

Interior Design Planning of the Indonesian Cultural Center in Berlin, Germany

Kezia Viola Santoso ^{a,1,*}, Rizki Kurniawan ^{a,2}, Alifia Wida Izzati ^{a,3}

^a Pradita University, Gading Serpong Boulevard No.1 Tower 1, Tangerang 15810, Indonesia

¹ kezia.viola@student.pradita.ac.id; ² rizki.kurniawan@pradita.ac.id; ³ alifia.wida@pradita.ac.id

* Corresponding Author



Received 10 November 2023; accepted 28 November 2024; published 13 December 2023

ABSTRACT

Indonesia is renowned for its rich cultural heritage, yet the global appreciation and understanding of this cultural wealth remain limited. This study addresses the challenge of enhancing international recognition and appreciation of Indonesian culture through the establishment of the Indonesian Cultural Center in Berlin, Germany. The primary objective is to develop an interior design concept that effectively introduces and represents Indonesian culture within a European context. Employing qualitative research methods, including observation, interviews, and surveys, the study focuses on the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Berlin, which serves as the project's location. The research includes comparative analyses of various cultural centers and gathers insights from a diverse group of respondents. Results reveal that a well-curated interior design, incorporating elements such as traditional Indonesian materials, colors, and motifs, can significantly attract and engage German audiences. This study concludes with recommendations for spatial design strategies that balance cultural authenticity with local preferences, aiming to foster greater appreciation of Indonesian culture abroad.

KEYWORDS

Indonesian Cultural Center
Traditional
Indonesian Elements
Spatial Design

This is an open-access article under the [CC-BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license



1. Introduction

According to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, culture encompasses thoughts, reasons, customs, and practices that have become habitual and difficult to change. This definition applies to every individual, small group, and even large entities like nations, each with distinct cultures. In Indonesia, cultural diversity is immense, spanning over 300 ethnic groups and 1,340 sub-ethnic groups, reflecting the national motto "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" (Unity in Diversity).

Indonesia's rich cultural heritage is internationally recognized, with UNESCO acknowledging Indonesia as a cultural superpower possessing at least 600 nationally recorded cultural heritages. Despite this recognition, international appreciation of Indonesian culture often remains superficial. Many foreigners are more familiar with Bali without understanding it as part of Indonesia, and there is a general lack of interest in exploring Indonesian culture further (Putra et al., 2020).

Indonesian culture is relatively well-known across Asia due to acculturation and cultural similarities within the continent (Cohen, 2019). However, this familiarity diminishes the novelty and appeal of establishing an Indonesian Cultural Center within Asia. In contrast, introducing Indonesian culture to more culturally distinct continents like Europe, America, Africa, and Australia presents a unique opportunity (Abbondanza, 2022; Beeson et al., 2021; Celadyn, 2019). Europe, particularly Berlin, Germany, stands out as an ideal location due to its reputation as the top art lover's city in Europe and its existing appreciation for Indonesian arts through various schools and universities that teach the Indonesian language, angklung musical instruments, and traditional dances.

Germany's deep appreciation for art suggests it would be receptive to broader aspects of Indonesian culture. However, the current methods of cultural exchange—through educational institutions and embassies—are insufficient. A dedicated cultural center is necessary to serve as a

comprehensive platform for learning, introducing, and teaching Indonesian culture directly to the public (Dell'Ovo et al., 2021; Shen, 2020; Thamrin et al., 2019).

This study aims to explore and develop an interior design for the Indonesian Cultural Center in Berlin that effectively showcases Indonesian culture. The objectives are to identify suitable interior design concepts for the cultural center, devise spatial design strategies that integrate appropriate design elements, and highlight specific aspects of Indonesian culture within the design. Through qualitative research methods, including observations, interviews, and surveys, this study examines the potential impact and engagement such a cultural center could have in Germany. By presenting Indonesian culture in an authentic yet appealing manner, this cultural center aspires to foster deeper appreciation and understanding of Indonesia's cultural wealth among the German population.

2. Method

The design method applied in this study utilizes qualitative approaches, including observation, interviews, and surveys, to gather comprehensive insights into the project. The primary object of this research is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Kementerian Luar Negeri) in Germany, with the design implementation located within the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia (KBRI) Berlin building. This building, which consists of four floors and covers an area of 3,185 square meters, provides a suitable venue for establishing the Indonesian Cultural Center.

