

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Humans tend to organize their lives using systems that grow increasingly complex over time, until eventually the systems themselves become difficult to control. Rather than empowering them, the complexity of these systems actually leaves people in an increasingly vulnerable position. Graffiti emerged as a response to systems that restrict individual freedom. It has become a global street art phenomenon. In its early days, graffiti was part of the Hip Hop subculture, developed by African American and Latin American communities. Hip Hop is a blend of MCing (better known as rapping), DJing, breakdancing, and graffiti (indonesiana.id, 2022) Alongside these hip-hop elements, graffiti has evolved into a subculture that plays a significant role among young people in the urban and underground scenes. Over time, graffiti has undergone numerous changes and developments. What began as a symbol of resistance—used to voice social and political criticism and protest—evolved into a symbol of gangster groups claiming their territory, and later became a personal symbol for graffiti artists as a form of self-expression, with them writing their nicknames using a writing style that reflects their own unique characteristics. Graffiti is a visual language that speaks to creativity, identity, and self-expression through the exploration of innovative techniques and the interplay of colors, thereby creating a powerful visual narrative (Carollina, 2023)

Graffiti usually consists of images of characters or text—such as the graffiti artist's initials—that are generally understood only by fellow graffiti artists (Aulia, Wanis, Tiyas, & Sumarwahyudi, 2023). The basic form of graffiti—tagging—is a core element in graffiti creation. Tagging itself is a simple scribble featuring the writer's nickname, which later evolved into the throwup, a bubble-style font that represents a further development of tagging. Writers use throwups to execute pieces in spots that require speed, as the process takes only a matter of minutes. The latest evolution of graffiti style is graffiti pieces that employ specialized techniques in their creation. Elements such as lines, colors, and shapes, arranged harmoniously and structurally, become essential components of the graffiti pieces themselves.

Graffiti has long been a symbol of identity for graffiti artists. According to Aulia Dimas Saputra et al., those who create graffiti can be referred to as graffiti writers. (2023:24). “Writer” is a broad term, but in practice, there are many other terms that describe the roles graffiti writers take on while creating their art on the streets. Other terms, such as “Bomber,” refer to vandals who aggressively engage in acts of vandalism like tagging and throw-ups, which are also essential elements of graffiti art itself. Graffiti writers and graffiti bombers often carry out their actions in groups, typically forming crews—a term for groups consisting of several writers who carry out their actions systematically and on a large scale.

Although it originated from a sense of unrest and began on the streets, graffiti has evolved over time and can now be found and accepted across various platforms such as the internet, social media, books, and art galleries. Of course, it is the widespread adoption of graffiti within society itself that has made it so popular. The inherent element of freedom in graffiti makes it highly flexible and adaptable. Based on observations, the author found numerous graffiti images on the internet and social media originating from all over the world. A wide variety of nicknames and styles are now easily found. Additionally, physical publications have become a special feature in the graffiti scene; many writers worldwide are flocking to use physical publications as a form of their work, and quite a few are using physical publications—whether in the form of books, magazines, or merchandise—as a means to commercially market their work. International graffiti writers such as MSK Crew, A crew that was founded and developed in the United States, it has been in existence for over 35 years and comprises leading and iconic writers who serve as idols and role models for many people. Names such as Revok, Rams, Ewok, Eklips, Vayne, Savie, and others have become influential figures in the international graffiti scene. Several members of the MSK Crew are very active in showcasing their work, as evidenced by the author’s observations on Instagram. In their creative exploration, they frequently hold exhibitions at renowned galleries. A recent example cited by the author during the research period is “Vayne,” who held his solo exhibition “All Over The Place” in 2024 at Cat Eye Creative, where “Vayne” presented works that fully explored his response to both canvas and street media. In addition to exhibiting, one of the members of the MSK Crew, “Savie,” also released a magazine in 2025 as the 9th issue in the “Living Proof Magazine” series, documenting “Savie’s” process of exploration and graffiti in the city New York. Their exploration of graffiti art is particularly fascinating because it offers a breath of fresh air and serves as a source of inspiration for graffiti artists around the world.

