

## **THE INTERTWINEMENT OF TRANSCULTURAL AESTHETICS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CHINESE FOLKLORE IN INTERIOR DESIGN**

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### **Abstract**

*This article discusses in-depth the involvement of the dialectics of cross-cultural aesthetics between two cultures in the form of the application of Chinese folklore in the cultural environment in Indonesia, in various aspects and the goals that accompany it. This research uses the theory of transcultural aesthetics, which is used to analyze the two primary data regarding the role of the aesthetic elements of symbols contained in Chinese folklore used in this study. Departing from an assumption that in the patterns of assimilation at the local level positive values are often found that can be developed. So thus this study aims to examine the involvement of cross-cultural aesthetics in its involvement as a solution in responding to challenges regarding aesthetic principles globally to locally, and vice versa. As a cultural product, interior design works with various ethnicities with all their forms and dynamics, must be able to merge into a design concept through empathy, understanding and the design process uses design thinking. Including various matters in which it intersects with the underlying factors, including the political sector, the economy and the social-community dimension simultaneously. As it is known that the design process in scientific discourse shows the stages of a sequential way of thinking, connected with cause and effect between one another which is sometimes equipped with a feedback flow.*

**Keywords:** *Transcultural Aesthetics, Chinese Folklore, Creativity, and Interior Design*

## Introduction

The pace of the development in the millennial era is marked by the dependence of society in all aspects of life on advances in information technology via the Internet. The millennial generation self-actualized in its own way with its involvement with various facilities that are very diverse from information technology. Starting from daily activities to communicating and transacting through social media, which influences their behavior and thoughts. This generation, which is part of a global society, tends to be more consumptive and in the way they consume it, they trust influencers more than advertisements.

Behind it all, traditional art or tradition itself is a topic that is always interesting to discuss on social media in various forums. When people talk about tradition, they get the impression that tradition is something that is fixed. In fact, the tradition is slowly always changing. The term preserving tradition does not mean that one hundred percent maintains the tradition, but becomes part of the growing tradition in continuous dialogue with the times. According to Gerald L. Bruns (2005), there is no such thing as tradition; traditions are multiple, conflicted and open, subject to revision, reproducibility. Tradition exists as a movement back and forth between past claims and appropriations (adjustments) to them. The same thing was conveyed by Genevieve Later (2005), that tradition is a kind of continuity; elements originating from the original tradition may be rejected or accepted. If many elements originating from this tradition are rejected, a new tradition is likely to be formed. Nowadays, cultural preservation is very important but shifts in traditions are very likely to occur and cannot be prevented.

Traditional art should be able to captivate the millennial generation with their lifestyle, which is of course different from that of the past. Actualization of traditional arts must be re-actualized so that they can develop according to the needs of the millennial era through the development of cultural industry. Thinking about traditional arts as a treasure in interior design study education really needs to be applied to allow encouragement in thinking through design thinking methods (design thinking). Design thinking is the process of generating explanations about iterative processes using unique and creative techniques with results that exceed initial expectations that jump over the boundaries of expectations, this is of course very important in producing a design work with certain characteristics in a design. Design thinking is a pattern of thinking in solving problems with an integrative way of thinking (Martin, 2009), meaning is the ability to exploit opposing ideas and oppose all obstacles to create new solutions through a balance in using technological feasibility, economic feasibility. The design incorporates three main components: 1) User-focused, 2) Collaborative, and 3) Experimental. To achieve these three things, the three components must play a maximum role during the ideation process, which eliminates the fear of failure and is able to think outside of the box. In the problem-solving-based approach there is a

tendency to focus on the problems at hand, but in thinking design will result in the creation of innovative solutions to answer challenges more satisfactorily.

In interior design, design thinking is what people think about in order to create interior design goals that are as expected in the creation. They recognize and determine information that is relevant to their goals by developing alternatives, selecting and determining so that they will be satisfied in achieving the results, if they are not satisfied they can revise their approach until they reach the meeting point and they can continue to learn through the experiences they gain. In addition to the process, they include several issues in creating the design, namely environmental friendliness that can be in the form of local wisdom as the starting point for the design. Sensitivity to local wisdom by digging from its historical roots will produce a design that is unique in accordance with the problems it faces. (Killmer, 2014).