This research involved comparing various Indonesian cultural centers abroad and cultural centers of other countries in Indonesia to understand best practices and contextual requirements. Cultural development centers are essential for promoting cultural potential and advancing tourism and education sectors (Patton, 2023; Seyfi et al., 2020; Yeoh, 2020). Additionally, the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 9 of 2014 emphasizes the need for regulations to support cultural diplomacy programs abroad, similar to the public diplomacy strategies employed by South Korea, which integrate various cultural and design elements into their diplomacy efforts (Choi, 2019). The Cultural Center can also integrate design elements to promote cultural exchange and experience, thus enhancing appreciation and fostering cooperation in the field of culture (Celadyn, 2020; Grincheva, 2019; Thamrin et al., 2019).

Koentjaraningrat (Sitohang & Fadilla, 2023) identifies seven universal elements of human culture: language, knowledge system, community system or social organization, living equipment and technology system, livelihood system, religious system, and art. These elements can be integrated into interior design through materials, colors, and finishes. A questionnaire was administered to 100 random respondents, including Indonesian citizens, foreigners, and Indonesian citizens residing outside Indonesia, to gauge their perspectives on Indonesian culture and its representation. An in-depth interview was also conducted with an Indonesian student currently on a student exchange program in Germany to obtain firsthand insights into the reception of Indonesian cultural elements in a foreign context (Van de Vijver & Leung, 2021). Germany's federal structure and its unique "culture of remembering", characterized by critical scrutiny of war, dictatorship, and ideological crimes, provide a rich cultural backdrop (Lewicki, 2022; Welsch, 2022). Germany values science and culture highly and emphasizes the importance of social welfare, freedom of religion, and high living standards. The country's appreciation for quality of life, balanced between urban work and natural retreats, further underscores its suitability as a location for the cultural center.

The qualitative methods employed allowed for a nuanced understanding of the potential impact and engagement strategies for the Indonesian Cultural Center in Berlin. Observations were made to assess existing cultural centers, and interviews provided detailed accounts of personal experiences and expectations. Surveys offered a broader view of public opinion and preferences, which were critical in shaping the design strategy. This methodological approach ensured that the design of the Indonesian Cultural Center was informed by diverse perspectives, making it culturally authentic and appealing to both local and international audiences (Van de Vijver & Leung, 2021). The comprehensive data collection and analysis provided a robust foundation for developing an interior design that effectively showcases Indonesian culture while resonating with the German public.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Design Concept

The design of the Indonesian Cultural Center is titled “The Magical of Nusantara,” encapsulating the extraordinary and enchanting essence of Indonesian culture in a manner that is both accessible and engaging for a diverse audience. This interior design concept aims to immerse visitors in an authentic Indonesian experience, showcasing the country's rich cultural diversity through various elements that can be seen, felt, and learned.

The design strategy employs a color, material, and finishing (CMF) approach that utilizes neutral colors such as brown, white, and black (Zuo & Lu, 2021). These colors are complemented by various Indonesian cultural accents from different provinces, creating a cohesive yet diverse aesthetic. The materials used include both original and artificial elements derived from Indonesian nature, with a focus on softer, matte finishes. For instance, materials such as marble or similar stones, wood, and fabric are incorporated alongside carefully selected lighting fixtures and accessories. This approach is visually unified through a mood board, ensuring that all design ideas align with the overarching concept.

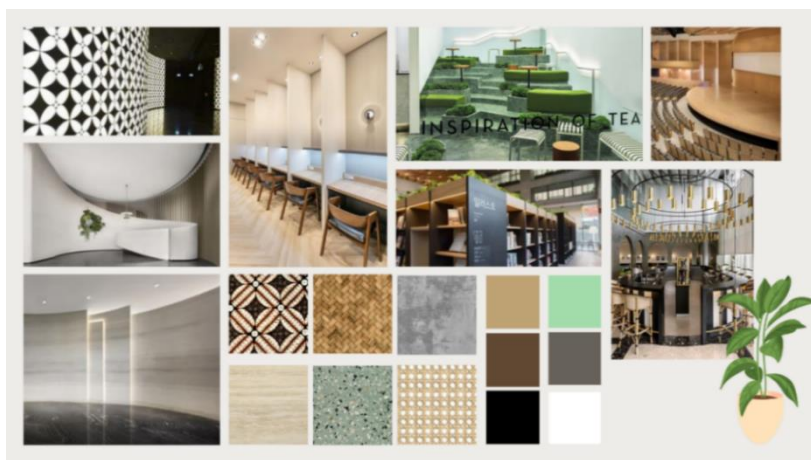


Fig. 1. Moodboard Planning

The interior design is structured across four floors, each dedicated to specific functions and themes. The first floor, or basement, serves practical purposes, including a parking area, storage, and a prayer room. The second floor is designed to be a public space, featuring a semi-outdoor food court, a lobby and lounge area, and an office accessible from the back of the building. The third floor houses a non-permanent gallery, a library, and a meeting room, offering flexible spaces for various public uses. The top floor is designed to accommodate an auditorium with a capacity of 100 people, along with classrooms for Indonesian music, batik, and theater, complete with a backstage area and wardrobe for performances.

