Art History towards Digital Acculturation in a Non-Fungible Token (NFT) Art

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Abstract

Clearly, digital technologies have been developed rapidly, and it affects art form significantly. For instance, visual works, where were displayed and sold in the art galleries have shifted into the blockchain networks nowadays. As a result, it makes NFT (Non-Fungible Token) becoming extremely popular, mainly in Generation-Z. This study aims to discuss how visual communication design students as a part of Gen-Z are introduced to the world of NFT as a visual archiving solution through the art history learning method in Bina Nusantara University. In addition, this study sees to what extent art history could be implied in the NFT art in order to attract Gen-Z to learn history and gaining analytical and critical ability. In order to design a historical NFT art, first, students should be able to understand the cultural concepts that exist in each particular era, from the mindset, characteristics, to the main essence of that period. From the analysis of previous artefacts and any great relics that were exist, students are capable to express their thoughts about the certain culture and providing conclusions from each era they adopt. Through this process, a historical NFT art that emphasize the origin meaning in the past and executed through visuals that tailored to the needs of Gen-Z would be successfully achieved. To sum up, this study found that even digital assets could not be separated from enculturation and history.

Keywords
Art History, Culture, NFT (Non Fungible Token), Digital Art, Visual Communication Design

1. Introduction
The digital world has been a daily consumption of Gen-Z's life. A generation, which takes cellphones and the Internet as part of their lives; those who were born in the range of 1996 to 2015; as known as the instant generation, although not all instant things have a negative connotation. Numerous phenomena were discovered within this era. For instance, the Metaverse world introduced by Facebook, where everyone can make any transactions that are done in the real world, Bitcoin was found as the substitute for conventional currency in digital form, and the current method of buying and selling artwork through NFT (Non-Fungible Token). In Indonesia, this phenomenon becomes more viral by the appearance of a man named Ghozali, who is not a professional artist or designer, selling his selfie collection 'Ghozali Everyday' as an NFT art, and have been sold from 0,001 ETH or IDR 45K to the highest value of 11 ETH or IDR 47 billion. Consequently, NFT is believed to be one of the safest ways of buying and selling tools, where the sold artworks would be the full rights of the buyer (Noor 2021).

Through several advantages of NFT in disseminating art works (Wang, *et al* 2021), the authors tried to use NFT art as a medium to attract Gen-Z to seek deep understanding of art history. This was done due to the significant decreasing of young generation's interest in learning history. As can be seen from the previous study, the Internet consumption has increased remarkably by 15,5% during the Covid-19 pandemic, with 93,5% of the usage was for entertaining

purposes in social media; Gen-Z have not use social media and other digital platform for education or informative purpose reasonably (Jakpat 2021). So that, in order to grab young people's attention to learn history, it requires an historical NFT art that illustrates Gen-Z's daily life yet does not demolishing the former history meaning.

In Visual Communication Design, art and design history becomes an important point of learning as a creative exploration of the concepts contained in each artifact. In the art history course, students are able to explore concepts that were born in each era. Hopefully, each characteristic from the particular era inspires design students to develop creative works in the future, which blends with student's personal signature. For this reason, if art history can be combined with the NFT phenomenon, it is hoped that cultural preservation can be done, as well as the innovation of creative works; both the ideation process and visual execution.

1.1 Objective

According to Abdullah (1996), art history aims to be an analytical critical 'intellectual discourse', not merely learning about the past. By learning history, students will be more aware to the uniqueness, morals or values that are upheld in a group, language and cultures, moreover ideology. Essentially, history teaches the concept of understanding what it means to be human (Wineburg 2006). Through understanding the cultural mindset of the past, the present generation is expected to be able to understand human needs in the future. In order to be interested in studying history, it is necessary not only to present an interesting literature, but also a method that invites students to create artwork visually. Usually, the result of studying history is in the form of a paper writing literature. This time, the lecturer invites students to produce works in the form of visual communication designs. The visual artworks created also contain nowadays contemporary elements, where gen z are getting familiar with their visual works.

This is where NFT was introduced, a digital media that accommodates students creativity which cannot only be enjoyed visually, but also context. The study outcomes would be the NFT digital content based on historical understanding, with the attached cultural concepts. Students are expected to not only designing a visual works, but to include the history elements and cultures as one of the work values. Through this task of creating an NFT art, Gen-Z were challenged to promote history and culture to their peers (which is Gen-Z) through the concept of storytelling and delivering the message through social media platform, Instagram. It is hoped that NFT art and social media would not only become a 'personal' medium, but to increase its function as a medium of information and education.

