



Neo-Vernacular Architecture at Balai Giri Nata Mandala: A Strategy for Cultural Preservation

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ABSTRACT

Art centers serve as vital facilities in supporting cultural preservation and the development of local arts. In the architectural context, the neo-vernacular approach offers a significant alternative that enables the integration of traditional values with the increasingly complex requirements of modern design. Neo-vernacular architecture combines distinct local architectural elements with modern forms, techniques, and design needs, thereby remaining contextual and relevant to contemporary life. This study aims to explore the application of neo-vernacular architectural principles in the design of art centers and to assess the contribution of such designs to the preservation of local culture. The selected case study is the Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala located at the Badung Government Center in Bali, which serves as an example of the application of contemporary Balinese architecture. The research methodology employed is qualitative descriptive, utilizing in-depth documentation analysis through literature review and visual observation. Data collection focuses on identifying traditional elements that have been adapted and developed into neo-vernacular forms. The research hypothesis posits that neo-vernacular architectural principles are applied cohesively in the design of Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala, and that this application successfully contributes to local cultural preservation by strengthening architectural identity and optimizing spatial function as a modern and functional arts center. This study provides insights into the effective integration of cultural heritage into modern architectural design.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Submitted/Received 28 Nov 2025

First Revised 17 December 2025

Accepted 14 January 2026

First Available online 1 Feb 2026

Publication Date 1 February 2026

Keywords:

art center,
cultural preservation,
neo-vernacular

1. INTRODUCTION

Art centers or cultural halls play a fundamental role in the preservation and development of local arts and culture. Traditional art is not merely a heritage from the past, but also a crucial source of inspiration in shaping a sustainable cultural future (Oktaviani et al., 2024). Furthermore, cultural centers hold five core mandates: serving as facilities to disseminate cultural knowledge to the wider community; designing, executing, and supervising all art and cultural activities; facilitating the advancement of art and cultural education; formulating preservation strategies to prevent the loss of culture and arts; and inviting cultural experts to support culture-related activities (Nurhaliza & Wulandari, 2022). However, amidst the strengthening currents of globalization, art centers face significant challenges in balancing traditional cultural values with the demands of contemporary design needs (Amalia & Agustin, 2022). Consequently, architectural design becomes the key to realizing spaces that are not only functional but also reflective of local cultural identity.

Neo-vernacular architecture emerges as a solution that harmonizes traditional elements with modern design. This approach refers to the principles of local wisdom as well as the harmony between the building, nature, and the environment. Moreover, this concept serves as a critical alternative to liberate design from the domination of modern styles, which tend to prioritize function and physical form without presenting depth of meaning (Rahman et al., 2024). It is here that traditional Indonesian architecture, which is imbued with life philosophies, plays a vital role; when integrated into modern design, it can serve as a local cultural preservation effort that remains relevant (Anisa, 2021). The ultimate result is a harmonious synthesis between traditional architecture and cultural heritage, manifesting as a spatial entity rich in values and local wisdom (Anto et al., 2024).

In the context of neo-vernacular architecture in Bali, previous studies have tended to focus predominantly on the application of this concept in commercial buildings such as resorts, hotels, or modern markets, where cultural adaptation is often driven solely by tourism aesthetics. These studies generally discuss variables such as Architectural Physical Aspects (roof forms, materials, ornaments) and Balinese Architectural Philosophy in a partial manner. However, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding neo-vernacular discussion in government public buildings, which possess stricter demands for regional identity representation compared to commercial buildings. Research that specifically analyzes the systematic implementation of neo-vernacular principles in large-scale state facilities and assesses their direct contribution to cultural preservation has not yet been conducted in depth.

Therefore, Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala was selected as the focus of this study due to its urgency and unique characteristics compared to other art centers in Bali. Located in the heart of the Badung Regency Government Center (*Puspem*), this building functions not only as an art venue but also as a political and cultural landmark representing the identity of Badung Regency amidst rapid modernization. Unlike small-scale cultural buildings or commercial structures, Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala faces complex challenges: it must accommodate massive modern audience capacities and advanced performance technologies, yet must strictly adhere to the sacred conventions (*pakem*) of traditional Balinese architecture. This unique position makes it a crucial object for testing the effectiveness of neo-vernacular architecture.

