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Building Contextual Perception through Background Illustrations in Visual Novel with Historical Theme

Dendi Pratama¹, Winny Gunarti Widya Wardani², Taufiq Akbar³

ABSTRACT

Visual novel is an audio visual game based on narration and illustration. Japan as a pioneer of visual novel games has mastered the world gaming market. In Indonesia, local creators strive to produce competitive visual novels. The study shows that there is a need for local creators to display visual novels with historical backgrounds, because most of the visual novels circulating are generally modern. Researchers were encouraged to design background illustrations from visual novels with the history of Majapahit's glory because they were rich in cultural values. Background illustration is a visual element which is also important to build contextual perception as a form of nonverbal communication that carries cultural messages. Background illustrations here refer to archaeological evidence in the form of Bajangratu Gate, Tikus Temple, and Wringin Lawang Gate. Qualitatively, this study discusses the creation of visual space with a proxemic study approach in the theory of nonverbal communication. The creation combines the characteristics of the remaining temples of the Majapahit civilization to build contextual perceptions of life in the past. The meaning of the elements is further differentiated according to the informational, symbolic, and image meanings, by looking at the visual elements of the building and the natural environment. This study concludes that the background illustration has visual strength to shape contextual perception through visual space. This can be a reference for local creators to create other models of background illustrations with the Indonesian history theme, and make visual novel as a more communicative and interesting educational medium.

Keywords: Background Illustration, Contextual Perceptions, Majapahit History, Visual Novel.

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1. Introduction

Visual novel or *bijuaru noberu* is an audiovisual game originating from Japan. This game is included in the best-selling game type. Japan produces a variety of visual novel titles every month, so

¹ Lecturer of Visual Communication Design, Universitas Indraprasta PGRI, Jl. Nangka No. 58, Jakarta Selatan 12530, Indonesia. E-mail: dendi.pratama@unindra.ac.id

² Lecturer of Visual Communication Design, Universitas Indraprasta PGRI, Jl. Nangka No. 58, Jakarta Selatan 12530, Indonesia. E-mail: winny.gunartiww@unindra.ac.id

³ Lecturer of Visual Communication Design, Universitas Indraprasta PGRI, Jl. Nangka No. 58, Jakarta Selatan 12530, Indonesia. E-mail: taufiq.akbar@unindra.ac.id

the visual novel market is increasingly competitive. According to Kusnawi and Firmansyah (2015: 5.7-5), data from *Gamestation* shows that Japan is capable of producing four visual novel creations in one month.

The attraction of visual novel games is the narration delivered through the dialog box as a choice of branching storylines. Visual novels are visualized with static backgrounds and sometimes dynamic characters, complete with sound effects. However, even though it is dominated by static images, visual novels are not just visualizing stories, but in them there are end-of-story choices that contain puzzles or mysteries, giving rise to attraction for the players. Cavallaro (2010:9) said, the strength of the visual novel lies in the right and fast action to respond to dialogue and the choice of storyline as a way to enter the following narrative and scene branches.

The study of the game is interesting to do because of the rapid development of the gaming industry. James Newman (2004:3) said, there are three important things that underlie the reason for the importance of conducting game studies, namely the increasingly fast videogame industry, the popularity of videogames in the community that continue to encourage creativity, and the growing interaction between humans and computers, especially in the era of information technology as it is today.

In the global gaming market, Japan as a pioneer of visual novel games has long dominated the world game market. In general, data on the game industry in Japan in 2016 mentions that the domestic market has reached 1.38 trillion yen, while the market value of the global gaming industry has reached 8.99 trillion yen (<http://jurnalotaku.com/2017/06/09/market-game-japan-reach-138-trillion-yen-break-record/>).

The dominance of games from Japan has encouraged local game developers, such as in Indonesia. The potential of the game business in Indonesia is considered more promising because of its rapid growth, compared to other countries in the Southeast Asia region. The total revenue of the gaming industry in Indonesia is predicted to reach US \$ 879.7 million in 2017, and put Indonesia as the 16th country with the biggest gaming business potential from 100 countries researched by Newzoo. This type of mobile game is considered the most suitable for the market in Indonesia, because most new users of smartphones (<https://dailysocial.id/post/melirik-papatan-besar-industri-gaming-di-indonesia>).

