

Received: 19 June 2023

Revised: 3 November 2023

Accepted: 1 December 2023

## แสงสว่างแห่งอารยธรรม: การสร้างสรรค์ศิลปะทัศนศิลป์ในบริบทของสังคมสมัยใหม่

### THE LIGHT OF CIVILIZATION: VISUAL ARTS CREATION IN THE CONTEXT OF MODERN SOCIETY

หลิ่ง化า ไช่<sup>1</sup>Linghua Cai<sup>1</sup>สุชาติ สุขนา<sup>2</sup>Suchat Sukna<sup>2</sup>กนกวรรณ์ นิธิรัฐพัฒน์<sup>3</sup>Kanokwan Nithirattapat<sup>3</sup>เคอ อี้ยัน<sup>4\*</sup>Ke Yihan<sup>4\*</sup>

#### บทคัดย่อ

แรงบันดาลใจในการสร้างสรรค์งานทัศนศิลป์ “แสงสว่างแห่งอารยธรรม” เกิดจากการพิจารณาถึงปัจจัยที่ไม่เสถียรซึ่งเกิดจากการขาดอิทธิพลตั้งเดิมในสภาพแวดล้อมสังคมปัจจุบัน วัตถุประสงค์ของการวิจัยในบทความนี้ คือ การวิเคราะห์ความสำคัญของความสัมพันธ์ที่กลมกลืนระหว่างผู้คนและระหว่างผู้คนกับธรรมชาติในชีวิตสังคม รวมถึงการสร้างงานศิลปะการจัดวางโดยการผสมผสานวัสดุใหม่ ๆ เช่น วัสดุดินเหนียวและเทคโนโลยีแสงสว่างสมัยใหม่ เพื่อแสดงให้เห็นถึงคุณค่าของวัฒนธรรมตั้งเดิมและปลูกจิตสำนึกของผู้คนต่อวัฒนธรรมตั้งเดิม ผลลัพธ์ของการสร้างสรรค์นี้ซึ่งให้เห็นว่า แสงสว่างมีเสน่ห์ลึกลับ เมื่อรวมกับอุปกรณ์ต่าง ๆ สามารถสร้างผลกระทบที่ไม่คาดคิด ทำให้งานศิลปะน่าดื่นเด้นยิ่งขึ้น และเพิ่มความสามารถในการแสดงออกของแนวคิดของงาน ศิลปะการจัดวางควรเพิ่มการมีปฏิสัมพันธ์ระหว่างงานและผู้ชม ทำให้ประสบการณ์ทางประสาทสัมผัสของผู้ชมสมบูรณ์ขึ้น และกระตุนให้ผู้ชมสำรวจความหมายเชิงลึกซึ้งของงานร่วมกัน

**คำสำคัญ:** แสงสว่าง; อารยธรรม; ศิลปะทัศนศิลป์; สังคมสมัยใหม่

<sup>1</sup> Graduate Student, Faculty of Fine-Applied Arts and Cultural Science, Mahasarakham University

<sup>2</sup> Dissertation Advisor, Assistant Professor, Ph.D., Faculty of Fine-Applied Arts and Cultural Science, Mahasarakham University

<sup>3</sup> Dissertation Advisor, Assistant Professor, Ph.D., Faculty of Fine-Applied Arts and Cultural Science, Mahasarakham University

<sup>4</sup> Ph.D., Faculty of Fine-Applied Arts and Cultural Science, Mahasarakham University

\* Corresponding author e-mail: yihan.k@msu.ac.th

## Abstract

The visual art creation, “The Light of Civilization,” was inspired by reflections on the unstable factors arising from the absence of traditional cultural elements in today’s social environment. The purpose of this study is to analyze the importance of the harmonious relationships among people and between people and nature in social life. Additionally, it also aims to create installation art by combining new materials such as clay materials and modern luminous technology, to express the value of traditional culture and awaken people’s awareness of traditional culture. The results of this creation suggest that light holds a mysterious charm, and when combined with various devices, it can create unexpected effects, making the work more exciting and enhancing the expression of its concepts. Installation art should enhance the interaction between the work and the viewer, enriching the viewer’s sensory experience, and drive the viewer to explore the deeper positive meanings embedded in the artwork.

