

Exploration of Indonesia's Culture through Batik as an Idea for the Creation of Contemporary Calligraphy Paintings

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How to cite: Padang, S. R. B., Astiani, A., & Azis, A. C. K. (2026). Exploration of Indonesia's Culture through Batik as an Idea for Creation of Contemporary Calligraphy Paintings. *Gorga : Jurnal Seni Rupa*, 15 (1), 243-247. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24114/gr.v15i1.70478>

Article History : Received: November 8, 2025. Revised: January 1, 2026. Accepted: June 30, 2026

ABSTRACT

Batik is one of Indonesia's cultural heritages that has a distinctive visual character, complex motif structure, and philosophical values that reflect local wisdom. The integration of batik motifs into contemporary calligraphy paintings offers a new aesthetic approach in exploring Nusantara culture through the medium of modern art. This study aims to: (1) identify and determine relevant batik motifs that maintain cultural values; (2) describe the artistic and technical processes in creating contemporary calligraphy paintings based on batik motifs; and (3) evaluate the final results from the aesthetic and cultural representation aspects. The study uses the I Made Bandem creative method which includes the stages of preparation, elaboration, synthesis, concept realization, and completion. The synthesis stage is an important part in combining the character of calligraphy lines with the structure of batik motifs, thus forming a balanced, harmonious composition with symbolic depth. The results of the study show that batik motifs not only serve as supporting ornaments, but can also function as structural elements that enrich the visual rhythm, space, and meaning in contemporary calligraphy works. The conclusion of the study confirms that the incorporation of batik motifs in contemporary painting can be a means of cultural preservation while expanding the visual vocabulary of modern art. The novelty of the work lies in the visual synthesis strategy that places batik motifs as generative elements in the calligraphy system, providing practical implications for the development of culture-based art in the future.

KEYWORDS

Batik, Painting,
Calligraphy,
Preservation, Culture

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's rich culture is reflected in its traditional textile heritage, such as batik, which is not only aesthetically pleasing but also imbued with symbolism and philosophy. The development of contemporary art has encouraged artists to explore batik as a visual language in new mediums, including calligraphy, which combines cultural expression with religious values (Hidayat, 2020; Siregar, 2022). Islamic calligraphy in Indonesia itself developed through an acculturative approach that incorporates local cultural motifs, making it part of the archipelago's visual identity (Mahfudz, 2019; Nasution, 2021).

Previous research generally utilized trintum, kawung, or Kembangan batik motifs as supporting ornaments in calligraphic compositions (Latief, 2023). However, limitations remain apparent because batik motifs have not been treated as the primary compositional structure. This research gap lies in the exploration of the kantil flower motif and kufic khat as structural elements, rather than mere decoration. The kantil motif was chosen for its connotations of loyalty and spirituality, while kufic khat offers geometric characteristics that allow for the modular integration of floral motifs. In terms of urgency, this exploration is crucial to strengthening cultural preservation through a contemporary visual approach amidst the homogenization of global artistic expression. Narratively, this research aims to create a calligraphy painting based on batik with a kantil flower motif and kufic script, evaluate

its aesthetic-semiotic value, and examine its contribution to the development of local culture-based fine arts. The novelty of this research lies in the integration of batik as a structural element of calligraphy, which has not been widely explored in previous studies.

METHOD

This research is a visual art creation study that develops contemporary calligraphy paintings based on batik motifs using I Made Bandem's five-stage method: preparation, elaboration, synthesis, realization, and completion. The primary objective is to formulate a collaborative form combining traditional batik aesthetics and Kufic calligraphy within the medium of contemporary painting. In the elaboration stage, visual ideas are developed through sketches, motif exploration, and compositional experiments that test the possibility of integrating geometric calligraphy structures with floral batik patterns from the Solo, Pekalongan, and Madura regions. The synthesis stage focuses on formal-aesthetic decision-making regarding motif rhythm, plane balance, and value contrast, resulting in a final design ready for realization on canvas. The choice of acrylic plaque technique over conventional batik tulis was based on the need for contemporary expression, layering flexibility, and faster and more precise color control. Acrylic allows for transparency, blocking, and texture without waxing and repeated coloring, thus accelerating visual iteration and opening up space for modern experimentation. Ultimately, the work is realized on a 60x60 cm canvas with a framing finish to enhance its aesthetic value. The results of the study show that this approach is able to present a visual synthesis between tradition and contemporary which still represents the symbolism of Nusantara culture.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The process of creating a contemporary calligraphy painting based on batik motifs begins with the preparation of tools and materials that support the application of acrylic plaque techniques on canvas. The sketch stage becomes an exploratory phase to integrate batik motifs with the structure of kufic calligraphy through compositional arrangement and visual proportions. Coloring is done using thick layers of acrylic to highlight the character of the motif and give a contemporary impression. Details in the form of texture, gradation, and color accentuation are added to strengthen the visual character, then the work is completed through the finishing stage with varnish to protect the final appearance. Visual documentation shows the transformation of ideas into works gradually from sketches to the final result.