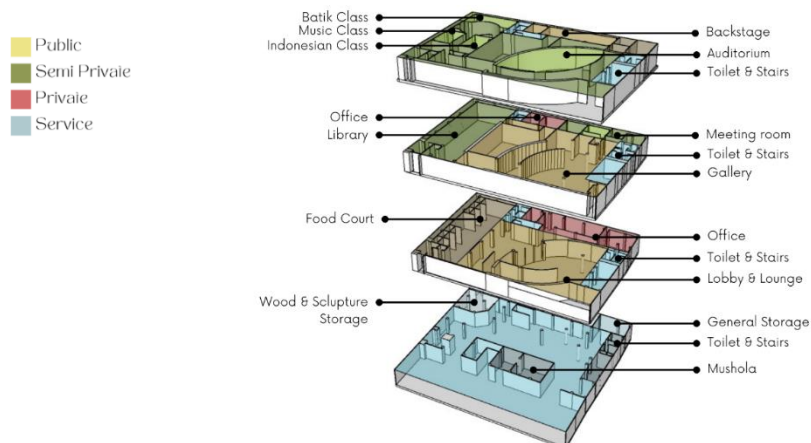


Fig. 2. Blocking Planning

The design specifically emphasizes three key spaces: the lobby, library, and gallery. The lobby is designed to be simple yet profound, evoking a sense of Indonesian purity with features like a mountain accent at the reception area. It also includes a bar offering traditional Indonesian drinks and an LED screen displaying news about Indonesia. The library combines simplicity and luxury, featuring a grand imitation of the Borobudur Temple stupa, synthetic grass decorations, and glass floors with spotlights, alongside a reading staircase with a terrace concept. The gallery space is designed to be flexible and non-permanent, with a front desk adorned with a batik motif chandelier, smart mobile technology for exhibit explanations, and black-dominated interiors to highlight the cultural artifacts on display.

3.2 Lobby

The lobby of the Indonesian Cultural Center has been designed with simplicity and elegance to evoke the sacredness of Indonesian culture. Upon entering, visitors are greeted by a mountain accent at the reception area, symbolizing the reverence and spiritual connection inherent in Indonesian traditions. The reception area prominently features the signage "Indonesian Culture Center" in three languages—Indonesian, English, and German—underscoring the center's commitment to accessibility and cultural exchange.

On one side of the lobby, an oval-shaped bar offers a variety of traditional Indonesian drinks, such as herbal medicine, civet coffee, and various spices. This bar is designed to provide a taste of Indonesian hospitality and culinary heritage, enhancing the cultural experience for visitors. The bar's design integrates seamlessly with the lobby's aesthetic, offering a space for relaxation and cultural immersion.



Fig. 3. Rendering Image of Lobby's Bar and Receptionist

An LED screen at the end of the lobby continuously displays news and updates about Indonesia, ensuring that visitors are informed about the latest cultural, social, and political developments in the country. This feature serves as both an educational tool and a connection to contemporary Indonesian life. The lobby's design is carefully curated to create a welcoming and informative first impression, setting the tone for the rest of the cultural center. It balances modern design elements with traditional cultural accents, creating a space that is both functional and reflective of Indonesia's rich heritage.

3.3 Library

The library within the Indonesian Cultural Center continues the theme of simple luxury, creating an inviting and sophisticated space for visitors. Upon entering, guests are greeted by the front desk situated near the entrance, which serves as a central hub for librarians and a point of information for visitors.



Fig. 4. Rendering Image of Library's Reading Area and Reading Stairs

On the back and sides of the library, display shelves showcase the best-selling books and notable literary works, providing a curated selection that highlights Indonesian literature and global classics. This arrangement not only promotes reading but also emphasizes the rich literary heritage of Indonesia. On the opposite side of the room, a locker area is available for visitors to securely store their belongings. The lockers are made of glass material, enhancing security and minimizing the risk of loss, while seamlessly integrating into the library's design. At the heart of the library stands a magnificent imitation of the Borobudur Temple stupa, a central feature that adds a magical and iconic element to the space. This replica is surrounded by synthetic grass decorations and covered with glass floors and spotlights, creating a visually stunning centerpiece that draws visitors' attention.

