

Aesthetic Form of Dai pottery: Transformation from peacock dance

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Abstract

This paper is part of practice-based research which aims to develop the aesthetic form of traditional Dai pottery in Xishuangbanna by transforming peacock dance. Dai pottery can be dated back to the 14th(Wang, 2012). The surface of the ware is stamped with patterned wooden sticks, which is consistent with the nature of the patterned pottery unearthed from the southern Neolithic site. Today, the type of pottery-making technology has changed from free-hand kneading to wheel making, and transition from no kiln to kiln, but Dai pottery still retains the basic characteristics of the original pottery inherit by Dai people.

Dai people live in Xishuangbanna. They take peacock as the symbol of their national spirit. In this paper, the researcher takes Yang Liping's modern peacock dance "the spirit of the Peacock" (雀之灵) and "the love of the Peacock" (雀之恋) which absorb the essence of the traditional peacock dance, as peacock dance case studies, to analyze, and extract the dynamics of the peacock dance, to explore the cultural spirit of Dai people. Meanwhile, taking two Japan's ceramic artists Fujikasa Satoko and Noriko Kuresumi, as Fine Arts case studies, to analyze their art forms and the possibility to present nature in art way. In the research process part, the researcher altered the peacock dance figure into the shape of Dai pottery, realizing the first step to renew traditional Dai pottery. The outcome can be regarded as a new form of Dai pottery.

The experimental results will establish the aesthetic value of Dai pottery, to create a different visual language for the evolution of Dai pottery. Inherit and promote the wisdom of Dai people, and gradually transform Dai pottery from living utensils to artworks, to meet people's higher aesthetic needs.

Keywords: Dai pottery, Aesthetic form, Peacock dance

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Introduction

Dai pottery is the original traditional handicraft in Xishuangbanna, one of the National Intangible Cultural Heritage in China, and it is considered to the representative of China's original pottery skills. Its nature is that uses the slow wheel combined with the hand-made mud sticks to form the mold, the made mud is slapped with a patterned wooden stick and then fired by the open kiln or semi-closed kiln which is on the ground. At present, only Jinghong, Menghan, and Menghai in Xishuangbanna retain traditional Dai pottery skills completely(Jin , Yan, 2019).



1.1 Hand-made Form



1.2 Wooden Stick Slap



1.3 After Firing



1.4 Prepare for Firing



1.5 Firing



1.6 After Firing

Figure 1.1—1.6: Process of Dai Pottery(Anonymity, 2018)

Since the 1950s, scholars have paid enough attention to the original Dai pottery technology for quite a long time. Most of them investigated this ancient technology and its inheritance from the angle of archaeology, sociology, ethnology, and anthropology, but ignore the artistry and aesthetic value of Dai pottery itself, and how it spreads today as well as how to meet the increasing aesthetic needs of citizens.

The traditional Dai pottery craftsmanship is single and less innovative. After 1980s, as industrialized production has gradually entered local families, except for a few architectural decorations and religious rituals, Dai pottery is rarely used in local people's daily life, and constantly replaced by glass, metal, and plastic. The traditional Dai pottery has continuously withdrawn from the historical stage and even fewer people who master this skill.



2.1



2.2



2.3

Figure 2.1—2.3: Example of Dai pottery Art Form(Baitaihui, 2020)

However, the inheritance of Dai pottery does not represent cultural heritage. How to create contemporary Dai pottery which has aesthetic value with traditional cultural connotation and cultural identity is worth exploring.

Peacock is regarded by Dai people as a kind of auspicious bird, symbolizing beauty and kindness, which is primitive totem worship, reflecting Dai people's yearning for a better life. Peacocks, on the one hand, as totem worship, usually appears on the roof of traditional Dai temples. On the other hand, as a modern artistic language and cultural symbol, it usually appears in the application of modern design, such as architectural design, interior decoration design, environmental art design, product packaging design, advertising design, household goods design, cultural communication design, clothing design, dyeing and weaving design, airport design, aircraft decoration, etc. To sum up, peacock serves as the local cultural identity in a certain way.



3.1 Temple Roof



3.2 Cloth Pattern



3.3 Airplane Decoration



3.4 Cultural communication



3.5 Contemporary Architecture



3.6 Subway Interior

Figure3.1—3.6: Local Design inspired by Peacock(Pengpeng, 2019)

Peacock dance is the most famous classical performing arts in Dai people. The style of the peacock dance is quite light, with delicate emotional expression and graceful dance posture. It is the crystallization of the wisdom of the Dai people which has high aesthetic value. Also, as the most favorite folk dance of the Dai people, they will get together, ring gongs, beat drums, and dance the graceful peacock dance in their annual "Splashing Festival", "Closed Door Festival", "Open Door Festival" and other folk festivals. The peacock dance has its representativeness makes it the most culturally recognized dance of the Dai people.

