Elements of Anime Style in the Illustrative Works of Senbazuru Art Course Participants, Yogyakarta

Dimas Afrillio Caesar Nugraha[1], Eko Sugiarto[2]*

[1,2] Department of Visual Art Education, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia
*Corresponding Author
Email : ekosugiarto@mail.unnes.ac.id

ABSTRACT
Although Indonesia's distinctive illustration style continues to evolve, anime's visual aesthetic has become one of the most dominant styles among young illustrators. This study explores how anime aesthetics are adapted and expressed in the illustration works of participants at the Senbazuru course center in Yogyakarta and how anime motivates their creative process. A qualitative case study design was used to collect data through observation, interviews, and documentation of works, which was then analyzed. The results show that participants' works display distinctive anime aesthetic characteristics, such as expressive large eyes, simplified faces, and unnatural hair colors. They also incorporate Japanese visual symbols, such as school uniforms and cherry blossoms, in both fan art and original characters. This visual adaptation transforms the anime style according to each individual's personal style, rather than merely imitating it. From a motivational perspective, anime serves as the initial trigger and sustained driving force in the participants' creative process. External factors from community and social environment, combined with internal factors such as personal interest and satisfaction in creating art, form a mutually reinforcing cycle of motivation. As a non-formal education center, the Senbazuru Art Studio facilitates growth in creativity rooted in personal interests and popular culture. By supporting the adaptation of anime aesthetics and encouraging individual expression, the studio plays a crucial role in shaping the visual identity of Indonesia's youth.

INTRODUCTION

Anime, originally referring to animated works from Japan, has become a global phenomenon with popular titles such as *Naruto, One Piece*, and *Dragon Ball*. These series were once broadcast on Indonesian national TV channels like GTV, Indosiar, RCTI, and NET. In Japan, anime is a general term for all types of animation regardless of origin, whereas outside Japan, the term specifically refers to Japanese animation produced using hand-drawn or digital techniques (Patioran et al., 2023)

The spread of anime in Indonesia was greatly supported by The Japan Foundation, an institution promoting Japanese culture abroad, including in Indonesia. Through its initiatives, various elements of Japanese culture especially anime became popular locally (Patioran et al., 2023) . Today, technological advancements have made anime even more accessible via OTT (Over The Top) platforms such as Netflix, Crunchyroll, and YouTube.

Anime's popularity has grown beyond viewership to influence economic and creative sectors (Khabib, 2022). This includes the emergence of anime merchandise stores and services offering skills training, such as language and drawing. One notable example is Senbazuru, a non-formal art course based in Yogyakarta that provides anime-style drawing training along with Japanese language

classes. This shows that anime is not only a form of entertainment, but also a cultural force that inspires skill development.

Unlike formal education, non-formal art courses offer more flexible spaces for learners to explore specific interests. Participants interested in anime-style visuals often join voluntarily to sharpen their drawing skills. Their motivations range from pursuing hobbies to preparing for careers in the creative industry. In this sense, non-formal education plays a crucial role in nurturing talents not always accommodated by the formal system (Herdiani, 2017).

Previous research supports the cultural and educational value of anime and manga. Patioran et al. (2023) emphasize anime's function as a form of Japan's soft power in global cultural diplomacy. (Hafiz, 2024) highlights its influence on youth communication and digital aesthetics, while Toi (2020) points to Indonesia's strong anime fanbase despite cultural differences. Studies by Mundianianto (2024) and Arni et al. (2023) also confirm the effectiveness of anime in formal education for enhancing creativity in writing and drawing.

In contrast to these studies which mostly focus on formal education, media, or cultural trends, this research specifically investigates how anime's visual aesthetics are adapted and interpreted in the illustration works of participants in a non-formal art course. It also explores anime's role as a visual motivation in their creative process. This study fills a research gap by examining anime-inspired illustration practices in non-formal education contexts and anime's function as a living aesthetic reference among Indonesian youth.

