

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Graffiti is one form of visual expression that is growing rapidly in various major cities in the world, including Indonesia. Since its inception, graffiti has been synonymous with freedom of expression and has become an important part of urban culture. In Indonesia, traces of graffiti can be found since the time of the struggle for independence through struggle slogans on the walls of the city, which then transformed into a media of socio-political criticism in the 1998 Reformasi era through collective works of art such as Taring Padi and Comic Pharmacies. Entering the 2000s, graffiti is increasingly rooted in urban culture with the presence of street art communities in various cities, including Surabaya, which actively organizes activities related to graffiti. Now, graffiti not only appears in public spaces, but is also present in private spaces such as cafes, hotels, and galleries, even integrated in the creative industry. According to data from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) (2024), the visual art sub-sector including murals and graffiti contributes significantly to Indonesia's creative economy, along with the increasing market demand for urban visual design. This phenomenon shows that graffiti has undergone a shift in meaning: from a mere street action that is considered vandalism, to a creative medium that has aesthetic, social, and economic values, and is relevant for teenager who are in the phase of exploring identity and creativity.

This shift in meaning is also reflected through events such as the Meeting of Styles Indonesia, King Royal Pride, and *Koneksi Antar Kampung* that elevate graffiti as an expression of culture, bring together local and international artists, and provide space for collaboration and community empowerment. Despite this, negative stigma is still attached, some people consider graffiti as “visual waste” that damages the beauty of the city, especially works that are made without permission or that are considered unaesthetic, as explained by Arsyadi (2017), which emphasizes that people's perceptions are influenced by the location, social context, and quality of the work. This phenomenon reflects the dynamic between artistic expression and public perception, showing that graffiti is now beginning to be recognized as a contemporary art form with cultural, social, and economic values, although educational and collaborative efforts between artists, government, and society are still needed to reduce negative stigma and make graffiti an integral part of Indonesia's rich and diverse urban culture identity.

Similar conditions also occur in the city of Surabaya, one of the big cities with a fairly active street art ecosystem. The city has a vibrant graffiti community, one of which is ARC Boys, which is often involved in graffiti festivals both nationally and internationally. Based on the observations of researchers at the *Koneksi Antar Kampung* Vol.4 festival held on October 26-27, 2024 in Gribig Village, Malang, it can be seen that many teenagers show interest in graffiti art. However, they still face challenges in understanding basic techniques and how to channel these interests appropriately, so there is a need for learning media that can facilitate their exploration.

Beginners tend to choose simple styles such as tagging or throw-ups because they are easier to apply, while more complex styles such as wildstyles are difficult to understand without clear guidance, so educational programs are needed to develop their technical abilities and creativity optimally. This phenomenon shows that although interest in graffiti is high, limited knowledge and experience remain obstacles for teenager in exploring the full potential of urban art. Collaboration between the art community, the government, and educational institutions is very important to create an ecosystem that supports the development of graffiti art positively and constructively. Teenagers aged 16-18 years are the most potential group to be introduced to graffiti art. In this age range, they are in the self-discovery phase and have a high need to express creativity. Data from Badan Pusat Statistik (2023) shows that the total population of Indonesia in the age group of 15-19 years reaches about 22.13 million people, or approximately 7.9% of the total population. Proportionally projected, the age group of 16-18 years covers almost half of that number, so it can be estimated to be in the range of 10-11 million people.

This figure shows that teenager in this age range are a fairly large and strategic group to pay attention to, especially because they are in the development phase of self-identity, creativity exploration, and the search for the right place for expression. Thus, presenting learning media such as graffiti coloring books is not only relevant to support their artistic interests, but also important in directing the creative energy of teenager not to be channeled into vandalism practices, but into positive and directed forms of exploration. The graffiti learning media available today are still limited and not fully in accordance with the needs of teenager. Most of the tutorials circulating on the internet are in the form of videos or technical articles that place more emphasis on procedural aspects so that they tend to be difficult to understand by beginners who do not have a basic knowledge of fine arts, making the learning process passive because participants only watch or read without getting space to experiment directly. On the other hand, some books on graffiti on the market generally only focus on the theory, history, or

documentation of the artist's work, without including applicable practical guidelines so that teenager who are in the exploration phase of creativity do not get learning tools that allow them to be actively involved and process interactively.

