

Metamorphosis of Tradition: Dong Arts from Folk Dong Painting to Contemporary Expressions

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ABSTRACT

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The Dong ethnic minority in southwest China possesses a distinctive cultural heritage. Dong's painting emerges as a unique and diverse form within Dong's artistic endeavors, capturing the essence of daily life among the Dong people. Regrettably, Dong paintings often endure neglect compared to the more recognized Dong architectural art. To revive appreciation for Dong culture, this study delves into traditional Dong folk paintings, aiming to discern various painting types and explore the impact of these traditional forms on contemporary Dong paintings. The similarities and differences between traditional Dong folk painting and contemporary Dong painting are obtained through the investigation and artistic practice of the Dong nationality. It mainly focuses on literature analysis, case studies, and art practice-based research. This investigation reveals that contemporary Dong paintings continue incorporating and reinterpreting symbols, architectural motifs, and dress patterns from traditional Dong folk art. This continuity in artistic expression contributes significantly to preserving and disseminating Dong culture in evolving artistic forms.

Contribution/Originality: The paper's primary contribution is finding that the continuity of artistic expression is of great significance to the preservation and dissemination of Dong culture. It explores the connection between traditional and contemporary Dong paintings from multiple dimensions, highlighting the potential of traditional art forms in contemporary art creation.

1. Introduction

The Dong ethnic group, a prominent minority in China primarily situated in the southwestern region, has cultivated a distinctive agricultural civilization marked by a concentrated and enduring population. With a rich historical trajectory and cultural

legacy, the Dong people have bestowed a vibrant tapestry of artistic expression upon the world, notably embodied in Dong paintings (Cao & Woramitmaitree, 2023). Serving as cultural and artistic treasures, Dong's paintings exhibit a kaleidoscope of hues and narratives, portraying Dong's authentic and diverse facets.

The artistic idiosyncrasies of Dong's paintings manifest prominently in their production process, character modeling, composition, and coloration (Yang & Guo, 2019). The production of Dong paintings is characterized by simplicity, employing commonplace tools such as brushes. Typically, pigments consist of ordinary powder pigments, and the canvas of choice is often the wooden structure of Dong architecture. This involves meticulous lime polishing to create a smooth surface, subsequently serving as the canvas for the vibrant expressions of Dong's artistry. Characterized by directness and conciseness, Dong paintings' modeling and composition derive inspiration from the intuitive sentiments of the Dong people. Details are intentionally omitted, with a focal emphasis on portraying the characters' surroundings. Folk myths, serving as thematic foundations, employ exaggerated techniques to accentuate key figures. Compositions are characterized by spontaneity, directly reflecting the prevailing conditions of production and daily life (Li, 2018). The color palette of Dong's paintings intricately mirrors the hues of life, drawing inspiration from the natural spectrum. Predominantly employing single colors, the reconciliation between hues is sparingly undertaken. Adopting a technique rooted in a flat painting, Dong's paintings exude a concise yet remarkably distinctive chromatic individuality (Li, 2018). This exploration delves into the nuanced artistic dimensions of Dong paintings, shedding light on their cultural significance and the enduring legacy they contribute to the broader tapestry of Chinese artistry (Zheng & Yao, 2018).

The traditional forms of Dong painting are mainly dominated by architectural decorative, New Year, religious, and farmers' paintings. All of these art types have now shown a state of decline, and among these types, architectural decorative paintings are more characteristic of the Dong tradition (Yang & Guo, 2019). Contemporary Dong painting forms mainly include oil painting, acrylic painting, Chinese painting, mixed-materials painting, watercolor, printmaking, etc. They are both the mainstream types of paintings and necessary forms expressing new Dong paintings. This article will analyze the works of painters in different fields and the researcher's painting practice to see the new forms of Dong painting and its expression in the outside world (Yang & Guo, 2019). Researcher carries out a comparison between folk painting and contemporary painting to discover their similarities and differences. Traditional and new contemporary forms embody the spirit and culture of the Dong nationality.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Types of folk Dong paintings

Folk literature used to be called oral literature, and the nature of language determines its identity as a folk language (Rusli & Zali@Zalay, 2020). Then, folk painting can be described as a visual inheritance. Just as oral literature conveys stories, legends, and wisdom through language, folk painting conveys culture, history, and values through images, symbols, and colors. The folk Dong painting reflects the life, beliefs, tradition, and customs of the Dong people and is a folk cultural heritage expressed in images.