Towards the back of the library, there is a reading staircase designed with an authentic terrace concept unique to Indonesia. This area provides a cozy and culturally immersive reading environment, featuring chairs with a dominant green color and grass accents on each step. This innovative design encourages visitors to relax and enjoy their reading experience while surrounded by elements that evoke the natural beauty and cultural richness of Indonesia.

3.4 Gallery

The gallery space within the Indonesian Cultural Center is designed to be non-permanent, allowing for flexible adjustments to accommodate various themes and exhibitions. This adaptability ensures that the gallery remains dynamic and relevant, capable of showcasing a diverse range of cultural artifacts and exhibits. At the entrance, visitors are welcomed by a front desk featuring a magnificent chandelier that mimics a cloudy mega batik motif. This striking piece adds a touch of elegance and cultural significance to the space.

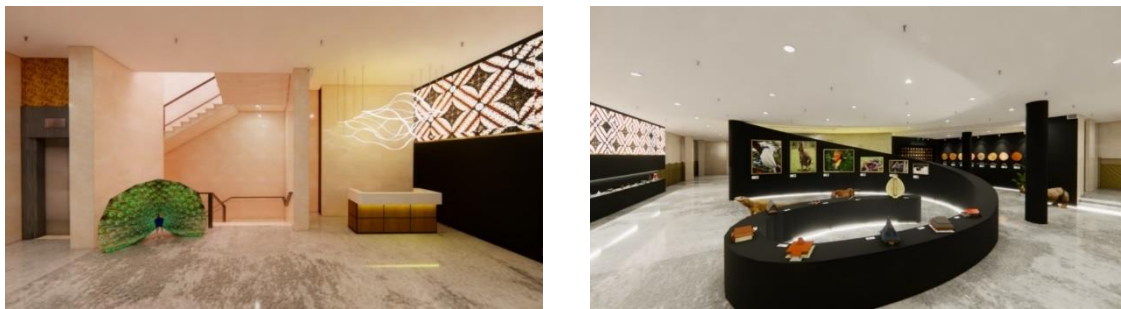


Fig. 5. Rendering Image of Gallery's Front Desk and Desk Partition

To enhance the visitor experience, the gallery utilizes smart mobile technology, enabling guests to access detailed explanations of each exhibit via their mobile devices. This interactive approach fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of the displayed items. Adjacent to the front desk, lockers are provided for visitors to store their bags and personal belongings securely, thereby protecting the exhibits from potential damage and ensuring a comfortable viewing experience. At the center of the gallery, a circular partition table serves as a versatile display area. This table is designed to be easily replaced or reconfigured to align with new themes, maintaining the gallery's freshness and appeal. The exhibits include paintings, photos, and replicas of flora and fauna endemic to Indonesia, offering a comprehensive glimpse into the country's natural and cultural heritage.

The gallery's design is dominated by a black color scheme and an unfinished concrete floor, creating a stark, minimalist backdrop that emphasizes the exhibits. The simplicity of the interior design is intentional, allowing the artifacts to stand out and the magical side of the room to be highlighted. This approach ensures that the focus remains on the cultural items being showcased, enhancing their visual impact and educational value.

4. Conclusion

This cultural center represents a pioneering initiative, as it is the first of its kind in Berlin, aimed at introducing and celebrating Indonesian culture in a European context. The design concept titled "The Magical of Nusantara" is meticulously crafted to incorporate authentic Indonesian cultural elements and traditional color schemes. The focus on three key spaces—the lobby-lounge, library, and gallery—

ensures a holistic representation of Indonesia's rich heritage. The lobby's design features symbolic elements like mountain accents and an oval-shaped bar serving traditional Indonesian beverages, which together create a welcoming and culturally immersive atmosphere. The library's highlights, such as the imitation Borobudur Temple stupa and reading staircase with terrace concepts, provide a unique blend of cultural symbolism and modern functionality, fostering an environment conducive to learning and relaxation.

The gallery's flexible, non-permanent design allows for diverse thematic exhibitions, ensuring that the cultural center remains dynamic and engaging for repeat visitors. The use of smart mobile technology enhances the educational experience, allowing visitors to gain deeper insights into the exhibits. Throughout the cultural center, the selection of neutral colors—brown, black, and white—alongside materials like wood and marble, and accents of Indonesian batik motifs, create a cohesive and aesthetically pleasing environment. These design choices not only highlight the cultural artifacts but also contribute to the overall ambiance of elegance and sophistication.

