CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background

Humans are highly visual creatures (Balaram & Kaas, 2014). Everything surrounding us, the signs at road, the representation shown in TV shows, the letters we see, is all a part of visual communication. The field of study in graphic design or visual communication design is to create more designers who can create comprehensive and efficiency in delivering a message. At the end of the day, graphic design should be used to create betterment for the society.

Min Lew, a creative director from Base Design, NYC, in the AIGA article *'Women Make Up Over Half the Design Industry—So Why Are There So Few at the Top*?' (2020) said that gender differences didn't become an issue in formal education, but in the workplace and industry. According to a global census conducted by American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) in 2019, 61% of designers working in 2019 are women. On the other side, only 11% of women holds a leadership position as creative directors. This number shows a phenomenon called *glass-ceiling* in the graphic design industry. In United Kingdom design sector, there is an enduring discourse in which the designer is normalised as male. Design 'teams' are referred to as 'the guys', and small firms as (for example) 'three-man' businesses.

Meanwhile, graphic design in Indonesia has only started as an official formal education in 1972, and improved throughout historical timelines. One of the turning points in the Indonesia arts history is when graphic design became a field of study in Indonesia, firstly opened in Bandung Institute of Technology (Institut Teknologi Bandung), brought by A.D. Pirous in 1972, a renowned painter and an important figure in Indonesia graphic design history. According to Ismiaji Cahyono, the Deputy Program of Desain Grafis Indonesia (DGI), the development of graphic design in Indonesia actually stems from campuses and universities. From universities, creative workers and designers sprout into agencies or studios, and later on the industry itself is created.

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Based on an interview that was done by the researcher in September 2023 with Pirous, the pioneer of Graphic Design as a field of study in Indonesia, women were not a part of the history of graphic design in the early 1970s. Women are mostly used as a visual attraction and object of aesthetic. In the scope of graphic design, the usage of women visualization can be found usually in advertisement. The image and visualization of women are used to become the *key of attraction* in a design work. It is rarely found that women are becoming 'the designer' in the early 1970s in Indonesia.

Though now, women has already gained access to education and started participating in Graphic Design (both formal education and industry), when looking to the most common sources of graphic design history, there were very few notable women graphic designers. During the period that graphic design history has been constantly studied, it is more known that women graphic designers only existed 'recently' in the modern times and in very negligible numbers (Levit, 2021).

Diversity in design sector matters because it needs to reflect the diversity of world it designs for. If not, the design of everything can overlook the aspirations, assets and needs of many people, excluding them and reinforcing existing inequalities and forms of marginalization (Quito, 2022). This is why both men and women representation and participation in graphic design became really important, in order to balance the creation and create diversity.

Graphic design in Indonesia have reached a milestone of 50 years in 2023. Unfortunately, there have been very little literature references in Indonesian graphic design, including an archive on the role of women graphic designers. Priyanto Sunarto, Indonesian graphic designer and illustrator adds the importance of documenting the tracks of graphic design in Indonesia, in an article written by Hanny Kardinata (2016), he said, "*If not documented, we lose track of what has been done and the prospects ahead; it's like being blind to our own history*."

The documentation of graphic design history was firstly done by Hanny Kardinata in 2003, together with Priyanto Sunarto dan Henricus Kusbiantoro. In 2007, the site "Desain Grafis Indonesia" or dgi.or.id was created to publish notes, clippings, and a collection of artifacts about graphic design that Kardinata have

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gathered since 1980. Therefore, a research and documentation must be conducted the same way as DGI, to find the positioning of Indonesian women designers in order to create a progression in Indonesian graphic design history and provide an archive of biography, artworks, and way of thinking.

1.2 Research Question

From the background research, three main issues were addressed:

1. Design graphic in Indonesia has been around for more than 50 years, but the progress of archiving designers work and writing them in history, especially women, has not been done yet.
2. Lack of women graphic designers representation and in decision-making roles in Indonesia.
3. Stereotypes in society that show women only as the key of attraction.

Therefore, the research question for this research will be: **How do Indonesian women graphic designers contribute to Indonesian graphic design?** Including their 1) biography, 2) design characteristics and way of thinking, 3) the stereotype that existed in graphic design industry, and 4) women's graphic designer role in the creative industry.

1.3 Research Scope

This research will focus on study cases within ten (10) Indonesian women graphic designers in certain period of year and expertise in their own field of graphic design. The graphic designers chosen for this research has several criteria, which are: 1) Indonesian women, 2) actively contributed in graphic design, and 3) has professional experience for more than five years in Indonesian graphic design. The hypotheses for this research subjects are:

1. Year 1980–1999 with Manual Techniques (2 representatives)
2. Year 2000–2010 during Early Computer Graphics (2 representatives)
3. Year 2011–2023 with active participation (2 representatives)

To complete this research, there will also be one (1) representative from each field of graphic design, consisting of women graphic designers who specialize and have experiences more than five (5) years in:

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4. Identity and Branding Design (1 representative)

5. Communication and Advertising Design (1 representative)

6. Interface and Interactive Design (1 representative)

7. Illustration and Typeface Design (1 representative)

In total, there will be ten (10) Indonesian women graphic designers as the study case for this research. The distributions of women graphic designers per category are chosen based on *Standar Kompetensi Kerja Nasional Indonesia* (SKKNI) for Graphic Design or Indonesian National Work Competency Standards supported by the confirmation from Eka Sofyan Rizal through interview, as the Writer Team of SKKNI and Head of AIDIA (*Asosiasi Profesional Desain Komunikasi Visual Indonesia*). The distributions are carefully picked to represent each field of graphic design. The variables of the women graphic designers are chosen based on the Indonesian Graphic Design Timeline listed by Desain Grafis Indonesia (DGI) per generation or era of graphic design in sequences (timeline). To add on, the representatives from graphic design fields are added to collecting each representatives from each expertise.

1.4 Research Objectives

This research has a final goal, which is to create inclusivity in Indonesian graphic design and bring a progress in the industry. Therefore, several objectives of this research are:

1. to collect the thoughts and their role from women graphic designers from study cases in a written work that can be used as a literary reference for others in Indonesian graphic design, and

2. analyze the phenomena happening in Indonesian graphic design according to historical timeline based on narrative resources.

1.5 Research Contribution

This research contributes to three main aspects: 1) for the researcher and fellow designers, 2) for society, and 3) for university and academics.

1. Researcher and Graphic Design Students

a. Analyzing the correlation between Feminism and Graphic Design–and getting in-depth review analysis of it.

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b. Contributing in the progress of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from the United Nations (UN) number 5: Gender Equality.

c. Becoming a start point for the researcher to start an innovation, movement, or campaign for women graphic designers.

2. Society Contribution

a. Uplifting women's stories and empowering other women.

b. Finding women's stance and position in the field of arts by conducting deeper research and analysis in the historical timeline, and also art and design archives.

c. Supporting Sustainable Development Goals No. 5: Sustainable Gender through research and analysis.

3. Academic Contribution

a. This research could show findings and specific result for the university to implement gender budgeting to create a more inclusive learning space, especially for the Faculty of Arts and Design in Multimedia Nusantara University.

b. Guiding university students who have passion in research for arts in order to increase the number of literature sources in graphic design.