

Basic Design Training for Ngumpul Komik Bogor (NKB) Community to Strengthen Superhero Identity

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ABSTRACT

This Community Service Program (PkM) aimed to improve the comic storytelling skills of members of the Ngumpul Komik Bogor (NKB) community through superhero character design training. The main problems identified included the lack of coherence between character design and visual narrative, limited understanding of scriptwriting, paneling, and visual pacing in comics. The program employed a workshop-based training method using participatory and learning by doing approaches. The activities were conducted through three workshop stages: Superhero Character Design, Proportional Drawing, and Lighting and Inking, followed by a final exhibition showcasing participants' works. The results demonstrated an improvement in participants' understanding of creating superhero characters that were more coherent with storytelling, the use of body proportions to strengthen character traits, and the application of lighting and inking techniques to create more dramatic and expressive

visuals. Participants' final artworks reflected development in character design processing, perspective, anatomical proportion, and the application of lighting through inking techniques. The novelty of this program lies in the integration of superhero character design, proportional drawing, and lighting and inking approaches as a method for strengthening visual storytelling in community-based comic training.

Keywords: Character Design; Comic Community; Comic Storytelling Workshop; Storytelling; Visual Communication

INTRODUCTION

The Bogor Comic Gathering Community (NKB) is a Bogor-based community that brings together comic creators. It was founded in November 2024 by Drajad Koncara as a platform for cross-generational collaboration. The community was founded under the leadership and coordination of Faisal, with support from his seniors, Jeffry Gunadi, Drajad Koncara, and Ersta Andantino. NKB has around 15 active members, out of a total of approximately 50 members, in a flexible and informal organizational atmosphere. Although it does not yet have a permanent location, NKB activities currently take place at NutriHub Bogor, where the community also collaborates with various other communities, such as the Bekasi Literacy Community, Koncara, Bogor Book Party, Bogor Illustrator Hub, Reka Bogor, Sebermula, and the Local Comic Reading Community. They have organized a number of activities, including Face Drawing Workshop, OC Get Talent, Comic Jamstrip, Gambreng, Panelling Workshop, Inking Workshop, From Scratch to Sketch, Nerd talk, Doodle-in Mascot Kibo, and Raden Saleh book review. In this community, the majority of members are young or amateur comic artists, so their narrative design skills are still weak. Therefore, external training in the form of comic storytelling workshops covering character design, scriptwriting, and visual narrative is needed to improve the quality of comic works.

The core problem in NKB is the disparity between creativity and potential in producing visual works in comic form. NKB is a community rich in creative resources from across generations, but there are limitations in systematic training and learning. The potential of comic artists in NKB can still develop further through increased knowledge of narrative design and structured character design. This obstacle is why comic artists are unable to incorporate sequential narratives that illustrate storytelling in their comics, resulting in suboptimal storytelling.

These issues can be formulated as: (1) Lack of harmony between character design and comic storytelling, (2) Unstructured comic scriptwriting, (3) Lack of understanding of panel design, and (4) Lack of rhythm and pacing in visual narratives.

The development of storytelling skills and character design in comic creation plays an important role in strengthening the coherence between visual narratives and character representation. Comics are not only an entertainment media, but also a visual storytelling media that is capable of conveying social, cultural, and education values

through the integration of narrative structure and character design (Sutanto & Wardaya, 2021). In the context of character creation, visual communication and character design contribute significantly to shaping identity, personality, and emotional connection between characters and audiences (Aditia & Aditia, 2024). Haq et al. (2024) explained that visual storytelling functions as an important communicative element in guiding audience to understand the arrangement of visual narratives, interface structures, and emotional engagement. This is supported through Yulianti et al. (2023) previous research that stated character development in visual media should emphasize memorable visual identities, personality traits, and behavioral characteristics in order to strengthen audience recognition and narrative delivery. Furthermore, community-based creative activities and participatory workshops are considered as an effective approach for improving artistic skills and collaborative learning due to how it encourages active engagement between the participants, collective discussion, and experiential learning processes (De Rosa et al., 2021). Enciso et al., (2023) explained that superhero storytelling activities can function as creative spaces for youth and communities to develop critical thinking, self-expression, and social imagination through visual narratives. In addition, community-based design practices contribute to social sustainability and creative innovation because they emphasize collaborative creation processes and contextual problem-solving within communities (Klerks et al., 2022). The use of comics and storytelling as participatory creative media has also been shown to support dialogue, social engagement, and the development of critical narratives within communities (Rainford, 2021; Davis et al., 2024). Therefore, improving storytelling quality and character design skills through participatory comic workshops aligns with the role of design as sustainable innovation and social change by fostering creative collaboration, visual literacy, and community empowerment.