The objectives of this study are: (1) to examine how anime serves as a visual source of inspiration for participants of Sanggar Seni Senbazuru in creating illustrations; and (2) to analyze the most dominant anime visual aesthetics reflected in their works. This research aims to contribute to the discourse on art education grounded in popular culture and expand perspectives on youth visual expression in the digital era.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach using a case study design. The main task of art research within qualitative studies is to closely examine how individuals in specific contexts produce works or carry out actions, enabling deep understanding, informed anticipation, and appropriate decision-making (Rohidi, 2024: 48). A case study is a descriptive research method used to analyze a specific phenomenon in depth. The scope of this research is often limited by constraints such as time, activities, or location, which are related to programs, processes, or institutions, with the aim of gaining comprehensive insights (Sumartono, 2017).

The research was conducted at course center Senbazuru, a non-formal art course located at Jl. Indraprasta Perum. Pondok Soragan Indah No.A10, Cungkuk, Ngestiharjo, Kasihan District, Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. This site was selected for its unique integration of Japanese popular culture into both language and art instruction.

The subjects of this study were individuals actively involved in anime illustration learning activities at Sanggar Seni Senbazuru. These participants were selected through purposive sampling based on criteria such as active engagement in digital or manual anime-style illustration and having relevant backgrounds or motivations tied to Japanese popular culture. Although the total number of individuals who participated in or were interviewed for this research was 21, only 8 were selected as samples due to their strong relevance to the study's focus.

The observation method employed in this study was a standard, non-participatory observation, in which the researcher did not engage emotionally with the subjects. This type of observation is commonly used to gather necessary information related to visible issues arising from certain events, phenomena, or specific objects (Rohidi, 2024: 184-185). This method was chosen for its unique strength in enabling researchers to obtain a substantial amount of data efficiently and to verify descriptions when confronting factual information.

In terms of analysis, the documented illustration works were examined to identify anime visual characteristics such as line style, composition, coloring techniques, and character design. According to (Rohidi, 2024), art-based data analysis seeks to discover or test general statements about the relationships and foundations of themes that inform theories in artistic practice. Interviews served as

a means to confirm the role of anime in the participants' creative process particularly as a motivational and stylistic influence. Thus, visual documentation provided the foundation for aesthetic analysis, while interviews offered narrative validation on how participants internalized popular cultural references into their artistic practice.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Anime Style in the Illustrative Works of Senbazuru Participants

The analysis of anime characteristics in participants' illustration works is approached through two main aspects: visual elements and thematic references. From a visual perspective, anime is known for its distinctive features. One of the most frequently observed traits in participants' works is the depiction of large, expressive eyes, functioning as the emotional focal point of the characters. Body proportions are often exaggerated and unrealistic, such as oversized heads, slender limbs, and dynamic poses. Hair designs tend to be stylized and unrealistically colored, costumes and backgrounds often draw on Japanese fashion or uniform. These characteristics align with prior research suggesting that anime aesthetics prioritize simplified forms and exaggerated expressions to enhance narrative clarity and emotional resonance (Petra & Sari, 2025).

The second approach focuses on thematic references, exploring the sources of participants' inspiration. Some artworks clearly reference specific anime titles such as *Bleach, Oshi no Ko*, or *Non non biyori*, reflected in character design similarities. Others feature original characters (OC) independently created figures that still adopt anime visual styles as part of the participants' exposure to and engagement with popular culture. This demonstrates how anime aesthetics have become a significant component of Indonesian youth's visual identity and a medium of creative expression. These findings are in line with (Anam & Shovi, 2025).

The following table presents the analysis of anime characteristics in selected participant artworks, categorized according to the Senbazuru curriculum levels, starting from the beginner level.

Table 1. Artwork and Analysis Table – Beginner Level

No.	Beginner Work	Analisis Table	
1		Name	Jocelyn Olivia Bong
		Age	10 year old
		Medium	Pensil & paper
		Anime Style	Chibi style (large head, small body), large eyes, simplified nose and mouth.
		Anime Inspriration	Original character inspired by the anime *Non Non Biyori*, an anime depicting everyday school life in Japan
2		Name	Jocelyn Olivia Bong
		Age	10 year old
		Medium	Pensil & paper
		Anime Style	Chibi style, large eyes, simplified nose and mouth
		Anime Inspriration	Fanart Umaru-chan from *Himouto! Umaru-chan*, an anime portraying the life of a Japanese schoolgirl.