Visual novels are games that can be played through personal computers, using consoles, or mobile phones, with adventure genres that rely on the strength of visual characters and visual narratives. Another attraction of visual novels is background illustrations that can build the player's imagination. Generally the background space illustrated in Indonesian visual novels is a modern picture with an urban atmosphere. This is due to the influence of visual novel production from Japan which controls the visual novel game market. Therefore most of the visual styles that circulate on gaming sites are generally manga-style. No wonder the competitors also rely on the strength of anime-style illustrations to be able to compete. A number of visual novels by local developers are quite successful in attracting attention to players.

The study conducted by Pratama, et al. (2018) mentions the existence of several Indonesian visual novel productions that have been popular, including *Dating Sims-Masa SMA*, *Lovestory: Highschool Romance*, *Kode Keras Cowok Dari Cewek*, *INheritance: Boundary of Existence*, dan *Nusantara: Legend of The Winged Ones*. Interesting things that are noted by researchers, visual novels with historical backgrounds such as *Nusantara: Legend of The Winged Ones*, the work of the developer SweetChiel, which was promoted through sweetchiel.itch.io, has been downloaded by more than ten thousand users. This shows that local production that prioritizes narratives set in the history and



Fig 1: Examples of Indonesian visual novels with historical backgrounds, *Nusantara: Legend of the winged ones*.

Picture source: <https://sweetchiel.itch.io/new-nusantara-legend-of-the-winged-ones>.

culture of Indonesia turns out to be enough to attract the attention of users and have a selling value. This visual novel combines the backgrounds of archipelago kingdoms in Indonesia with fictional characters.

The observations of researchers on Indonesian visual novel background illustrations then became the basis of researchers to conduct surveys on what themes were actually in the view of the designers as local game developers who were considered to have potential attractiveness.

The results of a survey conducted by students on a sample of 250 visual communication design students at Universitas Indraprasta PGRI Jakarta showed that the need for a visual novel theme was divided into the needs of themes of romance, historical themes, and a blend of historical themes with romance. The survey results show that 84 (18%) students need romance themes, 207 (46%) students need historical themes, and 164 (36%) students need historical themes by combining love stories. The results of this survey underlie this study, that the need to make visual novels with historical backgrounds is quite significant, as seen on the following chart.

Similar research written by Kusnawi and R. Firmansyah in the Proceedings of the 2015 National Information and Multimedia Technology Seminar at STMIK AMIKOM Yogyakarta (2015: 5,7-6) also explained that visual novels with historical backgrounds can basically encourage players to learn history, and open Indonesian game production opportunities, by capturing players, and marketing them.

There is also the creation of visual novels set in the history of Majapahit, entitled "Tikta Kavya" by Mojiken's studio from Surabaya. Research on visual novels shows that the creation of Majapahit's central

character that is made according to the tastes of today's teenagers in visual novels with historical and cultural themes can be effective communication (Estidianti and Lakoro, 2014: 49).

The results of the data prompted the research team to begin designing a background illustrations with a historical theme. Researchers chose the history of Majapahit for the visual novel theme, as part of Indonesia's phenomenal history. This choice is based on the idea that the Majapahit civilization which has been more than 700 years old contains cultural values as a source of knowledge that needs to be preserved and passed on to future generations. The glory era of the Majapahit Kingdom was not only a legend, but a true story that left many archaeological relics, including in the Trowulan region, Mojokerto, Central Java, such as the Bajangratu Gate, Tikus Temple, and Wringin Lawang Gate. These three archeological relics are used as references in making background illustrations, as examples of visual novels set in the history of Majapahit.

