

## ***BENTARA BUDAYA AND THE MAKING OF A HYBRID CULTURAL SPACE***

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### ***ABSTRACT***

*This article examines Bentara Budaya Yogyakarta (BBY), a cultural institution under the Kompas Gramedia media conglomerate, as a case of a corporate-sponsored cultural space that provides a platform for marginalized artistic practices. BBY has long functioned as more than a conventional art gallery. It gives space for traditional and lesser-known artists despite its limited financial resources. Drawing on the concepts of boundary organization and cultural intermediation, the study analyzes how BBY negotiates tensions between corporate rationality and artistic communities. It also examines how BBY translates local traditions into contemporary forms shaped by global influence, and sustain legitimacy among artists. Data are based on in-depth interviews with two BBY staff members and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's Interactive Model. Five key themes emerge: corporate patronage as a cultural mission, the creation of alternative cultural spaces, translation of tradition and modernity, trust and reciprocity within a workshop ethos, and place-specific identity rooted in Yogyakarta's art ecosystem. The findings suggest that BBY's hybrid position—neither fully corporate nor fully grassroots—enables it to act as a site of cultural dialogue, to create trust, to revalorize marginalized arts, and to support Kompas Gramedia's corporate social responsibility agenda, while also fostering the multisensuous encounters through which cultural value is experienced.*

**Keywords:** *boundary organization, cultural intermediation, corporate social responsibility, bentara budaya, tourism*

### ***Introduction***

Bentara Budaya Yogyakarta (BBY) is a cultural institution operating under the umbrella of *Kompas Gramedia*, one of Indonesia's largest media conglomerates. At the time it was founded, it was still under the daily newspaper, *Kompas*. Established in 1982 in Yogyakarta—a city renowned as a center

of classical Javanese fine arts and culture and home to the Indonesia Institute of the Arts—BBY is more than a conventional art gallery. It represents a corporate-sponsored institution that has been known to provide a venue for marginalized traditional arts since its establishment. The decision to support traditional artistic practices that often lack commercial viability appears to contradict the profit-oriented logic of private companies. Yet, BBY continues to receive a warm reception from artists, despite its limited resources for financing exhibitions and performances. These seemingly contradictory tendencies raise the question of how BBY negotiates its dual identity as both the cultural arm of a corporation and a space for marginalized artistic expressions. Seen from another perspective, however, this duality may in fact be the very condition of an organization that helps connect multiple social worlds and enable translation across diverse logics and artistic values.

Research on boundary organizations has revealed how institutions play an important role in connecting groups with different goals, jargons, and expertise. Operating at the intersection of different social worlds, a boundary organization such as BBY needs to constantly negotiate and translate between the demands of corporate rationality and the needs of different artistic communities—both traditional and modern. The concept of boundary objects is first introduced by Star & Griesemer (1989) as tools or ideas whose plasticity enables different groups of people to use them differently, yet having enough stability to hold those groups together. Later scholars reconceptualized this idea to include not only objects but also organizations that act as an institutional intermediary connecting different groups of people. O'Mahony & Bechky (2008) observe how communities and companies that are typically adversaries are able to agree on rules, share ideas, and work together—while keeping their differences—through a boundary organization. These organizations facilitate collaboration by using shared objects to work on, being accountable to both sides, and giving all parties involved a space to join forces without making everyone fully agree. Parker & Crona (2012) further situate boundary organizations within university context arguing that universities are hybrid spaces where politics and science intermingle. They found out that managing a boundary organization is not about creating permanent stability but about constantly negotiating tensions. In global politics, De Donà (2021) shows that while UN groups fighting desertification fit the definition of boundary organizations, their effectiveness depend on strategies that balanced between scientific credibility with political legitimacy. Similarly, in a study on the formal integration of Indigenous and local knowledge into the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, López-Rivera (2023) advances the notion of diverse boundary organizations that recognize not only scientists but also traditional and Indigenous people as legitimate knowledge holders.

