

Reimagining the Way of the Cross: A Contemporary Multilayered Visualization Based on The Passion

Brian Alvin Hananto

Visual Communication Design
Universitas Pelita Harapan
Indonesia
brian.hananto@uph.edu

Sharon Hardjono

Visual Communication Design
Universitas Pelita Harapan
Indonesia
sharonhardjono@gmail.com

Winoto Usman

Visual Communication Design
Universitas Pelita Harapan
Indonesia
winoto.usman@lecturer.uph.edu

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ABSTRACT

The Way of the Cross is a central devotional practice in Catholicism, yet its traditional visual representations often fail to resonate with younger generations. This study explores how contemporary art, specifically a multilayered visual approach, can revitalize engagement with the Via Dolorosa. Based on a devotional book, "The Passion" by James Traynor, which presents each station from a character's perspective, this design project transforms textual testimonies into layered visual interpretations. The study applies Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory to analyze character motivations and structure visual storytelling. The design methodology follows an exploratory model consisting of pre-design research, conceptual development, and

final production. The design offers a new way to experience the Way of the Cross, encouraging personal reflection through layered visuals and character-based storytelling.

Keywords: The Passion Devotion to the Way of the Cross Book, Contemporary Art

INTRODUCTION

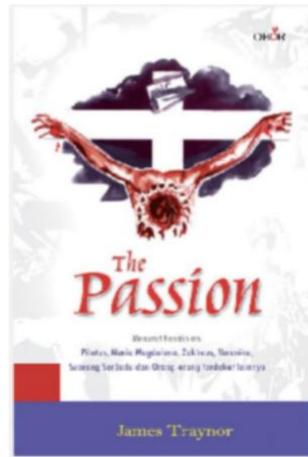
Devotion to the Way of the Cross, also known as Via Crucis, is a Catholic devotional that provides 14 to 15 stations (chapters) that representing significant event from Jesus Christ's last day on Earth (Beaumont & Thiele, 2021). The devotion always accompanied by the embodiment of art which is generally known as the term "tablo" and often found includes sculptures, paintings, and carvings (Mahendrapati, 2019).



Picture 1 Visualization of the Way of the Cross
Source: HIDUPtv.com, Altajatifurniture.com

This devotion is essential for Catholics to remember Jesus' great love for humanity (Niftrik & Boland, 2008). This prayer is not an obligation for Catholics but is recited according to personal encouragement and free will. While practicing this devotion, people are generally guided by a devotional book, overall it has the same pattern, which is chapter 1-the book told us about the situation, and then followed by a general prayer, it goes on until the 15th chapter.

In an effort to create a new visualization of this devotion, the author seeks to explore whether there are different potentials or books that could be highlighted as the essence of this artwork. And in fact, there is an innovative meditation book on the Way of the Cross is 'The Passion' by James Traynor (Picture 2), offering various perspectives and insights.



Picture 2 The Passion
Source: OBOR MEDIA

In response to the Church's concern about the younger generation's declining engagement with the Way of the Cross, this study proposes a new visual approach that draws from *The Passion*, a reflective devotional book offering multiple character perspectives. By combining narrative depth with contemporary visual techniques, this project explores how multilayered illustrations can communicate spiritual messages in a way that is both emotionally resonant and theologically meaningful. To guide the interpretation of character perspectives, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory is used as a conceptual lens to better understand the psychological and narrative structures of each station. This approach aims to create a visual experience that invites deeper reflection and strengthens the relevance of this devotion in today's visual culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Devotion to the Way of the Cross

There are 15 stations, that represent significant events from Jesus' trial to his death: Jesus is Condemned to Death; Jesus Takes Up His Cross; Jesus Falls for the First Time; Jesus Meets His Mother; Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus Carry the Cross; Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus; Jesus Falls for the Second Time; Jesus comforts the Women of Jerusalem; Jesus Falls for the Third Time; Jesus is Stripped of His Garments; Jesus is Nailed to the Cross; Jesus Dies on the Cross; Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross; Jesus is Laid in the Tomb; The Resurrection of Jesus.