METHODOLOGY

The workshop training method is a learning approach that emphasizes the active involvement of participants through discussions, demonstrations, simulations and direct practice to improve participants' understanding and skills in an applicable manner. Raibowo et al., (2024) argue that the workshop method provides more opportunities for participants to be directly involved in practices using learning media, so that participants' understanding and skills can be improved in an applicable manner. Ayuningtyas et al., (2022) also explain that training through workshops provides opportunities for participants to gain direct experience in using media through practice and mentoring during the training process. However, in its implementation, it is important that workshops are combined with a participatory approach that allows participants to be actively involved in the learning process, both through discussion, practice, and problem-solving. In addition, a participatory approach in workshops supports participants to understand the material more deeply due to the active interaction between participants and facilitators during the training activities (Sustaningrum et al., 2024). Safina et al., (2024) explained that an effective workshop method can increase active participation and collaboration between participants, so that the workshop produces a more applicable and realistic understanding. This is also

supported in the argument by (Buyung & Wasidi, 2024), where the authors emphasize that the combination of discussion, simulation, and workshop methods can increase participant engagement in training, as well as enhance the direct learning experience because participants have the opportunity to develop skills through practice.

Therefore, the implementation of workshop training at this PkM is carried out in stages, which consist of:

1. Preparation Phase (November 2025 – January 2026)

This phase was conducted to identify the needs and challenges experienced by partners through interviews on November 5, 2025. This phase was followed by program development and proposals, and technical coordination for the implementation of activities, which were to be carried out in January 2026.

2. Workshop I: Superhero Character Design (15 February 2026)

The first session was held on Sunday, February 15, 2026, via Zoom Meeting. The presentation by the PkM lecturers covered the etymology and history of superhero characters. Participants were then instructed to complete a worksheet to create a matrix for their respective character designs as a guide for their character development.

3. Workshop II: Proportional Drawing (29 March 2026)

The second session was held on Sunday, March 29, 2026, at ART.i Coffee and Space in Bogor. The presentation by the PkM lecturers covered the proportions and anatomy of superhero characters in general, as well as how each proportion reflects the distinct personality and traits of each superhero character. Afterward, participants were instructed to draw the characters they had filled in on the worksheet in the previous session, following the development of the material presented; with the hope that they would be able to visualize their characters' characteristics.

4. Workshop III: Illustration Art Design (19 April 2026)

The third session was held on Sunday, April 19, 2026, at ART.i Coffee and Space in Bogor. The presentation by the PkM lecturer team covered lighting and inking, which are necessary to emphasize character structure, build character dimensionality, create atmosphere and environment in character design illustrations, and provide sharper expression to character designs.

5. Exhibition of Works (26 April 2026)

As a final output of the activity, the entire PkM team assisted the NKB participants in holding an exhibition on April 26, 2026, at Djati Djaya Kopi in Bogor. The PkM team prepared by providing layouts for the participants' works in the exhibition space, preparing the works with names and captions, purchasing equipment and frames, arranging the exhibition space, and then officially opening the exhibition with a ribbon cutting.

RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

Results

Workshop I: Superhero Character Design

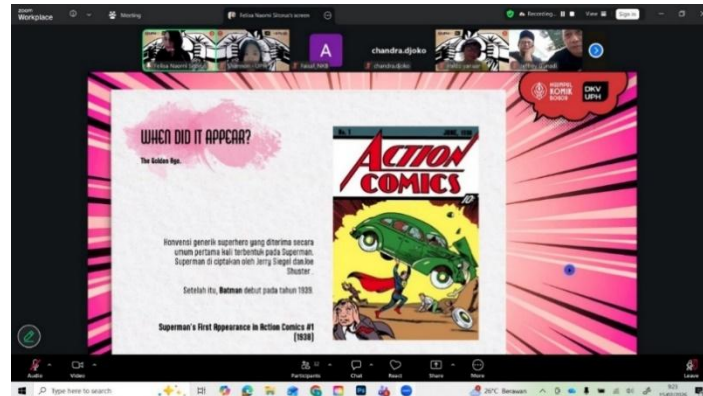


Figure 1. Presentation of material in the first session of the workshop
Source: Personal Documentation (2026)

The first workshop session was held online via Zoom on Sunday, February 15, 2026, from 09:00 until 12:00. This activity was the initial implementation stage of the PKM program, which focused on introducing superhero character design. The material presented included an introduction to etymology, the history of superheroes' first appearance in comics, human anatomy as the basis for superhero visuals, and the principles of visual storytelling in character development.

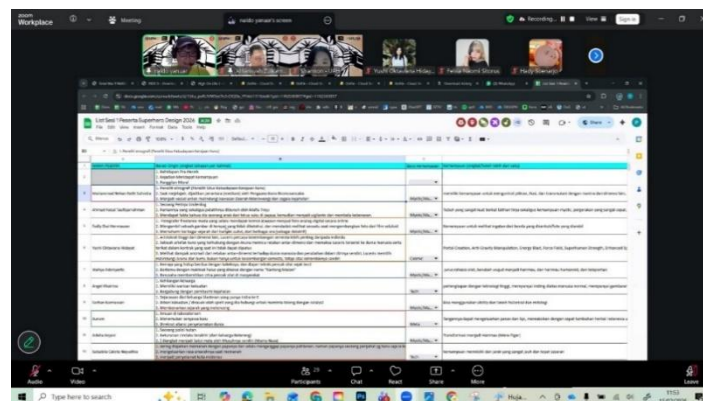


Figure 2. Workshop participants' work and discussion of evaluation results
Source: Personal Documentation (2026)

Following the presentation, participants were instructed to complete their own superhero character matrix. This would form the basis for character design, as the matrix included the character's identity, background story, powers, and supporting visual characteristics. Participants' work was then collected and systematically evaluated by the presentation team, taking into account creativity, conceptual

consistency, and the relationship between the visual design and the narrative that would be built around the character.

Workshop II: Proportional Drawing



Figure 3. Presentation of material in the second session of the workshop
Source: Personal Documentation (2026)

The second workshop session was held onsite at ART.I Coffee and Space in Bogor on Sunday, March 29, 2026, from 09:00 until 12:00. This activity was the second stage in character design training, where the material presented was an introduction to proportional anatomy, how to play with dynamic poses, and the placement of anatomical proportions in perspective views.



Figure 4. Participants practice drawing proportionally
Source: Personal Documentation (2026)

Following the presentation, participants practiced drawing according to their individual instructions and understanding. The UPH Visual Communication Design (DKV) PkM team provided time and space for participants to explore and provided guidance for those who needed it.

Workshop III: Illustration Art Design



Figure 5. Presentation of material in the third workshop session
Source: Personal Documentation (2026)

The third workshop session was held onsite at ART.I Coffee and Space in Bogor on Sunday, April 19, 2026, from 09:00 until 12:00. This activity is the third stage in character design training, where the material presented is an introduction to inking techniques to emphasize character design illustrations, as well as how inking is also useful for emphasizing lighting.



Figure 6. Application of material to practice by workshop participant
Source: Personal Documentation (2026)

Following the presentation, participants were given time to practice drawing according to their individual instructions and understanding. The PkM team provided each participant with a complete set of drawing pens so they could experiment with inking effects of various thicknesses and explore appropriate lighting for their superhero character illustrations.

Exhibition of Works



Figure 7. X-Banner Design for Final Work Exhibition
Source: Personal Documentation (2026)



Figure 8. Curatorial Poster for Final Work Exhibition
Source: Personal Documentation (2026)



Figure 9. Pre-Exhibition Preparation
Source: Personal Documentation (2026)

In the morning, the PkM team prepared the artworks on-site by collecting the A4-sized artworks provided by the workshop participants and neatly placing them into frames. Afterward, the frames were glued to securely hold them on the wall, along with the cutting and layout planning. Each artwork was accompanied by a caption describing each piece.