In conclusion, the Indonesian Cultural Center in Berlin stands as a testament to the richness of Indonesian culture and the potential for cultural diplomacy to foster greater international understanding and appreciation. The thoughtful integration of traditional elements and modern design principles ensures that the center is both a cultural beacon and an inviting space for visitors. This project exemplifies how strategic interior design can effectively bridge cultural gaps and create lasting impressions on a global audience.

References

- Abbondanza, G. (2022). Whither the Indo-Pacific? Middle power strategies from Australia, South Korea and Indonesia. *International Affairs*, 98(2), 403–421. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiaab231>
- Beeson, M., Bloomfield, A., & Wicaksana, W. (2021). Unlikely allies? Australia, Indonesia and the strategic cultures of middle powers. *Asian Security*, 17(2), 178–194. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2020.1846525>
- Celadyn, M. (2019). Interior Architectural Design for Adaptive Reuse in Application of Environmental Sustainability Principles. *Sustainability*, 11(14), 3820. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11143820>
- Celadyn, M. (2020). Integrative Design Classes for Environmental Sustainability of Interior Architectural Design. *Sustainability*, 12(18), 7383. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12187383>
- Choi, K. (2019). The Republic of Korea's public diplomacy strategy: History and current status. *Los Angeles: USC Center on Public Diplomacy*. https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/The%20Republic%20of%20Korea's%20Public%20Diplomacy%20Strategy%20Web%20Ready_2.3.19.pdf
- Cohen, M. I. (2019). Three Eras of Indonesian Arts Diplomacy. *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde / Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia*, 175(2–3), 253–283. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-17502022>
- Dell'Ovo, M., Dell'Anna, F., Simonelli, R., & Sdino, L. (2021). Enhancing the cultural heritage through adaptive reuse. A multicriteria approach to evaluate the Castello Visconteo in Cusago (Italy). *Sustainability*, 13(8), 4440. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13084440>
- Grincheva, N. (2019). *Global Trends in Museum Diplomacy: Post-Guggenheim Developments*. Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781351190275/global-trends-museum-diplomacy-natalia-grincheva>
- Lewicki, A. (2022). The material effects of Whiteness: Institutional racism in the German welfare state. *The Sociological Review*, 70(5), 916–934. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00380261221108596>
- Patton, L. D. (2023). *Culture centers in higher education: Perspectives on identity, theory, and practice*. Taylor & Francis. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=8hHJEAQAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT8&dq=Culture+centers+in+higher+education:+Perspectives+on+identity,+theory,+and+practice&ots=KogYvm-pV&sig=9lpVyuB3MiUr78KMQ1PyQtBbJRc>
- Putra, T. K., Rochsantiningsih, D., & Supriyadi, S. (2020). Cultural representation and intercultural interaction in textbooks of English as an international language. *Journal on English as a Foreign Language*, 10(1), 168–190. <https://doi.org/10.23971/jefl.v10i1.1766>
- Seyfi, S., Hall, C. M., & Rasoolimanesh, S. M. (2020). Exploring memorable cultural tourism experiences. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 15(3), 341–357. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2019.1639717>

- Shen, W. (2020). Inheritance and application of traditional arts and crafts in interior decoration design. *Conference on Social Science and Modern Science*, 622–625. http://proceedings-online.com/proceedings_series/SH-SOCIALS/SSMS2020/icess23031.pdf
- Sitohang, S. A., & Fadilla, N. (2023). People and Culture: Human and Cultural History, Human in Diversity of Cultures and Civilizations, Human and Source of Living. *International Journal of Students Education*, 381–387. <https://doi.org/10.62966/ijose.v1i2.453>
- Thamrin, D., Wardani, L. K., Sitindjak, R. H. I., & Natadjaja, L. (2019). Experiential Learning through Community Co-design in Interior Design Pedagogy. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 38(2), 461–477. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jade.12208>
- Van de Vijver, F. J., & Leung, K. (2021). *Methods and data analysis for cross-cultural research* (Vol. 116). Cambridge University Press.
- Welsch, H. (2022). What Shapes Satisfaction with Democracy? Interests, Morals, and the German East–West Divide. *Social Indicators Research*, 163(1), 197–217. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-022-02893-x>
- Yeoh, B. S. (2020). The global cultural city? Spatial imagineering and politics in the (multi) cultural marketplaces of South-east Asia. *Culture-Led Urban Regeneration*, 102–115.
- Zuo, H., & Lu, P. (2021). Investigation and Design Innovation of Color, Materials, and Finish for Civil Aircraft Interiors. *The International Journal of Designed Objects*, 15(2), 21.