Therefore, design Dai pottery modeling with peacock dance character as the prototype contains the cultural connotation of Dai people and which is cultural identity.

Objectives

The purpose of this paper is to explore the aesthetic form of Dai pottery modeling, to create a new visual language for the improvement of Dai pottery aesthetics value, and to study the transformation from two-dimensional graphic of peacock dance to three-dimensional clay modeling with Dai culture. The specific research objectives are as follows:

1. To understand Dai culture.
2. To extract the moving path of the peacock dance, experiments with the dance path to creating aesthetic forms.
3. To create a new visual language of Dai pottery and contribute to the aesthetic value of Dai pottery.

Methodology

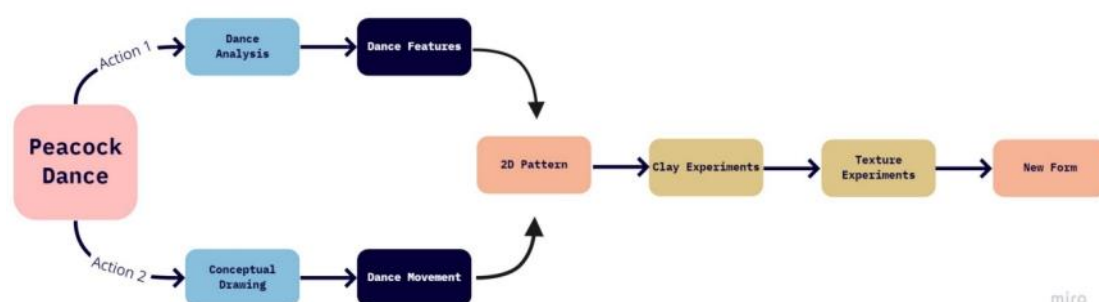


Figure 4 Methodology

The primary step is to analyze peacock dance, after understanding the true meaning of peacock dance, there should have two actions. Through action one, evaluate the dancer's dynamics to get the characteristics of peacock dance. Through action two, with the conceptual drawing, extract the dance movement. Synthesize the two actions, to get the two-dimensional graphic of peacock dance, and to create the final Three-dimensional clay model of Dai pottery based on experiments.

Literature Reviews

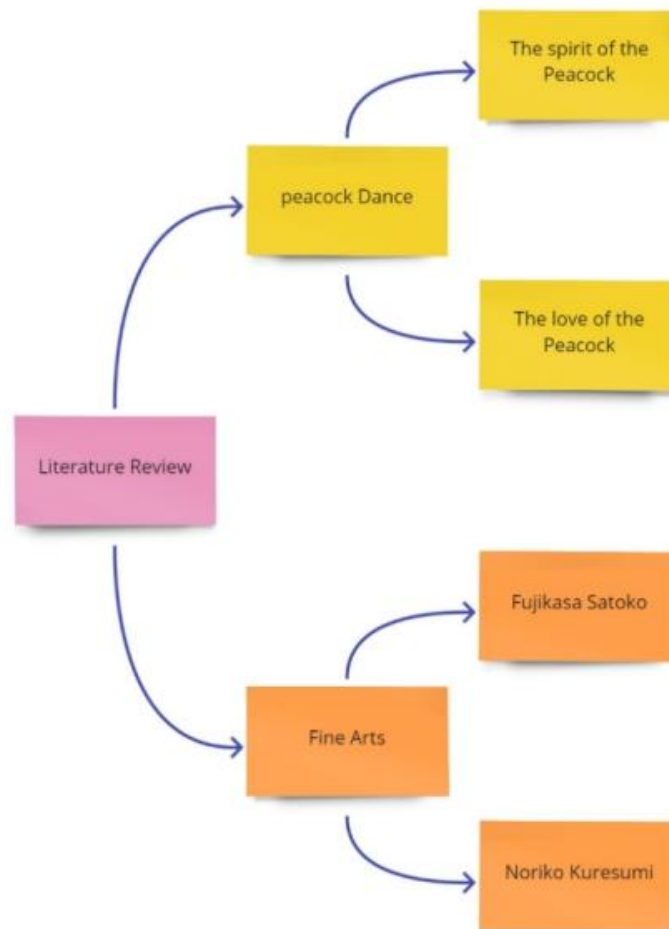


Figure 5 Literature Review

The study is divided into two parts.

The first part is to study peacock dance, the target is a Chinese dancer Yang Liping, who was born in Dali, Yunnan in 1958. She is known as "the second generation of Peacock King in China", who is good at transforming dynamic artistic expressions into static. She has lived and performed in Xishuangbanna for more than ten years, and she dedicated her life to the dancing career she loves. This paper will obtain graphics of peacock dance by studying two representative works of dancers.

The second part is to study artworks, the objects of study are two Japan's artists, whose abstract figures from nature, and express their own understanding of it with ceramic clay modeling performance.