Historical themes as a reference for building narratives which are then visualized through illustrations are important, because they become visual strength. Research conducted by Dennis van der Geest (2014-2015: 10) explains that the narrative world can be used in different ways in discussing games or especially visual novels. Not only is the text dedicated to attracting players, but the sound, artwork and character design are presented for the same purpose. The narrative world can be built not only by showing or notifying, but the information conveyed is very important. If it is well visualized, the reader or player can conclude the message in question, but the reader or player has also built a more personal narrative world, which encourages the desire to find out what's happening on the next page, and according to Bruner (1986 in Geest, 2014- 2015: 10), the same principle can be applied to video games. Visual novels rely on the strength of narratives like this, through introducing meaningful characters into the story, or by letting the reader imagine the description first, or presenting stories that the player must really find, while the player is only given a little information. All of this, of course, is

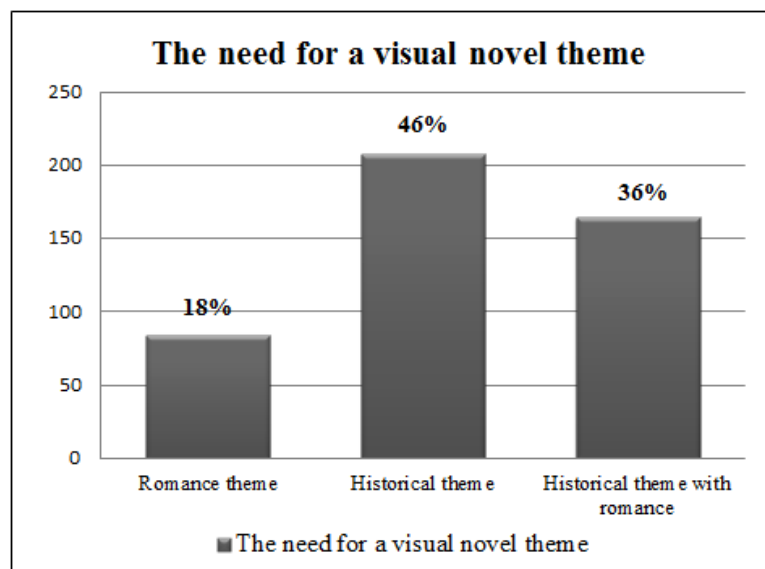


Fig. 2: Survey results of the need for a visual novel theme

supported by background illustrations. Therefore, background illustrations are an important visual element for building contextual perception.

As a visual communication design product, historical background illustrations can be a visual advantage and a special attraction because it encourages the imagination of players to imagine people's lives in the past. Background is the setting or part of the scene that appears to be located at the back of the scene or information that provides details or resources for a news story (Danesi, 2009: 34). The research question of this study is how to build contextual perceptions through design elements as background illustrations of visual novel games with the theme of the history of Majapahit?

This study aims to provide an example of a visual novel background illustration design, which combines visual literature from the temples of the Majapahit Kingdom. Background illustrations as visual elements that build contextual perceptions are designed in a visual space, as a form of nonverbal communication. According to Mulyana (2007), contextual perception is the interpretation of a message in communication, whether verbal or nonverbal, and the meaning of a relationship that can be obtained by placing it in a context. Context is the setting of the object we perceive. Interpretation of meaning in context becomes an important factor in understanding communication and social relations.

Through the study of background illustrations it is expected that Indonesian visual novels can appear with cultural identities, while carrying cultural messages. Visual novels with a history of Indonesia can also help preserve the culture and civilization that once existed, and become a source of inspiration to encourage local creators to create works that reflect the culture of their own country. This study is different from previous visual novel studies, because this study emphasizes more on the discussion of creating background illustrations and their meanings that can shape contextual perceptions. Research on visual novels previously discussed more about the creation of visual characters, visual narratives, and visual novel understandings in general.

The discussion in this study is described qualitatively with a proxemic study approach in the theory of nonverbal communication. Visual language can take place verbally or nonverbally, in the form of representational codes in the form of images as messenger text. The arrangement of signs displayed through visual space is a collection of signs with meaningful cultural messages. Background illustrations in visual novels with historical backgrounds are designed to build contextual perceptions about the atmosphere of the Majapahit Kingdom. For this reason the background illustration can be interpreted denotatively and connotatively. The meaning of the elements can be distinguished again according to the informational meaning, in the form of messages from signs that are seen directly. Then the symbolic meaning, in the form of a message from signs that are commonly known. Furthermore, the meaning of images, in the form of messages from signs that encourage different imagination and perception. To see the relation between visual elements from the background illustration in the visual space, the discussion is further differentiated according to the visual elements of the building and the visual elements of the natural environment.

