



## The Street Painters' Lives and Their Social Space Marking

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### Abstract

The study of *The Street Painters' Lives and Their Social Space Marking* emphasizes its importance of the painters' life stories that illustrate their different ways of life as well as their art enchantment. The great fascination with art has driven the painters to create their works from their own experiences until those works of art become their personal identities. The painters' lives happen along Pattaya beach, so the study aims to collect useful data by employing interviewing and observing methods. This study is to present its findings in descriptive analysis as follows.

The painters' ways of life demonstrate their differences in educational and family backgrounds. They also represent their artist honor that has nothing to do with their status in the society. The painters just want to create the fascinating works that finally can earn a living and afford their families with no concern whether or not they are called the artists.

The street painters in Pattaya are different from the main consciousness of art circle. The painters' identity runs under social conditions, so they have to assimilate themselves to the change of the area. The unstable economic system considerably influences their ways of life. Therefore, the painters' identity is changeable by using the freedom of art to go on with their lives.

In conclusion, the painters' identity has been developed from the conditions of the social structure. It results in development and stability of the society that belongs to the modern world by its own identity. Consequently, the findings of this study will be effective for other unique groups of people who are under the same social conditions.

### Importance and point of the problem

Every nation has its own art and culture that has been gradually accumulated for a long time by its people. Art is created by human beings and leaves its history such as antiques for the next generations to study. Therefore, art seems like blood driving human creation and imagination.

People never stop having imagination and that is the most exceptional talent of humans. Art comes from three principles, including artists, inspiration, and materials. These principles allow the painters to fulfill their intentions of painting. Therefore, works created without creative

imagination of humans are not any kinds of art.

Thai art has been developed from prehistoric time, Dhavaravati, Sriwichai, Lop Buri, Sukhothai, and Ayutthaya to Ratanakosin. The works of art are divided into two types including the art for emotional response and the art for decoration and use. The special characteristic of these two types still indicate the identity of Thai tradition that has been passing from generation to generation.

The art style of Ratanakosin can be found nowadays in temples, palaces, and houses. Various kinds of art are found in this period such as

architecture, painting, and handicraft of which beauty is influenced by the current state circumstances. For example, when the first king of Ratanakosin moved the capital from Thon Buri to Bangkok, the Great Palace and the Emerald Buddha Temple were built and decorated by numbers of artist to create the outstanding beauty. Although art has been supported by every king of Thailand, there are no art schools in those days.

However, the art program in the university aims to teach the students both knowledge and experience according to their abilities for their future careers.

This study particularly talks about the visual art of which principle requires the students to learn the art identity to become the artists. In contrast, not all of them become the artists because only knowledge and experience in works of art are not sufficient. There are also other personal factors. Thus, to become an artist depends on individual reasons.

Although the art academic systems in real life are different, they are the major tool to improve the painters' quality of life. The art education requires the graduates to produce the works in their individual styles. Those unique works will finally benefit their future careers.

Even though the best curriculum is provided for students to focus on their future abilities, the university cannot control the future careers of its students. Especially in art study, some majors want the students to become the artists, but finally some students do not. Therefore, this observation shows that no one can take control of the future of the art students.

On the other hand, there are some painters who do not follow the normal trend as well as the academic system. They create their works from nothing but love, attempt, and personal talent. This leads these painters to copy their works from the famous artists and sell them to foreign tourists in Pattaya.

Therefore, the street painters demonstrate a wonderful but realistic image of their alternative lives. Although they are only the street painters, they can earn their livings and take great pride in their status. Presently, a number of the street painters and street galleries have risen dramatically. This indicates that a lot of customers, many international tourists and a few Thais, buy the works.

To present the street painters' stories in Pattaya, nowadays the world famous city, the stories must begin from its popularity that has been recognized over forty years. A huge numbers of international tourists have visited this place of entertainment. Therefore, the existence of the painters cannot be denied.

Although there are not many educated painters in the beginning, there come more graduated artists at present. Moreover, the group is still expanding because some painters who escaped from Tsunami come and join the group at MIKE Shopping Mall.

"First, modern art must be original but the postmodern one must not. Second, modern art must consider the unity but the postmodern one must not. Therefore, contemporary or hybrid style appears from this ideology such as the mixed architecture on a building or a picture combining the realism of Greek or Renaissance with Mickey Mouse.

High art and low art are also not considered in the postmodern. With the integrity, the street art or a piece of works from the art shops becomes as valuable the ones in museums. This concept includes a unique or local style of art.

The heart of the modern art is the acceptance from the specialists, but the postmodern art does not have to be accepted and disagree with those specialists. Moreover, the modernists believe in the westerners as well as their speeches. In contrast, the postmodernists believe that the small groups can make their own speeches like the westerners. It indicates that the

postmodernists strongly disagree with the modernists.