Figure 10. Opening remarks from UPH and NKB
Source: Personal Documentation (2026)



Figure 11. Awarding of certificates to workshop participants
Source: Personal Documentation (2026)



Figure 12. Ribbon Cutting for Exhibition Inauguration
Source: Personal Documentation (2026)



Figure 13. Review of work by the PkM team
Source: Personal Documentation (2026)





Figure 14. Group photo with exhibition works
Source: Personal Documentation (2026)

The exhibition began with opening remarks and remarks from both parties, namely UPH and NKB (Figure 10). After that, it continued with the distribution of certificates from UPH (Figure 11) as a form of appreciation from the PkM team to participants who attended all workshop sessions. The ribbon cutting (Figure 12) was carried out as a sign that the exhibition had been opened to the public and was followed by a work review session by the PkM lecturer team (Figure 13). As a form of appreciation and memory of the activity, a group photo was taken between participants with the works that had been neatly displayed on the wall (Figure 14).

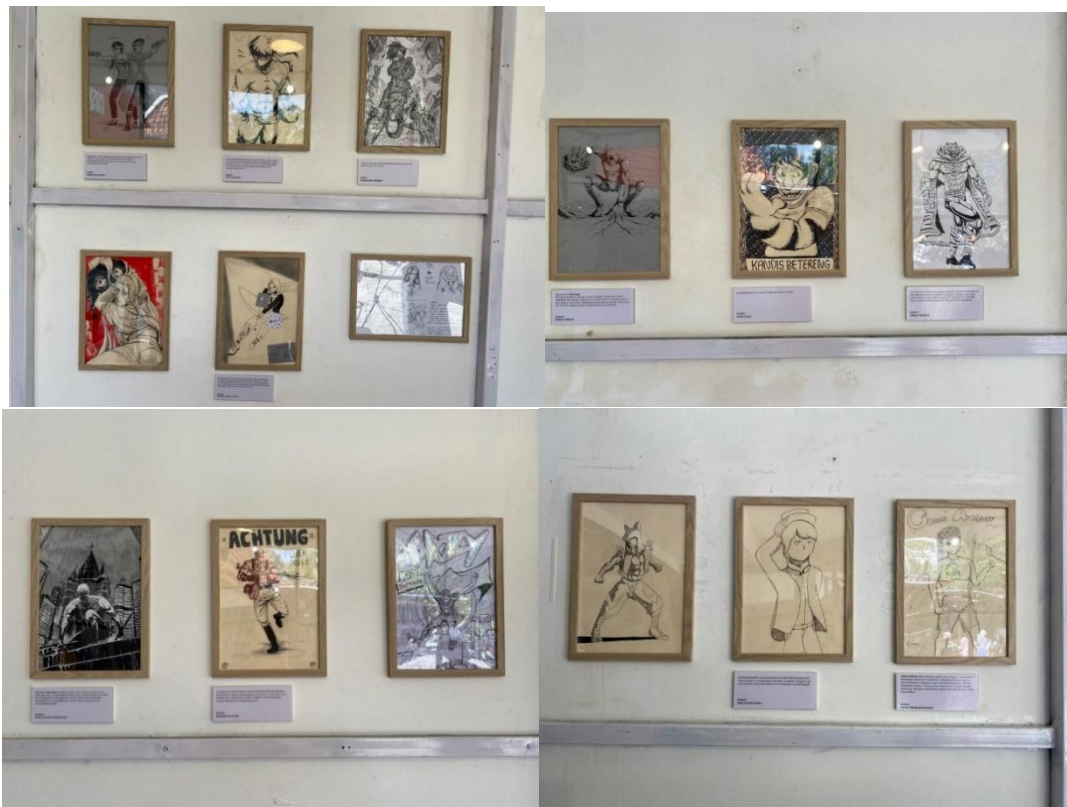




Figure 15. Final works of workshop participants
Source: Personal Documentation (2026)

The results of the training process during the three workshop sessions are evident in the exhibited works. The resulting illustrations incorporate all aspects covered in the material, including character design, proportion and perspective, and how lighting can be applied through various inking techniques.