Attention to organizations that act as cultural intermediaries linking different social groups began when French thinker Pierre Bourdieu in *Distinction* (1984/2013) notices that certain occupations—journalism, public relations, advertising, and marketing—function to transfer cultural knowledge. These occupations are well-versed in cultural knowledge and are instrumental in prescribing and legitimizing symbolic goods and services. Subsequent scholarship has reconsidered

Bourdieu's perspective. Negus (2002), for example, notes that cultural intermediaries can function not only as bridges between producers and audiences but also as gatekeepers who shape what cultural forms are circulated. Warren & Jones (2015) expand the scope of intermediation into governance and Bain & Landau (2018) reframe artists themselves as intermediaries. They show that artists actively promote themselves by creating their own spaces and projects to connect with audiences. Hutchinson (2018) extends Bourdieu's framework by repositioning cultural intermediation within contemporary media organizations. Stockley-Patel & Swords (2023) examine how intermediaries function in creative research and development projects. In the era of social media, Zhang & Negus (2024) expand the role of intermediaries by introducing the notion of "platform adaptor" whose function is to translate artistic content into algorithmically optimized forms. In this way, cultural intermediaries do not merely work by translating between classes and tastes, but also between institutions and communities, between artistic autonomy and market demands, and between cultural value and algorithmic logics. Past studies have further shown that corporations employ similar relational practices through their CSR programs.

Starr (2013) asserts that CSR programs can deliver conservation of cultural heritage enhance public access to it, and their success depends not only on leadership but also on the active involvement of employees and visitors (Wells et al., 2015, 2016). Biraglia et al. (2018) emphasize that corporate support should not erode the perceived authenticity of cultural heritage, while Esposito & Ricci (2021) examine how companies use digital tools to communicate their social responsibility. Mérai & Kulikov (2024) study how companies use their own heritage—such as buildings, equipment, and past documents—as a strategic resource for branding and CSR. While existing scholarship has examined the role of CSR in heritage conservation and branding, little is known about how CSR institutions that works as a boundary organization that mediates between corporate logics, artistic communities, and local traditions. Therefore, the present study aims to answer these questions:

1. How does Bentara Budaya Yogyakarta function as a boundary organization that negotiates between corporate rationality and the needs of marginalized artistic communities?
2. In what ways does Bentara Budaya Yogyakarta translate local traditions into contemporary cultural forms while sustaining trust and legitimacy among artists and the wider community?

## **Research Method**

This study draws on two overlapping perspectives: the concept of boundary organization and cultural intermediaries. The notion of boundary organization offers a lens to examine how BBY mediates between different social worlds while sustaining collaboration without erasing differences.

Meanwhile, the concept of cultural intermediary sheds light on the way BBY translate and revalorize traditional and marginalized arts into contemporary forms. Together, these frameworks allow the study to examine BBY as a CSR institution that not only connects different communities but also actively produces and circulates cultural meaning.

The data for this qualitative study are based on interview transcripts with two key informants working for BBY. These informants were deliberately selected because of their distinctive knowledge and experience: both have long-standing involvement in organizing artistic activities at BBY, have worked closely with local artists, and maintain strong personal relationships with them. Unlike other staff members who are more recent recruits, these two informants have been with BBY since its founding, which provided an additional rationale for their selection. Data collection from these two informants was deemed sufficient, since the interviews yielded recurring themes and no substantively new insights emerged, indicating that thematic saturation was reached for the scope of this study.

All personal communications cited in this article refer to the interviews conducted with BBY staff members in Yogyakarta on May 6, 2025. The interviews were in Indonesian since all parties involved are native speakers of the language. All interview excerpts originally produced in Indonesian were translated into English using DeepL. The translations were subsequently reviewed and edited by Author 2 and compared and double-checked by Author 3 to ensure accuracy of meaning and contextual equivalence. Both Author 2 and Author 3 are native speakers of Indonesian with strong proficiency in English. The analysis of interview transcripts employs Miles and Huberman's Interactive Model. This model, selected because it offers a systematic way to connect raw data to conceptual insights, involves the following steps. First, the raw interview data were condensed, and key points were identified and coded. Second, similar codes were grouped into broader categories and themes. Finally, the reduced data were displayed in tabular form, from which conclusions were drawn and verified.

