

The Purpose of Mural Art in Responsible Rehabilitation: A Case Study at the Batu Gajah Correctional Centre and its Implications for Society

***Muhammad Salehuddin Zakaria¹, Azian Tahir², Hairulnisak Merman³**
*^{1,2,3}College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perak Branch, Seri Iskandar
Campus, Perak, Malaysia*
¹msalehuddin@uitm.edu.my ²azian572@uitm.edu.my, ³hairulnisak@uitm.edu.my
***Corresponding author**

Received: 4 March 2025; Accepted: 31 March 2025; Published: 1 April 2025

ABSTRACT

The study on the design of mural paintings carried out at the Pusat Pemulihan Akhlak Batu Gajah (PPABG) is a collaboration between Fine Arts Studies, UiTM Perak Branch, Majlis Daerah Batu Gajah (MDBG) and PPABG, a mural production project with the theme "Membentuk Insan Produktif melalui Pendidikan Pencegahan". The objective of this mural is to study the history of the development of the Kinta district in Perak, which was once rich in tin ore, and to produce mural paintings with the theme of history, tasks and rehabilitation activities carried out by PPABG. This study also employs a literature review approach, examining previous studies as supporting documents to guide its development. The method used in this study is qualitative, by conducting research and planning, the design, drawing technique and evaluation and impact in collecting data to produce this project. The results of the analysis from this study found that there are various benefits obtained from the study that can be used by students, academia, art enthusiasts and the community. Finally, the murals at PPABG are not just decorative art but a rehabilitation tool that can improve the quality of the environment and the well-being of the community. Through positive symbols, harmonious colours, and motivational messages, murals can help individuals undergo the change process with more confidence and enthusiasm in the future.

Keywords: *Mural Art, Responsible Rehabilitation, Batu Gajah, Implication for Society*



ISSN: 2550-214X © 2025. Published for Ideology Journal by UiTM Press. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-No Commercial-No Derivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

1 INTRODUCTION

Mural painting plays a significant role in the efforts of the *Pusat Pemulihan Akhlak Batu Gajah* (PPABG), which is now known as the *Pusat Koreksional* (Correctional Centre), especially in the context of rehabilitation institutions and communities that need moral support. As a visual art medium, murals function as an aesthetic element that beautifies the environment and as an effective communication tool in conveying moral messages and positive values to the community.

Based on research sources, Batu Gajah Prison, which was built in 1902, is one of the oldest prison buildings in Malaysia. Although not as old as Taiping Prison, which was built in 1879, it also played an important role in the development of Batu Gajah town. However, the function of Batu Gajah Prison is no longer used for old punishments; it has been changed to a more professional task, namely the *Pusat Pemulihan Akhlak Batu Gajah* (PPABG). PPABG is located on a 1.25-hectare plot of land that borders Jalan Hospital (formerly Boyed Road), Jalan Perpaduan (formerly Dowden Road), and Jalan Merbok. Therefore, the proposed mural project is to provide an explanation and information related to the history, tasks and rehabilitation activities carried out by PPABG. This collaborative project between

Majlis Daerah Batu Gajah (MDBG), PPABG and Fine Arts Studies, UiTM Perak Branch is hoped to convey information other than awareness directly or indirectly through the production of this mural.

In correctional institutions such as PPABG in Perak, mural painting initiatives have been implemented to enrich the environment and instill noble values among the inmates. For example, an allocation was made for mural painting on the entrance wall of the Batu Gajah Women's Correctional Centre, measuring 10 x 40 feet, which aims to create a more conducive and pleasant atmosphere. In addition, the preservation of traditional arts such as Wayang Beber through murals in public spaces is an effort to preserve and learn the deep meaning of the culture. Such initiatives not only preserve cultural heritage but also convey the moral values contained in traditional arts to the wider community.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Mural art is a successful tool for sustainable community development, enabling community members to be active participants in social interactions and builders of both sustainable communities and sustainable urban environments (Petroniene & Juzeleniene, 2022). In addition, according to the views of other researchers, murals can effectively teach children positive values, character, and enhance creativity, school identity, social problem-solving, and self-reliance through periodic evaluation (Fahmi, 2024). Mural art in public areas serves as a medium for conveying aspirations, serving an aesthetic, economic, and educational function (Gazali, 2017; Ahmad et al., 2023). Making murals in art therapy can improve social skills, conflict resolution, and self-esteem while also aiding in healing, identity development, and social change (Wilkie, 2018). Because of this, making murals takes a lot of dedication, like doing in-depth research across multiple fields to find out how media affects moral understanding and how to deal with problems like conceptual clarity, measurement, and empirical methods (Friend et al., 202).