According to the ideology above, it explains the existence of the street painters in Pattaya and also leads to the study concepts as follows.

### **Visual art and artists**

This study specially talks about the visual art which its principle requires the students to learn the art identity to become the artists. In contrast, not all of them become the artists because only knowledge and experience in works of art are not enough. There are other personal factors. Therefore, to become an artist depends on individual reasons.

Although the art academic systems in real life are different, they are the main tool to improve the painters' quality of life. The art education requires the graduates to produce their works in their individual styles. Those unique works will finally benefit their future careers.

### **Point of view towards the street painters in Pattaya**

Pattaya, the sleepless city, is recognized as the famous tourist attraction among international tourists. There are both impressive daytime and nighttime attractions. One of them is the street painters who copy works of the famous artists for earning their living as well as stimulate the economic system.

The art of picture copy began since the GI soldiers' ships docked at Pattaya beach. A lot of bars started up as well as the taste in collecting pictures. Consequently, a group of painters appeared to meet the soldiers' requirement. They have improved and adjusted their ways of life to the westerners' attentions in any kinds of art especially paintings including the art of famous picture copy, expensive picture copy, the paintings from photographs, and the paintings of the Buddha images' faces.

The picture-copy painters depend their earnings on the number of the international tourists who are the major buyers. They want the painters to copy the pictures they bring, so the painters are just the picture imitator, not the artists who employ their own techniques and ideas to paint. Moreover, to become an artist, the painters' works have to be accepted by other artists, according to UNESCO.

After that, the picture-copy painting spreads out to other popular tourist areas such as Chiangmai, Phuket, Koh Samui and floating markets. The business is growing in popularity among the tourists from Europe, U.S.A., and Middle East, resulting in the increasing numbers of the street painters, which indicates the popularity of the careers.

Young generations are paying more attentions to this unique job because of its freedom to do what they love even it is the picture-copy paintings. By the way, this kind of art is not the end of the young generations' lives. They may get a chance to participate in the main consciousness of art like Pratueng Aimcharoen, Jang Saetung, or Mesiem Yipinsoi.

The reason why they choose to be the street painters comes from their personal talents, developed skills, and professional expertise. Moreover, the greatest power that drives them to create the fabulous works of art is their loves in career. Becoming a picture-copy painter is not easy and they have to face many obstacles before finally gaining the acceptance from the customers. That means the works must be sold in order to earn their livings. It is recognized as the target of this kind of painting.

The street painters, in accordance with these conditions, are worried about the career stability. The observation divides the picture-copy paintings into 2 types as follows.

The first type is the painters working in galleries. They have to work by the orders. The gallery owner deals with the painter about fifty

percent from the evaluated sell price. The gallery will provide the painters all materials such as colors, canvases etc. except for paintbrushes.

The second type is the painters running the business by themselves. That means they have to pay for the rented area, water, electricity, materials etc. The incomes depend on the numbers of tourists in each season.

Some old painters disagree to be interviewed. The observation reveals that they are only street painters comparing with their ages. They may feel upset with the idea of stagnancy. On the other hand, the new generations are eager to be interviewed. It can be concluded that they are in the period of searching for their life goals whereas the old painters' stagnant feeling makes them lose their future ambition and challenge.

### **The street painters as the social phenomenon**

The existence of the street painters in Pattaya is still unacceptable as a kind of valuable art to Thai art circle. The paintings value only the picture-copy art compared to the works of the famous artists who are educated from the academic system. However, the picture-copy paintings have been accepted by the foreigners over half a decade.

For anthropology, the existence of the street painters is one of the social phenomena that reflects art and culture of the area. Every nation needs art for life entertainment which is very important to human existence.

Therefore, the street painters in Pattaya are the reflection of cultural diversity in the society. For Thai contemporary art, they are only street painters who copy other pieces of the famous works, targeting for the earnings. Also they are different from the artists who create their works from imaginations. All in all, the differences are the nature of art and culture that can happen and adjust themselves to social conditions.

For Thai art circle, to become an artist means one's works are accepted by other artists according to UNESCO that has ideas as follows.

1. Artists should earn for leaving by their own works of art.
2. Artists should be graduated.
3. Artists may be art teachers.
4. Artists must have works that are accepted by public or published in reliable magazines.
5. Artist should have works in standard museums or art galleries.
6. Artists may be awarded by reliable art institute.
7. Artists should be recognized and accepted by other artists and the art circle in their countries.