DISCUSSIONS

Prior to the Community Service Program (PKM), participants had limited understanding of comic creation and how to integrate characters into their storytelling. Most NkB members were unable to maximize the integration of visual elements in character designs with the delivery of narrative, emotion, and identity in the story. This was due to the incoherence of the character design process with the visual narrative. After participating in a series of workshops with the PkM team, participants' understanding and skills in character development, supporting illustration techniques, and more structured visual processing improved.

The participants' development was evident at each stage of the workshop. In Workshop I: Superhero Character Design, participants understood that many things they had not previously considered in building a character were necessary in building character coherence into a visual narrative. Etymologically, the term superhero itself comes from a combination of the words "super," which means surpassing ordinary human capabilities, and "hero," which means a hero or figure admired for their courage and willingness to sacrifice. In popular contemporary media culture, superheroes are understood as fictional characters who possess symbolic identities, extraordinary abilities, and a certain moral compass in a narrative/storytelling. Coogan (2006) states that superheroes are not only formed through superhuman or excessive powers, but also through visual identities and moral values that are consistent with the stories they carry. Curtis (2023) also adds that superhero storytelling is closely related to the construction of values, power, law, and perceptions of time in popular culture, so that superhero characters also function as social symbols as well as narrative instruments in building the meaning of stories. Therefore, superhero character design plays a

crucial role in building coherence between the character's visuals and the storytelling. Appropriate character design can help audiences understand the genre, target audience, and main idea of a story through the visual elements contained within the character (Kuntjara & Almanfaluthi, 2021). Lubis & Zufri (2021) explain that character design relies not only on aesthetic aspects but must also consider emotional experiences, story type, and narrative context so that the character can build a connection with the audience. In research conducted by Ananda Saputra & Januarsa (2025), visual aesthetics, personality construction, and moral compass in character design significantly influence audience emotional attachment in narrative-driven storytelling. Therefore, in the context of building visual storytelling, visual elements such as costumes, silhouettes, colors, expressions, and visual symbols play a crucial role because they can clarify character identity while strengthening the delivery of the story's message. Transforming cultural narratives into character designs can also strengthen character identity and broaden audience engagement through visual representations consistent with the story's setting (Ardiyan et al., 2021). Therefore, coherence between superhero character design and narrative is crucial for maintaining an engaging audience experience. In this training, participants were given a matrix containing the characteristics of their superhero characters to encourage them to develop their characters in a deeper and more comprehensive narrative. This helped participants develop deeper ideas and consider the direction of their characters' journeys.

In the Workshop II: Proportional Drawing stage, participants were directed to provide character visuals for the written concepts in the matrix in Workshop I, and it started from building proportional anatomy on superhero characters. Proportional Drawing in figure drawing is a drawing technique that emphasizes the relationship of size, balance, and comparison between body parts to create harmonious and communicative visual figures. In character design, body proportions are used to build figure structures, silhouettes, gestures, and visual identities so that the audience can understand the nature and function of the character even before the narrative is explained verbally. Body proportions are not only related to anatomical accuracy but also become part of the visual language that helps build the audience's perception of the character. Modification of the character's body shape and physiognomy can help to strengthen the representation of the character's personality and function in visual media, because the visual form of the body also plays a role in building the audience's understanding of the character being displayed (Mohammad Fadly, S.E, M.M, 2025). Visual elements displayed such as silhouettes, body shapes, and exaggeration of character designs are able to provide narrative clues and strengthen storytelling consistently through the visuals displayed on the characters (Shane Sapmayada, 2024). In the context of superhero character design, proportional drawing is important because superheroes are generally visualized as idealized figures that represent strength, courage, dominance, or agility through exaggerated body shapes (exaggerated proportions). Fernando & Marwan (2024) said that superhero character design requires strong visual processing so that the character's heroic identity can be conveyed effectively to the audience. In addition, previous research on superhero

character visualization by (Gede et al., 2023) showed that body shape, visual style, and character proportions have an influence on the heroic impression and character appeal in animated media. Therefore, proportional drawing is an important basic element in visualizing character traits in superhero character design because body proportions not only build character aesthetics but also function as a visual communication tool to strengthen the character's identity, personality, and narrative function in visual storytelling.