## Results and Discussion

Following the data processing and analysis of interview materials using Miles and Huberman's Interactive Model, five central themes emerged as the core findings of this study: (1) *Corporate patronage as a cultural mission*, (2) *Alternative cultural space*, (3) *Translation of tradition and modernity*, (4) *Trust, reciprocity, and art-workshop ethos*, and (5) *Place-specific identity*. Taken together, these themes demonstrate how BBY negotiates between different social worlds while revalorizing traditional and marginalized art forms into contemporary cultural expressions. The following table provides a summary of these five themes.

### Central Themes

Theme	Quotes / Paraphrases from Informants with English Translation	Interpretation
Corporate patronage as a cultural mission	<p>“Pak, kalau boleh janganlah paviliun itu disewakan. Apakah arti keuntungan kecil bagi Kompas ... Lebih baik dipakai untuk seni yang tidak bisa tampil di gedung-gedung kesenian.”</p> <p>“Sir, if possible, please don’t rent out the pavilion. What’s the point of such a small profit for <i>Kompas</i>*... It would be better used for art that can’t find a stage in other art venues.”</p> <p>“Logika yang digunakan bukan logika produksi profit, tapi logika distribusi budaya.”</p> <p>“The logic at work here is not the logic of profit production, but the logic of cultural distribution.”</p>	The parent company <i>Kompas Gramedia</i> sustains BBY as part of a cultural mission, not profit-making. Branding and social value outweigh financial returns.
Alternative cultural space	<p>“Tempat-tempat resmi sangat sulit ditembus oleh seniman-seniman yang tidak punya kelas. Mereka diabaikan.”</p> <p>“Official venues are almost impossible for lesser-known artists to break into. They just get ignored.”</p> <p>“Bentara Budaya adalah Kawah Candradimuka-nya seniman... kalau belum pernah tampil di Bentara Budaya, belum layak disebut seniman.”</p> <p>“Bentara Budaya is like the <i>Kawah Candradimuka</i>** for artists... if you’ve never performed at Bentara Budaya, you’re not yet considered a true artist.”</p>	BBY provides an alternative stage for marginalized artistic practices, granting them recognition and legitimacy.
Translation of tradition and modernity	<p>“Produk gerabah seribu atau dua ribu rupiah, setelah dihias seniman bisa jadi 10 atau 50 ribu... hasilnya dikembalikan ke pengrajin untuk beli sepeda.”</p> <p>“A pottery product worth one or two thousand rupiah, once decorated by</p>	BBY facilitates co-creation between craftsmen and contemporary artists by reinterpreting tradition. Journalism amplifies these projects, scaling them beyond the local audience.

	<p>an artist, can sell for ten or fifty thousand... the money goes back to the craftsman so they can buy a bicycle”</p> <p><i>“Kami selalu mengupayakan untuk... meluluri seni tradisi, memberi warna, dan merefleksikan kembali menjadi sesuatu yang modern.”</i></p> <p>“We always strive to... enrich traditional art, give it new life, and reinterpret it into something modern.”</p> <p><i>“Sebuah pameran yang hanya dilihat 50–100 orang bisa dibaca oleh 200–300 ribu orang karena dituliskan di koran.”</i></p> <p>“An exhibition that only fifty to a hundred people see can actually reach two to three hundred thousand readers once it’s written up in the newspaper.”</p>	
Trust, reciprocity, and art-workshop ethos	<p><i>“Kalau Bentara Budaya pinjam barang para kolektor, ya mereka ikhlas... kalau tidak percaya, tidak akan ikhlas melepaskan koleksi mahal.”</i></p> <p>“When Bentara Budaya borrows pieces from collectors, they lend them willingly... without trust, they would never let go of such valuable collections.”</p> <p><i>“Modelnya low budget... para seniman tahu Bentara Budaya tidak memanfaatkan dana untuk bermewah-mewah.”</i></p> <p>“It’s a low-budget model... the artists know Bentara Budaya doesn’t waste money on luxury.”</p> <p><i>“Para seniman merasa seperti di rumah sendiri... datang, duduk, mengobrol sambil menikmati rokok.”</i></p> <p>“Artists feel at home here... they come, sit, chat, and enjoy a cigarette</p>	BBY operates like an art workshop, which emphasizes trust, modesty, and hospitality. This social capital sustains loyalty even without large financial resources.