Based on Maxson's (2021) view, Art Honor Society students design and create murals for local nonprofit organizations, promote social growth, and teach students to be ethically and morally responsible through mural-based service learning. This mural can indirectly apply the student's identity of love to the subject knowledge being studied, which encourages students to be creative (Apandi, 2018).

Therefore, mural art is a successful tool for community engagement and development, fostering sustainable community development and urban environments through the process of creating murals (Petroniene & Juzeleniene, 2022). Producing these murals is crucial as it not only beautifies certain spaces, but also contributes to the restoration of urban landscapes, increases aesthetic value, and positively impacts the quality of life of residents (Krzykowska & Gron, 2020). According to Merman et al. (2022), mural art is a vehicle for disseminating information about the history and its storytelling in mural studies. Public art plays an important role in shaping cultural identity, stimulating socio-political transformation, supporting positive change, increasing civic engagement, and addressing social justice issues (Filonenko et al., 2024). Murals also function to beautify the area; they are a form of information media and visual communication (Astuti, Ernawati & Arifin, 2023). Visual communication in the form of paintings contains messages that are intended to be conveyed in various forms, including patriotism, social beauty, politics, and culture (Ahmad, 2023). The awareness that exists within the painter to continue producing works that reflect local culture and values will continue if the commitment shown by the painter is taken into account (Humaini, 2020). Therefore, mural art is seen as an effective communication medium where it uses a creative approach in the narrative and styling of its themes (Nadiah, 2017).

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology refers to the systematic approach used to conduct research. It includes the methods, techniques and procedures used to collect, analyse and interpret data. In addition, according to another view, the methodology is the overall research design, including the theoretical framework,

research questions, and research approaches (Aguiar, 2024). Methodology is also a research approach to methodologically explain the research problem, identify important methods and techniques, and determine those related to a particular problem (Swarooprani, 2022). The methodology ensures that the research is structured, reliable, and valid. Therefore, among the interests of this research methodology are ensuring that the research is organized and systematic, providing reliability and validity to the findings, assisting in making informed decisions based on data and ensuring that ethical standards are maintained. There are several methods used to obtain information based on this research study as below.

