

# The Role of Arts in Identity Formation and Collective Memory in The Digital age

Donny Melianto<sup>1</sup>, Ahmad Syamsudin<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universita IPWIJA Jakarta, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Software Engineering, Hohai University China

E-mail: [donymelianto@gmail.com](mailto:donymelianto@gmail.com), [ahmadsyamsudin210@gmail.com](mailto:ahmadsyamsudin210@gmail.com)

## Abstract

*The role of art in the formation of identity and collective memory in the digital era is becoming an increasingly relevant topic along with the rapid advancement of technology and digital media. In this context, art is not only a medium for individual expression, but also an important means of forming a collective memory that connects people in a community or nation. With the emergence of digital platforms, art has the potential to change the way people build, communicate, and maintain their identities. This journal examines how art, whether in the form of visuals, music, or other art forms, influences the formation of social identity and collective memory in the digital era, through the approach of communication theory and cultural studies. As part of this study, using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method, this journal focuses on analyzing various literatures that discuss the relationship between art, identity, and collective memory in the digital context. This study also looks at how social media, digital art platforms, and other multimedia technologies play a role in strengthening or redefining people's collective memory and identity. The results of this study indicate that digital art plays an important role in mediating the process of identity formation, both at the personal and collective levels, and influences the way the digital generation remembers and responds to their history and culture.*

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Corresponding Author:

Donny Melianto

[donymelianto@gmail.com](mailto:donymelianto@gmail.com)

## 1. Introduction

The digital era has brought significant changes to many aspects of human life, including the way we interact with art and culture. Previously, art was understood as a personal expression limited to physical spaces, such as art galleries or live performances (Sitanggang, AS, et al. 2024). However, with the presence of the internet, social media, and other digital technologies, art can now be accessed and shared globally, reaching a wider and more diverse audience. This technology opens up new possibilities in introducing art as a tool to build, communicate, and maintain collective identity. This technology makes it easier for artists to publish their work without having to rely on large cultural institutions or physical art galleries (Purba, RA, et al. 2020).

This phenomenon allows art to not only thrive in a local context, but also to reach a more diverse global audience. Artists can share their work on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, or personal websites, allowing them to build a following and interact directly with their audience without intermediaries. This provides an opportunity for art to celebrate diversity and inclusivity, as more diverse works of art, both in terms of genre and perspective, can be discovered and appreciated by audiences around the world (Muharram, MZ 2023).

Furthermore, digital art opens up new possibilities for creating and consuming art. For example, interactive art, digital art, and even virtual reality (VR) art have introduced new ways to interact with art, blurring the boundaries between creator and viewer. This not only expands the concept of "what is art," but also allows art to become a more dynamic and multinational communication tool. (Musta'in, MM, et al. 2022). Digital art also plays a vital role in building



collective identity in an increasingly connected world. Through artworks produced, shared, and consumed digitally, cultural groups can express themselves, promote their heritage, and preserve traditions while remaining engaged in global conversations. This provides space for different identities, be they cultural, political, or social, to be explored and celebrated in a more inclusive and open manner.

In short, digital technology has opened up the art world to greater exploration and participation, making it more inclusive and enabling the strengthening of collective identity. Artworks can now speak directly to the global community, inspiring and shaping shared consciousness across cultural layers. Identity is an evolving concept, formed through interactions between individuals and society. In traditional societies, identity is often shaped by cultural elements present in the surrounding environment, such as language, customs, and historical heritage. However, with the dominance of digital media, identity is now also influenced by virtual spaces that allow individuals to share their experiences and values more widely. In this context, digital art is an important means of shaping identity, both at the individual and collective levels. Through digital artworks, individuals or groups can introduce and affirm their values and culture in a more flexible and open form (National, BRI 2024).

Collective memory is a concept that describes how social groups store, remember, and transmit their knowledge and experiences. Collective memory helps social groups maintain their identity, strengthen their sense of solidarity, and give meaning to shared experiences. It can also play an important role in the process of forming group identities, such as within a particular nation, ethnicity, or community. However, like individual memories, collective memory can also change over time, influenced by various social, political, and cultural factors. This makes collective memory something that can be dynamic, constantly evolving, and sometimes even contested. (Rupiassa, DA 2024).