2.1.1. Architectural decorative paintings

Architectural decorative paintings usually appear on public buildings, such as wind and rain bridges, drum towers, fortress gates, pavilions, ancestral halls (Cao, 2017). Usually, there is no uniform form of expression and too many requirements for decorative paintings, but they have rich and diverse contents and forms. Decorative paintings exist in more free places and are more common on the spacious walls and the eaves of the closed roofs. People mostly use them to hang decorative paintings on well-drawn wooden boards. The contents of the paintings reflect the daily folk activities, spiritual beliefs, and production life of the Dong people. The most typical architectural decorative paintings are found in the drum towers and wind and rain bridges along the Pingping River Valley and the traditional Liudong area in the Passage County of Huaihua City, Hunan Province (Cao, 2017).

The decorative paintings of wind and rain bridges are mainly on the walls of the wooden planks of the bridge corridors and on the sealed eaves boards at the top. The wall paintings depict the production life and historical stories of the Dong people, such as harvesting, welcoming relatives, and brocade weaving. These murals are painted directly on the wind and rain bridge walls, and empty frames are nailed on the edges of the paintings, which look like paintings hanging on the wall. The villagers from different villages donated money to the painter, who then painted the murals in the Hailong Bridge of Xiazhaizhai, so the names of the donors and the villages are written next to each painting (Jiang, 2017). The donors of the decorative paintings cover all the surrounding villages, which reflects the ethnic character of the Dong people, who are willing to help each other. The drum towers of different villages have adopted the decorative means of painting on the eave boards. In contrast, the drum towers of the Huangdu Dong Village in Passage have adopted the method of cutting out the images to be shown in paper cuttings and then spray-painting them onto the eave boards. In terms of the content of Dong architectural decorative paintings, Dong decorative paintings in Passage County not only express the production life of Dong but also enthusiastically express the characters in Chinese historical and literary stories (Jiang, 2017).

Figure 1 shows the Fengyu Bridge in Diping Dong Village, Liping County, Guizhou Province.

Figure 1: Decorative Painting of Wind and Rain Bridge



Source: (Owner, 2017)

There are long corridors and bridge towers on the bridge. The four pillars of the middle tower are painted with lifelike dragons and phoenixes, and the wall panels are painted with ethnic customs, historical figures, stories, scroll patterns and couplets (Owner, 2017).

2.1.2. New Year's Paintings

New Year paintings are pictorial decorative works posted during the New Year, and door gods and paper horses are classified as New Year pictures here because people also post them during the New Year (Chen, 2015). The themes of New Year paintings mainly include auspicious graphics, door gods and goddesses, stories and legends, dolls and beauties, and decorative miscellaneous paintings. The most classic type among them is the door god, which every household still posts on New Year's Day, and it is an essential type of New Year's painting. The roles and functions of New Year's paintings are multiple, as explained in Li Guangting's "*Xiangyan jieyi*" (Explaining the meaning of the countryside) of the Qing Dynasty (Yun, 2022); the entertaining, edifying, decorative, and celebratory functions of New Year's paintings have been explained in a simple and easy-to-understand manner. Of course, the door gods and paper horses in the New Year paintings also exorcise evil spirits and pray for blessings (Cao, 2017). The history of the door god is probably the oldest among all kinds of New Year's paintings. Then the god of the door, god of yin and yang, is the god of the yin and yang of the other qi at the gateway which makes a god with the people (Bao, 2024). According to the Southern Dynasty's Security Hours, "*The peach boards were made for the households, which were called "immortal wood." Someone painted two gods on the left and right sides of the door, the left god Tuan and the right Yubi, commonly known as the door gods*" (Zhang, 2024). These records show that the custom of sticking door gods has existed in ancient and modern times, and the fact that they are still stuck today is an inheritance of an ancient custom.

Originating from worshipping deities such as the God of Door and the God of Stove, then gradually evolving into architectural decorative paintings, New Year's Paintings had already entered a relatively prosperous stage in the Song Dynasty (Chen, 2015). In the second half of the 20th century, New Year's paintings were still prosperous, but after entering the 21st century, the use of New Year's paintings drastically decreased. In the 1980s and 1990s, New Year's paintings were indispensable decorations for New Year's Eve, especially in the early stage of reform and opening up. After the economy became active, New Year's paintings were highly profitable, but this trend is declining in modern times. Figure 2 is the famous Tantou New Year picture, which is a colorful overlay woodblock print printed on coarse linen paper produced by the people (Yang, 2024).

Figure 2: Tantou New Year's Paintings



Source: Yang (2024)

One color for each plate, with inked outlines of the characters, red, yellow, green, and blue overprinted clothing motifs, and black beards sketched directly on the brushes, making them seem rougher and more casual than the offset New Year's Paintings (Chen, 2015).