Through discussion of the visual elements of the background, this study intends to show that the background visual elements have visual strength to convey cultural messages. This can be an important reference for local creators to be creative in creating visual novels with the theme of Indonesian history. The discussion of visual space in visual novel games has been shown to have the potential to bring cultural messages through representational codes, both informational, symbolic, and images.

The next description of this study is an explanation of the understanding of visual space, a brief history of Majapahit, three archaeological evidence that is used as a reference in the illustrations in the form of Bajangratu Gate, Tikus Temple, and Wringin Lawang Gate, analytical methods in the discussion process, and discussion of reading visual signatures. in creating background illustrations designed to shape contextual perceptions through buildings and the natural environment.

1.1 Visual space

The definition of visual space in the context of the visual novel is the space seen by the player on the screen, whether it is a computer monitor or cell phone screen. In the study of space (proxemic) Edward T. Hall (in Littlejohn, 1996) says that visualization of space and time, as a background, can be seen in its meaning through the relation between the structure of both nonverbal visual signs. In semiotics, space acts as a sign. Space and time produce a meaning with the movement of objects. In

visual novels, proxemic messages can be conveyed through background illustrations, taking into account the visualization of time to explain. Semiotics, elements in the visual space are used to signify, among others, individuality, values, one's lifestyle, feelings, and desires.

As a form of nonverbal communication, visualizing the background can give a picture of the space and time of the place where and when the event occurred. Sudjiman said (in Wardani, 2011), all information and instructions relating to time, space, and the atmosphere of events in a story can build a background. Background illustration can be a representation, that is conveying meaning through visual signification. As Barker (2014) said, representation is a number of processes in which signification practices seem to describe objects or practices that occur in the real world. Representation can mean as far as being understood as a consequence of different sign systems that create meaning through difference. Visual elements that are built through background illustrations can also represent cultural messages, especially images of community life in the past. The description of it is designed through visual space as a proxemic study.

1.2 History of Majapahit and cultural messages

The story of history which is used as a theme in visual novels aims to bring a message about the history of human civilization. A visual novel background illustration that is placed in a cultural context, is a work of art that has relationships with things in the environment where the work was made and consumed, so it contains many cultural messages.

The history of the Majapahit Kingdom lasted between 1293 AD and 1389 AD, consisting of the era of progress, the era of decline, and the era of destruction. Each era leaves a historical record of civilization which is then considered as local wisdom. The meaning of culture itself according to Raymond Williams (in Barker, 2014) adopted the spirit of anthropological understanding of culture from the 19th century, to assert culture as "a whole and distinctive way of life". Therefore, an illustration that refers to the inheritance of a building form of the Majapahit Kingdom can be considered to represent a picture of the lives of its people and civilizations in the past.

To underlie this background illustration concept, observations have been made to Trowulan Subdistrict, Mojokerto Regency, which is the center of the legacy of the archeological evidence of the Majapahit Kingdom. Data from the Majapahit Information Center Museum said, to date, there are around 28 sites that have been successfully excavated and reconstructed sketches as Majapahit City. There are still dozens of sites that have not been studied, which are spread in Trowulan District, Mojokerto Regency, covering an area of 4,647.14 km². But for the discussion in this study, the researchers presented three temples which were used as samples to create background illustrations, namely Bajangratu Gate, Tikus Temple, and Wringin Lawang Gate. The legacy of the Majapahit architectural building provides an overview of technology and art as the ability of society at that time as a civilization that has an impact on civilization today.

1.3 Bajangratu gate

According to Majapahit Information Center Museum, the Bajangratu gate serves as the entrance to a sacred building to commemorate the death of Raja Jayanegara. In Negarakertagama, the King is said to return to the world of Wisnu 1328 Saka. The name Bajangratu was first mentioned in *Oudheikunding Verslag (OV)* in 1915. The Bajangratu gate is located in the village of Temon, with the gate type "Paduraksa", which is a gate that has a roof. The building is made of brick, while the stairs and doorways are made of andesite stone. This gate has a height of 16.5 meters, with a wide entrance hall 1.40 meters.