Based on this background, the research problem in this study addresses how traditional architectural elements at Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala are combined harmoniously with modern design through a neo-vernacular approach, and the extent to which this application contributes to supporting local cultural preservation. Thus, this study aims to explore and

analyze the implementation of traditional architectural elements adapted into the neo-vernacular design of Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala, while simultaneously assessing the design's contribution to supporting local cultural preservation and creating an art space that is relevant to contemporary developments.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study utilizes a qualitative approach combined with a descriptive method. This approach is applied to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of cultural, symbolic, and architectural contexts that cannot be elucidated numerically (Moelong, 2018). Meanwhile, the descriptive method is employed to systematically, factually, and accurately present the building characteristics, architectural elements, and cultural activities occurring within. The case study object in this research is the Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala building located at the Badung Government Center, Bali.

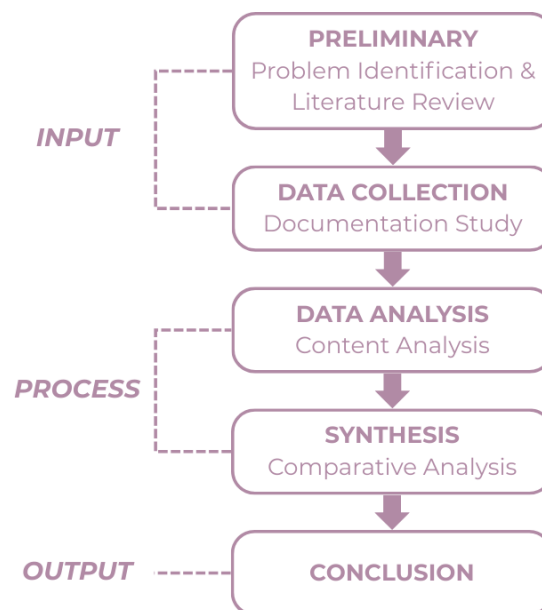


Figure 1. Research Methodology Flowchart
(Source: Author, 2026)

Research data was collected through documentation study, specifically the collection of secondary data derived from official documents, scientific articles, local government publications, and visual documentation of activities held at Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala. These data sources were selected as they provide rich visual and contextual information regarding the design process, construction details, and post-occupancy building functions.

Data was subsequently analyzed utilizing the content analysis method, a qualitative analysis technique used to identify, organize, and interpret meaning from textual and visual documents (Krippendorff, 2018). To ensure the analysis process proceeds transparently and systematically, this research developed an analytical instrument in the form of a table of criteria for neo-vernacular architectural principles. This table serves as a guideline to identify how traditional elements are transformed into modern design. The analysis variables and indicators used are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Analysis Criteria for Neo-Vernacular Architectural Principles

No	Analysis Variable	Neo-Vernacular Indicator	Observation Focus on Object
1.	Form & Mass Adaptation	Transformation of traditional forms adapted to new functions, while maintaining local imagery.	Roof shape, building mass composition, and vertical building proportions.
2.	Material & Technology	Use of modern materials (concrete, steel, glass) combined or clad with local materials (natural stone, red brick) for efficiency and aesthetics.	Type of material for the main structure and finishing material on the facade and interior.
3.	Ornament Transformation	Application of traditional decorative elements undergoing stylization, simplification, or repositioning as aesthetic accents on modern planes.	Details of carvings, statues, and decorative elements on columns, walls, or entrances.
4.	Philosophical & Spatial Aspects	Reinterpretation of local philosophical and cosmological values (such as Tri Hita Karana) in modern layout and spatial zoning.	Spatial layout patterns, building orientation, and inter-spatial relationships.

Source: Author, 2026

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala is situated in the southern section of the Badung Regency Government Center complex (*Puspem Badung*), which is an integrated precinct comprising various public and administrative facilities. Puspem Badung serves not only as a hub for government activities but also provides public spaces such as a regional library, open parks, children's playgrounds, and other supporting facilities that facilitate the community's social and educational activities, including Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala. The building itself serves as a medium to project the image of the activities it houses (Dunggio & Yunisy, 2021).