First artwork, created by Jocelyn Olivia Bong, utilizes the chibi illustration style, a visual approach that simplifies body proportions by significantly enlarging the head relative to the body. This style is commonly used in anime to depict childlike characters or to convey humorous and relaxed situations. The use of visual elements such as large eyes and simplified noses and mouths demonstrates an understanding of modern anime aesthetics, where expressive facial features

especially the eyes serve as the primary focal point in character design. This correlates with the thematic reference used *Non Non Biyori*, which served as Jocelyn's inspiration. The choice to depict a classroom setting also reflects the participant's narrative awareness in visually framing a scene that aligns with the original anime's atmosphere.
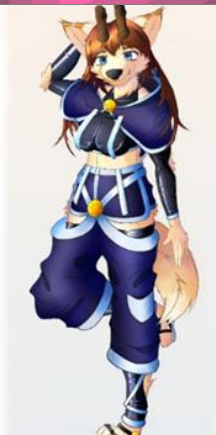
The second work, by Jennahara Senja Kinasih, also adopts the chibi style, with similar traits: oversized eyes, large heads, and minimal facial details. Her inspiration comes from *Himouto! Umaru-chan*. Jennahara appears to capture this essence through the character's expression and pose, portraying a schoolgirl engaged in study. Her interpretation reveals not only visual replication but also the ability to absorb and reinterpret narrative elements from media into creative expression.

Visually, the artworks share striking similarities with Japanese anime aesthetics. One of the most dominant features is the depiction of oversized eyes, emphasizing emotional expression. In anime, the eyes function as the core of emotional communication (Ruhland et al., 2015). Other features such as the nose and mouth are often simplified or omitted entirely to highlight the expressiveness of the eyes. This pattern also appears in Indonesian animations like Battle of Surabaya, where large, shiny eyes follow Japanese design conventions while the nose and mouth are minimized to emphasize youthful appearance .

The chibi style is particularly popular among beginner participants. This style exaggerates proportions such as oversized heads and tiny limbs creating a kawaii or cute effect, ideal for depicting innocent or humorous characters (Nathifa & Yulianti, 2023; Suryo et al., 2016). In the context of children's drawing education, this style is favored for its simplicity and ease in learning basic proportions. Children find it easier to express emotion through large, defined features like the eyes, eyebrows, and mouth, while keeping other body parts simple (Victoria, 2022).

Beyond visual form, thematic elements play a crucial role in the creation process. These themes reflect the children's personal experiences, cultural exposure, and emotional connections to the shows they watch. Most beginner participants, typically under 12 years old, draw inspiration from slice-of-life anime, such as *Himouto! Umaru-chan*, and *Non non biyori*. These series present light-hearted, everyday narratives that resonate with children's own lives and are easy to relate

Tabel 2. Artwork and Analysis Table – Intermediate Level

No.	Intermediate Works	Analisis Table	
1		Name	Anders Emmanuel Tan
		Age	18 year old
		Medium	Digital (Clip Studio Paint)
		Anime Style	Unusual hair color, cel shading technique, anime-style facial proportions.
		Anime Inspriration	Fanart Kotone Shiomi from *Pesona 3 Portabl*
2		Name	Nikolaus Pastika Bara Setyaradi
		Age	22 year old
		Medium	Digital (Clip Studio Paint)
		Anime Style	Furry style (anthropomorphic characters in anime), large eyes
		Anime Inspriration	Original character inspired by the anime *Beastar*.

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3		Name	Dira Adeeva Meheswari
		Age	12 year old
		Medium	Pencil color, marker & paper
		Anime Style	Unusual hair color, anime-style facial proportions, wearing a typical Japanese school blazer uniform
		Anime Inspriration	Fanart Mirai Kuriyama from *Kyoukai no Kanata*

The digital artwork by Anders demonstrates both technical and aesthetic proficiency through the use of Clip Studio Paint and the cel shading technique. The piece features Kotone Shiomi from *Persona 3 Portable*, where large expressive eyes and simplified noses and mouths further affirm the anime style while indicating a strong connection to Japanese popular culture.