The existing coloring book media, such as the work of Muckizm or Alber, is also aimed at children with simple illustrations that are purely entertainment; although it can provide an introduction to the forms of graffiti letters, this media does not have a deep educational purpose, for example in terms of the introduction of graffiti structures, coloring techniques, or relevant visual design principles, so it is less effective if used as a serious learning media for adolescents. Meanwhile, works such as Graffletters by Mrioes are more of a catalogue of graffiti styles that feature variations of letters and visual styles but do not provide systematic instruction for beginners, making it more useful as a visual reference for experienced artists than as a learning tool for teenagers who are new to graffiti. This condition shows a gap in the availability of graffiti learning media that is applicable, interactive, and in accordance with the developmental needs of adolescents aged 16-18 years, even though this age group has great potential to be directed to positive and creative activities through appropriate learning media.

In the context of design and art education, it is important to present learning media that are fun, interactive, and in accordance with the learning style of adolescents so that the learning process does not feel stiff or boring. One medium that has great potential for this purpose is a coloring book, because in addition to being simple in its use, this medium is able to present a learning experience that involves active participation. According to the research of Febriani. Nufian S. & Dewi (2018) visual-based media is proven to be more effective in facilitating concept understanding compared to narrative texts, especially for young age groups who tend to be more responsive to concrete and visual forms of learning.

Through coloring activities, adolescents can directly get to know various styles of graffiti, practice combining colors, and learn basic techniques such as fill in which is an important foundation in visual art practice. Furthermore, this activity also plays a role in developing fine motor skills, improving concentration, and fostering self-confidence when they successfully complete a work. In addition, coloring books have an inclusive nature because they do not require special facilities such as studio space, expensive equipment or digital devices, so they can be easily accessed by various groups. With these advantages, coloring books can be a relevant alternative media in introducing graffiti to adolescents while encouraging a positive exploration of their creativity.

The urgency of using coloring books as a learning medium for graffiti is increasingly real when looking at the limitations of current learning media. Most of the available media is still in the form of video tutorials on the internet or short articles that emphasize more technical steps without contextual explanations. For novice adolescents, this form of media is often difficult to follow because the tempo of delivery is too fast, unsystematic, and does not provide space for them to practice repeatedly. Meanwhile, books on graffiti that have been circulating generally contain documentation of the artist's work, developmental history, or letter style catalogs, so they are more informative than instructional. This condition shows a gap between the need for adolescents to learn practically and the media available in the field.

Graffiti coloring books are present as an answer to this gap because they are able to combine educational and explorative functions in one medium. Coloring activities not only provide simple guides that are easy to understand, but also provide opportunities for teenagers to create according to their imagination. With the print format, this media is also more accessible than digital devices that require an internet connection and certain devices. Therefore, the presence of graffiti coloring books is an important urgency in providing learning tools that are effective, fun, and relevant to the characteristics of adolescents as visual and creative learners.

These findings indicate that adolescents need a medium that allows them to learn gradually, while still having the opportunity to create according to their respective styles. In this context, coloring books have the advantage of being able to combine instructional aspects with visual exploration spaces, so that they not only serve as a means of entertainment, but also as a medium of graffiti recognition that is more systematic, educational, and relevant to the developmental needs of 16-18 years of age. In other words, coloring books can be an effective bridge to introduce graffiti as an art form while directing teenagers' interest in useful creative activities.