Multi Layering Medium

Multi layering is a media strategy used to present artistic effects such as sense of and complexity. In their study titled "Layering in Art and Aesthetic Experience," Gerald C. Cupchik and Allison experimented with how audiences perceive the effects of superimposed illustrations. This experimental data was collected during an emotional psychology research session. In this study, subjects were asked to choose one of three

stimulus groups of works presented, after which subjects were instructed to look at the strongest point of the image which helped the subject recognize the third painting. Subjects were then asked to choose the work that most interested them and write down their feelings when they saw the work (Cupchik & Gignac, 2007).



Picture 3 Comparison of Combined-Composite, Superimposed, and Graphic Images.
Source: Cupchik & Gignac (2007)

The results of the research show that the stimulus of superimposed/multilayer works is the work that provides the highest emotional effect. The use of multilayers succeeds in providing depth which helps the audience to deepen the meaning of the work presented. Layers of harmonization help present storytelling in an engaging way (Cupchik & Gignac, 2007).

Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), as proposed by Albert Bandura, emphasizes the interaction between personal, behavioral, and environmental factors in understanding human behavior. Rather than viewing behavior as solely influenced by external stimuli or internal dispositions, Bandura introduces the concept of reciprocal determinism, which highlights the dynamic interplay between environmental influences, cognitive processes, and behavioral actions (Boiliu, 2022). Through this lens, individuals are seen as proactive agents who interpret their surroundings, form cognitive patterns, and generate consequences based on their interpretations (Bandura, 1977; Harinie et al., 2017). One of the core components of Social Cognitive Theory is the process of observational learning, which involves four key subprocesses.

1. **Attentional process**, which refers to the stage at which individuals selectively focus on particular aspects of their environment. In this phase, people observe and attend to individuals whose behavior they find salient or relevant. These models may serve as references for future behavior, and the observation typically involves noting the actions and movements performed by the model .
2. **Retention process**, which involves encoding and storing the observed behaviors into memory. This phase is crucial for ensuring that the information gathered through attention is preserved for later use. According to Bandura, retention occurs through two primary coding mechanisms: (a) imaginal coding,

where individuals form mental images of the observed behavior based on environmental stimuli, and (b) verbal coding, which involves using language or symbolic representation to retain the information. Verbal symbols are particularly important because they contain dense information that is easier to recall and reproduce .

3. **Motor production process**, which refers to the translation of mental representations into physical action. At this stage, individuals attempt to reproduce the behavior they have previously observed and encoded. This process is influenced by their existing cognitive and motor skills. The accuracy of imitation depends on how well the individual can integrate the modeled behavior with their own capabilities.
4. **Motivational process**, which determines whether or not an individual will enact the observed behavior. Even when a person pays attention, retains the behavior, and is capable of performing it, they may choose not to act unless there is sufficient motivation. Motivation in this context is shaped by anticipated outcomes, reinforcement, and self-efficacy beliefs. In essence, without interest or perceived value, individuals are unlikely to imitate the observed behavior, regardless of their cognitive or physical capacity.

In conclusion, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding learning and behavior. Through the four subprocesses of attention, retention, motor reproduction, and motivation, individuals engage in a complex process of learning from their environment. These cognitive mechanisms operate within the broader system of reciprocal determinism, in which behavior, personal factors, and environmental influences continually interact to shape human action (Boiliu, 2022; Harinie et al., 2017).