2.1.3. Religious paintings

People make Dong religious paintings to fulfill the needs of religious ceremonies and paintings, and their primary forms of existence are funeral rituals, exorcism, exorcism of ghosts, and evil activities in the statue of God and paper horses (Xing, 2016). Funeral rites and exorcism in the use of painting is mainly for the Buddha, Taoism, which in the image of the gods, the performance of paper cloth as the primary carrier, to the basic techniques of Chinese painting brushwork, cardboard paintings, banners, scrolls form, hanging in the religious ceremonies for worship (Cao, 2017).

Folk painters paint the idols used in Taoist ceremonies. Funeral ceremonies and the July half of the Mid-Yuan Festival now also use woodblock prints of the paper horse; the paper horse is a box packaging to be incinerated paper offerings, also known as the Dong region cabinet, printed with woodblock prints, prints, and images are mainly horse and carriage figures, flowers, and mail format documents to the underworld, in the past the paper horse in the form of a lot of, is not used now (Cao, 2017).

Although religious paintings are not a widespread folk art form, they are familiar. Funerals in the Dong ethnic minority area still have superstitious solid colors, and inviting Taoist priests to do Taoist ceremonies for funerals has become an unavoidable process (Tong, 2015). The painted idols will be used in Taoist ceremonies.

2.1.4. Peasant Painting

Peasant painting is a form of painting that adapted to the government's need for ideological domination and developed in the 1970s, with peasants as the main body of the creative team, rural life as the object of expression, and embodiment of the guidelines and policies of the time as the principle of expression, which was developed against the background of social movements such as collectivization, the Great Leap Forward, socialist education, and the Cultural Revolution (Huang, 2024). Peasant painting was used in rural areas with a large proportion of illiterates in the past; peasant paintings were a powerful means of social mobilization by the government and a pictorial political discourse (Huang, 2024). After the reform and opening up, this form of peasant painting as a political spin-off was adapted to social transformation, economic development, and cultural protection. There were significant changes in the subject matter and purpose of expression, with the subject matter shifting from political propaganda to the realities of rural life. The purpose of expression changes from ideology to the exchange of economic interests. However, the form of its creation is still peasant-based, with amateur art techniques as the means of expression, and peasant painting, which used to be expected throughout the country, has now changed its state of existence into a typical folk painting township that exists only in some places. Peasant painting has been renamed Modern Peasant Painting (Cao, 2017).

Nowadays, Sanjiang's peasant paintings in the Dudong Township are the most prominent. Sanjiang peasant paintings mainly use gouache paints and brushes to paint on white paper but also use other water-based paints such as acrylics and other flat materials such as Dong cloths and wall surfaces, and the peasant painters focus on large-format works. They

mainly use flat outlining and color-filling methods or color block painting in terms of performance techniques. At the same time, individual painters slightly do some dry rubbing texture effects and rely on shapes and colors overlapping and blocking to express the perspective space (Qin, 2023). All the Dong peasant paintings pursue the effect of decorative paintings. Peasant painters use their daily memories to extract the most typical elements in the image of real life in the Dong village and use flat modeling techniques, programmed language, and bright colors to create their works full of the Dong village's vernacular imagery (Qin, 2023).

Figure 3 preserves the traditional artistic style of Sanjiang Dong peasant paintings, and upgrades the original pot ink, indigo, watercolor and other pigments to tung oil, lacquer, carbon powder, silver powder and copper wire, and then polishes and mounts them, making the peasant paintings easier to preserve (Wu, 2016). Its biggest feature is its unique conception, colorful and lifelike images. Non-realistic modeling not only circumvents the defects of farmers who have not received systematic professional training but also better expresses subjective imagery and creates the overall atmosphere of the picture by simplifying, distorting, exaggerating, and abstracting. Dong Peasant Painting is a form of folk painting that combines mass, folklore, and decoration (Qin, 2023).

Figure 3: Peasant Painting by Yang Xiankao



Source: Wu (2016)

2.2. Characteristics of folk Dong paintings

Dong folk paintings include architectural decorative, New Year, religious, peasant, and other forms (Cao, 2017). These forms of paintings are applied to different occasions, created by different subjects, and expressed for different purposes, and therefore have different characteristics.

2.2.1. Architectural decorative paintings

Among the several forms of paintings that exist in Dong folklore, architectural decorative paintings are the most characteristic of the Dong. Dong architectural decorative paintings show the characteristics of entertainment purpose of expression, wide range of expression content, diversity of expression forms, comprehensive material techniques, non-professional expression methods, immaturity of development, popularity of artistic style, and marginal artistic status (Cao, 2017).