By combining the two parts of the study, the researcher expects to create new forms of Dai pottery with aesthetic features, to make contribution to the aesthetic value of Dai pottery.

Peacock Dance

A. The Spirit of the Peacock (雀之灵) by Yangliping



Figure 6.1—6.6 Peacock Dance(The Spirit of the Peacock) (TECH, 2020)

"The Spirit of the Peacock" is a solo dance created and performed by Yang Liping in 1986 and performed in 2009 at the Great Hall of the People to welcome former US President Barack Obama to China.

When the dance began, with the morning light, a graceful silhouette of a peacock appeared on the stage. In the dancer's graceful dance, the audience saw the beauty and elegance of the peacock, standing proudly. Her delicate and gentle fingers, her shoulders, chest, and waist are constantly stretching and changing dance postures, expressing gratitude and love for the awakening of life. But according to the dancer herself, she did not just want to imitate the appearance of a peacock but also wanted to describe the beautiful inner world of a spiritual peacock and talk to a Dai girl or dancer herself pursuing her ideal world.

In the choreography of movements, in addition to expressing the agility of the peacock through rhythmic and hierarchical movements, she extremely exerts the expressive power of hands, the wave-like movements of the arms, the unique five-finger shape, and the dance posture with her back and hands is even more beautiful and moving, which means that Peacock Dance is more concerned with image shaping and inner emotions. Also, "The Spirit of the Peacock" shows more classical ballet aesthetics in terms of physical features and contains more personal emotion.

B. The love of the Peacock (雀之恋) by Yangliping

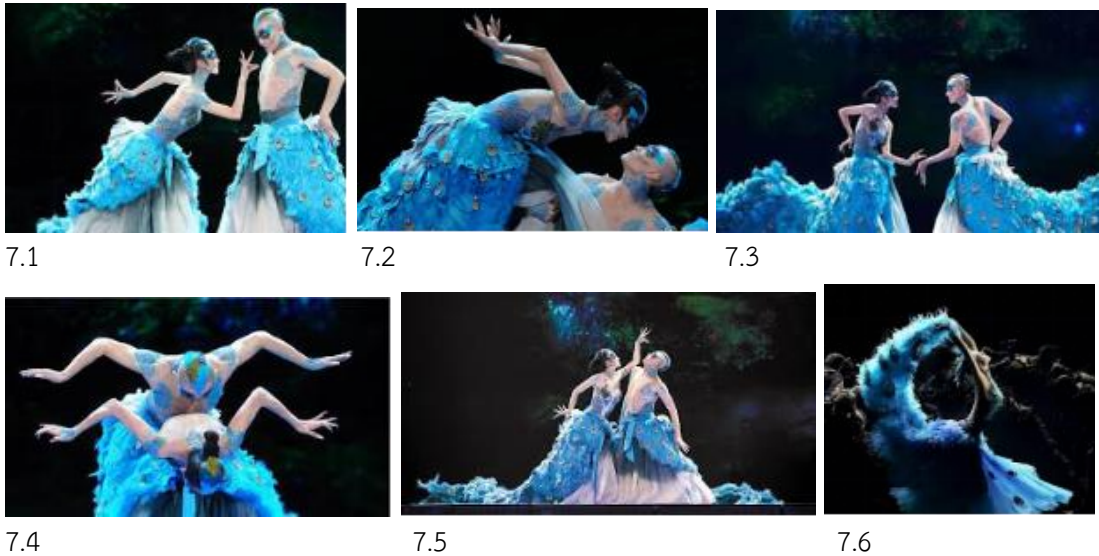


Figure 7.1—7.6 Peacock Dance(The Love of the Peacock)(TECH, 2020)

The dance was created in 2012. Yang Liping and Wang Di wore blue peacock costumes, blending the peacocks into the beautiful environment, expressing the passion of the peacocks with pure body language, achieving a beautiful artistic effect. The lingering and love of two blue peacocks in the forest with the main color of deep blue interpret the natural and pure feelings of life.

In "The Love of peacock", the essence of mimicry and transcendence, the ethereal peacocks are endowed with innocent and pure humanity. Dancers obtain spirituality from the harmony of heaven and earth, and the coordination of “yin” and “yang”. It is a passionate love story present by the way of modern dance.

Fine Arts

A. Fujikasa Satoko



8.1 Flow 2011

8.2 Blooming 2012

8.3 Seraphim 2016



8.4 Rippling Waves 2016 8.5 Soaring Through the Heavens 2018 8.6 Effervescence 2019

Figure 8.1—8.6 Fujikasa Satoko's Ceramic Sculpture (LTD, 2012)

Japan's artist Fujikasa Satoko creates her fluid and dynamic sculptures from coarse clay. They are all hand-built by slowly melding slender coils of clay, requiring months to complete a single work. Due to the extraordinary thinness of the sculptures' walls, some as thin as three millimeters, controlling the drying time is the most difficult aspect of her technique. Though only in her thirties, Fujikasa has received international attention and acclaim for her work (LTD, 2012).