METHODOLOGY

The design methodology in this study adopts an exploratory approach, structured into three main phases: pre-design, design, and post-design (Hananto et al., 2020). The pre-design phase focuses on data collection and in-depth analysis to establish a conceptual foundation for the visual interpretation of The Passion devotion. In this stage, the author conducts a visual analysis of Lurung Kamulyan, a performance artwork, as an initial study (Hardjono & Hananto, 2024). This analysis utilizes a form-content-context framework. Additionally, a literary analysis of The Passion book is carried out, covering both extrinsic and intrinsic elements. Qualitative data is further enriched through interviews with four Catholic priests from various theological institutions in Indonesia. A literature review is also conducted to deepen the author's understanding of the book's themes and enhance the contextual knowledge of the visual components to be developed.

In the design phase, insights from the pre-design stage are translated into the development of visual ideas. The process begins with the formulation of keywords that encapsulate the thematic and narrative focus of the project. These keywords serve as anchors for constructing a moodboard that consolidates visual references, including styles, colors, textures, and compositional approaches. This is followed by an exploration of various visual media appropriate to the subject of devotion. The design process is both experimental and reflective, integrating the relationship between form, spatial context, and medium. During this stage, the author develops a cohesive visual concept and also considers strategic choices in terms of materials and spatial installation relevant to the final presentation of the work.

The post-design phase marks the final stage, which centers on the execution and realization of the visual work. In this phase, the author produces the final design based on the refined concepts and creative explorations from the previous stage. This includes the selection of media, technical production, and preparation of the artwork for public presentation or exhibition. Beyond technical completion, this phase also incorporates reflective evaluation, where the author assesses the effectiveness of the design in achieving its intended objectives, visual coherence, and narrative alignment. By following this three-stage process, the design methodology ensures a systematic, research-driven, and conceptually grounded approach to the creation of visual communication work.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

Due to the quantity of the work and discussion, this paper will focus on the Second Station, Jesus Takes Up His Cross, based on Zacchaeus' perspective.

Literature Review & Analysis

The story of Zacchaeus is referenced from the Bible Luke 19:1-10. Zacchaeus in Greek is "Ζακχαῖος", "Zacchaios"; Hebrew: זָכִי, zaki, meaning "the pure and pious" (Ade et al., 2023) [14]. Luke described Zacchaeus as a tax collector, a rich man and a short man who then often associated with fig trees. As he wanted to see Jesus, he then climbed the Sycamore tree. When Zacchaeus had to climb a sycamore tree to see Jesus, and Jesus already knew the figure of Zacchaeus even before Zacchaeus introduced himself. Jesus then asked to stay by Zacchaeus' house and be willing to hang out with sinners. This story shows Jesus get along even with the sinners (Ade et al., 2023).



Picture 4 Depiction of Zacchaeus

Source: (A) Demetra Sarras, 1867; (B) James Tissot, 1886- 1894; (C) Niels Larsen Stevns, 1913

After a literature review to study about the character, the next step is the character analysis. The character analysis will be examined through the lens of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, focusing on how observed actions, cognitive processing, and environmental interaction reflect internalized values and intentional behavior. The following table outlines the analysis for the second station.

Table 1 Character Analysis for The Second Station

Category	Description
Attentional Processes	Jesus' patience regarding to the people who hated him.
Retention Processes	Zacchaeus comparing Jesus' reaction to his reaction dealing with people who hated him, what he would taking revenge to everyone that hated him.
Motoric Processes	Zacchaeus felt hatred and annoyance towards his persecutors and planned revenge. However, he was amazed by Jesus' love for everyone, including sinners.
Motivational Processes	Getting to know Jesus more and how he interacted with those who hated him.