The success of designers in processing their designs in various functions and uses will be easily accessible with the most sophisticated information technology tools today. This makes the interior designer's position to seize this opportunity as a challenge in order to be able to represent interior design through a variety of cultural distinctive colors that become its identity.

Referring to the description above, this article will be focused on the design process through a cross-cultural perspective, namely the culture of the Chinese state through its living folklore as the color of the traditional life of Chinese citizens. To what extent did immigrant culture (Chinese) synergize with local culture from Indonesia, especially with regard to history covering the area from Batavia to Banten and its surroundings? Aligning their identity with the indigenous people or assimilation, so some residents who come from ethnic Chinese feel they have lost their identity. This situation is unfavorable for the mental health of a group of immigrant ethnic groups living in a country that adheres to the principle of *Bhineka Tunggal Ika*, which means that although they have different ethnic groups, they are still one. This has an impact on residents who come from the Chinese ethnic group, which results in experiencing amnesia, which means the inability to recall about the past, which is called auto hypnotic amnesia. The discriminatory prohibition coupled with the Presidential Decree on the prohibition of Chinese-language schools and publications made the Chinese ethnic group even more assimilated. Pearl S. Buck calls it The Dragon Seed. (Danandjaja, 2007).

Batavia and Tangerang are areas where people's parties such as Cap Go Me are held, which are usually held in several places, such as Glodok, Pasar Senen, Jatinegara and Bogor. In addition, there are boat races on the Ciliwung River, Pasar Baru River, Besar River, Pasir River, Fish Market, and Angke River and in Tangerang (Benteng). Apart from that, it is also known as the celebration of the Chinese New Year which is celebrated with various celebrations, food

and drinks imported from the country of the ancestors as well as local food such as milkfish from ponds in Cilincing and typical Chinese basket cakes and so on. (Sholahuddin, 2016).

### **Materials and Methods**

Creswell (2014) sees research data as having two types: primary and secondary data. Primary data is data obtained directly through direct observation of two research objects in the form of the work of studio design final assignment students of the Interior Design Study Program, Faculty of Civil Engineering and Planning, Gunadarma University, class of 2018 which will be examined in 2022. Observation techniques are used to delve into the final tasks in the form of design reports. While secondary data is data obtained through library research in the form of research/journal results, other references that support research. The implementation of primary data techniques is by researching and observing their process in designing interior design projects as objects of interest, by: 1) Observing the design process in the form of analysis (problem identification, how to solve problems. 2) Synthesis stage, in the form of ideation, selection, implementation and evaluation The design process is also carried out through design thinking by carrying out stages in the form of: 1) Immerse; 2) Invent; and 3) Implement. A problem statement that is based on strong evidence obtained during the observation period to generate potential design solutions reinforces this. The next process is to build a design solution and provide feedback and evaluate the design solution before it is implemented. The research analysis refers to the cross-cultural aesthetic theory (Tanchio, 2014) that involves Chinese Folklore, Creativity and Interior Design.

### **Transcultural/Cross-Cultural Aesthetics**

Transcultural/cross-cultural aesthetics demands a very specific understanding of the nature of consciousness. This will require accountability from art practitioners to the ultimate reality in history; furthermore art practitioners will demand theoretical accountability to the ultimate reality in humanity (Tanchio, 2014). Husserl (2001 in Tanchio, 2014) said that the contemporary reality experienced through our intention and presence in consciousness is what makes aesthetics a living synthesis. Transcultural/cross-cultural aesthetics can be seen as the intentionality of an effort to become trans-aesthetic that is strong, meaningful, and beautiful, the way it appears, and the experience is an integral whole.

### **Chinese Folklore**

Chinese folklore is part of Chinese culture which has been inherited and spread from generation to generation among Chinese people, both those who live in mainland China and those who have migrated to various countries, especially Indonesia, both traditionally and in various different versions, both in oral form and accompanied by Movement in the form of cues or mnemonic devices (Danandjaja, 1997). The term folklore comes from the

English compound word folklore, consisting of two words: folk and lore. So Chinese folklore is part of Chinese culture, both those who live in Mainland China and outside. Consisting of the majority of tribes such as the Fucien, Hakka, Teo-Chiu, Hailam and so on, all of whom are called the Han people from the origin of the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220) and ethnic minorities such as Uighurs, Tibetans, Mongols, Manchus and so on.