The ease of accessing references and the massive global spread of graffiti have made Indonesia one of the countries most significantly impacted by this trend. Emerging and gaining traction in the 2000s, graffiti has become a popular activity among people of all ages in Indonesia. Graffiti in Indonesia is now widely recognized across various segments of society, both as beautiful street art that adorns public spaces and as visual pollution that is seen as marring the city's beauty (Bagus, 2015). This is evident from the large number of graffiti artists across the archipelago, as well as the abundance of graffiti works found in every corner of Indonesian cities. Graffiti events are also beginning to emerge in Indonesia, both on a local and international scale. "Street Dealin," initiated by Gardu House—Indonesia's most renowned graffiti collective—has become an annual event eagerly anticipated by all graffiti artists in the country. Writers from all over Indonesia flock to Jakarta, where "Street Dealin" is held, simply to connect with fellow writers. Additionally, the "Meeting Of Styles Indonesia" event, which began in 2022 in Karanganyar, has become an annual gathering where local and international graffiti writers showcase their skills and connect with one another.

Surabaya is one of the cities in Indonesia experiencing massive growth in the graffiti scene, alongside other cities such as Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Bandung, and Semarang. Graffiti in Surabaya was initially marked by the work of a London-based writer known by the nickname "Torismo," who visited Surabaya in 1998 while en route to Mount Bromo. "Torismo" created his piece in the Sawunggaling area, making it the first graffiti in Surabaya. The author learned this from an article written by Spray Mystery on Instagram in 2023. Spray Mystery responded to a statement by "ADV51," a writer from Jakarta who is active on the streets of London. "ADV51" revealed that "Torismo" had done graffiti in Surabaya in 1998. Spray Mystery immediately followed up on this interesting fact by conducting a brief interview with "Torismo" via Instagram.

Spray Mystery is a graffiti supply store in Surabaya founded in 2014 by "PINO." Spray Mystery plays a vital role in the graffiti scene in Surabaya. In addition to being a graffiti supply store, Spray Mystery also serves as a hub and platform for writers in Surabaya to create and connect with one another. Through the author's observations, it is evident that Spray Mystery is the primary destination for writers in Surabaya to get to know and connect with one another; every day, many writers visit the shop simply to greet each other or for other purposes. The strong Eastern culture in Surabaya has kept the city's graffiti scene on a

positive path. Both seasoned and novice writers greet and get to know one another. Of course, this is inseparable from the role of Spray Mystery, particularly “PINO,” who is very active in creating various movements that bring the scene in Surabaya to life. Events such as Yardfestival, Write Something, Indograff Day, and many others are concrete examples of Spray Mystery’s initiatives as a group that consistently provides fresh ideas and innovation.

With its rapid and positive growth, the graffiti scene in Surabaya today features many writers emerging over time. Through the author’s observations, numerous new graffiti pieces and works were encountered during explorations through the nooks and crannies of Surabaya. The category of graffiti considered new—or what could be called the work of young writers—can be distinguished by the quality of their street art, which naturally differs from that of Surabaya’s senior writers such as Sleepy, Pino, Pesh, and Adr1. This is not a negative trend; rather, these young writers share the same passion as their seniors in their graffiti practice. The scale of their movement is evident in the abundance of their work found throughout the city—both in the city center and on the outskirts—in the forms of Tagging, Throwups, and Pieces. This phenomenon serves as proof that the regeneration of the graffiti scene is progressing well in Surabaya.

Among the many works by young graffiti artists in Surabaya, Kadilsaster’s graffiti stands out as a dominant presence in the city’s corners. Based on the author’s direct observations and social media posts, it is evident that Kadilsaster carries out his graffiti activities extensively and regularly throughout Surabaya. His graffiti pieces have become a hallmark of his style as he takes on every corner of the city. His wildstyle and large-scale images are hallmarks of every piece by Kadilsaster. Additionally, his spots—which are full of exploration and “not just the same old thing”—have made Kadilsaster a well-known young writer both within the city and beyond. Representing Surabaya at the Meeting Of Styles Indonesia 2024 serves as a gateway for Kadilsaster to gain recognition and appreciation within the graffiti scene. This is particularly intriguing to the author, especially considering that Kadilsaster began his graffiti journey in 2020—a relatively recent start compared to senior writers who have been active for decades. Kadilsaster’s work and movement can be said to be on par with that of senior writers in Surabaya, and he has earned a place and recognition as one of the driving forces behind the city’s graffiti scene. The determination and youthful passion Kadilsaster has demonstrated while stoking the flames

of the scene in Surabaya have established him as a writer of note, both within his own generation and among the next generation of graffiti artists in Surabaya.