In Workshop III: Illustration Art Design, participants were directed to give a more dramatic effect to the design characters they had visualized and depicted in Workshop II by applying lighting to photography using the inking technique. Lighting in photography is a light arrangement technique used to create volume, depth, atmosphere, and provide visual focus on the photographed object. In visual practice, lighting not only functions as technical lighting, but also as an artistic element that helps build mood, contrast, and visual emphasis on the subject. Lighting techniques such as three-point lighting, rim light, and chiaroscuro are often applied to clarify the shape of an object through the relationship between light and dark areas, so that the object looks more dimensional and dramatic. Lighting in visual media also plays an important role in shaping emotional perception and narrative atmosphere because the distribution of light and shadow is able to direct the audience's attention to certain visual parts (Haoran & Kim, 2023). In addition, Wei (2025) also explains that the chiaroscuro technique in photography creates a strong contrast between light and shadow with the aim of emphasizing body shapes, building more dramatic visuals, and strengthening narrative construction in the representation of human figures. The use of artificial light in photography can also create a dramatic impression and strengthen visual focus on the subject by adjusting the intensity and direction of light (Arofah & Sari, 2022). When this is raised in the context of illustration, lighting techniques in photography are often used as a reference in the inking process. Inking is a technique and stage in illustration where lines, shadows, and the formation of visual details are emphasized using ink and/or black lines to clarify shape, volume, and depth within the illustration. In digital and comic illustrations of character designs, the inking process is generally carried out after the line art stage to clarify character anatomy and build visual dimension through light and dark contrast. Sutanto & Suhartono (2022) argue that the processing of illustrations, both traditional and digital, and line art plays a crucial role in clarifying visual forms and strengthening narrative readability in illustrations. The process of emphasizing lines and adjusting visual contrast helps illustrators create visual focus and strengthen the dramatic impression in illustrations through the processing of black and white areas. Therefore, lighting references can help illustrators determine the direction of light, the distribution of shadows, and the placement of light and dark areas, so that the inking process not only produces outlines but also builds a strong visual dimension. Furthermore, the photographic lighting process plays a crucial role in revealing the shape of objects and creating more expressive visuals through directional light processing (Aziz & Tobroni, 2023). This is crucial in creating superhero character design illustrations because superhero characters are often depicted through dramatic, powerful, and easily recognizable

visuals. Appropriate lighting processing in visuals can also strengthen the delivery of concepts and emotions to the audience (Aziz & Tobroni, 2023).

CONCLUSIONS

The Community Service Program (PKM) successfully improved the skills and understanding of the Ngumpul Komik Bogor community in developing comic narratives, particularly in character design, to create greater harmony between the characters and the intended narrative. This improvement was evident in the final results of the community workshop, which were displayed at the exhibition, the primary output of this PkM activity. Beyond technical skills and understanding, this PkM encouraged workshop participants to be more creative in developing their character illustrations, with the hope of building sustainable potential for activities within the partner community. However, several challenges arose during the implementation of the program, primarily due to the limited time available for the workshop. The short duration of the training meant that some participants did not have time to complete their work and were not given the opportunity to discuss their characters further. Consequently, the character creation process was largely carried out independently outside the workshop. However, these challenges did not diminish the participants' enthusiasm for the workshop and their satisfaction with the material provided.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Authors are responsible for the conceptualization, research design, data collection, data analysis, visualization, and drafting the manuscript. All listed authors have made substantial intellectual contributions to the work and have approved the final version of the manuscript prior to submission.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper. The research was conducted independently without any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical standards for academic research. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. The study did not involve experimental manipulation, sensitive personal data, or clinical procedures beyond minimal-risk academic research. Ethical approval was not required under institutional guidelines.

GENERATIVE AI DISCLOSURE

Generative AI tools were used to assist with include language editing and grammar refinement. However, authors remain fully responsible for the intellectual content of the manuscript, including conceptual development, theoretical framing, research design, data analysis, interpretation, and conclusions.

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