This gate is divided into parts of the legs, body and roof. Coupled with the wing and wall fence on both sides. At the foot of the gate there is a decorative panel that illustrates the story of "Sri Tanjung". At the top of the body, the doorway was decorated with tendrils. The roof is a multilevel shape with a square top. On the roof



Fig. 3: Research Team in front of bajangratu gate at Temon village, Trowulan.

there is an ornament in the form of a spider's head flanked by lions, sun reliefs, legged dragons, eagle heads, and one-eyed reliefs or monocle cyclop. These reliefs function as protective or repellent of disasters.

1.4 Tikus temple

According to the Majapahit Information Center Museum, this temple is also located in the village of Temon, as a hermitage building. Tikus Temple was discovered in 1914 by a resident. The discovery of this temple building coincided with the occurrence of a rat outbreak in the area, which turned out to originate from a temple mound. Tikus Temple stands at a depth of 3.5 meters below the ground surface, with a square measuring 22.5 x 22.5 m. On the left and right of the stairs leading to the entrance, there are pool chambers. The structure of the main building consists of legs, body, roof. The legs, there are showers or also called *jaladwara* along the foot of the temple, which is considered as the place for the flow of the holy water of *Amrta*, the place of all sources of life. There are two types of showers, namely *padma* or lotus, and *makara*. In the body part, in the center of the building are towers which symbolize Mount Mahameru, as a macro cosmos, where the gods reside. The roof was once the top of the towers, but now it has disappeared.



Fig. 4: Tikus Temple at Temon Village, Trowulan

1.5 Wringin lawang gate

According to the Majapahit Information Center Museum, Wringin Lawang Gate is located in Jatipasar Village. Raffles notes (1815) call it the Jati Pasar Gate. Whereas the Knebel writing (1907) calls it Wringin Lawang Gate. This gate is made of brick, except for the stone steps. The gate shape is *bentar* temple (the temple is split in two) with four long sections measuring 13 m (P), 11.5 m (L), and 15.50 m (T). In the southwest courtyard, 14 wells were found. The well model is in the form of cylindrical and cube. Traditional houses generally have wells in front of the house. Wringin Lawang Gate faces west, so it is estimated that this gate serves as the entrance to the building complex. Around the gate there are also brick structures that are considered part of the wall around the complex



Fig. 5: Wringin Lawang Gate at Jatipasar Village, Trowulan

That is the description of the three temples which are used as references to make examples of background illustrations in visual novels with the theme of the history of Majapahit.

2. Method

The discussion in this study is described qualitatively with a proxemic study approach in the theory of nonverbal communication. Visual language can take place verbally or nonverbally. In the context of nonverbal communication, according to Fiske (2007), communication is the codes presented through gestures, postures, the nature of sound, or representational codes in the form of text. Text in this case can be in the form of writing or drawing as messages, information, and ideas, without having to deal directly with the communicator. The arrangement of signs displayed through visual space is a sign building containing cultural messages. This is in accordance with what Piliang said (in Walker, 2010), that culture can be seen as a building built by a combination of signs, with certain codes that are meaningful.

Background illustrations in visual novels with historical backgrounds must be designed to build contextual perceptions about the atmosphere of the Majapahit Kingdom. To achieve this, the

researcher also based the background illustration on the meaning of the two levels formulated by Barthes (2010), namely: visual elements that give denotative meaning, where images can be understood directly, and visual elements that give meaning indirectly or connotatively, where the image is implicitly understood. As for Barthes (2010) also divides the meaning in visual texts into three layers, namely: informational, symbolic, and images.

Background illustrations with informational meanings are designed to convey messages based on things that are seen directly, both through the lines, shapes, fields and colors. Then the background illustrations with symbolic meanings are designed to convey messages from signs that are commonly known and have become conventions in the community. While the background illustration with the meaning of the image is designed to convey a message that encourages the imagination of the player, and allows the emergence of different perceptions. The relation between visual elements as background