Nikolaus presents an original anthropomorphic character inspired by the anime *Beastars*. The character features deer-like attributes such as horns and a tail, paired with large anime-style eyes and emotive facial expressions. This work reflects a deep understanding of both the visual symbolism and stylistic conventions in anime.

Dira employs traditional media, using colored pencils and markers to depict an original character inspired by Mirai Kuriyama from *Kyoukai no Kanata*. Distinctive elements such as her hairstyle, eye expression, and school blazer reinforce anime aesthetics while functioning as a vehicle for personal emotional expression. Visual elements such as Japanese school uniforms (seifuku) serve as strong symbolic markers in their artworks. Uniforms such as sailor suits, blazers, or gakuran are represent the student identity and broadly recognizable aspects of Japanese culture (Riyadie, 2022). teenagers often adopt anime character fashion as a form of identity expression and emotional connection to their fandom communities. teenagers often adopt anime character fashion as a form of identity expression and emotional connection to their fandom communities. In this context, design that adapts elements of cultural symbolism can function as an effective tool for introducing and preserving the identity of a community (Yusuf et al., 2025).

In addition to shared visual traits like large eyes and simplified facial features, many intermediate level participants especially those transitioning into more complex coloring have adopted the cel shading technique. This technique emphasizes solid colors with distinct shadows, avoiding smooth gradients, and creating a clean, expressive aesthetic (Kurniawan & Fitriana, 2016). Key features include bold outlines and the separation of light and shadow into distinct flat zones, producing a stylized 2D effect even in 3D-rendered forms. This method enhances the recognizability of anime visuals and supports production efficiency while preserving the distinct 2D anime look.

Another notable element is the use of unrealistic hair colors, (Lu, 2009) stated that brightly colored and unrealistic hair is one reason anime characters are often perceived as "ethnically neutral" or "racially universal," as such features do not align with real-world ethnic stereotypes. This allows the characters to be more easily accepted by audiences across different cultures. hair color in anime serves to differentiate characters and symbolize personality traits, even if the colors do not reflect real-life norms. This aligns with the idea that color can create an immediate impression that is widely recognized due to its ability to evoke specific psychological responses (Fionarizoca & Ratri, 2025)

From a thematic standpoint, intermediate participants begin to explore more varied content, though still within light-hearted boundaries. Some show an interest in more mature themes, such as Beastars, which explores complex issues like inter-species conflict and social hierarchy. These choices reflect a growing capacity for introspection and social critique, as participants begin to infuse their work with deeper personal and thematic meaning.

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Table 3. Artworks and Analysis Table – Advance Table

No.	Intermediate Works	Analisis Table	
1		Name	Teoderikus Ferdian
		Age	29 year old
		Medium	Digital (Clip Studio Paint)
		Anime Style	Uncommon hair colors, use of cel shading, anime-style facial proportions, Japanese schoolgirl uniform.
		Anime Insppiration	Hairstyle inspired by character Sasha from anime Attack on Titan.
2		Name	Carlynda Hermawan
		Age	14 year old
		Medium	Digital (IbisPaint X)
		Anime Style	Combination of cel shading and smooth gradients, anime facial proportions.
		Anime Insppiration	Original character inspired by character Akane from anime Oshi no Ko.
3		Name	Jenifer Joice Adiwijaya
		Age	16 year old
		Medium	Digital (IbisPaint X)
		Anime Style	Large eyes, facial simplification, distinctive anime-style hair color
		Anime Insppiration	Original character based on fondness for white-haired characters such as Kaneki Ken (Tokyo Ghoul) and Emilia (Re:Zero)

Teoderikus presents a visually mature digital work using cel shading techniques. The character's hairstyle is inspired by Sasha Blouse from *Attack on Titan*, but is personalized through modifications like blue hair and a peaceful atmosphere that contrasts the anime's darker tone. The high school uniform especially the popular Japanese sweater outer is a product of visual exploration. As (Anjani & Astiti, 2020) observe, anime fans often use visual traits such as hairstyle and clothing as means of self-representation, shaped by their self-control and social conformity.