Various studies have discussed graffiti-based media and the effectiveness of visual media in supporting the learning process. Research in Bandung (2020) designed a visual book to introduce graffiti to the general public. The results show that visual media can attract the attention of the audience, but the format used is more documentary and informative, so it does not provide practical exploration space for readers. Febriani, Nufian S. & Dewi (2018) through his research found that visual-based media is more effective than narrative texts in improving concept understanding in young age groups, although this study did not produce an applicative visual work design. Popular works such as coloring books by Muckizm and Alber show the

potential of coloring media in attracting readers, but the content is more entertainment-oriented without a purposeful educational approach. Meanwhile, the book *Graffletters* by Mrioes emphasizes its function as a catalogue of graffiti styles for the reference of experienced artists, making it less relevant for novice teenagers.

Thesestudies show that graffiti-based visual media has great potential to be used as a means of education and exploration, but none has been specifically designed for the youth segment aged 16-18 years. Thus, this study occupies a novelty space by presenting the design of graffiti coloring books that not only serve as entertainment, but also combine aspects of education, creative exploration, and practical learning that are in accordance with the characteristics of adolescent development.

In fact, this design is also important because it answers real needs in the community, especially among adolescents who have an interest in graffiti but often do not know how to start correctly. This condition has the potential to cause problems if it is not facilitated with the right media, because the interest can be channeled in a negative direction, for example through the act of doodling public facilities without permission which is then considered vandalism. In fact, graffiti is essentially a form of visual cultural expression that has aesthetic value, creativity, and urban identity. The presence of graffiti coloring books is expected to be an alternative to positive learning media by providing a directed exploration platform, so that adolescents not only practice technically through coloring activities, but also understand the basic principle that graffiti can be managed as a valuable art, not just a destructive action. Thus, this design not only contributes to the development of scholarship in the academic field of visual communication design through the creation of innovative learning media, but also provides wider social impact by helping to build a more constructive public perception of graffiti as part of contemporary art practice.

## **1.2 Problem Identification**

Based on the background description, several problems can be identified, namely:

1. Graffiti is still often seen as a form of vandalism that damages the beauty of the city. This happens because most works are made in public spaces without permission, giving rise to the perception that graffiti is illegal. In fact, graffiti also has strong aesthetic, cultural identity, and creativity if managed properly (Arsyadi, 2017).
2. Questionnaire data states that adolescents aged 16-18 years are a group with a fairly high interest in graffiti. Most are only familiar with simple styles like tagging or throw-

ups. Without an understanding of basic techniques and visual principles, they have difficulty exploring their creative potential optimally.

3. The graffiti learning media available today are still very limited and tend to be theoretical or just entertainment. Online tutorials tend to be procedural, while graffiti books focus more on documentation of works, rather than practical guides. This makes it difficult for adolescents to find learning media that suits their needs.
4. Until now, there has been no media for learning graffiti that is truly applicable, interactive, and in accordance with the characteristics of adolescent development. The existing media is more oriented towards knowledge or entertainment, but does not provide a direct exploration space for adolescents to be creative. In fact, at the age of self-discovery, they need creative means that allow active involvement (Zahira & Suriani, 2025), so that interest in graffiti can be channeled positively and purposefully..

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

How to design an educational coloring book in graffiti for 16 – 18 year olds?

### **1.4 Problem Limitation**

In order for the research to be more focused, the problem limits are set as follows:

1. Designed media focused on the shape of graffiti coloring books. Other media such as drawing are not discussed in this design. The selection of coloring books is based on their interactive nature, easily accessible, and relevant to the needs of adolescents to practice independently.
2. Design targets are limited to adolescents aged 16-18 years. This age was chosen because it is a time of identity seeking and creativity exploration, so it has the potential to be introduced to graffiti art through an educational approach. Other age groups, both children and adults, were not the focus of this study.
3. The content presented in the book is limited to the introduction of familiar graffiti letters and styles such as, tagging, throw-up, simple piece, wildstyle, funkystyle, oldschool, retro, dan character.

