

Contemporary painting inspired by beliefs and the aesthetics of flower bathing

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ABSTRACT

This research objective is to create contemporary paintings inspired by the beliefs and aesthetics of the Mandi Bunga, or flower bathing ritual. The study employs qualitative research methods such as documentary search and field data collection, surveys, observation, interviews, and questionnaires. The informants include experts, professionals, and individuals involved in the practice of flower bathing. This study explores the theoretical frameworks of cultural diffusion, structural functionalism, myth, semiology, and aesthetics to get a deeper appreciation and understanding of flower bathing. These conceptual frameworks guide the development of contemporary paintings that encapsulate the ideology and aesthetics of flower bathing.

The research found out that the beliefs in the three southern border provinces can be classified as community beliefs, originating from the collective way of life, culture, religious institutions, lifestyles, treatments, and rituals observed by the people. These beliefs are indicative of the shared values and customs that influence the identity and activities of the group.

The region's religious beliefs are largely Islamic, with the majority of the population identifying as Muslim. However, the area's historical evolution has had a considerable impact on the local belief systems. The people's manner of life emerged as a result of a fusion of beliefs, beginning with the cultural influence of Brahmanism and ancient Hinduism, which were prevalent from the 7th to the 11th Buddhist centuries. Furthermore, Mahayana Buddhism played a significant role during this period. The pervasive influence of Islam during the Buddhist era of the 18th century has had enduring consequences, persistently molding the region's religious landscape to this day. The region's unique rituals and customs demonstrate the fusion of principles that occurred over a period beyond a millennium.

There are two main approaches to understanding the aesthetics of the flower bathing. First, the aesthetics of flower form comprise the flowers' physical attributes, such as shape, structural elements, and color, which highlight the unique characteristics of different flowers. It also includes flower group arrangement, open space use, three-dimensional shape development, and the rhythmic and swaying movements of the flowers throughout the event. Second, the aesthetics of floral beliefs link these visual features to spiritual and artistic refinement, transforming the event from a ritual to a long-standing cultural practice. Contemporary paintings, particularly oil paintings on linen canvas, highlight the relationship between art and belief. The flower bathing tradition inspired 419 pieces of art that represent the ideals and aesthetics associated with flowers. These works convey a deeper understanding of the way of life of the Thai-Malay people in the three southern border provinces.

This research article is part of a doctoral student's research on the beliefs and aesthetics of flowers in the Mandi Bunga, or flower bathing ritual, with the objective of creating contemporary paintings. The student is a participant in the Doctor of Philosophy Program in Culture, Fine Arts, and Design Research at the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, KhonKaen University.

Keywords : Contemporary painting, beliefs, the aesthetics, flower bathing

INTRODUCTION

The three southern border provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat are predominantly Muslim. The area's history has had a significant impact on the beliefs of the inhabitants of the three southern border provinces, particularly their way of life. Ancient Brahmanism and Hinduism, which have played a

significant role in the region since the seventh Buddhist century, are the sources of most of these ideas. The worship of gods, ghosts, and deceased ancestors exemplifies reverence, worship, and gratitude. (Bindsan, 2002) The local community center has been observing Mahayana Buddhism from pre-11th century to 18th century, concurrently with the influence of Islam in the region. (Madakakul, 1976) The culture and beliefs of the southern region reveal a blend of religious and cult-related traditions, where original beliefs are deeply integrated into the way of life. These beliefs are expressed through rituals that are central to the community's ceremonies. These rituals often include acts of worship, offerings, and decorative elements, with flowers playing a key role as a symbolic and aesthetic component in these practices. (Department of Cultural Promotion, Ministry of Culture, 2016)

Flowers hold a significant place in the culture of the three southern border provinces, playing a role in a variety of religious and traditional practices. Brahman-Hindu, Chinese, and Mahayana Buddhist traditions commonly use flowers as offerings. Local handicrafts, such as clothing, Behamas and Bulan kites, Batik, Kris head craving dessert molds, and Islamic architectural motif, incorporate flowers beyond rituals, reflecting their aesthetic and cultural importance. People of all faiths in the region have cherished flowers for centuries, using them in important life ceremonies from birth to death, in accordance with Brahman-Hindu and Mahayana Buddhist beliefs. Religious and spiritual traditions closely tie these offerings, both tangible and mystical. Flowers, known as Mandi Bungain Malay, have a deep connection to local ceremonies and reflect the inherited customs passed down through generations. Rituals such as the flower bathing, which uses fragrant flowers of seven colors and seven types to reinforce and highlight these longstanding beliefs in the three southern border provinces, exemplify this.

