

## Interior Design of Batak Cultural Center with The Implementation of Batak Toba Gorga in Medan City

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### Abstract

Traditional culture, including Batak culture, is increasingly being overshadowed by modern influences. Medan City, which has the largest Batak population in Indonesia, still lacks a cultural center that truly represents Batak heritage. Furthermore, the relocation of the North Sumatera Cultural Park to PRSU has resulted in limited accessibility and functionality. To support cultural preservation efforts, establishing a Batak Cultural Center in Medan City is essential. The design of this cultural center incorporates the design programming method by David K. Ballast and the pictorial transformation approach by Anthony Anthodias, adapting the Batak Toba Gorga carvings and the *Tiga Bolit* color scheme. This cultural center aims to provide a representative space and foster greater appreciation of Batak culture among younger generations.

**Keywords:** *Interior design, Cultural Center, Batak, Gorga*

## INTRODUCTION

Culture plays a vital role in shaping a society's identity, encompassing moral values, customs, and artistic expressions. Indonesia is renowned for its vast cultural diversity, with 633 ethnic groups spread across various islands (BPS, 2010). One of the largest ethnic groups is the Batak people, originally from North Sumatra, who have since migrated to different regions across Indonesia. The Batak community has a long-standing tradition of migration, deeply rooted in the values of *Hamoraon* (wealth), *Hagabeon* (descendants), and *Hasangapon* (honor), which serve as guiding principles in their pursuit of a better life beyond their homeland (Gultom, 2021).

However, modernization and globalization have significantly impacted the preservation of Batak culture (Turena, 2017). Many Batak youth have begun to abandon their traditional language and arts. This decline is evident in the 2010 population census, which found that only 38.7% of the total Batak Toba population still spoke the Batak language in daily life (Eberhard et al., 2022, in Rumapea, 2023). In addition to globalization, the younger generation's diminishing interest in Batak culture is also attributed to the lack of platforms and facilities that enable them to learn about and engage with their traditions.

As a multicultural city, Medan is home to various ethnic groups, including Batak, Malay, Chinese, Minang, and others (Salsabila, 2022). Some existing cultural landmarks represent specific communities, such as Maimun Palace for Malay culture and Kampung Madras for Indian culture. However, despite the Batak community's significant role in shaping Medan's identity, there is no dedicated cultural center that specifically showcases Batak traditions and arts.

The Medan City Government previously developed Medan Cultural Park, but its relocation to the PRSU area has limited access to arts and cultural activities (Salsabila, 2022). This situation highlights the need for a cultural center that serves as a space for expressing and preserving Batak cultural heritage within Medan's multicultural environment. The establishment of a Batak Cultural Center in Medan is expected to help sustain Batak arts and traditions, particularly among younger generations. To make the center more engaging and relevant to modern times, it should be designed with both educational and recreational elements. Additionally, incorporating distinctive Batak features, such as the Batak Toba Gorga motifs, will give the center a strong cultural identity. With this cultural center, it is hoped that the Batak community, especially its younger members, will have greater opportunities to recognize, understand, and appreciate their rich cultural heritage. In doing so, Batak culture can continue to thrive despite the rapid influences of modernization and globalization.

## METHOD

The methodology used to achieve the results of the interior design research for the Batak Cultural Center in Medan City was developed based on David K. Ballast's design process scheme (Ballast, 1992). The first stage is the programming phase, which includes establishing the general concept after determining the primary objective of the design based on user needs. Data collection was conducted through surveys, interviews, questionnaires, field observations, and documentation. The survey process involved interviews with key stakeholders related to Batak cultural centers, particularly the Medan City Office of Education and Culture. Additionally, data was gathered through questionnaire distribution among young members of the Batak community at the HKBP Surakarta Church, who served as a sample group. Furthermore, field data was collected through direct observations at the nearest cultural center in Solo City, the Central Java Cultural Park. These observations provided valuable insights regarding visitors, activities, facilities, dimensions, architectural styles, and functional aspects that support the operation of a cultural center. The collected information was documented through photographs, video recordings, and sketches.

The next stage in the design methodology involved analyzing the collected data to formulate the interior design concept of the cultural center. This process was carried out schematically, taking into account zoning, spatial grouping, space organization patterns, room dimensions, and the relationships between different spaces. The Batak Cultural Center building employs a radial space organization pattern, with the lobby

serving as the central hub that connects various rooms and floors. The spatial zoning and grouping within the building are categorized into public, semi-public, and private zones based on functionality and user access.