	together.”	
Place-specific identity	<p>“<i>Bentara Budaya Yogyakarta berbeda sekali... apa yang dibuat di sini tidak bisa dibuat di Bandung, Surabaya, atau Jakarta.</i>”</p> <p>“Bentara Budaya Yogyakarta is truly different... what’s created here couldn’t be created in Bandung, Surabaya, or Jakarta.”</p> <p>“<i>Di Yogyakarta seniman sangat akur, dan kalau ada kudapan, mereka akan betah kumpul, diskusi.</i>”</p> <p>“In Yogyakarta, artists get along really well, and if there are snacks, they’ll happily stay, gather, and talk.”</p>	BBY’s identity is deeply shaped by Yogyakarta’s cooperative art ecosystem. Its distinctiveness comes from being embedded in a unique local cultural environment.

\* *Kompas* daily newspaper

\*\* *Kawah Candradimuka* is a mythical Javanese cauldron where heroes are forged and tested.

### Theme 1: Corporate patronage as a cultural mission

From its earliest days, BBY was supported by *Kompas*, its parent company, not as a business venture but as a cultural commitment. One Informant recalled that founder Yakob Oetama agreed to a suggestion not to rent out a company-owned building located in a prime commercial area, accepting the proposal that it would be better used as a platform for marginalized artistic practices. This decision set the tone for BBY’s non-profit-oriented mission. The founder’s favorable tendencies toward programs aimed at social activities are predictable, according to a study by Sarker & Elnahas (2025). In their research, leaders who grew up in high Power Distance cultures tend to lead companies with higher corporate social responsibility (CSR), and Indonesia—scoring 78 on Hofstede’s Power Distance framework—is ranked as a high-Power Distance culture (Hofstede et al., 2010). As the informant explained, the guiding principle was the “*logic of cultural distribution*,” which justified the decision to open BBY’s doors to “*marginal art forms so they could find a stage*,” because this was consistent with *Kompas*’s “*humanitarian mission to promote lesser-known crafts and cultures*” (Informant 1, personal communication). As Möntmann (2021) shows, small-scale art organizations, such as BBY, enable provision of platforms for artistic practices overlooked by mainstream institutions. While Möntmann’s examples focus on non-profit organizations, a similar role can be seen in *Kompas*, which, despite being a private company, has made it part of its mission to promote less-known cultural traditions. Furthermore, the informant added that even when *Kompas* was still small, the company already provided minimal but crucial financial support to BBY, sometimes only enough

to match a journalist's monthly salary. This shows that a tangible presence in cultural promotion—not profit—was the priority.

## **Theme 2: Alternative cultural space**

Both Informants stressed that from the beginning BBY provided a rare platform for marginalized artistic practices, which is in line with the parent company's belief that “*culture is an integral part of national life ... Kompas needs to support cultural activities*” (Informant 1, personal communication). This was especially true in the early years of BBY's establishment, when official spaces for performances or exhibitions were very limited in number. To make matters worse, the few that did exist were largely inaccessible to “*lesser-known artists*” (Informant 2, personal communication). Without an alternative cultural space in which to perform, these marginalized artists and their works would have remained invisible to the public. From the outset, therefore, BBY became a destination and a place of hope for artists seeking public recognition. Among artists themselves, there was even a saying that BBY was a forging ground: if an artist had exhibited at BBY, then they had earned the right to a name. For the artists, performing or exhibiting at BBY became a rite of passage. BBY's reputation—what Cnossen & Bencherki (2023) call a form of “*artful legitimacy*”—was not only shaped by what artistic communities said about it. It was made tangible through the physical space itself and the artistic practices that take place there. This reputation made Bentara Budaya not just a venue, but a cultural marker of legitimacy.