**Keywords:** Light; Civilization; Visual arts; Modern society

## 1. Introduction

China is an ancient civilization with a five thousand-year history and profound cultural heritage. Excellent traditional culture has accumulated the most bottomless spiritual pursuit of the Chinese nation, forming the Chinese people's thinking and behavior. Traditional culture supports the unique civilized character of cultural people, educating and preaching to people, and supports the Chinese nation that has been endless after more than 5,000 years (Hu, 2022).

In more than 40 years of reform and opening up, society has been actively invested in a global environment from a planned economy to the market. China has been holding an open and inclusive attitude to absorb various civilization methods in the West. Therefore, a considerable part of the culture of Chinese society and culture belongs to a foreign culture (Fang, 2011). These are the world views and values of many people's world views and values. This has also led to an embarrassing position in traditional Chinese culture, which is gradually ignored and abandoned. Economic development, while the material life is continuously enriched, the spiritual world has appeared desertified. In the face of the impact of foreign culture, current social education needs more attention than traditional culture. Moral landslides in society and the lack of faith seriously affect the foundation of Chinese Civilization Building.

Civilization is to create cultured people-John Ruskin (England, 1819-1900). Facing the lack of this culture and no longer civilization, China has gradually strengthened the traditional cultural education of the whole society and tried to re-evoke the light of ancient civilization (Cheng, 2016). The glory of reshaping the Chinese civilization is the responsibility and responsibility of all Chinese people. As an art creator, the researcher is also eager to create unique artwork to participate in it.

"Thousand Character Text" is a classic compiled by the ancient Chinese sage Zhou Xingsi, which records the ancient Chinese people's understanding of the universe, astronomy, geography, nature, society, history, morality, ethics, and other aspects. The full text is 1,000 Chinese characters, and each Chinese character is not repeated (Du, 2006). It is an old Mongolian textbook in ancient China. It is a typical book

representing Chinese culture. It has affected the ideological civilization of the Chinese for thousands of years. Throughout Chinese history, numerous artists have created various art forms on “Thousand Character Text” content to promote its romantic charm. Among them, Chinese calligraphy artists mainly create various forms of calligraphy art, forming a unique cultural scene in Chinese calligraphy art.

The rise of free visual art thought and its comprehensive art expression form gives artistic works a richer vitality, which can have more art forms of traditional culture and give traditional culture more charm (Zheng, 2022).

How to express the civilized power carried by “Thousand character Text” with visual arts, I think of the factor of “light.” In the vast universe space, “light” is the source of all life, and there is continuous power. Although “light” is invisible, it can be used to make a “tangible” shadow with some auxiliary methods, exudes a unique visual aesthetics, produce more vital artistic words, and shows richer artistic value. Using light and shadow as an art form to create interactive visual artworks by allowing static devices to emit text light and shadow is the original inspiration for this article’s thinking and work creation.

## 2. Objectives

2.1 To analyze the value of Chinese traditional culture through the artistic expression of the classic “Thousand Character Text” in traditional Chinese education.

2.2 To create a novel installation art by applying clay materials and combining the shape with luminescent technology.

## 3. Scope of study

### 3.1 Content

The power of civilization is like a light that can guide people in the dark. Civilization is significant for developing a country, a nation, or human beings. We should attach importance to the inheritance of civilization and make civilization play their value in an unexpected society, which can make humans go further.

### 3.2 Form

Through the combination of pottery and text, combined with light, the form of the work has other appearances, such as roads, beacon platforms. It is a device art.

### 3.3 Techniques

The installation works show the light and shadow. At the same time, the light and shadow are exposed to the space environment so that the text is presented in every corner of the environment where the work is located, reflecting the inner light represented by the Chinese civilization represented by the “Thousand Character Text.”