Carlynda combines cel shading and soft gradients, creating a polished and professional illustration. The face and clothing areas are shaded with bold contrasts, while the hair and background employ smooth gradients to enhance visual depth. Her character is a reimagined, adult version of Akane from *Oshi no Ko*, indicating a process of creative reinterpretation rather than direct reproduction. According to (Putra & Khasan, 2024), anime fans often seek to construct cultural and visual meaning through the styles they draw or emulate.

Jenifer created an original character as a symbolic representation of herself, with silver hair inspired by Kaneki *(Tokyo Ghoul)* and *Emilia (Re:Zero)*. She also included cherry blossoms in the background forming a highly personal and emotional narrative, anime serves as a medium for building visual identity through layers of personal and cultural meaning (Putra & Khasan, 2024). Such color choices further reinforce the expressive intent, as color is closely tied to the design process and is often used as an expressive tool to convey emotions (Zahra & Mansoor, 2024).

Advanced participants tend to engage with deeper themes, viewing anime not just as entertainment but as a meaningful narrative medium. Their references like *Attack on Titan, Osho no Ko,* and *Tokyo Ghoul* indicate an interest in moral conflicts, existentialism, and emotional depth.

Themes become central to their illustrations rather than mere visual backdrops.

Participants usually adopt one of two approaches: creating fan art by redrawing known characters, or developing original characters (OCs) with anime influences. From hairstyles and clothing to visual composition, these works reflect the creative influence of anime and its role in shaping personal expression, imagination, and visual identity.

Motivation in Creating Anime-Styled Illustrations

Motivation plays a pivotal role in the creative process and in art education, as it significantly influences the depth of exploration, level of creativity, and students' appreciation of artistic practices. To sustain enthusiasm, innovative teaching methods are essential in fostering active participation, collaboration, and original idea development (Sarbaitinil et al., 2024). Educators are thus encouraged to align instructional strategies with students' interests and generational traits, designing learning experiences that are both engaging and relevant to contemporary creative industries.

Among the participants of Senbazuru, motivation to create anime-style illustrations is shaped by a dynamic interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic factors. These motivations often reinforce each other; for instance, a participant may start drawing due to trends on social media (extrinsic), and later develop personal satisfaction and emotional investment in the activity (intrinsic). Conversely, an initial inner passion for drawing may be amplified by external support and public recognition (Wahyudi, 2019). As (Zuanda & Sugito, 2022) emphasize, motivation to actualize drawing skills is an internal drive that encourages students to develop their abilities and personal expectations in the field of visual arts. In line with this, motivation is considered a crucial internal force, as motivation is something important and must exist within a person, because it influences one's actions (Kharisma & Purnomo, 2018)

A study at SMPN 2 Batang Gasan demonstrated that appropriate instructional methods significantly improved students' motivation and academic performance in cultural arts subjects (Pratiwi & Yensharti, 2024) Similar studies have emphasized the importance of teacher strategies and adequate infrastructure in sustaining motivation (Saud, 2020). Teachers who relate art lessons to students' interests and cultural context are more likely to maintain engagement especially in today's visual era where students are immersed in anime, games, and digital art. Bridging educational content with students' media experiences not only enhances motivation but also strengthens learning outcomes.