Dong architectural paintings reflect the Dong people's concern for their own folk culture and life and their absorption of and esteem for traditional Chinese culture. Its existence is of positive significance to promoting and disseminating Chinese traditional culture and Dong ethnic culture. Compared with the buildings without decorative paintings, there are fewer buildings with decorative paintings, which means that paintings are dispensable in Dong public buildings, and paintings are a kind of marginal folk art form. From the overall performance of decorative paintings in Dong architecture, its development is still in an immature stage of experimentation (Jiang, 2017).

The architectural paintings of Dong nationality all use professional artistic materials and techniques. However, the non-professional characteristics of expression techniques are pronounced, and the pursuit is not a professional artistic effect but a popular art painting form (Jiang, 2017). Viewed from the side, the free expression of architectural painting reflects the Dong people's ability to accept a wide range of aesthetic styles.

2.2.2. Marginal cultural status

The decline of the Dong region's New Year paintings is also a microcosm of the survival of rural New Year paintings in the country. From the second half of the 20th century to the beginning of the 21st century, in just half a century, the folk woodblock prints that lasted for hundreds of years went from glory to decline and disappeared (Bao, 2024). The Dong region does not produce woodblock prints, and they mainly come from Tantou, Hunan Province (Cao, 2017). In the nineties, the New Year's paintings in Tantou were squeezed by the offset New Year's paintings and gradually declined. In the 21st century, the new entertainment media marked by electronic information made the offset New Year's paintings no longer famous. The wooden New Year's paintings were even more challenging to make progress. New Year's Day, past New Year's paintings, door god of less and less people.

Religious paintings are only used by Taoists on specific occasions such as funeral ceremonies, and they are a kind of props not created by the public but play the role of deities in the spiritual life of the public (Zhang, 2024).

Peasant painting is not a kind of spontaneously generated folk art. However, it is a product of a social and cultural movement, which continues under the utilitarian demand of tourism and economic development, and artistic value is essentially a secondary pursuit. In general, there is no intrinsic connection between the various forms of painting in the Dong region. However, the overall presentation of amateurishness in modeling, utilitarianism in production, and popularity in style is prominent, and the art of painting is marginal in the social life of Dong (Qin, 2023).

2.3. Contemporary Dong painting

In addition to the traditional forms of Dong folk painting, some Dong and non-Dong artists use their painting language to express the Dong culture in different forms. Dong locals mainly made traditional folk Dong paintings in the past. However, many non-Dong artists are gradually joining in, which is conducive to the broader dissemination of Dong culture.

2.3.1. Long Yimin

As a Dong people, Long Yimin likes to express the life of the Dong nationality. In 2018, Long Yimin created the series of works "Festivals in Dong Village." the object of expression is some essential or commonplace life events that happen in the Dong village, such as the great song of the Dong people, the stepping on the halls, and the villages at different times of the year and so on, which are appropriately arranged in the picture (Chen, 2021). Through Figure 4 "Dong Village Festivals No.3", the viewer sees a tall drum tower in the visual center of the picture, a Dong girl singing a big song downstairs, and a Dong boy playing the Lusheng and stepping on the dance steps. Long Yimin intentionally reduces the purity and brightness of the colors in this group of works, unifying the chaotic hues under a warm grey tone to create a warm and lively scene. Like an old photo, the grey and yellow tones are just like memory colors. There are many opinions in the academic world about the relationship between art and real life. Heidegger (1950) pointed out in *The Way in the Woods* that "*we have to find the direct and full reality of the work of art; for only in this way can we also find the real art in the work of art* (Heidegger, 1950)."

Figure 4: Dong Village Festivals No.3



Source: Chen (2021)

2.3.2. Wei Mingsi

The painter Wei Mingsi, born in Sanjiang Dong Autonomous County in Guangxi in 1985, can also find the narrative scene of Dong society's reverence for unity in his oil painting art creations (Lu, 2021). For example, *Night Sound of Dong Family II* is an oil painting completed by Wei Mingsi in 2017, which takes the life scene of Yueyi Doye, a village of the Dong ethnic minority in the Sanshenpo area, as the narrative object, with the rushing ping on the upper right of the picture located above the golden division point, and adopting the technique of leaving the white space and paving the green space, which makes the whole piece of work with low-brightness tonal processing of the picture, and quickly becomes the visual centre, and on the greenish-white pushing singing ping, the saving and jumping On the green-white Lusheng Song Ping, the crowd of dancing people share the joy in the Lusheng music, which may come from the completion of the drum tower built by the members of the house family, from the Lusheng competition of the village collective and

friendly village, or from the victory of the bullfighting in the regiment village, which shows the simplicity and harmony of the social and cultural life of the Dong villages (Lu, 2021). The works in the Night Sound series are also complete of Wei Mingshi's ecological meaning of the harmony of the Dong ethnic group's fortresses (Lu, 2021). The works describe the social and ecological theme of the Dong people working together to build a drum tower. In the composition of the picture, the interlocking wooden buildings form a triangular shape with stability and beauty under the light, which breaks the darkness of the original picture and echoes with the bustling scene of the construction of the Drum Tower, increasing the visual tension and aesthetic interest of the picture.

