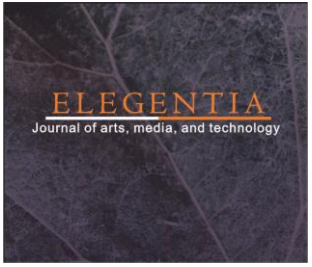
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PROLOGUE

# From Traditional Heritage to Digital Art: Navigating Changes in Culture and Creative Expression

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The development of technology has brought significant changes in the way humans create, distribute, and appreciate art. Traditional art, which is rooted in the history and culture of a society, now faces challenges from the advancement of digital technology. Traditional art is not just a form of aesthetic expression, but also an important medium for conveying values, beliefs, and collective identity. However, the digital era introduces a new dimension that allows artists to create works in ways that transcend material and geographical boundaries. This transformation creates a new dynamic that demands a reinterpretation of art in the contemporary context.

Digital art, with the presence of technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), offers limitless opportunities for creative exploration. This medium enables artists to overcome technical constraints and expand their artistic horizons. Meanwhile, society, as the audience, is also experiencing shifts in the patterns of interaction with art. Digital artworks are often immersive and interactive, allowing for deeper engagement compared to traditional art forms. However, this development also raises fundamental questions about the sustainability of traditional art in the face of technological dominance. Can digital art serve as an extension of tradition, or will it ultimately replace it?

Although introducing significant innovations, the shift to digital art also poses the risk of reducing cultural value. Traditional art adapted to digital formats may lose its historical context and spiritual meaning if not managed carefully. Technology, which should serve as a tool for preservation, can instead become a means of cultural homogenization if applied without sensitivity. Therefore, a holistic approach is needed to integrate tradition into the digital realm. This involves not only creating new artworks but also ensuring that the cultural values underlying traditional art remain alive and relevant.

In facing the digital era, efforts to create a bridge between traditional art and digital art have become crucial. Collaboration between traditional and digital artists can result in new forms of art that combine cultural authenticity with technological innovation. Through this approach, traditional art can not only survive but also thrive in a form that is more contextual with the times. This transformation is not merely a shift in medium, but also a reflection of the dynamic evolution of culture. Amidst these changes, society needs to ensure that technology is used as a means to enrich art, not erase the heritage that has been formed over centuries.

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## Traditional Art: Guardian of Cultural Heritage

Traditional art represents a profound embodiment of a community's cultural identity. Every piece of traditional art—be it wood carving, weaving, dance, or music—has roots that reflect the history, beliefs, and moral values of the community (Morriss-Kay, 2010). This art is not merely an aesthetic symbol but also a medium that conveys messages across generations. For instance, batik in Indonesia is not just patterned fabric but part of rituals and a symbol of social status, recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (Anton, 2022). However, traditional art faces a dilemma in the modern era. The shifting interests of younger generations and the digital-oriented consumption patterns of art pose a risk of losing traditional art if it is not actively preserved.

In the era of globalization, cultural homogenization presents a significant challenge for traditional arts. The dominance of global culture through mass media and digital technology often shifts the uniqueness of traditional arts. This phenomenon leads to cultural standardization, where local artistic expressions receive less attention compared to modern or commercial art (Tomlinson, 1999). Moreover, the rapidly changing lifestyle makes younger generations tend to choose modern art that is more practical and easily accessible. If this situation continues without intervention, traditional arts may lose their role as a strong medium of cultural identity. Therefore, preservation strategies are needed that involve collaboration between local communities, governments, and the education sector to maintain the values of traditional arts.

Education plays a crucial role in the preservation of traditional arts. Through curricula that integrate local arts, young generations can learn to appreciate their cultural roots. Schools in countries like Japan, China, and the United States, for example, have successfully taught calligraphy as part of formal education, which not only preserves the skills but also strengthens cultural pride (Li, 2022). In Indonesia, initiatives such as the Nusantara Sultanate Festival, traditional art training programs for students, and village cultural advancement programs are positive steps toward reigniting the interest of younger generations in traditional arts. However, this approach needs to be broader and more consistent in order to produce significant impact (Wulandari, 2024).