Her works show a strong sense of movement and the beauty of silence, in the movement with tenderness, edge lines of artworks are extremely smooth, with strong oriental aesthetics.

B. Noriko Kuresumi



9.1 Sea of memory 004

9.2 Sea of memory 005

9.3 Sea of memory 007



9.5 Sea of memory 009

9.6 Sea of memory 010

9.7 Sea of memory 012

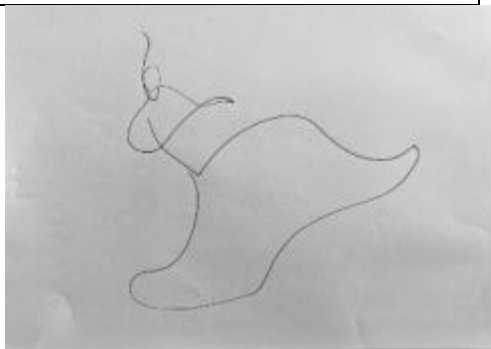
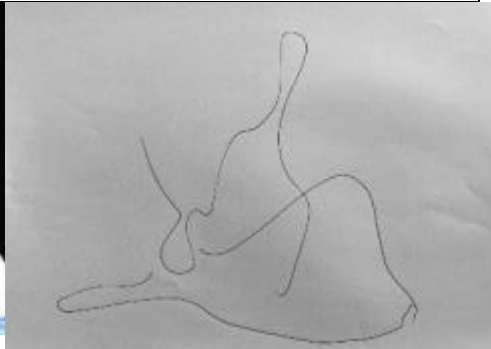
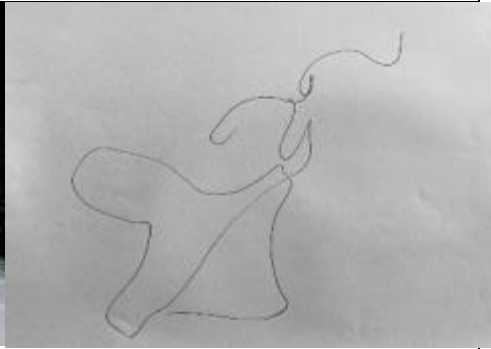
Figure 9.1—9.7 Noriko Kuresumi's Ceramic Sculpture (KURESUMI, 2010)

From 2010 to 2017, Japanese artist Noriko Kuresumi started the series of sea memory artworks, which includes 54 pieces in total. Those works are used porcelain mud, with delicate and soft edge lines to reflect the flow of the sea. The superimposed edges make her works dynamic and vivid. In this case, the paper only shows her series of works in the year 2010.

It is worth noticing that the contrast between two textures of clay in her works is fully harmonious, make people feel the softness and the drift from the sea.

Research Process

Abstract dance movement

	Peacock Dance	Conceptual Drawing
Figure 10	 10.1	 10.2
Figure 11	 11.1	 11.2
Figure 12	 12.1	 12.2

The peacock dance is done with body parts such as hands, legs, waist, etc. It is flexible, elegant, passionate, and full of rhythm. The peacock dance is ever-changing, which the main language is the use of hands, shows the liveliness (Figure7.1—7.5), agility (Figure6.2, 6.3), grace (Figure6.1), and a variety of peacock (Figure6.4—6.6). In addition to the lightness and agility of the movements, it also expresses the inherent softness and toughness, graceful and elegant, which is its inner emotions with the ups and downs of the body.

Conclusion

Peacock dance is not only a visually beautiful dance posture but also a kind of dance that condenses the wisdom and local culture of the Dai people. Hence, even though it is 21 Century now, it is still valuable learning the peacock dance by the young generation. The softness and elegance contained in the peacock dance are the embodiment of the inner beauty of the Dai people. It embodies the S-curve from an aesthetic point of view, which is the most obvious beauty among women.

On the basis of exaggerating and amplifying, this kind of curve to refined Dai pottery shape from the peacock dance, the aesthetic shape of Dai pottery can be realized. Using peacock dance as a prototype to renew the form of Dai pottery is the first step for Dai pottery to convert daily utensils to artworks.

The experimental result shows that by analyzing peacock dance, refining the dance movement with a conceptual drawing method, which expects to create a new aesthetic value of Dai pottery. It can contribute to the aesthetic value of Dai pottery with Dai people's aesthetic cognition and provides new ideas for the evolution of Dai pottery in the future.

However, realizing clay modeling still requires more experimentation and practice. That will be the next step by using different ceramic modeling technique such as slab-built or slip-cast, which requires further research.

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