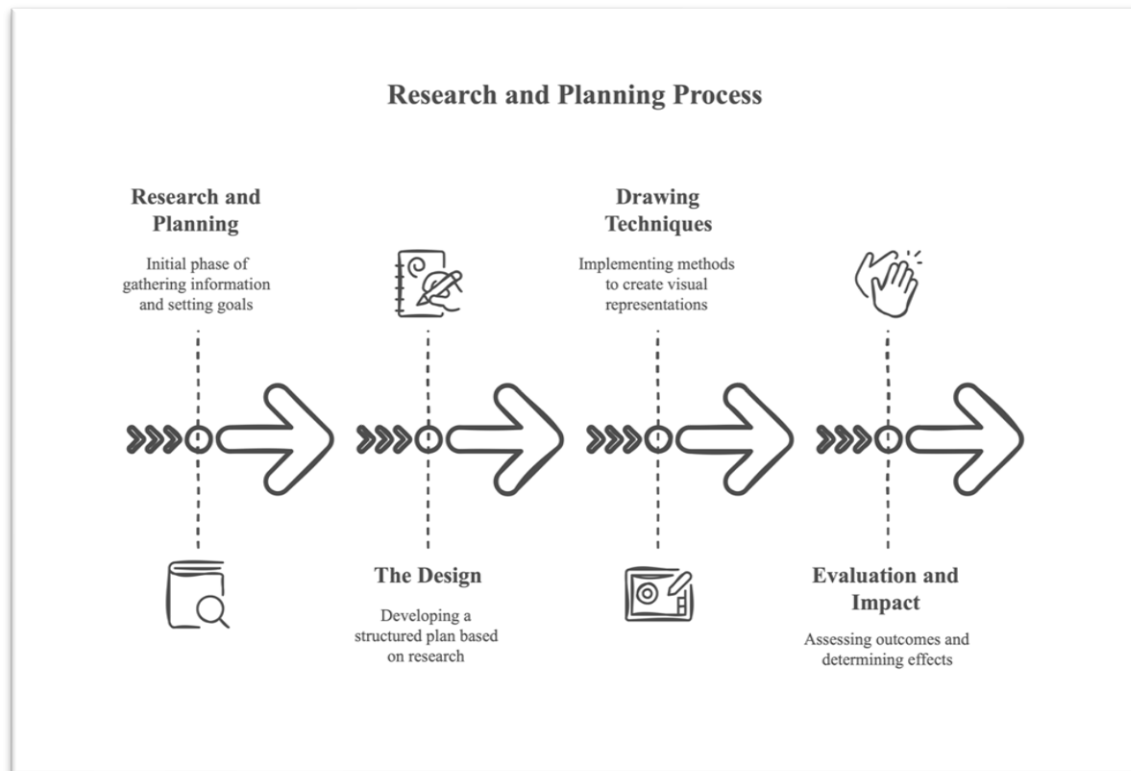


Figure 1 Research and Planning Process
(Source: Muhammad Salehuddin Zakaria, 2025)

3.1 Research and Planning

In the production of the mural at the *Pusat Pemulihan Batu Gajah* (PPABG), discussions were held with the *Majlis Daerah Batu Gajah* (MDBG) and PPABG to determine the themes and moral values that need to be featured in the mural design. Therefore, the themes conveyed must carry positive messages such as honesty, patience, respect, and responsibility. The results of this study need to study the background of the target by understanding the culture, needs, and challenges of the target group. In addition, all discussion processes regarding ideas and concepts need to obtain permission and support, which means discussing with all parties involved in the production of this mural process by discussing with the authorities, community, or institution to obtain permission and logistical support to meet all needs.

3.2 The Design

After the discussion, the next step involves creating an initial sketch of the mural design. This can be done manually or digitally, using bright and harmonious colours to create a positive impact. The use of meaningful symbols and visuals, such as birds symbolizing freedom, light symbolizing hope, shaking hands symbolizing unity, and trees symbolizing growth, ensures that the images align with the cultural and religious norms of the local community. In addition, there is also the involvement of the community

and citizens who are in the process of moral recovery in the design of the mural so that they appreciate the message more.

3.3 Drawing Techniques

We selected Jotun's appropriate wall paint for this project due to its durability and suitability for exterior walls. In addition, various types of brushes are used for the background and fine brushes for small details. In addition, there are several methods used to produce initial sketches, such as the grid method technique, which uses squares to transfer small sketches to a large wall more accurately. The second is through digital projection, which uses a projector to display the design onto the wall before painting, and the third technique is stencilling, which uses cut-out prints to easily create shapes and patterns. Finally, to maintain the quality and neatness of the mural, add a protective layer so that the mural lasts longer so that the mural can be updated if it is damaged or faded.