The primary element of flower bathing ritual is the requirement of fresh flowers, which must be of seven different colors and seven different varieties. A historical midwife or female traditional healer, known as Tok Bidan, or a male traditional healer, known as Tok Mudeng, officiates the event. Participants in the flower bathing ritual may be any gender. The indigenous Yawi language guides the flower bathing proceedings. The person who serves as the ceremony's conductor, whether female or male, has the ability and unique authority to establish communication and connection between the realm of humanity and the realm of spirits. (Hemmet, 1996)

The Yawi language uses poetry in the flower bathing ritual to communicate with sacred items and express deep respect. A speech of this nature is believed to bestow a feeling of liveliness and luminosity upon everyone present at the event, akin to the initial blooming. From birth, both males and females possess the ability to engage in this ritual, regardless of their age or religious orientation. The ritual of flower bathing intricately links the conviction in botanical beauty. The structured ritual includes quite a range of phases. It boosts the morale of those who participate in the ritual, as well as their family members. This belief has been passed down from all successive generations. To this day, the three southern border provinces have preserved their picturesque aesthetics and inherent worth.

Aesthetics in the society of the three southern border provinces can be defined as the recognition of the significance of beauty emerging from a region rich in ethnic, religious, cultural, and linguistic diversity. This aesthetic appeal arises from the preservation of the distinctive attributes of various groups, their cohabitation within society, and the harmonious coexistence they foster. Amidst this diversity, the artwork reflects communal life, shared rituals, and aesthetics, all rooted in a common history and land. (Thongkhachok, 2019) The concept of myth is to be construed literally and regarded as an explanation of the beliefs associated with flowers in the flower bathing, where they are assigned both signifier and signified cultural meanings. The ritual system of flower bathing, which examines shared beliefs within the community, inspires the creation of a series of contemporary paintings that reflect the beliefs and aesthetics of the flowers. The implicit meanings of this ritual underscore the relationships among individuals in society, transcending religious and social divisions, uniting minds, and promoting harmony. Knowledge can reduce the significance of these beliefs and the aesthetics of the blossoms, inspiring contemporary paintings that blend tangible and abstract meanings to create a distinctive and unique aesthetic beauty.

Globalization and the evolution of human needs resulting from evolving beliefs have led to the disappearance or diminution of certain cultures, some of which may no longer be relevant in the current era. In the 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan, Strategy for Reinforcing National Security for the Country's Progress towards Prosperity and Sustainability (Strategy 5), the government and private agencies explicitly acknowledge the recognition of local culture over the past ten years. This awareness is the result of a conscious endeavor to protect and improve the national culture. The primary objective is to underscore the cultivation and advancement of regional community identity. Promoting cultural unity is prioritized. Community aesthetics must recognize and appreciate these distinctions. Understanding the origins, history, and progression of the community, society, and nation strengthens relationships. This encompasses the obligation to safeguard cultural heritage, a shared civilization,

through cultivation, promotion, and recognition. This research process is essential in that it aligns with conservation principles and reveals the beliefs and aesthetics of the communities in the three southern border provinces by examining the beliefs and aesthetics of flowers in the flower bathing ritual to produce contemporary paintings.

Contemporary painting is the product of human intelligence. It possesses a distinctive prototype and the creator's personal attributes. It is a novel creation that embodies the creator's ideals and concepts. At times, paintings function as a visual language, enabling communication between individuals and spirits, beliefs, traditions, and culture within the community. The creator's beliefs and culture, expressed through paintings, must form the foundation of creation. By exploring the impact of flower bathing beliefs and the beauty of flowers on contemporary paintings, we can observe how these beliefs have transformed the daily lives of individuals in the three southern border provinces. These modifications encompass beliefs unique to each culture as well as those borrowed from other cultures.