Beyond functional zoning, the spatial grouping of rooms is also influenced by the traditional color scheme of Gorga carvings from Batak Toba, known as "Tiga Bolit," which consists of red, black, and white. The Gorga carving art concept serves as an inspiration for the interior and spatial distribution of the cultural center, embodying the essence of Batak culture. The transformation of Gorga Batak design is applied to elements such as the ceiling, wall panels, flooring, and building façade, incorporating traditional motifs such as *Gorga Ipon-Ipon*, *Iran-Iran*, *Simeol-Meol*, *Dalihan Na Tolu*, *Boraspati*, and *Gajah Dompok*.

To integrate Batak Toba Gorga art into the interior concept, the Pictorial Transferring theory by Anthony Antoniadès (1998) was utilized. This theory facilitates the transformation of cultural art elements into modern architectural design. Through this approach, the form and symbolic meaning of Batak Toba Gorga are adapted into interior elements, resulting in a new identity that is both modern and aesthetically refined. The design transformation and conceptual development were further refined using manual sketches, existing architectural plans created with AutoCAD 2020, and 3D modeling executed in SketchUp 2020.

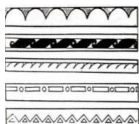




### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The design of the Batak Cultural Center in Medan City was developed as an effort to preserve Batak culture, which has been experiencing a decline. The design incorporates inspiration from Gorga Batak Toba in its interior ornamentation, aiming to create a space that supports both the preservation and development of Batak cultural arts. The Batak Toba Gorga concept featured in this design includes various traditional motifs such as *Gorga Ipon-*

*Ipon*, *Iran-Iran*, *Sompi*, *Boraspati*, *Dalihan Na Tolu*, *Mata Ni Ari*, *Gajah Dompok*, *Jonggar*, and *SimarogungOgung* (Saragih, 2019). Additionally, it integrates the characteristic color scheme of *Tiga Bolit*, which consists of black, red, and white (Siburian, 2022).

In the design of the Batak Cultural Center, the interior elements draw inspiration from Gorga Batak Toba carvings. The transformation of these forms is achieved using the pictorial transferring technique, a process that reinterprets cultural elements into a new form while preserving their original meaning and context (Antoniades, 1998). This transformation ensures that the philosophical values embedded in Gorga Batak Toba remain intact, reflecting the Batak people's way of life and worldview. There are two key aspects to understanding the Batak Toba Gorga carvings: (1) The *Tiga Bolit* color scheme (black, red, and white), which symbolizes the three realms of the Batak cosmology; (2) The smooth, flowing lines in the carvings, which represent the refinement and depth of the Batak people's spirit (Siburian, 2022). Based on these principles, the transformation of Gorga in this design involves a slight modification in color due to the selection of specific carving materials for the interior, such as paras stone. However, beyond this adjustment, the design retains the smooth lines and the fundamental inspiration of the Gorga Batak Toba form (Table 1).

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NO	Gorga	Transformation			
		Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Result
1	<p><i>Gorga Ipon-Ipon</i></p> 				 <p>(Souvenir shop clothes rack)</p>

2	<i>Gorga Iran-Iran</i>						(Library Bookshelf)
3	<i>Gorga Boraspati</i>						(Theater acoustic wall)
4	<i>Gorga Mata Ni Ari</i>			-	-		(Souvenir shop acoustic ceiling)
5	<i>Gorga Dalihan Na Tolu</i>				-		(Hanging Lamp library)
6	<i>Gorga Simeol-meol</i>						(Patterned Metal Panel on the main Lobby column)

**Table 1.** Transformation of Batak Toba Gorga form  
Source: Stefani C. Pangaribuan, 2024

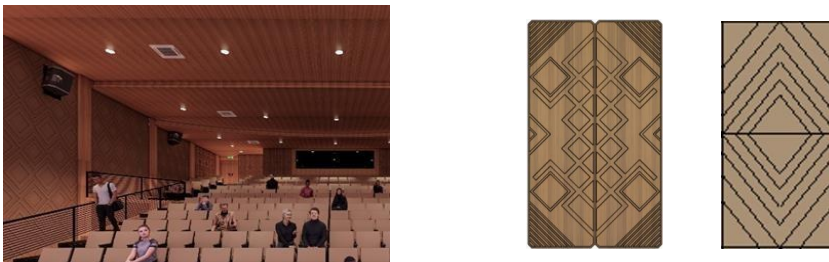
The color concept is derived from *Tiga Bolit*, the traditional Gorga Batak Toba color scheme consisting of black, red, and white, which symbolizes the three realms in Batak cosmology. White represents the upper realm, where the gods and the creator reside. Red symbolizes the middle realm, the domain of humans and earthly beings. Black represents the lower realm, associated with the afterlife and death (Siburian, 2022). This color scheme (Figure 1), combined with the transformation of Gorga motifs, is integrated with modern elements such as wood, aluminum, and glass, creating a warm, minimalist, and aesthetically pleasing atmosphere in the interior design of the cultural center.