Of course, there are many other crews and artists in Surabaya who can also be categorized as young writers contributing to the vibrancy of the city's graffiti scene. Crews like YGC, GEO, RHS, TMV, and 2G, along with fresh names such as Sega, Fraw, Jerk, Gone, Karz, and others, each have their own distinctive style and character in their work. The graffiti they create is also diverse; for example, YGC and RHS are active in creating graffiti pieces with the unique styles of each member, while GEO, TMV, and 2G frequently engage in bombing with graffiti forms such as Tagging and Throw-Ups, each bearing the distinctive traits of their members. This diversity in the unique styles and characteristics of these young graffiti artists in Surabaya has made them quite well-known within the Indonesian scene. In addition to creating art in Surabaya, many of them are quite active in other cities. This is evident in the fact that their graffiti works can be found in cities surrounding Surabaya, such as Sidoarjo, Gresik, Mojokerto, Jombang, and Malang.

However, in the process, many young writers hold strong ideals and maintain anonymity in their work. If you search on social media, it's very difficult to find the Instagram accounts of young writers active in Surabaya. Most of them use different names on social media. This phenomenon makes it difficult for young writers in Surabaya to widely showcase their graffiti work. Since they rarely post their work on social media themselves, their body of work remains disorganized. According to Rune HSK in his book **POTATOWITHSALT**, archiving is actually very important in graffiti. This is because, in the future, it will be the archives that speak for themselves, given that the current archiving of street graffiti and the activities of crews in Indonesia is minimal and can be considered inadequate (2024:5). Archiving graffiti art is extremely important, as these archives—whether in the form of photos or videos—allow us to preserve the history and artistic journey of each writer, who naturally possesses their own unique style. Initially, the archiving of graffiti art in Indonesia took place primarily through the internet and social media. This can be seen on the TEMBOK BOMBER website and on the Facebook pages of senior writers who regularly post their work on social media. In addition to archiving work on social media, physical publications can also serve as an alternative for archiving street art. Many writers in Indonesia have released books and magazines featuring their graffiti work, such as **Day*

To Day* by CakesPWS, *Turn Around* by Stmyfunk, *Across The Seven Seas* by Send7, and many other exclusive physical releases.

In today's digital age, physical publications such as books also face their own challenges. Based on data from the questionnaire, it can be concluded that the majority of graffiti writers—58.9%—still enjoy graffiti firsthand through street observation, while 24.4% of respondents prefer graffiti books that contain collections of graffiti works. The ease of reading offered by digital books has made physical releases less widely sought after. However, in the graffiti scene, physical releases in the form of books can be something special, as they offer advantages in terms of the reader's experience and the exploration of the book's interior—features that allow the layout execution to become a signature of the bookmaker, aligning with the message and memories they wish to convey. Additionally, physical book releases have recently seen a rapid increase in sales within the graffiti scene. Potato With Salt, one of Indonesia's most renowned graffiti crews—known for the unique graffiti styles of each member—released their book to commemorate 10 years of dedication and their journey within the scene. The book titled POTATO WITH SALT, released in 2024 by publisher ARRMAADA, has become a fascinating phenomenon. This 350-page volume delves into the compelling stories of its members, accompanied by archival photos of their best works. Priced at Rp. 1,200,000, the book has proven to be a success since its release. This is evident from the Instagram account @potatowithsalt, where the book was released not only locally but also on a massive global scale. This phenomenon demonstrates that enthusiasm for physical releases—particularly in the form of books—still has a significant following and remains substantial within the graffiti scene, both in Indonesia and worldwide.