3.4 Evaluation and Impact

The next process is to get community feedback by conducting a questionnaire or discussion to evaluate the effectiveness of the mural in conveying the message of moral recovery. In addition, to document and promote by taking photos and sharing them on social media to inspire other communities and promote the mural as part of a social awareness and moral education program.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 Medium of Expression and Therapy

The production of murals at the *Pusat Pemulihan Akhlak Batu Gajah* (PPABG), Perak is a program involving collaboration from Fine Arts Studies, UiTM Seri Iskandar, *Majlis Daerah Batu Gajah* (MDBG) and PPABG. This mural production program was produced by students and lecturers from the institution for five days in the production process. The purpose of this mural production is to express expressions such as emotional expressions through the mural paintings produced to help painters channel feelings such as joy, sadness, anger, or anxiety. In addition, it can increase creativity among students and can encourage freedom of thought and innovation in conveying feelings, techniques and ideas through the mural paintings produced. Furthermore, it can increase social understanding by facilitating communication and relationships with others through clear and honest expression.

Meanwhile, from a therapy perspective, it is a form of treatment that aims to heal or improve a person's mental, emotional, and physical well-being through murals produced at PPABG. It is important for the awareness of the community and residents at PPABG to reduce stress and anxiety to help overcome daily stress during the recovery process and increase self-confidence to help individuals build self-esteem and courage to face life's challenges. In recovery institutions, such as correctional centres or rehabilitation schools, mural painting activities can be used as part of an art therapy program. This creative process allows individuals to express their emotions and thoughts constructively, helping in the healing and recovery process. For example, *Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris* (UPSI) has implemented a community service program by producing murals at *Sekolah Kebangsaan Tapah, Perak*. This program aims to create a conducive and interesting learning environment, stimulating the minds and psychomotor skills of students through interactive learning activities (Aznan, 2024).

4.2 Delivery of Moral and Educational Messages

Mural painting is one of the effective visual art mediums in conveying moral and educational messages. In the context of moral recovery, the murals produced at PPABG are used as a communication tool to provide awareness, inspiration, and motivation to individuals who want to change for the better, especially to residents around the area. Murals are often used to convey moral,

social, and educational messages to the community. Through attractive visuals, values such as tolerance, cooperation, and integrity can be conveyed more effectively. For example, in Dusun Karangwatu, Pucungrejo Muntilan, mural paintings featuring the puppet character Wisanggeni are used to convey the values of courage and devotion to humanity (Anugrah, 2022).

In addition, the purpose of this mural is also to convey moral and ethical values through designs that have been produced based on discussions with the MDBG and PPABG. Among the designs produced are pictures of daily activities carried out by PPABG inmates that are beneficial and can be used as experiences for them after they are released from PPABG. In addition, through this design, it can also convey messages to the community as useful information. Murals often depict messages about kindness, patience, discipline, and responsibility in life. For example, drawings showing hands helping each other symbolize the values of mutual help and brotherhood.



Figure 2 Mural paintings measuring 10 x 8 feet for each wall at PPABG (Sources: Muhammad Salehuiddin Zakaria, 2025)

4.3 Enhancing Environmental Quality and Community Welfare

The results of projects like this can create a positive environment. Mural paintings in a rehabilitation centre can create a more cheerful, peaceful, and inspiring atmosphere. This project shows that a positive environment can improve mental well-being and encourage behavioural changes in the community. The use of bright and symbolic colours in this mural can evoke emotions of joy, peace, and hope. In addition, the design results that display an attractive atmosphere help reduce feelings of stress and depression. To improve the quality of the environment by encouraging self-reflection, which is the message that is wanted to be conveyed in the murals at PPABG, it often invites individuals to reflect and evaluate themselves. For example, a mural that depicts two different paths, namely the dark path (evil) and the bright path (goodness), reminds someone to make better choices. The presence of murals in public spaces can beautify the physical environment, making it more attractive and pleasant. This indirectly improves the mental and emotional well-being of the local community. In addition, murals also function as a visual communication medium that conveys important messages to the community, such as awareness campaigns or cultural values. (Hildayanti & Rahim, 2023).

The next way to improve the quality of the environment is by conveying noble values. Based on the mural designs, such as images of gardening, carpentry, sewing, reading the Quran and cooking, they bring messages of recovery, unity and new life. In addition, there are also designs such as old prison buildings around Perak, such as Pudu Prison, Taiping Prison and Batu Gajah Prison, featured in this mural design to give identity to the community to depict culture, history, or community values, creating

a sense of pride and belonging among the residents of the rehabilitation centre.