The drum tower is the first thing to be built in a Dong village, and the wooden buildings surrounding the drum tower represent the order of the village (Zhou & Kong, 2022). In Figure 5, with the help of the dancing crowds in Lusheng Duoye and the cedar planks on the wooden floor, Wei Ming Si uses objects to speak of things, suggesting the close integration of Dong villages' architecture and people's hearts and recounting the ecologically harmonious drum tower culture of Dong villages.

Figure 5: Dong Family Night Sound No.2



Source: Lu (2021)

2.3.3. Huang Jing

Huang Jing, born in Liuzhou, Guangxi Province, became interested in Dunhuang and folk art. Huang Jing's works have a strong sense of spontaneity. His series of works, "Sanjiang Dongzhai," discard the original colors, avoids light and environment colors, and avoids three-dimensional modeling to give the picture a sense of flatness and geometry (Xi, 2021).

The Figure 6 layout attaches importance to the color structure, black-and-white structure, and other formal factors. Although the layout of the picture is strict, the picture is straightforward and freehand. Huang Jing handles each color block in the picture in a wonderful way; each color block is not independent; they collide like music, so there is a fuzzy and overlapping texture between each color block, which is full of the rhythm of ink painting. Huang Jing's pictures often appear stone green, earth red, black, ultramarine, and other classic colors, which is also due to his absorption of Dunhuang murals (Xi, 2021), simple colors but in his paintings play such a great charm, of course, all of these results, but also from the cultivation and influence of traditional Chinese culture.

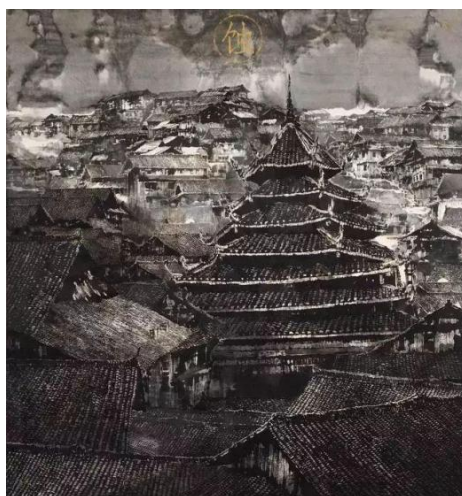
Figure 6: Golden Dongzhai

Source: [Xi \(2021\)](#)

2.3.4. Zhao Xiaolin

Guizhou painter Zhao Xiaolin's work "Eclipse" depicts a group of Dong villages with drum towers towering in the picture. He uses just the right amount of ink and brushwork as a painter. The houses in Dong Village are of the same style; the tiles densely cover the roofs, and the colors are repeated, which makes it very difficult to show such a vast group scene. Zhao Xiaolin uses the form of chapping to open up the sense of space in the picture, and the formal composition of gathering and dispersing highlights the history and cultural deposits of the Drum Tower ([Sun, 2020](#)). Ink and brush strokes make the houses distinct, and the background created by texture staining increases the contrasting effect of the picture, which also fits the theme of "erosion." In [Figure 7](#), the artist's careful consideration can be seen in the contrasting height layouts, black and white, and sparseness. Watching a series of paintings of Dong villages and drum towers displayed by him, one feels as if one is in a primitive and simple village, crossing time and space between the majestic and heavy wooden beams and feet of the buildings and feeling the impact of the rich and heavy culture of the Dong ethnic minority ([Sun, 2020](#)).

Figure 7: Erode

Source: [Sun \(2020\)](#)

2.3.5. Jiang Caiping

The brushwork figure painting is known for its meticulousness, and in the performance of the brushwork figure painting of the Dong ethnic costume patterns, it is possible to make use of the slender and vigorous brushwork to show the living customs and traditional cultural contents of the Dong people in a very delicate and realistic way (Pei, 2018). Take Figure 8 Jiang Cai Ping's work "The Night of March 3" as an example; this brushwork figure painting depicts the scene of Dong women dressed in daily costumes looking forward to the traditional national festival of "March 3" in the deep darkness of the night, the indigo colors of Dong women's dresses give people a tranquil, elegant and gentle artistic feeling. Under the expression of brushwork and heavy color, it delicately and realistically presents and reveals the painting's content of life and traditional culture. Under the language form of heavy colors, it presents and reveals the unique connotation, meaning, and modern consciousness of the painting (Pei, 2018).