The lack of awareness regarding archiving and physical publications in the form of books in Surabaya has resulted in the city being underrepresented in the underground graffiti works of its young writers. Most young writers do not maintain a proper archive of their work, and many of them are unaware of the importance of physical publications as a means to promote their work while also serving as a way to archive their own creations. So far, only senior writers can be considered to have properly archived their work. A concrete example of this came to light during an interview with Sleepy, a senior writer who is part of the ARCBOYS crew; Sleepy is aware of the importance of archiving. Sleepy himself said that every time he draws—whether working alone or jamming with others—he always takes the time to photograph every piece and neatly saves them in his computer files. Additionally,

“PINO”—a pioneer and guardian of the Surabaya graffiti scene—frequently releases physical works and merchandise. “PINO” is also active in posting his graffiti art on Instagram. In March 2025, PINO recently released his book titled “Never Seen Before,” accompanied by a solo exhibition featuring works he has created since his last exhibition, “DIVERSION,” in 2018. NEVER SEEN BEFORE is a book containing a collection of archival photos of PINO’s work, showcasing the style and patterns he has explored over the past three years. In addition to featuring graffiti pieces never before published on social media, the book also chronicles PINO’s daily life cycling and spending time with his family. The author’s firsthand observations indicate that the enthusiasm among writers in Surabaya is immense in response to this book release. Many senior and young writers came to celebrate and purchase copies of NEVER SEEN BEFORE. This indicates that book releases can serve as a new method of archiving work that also sparks enthusiasm among graffiti writers in Surabaya.

Based on the various challenges faced by young writers in the field of book design in Surabaya, the author was inspired to create the visual book *Kadilsaster*, which serves as a reference for young writers in their book design process. This book aims to broaden their understanding of book design exploration, enabling them to eventually create their own works that reflect their unique artistic styles. The author believes that the figure of Kadilsaster can serve as a suitable subject for this project, aligning with the message the author aims to convey to young writers in Surabaya. Kadilsaster’s consistency and well-executed process make him a compelling figure to document. This design will cover Kadilsaster’s story from the beginning of his career through his exploration of graffiti and the achievements he has made so far, along with how the author can create a unique archival format for Kadilsaster’s work that will be accepted by both the graffiti community and the general public. The hope for the future is that this Kadilsaster biography project will inspire other young graffiti writers to archive their own work and curate their archives by publishing their own physical books—each reflecting their unique processes, ideologies, and personalities.

1.2 Problem Identification

Based on the explanation and analysis of the background provided, the following issues have been identified:

1. A lack of awareness regarding documentation practices among young graffiti artists, as indicated by questionnaire data on how graffiti artists archive their work: 71.1% of the 64 respondents archive their work by posting it on social media, 53.3% of the 48 respondents archive their work by keeping it privately, and 50% of the 45 respondents archive their work by compiling and publishing books or zines. It can be concluded that not many of them are able to document the work they have created in a neat and systematic manner.
2. According to interviews with Pino, Jarno, and Graffiti Story, the lack of a comprehensive physical archive of graffiti art means that the work of graffiti artists—particularly in Surabaya—cannot be permanently preserved or widely enjoyed.
3. The majority of graffiti artists in Surabaya—both seasoned and emerging—struggle to improve the quality of their physical works due to a lack of visual skills, particularly in terms of documentation, design, and layout. This aligns with the results of a questionnaire in which the author asked participants to assess their interest in and need for a graffiti book that could serve as a reference for techniques that effectively convey narratives and works through unique and engaging layouts. And 52% of respondents need such a book, while 36.7% of respondents strongly need it.
4. According to an interview with Graffiti Story, there are currently no physical publications—specifically visual books—featuring young graffiti artists in Surabaya that delve deeply into their creative process; as a result, their journey and contributions to the graffiti scene remain largely unknown.

1.3 Problem Statement

How can the design of the book **Visual Graffiti Writer Kadilsaster** serve as an effective reference for compiling and archiving graffiti works in book form, particularly for graffiti artists in Surabaya, by accurately documenting their works, journeys, and achievements, while combining layout freedom, graffiti techniques, and engaging design elements without

compromising on layout principles to ensure the book remains easy to read and widely accessible?