### 3.4 Conceptual of Framework

“Thousand Character Text” records the ancient Chinese people’s understanding of the universe, astronomy, geography, nature, society, history, morality, ethics, and other aspects. It has affected the ideological civilization of the Chinese for thousands of years. Therefore, its content and ideas have significant power for building a harmonious society. Learning the text content of thousands of texts can give people rich knowledge and full of spirit.

A person’s life is constantly walking, and the guidance of civilized light will not make people lose their direction during walking.

What can protect safety is relying on something other than solid castles and complex weapons. The consensus of civilization is the most powerful guarantee of peace.

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1 Data collecting

The researcher initially evaluated previous works to establish creative process pros and cons. Improve creative topic analysis to improve development. I must widen my expression since the researcher wants these creative works to view the “light of civilization” differently. Imagine society’s savagery. The researcher utilized books and the Internet. Scholars constructed clay installations.

Burning and shaping clay gives ceramics their character. Pottery is fire art. Zhu Yan remarked “Tao Shuo,” “The color matching of painting tools is different from that of painters, and the colors on the tools must be determined by fire.” Old Eastern and modern installation art will create amazing visuals in this new creative expression language.

## 5.2 Data Analysis

### 5.2.1 Theme analysis

Humans seek peace-promoting civilization. Tradition Chinese values nature and morality. Maintaining Chinese culture promotes peace.

Light is used to illustrate prior “civilization,” protest the hostile backdrop of the current absence of social conceptions, and urge their transfer.

### 5.2.2 Examine symbols

The ancient Chinese “Thousand Character Text” considers clay a virtual Earthly thing and a metaphor of nature. Using “Thousand Character Text” and “pottery,” “roads” and “beacon towers” are innovative. Li (2021) design lighting exhibits text light on all spatial interactions. All aspects of life should reflect and interact with civilization. Since entering “civilization,” people belong.

### 5.2.3 Technique analysis

Choose natural soil clay to remove contaminants. Carve letters on clay bricks of various sizes after making a form model. Use wood and straw for high-temperature fire after clay bricks dry. Charred bricks provide character to themes. The piece’s light illuminates the hollowed-out letters.

## 6. Outputs and benefit

As a prominent manifestation of visual art, installation art has the artistic charm that traditional art cannot have in the form of art and language. In addition, it can express the artist’s ideological demand more comprehensively through rich art forms. Anthony Johnson, an American art critic, explained to postmodernism installation art: “In terms of devices themselves, they are just containers that can hold whatever content creators and viewers want to put in. Therefore, installation art can be the most convenient and direct medium for expressing social, political, or personal content.”

Combining the expression form of contemporary installation art and the traditional form of calligraphy can expand the original two -dimensional calligraphy form to the form of multi-dimensional expression, showing a richer visual experience.

The combination of Chinese characters and “clay,” combined with light and shadow shaping, constitutes a unique artistic installation, making the work present a richer visual experience. To stimulate the audience to think more about the work’s theme, “Light of Civilization.”

## 7. Results

This research is based on full research and fieldwork. The idea is to use classic traditional culture as the basis to extract the elements needed for creation, and then combine it with modern luminous technology to express the art work in a new way and increase the charm of traditional culture, thus more strongly embodying the value of Chinese traditional culture.

### 7.1 Creative Work 1

**7.1.1 Idea/ Concept:** Columns are the main construction of buildings, playing a supporting role, and are extremely important. China’s civilization-building needs strong support like a pillar.

**7.1.2 Form:** Enclosing a closed indoor space, a considerable column is erected in the center of the space, and the text is hollowed out on the column body, and the light of the text is emitted through the center. This unique installation art allows the viewer to stand in the middle of the work (Ma, 2013).

**7.1.3 Results:** The red octagonal columns have a robust Chinese style, and the translucent column body is carved with “Thousand Character Text.” The internal lighting illuminates the text onto all walls of the space, providing a strong sense of enclosure. In addition, when visitors enter the space, the light of the text shines on them, creating a good interaction with the work.



**Fig. 1** Light of Civilization

Size: 82x82x260 Centimetre | Technique: Installation art  
(Linghua Cai, China, 2023)

## 7.2 Creative Work 2

**7.2.1 Idea/Concept:** “Bamboo slips,” the most representative form of books in ancient China, record the history of China’s ideological civilization and have been circulated.