Figure 8: The Night of the Third of March



Source: Pei (2018)

3. Research Methods

The concept of this study is based on the traditional customs and artistic components of the Dong area to demonstrate the conscious expression and artistic development of cultural subjects, to spread minority culture through cultural thoughts and artistic works, and to promote a better understanding and development of Dong folk art through new artistic types. This study uses qualitative research methods. The qualitative method is descriptive, and these data include images, exhibition catalogs, journals, academic papers, and monographs (Wenyan et al., 2023). The data analysis in the research adopts the method of content analysis to explore the theme, form, and meaning of artworks. In addition, the researcher will use art practice-based research (Leavy, 2020), literature research, field visits, and case studies to analyze and collect data actively. Then, the hierarchical induction and summary are carried out by classifying painting types. To sum up, this paper comprehensively compares and analyzes Dong's folk paintings and Dong's contemporary paintings.

3.1. Documentary Research

The research process of collecting the region's unique cultural customs and artistic expressions is conducive to understanding the creative development trajectory of ethnic minority regional culture (Ahmed, 2010). By collecting relevant materials on traditional Dong painting, this paper classifies the types of Dong folk painting and analyzes its artistic characteristics through artistic functions, forms of expression, and themes (Ahmed, 2010). Secondly, through the perspective of the works of the five artists, the main themes and forms of expression of contemporary Dong painting are presented. While painting the local scenes, activities, buildings, and costumes of the Dong ethnic group, the theme still inherits the traditional folk culture. However, it uses the material base and formal language unique to the mainstream painting of this era. These works confirm the diversified trend of the Dong ethnic painting in today's art development.

3.2. Art Practice-Based Research

This study is conducted under the Art Practice-Based Research paradigm. Art practice-based research aims to research supportheoretical results through practical actions (Nelson, 2013). In addition to the case analysis of artists, the researcher also carries out painting practice on the theme of Dong nationality to explain the architectural and cultural background of Dong nationality and the expression of Dong nationality painting. Practice is artistic practice on the one hand and academic research on research, and artists who conduct inquiry through practice may think differently than what they are doing in research, which allows them to solve problems and gain insight (Nelson, 2013). The reason why the study of art theory should draw on the results of practice is that practice can bring more possibilities for new creation, and a unique artistic language is emerging from these interdisciplinary practices (Thuc, 2022).

3.3. Case analysis method

Through analyzing and comparing the works of five different artists, the researchers try to prove that Dong painting can present a new contemporary schema based on inheritance and development (Fidel, 1984). It can also continue to convey the connotation of traditional national culture. Table 1 summarizes and compares the characteristics of the five works, proving that contemporary painting can also express the traditional culture of the Dong ethnic group.

Table 1: Comparison and analysis of 5 works

Works of art	Theme	Characteristic
Dong Village Festivals	Dong traditional festival	Dong Village's architectural style appears in a silhouette-like form (Chen, 2021).
Dong Family Night Sound	Dong traditional activities	The characters and light inside and outside the building show national activities' festive and lively atmosphere (Lu, 2021).
Golden Dongzhai	Dong building construction	Combine Western painting language and Chinese national symbols to create a new schema (Xi, 2021).
Erode		Highlight the historical and cultural heritage of the drum tower with heavy ink (Sun, 2020).

The Night of the
Third of March

Dong group of
buildings

The artist uses traditional national costumes to
present the modern consciousness of painting
(Pei, 2018).

Dong traditional
costume

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Field trip to Drum Tower

Before artistic practice, the best method is to extract materials from local inspection or directly sketch, taking Yanzhai in Sanjiang County, Liuzhou City, as an example for field investigation and analysis (Eden, Sharma, Roy, Joshi, Nocera & Rangaswamy, 2019). The Yanzhai Drum Tower used to be a high defensive structure, similar to a tower used to watch the enemy. Later, with the stability of the society, the image of the defense was weakened, and more so, the image of the Dong village was displayed to people. It is an area for Dong villagers to hold meetings, chat, and raise funds, as well as a space carrier and public relations link for public activities in the village. In summary, there are seven functions: offering sacrifices, formulating village laws and regulations, resisting external encroachment, welcoming guests, entertaining, performing Dong operas, and feasting guests. The local people pay attention to the feng shui culture and attach great importance to the arrangement of the location of the drum tower. The houses built around the Drum Tower are called an independent "house clan" (Zhou & Kong, 2022). Figure 9 shows the Yanzhai Drum Tower is the representative image of the house clan, and its location is located in the "leading position" of the village. It is necessary to let people find its location at a glance, but it must also integrate into the environment and become a part of the overall style of Dong Village; it can not let it exist in isolation. This central location is not only convenient for the Dong people to gather here but also conducive to the evacuation of disasters.