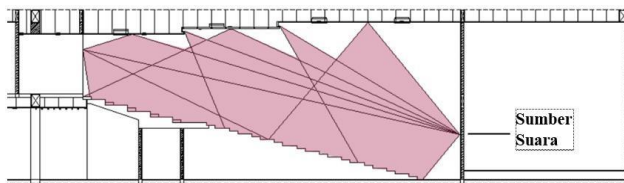
**Figure 1.** Color scheme  
Source: Stefani C. Pangaribuan, 2024

The selection of materials for the building's design is based on achieving an aesthetically rich visual inspired by a combination of Gorga Batak Toba and traditional Batak houses. The dominant materials used include wood, paras stone, granite, iron, aluminum, and glass, while most of the furniture is made from wood and HPL (High-Pressure Laminate). Additionally, acoustic materials are incorporated into rooms with high sound activity, such as the theater, music studio, dance studio, and library, ensuring optimal clarity, reverberance, and intimacy in sound quality (Egan, 1988).

The theater, music studio, dance studio, and library require specific acoustic treatments, utilizing materials such as MDF and acoustic slats on ceilings and walls. Ideally, spaces with high sound activity should have a reverberation time (RT) of 1.5–2 seconds (Egan, 1988). To achieve optimal acoustics, materials with a sound absorption coefficient of 0.4–1.0 are used, including MDF (0.6), carpet (0.4), and ceiling acoustic tiles (0.65). In the design of the theater, which serves as the main hall of the Batak Cultural Center in Medan City, acoustic planning includes the installation of MDF acoustic panels and ceiling acoustic tiles, as illustrated in Figure 3, which helps create controlled sound reflections (Figure 2).

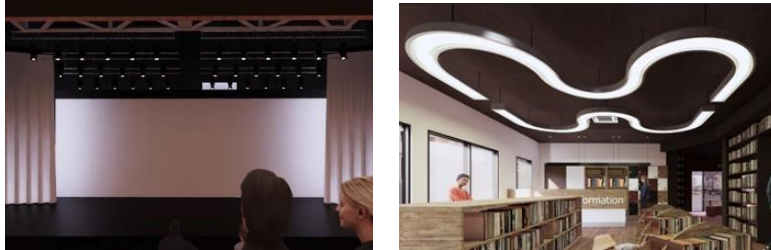


**Figure 2.** Concept of performance theater MDF acoustic panels  
Source: Stefani C. Pangaribuan, 2024



**Figure 3.** Schematic of the distribution of sound reflections in a performance theater  
Source: Stefani C. Pangaribuan, 2024

The lighting system in the Batak Cultural Center maximizes the use of natural lighting in public areas such as the lobby, souvenir shop, and administrative office through window openings, glass doors, and glass panels. Meanwhile, artificial lighting is utilized in spaces with specialized activities, such as the gallery, theater, library, and dance and music studios, using downlights, LED strip lights, hanging lamps, spotlights, and beam lights. In the theater and performance stage, lighting is designed with higher precision, incorporating stage spotlights and moving headlights, supported by a hanging grid system to enhance stage performances (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Lighting System for the theater stage and library  
Source: Stefani C. Pangaribuan, 2024

The building's ventilation system primarily relies on artificial ventilation, including air conditioners (AC) and exhaust fans. Additionally, thermal conditioning and lighting in the skylight roof are optimized using Low-E glass, which features a vacuum-coated metallic layer that reduces thermal emissivity. This technology helps reflect heat radiation back to its source, effectively minimizing heat transfer into or out of the interior space (Togen, 2021).

The security system in the cultural center is designed to ensure visitor safety while protecting essential facilities, gallery artworks, and archived documents. Security measures include the installation of CCTV cameras in strategic locations, a key card entry system for restricted access to administrative and archive rooms, and fire detectors throughout the building. Additionally, fire extinguishers and fire detectors are placed at critical points to prevent and respond to fire hazards effectively.

## CONCLUSION

The interior design of the Batak Cultural Center in Medan City is dedicated to preserving Batak culture by providing spaces for interaction and education within the community. The center features various educational and recreational facilities, including a lobby, performance theater, art gallery, practice rooms for traditional dance and music, a library, and a souvenir shop. It serves as a platform for the younger generation to explore and engage with their cultural heritage. The interior design incorporates Batak Toba Gorga carvings and the *Tiga Bolit* color concept, both of which hold deep philosophical significance in Batak culture. These elements are integrated using a pictorial transformation method applied to the floors, walls, ceilings, and furniture. Beyond enhancing aesthetics, this design approach reinforces the Batak cultural identity throughout the entire interior of the cultural center.

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