Although most Thai artists graduate from universities and play their roles in the art circle, there is a small group of the street painters who should also get supports from the government. For clear understanding, this study searches for the different findings of the social phenomenon through social science and anthropology ideology concerning art framework. The findings show that this is the art cultural phenomenon which has been adjusted to the social diversity and conditions.

### **Objectives**

1. This research aims to study the street painters' identity in relationship with social space marking.
2. This research aims to study the street painters' life experiences.

### **Methods**

This research uses qualitative methods, placing the importance to fieldwork data. The methods for collecting and analyzing data are as follows.

#### **1. Study method**

This fieldwork study uses interviewing method between the researcher and the street

painters in Pattaya. The research observes and places the importance to the appropriation, readiness, and contentment of the interviewees. The painters are allowed to give their opinions and tell their stories before and after they become the street painters. The researcher observes their behaviors including awareness, ideology, adjustment, problem solving, and future ambition. The research focuses on the painters in galleries in Pattaya and takes two years in data collecting.

The existence of the street painters is one factor to drive various entertaining culture. It affects on social conditions, economic system, politics, culture as well as religion. These things describe the existence of the street painters.

The researcher lays the plan to study the social phenomenon in terms of Thai educational development, art development, and the existence of the street painters to understand the root of their history because some points of their stories, which are out of the mainstream, are still untold.

The researcher specifically chooses the painters into the interviewing method. Then, one interviewee recommends another one as well as other interesting source of data. The painters' data, stories, and ways of life are rather different.

This study explains the identity of the street painters in Pattaya of which art history has been developed against the main idea of the art circle. Therefore, the researcher chooses Pattaya as the study area with the conditions as follows.

- The existence, importance, and relationship between the street painters and the society and the meaning of *The Street Painters' Lives and Their Social Space Marking* by the painters themselves and the society.

- The street painters are divided into 3 groups as follows.

The first group has come to Pattaya before the others. Most of them did not graduate from art schools. On the other hand, they are talented. They have tried to paint and practice

themselves until they have painting skill and become acceptable. Therefore, the painters lead their lives and families by selling their works. Most of them are over fifty years old, so they cannot turn to another job.

The second group has interned with public practicing institute, the senior painters or learning to copy the famous works of art by themselves. Most of them are uneducated, so they have to search for experience, knowledge and ability on their own, which takes quite a very long time to become finally acceptable.

The third group is the graduates from the universities. They love independent careers and paintings out of the mainstream. They are ready for their chosen careers for their physical and mental responses especially in the open society of which popularity and honor are not considered. This causes the increasing numbers of the street painters in Pattaya.

## Conclusion

The study of *The Street Painters' Lives and Their Social Space Marking* shows that the painters' ways of life have been developed from the social conditions until those ways become the painters' identity. The painters adjust themselves to the conditions and relate them to the social diversity that is changeable, expandable, and unstable.

The study takes place along Pattaya beach where a lot of galleries are located. The findings show the stability of the careers because of the increasing numbers of painters. They commonly work in the galleries and demonstrate their work along the footpath. It reflects the promoting business that is well accepted by the customers. Therefore, the number of tourists affects on the painters' incomes.

The identity of the street painters in each gallery indicates their special characteristic especially the older ones. They walk through a long life with later becomes their different ideology

and ways of life. Therefore, the researcher can divide the painters into their groups including the old generations, the middle generations, and new generations. The education is mainly considered as the matter of fact of the division.

The background of each painter reveals their different ways of life. They do not have a good chance, but they are talented. Consequently, they seek for their identity in Pattaya. Moreover, some art graduates who love freedom life and the chosen career are one of the groups. The main reasons for their decision are intention, braveness, and curiosity to create the works of art to lead the families.

Because of the identity development with popularity, belief, and ways of life, the street painters are considered different from other artists. It is impossible to compare the painter with the artist in terms of social value. They aim the different targets, ones for valuable beauty but ones for money. Therefore, the painting difference finally becomes unique.

To identify their own identity, there are a lot of problems coming from them and the society which they have to face. The painters have to maintain their identity as it is their selling point by adjusting themselves to the social conditions. It indicates that the painters always change their ways of life to maintain their identity according to the changeable society. The researcher later calls it 'multiple identities.' The term challenges the mainstream art concept.

The mainstream ideology of art makes street painting become different as the painters who repeat the same works and have no creative imagine. In fact, a picture creation does not come from a package or at least color combining. By the way, the art circle still recognizes this form of art as a painting only. The painters know that they are out of the standard principles including artists should be graduated, artists may be art teachers, artists must have works that are accepted by public or published in reliable magazines, artist

should have works in standard museums or art galleries, artists may be awarded by reliable art institute, and artists should be recognized and accepted by other artists and the art circle in their countries. So, they search for their own identity as a picture-copy painter. They believe that their careers are not against the law and can earn money for their livings. That should be enough.