Figure 9: Yanzhai Drum Tower scene



Source: First author's photography material

The entire Yanzhai Drum Tower is a wooden structure, including tile eaves, including a total of 15 layers; the first layer is the highest, and each layer is a four-sided symmetrical structure; the tile surface of the drum tower from the first layer to the top layer is evenly divided, the compression has compressed the layers so that the floor is pyramid-shaped,

very stable (Zhang, 2017). Figure 10 shows the whole drum tower stands on the stone slab to prevent rain erosion to a certain extent. They made the bottom of the wall in a sealed shape using solid wood, and the middle part consists of thin wood strips arranged in a strip shape; the upper part is a network structure of staggered wood strips; the overall ventilation effect is good. The whole building does not use a nail or riveting. Its internal sculpture decoration often consists of the image of people or animals as the basic shape (Zhang, 2017).

Figure 10: Yanzhai Drum Tower main building



Source: First author's photography material

4.2. Artistic practice of Dong painting

In painting practice, according to the field investigation of Yanzhai Drum Tower and the understanding of Dong folk and contemporary painting, the researcher uses different painting materials to express the image painting of Figure 11 Yanzhai Drum Tower.

Figure 11: Yanzhai Drum Tower, Wang Yunlong, Mixed media painting, 100cm×100cm



Source: First author's creation

First, the square picture's composition was re-arranged, and the size, number, void and solid, strength, and spatial arrangement of the drum tower and other buildings were established. The researcher compared the ample blank space left behind and the

complicated main objects to form a sense of the relationship between objects and spatial rhythm, making the picture more breathable (Zou & Yeo, 2022). The researcher use a variety of materials to make the base. The lowest layer is first coated with a thin layer of acrylic pigment to form color interweaving because folk painters often use water-based pigments. Hence, the use of acrylic here is to carry on the use of water-based pigments in traditional Dong folk painting, and another purpose is to make the thinnest part appear more transparent in the thin and thick contrast picture.

Then, by squeezing the pigment, arrange the acrylic pigment in a strip on the eaves of the picture, acting as a line in the picture modeling. Then, the researcher uses a large scraper to flatten the thick acrylic paint, creating a natural shape in the picture. Place several pieces of dark-colored paper of different sizes and leave them there for one day and one night. After the thick and thin pigments are thoroughly dried, the paper is uncovered, and the picture will print color blocks of different shapes and textures. At this time, the picture's free mixing of different colors has stained it with rich transparent color changes, and they form their styles randomly. Leave some firmly pasted paper on the canvas to form a texture. Next, the researcher began to use thin black paint of oil pigments to establish the prominent black, white, and gray relationship on the color painting base and by the way, dry rub black lines and surfaces with rubbing and kneading techniques, used to paint the preliminary structure of several theme buildings, at this time the deepest color has laid the heaviest part of the picture (Zou & Yeo, 2022). Next, the main image of the drum tower and the building will be shaped, and the internal and external textures of the drum tower will overlap to form an optical illusion effect. The partially wooden beams and roof eaves are deeply carved based on the giant structure. The small balconies are triangular, and the blue sky flows freely. At this point, the entire composition of the picture is complete, and the giant beam of the door pulls the heavy oil paint. The picture presents the changes in numerous forms and languages, such as thick and thin, deep and shallow, flat and stacked, and free and regular, to express the architecture in contemporary Dong painting in a new way and from a unique perspective, which originates from tradition and breaks through the contemporary era (Zou & Yeo, 2022).

4.3. The similarities and differences of folk Dong painting

Traditional Dong folk paintings are divided into different types and themes, all of which reflect the daily life, folk culture, and spiritual beliefs of the Dong people. However, they differ in form and carrier. Although these art forms all function as cultural inheritance, their uses and functions differ (Čopič Pucihar & Kljun, 2018). Architectural decorative paintings mainly play a decorative role in beautifying the building environment. The primary purpose of New Year pictures is to express festive and good wishes. Religious painting is used for religious ceremonies and sacrifices and has the function of religious belief. Peasant paintings have different political propaganda functions or express rural life in different historical periods.