This research study aims to investigate the extent to which the beliefs and aesthetics of flowers in the flower bathing ritual influence the creation of contemporary paintings, given the aforementioned reasons and significance. The knowledge gained from this study will serve as a foundation for understanding the aesthetics and beliefs associated with flowers in the flower bathing ritual.

Research objectives

To create contemporary paintings that are inspired by the aesthetics and beliefs of flowers in the flower bathing ritual.

Research Method

The researcher examined the target group, data collection tools, data collection techniques, and data verification and analysis as follow:

1. Demographics and target audiences. The researcher conducted qualitative research in this study, utilizing a mixed-methods approach. The researcher selected informants from a variety of groups that were associated with the flowers used in the flower bathing ritual: 1) Key informants, such as historians, folk philosophers, community leaders, and art scholars, who are knowledgeable about the beliefs and aesthetics of the flowers used in the flower bathing and are experts in the history of flowers in this ritual 2) The study includes practitioners such as those who perform flower bathing, participants in the ceremony, beliefs about flowers in each religion, traditions in the southern border provinces, and qualitative research. The researcher employed the purposive sampling method to identify individuals who possessed knowledge and expertise in contemporary art. The study employs a purposive sampling method to investigate the aesthetics and beliefs surrounding flower bathing.

2. Research tools: The qualitative study was conducted by the researcher using the following instruments: The primary objective of the basic survey is to acquire preliminary, comprehensive information regarding the research domain by analyzing documents, textbooks, articles, and related research. The survey will concentrate on the beliefs associated with flowers and the creative information found in painting. The researcher employed a participatory observation method to document the flower bathing ritual's steps from the outset, utilizing both written notes and video recordings. Structured interviews were conducted to gather information on the history and evolution of flower-related beliefs in the context of flower bathing, while unstructured interviews were conducted to investigate the creative process of painting.

3. Data Collection: For this study, the researcher gathered data on the beliefs and aesthetics of flowers in flower bathing by conducting documentary searches, consulting textbooks from both domestic and international sources, and reviewing relevant literature. The researcher gathered field data from the study region by conducting initial surveys and interviews in order to analyze the historical beliefs and aesthetics associated with flowers in the flower bathing ritual.

4. Analysis of Data: The data for analysis has been organized by the researcher in accordance with the objectives of the contemporary painting process. The researcher applies research knowledge from both documentary and field studies to analyze data, generating content knowledge and processing ideas within the visual arts context. The objective of the analysis is to identify the work's concept, form, and techniques, all of which are essential for maintaining a consistent relationship between the work and the contemporary painting concept. The following are the processes and steps that are involved: 1) The initial step involves the development of a sketch for the work and the production of contemporary paintings. 2) Conducting an analysis of pertinent literature and developing a conceptual framework for research and development. 3) The data is analyzed and synthesized in accordance with the concepts and theories that have been studied. 4) Producing the work. 5) Examination of the creative work.

To present the findings of the data analysis, the researcher utilized techniques from qualitative research. The process entailed the examination and exposition of the data, the presentation of the research investigation's findings in alignment with the research goals, and the use of the descriptive analysis approach. In addition, the researcher incorporated artistic creations and organized an exhibition.

Outcomes research

The knowledge and creative process details of the study of the creation of contemporary paintings based on the beliefs and aesthetics of flowers in the flower bathing are provided below:

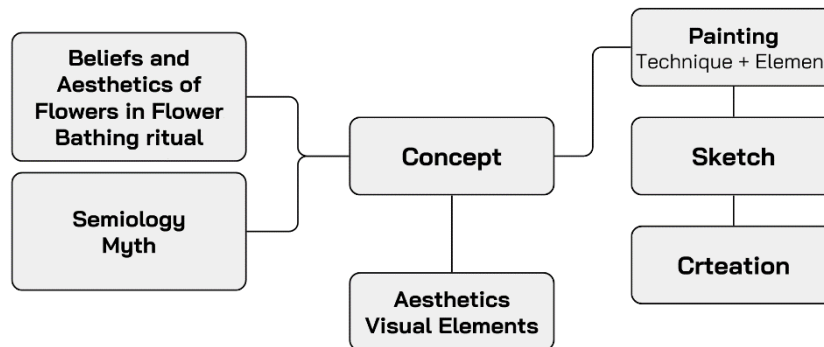


Figure 1. The Development of Contemporary Paintings Inspired by the Beliefs and Aesthetics of Flowers in Flower Bathing.