2. Literature Review

The numbers of historical learning materials in the form of writing are remain a stereotype in art history courses, which cause Gen-Z lack of interest in learning art history. Consequently, conceptual and visual based learning materials are more needed. It can be clearly seen that digital media are more common and embodied with the young generation or students nowadays. As previously discussed, the development of NFT Art in the world is quite astonishing. The NFT phenomenon began in March 2021, where a digital mosaic image by Mike Winkelmann was sold, entitled "Everydays-The First 5000 Days" (as can be seen in Figure 1) for a price of 69 million US dollars (Dean 2021). A fantastic price as well as the former conventional painting, which is estimated to be the most expensive at this time, the Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci, estimated at 700 million US dollars.
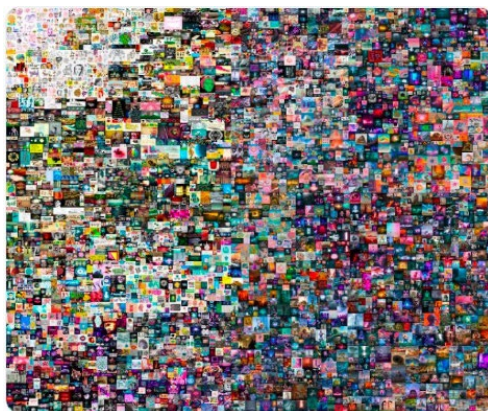

Figure 1. NFT Art "Everydays-The First 5000 Days" by Mike Winkelmann

One of the ways to blend NFT and art history is by learning to transform the art form (Alih Wahana) of the historical content to NFT format. According to 'Alih Wahana' book by Damono (2021), basically Alih Wahana includes activities of translation, adaptation, and transfer from one type of art to another. In addition, this is the answer of culture preservation issue; the value of particular historical artifact and culture would be dismissed by the development of modernism. The reason is because Alih Wahana method does not eliminate the meaning of the previous art form, the meaning or message is applied to other media, including digital media such as NFT. (Figure 2)
2
Visual experience-based creativity becomes one of the main points in the process of creative a good artwork. In consequence, artists or designers are able to depict their individual characteristic within the artworks. This can be triggered from the past, present, or hope for the future. According to Sumardjo (2010) art was discovered by humans through experience, through the human senses. In addition, there are two monographs of Tabrani (2000) related to creativity: Creative Process, Appreciation, Learning; and Creativity and Humanity: A Study on the Role of Creativity in Human Lives, that supports the concept of Visual Communication Design. In these studies, creativity was defined as a biological function of human relations with self-stimulation, with a restructuring pattern consisting of several stages of the learning process.
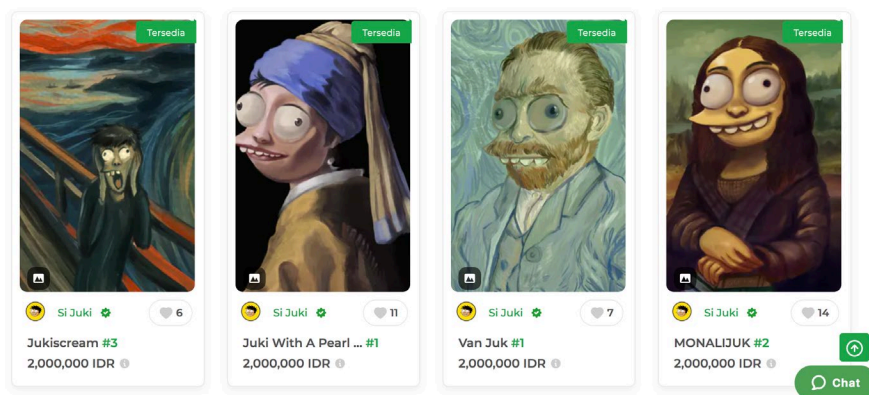