In addition to education, technology can also serve as a tool for preserving traditional arts. The digitization of art through platforms such as 3D documentation, virtual exhibitions, or traditional art learning applications offers new ways to capture the interest of younger generations (Furferi et al., 2024). For instance, the launch of virtual exhibitions of traditional arts in museums like the National Gallery of Indonesia and the National Library of Indonesia allows for global access and promotes local cultural richness to a broader audience (Pyae, 2018). This approach not only broadens the scope of art preservation but also provides new economic opportunities for traditional artists. By integrating education and technology, traditional arts can remain relevant in the modern world without losing their cultural roots (Makarova et al., 2019).

## The Digital Era: Expanding the Horizons of Art and Creativity

Digital technology provides artists with broader access to explore ideas and create works that were previously challenging to achieve through traditional media (Wiratno & Callula, 2024). With graphic computing and creative software, artists can now visualize complex and abstract concepts in immersive and interactive forms. For instance, the use of augmented reality (AR) technology allows the public not only to view art but also to experience it in a three-dimensional context. A digital art installation integrating AR technology in museums or public spaces can connect viewers with the historical and cultural narratives behind the artwork (Boboc et al., 2022). In this regard, digital art transcends the boundaries of traditional media, creating new ways to engage with audiences.

In addition, virtual reality (VR) has transformed the way society experiences art. Through VR, artists can create entirely new worlds where audiences can actively participate, not just observe (O'Dwyer et al., 2020). This experience adds an extra dimension that transcends the boundaries of physical space, allowing art to become both a personal and collective experience. For example, artists can create VR environments that reconstruct

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traditional cultural festivals, which not only document but also reintroduce traditions to younger generations. Innovations like this have been shown to significantly enhance audience engagement (Buragohain et al., 2024). Digital art, in this context, serves as a bridge between technological innovation and cultural values.

Digital art not only serves as a medium of expression but has also created a new market through blockchain technology, such as NFT (Non-Fungible Tokens), which allow artists to sell their artworks in digital format with verified authenticity. This opens up new economic opportunities, especially for artists who previously struggled to access traditional art markets, and provides an opportunity to preserve traditional art in digital form without losing ownership rights (Jain et al., 2024). On the other hand, the adoption of digital art also brings challenges, one of which is the digital divide, where access to devices and technological knowledge is limited in certain communities. Additionally, the blockchain technology used for NFT has been criticized for its environmental impact, particularly the high energy consumption involved in the minting process and transactions. Therefore, it is crucial to adopt a sustainable approach in the use of digital technology in art, which not only supports innovation but also considers environmental sustainability (Zakopoulos et al., 2023). Thus, the digital era can become an opportunity to enrich art while not neglecting social and environmental responsibility.

## Transformation or Disruption? The Challenges of Traditional Art in the Digital Era

The transformation of traditional art into the digital realm brings both opportunities and significant challenges. One of the main challenges is how traditional art can maintain its relevance amidst the rapidly advancing technological landscape. The ease of access and production of digital art often leads younger generations to prefer modern art forms over traditional works, which are seen as less practical and rigid. According to a study by Wiratno & Callula (2024), the digital generation tends to seek art that is dynamic and adaptive, leaving behind traditional art that requires personal involvement and time to learn. This situation poses a real threat to the sustainability of traditional art if effective preservation efforts are not made.

Furthermore, the digitalization of traditional art without considering its cultural context can reduce its essential value. The adaptation process to digital formats often emphasizes the visual aspects over the symbolic or spiritual meanings embedded in the traditional art itself. According to Taçon & Baker (2019), when elements of traditional art are turned into digital commodities, there is a risk that the cultural heritage loses its historical relevance and becomes nothing more than a visual decoration. Digitalization that is not sensitive to the roots of tradition can produce works that are disconnected from their history, obscuring the original values that define the art.