4.4. The similarities and differences of contemporary Dong painting

Contemporary Dong painting artists generally pay attention to the inheritance and development of Dong culture. Many of the works are influenced by traditional Chinese painting, and some retain certain traditional elements such as lines, colors, and composition. Among these works, some pay more attention to the protection and expression of traditional culture, while others may be more realistic and pay more attention to the expression of details (Čopič Pucihar & Kljun, 2018). Other works are

more concerned with modern social issues or personal emotions, and their style tends to be expressionist, focusing on emotion and inner expression.

4.4.1. *The similarities and differences between folk Dong painting and contemporary Dong painting*

Through Table 2, the researcher summarizes the similarities and differences between traditional Dong folk painting and contemporary Dong folk painting.

Table 2: Comparison of folk Dong painting and contemporary Dong painting

Characteristic	Folk Dong painting	Contemporary Dong painting
Theme and content	Traditional folk customs, religious ceremonies (Cao, 2017).	Diverse social issues, personal feelings (Chen, 2021).
Art form	Most of them are water-based pigments and paper (Cao, 2017).	Covers all kinds of paintings and formal languages (Pei, 2018).
Historical background and expressive style	Influenced by the traditional social environment, it presents a traditional classic style (Cao, 2017).	Influenced by modern society, the performance style is more modern and personalized (Li, 2018).
Audience and use	Local community and cultural events, religious ceremonies, and holiday celebrations (Cao, 2017).	Commercial exhibition, art exchange (Lu, 2021).
Creation background and form	Inherited and created by the local Dong people, the form of the works is relatively simple (Cao, 2017).	Not only Dong artists but also non-Dong artists participated (Yang & Guo, 2019).

First, regarding subject matter and content, traditional folk and contemporary paintings reflect the Dong people's concern and understanding of nature, traditional culture, and modern life. Secondly, they differ in historical background and expressive style. The traditional folk painting was mainly subject to the social environment at that time and presented a more traditional and classic style of expression, mainly focusing on traditional folk customs and religious rituals (Cao, 2017). Contemporary painting is more influenced by modern society, showing a more personalized, diversified, and modern style of expression, and the content is more extensive. In terms of audience groups and uses, traditional folk paintings mainly serve local communities and cultural activities, and their uses are more reflected in religious ceremonies and festival celebrations, and the audience is mainly limited to the Dong minority community (Cao, 2017). Contemporary painting, on the other hand, is more open and may participate in commercial exhibitions, art exchanges, and other activities with a broader audience. Creation background and painting form: Traditional folk painting is mainly inherited and created by the local Dong people, and the form of works is relatively simple. In addition to the Dong artists, non-Dong artists are in contemporary painting. The forms of the works are more diverse, including Chinese painting, oil painting, and watercolor painting, showing a more prosperous artistic outlook. To sum up, although there are some common characteristics between traditional folk painting and contemporary painting, there are also significant differences in the era background, expression style, audience and use, and creation form,

which reflect the development and changes of Dong art in different historical periods (Čopić Pucihar & Kljun, 2018).

5. Conclusion

Dong folk paintings come from Dong traditional folklore, rooted in Dong traditional folk culture, with Dong people as the main body, rich in content and distinctive features, containing rich aesthetic imagery (Li, 2018). Most of the traditional folk Dong paintings are painted on local Dong buildings, and it is difficult for the Dong paintings appearing in these traditional activities to be seen by the outside population, which could be more conducive to disseminating Dong culture. Today's Dong and non-Dong artists use oil, acrylic, and Chinese paintings to enrich contemporary Dong painting expressions with folk art and life. Although new types of paintings, such as easel paintings, are used for expression, the contents are still the activities and life of Dong locals, patterns, and architecture, consistent and inherited from what folk paintings express. The new form of painting exhibited in various places outside the Dong region and disseminated through the network dramatically enhances the preservation rate of Dong culture. In the new era of cultural diversification and development, how Dong folk painting can continue to be rooted in the folk culture, keep the tradition, and enhance the aesthetic consciousness in the new cultural environment to be compatible with the new era and realize the modern transformation (Zheng & Yao, 2018); how to examine and express the new social realities from the Dong traditional folk painting as folk art, to make the painting have its own growth space in the contemporary times, is a realistic issue concerning the inheritance and development of Dong folk painting, which is also the direction for experts and scholars to work together in the future (Cao, 2017).

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The researchers used the research ethics provided by the Research Ethics Committee of Universiti Teknologi MARA (RECUiTM). All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants according to the Declaration of Helsinki.

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Conflict of Interest

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