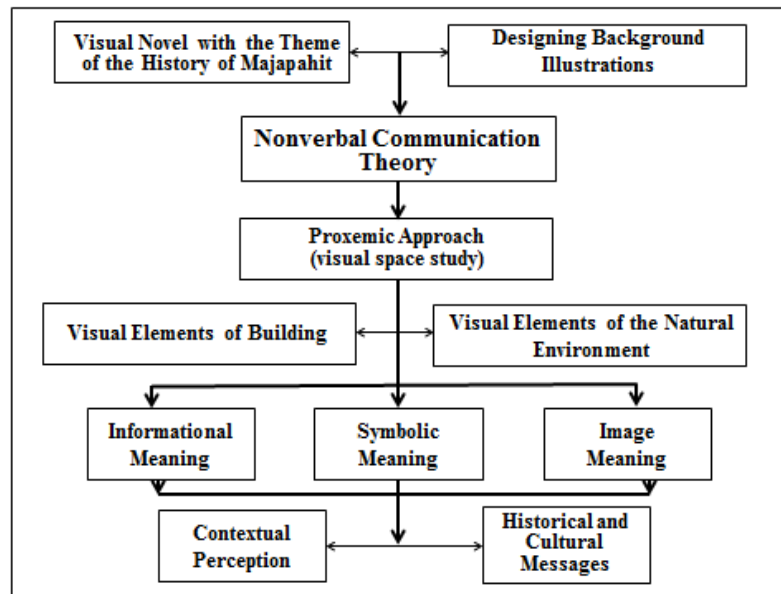


Fig. 6: Analytical method

illustrations in visual space can be distinguished according to: visual elements of the building (ie elements that visualize the shape of the main object) and visual elements of the natural environment (ie elements that visualize other elements around the main object). The following is a picture of the analysis method.

3. Contextual perception of the background illustration

In the concept and process of designing a visual novel background, this study re-examines images derived from literature and observations to display the background with visual elements of the building and visual elements of the natural environment. To visualize the background with visual elements of the natural environment, a background concept was made by taking part in the story of the founding of the Majapahit Kingdom, namely at Jayakatwang as Adipati Kediri rewarding Raden Wijaya a forest called Tarik Forest in an area now known as Trowulan District. Tarik Forest is visualized by adopting the type of forest in Java, Indonesia.

In the first stage, researchers sketched using pencils, combining the lush character of Indonesia's forests with high cliffs, as many are still found in forest areas in Java. After the pencil sketch is complete, the researcher performs manual coloring using colored pencils, in order to get a detailed picture before being digitally colored.

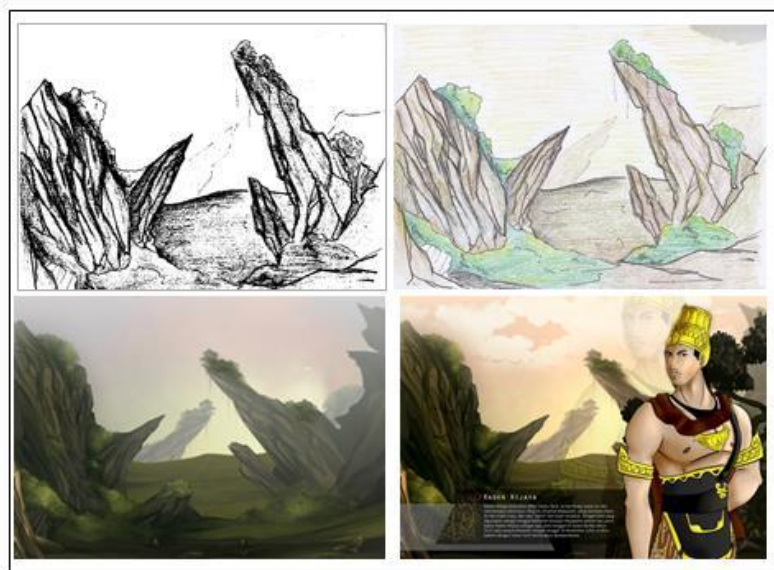


Fig. 7: Background illustration of the natural environment

The results of the background illustration above denotatively visualize large and pointed rocks. The distance of the rocks that look close together. The position of the rocks is described as being piled

up and some are elongated. The position of the rocks tends to cover the road. There is no shrub, only a stretch of grass. The rock looks gray in color, while the sky is described as purplish blue. Whereas connotatively, background illustrations build perceptions about the environment and life that are "hard". An environment that is full of challenges and struggles, which indirectly results in a formidable human character.