The design concept of this Cultural Hall adopts neo-vernacular principles, which essentially entail combining traditional elements of the local community with modern innovations to create a contemporary appearance (Akbar et al., 2024). This integration aims to ensure the building remains relevant to modern functional requirements while simultaneously preserving a strong local Balinese cultural identity.

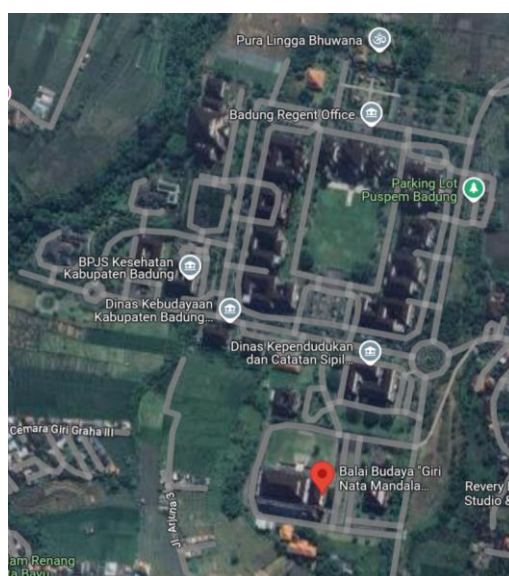


Figure 2. Map of Badung Regency Government Center (Source: Google Maps, 2025)

3.1 Physical Aspects of Architecture

The physical aspects of neo-vernacular architecture are characterized by the integration of traditional architectural elements with modern techniques, materials, and forms, while maintaining local character. Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala showcases a number of distinct physical Balinese elements interpreted within a contemporary design, including traditional roof forms, symbolic towers, columns and pillars, materials, as well as ornaments and carvings. These elements were selected based on the principle that the physical structure representing neo-vernacular architecture encompasses the basic structure, roof type, materials, and spatial division of the building (Amali et al., 2024).

One of the most striking elements of Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala is its roof form, which adopts the limasan structure, a style frequently used in traditional Balinese buildings. This multi-layered limasan form serves not only as a visual characteristic but also holds deep philosophical meaning. The roof crown is adorned with *murda*, while the lower ends of the ridge are decorated with *ikut celedu*; both are traditional ornaments commonly utilized in Balinese buildings.



Figure 3. Roof Form of Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala
(Source: PT. Tunas Jaya Sanur, 2025)

The large tower on the right side of the building functions as more than just a visual accent; it is also a powerful symbolic element. Its form resembles a *bale kul-kul*, a traditional tower typically used to hang a *kul-kul* (wooden slit drum), which is sounded to signal customary events, religious ceremonies, or emergencies within the customary village and temple environments. In the context of Balinese architecture, the presence of such a marker tower is not always a mandatory element in every building, yet its existence is vital within the social and religious structure of the Balinese community (Gantini, 2020).



Figure 4. Bale Kul-kul of Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala
(Source: PT. Tunas Jaya Sanur, 2025)

The column and pillar elements in the foyer area of Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala stand out as one of the most prominent architectural features. These columns are constructed in a massive form using reddish natural stone materials that harmonize with the overall building materials. Each column is coated with decorative ornaments with a traditional nuance, complemented by *poleng* (checkered) cloth and Balinese *prada* (gold-painted) red-and-yellow cloth, which are typically used in religious rituals to mark sacredness and spiritual protection. The structural function of the column as a building support is reinforced by its large dimensions and sturdy proportions, while still displaying high aesthetic value through detailed carvings and color compositions that contrast with the building's background.



Figure 5. Columns and Pillars of Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala
(Source: PT. Tunas Jaya Sanur, 2025)

In the facades of neo-vernacular buildings in Indonesia, natural materials serve as the primary component (Pangestu et al., 2022). The facade of Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala blends traditional and modern elements through the selection of materials and distinct Balinese ornaments rich in meaning. Primary materials such as red brick dominate the building's exterior, presenting a warm impression deeply imbued with the nuances of traditional Balinese architecture, as often seen in temples and other customary buildings.