Previously, this collective memory was usually preserved through oral narratives, writings, or physical artifacts. However, with the advancement of digital technology, collective memory is now not only preserved in the form of physical materials, but also in digital spaces, such as social media, online archives, and content sharing platforms (Effendhie, M. 2019). Digital art, with its ability to reach a global audience and store works permanently in cyberspace, has influenced the way people maintain and remember their collective experiences. For example, in the context of history or important events, digital art can be used to immortalize historical moments, commemorate important figures, or celebrate the cultural identity of a group. Various digital art projects, whether documentary, reflective, or expressive, provide space for social groups to tell their own stories, recall important events, and even discuss the collective traumas that shape their history. In this way, digital art not only functions as a medium of expression, but also as a way to preserve and transmit collective memory in the era of digital globalization (Redi, P. 2019). Overall, advances in digital technology have expanded the dimensions of collective memory, creating new ways of remembering, sharing, and celebrating shared experiences in more inclusive, accessible, and durable formats. With the vast and growing digital space, collective memory is no longer limited to physical artifacts, but has become something that can continue to live and evolve over time in cyberspace. In the digital era, art does not only function as entertainment or creative expression, but also as a tool to shape social and cultural narratives. Artworks created and shared digitally can create space for collective discussion and reflection on various social, political, and cultural issues. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become spaces where artists can share their work with a wider and more diverse audience, which in turn allows for the creation of a more inclusive collective identity. Through digital art, people can introduce previously marginalized or forgotten stories, give voice to minority groups, and build a shared awareness of their history and culture (Hariyanto, B., & Anom, E. 2024). In the Indonesian context, for example, digital art can be a means to strengthen national identity amidst the rapid globalization and social change. Indonesian artists can use digital media to raise local, historical, and cultural themes, and connect them to relevant global issues. This allows for the creation of a more dynamic cultural identity, which is not trapped in traditional views, but able to adapt to the development of the times. Therefore, it is important to understand how digital

art plays a role in shaping identity and collective memory, especially in developing countries, such as Indonesia.

Other studies explain that art has a strategic role in the formation of identity and collective memory in the digital context, which is in line with the findings in this file. In the digital era, art is not only a medium for individual expression, but also a tool to strengthen social and cultural ties. With the advancement of technology, art can be accessed and created more widely, expanding the spread of increasingly diversified collective memory. This allows for the creation of a dynamic collective identity, which reflects the shared experiences of society in a global context connected through cyberspace. Digital art is a powerful means of preserving and transforming cultural values, while providing space for dialogue and reflection in forming a collective memory that is relevant to the development of the times (Hartono, D. 2020) (Pulukadang, MA 2023).

However, although digital art has great potential in shaping collective identity and memory, there are challenges and issues that need to be considered. One of them is the issue of authenticity and copyright in digital artwork. In cyberspace, artwork can be easily downloaded, copied, and distributed without permission from the original creator. This raises questions about who has the right to determine and control collective memory through digital art. In addition, there are also challenges in terms of accessibility, where not all levels of society have the same access to digital technology that allows them to participate in the creation and consumption of digital art. By studying the role of art in shaping collective identity and memory in the digital era, this study aims to provide deeper insights into the relationship between art, technology, and social dynamics in an increasingly connected and rapidly changing world.

## **2. Method**

This study uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to examine relevant literature on the role of art in the formation of identity and collective memory in the digital era (Zafila, SS, & Purnairawan, RE 2024). The SLR method was chosen because of its ability to filter and analyze various previous studies, provide a clear picture of the topic being discussed, and identify trends, gaps, and potential for further research. In this study, the authors traced journal articles, books, research reports, and other sources related to digital art, identity, and collective memory published in recent years.

The SLR process begins with the identification of inclusion and exclusion criteria to select literature relevant to the topic. Then, the selected articles are analyzed qualitatively to identify emerging patterns regarding how digital art plays a role in shaping social identity and collective memory. The authors also consider perspectives from various disciplines, such as cultural theory, communication, art, and technology, to provide a deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **a. Analyzing the Role of Art in the Formation of Collective Identity**

Art, in its various forms such as visual art, music, theater, and other art forms, plays a very important role in shaping and strengthening the collective identity of a social, cultural, or national group. Through art, a group can depict shared values, history, and collective experiences that enrich their identity (Dewi Smara, C. 2021). For example, visual art such as painting or sculpture is often used to represent cultural symbols or historical events that are important to the community, while music and national anthems serve as a means to strengthen a sense of togetherness and solidarity among members of society. Theater, in the same way, can tell historical stories or myths that connect individuals to their collective traditions, as well as build dialogue about shared values. Art can also strengthen national identity, as seen in the use of artwork to commemorate heroes or important events in the country's history, which then strengthens social ties between citizens. In addition, art serves as a medium to unite various cultural groups in a pluralistic society, allowing for the formation of understanding and appreciation for diversity, and enriching a sense of togetherness. Therefore, art is not only a reflection of cultural identity, but also a means of maintaining and transmitting collective memory, as well as playing a role in building and strengthening social ties within the community (Pratama, I. 2019).