Source: Author's Documentation (2024)

Design Concept

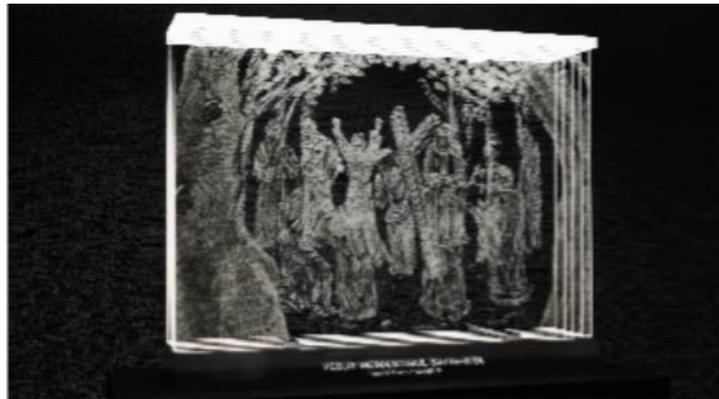
'The Passion' not only tells people about the story of Via Dolorosa devotion, but it invites readers to actively imagine the story with clarity and in-depth detail, this book also offers a visual illumination experience that enriches spiritual understanding. Through the illuminative, rich, and imaginative descriptions of each witness, the reader is drawn into the depths of Jesus' journey, whose every step is illuminated with profound meaning and symbolism. For this reason, this visualization not only reaches the surface of the narrative, but also dives into the hidden layers of the event, revealing the depth of the spiritual message and its relevance in modern life. This book is an alternative to help audiences gain illumination through deep appreciation and understanding of truth values.

Visual style of this design prominently features sketch illustrations implemented in multilayer media. The sketching style in this design adds an impression of authenticity and a sense of ownership to each witness. The subtle strokes reflect the emotions and circumstances felt by the witness during the journey of the cross. The use of white ink, clear acrylic media, and lighting highlights the sense of illumination in the artwork. The project was designed using black and white to reduce the distraction of color (Gilchrist, 2007), reflecting the seriousness and depth of the themes in the book *The Passion*.

Illustration

The second station, 'Jesus Takes Up His Cross, based on Zacchaeus' perspective. This station depicts the contradiction between retention processes and attentional

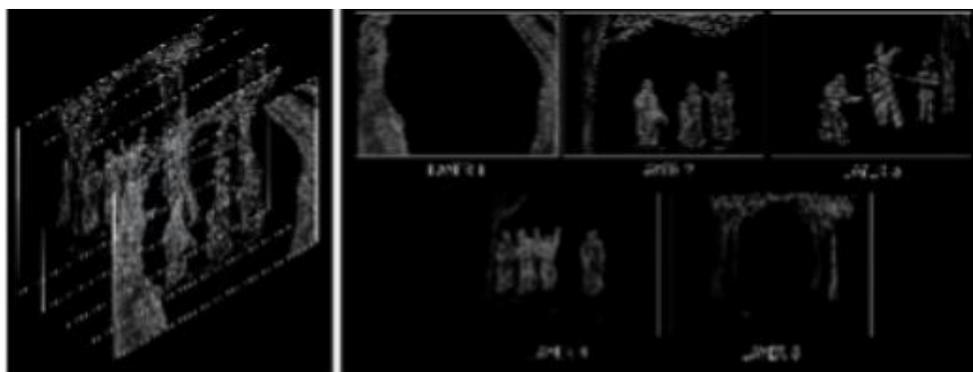
processes, highlighting the extreme change within the crowd that once admired Jesus but now demands his blood. Emotions within the artwork are strongly demonstrated by the facial expressions and body language. The gesture of a person shouting happily with their hands up, pointing a spear, reflects the spontaneous response of the crowd demanding the blood of Jesus.



Picture 5 Visualization of the Second Station
Source: Author's Documentation, 2024

The depth is enhanced by illustrating close-up details of the Sycamore trunks in the first layer, figures of people with their backs turned to Jesus in the second layer, illustration of Jesus carrying his cross placed right in the middle/the third layer. Fourth layer depicting the crowd's appearance from behind to illustrate Jesus' presence among them. The final layer is used to depict a tense atmosphere and the tree described by Zacchaeus.

The layer separation uses closure and proximity. The objects can be divided into different layers if the audience can perceive the right image. In this case, the trees and the leaves are drawn in separate layers to enhance the sense of depth. However, for living objects like humans, the illustration cannot be divided into different layers.