The creation of contemporary paintings, influenced by the beliefs and aesthetics of flowers in flower bathing ritual, reveals the following:

1. Beliefs of flowers in flower bathing

The research of beliefs about flowers in the flowerbathing found that these beliefs stem from concerns about health and lifestyle. People in the past believed that bathing would cleanse them of negative elements. Since hospitals were not available in earlier times, theflower bathing emerged. To analyze these beliefs, the researcher applied the conceptual framework of Atthakorn (1976), which divides beliefs into two levels: community beliefs and religious beliefs. The researcher further categorizes the beliefs in the ceremony as follows:

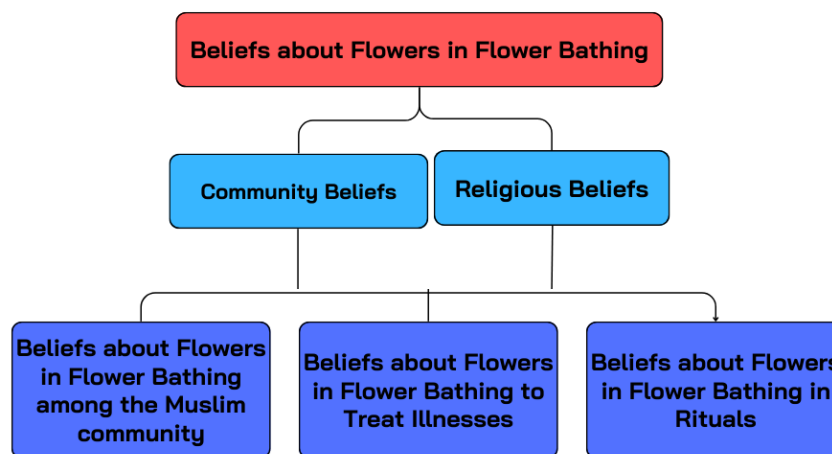


Figure 2. The beliefs of flowers in flower bathing

In accordance with Mani Payomyong’s framework, the investigation of the beliefs associated with flowers in the flower bathing ritual yielded the subsequent results: 1. Confidence is attained through belief. 2) Power is generated by belief. 3) Concrete (including symbols) are generated by belief. Flowers are submerged in the realm of mystical entities, spirits, or genies with their belief. As every life ultimately concludes in death, Islam motivates individuals to concentrate on performing beneficial deeds, adhering to the one God, and imitating God’s example. Make haste to accumulate provisions to sustain yourself in the afterlife prior to your death and perform acts of kindness.

2. Aesthetics of flowers in flower bathing

2.1 Aesthetics of form

1) The following is an analysis of aesthetic form in flower bathing

Table 1. shows the aesthetics of flower patterns in flower bathing

No	Style	Characteristics
1	Shape Form	Form of a flower and key structural features of the flower form
2	Color	Unique characteristics of each flower type are reflected in their colors.
3	Space	Positive space include a cluster of flowers, while open space, or negative space, encompasses elements such as water and the sky. Open space evokes feelings of liberation, ease, and spaciousness, whereas confined open space can evoke a sense of oppression.
4	Volume	Shape refers to the spatial dimensions of an object, including its width, length, depth, or thickness, which give it a three-dimensional physical appearance. Additionally, it can symbolize the perception of space within a two-dimensional artwork.
5	Rhythm	The length of the shape or form of the flower varies, with some being short and thin, while others are long, either dense or thin.
6	Movement	The swaying of the flowers during the flower bathing ceremony results from the interaction between two entities: the flowers in the water and those flowing over the body. This movement is influenced by changes in light and the position of the water's flow, as the flowers drift from one point to another along the water's surface.

