducted, bridging the gap between objective analysis and subjective creation. Ultimately, the proportional relationship that emerges is not an absolute truth that I have managed to uncover, but rather an offer of meaning born from the dialogue between the methodology I use and my freedom of expression as a creator.

Figure 2 visualizes the creative translation of the *saloka* "Timun Mungsu Duren," rendering its philosophical blueprint into a detailed line art composition.

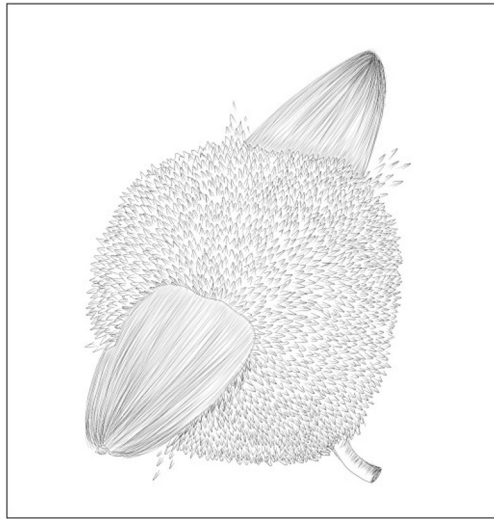


Fig. 2. Visualization of Creative Translation. A line art composition based on the philosophical blueprint of the *saloka* "Timun Mungsuh Duren." (2025). *Researcher's original artwork.*

Analytical Note. This work represents the result of a process of textual-cultural analysis and creative translation. Its visual composition applies specific strategies developed in the research: (1) a formal composition that challenges established discursive structures, (2) representations of flexible bodily penetration that demonstrate adaptation to rigid forces, and (3) the deconstruction of narrative determinism through sequential ambiguity. This visual achievement proves the effectiveness of the two-stage methodology in maintaining philosophical depth while developing contemporary visual appeal.

Critical Reflection. This work represents a complex balance between methodological frameworks and intuitive improvisation. In it, planned strategies (such as deconstruction) are not presented as definitive rules, but rather as tools for opening up new possibilities. The actual visual translation emerges through tacit material dialogue. The concept of "flexible penetration," for example, is first felt in the hand's negotiation of lines and shapes, long before it becomes an intellectual decision. The ambiguity presented is not an incident or merely an aesthetic preference, but rather a philosophical construct that operates to transfer the power of interpretation to the subject of enjoyment. However, whether we realize it or not, this construct has its own critical flaws. Here, a fundamental question arises: does this ambiguity function as a generator of participation that facilitates the audience as active partners in the production of meaning, or does it have the potential to crystallize into circular and closed obscurity—a form of ambiguity that revolves around itself without ever reaching articulation?. Therefore, this work not only illustrates the findings of the research, but also demonstrates the act of investigation itself—inviting not only visual engagement, but critical participation in the on going construction of understanding.

Figure 3 documents the colouring process applied to the philosophical line art, while Figure 4 presents the final rendered digital illustration, completing the translation from concept to finished artwork.



Fig. 3. From Process to Final Artwork. (Left) The colouring stage applied to the line art derived from the *saloka*'s philosophical blueprint. (Right) The final rendered digital illustration, completing the creative translation.

Analytical Notes. This work functions as a deconstructive visual instrument, designed to transfer interpretive agency to the viewer. The transformation of tacit knowledge—born from the dialogue between theory and practice—leads to the aesthetics of deliberate ambiguity. By shaking up fixed narratives, the work deliberately evokes uncertainty in order to stimulate the critical faculties and imagination of the audience in creating personal meaning. Its main value lies in its ability to both dismantle and rebuild understanding. This work shakes up fixed narratives to deliberately create uncertainty, which then stimulates the audience to think critically and use their imagination in forming their own meaning. Its main value is its ability to deconstruct and then reconstruct understanding.

Critical Reflection. Visual interventions in established narrative structures are, in fact, derived from tacit knowledge, which is defined as an intuitive understanding that develops through continuous dialogue between theoretical understanding and dialogue with the materiality of lines. Upon processing these deconstructive visuals, it becomes apparent that they will engender ambiguous perceptions and uncertainty in the audience's interpretation process. The piece is characterised by a deliberate ambiguity, the effect of which is to prompt audience members to engage with the work through the application of critical faculties, thereby facilitating the emergence of their own layers of interpretation. The value of this work lies in its ability to dismantle established structures of meaning, as well as its capacity to construct new understandings that can empower the audience.

4 Conclusion

Ultimately, this study proves that the philosophical essence of the *saloka* “Timun Mungsu Duren” can be transformed into a dynamic form of visual knowledge through a two-stage methodology that combines critical analysis and creative adaptation. The resulting digital artwork does not function merely as an illustration,

but as an autonomous deconstructive instrument—deconstructing binary hierarchies and activating audience interpretation through deliberate ambiguity. This work translates fundamental philosophical oppositions into a contemporary visual strategy, thereby developing an actionable approach to connecting cultural depth with contemporary expression. By demonstrating the broad applicability of this scheme, it offers a repeatable model for revitalizing cultural heritage. This artistic research serves as a critical tool and generative bridge, actively reshaping traditional insights into a visually striking, intellectually robust, and socially relevant participatory exchange.

Implications. This research yields three main implications. First, this study expands the definition of digital conceptual art as an autonomous medium of visual knowledge. The digital work *Saloka Timun-Durian* demonstrates that conceptual illustrations can be equivalent to theoretical texts in conveying philosophical complexity, thereby opening opportunities for the development of new visual theories in digital-based cultural studies. Second, the two-stage methodology developed—textual-cultural analysis and creative translation—offers a replicable model for revitalizing cultural heritage, as it successfully preserves “cultural genetics” while enabling new interpretive possibilities that respond to contemporary challenges in maintaining cultural relevance. Third, this research clearly shows how the digital transformation of cultural heritage can function as a counter-hegemonic strategy; the universal binary opposition scheme of *Timun-Durian* revitalizes local wisdom while providing an analytical lens to interpret contemporary power dynamics, ultimately empowering communities to reclaim their cultural narratives.

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