**7.2.2 Form:** Chinese characters are carved on the bamboo’s surface, emitting the characters’ light through the center. Combine the bamboo suspension device with a luminous bamboo book.

**7.2.3 Results:** The hanging luminous bamboo slips give visitors a sense of reading the work. This is an effective means of information dissemination. The increased number could have a more substantial visual impact.



**Fig. 2** Light of Civilization

Size: 150x175x20 Centimètre | Technique: Installation art  
(Linghua Cai, China, 2023)

### 7.3 Creative Work 3

**7.3.1 Idea/ Concept:** “Bonfire” has warm energy, and the rising fire means energy dissipation.

**7.3.2 Form:** The characters in the “Thousand Character Text” are carved into red three-dimensional acrylic characters and piled into the shape of a “bonfire,” emitting a red text light through the central lamp.

**7.3.3 Results:** The red text “bonfire” is filled with warm energy, and the hanging text is like the power of the eruption of fire, representing the spread of civilization. Visitors can experience the joy brought by civilization around their works.



**Fig. 3** Light of Civilization

Size: 200×150×230 Centimètre | Technique: Installation art  
(Linghua Cai, China, 2023)

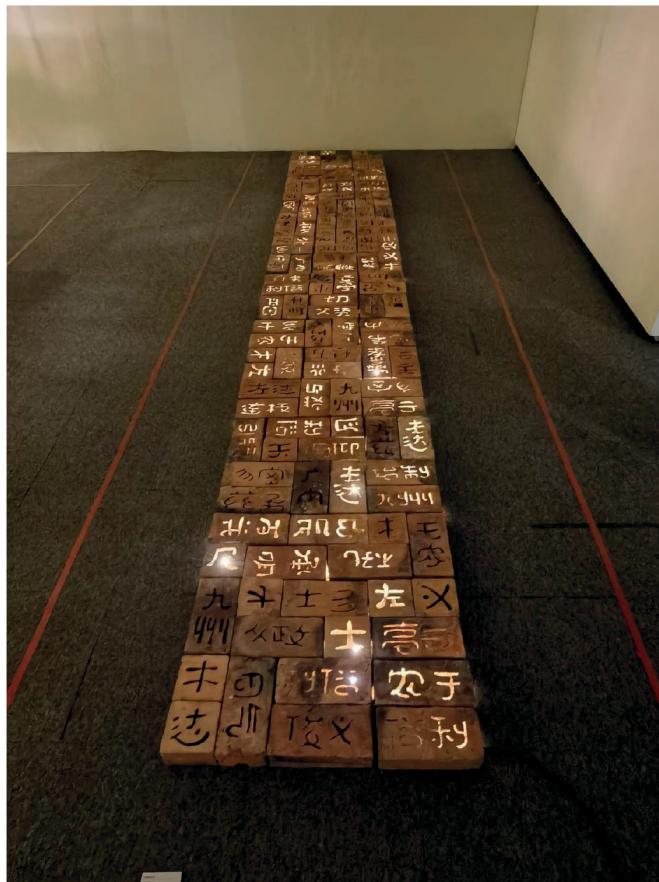
#### 7.4 Creative Work 4

**7.4.1 Idea/ Concept:** The road is the infrastructure for pedestrians and vehicles to pass, and it also refers to how to achieve a specific goal. It also refers to the way things develop and change. The path that emits the light of civilization can guide people's lives to a higher and farther level.

**7.4.2 Form:** This installation artwork lays a luminous path on the ground. The clay is made into bricks, on which the text is hollowed out, and the bricks are laid into a sidewalk for display.

**7.4.3 Results:** Visitors can walk on this luminous sidewalk and read the meaning of the luminous text to achieve the effect of interacting with artistic works.

This can effectively convey the meaning of the work to visitors. Visitors must read the text on their works with their heads lowered, implying that people should see the environment under their feet when walking and embark on a safe and civilized life path.