## **Theme 3: Translation of tradition and modernity**

Informant 1 expressed a conviction regarding the importance of preserving Javanese traditional arts. According to the informant, the cultural philosophy rooted in Javanese traditions provides an underlying energy and set of values that sustain the meaning and purpose of BBY's programs and activities and offers continual guidance for the institution. As the person noted: “*I truly believe this—that the very essence animating Bentara Budaya's activities, as long as the Javanese concept remains alive, can continue to guide us*” (Informant 1, personal communication). According to the informant, this is why, whereas other institutions focus on modern arts, BBY devotes its attention to traditional Javanese arts.

At the same time, BBY does not treat these traditions as static; it actively translates these traditional practices into contemporary forms. The process often begins with BBY planning an exhibition and inviting craftspeople to display their traditional products. For example, BBY invited local potters to display their work and then brought in artists to add their own interpretations and creative touches. One of the informants explained, “*a pottery product worth one or two thousand rupiah, once decorated by an artist, can sell for ten or fifty thousand... the money goes back to the*



*craftsman so they can buy a bicycle or fund their work*” (Informant 2, personal communication). This BBY-mediated collaboration extended to instruments like the *kencrung* and *kentongan*, which were creatively reworked to make them appealing to modern audiences. Reflecting on this co-creation of value, another informant stated, *"We always strive to—not merely polish, but to enrich traditional art, give it new life, and reinterpret it into something modern"* (Informant 1, personal communication). The informant explained that BBY challenges artists not to follow tradition or merely repeat existing forms. Instead, BBY encourages them to push boundaries, experiment with new ideas, techniques, or interpretations, so that traditional art evolves and adapts without losing its cultural essence. Moreover, projects of this kind are never left without media exposure; deliberate efforts are made to enhance their visibility. As an organization under a media company, BBY is encouraged to amplify these projects through writing. The informant quoted the founder of *Kompas* as saying, *“An exhibition that only fifty to a hundred people see can actually reach two to three hundred thousand readers once it’s written up in the newspaper”* (Informant 1, personal communication).

#### **Theme 4: Trust, reciprocity, and art-workshop ethos**

This study shows that trust emerged as a key principle in BBY’s operations. Informants described how collectors lent valuable items, such as antique bicycles, to be exhibited at BBY without any payment. This trust was reinforced by BBY’s modest and transparent approach. The organization’s financing is characterized as a *“low-budget model... the artists know Bentara Budaya doesn’t waste money on luxury,”* and BBY *“openly discloses the budget available for each exhibition”* (Informant 1, personal communication). Consequently, artists participating in BBY events are fully aware of the financial constraints and regard this candid approach as *“an effective model for organizing exhibitions. They view the process as pragmatic: the exhibition should operate within the limits of the funds available, making the most of the resources at hand”* (Informant 1, personal communication).

Wells et al. (2015) argue that employees are central to the success of CSR initiatives. Staff of BBY, as Informant 1 stated, are primarily motivated by their genuine passion for art. The staff continue their work regardless of financial compensation because, as the informant explained, they are *“driven by intrinsic interest rather than material reward,”* interests that are *“rooted in personal fulfillment and enjoyment”* in creating and supporting art (Informant 1, personal communication). Furthermore, the informant argued that BBY staff refuse to misuse funds from *Kompas* for personal purposes because, once caught, *“people would no longer trust Bentara Budaya”* (Informant 1, personal communication). In addition, artists collaborating with BBY *“know the ins and outs of Bentara Budaya”* (Informant 2, personal communication), and Informant 2 believed that these artists are in a position to observe firsthand the integrity with which financial matters are managed.