Figure 2. NFT Art Si Juki in Western Art Painting context by Faza

In the example above, Si Juki character as an NFT art, which displays historical content with a gen-z-style approach. From the visual message conveyed by the creator, the research team agrees with how to convey the 'historical message' to gen-z. Hereby, the creators not only taking the parody part of famous paintings, but there is an emphasis on visuals that attract gen-z to find out more about the meaning behind the parody. For example in this painting "Juki Scream", where Si Juki (the character carried by the creator) emphasizes fear face expressions we usually see from The Scream painting, but this NFT art explain that the painting were about the fear of students from deadlines, inspired by the debate over Edvard Munch's fears reflected in the painting The Scream 1893. Through several works of Si Juki figures, the author tries to examine what DKV students need to do as creators in order to create historical NFT art that attracts Gen-z to explore history further. To understand the message to be conveyed, a specific study of sign learning is needed; namely semiotics. The artwork has visual message that consists of design elements which are arranged with a structure. The relationship between the elements of art (and design) is a relation of visual signs that form a structure or sign system (Saidi 2020). In art study, teachers usually only provide text from literature, but after several method involved, the study result turned into art work that could not only be studied through a structural approach, but also with a scientific approach to signs, namely semiotics.

Semiotics or the study of sign was used as a method of creating works. NFT historical content would be considered successful if the sign structure (semantic) of the historical content does not merge into the relation between signs in the digital media (syntactic); referring to the three core points of semiotic concept, which are semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic (Noth 1995). By interpreting the sign structure, the meaning contained in the visual works would be obtained. The final outcomes would not only depict the aesthetic form and uniqueness, but also relevant to the audience, based on the formation and relationships between visual structures.

Referring to theories above, clearly, designing a historical based NFT art through art history learning method would not be successful if students does not have a depth understanding and experience of each era at the initial stage of the course meetings. It also has been supported by visual perception, analytical learning process, and creative thinking. In

addition, artifact analysis is the main key of visual communication. Current study regarding crypto art (Pawelzik and Thies 2022) mentioned that NFT arts are predicted to be expanded and having higher value in the future due to wider communities. In addition, the authors see that historical NFT art have more opportunities to be sold relatively higher than other visual art, as can be seen in Si Juki NFT art (figure 2) which are set in greater price compared to others.

3. Methods

This research is a practice-based study, where the research objects are not the analysis of previous artworks or artifacts, but the complete learning journey of an art history course in Bina Nusantara University; with approximately 70 visual communication design students. First, literature reviews and peer discussion of cultural study of particular era were gathered. The results were then reflected and analyzed based in the individual experience of each work; to what extent students were able to apply basic principles of art history to design a visual creation in different art form. In addition, main learning materials were given by the lecturers to support students understanding such as the concept of each era, basic materials of NFT art, idea description, design principles to improve visual execution, and visual communication towards social media. In order to accomplish the research outcomes, the structural approach of semiotic concept pioneered by C.S Morris used in this research. Morris Classification is exceedingly important in the design research, weather in syntactic level (the structure and combination of signs), the semantic level (the meaning of a sign or text) or the pragmatic level (the acceptance and effect of signs on society) (Piliang 2010). This classifications was also used, main in literature, history, architecture, psychology, including design (the application of Morris classification can be seen in Table 1).

Table 1. C.S Morris Structural Evaluation Classification Chart

LEVEL	SYNTACTIC	SEMANTIC	PRAGMATIC
Objective	The relation between signs	Meaning of the sign	The sign effect
Element	Signifier / signified / syntagma / connotation system / denotation / metaphor / metonymy	Structural, contextual, denotation, connotation, ideology / myth	Target audience analysis (psychology, socio-economic lifestyle)

In regard to the classification chart, three major stages of learning process were discovered, such as pre-idea stage, the transition idea, and the executed idea (illustrated in Table 2). In the pre-idea stage, students were asked to explain the general concept of chosen era and its cultural analysis. Next, students were required to develop numbers of sketches of the selected idea in the transition idea. It aims to stimulate student's creative thinking so that intertextuality process could be accomplished. As a result, students were able to transfer former meaning of the previous artifact into a digital form, not merely a descriptive form of a particular visual experience.