Figure 6. Building Details of Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala
(Source: PT. Tunas Jaya Sanur, 2025)


Ornaments are decorative elements that are attached and permanent, whereas decorations are decorative elements that can be removed or moved as needed (Utami & Swari, 2021). The interior of this building is enriched with traditional Balinese ornamental details such as *patra sulur* (vine motifs) and frangipani flowers in the balcony areas, columns, and walls surrounding the stage, reinforcing an elegant and artistic atmosphere.



Figure 7. Interior Details of Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala
(Source: PT. Tunas Jaya Sanur, 2025)

To understand the creative process in the application of neo-vernacular architecture at Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala, a direct comparative analysis is required between the original forms of traditional Balinese architecture (vernacular) and the modified forms applied to this building. This adaptation demonstrates how traditional elements are not merely copied rawly, but transformed to meet the scale and function of a massive modern performance hall. The comparison between vernacular and neo-vernacular elements is presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Analysis Criteria for Neo-Vernacular Architectural Principles

Architectural Element	Original Form (Vernacular)	Modified Form (Neo-Vernacular)	Transformation Analysis & Creative Adaptation
Roof (Murda & Structure)			The traditional limasan roof form is adapted into a multi-tiered wide-span structure using modern materials to shelter a large-capacity auditorium without eliminating its iconic silhouette.
Tower (Bale Kul-kul)			The function of a small-scale sound communication tower is transformed into a monumental visual landmark made of exposed brick, reinforcing the precinct's identity.
Column			Columns are replaced by massive concrete structures supporting heavy loads, featuring carved ornament cladding and poleng cloth to maintain a sacred image.

Source: Author, 2026

3.2 Aspects of Balinese Architectural Philosophy

Balinese architectural philosophy is deeply steeped in spiritual, cosmological, and social values. In this context, the neo-vernacular approach does not merely adopt forms, but also the symbolic meanings inherent in those elements. Several philosophical principles identified at Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala include *Tri Hita Karana*, *rwa bhineda*, *Panca Maha Bhuta*, as well as sacred values within architecture.

The building visibly reflects the concept of *Tri Hita Karana*. Essentially, this concept underscores three vital relationships that humans must maintain: with God (*parahyangan*), with fellow humans (*pawongan*), and with the surrounding nature (*palemahan*) (Sukmayasa & Mahardika, 2024). The towering, tiered roof form symbolically represents the spiritual relationship towards God, while the existence of the building as an art space open to the community reflects social harmony. Conversely, the use of traditional architectural forms that blend with the landscape demonstrates respect for nature.



Figure 8. Roof of Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala
(Source: PT. Tunas Jaya Sanur, 2025)

The use of ornaments and cloth on the foyer columns affirms the symbolic meaning that columns are not merely structural elements, but also representations of strength and stability, in accordance with the principle of balance or *rwa bhineda* in Balinese culture. The concept of *rwa bhineda*, which emphasizes the existence of two complementary forces, is reflected in the ornamental composition and the use of contrasting colors on the columns; this depicts the cosmic balance between the *sekala* (tangible) and *niskala* (intangible) forces in life and Balinese architecture (Sudiarta, 2021). The structural function of the columns as building supports is reinforced by their massive dimensions and sturdy proportions, yet they still display high aesthetic value through detailed carvings and color compositions that contrast with the building's background. The concept of *rwa bhineda* can be understood as dualism, implying that life depends on the balance of two opposing elements (Sumadi et al., 2023).



Figure 9. Foyer Area of Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala
(Source: PT. Tunas Jaya Sanur, 2025)

The dominant colors in the performance hall interior of Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala are red, earthy brown, and white. This color combination reflects the philosophy of *Panca*

Maha Bhuta in Balinese Hindu belief, which consists of the five elements forming the universe: earth (*prthiwi*), water (*apah*), fire (*teja*), air (*bayu*), and ether (*akasa*), and further demonstrates the effort of Balinese architecture to create harmony between humans, nature, and spirituality (Paramadhyaksa, 2016).