To address this challenge, collaboration between traditional artists and digital art practitioners becomes a crucial solution, as this approach allows for the harmonious integration of technology with tradition, creating artworks that are modern yet still rooted in cultural values. For example, interactive digital art projects based on AR, such as those developed by the Indonesian Ministry of Culture, have successfully introduced architecture, traditional clothing, and dance to a global audience without compromising their meaning. As Schnugg & Song (2020) stated, cross-disciplinary collaboration is a middle ground to ensure traditional art remains relevant in the era of modern technology. Additionally, it is important for art institutions and governments to take an active role in protecting and promoting traditional arts amid the dominance of digital art. Education program that integrate the values of traditional art with technology can be a strategic step to bridge the younger generation with their cultural heritage, ensuring that traditional art not only survives but thrives in the digital era.

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## Building Bridges: The Integration of Traditional and Digital Art

The second edition of the December 2024 Elegentia journal presents five articles that explore various phenomena at the intersection of traditional culture, art, and modern technology. The first article discusses the rapai tunang from North Aceh in the digital age, highlighting the impact of digital transformation on the preservation of traditional music and the challenges faced by local artists. The second article explores the symbolism of the tombstone ornaments of Sultanah Nahrasyiah, revealing the aesthetic and spiritual values that reflect Islamic influence, and stressing the need for preservation as part of Aceh's cultural identity. The third article analyzes the neglect of Jeungki, a cultural heritage of Aceh that is increasingly marginalized, while offering revitalization strategies to maintain the sustainability of local cultural identity. In the realm of contemporary culture, the fourth article examines the phenomenon of sensory preference manipulation in viral unique cuisine on social media, focusing on the visual influence and marketing strategies in shaping consumer perceptions. This research provides new insights into the role of social media algorithms in shaping modern cultural trends. Finally, the fifth article delves into the transformation of digital art powered by artificial intelligence (AI), opening new spaces for creative expression in contemporary art while also presenting ethical and artistic challenges.

The articles in this edition contribute to the global literature by bridging the understanding of cultural and artistic transformations amid the growing influence of digital technology worldwide. Academically, this study expands the discourse on cultural heritage preservation and the adaptation of local traditions in the context of globalization, offering new insights into how cultural communities can survive and adapt in the digital era. Practically, these articles provide strategic guidance for cultural practitioners, artists, and policymakers to leverage technology in the preservation, transformation, and innovation of arts and culture.

Overall, these five articles highlight the importance of understanding the interaction between tradition and modernity, as well as the role of technology in influencing the preservation of culture and artistic expression. The findings are expected to serve as a foundation for further discussions on strategies for cultural preservation and the development of art in the digital era. In the global context, this discussion reflects the challenges and opportunities faced by various cultural traditions around the world in maintaining their identities while adapting to social and technological changes. The emphasis on the integration of digital technology and cultural expression not only enriches theoretical understanding but also offers concrete solutions to involve society more broadly in the preservation and development of culture. By connecting local and global aspects, these articles contribute to the re-mapping of a more inclusive, dynamic, and relevant cultural and artistic landscape in the digital era.

## Closing Remarks: Future Research Directions

The journey from traditional art to digital art reflects the dynamic evolution of culture. On one hand, the main challenge is to preserve the essence and traditional values in the process of digitalization, ensuring that the cultural roots are not lost. On the other hand, this transformation opens up great opportunities to create broader forms of creative expression, allowing artists to innovate and adapt to the changing times. With the wise use of technology, digital art can become an effective tool for connecting different generations while maintaining the relevance of traditional culture in an increasingly globalized modern context.

Looking ahead, it is important to explore how digital art can enrich and expand perspectives in the preservation of cultural heritage. The integration of technologies, such as artificial intelligence and social media, allows traditional artworks to reach a wider audience, transcending geographical and temporal boundaries. This transformation not only demands recognition of art rooted in tradition but also urges society to be more open to innovations that can enrich the meaning and application of art itself. Therefore, it is essential to create a proper balance between preserving cultural values and creative exploration that allows traditions to continue thriving.

Looking towards the future, interdisciplinary collaboration between traditional arts and digital technology could form the foundation for a more inclusive and sustainable era of

creativity. This approach not only prioritizes the preservation of cultural heritage but also demonstrates how traditions can evolve and transform over time. Further research into the relationship between culture, technology, and the arts is crucial to create models that allow for the sustainability of traditions while harnessing the innovative potential offered by technological advancements. In this way, art and culture will not only serve as a reflection of the past but also act as catalysts for a more creative and relevant future.

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