2.2 Aesthetics of Beliefs

1) Researchers discovered that the aesthetics of flowers in flower bathing can establish a connection between art and belief, thereby enabling access to spiritual refinement. The intricate rituals integrate this refinement into the ceremony. However, it involves a process of reshaping the mind to enable one to appreciate the beauty and flavor of art. The flowers in the flower bathing are symbolic of brightness, beauty, radiance, growth, prosperity, a new life, beauty, and goodness in terms of their aesthetics. It is evident that the flowers used in the Mani Bukongo ceremony have been present for an extended period of time, resulting in a ritual that has endured to this day. This aesthetic is recognizable to humans and embodies the values of goodness and beauty.

3. Contemporary painting creation based on the beliefs and aesthetics of flowers in flower bathing

The artistic creations consist of 419 oil paintings executed on linen canvas, organized into four sets of works. The research has systematically analyzed the significance of beliefs about flowers in the Mani Bukongo ceremony, both historically and in the present day. Additionally, the study has examined the aesthetic importance of flowers in Mani Bukongo by dividing the analysis into four distinct periods, corresponding to the stages of the flower bathing process. This approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the symbolic and aesthetic roles flowers play throughout the ritual.

1. The pre-flower bath step represents hope.

Technique: Oil painting on linen canvas. Shape: rectangular and square.

Oil painting styles and techniques involve connecting indistinct forms that appear as mere clusters of colors, creating an atmosphere of movement through lines that vary in speed, from slow, gentle strokes to more aggressive sweeps. Artists also use layers of color to express overlapping, heaviness, or lightness, evoking different emotions. Monochrome imagery often conveys a sense of friendliness and lightness, while certain techniques using contrasting colors evoke feelings of alertness or insecurity. These color combinations blend lightness with a sense of weight, capturing abstract emotions. These techniques effectively convey the emotional states of individuals who approach the flowers, seeking relief from suffering and physical or mental discomfort, ultimately striving for success and happiness. Figures 3 and 4 serve as examples of this emotional depth in artistic expression.



Figure 3. Mandi Bunga
no.3 Oil on linen canvas 170 x 180 cm. Year 2023



Figure 4. Mandi Bunga
no.4 Oil on linen canvas 170 x 100 cm. Year 2023

2. The processes of flowers blooming, blossoming, and flourishing form the core of studying the meaning of flowers.

The narrative unfolds through a diverse array of vibrantly colored flowers, showcasing the style and technique of oil painting. A key technique used in this series involves connecting shapes to depict the flowers in varying degrees of clarity, from well-defined forms to more abstract outlines, gradually dissolving the details until only the essence of the flowers remains. This range of clarity and vagueness is not tied to physical distance but is intended to create an illusion of overlapping dimensions. In some instances, the foreground may appear more blurred than the background, adding to the sense of depth and mystery. The objective is to capture the beauty of emotions and sentiments evoked by the blossoming and swaying flowers within an imagined environment. The color palette in these paintings not only conveys the appearance of the flowers but also evokes the atmosphere of an indeterminate location. It suggests specific moments in time—whether morning, evening, or a scene with minimal light. The lines used throughout these works give a sense of dynamic movement, while multiple layers of overlapping colors compose both the flowers and the surrounding atmosphere. The varying weights and lightness of these layers evoke different emotions. Bright, contrasting colors are used to create a sense of vitality, alertness, brightness, freshness, and liveliness. This second series of paintings focuses on the aesthetics of flowers and their profound emotional impact on individuals. For examples, refer to figures 5 and 6.



Figure 5. Mandi Bunga
no.6 Oil on linen canvas 200 x 200 cm. Year 2023



Figure 6. Mandi Bunga
no.12 Oil on linen canvas 180 x 200 cm. Year 2023

3. Aesthetics in Flower Bathing

This series features 19 paintings executed on various canvas sizes and shapes, with the goal of showcasing painting styles and techniques that highlight the aesthetic significance of flower bathing. The narrative is conveyed through the depiction of flowers that appear to float in water, with a distinct color scheme in each piece. A prominent mass of flowers in the paintings evokes the sensation of being submerged underwater, resting on the water's surface, or even floating in the air, each at varying depths. The overlapping of different forms, including flower shapes, water shapes, Bruku shapes, Pruepa shapes, kaffir lime shapes, batik cloth patterns, and water container shapes, creates a layered complexity. Some shapes are indistinct, appearing only as clusters of color, while the color atmosphere itself adds to the sense of movement, with rhythms flowing in various directions. This dynamic effect is achieved by the use of connecting lines, straight lines, dotted lines, and diagonal lines, all overlapping until a clear direction of movement is established within the composition. This interplay of shapes and lines can be seen in figures 7 and 8.