1.4 Scope Of The Problem

The following is an explanation of the scope of the problem based on the results of the problem identification and the problem statement in the design of the visual book for graffiti artist Kadilsaster.

1. This project focuses on the graffiti artist Kadilsaster and showcases a collection of works he has created over the past five years (2020–2025) as part of his journey in the graffiti scene.
2. This visual book will cover Kadilsaster’s journey, the process behind the creation of his graffiti works, his achievements, and a documentation of his works.
3. This design project uses the Kadilsaster documentation archive as its primary source material, supplemented by documentation created during the design process.
4. The narrative detailing Kadilsaster’s journey and creative process is based on data provided by Kadilsaster himself as the primary subject of this research, supplemented by insights from key figures in the Surabaya graffiti scene—who have significantly influenced the scene—regarding Kadilsaster, as well as young writers in other cities across Indonesia who have connections with him. This material will then be curated by Koolspotz, a graffiti media outlet with extensive experience in curating various graffiti exhibitions across Indonesia, which the author will involve in the design process.

1.5 Design Objectives

1. This visual book aims to introduce Kadilsaster as a writer from Surabaya. The author hopes that Kadilsaster’s journey, creative process, and achievements can be shared and widely appreciated both within the graffiti scene and beyond.
2. To raise awareness among young graffiti artists in Surabaya about the importance of documenting and archiving their work, so that their presence in the graffiti scene can continue and be widely appreciated.
3. This can serve as a reference for graffiti artists who wish to compile their work into a physical book by applying design and layout principles that are appropriate and appealing to readers.

4. Educating graffiti artists by introducing them to alternative ways of producing graffiti books that take advantage of the various benefits of physical books.
5. Introducing to the general public outside the graffiti scene that, in addition to creating art on the streets, graffiti artists are also capable of presenting their work in other forms that are more readily accepted in society

1.6 Benefits of Design

Based on the background and existing issues outlined above, the benefits of designing the Kadilsaster Visual Graffiti Book can be summarized as follows:

A. Benefit for the Author

1. This study provides insights into the state of the graffiti scene in Surabaya, based on the author's interviews with graffiti artists who contributed to this project.
2. To enhance and refine the author's skills as a graphic designer in creating visual books that adhere to design principles and incorporate visually appealing elements that resonate with the target audience.
3. Drawing inspiration from the energy and positive spirit of the graffiti artists in Surabaya, which I can apply to my creative process and the connections I build in my daily life.

B. Benefits for the Surabaya graffiti scene

1. This book serves as a form of documentation and archival record that holds artistic and historical value regarding the figure of Kadilsaster, and can subsequently serve as a reference for other graffiti artists in the city of Surabaya.
2. It can serve as inspiration for graffiti artists in Surabaya to be more enthusiastic about documenting and archiving their work.
3. Creating opportunities for expressive and creative collaboration among graffiti artists in Surabaya.
4. Keeping the flame alive, just as the Surabaya graffiti scene has done all along, so that the city's graffiti artists can continue to create and build their presence.

C. Benefits for the general public

1. To introduce the public to the existence of an urban phenomenon found on the streets of Surabaya—namely, graffiti—in a way that is generally acceptable.
2. Educating the public that graffiti isn't limited to the streets but can be applied to various media they frequently encounter in their daily lives within the community.
3. To reduce the negative stigma associated with graffiti in Surabaya, thereby fostering positive relationships between the community and graffiti artists in the city.

D. Benefits for Organizations

1. This book is intended to serve as a reference for students, particularly those majoring in Visual Communication Design, in understanding book design, the archiving of works, and the adaptation of existing graffiti into design works that are well-received across various media formats.
2. This design serves as a good example of how appropriate layout and design can facilitate effective communication, ensuring that information is accurately conveyed to the audience, and demonstrates the use of visual storytelling techniques as a key component of Visual Communication Design.
3. To foster greater appreciation for various forms of art, particularly graffiti, so that it is accepted as a form of visual art rather than merely being viewed as vandalism or street litter that is considered a nuisance to the public.
4. To enhance the image of the University of National Development “Veteran” East Java as an institution that is open and accepting of artistic phenomena that are inseparable from the life of the nation and state, so that any form of art can be regarded as a form of national service through the creative expression of Indonesia's youth.