Forms of folklore consist of folklore (legend, myth, folktale), religion, kinship structure, life cycle, clan, writing system, calligraphy, medicine, folk parties, folk games, martial arts, music arts, musical instruments and the art of worship buildings called kelenteng. In Chinese culture, the plan and space forms in vernacular (traditional) buildings are derived from their philosophy of life, which has a special hierarchical and symbolic meaning. Such as: Circular Plan (circular shape) as a symbol of heaven / heaven, Square Plan (square shape) symbol of Earth (earth), Rectangular Plan (rectangle) is intended for the courtyard (open space area). These forms are derived from ancestral, conservative, artistic expression.

Chinese culture has a philosophy of living close to nature, so that its decorative folklore is full of symbols of nature in their daily lives which are applied to architecture, space, objects of use and complementary ornament of Feng Shui is symbolized as wind and water which means good luck, health and closeness to God. In addition, these decorations have many philosophies and symbolic values such as Fu and Shou which mean: 1) luck 2) Longevity 3) Immortality/immortality. This symbol has various variants and styles of calligraphy such as: 1) Swastika 2) Curve 3) Spiral 4) Stylized plants 5) Animals 6) Creatures of Mythology. This decoration is believed to have the meaning of success and a source of energy. This can be found in various designs, for example building/architectural layout plans, Kanji Writing, Calligraphy decorative patterns. Other inspiration in the art of decorating is obtained from stylized forms of animals such as: Dragon (Dragon), Lion (Lion), Bird (Phoenix, Hong bird), Butterfly (Butterfly which is considered a symbol of Good Fortune) / Fu (Luck). (Harahap, 2012).

## **Creativity**

Creativity is one of the qualities in which there is a process that produces new responses that contribute to original problem solutions and makes a meaningful contribution to culture, by communicating a new concept (product) obtained as a result of a mental process (process) in generating ideas. . Creativity is the ability to create new combinations based on existing data, information or elements. The results of creation do not always come from something completely new, but can also be a combination of existing ideas from experience and knowledge that individuals already have. The combination of these ideas will be something new and have innovative value.

Talking about design cannot be separated from discussions about physical objects or products, around their invention, development, production and marketing that regard originality and effectiveness as two distinctive elements of a creative idea. Most approaches in modern design include matters relating to human interaction, for example in user-centred or human-centered design philosophies, requiring a systematic basic conception of roles and implications resulting from human perception and the stages of emotional-cognitive processing related to design the resulting product. Christian, (2019).

According to notes from the Intellectual Property and Human Rights Module (2020), in developing a design, the creative process focuses on the embodiment of novelty in design. The creative process in design is the stage in pouring ideas from something that was in wishful thinking into a change of shape so as to create visual appeal. These compositions have different levels of creativity depending on the ability of the designer. In creating attractive designs in terms of form and concept, (Nilsson 2011) divides creativity in the Taxonomy of Creative Design into the following levels: 1) Imitation 2) Variation 3) Combination 4) Transformation 5) Original Creation.

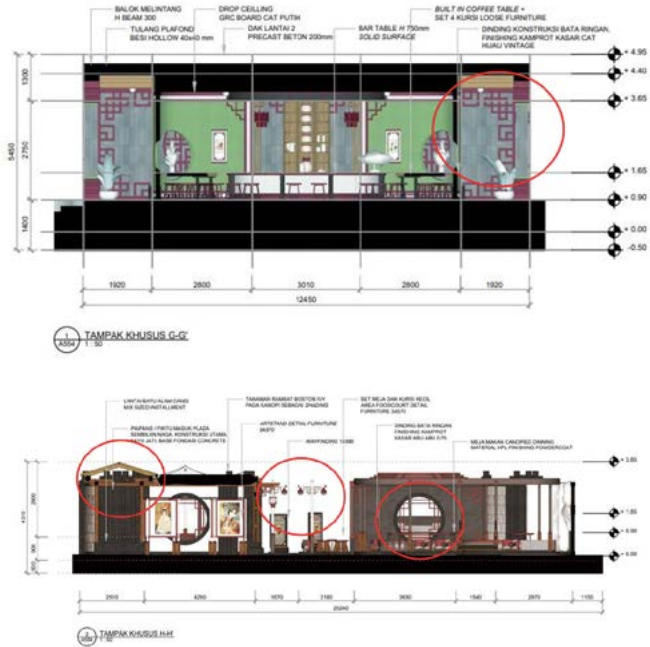
## **Interior Design**

### **Urban Interior Space Chinatown, Petak Sembilan, Taman Sari, West Jakarta**

(Final Project Design Work by: Jiko Candra)