## **b. Examining the Transformation of Collective Memory in the Digital Era**

The digital era has changed the way societies store, remember, and transmit their collective memories. Digital technologies, including social media, digital archives, and online art platforms, enable the dissemination of collective memories in a faster and wider way compared to traditional methods (Hildawati, H., et al. 2024). Digital art, such as interactive artworks, virtual reality installations, or internet-based videos, now plays a role in maintaining and shaping a group's collective memory, allowing individuals to actively participate in creating and sharing shared narratives. Through social media, for example, people can share memories or cultural experiences that shape a shared identity, while digital archives allow easy access to information that describes history or important events. The main difference between collective memories formed in the physical world and the virtual world lies in their accessibility and involvement. Physical collective memories are often tied to specific places or events, such as monuments or museums, which can only be accessed physically. Meanwhile, digital collective memories are more flexible, distributed, and accessible to anyone anywhere, allowing for the creation of more inclusive and dynamic narratives. Thus, digital technology provides a new dimension in how art and collective memory can be maintained and developed in the modern era (Diningrum, W. 2020).

## **d. Exploring the Impact of Digital Platforms on the Spread of Art and Collective Memory**

Digital platforms, such as social media, websites, and internet-based applications, have made it easier to access artworks and expand their distribution reach to a wider audience. Previously, artworks may only have been accessible to a limited circle, for example through galleries, museums, or certain public spaces. However, with digital technology, artworks can now be easily accessed by anyone, anywhere, anytime. Through platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, or other digital art sites, artists can share their works with a global audience, while audiences can also interact directly with the work, even providing interpretations or reactions that influence the meaning of the art itself (Wibowo, A. 2022). This study aims to explore how the accessibility of artworks through these digital platforms affects the spread of collective memory and the formation of group identity. One of the biggest impacts of the spread of artworks in cyberspace is its ability to create new spaces for the formation of social memory. When artworks are shared widely, for example through social media, they can introduce various perspectives and experiences from various individuals and social groups. This can enrich collective memory with more diverse narratives, which may have previously not had a place in dominant or traditional narratives.

On the other hand, however, there is the potential that these digital platforms could also exacerbate fragmentation in the identities of certain groups. In the virtual world, very large and diverse audiences can lead to artworks being received in a variety of different ways, often depending on the social, cultural, or political context of those audiences. For example, a work of art that is intended to depict the collective experience of a community may be misinterpreted or understood differently by audiences from different cultural or social backgrounds, leading to conflicting interpretations or identity fragmentation. In addition, social media algorithms that often curate the content that users see can also reinforce the formation of "filter bubbles," where individuals are only exposed to views or artworks that align with their own, potentially exacerbating polarization in society.

Additionally, artworks shared online can risk losing their context or physical dimension, which can make them disconnected from the direct experience that can deepen one's understanding of the work. Without physical interaction or a broader social context, the meaning of an artwork can become more fragmented or simplified. This can impact how people remember or perceive a historical event, cultural identity, or collective experience embodied in the work.

However, on the positive side, art published through digital platforms also has the potential to overcome the limitations of physical space and provide access to more people, including those who have previously been marginalized or have no access to art in traditional contexts. As such, digital art allows for more inclusive forms of collective memory, which

include a wider range of voices, experiences, and perspectives. Overall, digital platforms serve as a platform that introduces new dynamics in the formation of collective memory. It can create new agreements in building shared narratives, but also risks exacerbating fragmentation in group identity, depending on how artworks are understood, received, and distributed online. Further research is needed to understand the long-term impact of these changes on social consciousness and collective identity in the digital age (Syamsidar, S., et al. (2023).

#### **e. Assessing the Effectiveness of Digital Art in Preserving and Changing Collective Memory Over Time**

Digital art, including interactive art, video, and virtual reality (VR)-based media, offers an innovative way to update or even challenge traditional collective memory. Collective memory, which includes shared memories of a society's history, culture, and values, is often maintained through fixed narratives passed down from generation to generation. However, digital art opens up the opportunity to create new, dynamic experiences, where viewers or users can actively engage in interpreting and changing these narratives (Andi, TH, & Bolmer, SH 2023). Interactive art, for example, allows viewers to participate directly in the artwork, changing or updating aspects of the story based on their interactions, which can create a more personal and relevant experience. Video art, on the other hand, provides the opportunity to present historical or cultural events in a more expressive way, allowing viewers to view historical narratives from a different and even more critical perspective. In addition, VR-based media allows for immersive experiences that take viewers "into" historical events or cultural situations, giving them the opportunity to experience the context firsthand and more deeply. In this way, digital art not only renews collective memory, but also introduces new perspectives that can challenge and revolutionize established historical and cultural narratives (Ifadhila, I., et al. 2024).