The contextual perception according to the informational meaning is, the visual element of rocks as an illustration of the natural environment, where the wealth of natural resources produces a portrait of the urban architecture of Majapahit, as a greatness in combining technological excellence in designing buildings with high-level art.

Based on the symbolic meaning, it can be said that the visual elements of rocks also represent the life of a civilization society that depends a lot on rocks, a symbol and spirit to realize the gods through places of worship, dwellings, and household appliances, besides using terracotta, ceramics, and metal. Whereas according to the meaning of images, visual elements that are dominated by rock images encourage the imagination of people's skills at that time in making temples, statues, reliefs, or stone inscriptions. The description of the background illustration about the natural environment that builds contextual perceptions can be explained briefly in the following table

Table 1: Contextual perception of the background space of the natural environment

Contextual perception of the natural environment elements			
Visual Space	Denotation	Connotation	Meaning
Background illustration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rocks - Long tapered rocks - Adjacent rock distance - Stacked rock position - Rocks tend to cover the streets - There are no shrubs, except grass - Gray colored stone - The sky is purplish blue 	<p>A living environment full of challenges and struggles. The "hard" environment at that time indirectly produced human characters that were also strong</p>	<p>Informational: The visual element of rocks as a natural resource, represents a portrait of Majapahit urban architecture, as a grandeur in combining technological excellence in designing a building with high-level art.</p> <p>Symbolic: Visual elements of big rocks represent the life of civilization that depends on rocks, a symbol and spirit to realize the gods through places of worship, homes, and household appliances.</p> <p>Image: Visual elements dominated by images of rocks encourage imagination about people's skills at that time in making temples, statues, reliefs, or stone inscriptions</p>

As for visualizing the background with visual elements of the building as visual objects that aim to encourage the player's imagination about the atmosphere of the Majapahit Kingdom. The depiction of the background of this building is related to the character of Tribhuwana Tunggaladewi, the first Majapahit Queen who ruled from 1328 to 1350 AD. Here the researchers took a view of one of the important building complexes in the capital city of Majapahit, namely Bajangratu Gate, Tikus Temple, and Wringin Lawang Gate.

Just like making background for the natural environment, the first step is to make pencil sketches, then manual coloring using colored pencils, and then a digital touch with digital painting techniques.

The results of the background illustration denotatively show the visualization of the building in the form of a gate and temple. The building consists of three parts, namely the foot, body and roof. Part of the foot is a low step. The body part is the doorway which also has stairs. While the roof looks storied with a pointed peak. On the right and left wing there are statues of guards holding beating weapons.



Fig. 8: Background illustration of the building

The building is described as having a dividing wall. The building is dark green, and the sky is described as reddish blue. On the left side of the building, it appears a Maja tree with many branches and roots that appear to hang. Whereas in connotative terms, the entire element above builds perceptions of a building complex, where people live in the downtown area of Majapahit.

The informational meaning is a visual element of a building capable of representing the shape of a gate and a temple that carries a message about the description of the city of Majapahit. In the newly established period, Majapahit experienced many rebellions. Raden Wijaya was the first king of Majapahit. Relations between elements in the visual space provide an overview of the place of residence of the people at that time. The gate and temple buildings with their dividing walls build imagination about safe community life.

Then the symbolic meaning is the perception of statues as guards holding weapons, as a symbol of the strength of the troops owned by the central government of Majapahit. The Majapahit kingdom has legislation to regulate the lives of its people. The book regulates both criminal law and civil law. Another symbolic meaning is the Maja tree. Maja tree builds imagination about the beginning of the story of Raden Wijaya naming his country with Majapahit. While the meaning of the image is the color of the purplish blue sky that encourages the player's imagination of unpleasant events. The color of the sky that is not bright tends to be perceived as a gloomy society. The following table outlines the meaning of the outline.