Design concept: **Great Unity**. 大同 . Dàtóng

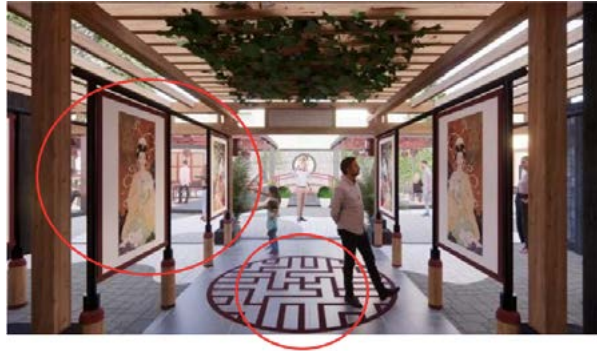
It is a picture of utopia in Chinese stories, poetry and poetry. The Great Unity is described as a “place” where all people can live in harmony and work together with one another. This area is an area where the majority of the population is Chinese with Chinese lineage. This interior urban area is designed so that Chinatown is rich in historical and cultural values of the overseas Chinese (*Peranakan*). The Chinatown area complex generally consists of shops, houses of worship, and settlements/residential areas. Glodok is one of the largest and oldest Chinatown complexes in Indonesia. Petak Sembilan is an area that has existed since the reign of the Dutch East Indies in Indonesia and is a witness to the cultural history of the Indonesian Chinese community in Jakarta. Petak Sembilan consists of a market, a temple complex and settlements. This design is intended to answer today's need for an interior urban area that meets the demands of the habits of the people in the Petak Sembilan Chinatown area to have a habit of gathering and socializing. Meanwhile, the number of tourists visiting Petak Sembilan Chinatown continues to increase following the population growth of DKI Jakarta. Consequently, the need for community space is getting higher to facilitate activities. Its cultural mission is to anticipate the influence of globalization that makes the younger generation tend to like the influence of Western culture compared to loving the culture of their ancestors/ancestors. This is also to anticipate the urban interior environment/urban interior facilities that are not designed at all in the midst of dense population and traffic that has not been perfectly organized.



Pictures 1 and 2: Slice view of Food Court Area. (Source: Jiko Candra, 2022)



Pictures 3: Entrance hall, Nine Dragons. (Source: Jiko Candra, 2022)



Pictures 4: Lobby, Nine Dragons

The application of simple geometric shapes and lines becomes the center of attention in the lobby area.  
(Source: Jiko Candra, 2022)



Picture 5: The atmosphere of the Transition Area - By raising a famous painting from China in the form of a painting with watercolor tells the life of the wise men and scholars and geometric shapes and usage white and natural wood color.  
(Source: Jiko Candra, 2022)



Pictures 6 : Atmosphere of Amphitheater—presents various attractions in the form of movement, dance and music atmosphere reminiscent of the culture of their country of origin.  
(Source: Jiko Candra, 2022)





Pictures 7: Atmosphere of Food Court–The use of combined geometric shapes and linear lines creates a cheerful & dynamic atmosphere in the form of circulation/access for visitors to visit the food counter.

(Source: Jiko Candra, 2022)



Pictures 8 : Baqua Dining Area

(Source: Jiko Candra, 2022)



Pictures 9 and 10: Atmosphere of Food Court – Baqua Dining Area

(Source: Jiko Candra, 2022)



Pictures 11: Application of Chinese geometric patterns with various variations, both vertical, horizontal, diagonal, diapers and the use of red maroon and the natural color of the wood and stone on treatments wall insulation.