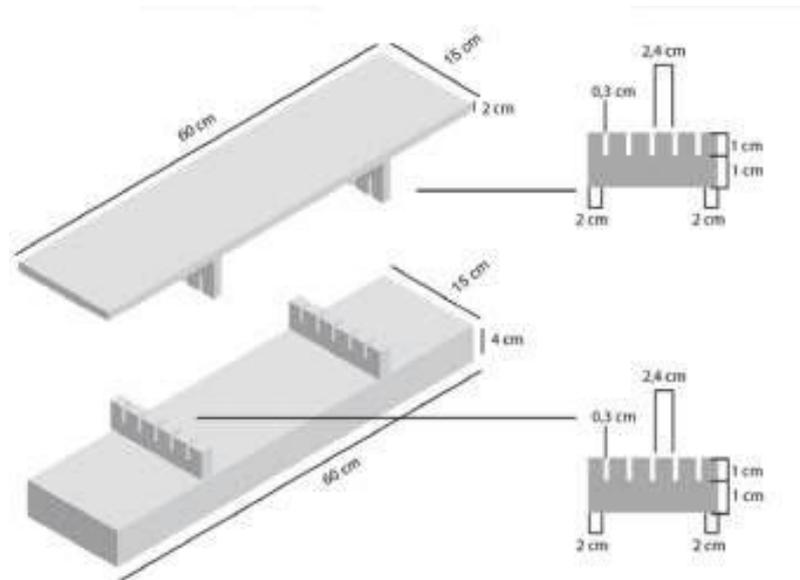


Picture 6 Second Station's Layer Breakdown
Source: Author's Documentation, 2024

Installation Concept

The size of the supporting base follows the dimensions of the main illustration area which is 42 cm x 59.4 cm. The acrylic used is 0.3 cm thick. Initially, the authors considered acrylic thicknesses of 0.2 cm, 0.3 cm, and 0.5 cm to maintain thin lines in the sketch's quality. At the end the 0.3 cm thickness is the best option because it has thin yet sturdy construction to support an A2-sized area. The artwork consists of 5 layers. We focused on using 3 to 4 layers for depth in the figures and 1 to 2 layers for the ground. We selected a total of 5 layers, emphasizing depth in the third layer, placed in the middle of the artwork.

To preserve the multilayer effect, a distance range was chosen that maintains overlapping effects. The author considered using multiples of 0.3 (the medium thickness of acrylic used) within the range of 0.6 to 3 cm. Distances of 0.6 to 1.5 cm were deemed too close, while 1.8 to 3 cm provided adequate spacing. Ultimately, the author selected 2.4 cm.



Picture 7 Base For The Illustrations
Source: Author's Documentation (2024)

Final Design

After a long process of designing, here is the final visualization of the Devotion to the Way of the Cross, inspired by The Passion devotional book. All four artworks were exhibited at Pelita Hall, Universitas Pelita Harapan (Picture 8 & 9).



Picture 8 Close up Look at Pelita Hall
Source: Author's Documentation (2024)



Picture 9 Close up Look at Pelita Hall
Source: Author's Documentation (2024)

CONCLUSION

This study reinterprets the Catholic devotion of the Way of the Cross through a contemporary visual design approach, using *The Passion* by James Traynor as a narrative foundation and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory as an analytical framework. By translating character testimonies into multilayered visual compositions, the work demonstrates how attentional, retention, motoric, and motivational processes can inform symbolic representation in religious art. The project offers a novel model for engaging younger audiences with spiritual traditions, suggesting that visual

communication design can function not only as aesthetic expression but also as a meaningful pedagogical and theological tool. This approach contributes to broader discussions on how contemporary art can revitalize inherited rituals, bridge generational gaps in religious engagement, and expand the narrative possibilities within visual devotion.

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