**Fig. 4** The Road of Light

Size: 600×120×8 Centimètre | Technique: Installation art  
(Linghua Cai, China, 2023)

## 7.5 Creative Work 5

**7.5.1 Idea/Concept:** The beacon tower was a high tower used to light fireworks and transmit important information in ancient times. It was an essential military defense facility in ancient times and was built to prevent enemy invasion. It is the oldest but most effective method of messaging. Engraving the words "Thousand Character Text" on

the beacon tower and emitting light is not to convey the flames of war but to elevate the appeal of civilization to the highest point.

**7.5.2 Form:** The clay is made into bricks for the city wall, on which characters are hollowed out. On a 50 cm platform, enclose bricks to form a beacon tower, and install lights in the middle to make the beacon tower emit the light of words.

**7.5.3 Results:** Ancient architecture is endowed with new materials and technology, changing the original functional value. Visitors can associate the difference between war and peace when viewing this work. To survive longer, humans must establish more civilized systems, learn the civilized ideas in the “Thousand Word Essay,” and build a harmonious world. Let the world no longer need “beacon towers” and more appear as monuments of civilization.



**Fig. 5** The Light of the Beacon Tower

Size: 240×240×230 Centimètre | Technique: Installation art  
(Linghua Cai, China, 2023)

## 8. Conclusion and discussion

The concept of this work is to reflect on the uncivilized status quo in life. The phenomena of self-interest and unethical behavior have made the researcher understand the significance of promoting the power of civilized thinking in traditional Chinese culture. The history of China is a glorious history of civilization with diverse forms and profound connotations. The “Thousand Character Essay” is a typical work representing traditional Chinese civilization and has vital educational significance for social civilization. Mr. Qigong, a renowned master of modern Chinese traditional culture, once commented on the “Thousand Character Essay” and said, “The Thousand Character Essay, which starts with the sentence ‘Xuanhuang of heaven and earth,’ has a great name and wide application. There are probably very few that can surpass the thousands of ancient texts and books.” Therefore, to hopefully create some meaningful artistic forms by using artistic means, the civilization radiance of “thousand-word writing” can permeate every corner of social life.

In creating works with the theme of “Light of Civilization,” the final production process, from the perspective of materials, technology, and form, is made through careful research. “Clay” is the material of natural soil, implying energy storage. “Light” gives people a warm feeling, and there can be good interaction under light irradiation. Each work’s modeling has a profound background significance, which can better set off the creative value of the “light of civilization.”

In general, this research and creation have achieved the expected goals, it uses a modern perspective to discover the beauty and value of traditional culture can awaken people’s attention to traditional culture and better inherit Chinese traditional culture. Of course, there are other more modern technological methods that can be used and tried, and the author will continue to use this method for artistic creation.

## 9. Suggestions

Engaging in artistic creation should allow oneself to have a lot of knowledge storage, which requires a lot of learning and reading. The knowledge structure should be rich and diverse, and the knowledge of various disciplines should be learned as much as possible. Not only should the knowledge of art, but also philosophy, religion, sociology, and other disciplines should be studied more. It is necessary to establish social values for artistic creation, think more about social issues, and express them in the form of artistic works. Make beneficial contributions to the establishment of a harmonious society for mankind.

## 10. References

Cheng, X. (2016). On the importance of humanism in recreational art. *Talent Magazine*, 15-18.

Du, X. (2006). The leading line of art creation thought in Heidegger's philosophy of art and its significance. *Journal of Continuing Education of Shanxi Normal University*, 66-67.

Fang, L. (2011). Inheritance of skills and social development-From the perspective of art anthropology. *Journal of Jiangnan University*, 118.

Hu, S. (2022). The historical evolution of ancient Chinese characters in ceramic decoration art. *China Culture Daily*, 1-2.

Li, J. (2021). Analysis on the technicality and artistry of installation works of art. *Tomorrow Fashion Magazine*, 34-36.

Ma, X. (2013). *New media installation art*. Nanjing University Press.

Zheng, X. (2022). On the concept of objects in installation art creation. *Literature and Art Weekly*.