1.7 Framework

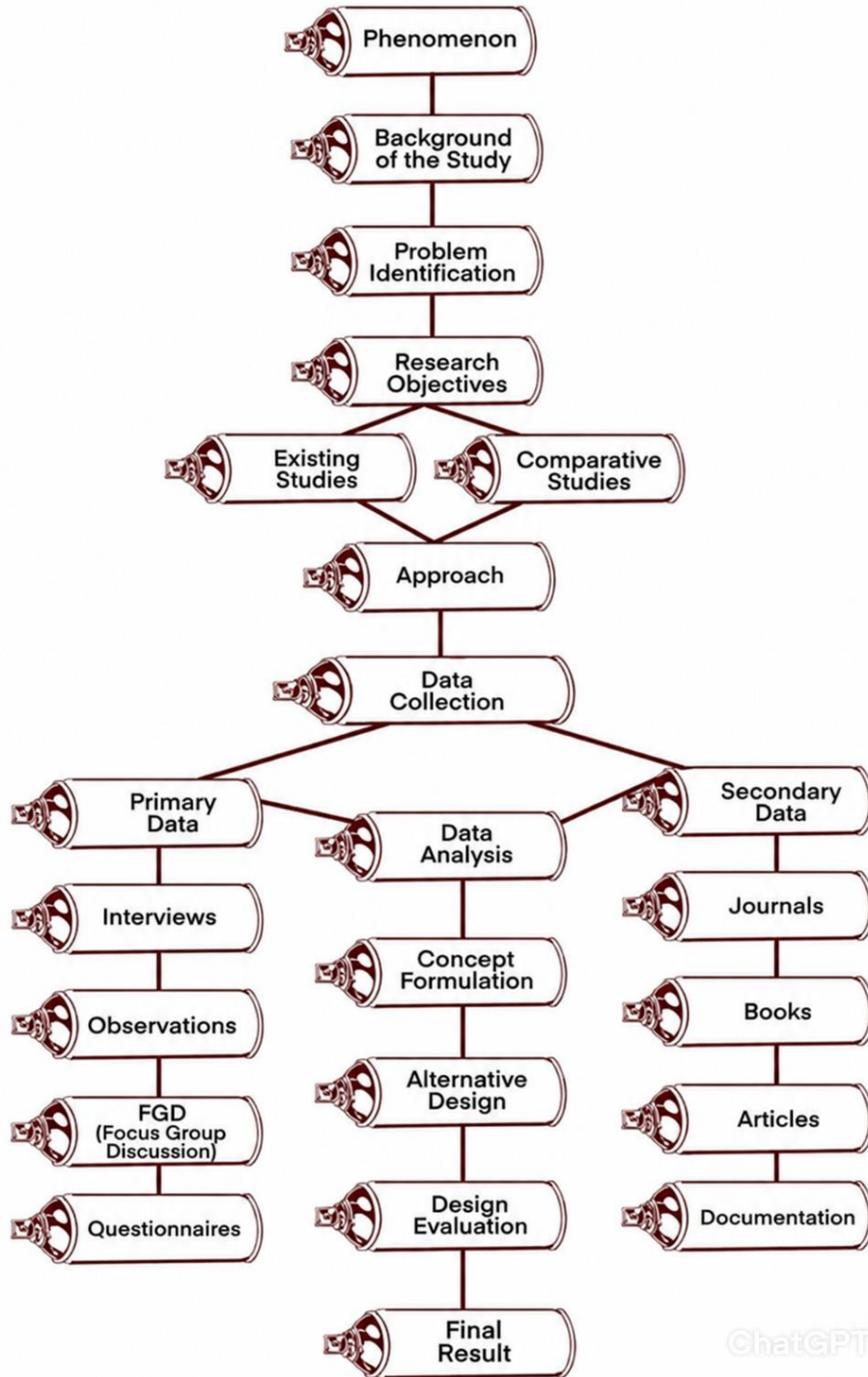


Figure 1. 1 Framework

(Source: Personal Documents, 2025)