Furthermore, the murals produced can also have an impact on the well-being of the community and mental and emotional health of the community, namely through mural painting; it helps create a peaceful and calm atmosphere, having a positive impact on the mental health of individuals. Each symbol and design produced, such as sewing, gardening, cooking and so on, will give the spirit to continue a new life. In addition, the murals at PPABG are also a self-recovery ward for residents because the process of painting murals collaboratively gives individuals the opportunity to express emotions, build self-confidence, and work together. Therefore, murals that contain motivational messages help individuals understand that they are capable of change. Finally, the production of this mural also trains students and the community to interact socially through group mural painting activities that can build positive relationships between individuals, volunteers, and teaching staff. This can indirectly increase the attitude of helping each other and unity in the community.

4.4 Strengthening Identity and Community Pride

Murals that depict elements of local culture, history, or identity can inspire a sense of pride and belonging within the community. This is important in forming a strong individual and community identity, which in turn contributes to moral recovery through the reinforcement of positive shared values. Murals are not just decorative elements but also function as a tool of expression and social transformation. At PPABG, murals can be used to strengthen community identity and pride by conveying noble values, history, and local culture. It also provides opportunities for rehabilitation centre residents to actively participate in artistic activities that build their identity and self-esteem.

Therefore, murals serve as a tool to build community pride to increase the self-confidence of residents through the process of painting paintings, allowing residents of the rehabilitation centre to contribute to the community positively, increasing their self-esteem. It provides practical experience in art and teamwork, which is useful in life after recovery. In addition, it can create harmonious relationships in the community, namely through this mural project at PPABG involving students, lecturers, and residents of the centre, helping to strengthen social relationships and trust in the community. This collaborative activity encourages cooperation, tolerance, and appreciation for joint efforts. Finally, the purpose of this mural is also to change the perception of society through the results of the murals that depict positive changes and potential of individuals in the rehabilitation centre, which can reduce the stigma against those undergoing recovery. It shows that recovery is not the end but a new beginning.



Figure 3 The completed murals are produced at PPABG
(Sources: Muhammad Salehuddin Zakaria, 2025)

5 CONCLUSIONS

Overall, mural painting serves as an effective tool in moral rehabilitation efforts. Through artistic expression, delivering moral messages, improving environmental quality, and strengthening community identity, murals contribute to the formation of better individuals and societies. Therefore, the integration of mural art in community rehabilitation and development programs should be considered as a holistic approach in addressing social and moral issues. The production of murals in PPABG requires careful planning, appropriate techniques, and the delivery of a clear moral message. By involving the target community and using symbols and colours that have a positive impact, murals can be an effective tool for social transformation. Mural painting is not just decoration but a powerful visual communication tool for delivering moral and educational messages. In moral rehabilitation, murals function as a source of inspiration, teaching, and motivation to help individuals change toward a better life. With the use of positive symbols, colours, and words, murals can become a mirror to a person's journey to finding identity, self-awareness, and mental well-being.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank the Idealogy Journal, College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Seri Iskandar Campus, Perak Branch for allowing me to publish this article. Finally, thank you also to the researchers of this article for their cooperation in preparing the article until it was published.

FUNDING

Thanks to *Geran Penyelidikan Bersama UiTM Cawangan Perak, Majlis Daerah Batu Gajah dan Jabatan Penjara Malaysia "Membentuk Insan Produktif Melalui Pendidikan Pencegahan" di Pusat Pemulihan Akhlak (PPA) Batu Gajah 2025* for the contribution of funds in publishing this article.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author and group members were directly involved in the production of this project and were formally involved in collecting data and analyzing this research.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest.