This learning process has helped students in gaining critical and analytical thinking, which are required in order to create an effective NFT art. The model of intertextuality could not be applied without mastery of past and present cultures. Group discussion is one of the keys to creating an interesting and unique intertextuality style, supported by the characteristics obtained through the visual experience of each creator. Starting with the complete analysis of each era, students learned to discover the culture by different aspects such as social, economy, beliefs, technology, and spirit of the period. Then, students brought the conclusion of their analysis to one-by-one lecturer assistance. Through mind mapping process, sketch development, and final crafting, students were then completed the task. Final evaluation was carried by lecturers using semiotic analysis (consistency of the meaning), presentation strategy (conceptual structure and digital content strategy), and design principles (visual styles that are grab Gen-Z attention to discover historical content). (See Table 3).
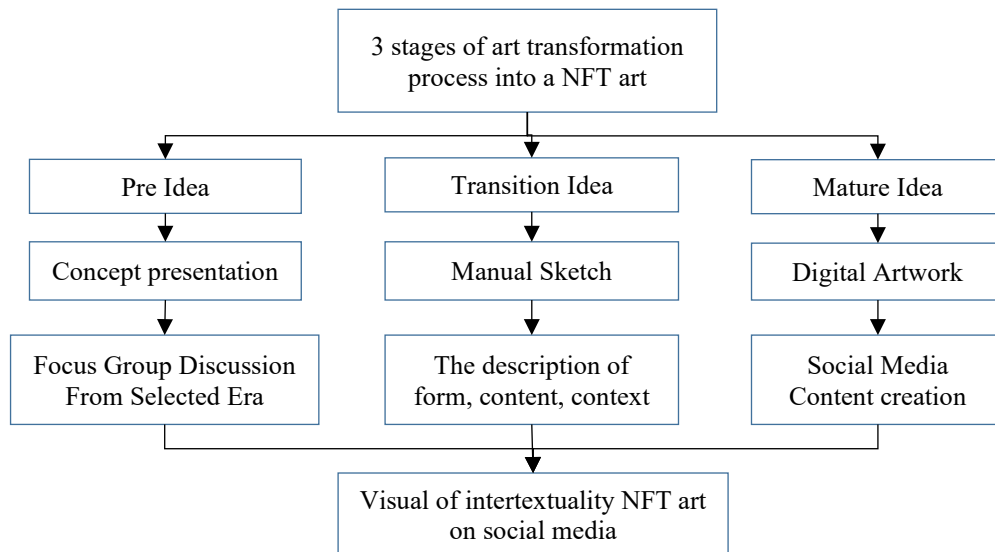
Table 2. Class Learning Process Chart

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                    ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                    │  3 stages of art transformation│
                    │     process into a NFT art     │
                    └──────────────────────────────┘
           ┌───────────────────┼───────────────────┐
           ▼                   ▼                   ▼
    ┌─────────────┐    ┌─────────────┐    ┌─────────────┐
    │  Pre Idea   │    │Transition Idea│    │ Mature Idea │
    └─────────────┘    └─────────────┘    └─────────────┘
           ▼                   ▼                   ▼
    ┌─────────────┐    ┌─────────────┐    ┌─────────────┐
    │   Concept   │    │Manual Sketch│    │   Digital   │
    │presentation │    │             │    │   Artwork   │
    └─────────────┘    └─────────────┘    └─────────────┘
           ▼                   ▼                   ▼
    ┌─────────────┐    ┌─────────────┐    ┌─────────────┐
    │Focus Group  │    │The description│   │Social Media │
    │Discussion   │    │of form,      │    │Content      │
    │From Selected│    │content,context│   │creation     │
    │Era          │    │             │    │             │
    └─────────────┘    └─────────────┘    └─────────────┘
           └───────────────────┼───────────────────┘
                               ▼
                    ┌──────────────────────────┐
                    │Visual of intertextuality │
                    │NFT art on social media   │
                    └──────────────────────────┘
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Table 3. Research Process

STAGES	DESCRIPTION	TECHNIQUE	OUTPUT
I	Data gathering and literature review (artifact and culture of particular era)	Data collection of the selected topic	Data collection (regarding the artifact) of the selected topic of the era
II	Spirit of time analysis	Group discussion and presentation	Analytical data regarding the culture of the era
III	Concept or idea development	Scope of the task, observation, mind mapping, initial sketch	Final design concept
IV	Sketch development	One-by-one lecturer assistance	Digital sketch development
V	Intertextuality in digital art form	One-by-one lecturer assistance, creative process analysis	Individual characteristic of the artwork
VI	Social media promotion	Digital content of the new art form	Historical NFT art that has been shared through social media, which grab Gen-Z attention