Figure 7. Mandi Bunga
no.15 Oil on linen canvas 200 x 300cm. Year 2023



Figure 8. Mandi Bunga
no.23 Oil on linen canvas 100 cm. Year 2023

4. The Aesthetics After a Flower Bathing

The fourth set of paintings contains the most pieces, with Figure 1, Mandi Bunga No. 33 exemplifying the style and technique of oil painting. This piece emphasizes the connection of shapes that are not clearly defined, appearing instead as clusters of colors. The atmosphere is built through these color groups, with a sense of movement created by lines that range from slow, subtle strokes to vigorous flicks, evoking intense movement. Layers of color are used to express depth, weight, and lightness, eliciting a range of emotions. While some paintings use contrasting colors to convey alertness, the use of monochrome hues in this piece generates a feeling of friendliness and lightness. The interplay between these color combinations produces an effect of excitement, lightness, and enjoyment. Smooth brush strokes guide the viewer's eye throughout the composition, creating an illusion of water swirling around the viewer. Mixed within the water are color clusters suggesting flowers, albeit in their most simplified forms. The intention here is to eliminate all concreteness, leaving only the essence, where the story is told purely through the interplay of color groups and brush strokes. Mandi Bunga No. 33 captures the sensation that follows a bath in flowers. The neutral gray-blue tones, created by blending orange and blue (opposing hues), are softened with white to produce varying intensities of these neutral shades. The color group within the painting conveys themes of water, happiness, and flowers. This expansive work is rich in emotional communication, exploring the various states experienced by individuals who visit the flower baths. The use of vibrant, sparkling colors conveys an optimistic message, suggesting that individuals can transition from physical and mental discomfort to success and happiness, eventually regaining a sense of brightness and renewal.

The third piece, part of a set of six within the fourth and final series, is accompanied by the second piece, Mandi Bunga No. 34. Both of these artworks explore abstract emotions, focusing on the origins of various flowers through the perspective of nature. The central theme is the divine creation of nature, likened to a mother giving birth to the wonders we know as "flowers," which are seen as an important gift to humanity. All three pieces in this series aim to evoke abstract emotions, using flowers as symbols of nature's beauty and the deeper connection between creation and the human experience.

The fourth piece, part of the series with the most works (365 pieces), symbolizes the 365 days of a calendar year. In the context of Mandi Bunga or flower bathing, the ritual is permitted on all days of the week except Fridays, and it is prohibited during Ramadan. The lines, colors, and shapes in each frame represent the days of the year, suggesting that flower bathing is only possible for a maximum of 287 days. The remaining 78 pieces in the artwork, representing the days when flower bathing is restricted, do not contain a specific narrative. Instead, they serve as a visual representation of the absence of the ritual during those periods, creating a balance between ritual practice and spiritual reflection.

The four series of works are contemporary paintings created to reflect the beliefs and aesthetics of flowers in the flower bathing ritual. These paintings focus on both the beauty and the aesthetic experience, encompassing the form of expression, as well as the conceptual depth and artistic beauty of the paintings. This is exemplified in Figures 9 and 10, where the harmony of visual elements and the profound meaning of the flower bathing ritual are brought to life through the painter's craft.