The identity shows the whole image and the individual image from the same characteristic of the painters including they choose the same career, they start painting in the same way, some are graduates, they love art, they join the place together, they ignore the main stream ideology, and they have international relationship with the tourist foreigners.

In conclusion, the reason why the street painters have unique identity comes from the social conditions. Although some painters come from different place and background, they are developed in the same area for the whole identical image. The great importance to the painters' multiple identities in Pattaya has been recognized for a long time that leads to the interesting diversity of the beach of entertainment.

## Discussion

The study of *The Street Painters' Lives and Their Social Space Marking* indicates that the existence of the painters depend on the different social conditions. This leads the painters to develop their own identity that may be same or different. Also, the identity comes from the response to meet the customers' requirement which is the importance that the research also studies.

To create the works of art, both the picture-copy paintings and other kinds of art, requires knowledge, understanding, and meaning. The most important inspiration is the identity that drives the works become successful and indicates the painters' style. Therefore, through this process, the painters mark their social space. All in all, it

depends on the painters' attempt and skills to meet the targets.

Most painters value themselves as street painters, not artists. It indicates their social roles and ways of life that are different from artists who stand on the other side. That leads to the low support from the government for the painters as well. By the way, to mark social space lets them to have their own speeches for their identity.

Although they live in the group of the same people who fascinate in the beauty of picture-copy paintings, they are so proud of their human honor that drives them continually into creating the works. Their job both by orders and imagination demonstrates the switch of individual works and social response that gives answer to the social conditions.

Having been differed by the meaning from the mainstream ideology for a long time, the street painters finds their identity that is opposite, in all view, to the main stream art circle. Moreover, the new point of view makes a new standard and meaning over the old social frame around the art of street paintings.

To continue their identity through the social conditions, the painters quietly and unconsciously define their meaning of art that leads to the quality of life, popularity, and value in the future.

This study places the importance to the multiple identities of the painters by aiming to promote their voices in the mainstream. The benefit is the painters will be accepted as the art makers. Although the street painters are not exactly the same, but their power between the painters and the customer is very strong. Their works can sell much more than the famous works of the artists. Consequently, this becomes their unbelievable identity which destroys the old frame of social ideology.

The researcher recognizes experience that brings the painters' knowledge. Some painters are the researcher's students that we have not met for

over ten years. Some are familiar so that the interview seems like we are talking informally. Some who just graduated shows their choices of choosing this area of experience. The middle generations are becoming stable in the careers no matter what happens. By the way, some deny to be interviewed. That show the diversity in the group and the ways of life the gradually continue same as Pattaya city that never sleeps. The more the tourists come to the beach, the longer the lives of the painters.

Although the existence of the street painters is developed from the social conditions, it finally becomes the tourist attractions on the beach. Therefore, it is undeniable that the existence of the painters always gets along with the social change. All in all, the painters still believe that their works are legal, related to the wide society, and finally become acceptable.

The joining painters to mark the social space show their human rights and freedom, equal to other people. It reflects the powerful relationship including the same and the difference like in other groups, having the multiple identities. Although the mainsteam still remains, the painters can also live with others.

In conclusion, the study leads to the findings that the identity of the painters is multiple. The ways of their lives are like the movie that plays in a life theater. The identity comes from an individual person and then becomes a mixing image of the painting group until it becomes opposite to the main stream. Although the diversity remains, the group consciousness, group identity, and social space marking are the major roles of the painters.

## **Suggestions**

### **1. Suggestions for the findings usage**

To create the system according to the social conditions has to follow the social law to be accepted like the painters' ways of life. Their

identity has been passing down from generation to generation and always changeable. Therefore, there is no best identity, just only the appropriate one which is adjustable to handle the change in the social current state.

To understand the matter of fact of this social phenomenon based on human honor, the researcher has to study the emotion, feeling, idea, and view to synthesize the new knowledge rather than comparing it with the social law.

In fact, the ideology towards the identity of the painters and the main stream cannot be compared because they are on the opposite side. The reflections of the deep feeling that comes from their souls are in every painter. Therefore, the diversity

still remains in the conditions of nowadays society.

Social condition, standard, law, belief, and view should be acceptable as well as the new idea that should be declared for the new identity and honor.

Whether the new idea will become acceptable or not, it is the fine problem-solving in the society that consisted of diversity.

## 2. Suggestion for the other studies

The next research should study the street painters in other countries around Thailand that are similar to ours in Pattaya. The study should place the importance to the similarity and the difference that will reflect the human value through the process of the works of art.

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