#### **f. Analyzing the Influence of Art on the Formation of Collective Memory among the Young Generation**

Digital art has a major influence on how the younger generation understands and shapes their collective memory. The younger generation who grew up in the digital technology era, with easy access to the internet, social media, and various other digital platforms, developed new ways of interacting with art and history. Unlike previous generations who were more accustomed to traditional art forms such as paintings, sculptures, or artworks that were consumed passively, the younger generation now tends to be more active in experiencing art. They can interact directly with digital artworks through interactive art, virtual reality (VR)-based media, or digital videos that allow for a more immersive and personal experience (Sulianta, F. 2020).

This research aims to investigate how digital art shapes the young generation's views on history, identity and the social values they inherit. In this context, digital art gives them the opportunity to be more active in shaping and understanding their own historical and cultural narratives. For example, through interactive or VR-based digital artwork, young people can "re-experience" historical or cultural events directly, providing a more immersive and relevant experience. This allows them to see and experience historical events from a more personal and contemporary perspective.

In addition, digital art also provides a space for young people to express and construct their own identities. With easily accessible digital tools, they can create artwork that reflects their views, experiences, and values, and share these artworks with a wider audience. This allows them to be more free to interpret and discuss existing social values, and gives them the opportunity to shape and transform their collective memory in a way that is more in line with their times and needs. Thus, digital art is not only changing the way young people interact with history and culture, but also helping them to shape a more inclusive, dynamic, and diverse collective memory.

The results of this study suggest that digital art plays an important role in strengthening social identity and building collective memory in the digital age. One of the main findings is that digital artworks allow artists to convey more personal and collective messages, which can

inspire audiences to reflect on their own identities and their relationships to their history and culture. In many cases, digital art also creates a space for more inclusive social discussions, allowing previously marginalized voices and perspectives to be heard. One of the most prominent aspects of identity formation through digital art is its ability to create shared narratives that connect individuals to larger social or cultural groups. For example, through artworks uploaded on social media, artists can share their personal stories that reflect the collective experiences of a group. This opens up opportunities to build a sense of solidarity among group members, which can strengthen their collective identity.

Additionally, digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube allow artists to reach a global audience and engage with them directly. This creates an opportunity to introduce a particular cultural and historical identity to a wider audience, even those who may not have had access to that culture before. This can enrich the collective memory by introducing a wider range of perspectives and experiences. However, there are also challenges to consider when it comes to identity formation through digital art. One major issue is the potential for identity manipulation or misuse through artwork published online. In the virtual world, the identity of an individual or group can easily be changed or misrepresented, which can affect how people remember or identify with a culture or historical event.

In the context of collective memory, digital art makes a significant contribution to strengthening or even changing the way people remember their history. Through digital artworks that highlight historical or cultural themes, artists can introduce new interpretations of important events, which can enrich a nation's collective memory. However, it can also raise questions about who has the right to control the historical narrative, especially if the artwork is influenced by a particular political or ideological agenda.

On the other hand, the existence of digital art archives that are accessible online also strengthens collective memory by allowing people to access and study artworks that may have previously been out of reach. These archives can include a variety of art forms, from painting, photography, music, to film, all of which play a role in creating a richer and more diverse collective memory. This allows future generations to learn about and appreciate their cultural heritage in a more accessible way. On the other hand, the existence of digital art archives that are accessible online also strengthens collective memory by allowing people to access and study artworks that may have previously been out of reach. These archives can include a variety of art forms, from painting, photography, music, to film, all of which play a role in creating a richer and more diverse collective memory. This allows future generations to learn about and appreciate their cultural heritage in a more accessible way.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In the digital era, art plays a very important role in the formation of identity and collective memory. Through digital artwork, individuals and groups can introduce, communicate, and maintain their identities, as well as build a more inclusive and dynamic collective memory. However, challenges related to authenticity, copyright, and accessibility are still issues that need to be considered in the development of digital art in the future.

This study shows that digital art not only enriches the experience of art itself, but also strengthens social and cultural connectivity at the global level. By utilizing digital technology, art can be a powerful tool in maintaining and shaping collective memory, which ultimately enriches social and cultural identities in modern society.

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