Figure 9. Mandi Bunga
no.35 Oil on linen canvas 200 x 70
cm. Year 2023



Figure 10. Mandi Bunga
no.36 diameter 30 cm Year 2023

The researcher has completed the analysis of the beliefs and aesthetics of flowers in the flower bathing and subsequently created graphics to promote the Mandi Bunga Exhibition at MOCA BANGKOK. The graphics are presented as follows:



Figure 11. Electronic Exhibition
Invitation Card (e-invitation)



Figure 12. Graphics for publicizing exhibitions on social media
(Facebook Instagram)



Figure 13. Exhibition view Mani Bunga
Exhibition
(Flower Bath) at MOCA BANGKOK

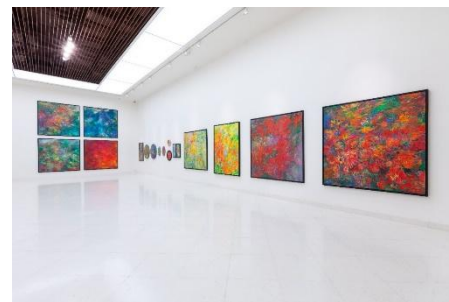


Figure 14. Exhibition view Mani Bunga
Exhibition
(Flower Bath) at MOCA BANGKOK

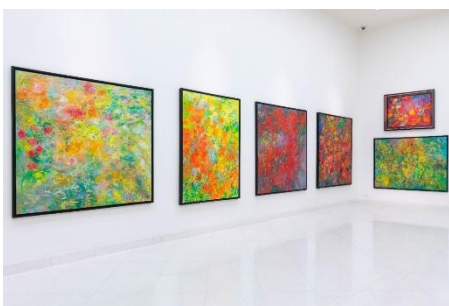


Figure 15. Exhibition view Mani Bunga
Exhibition
(Flower Bath) at MOCA BANGKOK



Figure 16. Exhibition view Mani Bunga
Exhibition
(Flower Bath) at MOCA BANGKOK

Summary and analysis of research findings

Mandi Bunga in the three southern border provinces is a flower bathing ritual, as revealed through the study of contemporary paintings based on the beliefs and aesthetics of flower bathing. The primary components of this ceremony are water and flowers, which emit a fragrant aroma and display seven distinct petal colors. The Malay people of the region associate this ritual with their beliefs, claiming that it can release a substance from the individual being bathed, thereby enhancing their aura and purifying them. This ceremony not only uplifts the individual's morale but also benefits their relatives and family members. The significance and history of flower bathing in the three southern border provinces span thousands of years. The research area is an ancient community, hundreds of years old, and was once the site of an important ancient kingdom, with Yarang as its capital. Evidence suggests that the region initially adhered to Hindu Brahman traditions. Later, during the 11th to 18th Buddhist centuries, Buddhism played a significant role in the area. In the 18th Buddhist century, the region saw the rise of Islam, which continues to influence the area's practices to this day. Hattha (2009) argues that most of the long-standing communities of Langkasuka and Pattani embraced Islam in the latter part of the 18th century. Consequently, the language and other cultural practices became deeply rooted in Islamic religious principles, incorporating traditional customs that align with these principles. The colonization of the region by Malays from Pasai contributed to a significant shift in the religious beliefs of the local population, alongside the spread of cultural practices throughout both the higher and lower regions. This aligns with Leo Frobenius's (1897) theory of cultural diffusion, which posits that the spread of various elements—such as ideas, styles, religions, technologies, languages, and cultures—among individuals within a single culture or between different cultures results in a society with diverse beliefs. These beliefs, in turn, shape the population's way of life and lifestyle. According to this theory, the most impactful culture is the one that pertains to the mind. In the studied area, the way of life is deeply connected to the cultural significance of flowers. Flowers hold importance for individuals throughout their lives, from infancy to death. They are not only symbolic but also serve practical roles as food and medicine, and are used in water for bathing, helping to alleviate mental distress within the local population. According to the findings of Datuk Seri Dr. S. Subramaniam (2016), flower bath therapy has the potential to alleviate mental health problems by reducing cortisol levels (the hormone associated with stress), promoting well-being and relaxation, and increasing endorphin levels, which stimulate a positive emotional state and reduce pain. Additionally, flower bath therapy may help in the prevention of depression. The objective of this study is to introduce flower bath therapy as a potential intervention for improving mental health.