### **1.5 Design Purpose**

The purpose of this design is set so that the research results are more targeted and can provide benefits in accordance with the needs of the target, namely adolescents aged 16-18 years. Specifically the purpose of this design is as follows:

1. Designing learning media in the form of interactive and applicative graffiti coloring books, so that it can be an alternative learning tool for adolescents. This book is designed by considering the visual aspects, layout, and content that match the characteristics of young people.
2. Provide creative exploration space for adolescents in knowing and practicing graffiti art positively. Through coloring activities, adolescents can understand letter shapes, basic styles, and coloring techniques, as well as practice their motor and aesthetic skills.
3. Reduce society's negative stigma on graffiti by introducing the educational side of the art. With structured learning media, graffiti is not only seen as vandalism, but also as a means of developing creativity.
4. Support the art learning process outside the formal classroom, both by schools and communities. This book can be used as additional teaching materials or fun independent training media, according to the needs of adolescent development.
5. Be an example of innovative media design in the field of Visual Communication Design, especially in the context of urban art education. Thus, this design is expected to contribute to the development of design science as well as provide real solutions to the needs of graffiti learning media.

## **1.6 Design Benefits**

### **A. Benefits For The Author**

1. Provide direct experience in designing learning media based on coloring books with visual communication design principles, so that the theory learned can be applied in a real way.
2. Hone the author's ability to integrate design theory, research, and practice into products that benefit the target audience.
3. Adding a portfolio of relevant work, so that it can be a provision for academic and professional development in the field of visual communication design.

### **B. Benefits For Teenagers**

1. Become a means of exploring positive creativity through graffiti typography coloring activities, so that their creative energy is channeled purposefully.
2. Provide a basic understanding of lettering styles, simple coloring techniques, and graffiti visual principles in an easy-to-learn manner.

3. Reduce the tendency of vandalism behavior by providing a fun and educational alternative to learning media.
4. Cultivate a sense of confidence and appreciation for urban art as part of their creative identity in the social environment.

**C. Benefits For Public**

1. Helps change public perceptions that graffiti is not merely vandalism, but also art with aesthetic and educative values.
2. Adds public insight into the role of graffiti art as part of the contemporary visual culture that develops in big cities
3. Encourage the creation of a more positive relationship between the community and urban art actors, so that public spaces can be seen as more inclusive.

**D. Benefits For The Institution**

1. Become an academic reference for Visual Communication Design students in understanding the design of applied urban art-based learning media.
2. Support educational institutions and the art community in an effort to encourage the creative activities of adolescents through media that match their interests.
3. Make a real contribution to the development of innovative learning media that are relevant to the socio-cultural needs and development of the times.

## 1.7 Design Framework

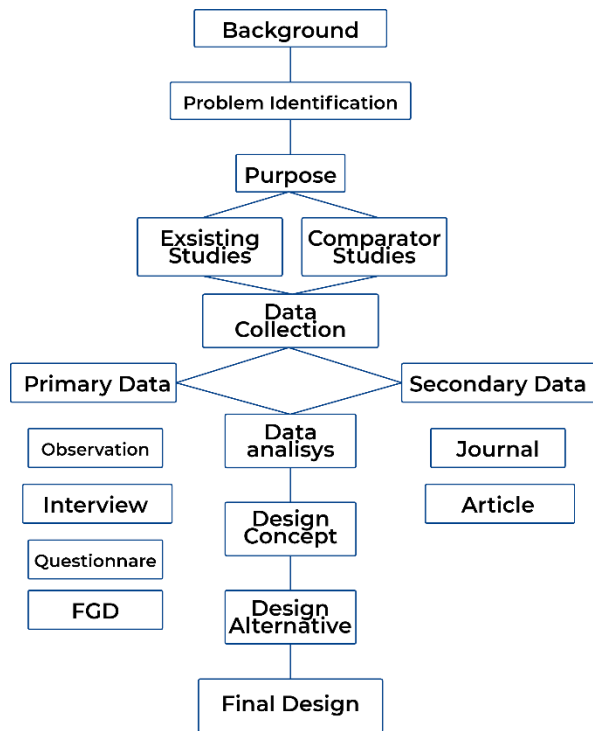


Figure 1. 1 Design Framework  
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2025)