(Source: Jiko Candra, 2022)

### **Hotel Interior Design in Tangerang, Banten**

(Final Thesis Design Work by: Shela Septianingsih)

Design concept: **Lenggang Cisadane**

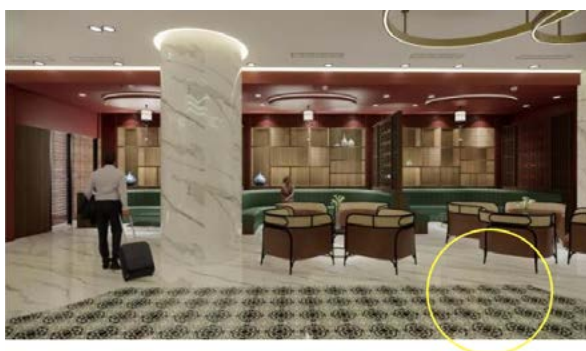
Lenggang Cisadane consists of ten dance movements namely *landan*, *keupat*, *salute*, *leungsar*, *cocor duck*, *enjoyt sinpay*, *keupat lingget*, *lontong canting*, *kewer dua*, and *sontang lageda* that describe the agility, joy and beauty of the people of Tangerang.

Tangerang City is the largest city in Banten province, located at 106°33' - 106°44' East Longitude and 6°05'–6°15 South Latitude). Having a geographical location directly adjacent to DKI Jakarta makes this city a strategic area. The strategic location of the city provides advantages for the development of Tangerang City. The rapid development of industry, trade, business, and hotels as well as the availability of access such as toll roads and Soekarno-Hatta International Airport make it easy for the interaction between cities. The easy accessibility of facilities and infrastructure and the ease for investment make the city of Tangerang have promising prospects as a location for the development of the urban activity sector, one of which is infrastructure development.

Hotel Horison Grand Serpong. This hotel underwent a rebranding in 2018 and is managed by PT. Metropolitan Golden Management. The vision of the new manager is, "to become a world- class hospitality company that combines local cultural wisdom with Indonesian authenticity". After observing in the field, it can be concluded that in the rebranding process at Hotel Horison Grand Serpong there is no local wisdom identity that can mark the existence of the hotel by elevating the locality as a tourism destination which is a memory for visitors who stay and do activities in the area.

The city of Tangerang is an area that has unique characteristics and culture, one of which is the existence of a Chinese community known as the Chinese Benteng community. China Benteng is a unique Chinese community. Unlike the Chinese *peranakan* in general, the Benteng Chinese have dark skin color and big (not slanted) eyes. Their ancestors were ethnic Chinese who came from Hokkien who came to Tangerang and lived in the Pasar Lama area for generations. The Old Market Area or Jalan Ki Samaun is the first settlement of the Benteng Chinese ethnicity. Now it is the forerunner of Tangerang City. Most of the Benteng Chinese currently live in Tangerang Chinatown area, namely in Sewan Village, Neglasari District.

Another uniqueness of the Benteng Chinese community is that they have acculturated and adapted to the environment and local culture of the Banten people, and some of them have even embraced Islam and married local residents. They can no longer speak Chinese; every day they use Sundanese and Betawi language besides speaking Indonesian. The Chinese Benteng phenomenon is a clear evidence of how harmonious Chinese culture is with local culture, which is assimilated fluidly and harmoniously.



Pictures 12: Hotel Lobby with a geometric pattern on the floor covering design.  
(Source: Shela Septianingsih, 2022)



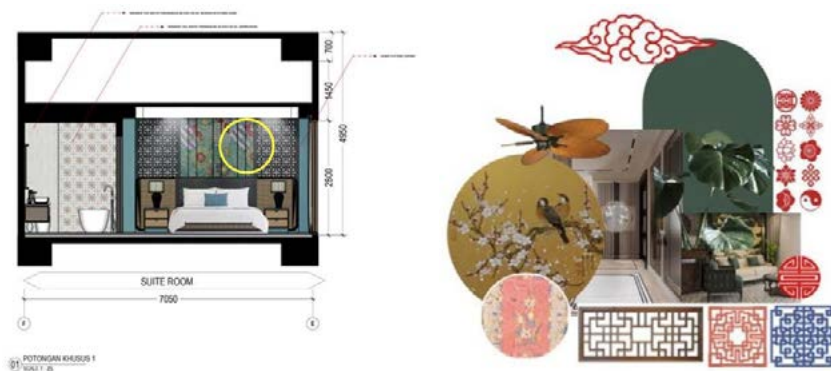
Pictures 13: Hotel Lobby and Restaurant Area, geometric elements and the use of red maroon & golden yellow as a wall panel.  
(Source: Shela Septianingsih, 2022)