Table 2: Contextual perception of the background space of the building

Contextual perception of the building elements			
Visual Space	Denotation	Connotation	Meaning
Background Illustration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Buildings in the form of gates and temples - Foot section in the form of stairs - The body part in the form of a doorway which also has stairs - Storied roof section with a pointed peak - Parts of the right and left wings are decorated with statues of guards with beating weapons - Buildings have a barrier 	A complex of residential buildings in the downtown area of Majapahit.	Informational: The visual elements of the building carry a message about the description of the city of Majapahit. In the newly established period, Majapahit experienced many rebellions. Raden Wijaya was the first king of Majapahit. The relationship between elements in the visual space carries a message about the description of the residence of the people at that time. The gate and temple buildings with their dividing walls build imagination about safe community life.

wall

- Dark green building
- The sky is reddish blue
- There is a tree with many branches and roots that appear to hang.

Symbolic:

The visual element of a statue holding a weapon is a symbol of the strength of the troops owned by the central government of Majapahit. Another symbolic meaning is the Maja tree. Maja tree builds imagination about the beginning of the story of Raden Wijaya naming his country with Majapahit

Image:

The visual element that builds imagination is the color of a purplish blue sky. The color of the sky that is not bright tends to be perceived as a gloomy society.

Such is the discussion of background illustrations that can build contextual perceptions about people's lives in the Majapahit period. Background illustrations related to narration. Although the narrative in the visual novel is not the dominant visual strength, it still has an effect on the overall game (Pratama, et al, 2018). Narratives generally have to encourage the curiosity of the players. Therefore, the narrative needs to be supported by a background image that builds a certain perception.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the survey and the results of the design study on the background illustrations with historical themes, the study concludes that the background illustrations have visual strength to shape contextual perceptions through a background with visual elements of buildings and visual elements of the natural environment. This can be an important reference for local creators to be creative in creating visual novels with the theme of Indonesian history. The discussion of visual space in visual novel games has been shown to have the potential to bring cultural messages through representational codes, informationally, symbolically, and images. Informationally, through this study, it can be seen in the background illustration of the relationship between elements in the visual space that carry messages about the description of the place of residence of the people at that time. The gate and temple buildings with their boundary walls are able to build imagination about the quiet life of the people, and the use of natural resources in the form of rocks as a representation of the Majapahit architecture. Then symbolically, visual elements of rocks are a symbol of the civilization life of a society that depends a lot on nature, while the illustration of a guardian statue holding a weapon is a symbol of the strength of the troops, which is owned by the central government of Majapahit. Furthermore, in imagery, the setting of natural illustrations builds imagination about people's skills at that time and represents their struggle.

The implications of the creation of this historical themed background illustration can be summarized as follows, namely: First, visual novels can be an alternative educational media because it has visual strength to provide knowledge and build imagination about the history of civilization in the past, in more interesting ways and communicative. Second, visual novel is a game that presents a form of nonverbal communication, by relying on visual elements as text and illustration. The historical theme background illustrations need to be based on references that once existed as archaeological evidence, so that the sign structure described is close to the reality, and is able to build contextual perceptions, both denotative and connotative. Third, visual novels with historical backgrounds can become a game model that prioritizes the value of local culture. This is important to be developed so that the products

of the local creative industry can still have an identity in accordance with the characteristics of their respective cultures.

The implications for policy from the results of this study can be used as a reference for local game developers, as a scientific reference for visual communication design students, as well as users of interactive games to continue to develop Indonesian visual novels. This study can be used as further research for the development of visual novel games in terms of other visual elements, such as visual characters and visual narratives. This is due to the rapid development of the game industry, and Indonesian visual novels have the potential to compete with visual novel products from outside. Local game developers do not hesitate to prioritize the historical and cultural values of Indonesia through audiovisual game products. Game products have been included in the creative industry commodities that are globally competitive, so the government should also encourage the creativity of developers as part of the development of the creative economy sector. Formal and non-formal educational institutions, especially the field of visual communication design, can continue to increase knowledge and insight into visual novel games, thereby encouraging the productivity of Indonesian visual novels that are more productive. In addition, it is important to study visual novel games on an ongoing basis, because the development of the creative industry is increasingly rapid and there are still limited Indonesian visual novel games. This study can be a scientific reference to maximize the potential strength of visual elements in the creation of visual novel games in order to meet the needs of heterogeneous players, and be able to be more competitive with the global gaming market.

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