Below is a chart outlining the motivational factors of Senbazuru participants in creating anime-styled illustrations.
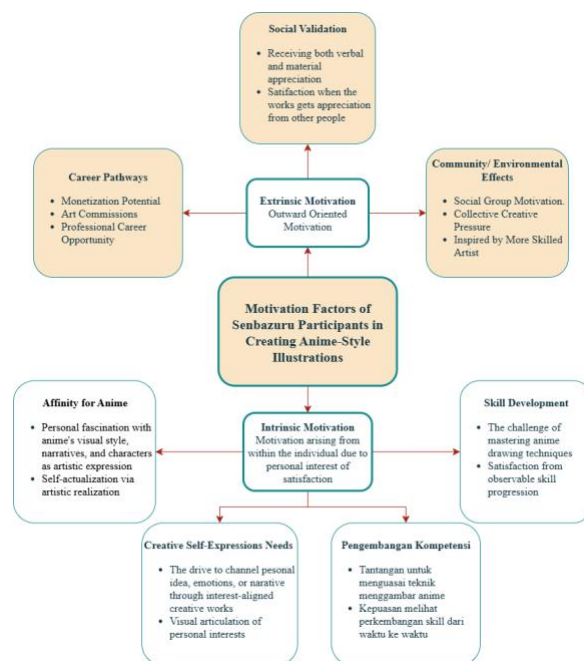

Figure 1. Motivation Chart in Creating Anime-Styled Illustrations (Source: Dimas, 2025)

One of the strongest intrinsic motivations is emotional attachment to anime itself. Many participants feel a deep personal connection to specific characters and narratives, which become their primary sources of inspiration. Drawing then becomes not just a technical exercise but a channel for self-expression, emotional release, and personal imagination (Michalopoulou, 2014). Intrinsic motivation also emerges through the desire to master specific drawing techniques. Some participants are driven to understand human anatomy, facial expressions, and movement dynamics. As their technical proficiency improves, so does their sense of pride and confidence, which in turn fuels further motivation (Nurisriyani et al., 2021).

Extrinsic motivation is evident through exposure to social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Pinterest. Participants are often inspired by fan art or digital illustrations shared by others, which encourages them to produce similar works and seek validation through likes, shares, and comments. Social validation and the presence of influential content creators serve as powerful incentives. In addition, anime-styled games and comics such as Genshin Impact and Persona also act as motivators. Even participants who do not actively watch anime are exposed to anime aesthetics through these media, highlighting the extent to which anime visual language has permeated cross-platform cultural ecosystems.

Some participants are also motivated by professional aspirations. For them, drawing serves as preparation for future careers in illustration, animation, or other creative industries. In this context, anime functions not just as an artistic influence, but also as a technically and conceptually relevant learning resource. Research by Mardi et al. (2023) shows that individuals with strong visual literacy tend to have better career opportunities and greater income potential.

Interview findings suggest that participants' motivations are rarely purely intrinsic or extrinsic; rather, they are intertwined. One may start drawing from a place of personal interest and later develop additional motivation due to exhibition opportunities or financial incentives or vice versa. This creates a unique motivational profile for each individual.

In summary, anime serves not only as an aesthetic reference, but also as a catalyst that nurtures interest, technical skill, and creative ambition among young learners engaged in non-formal art education. It acts as a bridge connecting personal expression, social influences, and professional goals in the realm of visual creation.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant role anime plays in shaping both the visual direction and creative motivation of participants at Senbazuru Yogyakarta. Within the context of nonformal art education, anime functions not merely as a form of passive entertainment but as an active and generative source of inspiration. It encourages participants to create original illustrations marked by distinctive visual styles and narrative sensibilities. Through consistent exposure via anime series, social media, or anime-styled video games, participants have internalized not only the narrative appeal of anime but also its visual language, integrating it into their artistic processes, either consciously or unconsciously.

Visually, participants' artworks consistently exhibit hallmark characteristics of anime aesthetics. These include large, expressive eyes, simplified facial features, vivid and unconventional hair colors, and culturally specific Japanese iconography such as school uniforms, cherry blossoms, and ambient settings reminiscent of anime narratives. Such elements appear in both fan-based reinterpretations and original character designs that conform to anime's stylistic conventions in terms of form, atmosphere, and symbolic meaning.

Accordingly, the two research objectives have been effectively addressed. Anime serves as a powerful influence both motivationally and visually in the artistic development of the participants. Furthermore, the flexible, interest-driven approach practiced at art course Senbazuru enables learners to organically transform their passion for anime into a structured and evolving artistic skill. As a nonformal educational space, the sanggar supports and empowers creative expression rooted in contemporary popular culture.

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