Beyond financial integrity, BBY also fosters a welcoming and home-like atmosphere for its visitors. Informant 1 reported that BBY always makes an effort to host guests, at the very least by

*“serving packed rice with simple side dishes”* (Informant 1, personal communication), thereby creating an environment reminiscent of an art workshop rather than a corporate organization, where *“artists feel at home here... they come, sit, chat, and enjoy a cigarette together”* (Informant 2, personal communication). This informal and transparent atmosphere, in which interactions are open and candid, reinforces BBY’s art-workshop ethos and helps cultivate loyalty among staff and collaborators despite meager financial compensation. As Informant 2 joked, the artists consider BBY to be the *“Citadel of Struggle”*. Informant 1 added that the artists often say, *“If you want to earn a lot of money, this is not the place. At Bentara Budaya, what you seek is value,”* and that *“Bentara Budaya truly does not exploit the artists, and yet the artists always benefit”* (Informant 1, personal communication).

### **Theme 5: Place-specific identity**

Both informants agreed that Yogyakarta’s strong arts ecosystem strongly influenced BBY’s identity stating that cultural events created in the city *“couldn’t be created in Bandung, Surabaya, or Jakarta”* (Informant 1, personal communication). This observation aligns with a study by Kaddar et al. (2022), who argue that cities act as ecosystems that shape how artists see themselves, what drives them, and how they create art. Cities provide resources, pressures, networks, and opportunities, and Yogyakarta, in particular, fosters an atmosphere of collaboration. As one of the informants added, *“artists get along really well, and if there are snacks, they’ll happily stay, gather, and talk”* (Informant 2, personal communication). This local distinctiveness contributes to the unique character of BBY.

### **Conclusion**

In negotiating the tension between corporate rationality and the needs of marginalized artistic communities, BBY’s parent company opted for an approach focused more on cultural dissemination than profit generation. As a CSR initiative of *Kompas Gramedia*, BBY’s value lies in its branding and cultural legitimacy rather than in revenue. Despite *Kompas* being a media giant, artists know that BBY neither exploits funds nor channels them toward luxury. This transparency fosters trust and encourages ongoing support from the artists. Unlike state-sponsored venues, BBY avoids formality, and it makes artists feel it operates more like a collaborative workshop than a corporate entity. This hybrid position—neither fully corporate nor fully grassroots—allows BBY to navigate between corporate logic and the realities of artistic life.

To translate local traditions into contemporary cultural forms, BBY imbue traditional crafts with contemporary touch shaped by global influence, and invite artists to reinterpret the traditional crafts. This way, it helps sustain craftsmen economically while keeping traditions alive in new forms.

The traditional crafts become hybrid cultural products that appeal to contemporary audiences without erasing traditional meaning.

With Bentara Budaya in the picture, Yogyakarta—already a major tourist destination—now offers traditional crafts that have been infused with contemporary elements. These creative modifications produce objects that appeal to the tourist gaze, that present features that differ from what one would ordinarily encounter in daily life (Urry & Larsen, 2011). As a space that routinely exhibits cultural works, facilitates contact among artists, craftsmen, visitors, and of course tourists, and one that—during exhibitions—also serves simple local snacks while occupying a heritage building, Bentara Budaya creates opportunities for tourists not only to see but also to feel, smell, taste, and hear the city and its cultural heritage in ways that, according to Larsen & Urry (2011), are “*multisensuous*,” rather than experienced solely through sight.

This study provides insights only into Bentara Budaya as it operates in Yogyakarta. As noted by Informant 1, the city’s distinctive arts ecosystem plays a significant role in shaping artistic practices, such that forms of cultural production that can be realized in Yogyakarta may not be readily transferable to other cities. In addition, this study is limited by its reliance on senior informants, both in terms of age and their high-ranking institutional positions within BBY and the Kompas daily newspaper. Consequently, the analysis does not capture the perspectives of junior staff, who are generally younger and occupy lower-ranking positions within the organization, and whose greater distance from decision-making power may be associated with different understandings of cultural work and institutional practice.

## Author Contributions

W. Winarto. Author 1: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing the Original Draft; Vincentius Tangguh Atyanto Nugroho. Author 2: Data Curation, Translation, Writing, Supervision; Carlos Iban. Author 3: Validation, Reviewing and Editing.

## Conflicts Of Interest

The manuscript has not been published elsewhere and is not under consideration by other journals. All authors have approved the review, agree with its submission and declare no conflict of interest on the manuscript.

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