Pictures 14: Application of maroon and golden beige and combined with wood elements as well simple geometric shapes in Spa Area  
(Source: Shela Septianingsih, 2022)



Pictures 15: Suite Room – The application of a bright turquoise green color and a combination of wood elements and the use of Sundanese batik patterns on the wall panels and simple geometric shapes gives an elegant impression, comfortable and quiet.  
(Source: Shela Septianingsih, 2022)



Pictures 16 and 17: Slice Image of Suite Room and mood boards  
(Source: Shela Septianingsih, 2022)

## Results and Discussion

There is a very close relationship from cross-cultural aesthetic theory between Chinese culture in dialogue with Indonesian culture in this case culture in Jakarta today, is seen as a linkage (close linkage) between how the creative process is in processing various visual and dialectical elements in both designs from interior design with different functions, goals and objectives between the two. For the first work, the aim is to recall and create involvement between ethnic immigrants and their ancestral culture and how they respond to the ethnic responses of local people to their culture. This is intended to maintain harmony between two different cultures with clear purposeful functions.

It is emphasized that the role of designer creativity in creating interior design products through the processing of Chinese folklore, namely urban interior design in the form of the Chinatown area, which is located in Glodok, Taman Sari in the West Jakarta area, is expected to represent a utopian picture of folklore in the form of a closely related to Chinese stories, poetry, & poetry. Of course, this can be an adhesive for the formation of a long-standing cultural community in Indonesia that has been assimilated with local culture since the Batavia era, or modern Jakarta for the millennial generation. It can be said that one of the causes of the generation gap is also influenced by the flow of digital technology advances so that the millennial generation is eroded by the influence of Western culture.

Changes in the culture of a society have a very close relationship with the design of that society. Vice versa, design changes will also have an impact on existing social activities in society. This can be seen in how people's behavior and consumptive patterns can be affected by advertising and the design of a product. Advertising as one of the results of the design process will have an influence on the mindset of its viewers.

Through visualization of various variants of shapes and patterns from various ornaments and decorations that adapt geometric shapes, flora and fauna that live in China's ancestral lands, it is hoped that this will cure auto hypnotic amnesia so that the young millennial generation will not forget their ancestors. The Great Unity is described as a "place" where all people can live in harmony and work together with one another and uphold their ancestral traditions.

In the second study, namely in the concept of hospitality interior design in the form of rebranding a hotel in Tangerang which emphasizes the emergence of local cultural identity with the concept: Lenggang Cisadane, put forward the process of acculturation of Chinese *peranakan* culture with local culture (Tangerang, Banten) by processing local dance themes as a dynamic movement that synergizes the assimilation process to run elegantly. This is obtained by being creative in processing these cross- cultural aesthetics into a unifier that

produces elegant works with a touch of Chinese culture, which are elevated as cross-cultural aesthetics, by processing them with a soft and elegant touch. The aesthetic theory that refers to how complex or how simple the use of cross-cultural aesthetic elements can easily solve the problems and demands that are desired in an interior design with a different focus and design goals.

## **Conclusion**

The conclusion drawn from the discussion above is that art practice precedes and produces art theory, not the other way around. But the practice of art itself is determined by the affective impact and inspiration of art itself around the world. This means that in practice art is an affective art form of art itself. Mediator-praxis was developed to introduce the affective creative act of art, and each of these acts, too, is an artistic practice of reflection and reconciliation of a relationship that reconnects art with nature and aesthetic qualities.

From this transcultural/cross-cultural art practice, theoretical activities emerge, which explore and explain the purpose of art in all its forms and manifestations, including interior design. Thus art theory functions as a collaborator of art practice, demonstrating it as the affective impact of art and demonstrating repeated aspirational imagination. As Karl Jaspers reminds us in *The Great Philosophers* (1962, 1966), this brings us to knowledge about ourselves. We cannot simply contemplate the purpose of art in its variations without first contemplating our own nature and intentions. Transcultural/cross-cultural theoretical reflections must arise from art practice for art's sake and for art's sake if it is to be juxtaposed with creativity methodology. Contemporary art practice is not only the right context to carry out theoretical thinking and transcultural/cross-cultural meditation, but also intrinsically a culture-building element which is a theoretical activity in a mediator's praxis which is often the source of all innovation and creativity in art practice. For that reason, the conclusion here is that the theory of art in question is always a living synthesis.



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