4. Data Collection

This following artwork (Figure 3) has been considered successfully transformed from the previous art form and depicts the combination between past culture and modernism:
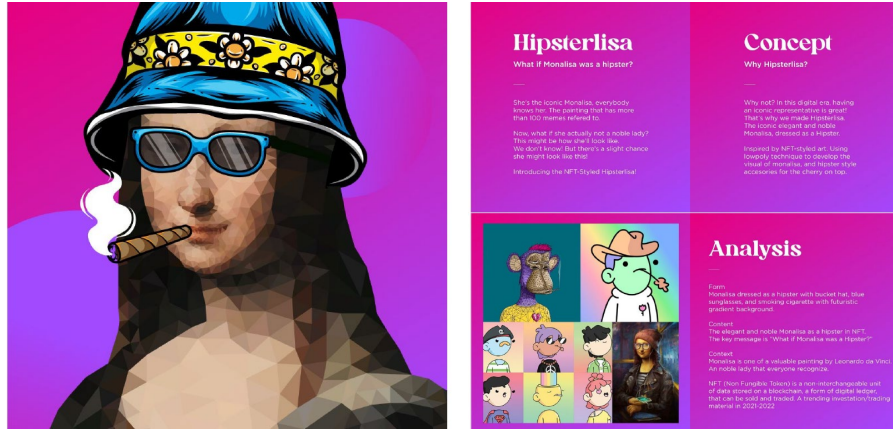
Figure 3.Visual, concept, analysis, and references design by Bina Nusantara University student, Muhammad Rayhan, Creative Advertising - School of Design

The artwork above was inspired by the famous painting, Mona Lisa, which represents the Rennaisance, the era of a well-known artist Leonardo da Vinci. His famous wood panel oil painting was created between 1503 and 1506 in Florence, Italy. However, The Mona Lisa painting is remains an admiration and debate issue nowadays. Monalisa's smile is considered to be a mystery that causes many speculations. This is what inspired the creator to create a new form as an NFT art. The creator transformed the Mona Lisa painting into a NFT art, combined with a contemporary urban style. Contemporary style was chosen to illustrate the present era, which was intertextualized at the same time as the Renaissance.

5. Result and Discussion

After going through the process in the research stage, the result titled "Hipster Lisa" was assessed as an impressive artwork. The student was successfully combining his personal experience and historical knowledge, then transforming into a recent art form that represents individual characteristic. The element of intertextuality was also depicted through the visual work. Figure 3 illustrates the initial process (brainstorming), which became the main idea of the "Hipster Lisa".
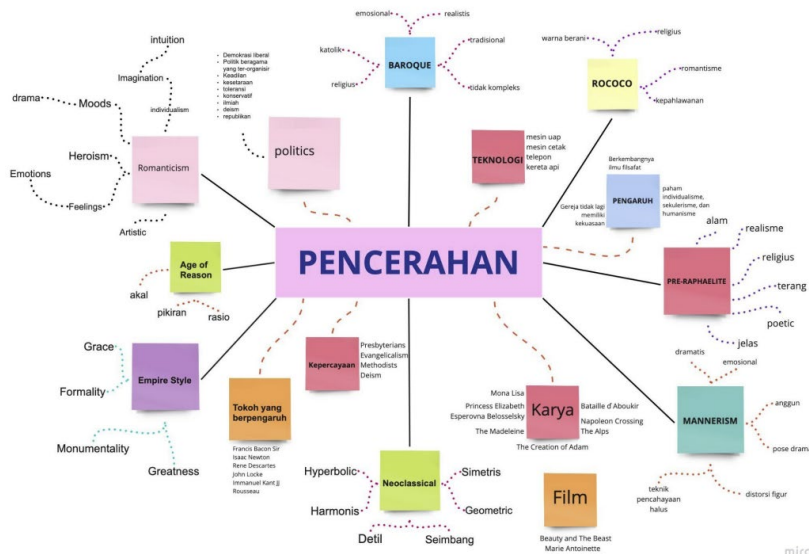

Figure 4. Brainstorming and ideation process

According to the brainstorming process Figure 4, the designed NFT art which combining the past and present era was visualized through several signifiers and caused social effect that can be seen in Table 4:

Table 4. Sstructural Evaluation Classification Chart

LEVEL	SYNTACTIC	SEMANTIC	PRAGMATIC
Objective	The Renaissance period is represented by the Monalisa visual. Monalisa's painting considered a work of high art in Rennaisance Era.	Monalisa is used as an experiment by adding contemporary visuals that are close to Gen Z. Star from the trend of wearing a bucket hat, and smoking a cigar.	The effect of combining the Renaissance's icon and the visuals of today's hipster themes gives Monalisa a "close" and "cool" effect as an icon of today.
Element	**Color:** Bright colors on the background, shade tone with an earthy theme on Monalisa. **Forms and shapes:** Organic lines on the background, supporting objects, and geometric on the main object. **Pattern:** Geometric from digital effect on objects.	Combining the main object with the present object denotatively through the use of hats, glasses, and cigars. Merging each element also gives a connotative effect in the form of "cool Mona Lisa".	Hats, sunglasses, and cigarettes give a different impression, where these three things are considered as objects of discourse on the hipster theme. All forms combined with the main object that looks more sacred, namely Monalisa.

Through this NFT art, the student admitted that Mona Lisa is a timeless historical icon. Therefore, the icon was chosen to be intertextual zed with contemporary art. Given the fact that it has a contemporary aspect, the student was able to develop creative ideas freely, and executed into a new visual form. As illustrated by the semiotic explanation in table 4.3, understandably, historical content could be transformed into a modern form and has great values as well as other contemporary art. Although it has a historical perspective, the "Hipster Lisa" is still relevant to the Gen-Z behavior. These following points explaining more about the artwork through the semiotic analysis:

1. Meaning/content:
   The mindset that occurred during the Renaissance was illustrated through the Mona Lisa painting, as a symbol of freedom that provides novelties at that time. In the Renaissance era, numerous things were made after the previous rules were withdrawn, from the Dark Ages era.
2. Form:
   Mona Lisa painting represents the freedom of the era, which inspired the student to create the "Hispter Lisa". Hipster concept was illustrated through cigars, sunglasses, and a "bucket hat". All the design elements were arranged to create a contemporary feelings.
3. Context:
   Mona Lisa painting, which is considered elegant and respectable, could be closer to Gen-Z through this art. It aims to deliver historical content from the past, which is rare to Gen-Z life. The "Hispter Lisa" has proved that historical content can compete with other contemporary art or digital art form, with a touch of current art technique and renewable applications, traditional works could be transformed and become modern works.

Through the combination between artifact analysis and creativity, NFT art would depict individual characteristic. With regard to the learning process, it is important for lecturers to allow students to develop creative ideas without any boundaries. Consequently, students are able to design an artwork in intertextuality form, combining past, present, and modern perception (future). Intertextuality is defined as a process of connecting texts from the past with texts that exist in the present. Intertextuality does not only see a text through its emergence from social texts, but also its continuation in society and history (Kuswarini 2016). If the work wants to deliver messages from the past, then intertextuality is considered capable of attaching itself to present-day delivery.

6. Conclusions
Historical learning method for undergraduate students is often associated with memorization, at the beginning of learning. Meanwhile, most of the students found it difficult to understanding the concept of particular era through memorization technique. The aim of this study is to link artifacts with the spirit of the times and the mindset at that

time that triggers student creativity process, which occurs through class discussions. Transferring artifacts from previous era could bring freshness learning process to the graduate students and gaining more critical and analytical thinking, which help design students in developing an artwork. The stereotype mindset of art history lesson that full of memorizing is also changed. Understanding the previous culture of the certain era and emphasizing its meaning through a digital format has become a captivating concept of learning. NFT art is one of the ways to archive artworks into digital form, which is predicted to be developed in several ways in the future. As a result, more art form would compete digitally. For this reason, digital artwork must have a distinction or unique value, by not detaching it from the history and culture we have.

Taking these pros and cons of this study, researches identify a range of areas for further studies, including: 1) How to make other designer works can compete with current NFT art? 2) NFT towards particular social issues or brands. 3) character creation in NFT art which represents the local culture. 4) The certain methods of creating NFT artwork for Visual Communication Design. It is hoped that with this research as a start, further studies and research will be carried out with various issues that will arise in the future regarding the development of NFT, which WILL SURELY bring benefits, especially for Gen Z

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Biography

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