The examination of flower-related beliefs, which are embedded in various aspects of daily life in the three southern border provinces, can be divided into two main categories: community beliefs and beliefs related to religion. Despite this distinction, both categories align with the same overarching objective. Flowers symbolize beauty, growth, freshness, happiness, life force, birth, and rebirth in both cultural and religious contexts. Kosinanont (n.d.) argued that archaeological findings suggest the existence of a prosperous kingdom and a densely populated community spanning 14 provinces. The social conditions of the region were shaped by factors such as geography, economy, and religion. The flourishing of various art forms was a direct result of a Buddhism-based civilization, which emerged through the mutual acceptance of spiritual and material cultures among local communities. As a result, religious and traditional beliefs, despite their more recent expressions, became a defining characteristic of cultural integration. This integration is likely due to the prolonged accumulation and cultivation of these beliefs over time.

Punnotok (1985) explains belief as the unconscious acceptance of supernatural abilities, regardless of whether they are beneficial or harmful to an individual or society. This belief involves the acceptance, respect, and fear of supernatural powers by individuals within a society, even without proven validity. Thus, belief encompasses a vast scope. Spiritualism includes not only belief in spiritual entities, ghosts, spells, superstitions, and witchcraft but also the reverence and worship of natural phenomena that humans highly value, such as trees (Bodhi trees, Banyan trees, large trees), forests, mountains, ponds, and more. In the study of the aesthetics of flowers in the flower bathing ritual, through methods such as observation, interviews, fieldwork, data collection, data processing, and personal experience with flower bathing across various locations, the findings were summarized as follows: There are two forms of aesthetics. First, physical aesthetics, which can be perceived by the senses, including form, taste, smell, color, and sound that can be experienced in the environment. Second, mental aesthetics, which are abstract perceptions that can be processed and expressed through artistic visual elements. The aesthetic value of "content" is a phenomenon where images reflect society by blending the artist's experience with concepts related to observed objects. This idea is explored by Wianchai (2005), who studied the aesthetic process derived from local concepts in contemporary art. According to Wianchai the "style" represents a semi-abstract imaginative perspective, which becomes evident in the "composition" of the artwork. This

approach allows for a fusion of personal insight and broader societal reflections within the visual form of the piece.

The researcher has interpreted the meaning of the beliefs and aesthetics of flowers in the flower bathing ritual through the creation of 419 two-dimensional contemporary paintings, organized into four sets. This interpretation aligns with aesthetics theory, which often defines aesthetics in terms of beauty. Beauty is a crucial element in the creation of art, and understanding and appreciating it is essential. The process relies on the unique experiences and perceptions of each individual, contributing to the overall interpretation of the artwork. According to Tatiya (2004), defining beauty is a challenging task. However, humans rely on beauty to feel lively, refreshed, and delighted. The perception of beauty, valued as pleasure, satisfaction, and aesthetic appeal, is crucial to human experience. Beauty can be perceived through various senses, including sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Aesthetics often arise from specific situations and perceptual experiences. When these aesthetic experiences are applied in the creation of art, the process generates works that are complete in their ideas, expressions, or techniques, resulting in a more profound artistic outcome. According to Tangcharoen (2003), aesthetics is the ability to perceive beauty that can be experienced both visually and mentally. It encompasses the appreciation of beauty through the senses as well as the mental or physical representations of that beauty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The research study on the creation of contemporary paintings inspired by the beliefs and aesthetics of flowers in flower bathing derives the following recommendations.

1. Proposed applications of the research findings

1.1 Explore the historical background, cultural practices, and artistic elements of flowers in flower bathing to enhance the knowledge of students and those with a general interest.

1.2 The objective is to provide information that can serve as a resource for the government or community to establish guidelines for social work and documenting community history. Additionally, this knowledge can be used as an alternative approach to align with the national economic development vision on Soft Power, thereby enhancing prospects and potential for community development in the tourism sector in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat provinces. These initiatives will encourage the participation of interested individuals or tourists in cultural activities, with a focus on education and the dissemination of historical information.

2. Recommendations for Future Research

2.1 Detailed information regarding the history and an in-depth examination of the steps and processes associated with bathing for therapeutic purposes should be included in the research. Bathing as a therapeutic approach encompasses a diverse array of forms; however, there is currently no systematic documentation or research on this subject. There are numerous factors that necessitate additional investigation and data collection.

2.2 Prospective scholars may expand this research methodology to encompass other domains of art, such as handicrafts, product design, and ecotourism, with the aim of deepening comprehension and promoting its progress for future generations.

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