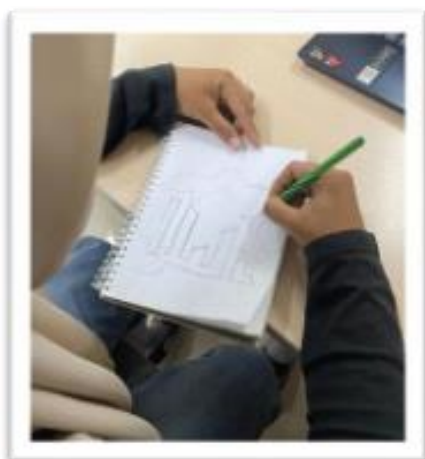


Figure 1. Initial Sketch



Figure 2. Initial Coloring Stage



Figure 3. Detailing Stage



Figure 4. Finishing

Based on these results, the visual integration between batik motifs and Kufic script requires aesthetic adjustments to achieve unity without dominating each other, in line with the principle of harmony in fine art. The cultural values contained in batik motifs are combined with the spiritual meanings in calligraphy, resulting in a visual acculturation typical of Nusantara Islamic art. The choice of acrylic plaque technique supports the contemporary character of the work and distinguishes it from the more ornamental medium of batik tulis. The final results show that this creative approach has the potential to be a strategy for cultural preservation through the medium of contemporary art, while simultaneously expanding the space for dialogue between tradition and modernity.



Figure 5. Final Works

Title	:	The Almighty Creator
Size	:	60 cm x 60 cm
Technique	:	Plaque technique, Acrylic paint
Medium	:	Canvas
Year	:	2025

The work, titled "The Almighty Creator," integrates the calligraphy of the Asmaul Husna (Asmaul Husna) of the Creator with the distinctive Yogyakarta kantil flower motif. In Javanese tradition, the kantil flower signifies purity, exemplary conduct, and a binding spiritual force (kanthel), while also symbolizing the unbreakable connection between humanity and a transcendent power. This symbolism parallels the nature of Al-Khāliq as the Creator who gives birth to order, beauty, and the continuity of life. Thus, the kantil flower functions not merely as a decorative ornament but as a visual metaphor for the continuity of creation, the purity of purpose, and unending spiritual attachment. This symbolic relationship strengthens the cohesion of meaning between the calligraphic elements and the batik motif and demonstrates how local values can enrich universal religious expressions.

Aesthetically, this result aligns with the theory of beauty in fine art, which emphasizes the integration of form, meaning, and visual experience. The principles of unity, balance, and rhythm are present through the compositional arrangement, visual hierarchy, and repetition of motifs, while the emphasis on the phrase Al-Khāliq emphasizes the work's spiritual center. The choice of dark blue as the background supports the idea of contemplative and religious depth, while the red-white-and-cream contrast of the kantil motif enriches the visual dynamics and avoids compositional stagnation. In the context of globalization, this work responds to cultural homogenization by showcasing the strategy of "localizing meaning" through art. Rather than abandoning tradition, the batik motif is

positioned as a medium for negotiation between local identity and contemporary aesthetics. In this way, the work becomes not only a spiritual and aesthetic expression but also an effort to preserve culture through creative adaptation—demonstrating that local values can remain relevant amidst the rapid and uniform flow of global culture.

The Manifestation of Cultural Introduction

The work "Yang Maha Krestina" (The Creator) combines the calligraphy of Asmaul Husna Al-Khaliq (Asmaul Husna Al-Khaliq) with the distinctive Yogyakarta kantil flower batik motif, as a way of introducing culture through visual art. The kantil flower motif, which symbolizes purity, sincerity, and eternal hope, is presented as a symbol of local wisdom that blends harmoniously with Islamic religious values. Through this combination, the work not only emphasizes visual beauty but also serves as an educational medium, introducing the close relationship between Javanese culture and Islamic spirituality (Bandem., 2001).

Aesthetically, this work presents a harmony between traditional and modern elements through the play of lines, colors, and batik patterns that enrich the calligraphy. The dynamic and balanced processing of visual elements makes this work a representation of religious values while strengthening

Indonesia's cultural identity. Overall, "Yang Maha Krestina" (The Creator) serves as a clear example that cultural preservation can be achieved creatively without losing its original meaning, and emphasizes the importance of art as a means of introducing and preserving the nation's cultural richness (Cozen, 2015).

Achieved Outputs

Based on the implementation schedule, researchers compile research progress in the form of outputs presented in the final report of the Student Grant program.

Table 1. Final Report of the Student Grant Program

No.	Research Output	Targets
1	Progress Report	Done
2	Final Report	Done
3	National Journal Publication Accredited	Done
4	Copyright	Done
5	Final Painting Work	Done

Research outputs include the preparation of Progress Reports and Final Reports as a form of accountability, the publication of scientific articles in accredited national journals containing research findings and analysis, and the acquisition of Copyright certificates for the resulting calligraphy artworks as a form of intellectual property protection. These outputs are expected to not only provide academic contributions but also encourage cultural preservation through innovative and educational artistic approaches, especially for students and the general public.

CONCLUSION

This creative research demonstrates that the integration of batik motifs with Kufic calligraphy can produce artworks that are not only aesthetic but also embody cultural symbols and spiritual values. These findings align with the research objective of emphasizing batik's potential as a source of visual ideas that can be contextualized in contemporary calligraphy. The resulting works facilitate a dialogue between tradition and modernity and confirm that the art medium can function as an educational and representational tool for the Indonesian archipelago's cultural identity. Consequently, this approach opens up new opportunities for cultural preservation strategies through contemporary art, particularly in the visual realm, which prioritizes innovation and actuality.

The limitations of this research lie in the limited scope of batik motifs and the choice of medium, which remains conventional within the category of studio painting. Therefore, further research is recommended to expand the exploration of motifs from various regions, involve interdisciplinary approaches, and test the use of new techniques and media such as digital art, mixed

media, or installations. Furthermore, it is recommended that the works be exposed through exhibitions and scientific publications to have a broader impact on art discourse and cultural preservation efforts in Indonesia.

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