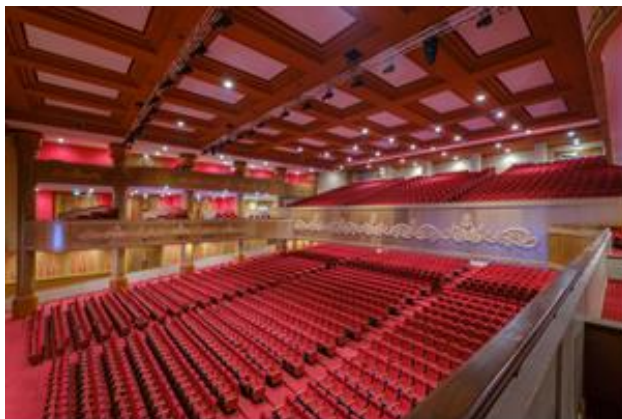


Figure 10. Interior of Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala
(Source: PT. Tunas Jaya Sanur, 2025)

The Kala head symbol located above the stage proscenium serves as a protective element according to local belief, asserting that this performance space functions not solely as a space for artistic expression, but also holds sacred value and is respected as part of Balinese cultural heritage. The utilization of Balinese ornaments is grounded in the village community's respect for local citizens (Prasetya, 2012).



Figure 11. Stage of Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala
(Source: PT. Tunas Jaya Sanur, 2025)

3.3 Architectural Space as a Cultural Vessel

The successful application of neo-vernacular architecture at Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala is also evident in its functional contributions. As an arts center, this building serves as the primary venue for a diverse range of cultural activities. The design of Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala contributes tangibly to local cultural preservation, not only through its architectural form but also through its function as a living space for Balinese culture. The building serves as a hub for active cultural engagement throughout the year. One of the routinely held activities is the arts and culture festival, featuring performances of traditional dance, *baleganjur* music, and *gong kebyar* played by local art troupes. Furthermore, the facility regularly hosts the commemoration of *Bulan Bahasa Bali* (Balinese Language Month), art exhibitions, and cultural literacy competitions. This reaffirms the building's core function as a modern arts venue, noting that a Performing Arts Building is defined as a facility

functioning as a space for art performances, encompassing movement arts, music, and other aesthetically valuable arts performed before a public audience (Kuncoro, 2024).



Figure 12. Arts and Culture Festival at Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala
(Source: PT. Tunas Jaya Sanur, 2025)

Additionally, in commemoration of *Bulan Bahasa Bali*, a *baligraphy* (Balinese calligraphy) competition is held, engaging students and the younger generation to express their creativity through Balinese script.



Figure 13. Baligraphy Competition at Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala
(Source: PT. Tunas Jaya Sanur, 2025)

Equally compelling, the *ogoh-ogoh* exhibition, routinely held approaching Nyepi Day (Day of Silence), serves as a powerful visual attraction and a platform for both preservation and innovation in traditional Balinese visual arts.



Figure 14. Ogoh-ogoh Exhibition at Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala
(Source: PT. Tunas Jaya Sanur, 2025)

4. CONCLUSION

The implementation of neo-vernacular architecture at Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala successfully fulfills the research objectives by demonstrating a harmonious integration between traditional Balinese elements and modern design, while simultaneously validating its contribution to local cultural preservation. Overall, Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala functions effectively as an active and inclusive cultural space facilitated by various festivals and artistic activities, thereby proving that this approach serves as a dynamic strategy for achieving cultural preservation amidst the demands of modernization.

A distinctive finding that differentiates this case study from general neo-vernacular applications in commercial buildings is the successful transformation of micro-scale sacred elements (such as the *Bale Kul-kul*) into monumental landmarks within the context of a civic center. This underscores that neo-vernacular architecture at Balai Budaya Giri Nata Mandala functions not merely as visual aesthetics, but rather as a vital instrument in legitimizing the political and cultural identity of Badung Regency.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author expresses deepest gratitude to God Almighty for His grace and blessings, which enabled the smooth completion of this study. Sincere appreciation is extended to all parties who have provided guidance and assistance throughout this process. Special thanks are directed to Mrs. Eva, as the academic advisor, for her invaluable direction, guidance, and knowledge; to Mrs. Yusrina, as the lecturer of the Architectural Research course, for the guidance and knowledge shared; to the author's family, especially parents, for their prayers, guidance, and unwavering support; and to fellow peers and Balinese friends who have shared valuable insights and experiences regarding Balinese culture and architecture. The author acknowledges the limitations of this study; therefore, constructive criticism and suggestions are highly welcomed for future improvements.

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