REFERENCES

- Ahmad, S. H. S., Ahmad, S., Razali, R., Tahir, A., Zakaria, M. S., & Saad, M. N. (2023). Seni Mural sebagai Alternatif Komunikasi Massa dalam memperkasakan simbol-simbol kenegaraan diPekan Bagan Datuk. KUPAS SENI: Jurnal Seni dan Pendidikan Seni, 11(3), 22-31.
- Andi Hildayanti, R. R. (2023). Komunikasi Visual Ada Ruang Publik Melalui Seni Mural di Kota Makassar. Seminar Ilmiah Arsitektur, 1411-8912, 7.
- Anugrah, D. (29 Mei, 2022). Pesan Moral dalam Seni Mural. Retrieved from Berita Magelang: <https://www.beritamagelang.id/kolom/pesan-moral-dalam-seni-mural>
- Apandi, W. N. W. M. (2018). Perbezaan Seni Mural Dan Grafiti. Idealogy Journal, 3(1), 75-80.
- Astuti, E.Z., Ernawati, A., & Arifin, Z. (2023). Identitas Budaya Jawa Pada Mural di Kampung
- Aznan, A. A. (2024). Seni Mural di Sekolah: Inisiatif UPSI dalam Memperkaya Pengalaman Pembelajaran. Retrieved from epena : <https://epena.com.my/index.php/2024/08/05/seni-mural-di-sekolah-inisiatif-upsi-dalam-memperkaya-pengalaman-pembelajaran/>
- Batik Kota Semarang. Jurnal Riset Komunikasi.
- dan Penyampaian Ekspresi Siswa.. JURNAL ILMU PENDIDIKAN.
- De Aguiar, G. (2024). DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN METHOD AND METHODOLOGY IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH. Journal of Advance Research in Mathematics And Statistics (ISSN 2208-2409). <https://doi.org/10.61841/xjxks957>.

- Fahmi, K. (2024). Seni Mural Sebagai Media Pendidikan Seni Rupa: Mendorong Kreativitas
- Friend, S., Nyhout, A., Smith, M., & Ferguson, H. (2024). Moral Understanding and Media.
- Galchynska, O., Filonenko, L., Lozev, R., Sydor, M., & Drotenko, V. (2024). Public art as a driver of change: exploring its socio-political impact in the modern era. *Revista Amazonia Investiga*. <https://doi.org/10.34069/ai/2024.79.07.17>.
- Gazali, M. (2017). Seni Mural Ruang Publik dalam Konteks Konservasi. *Imajinasi*, 11, 69-76. <https://doi.org/10.58222/jurip.v3i1.730>.
- Humaini, S., Ahmad, S., & Ahmad, S. (2020). Elemen budaya dalam karya seni catan in Science, Engineering and Technology. <https://doi.org/10.32628/ijsrset2293175>. *Journal of Media Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-1105/a000410>.
- K, S. (2022). An Study of Research Methodology. *International Journal of Scientific Research Malaysia: satu tinjauan*. *Ideology Journal*, 5(1), 157-164.
- Maxson, M. (2021). Impact of Art Within a Community. The Personal, Place, and Context in
- Merman, H., Tahir, A., Mohd Aripin, N. A. N., Zakaria, M. S., & Saad, M. N. (2022). Mural Painting as a Platform for Historical Information in Batu Gajah Heritage Town. *KUPAS SENI*, 10, 80-92. <https://doi.org/10.37134/kupasseni.vol10.sp.2.8.2022>
- Nur Adibah Nadiah, M. A., & Noor A'yunni, M. (2017). Seni kelarai dan seni mural: pertembungan timur dan barat/Nur Adibah Nadiah Mohd Aripin dan Noor A'yunni Muhammad. *Ideology Journal*, 2(2), 116-121. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-71423-9_19. *Pedagogy*.
- Petronienė, S., & Juzelėnienė, S. (2022). Community Engagement via Mural Art to Foster a Sustainable Urban Environment. *Sustainability*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su141610063>.
- Wilkie, S. (2018). An Exploration of Community Mural Making in the Context of Art Therapy and Social Action: A Literature Review.
- Zabawa-Krzypkowska, J., & Groń, K. (2020). Art in the Public Space, Different Aspects of Artistic Activities in Architecture. *IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering*, 960. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1757-899X/960/3/032090>.