ENG 102

But, is it Art?

Research Paper Proposal Format

Your term paper proposal should help you clarify your ideas and find background information on your topic. Encyclopedias should not be your main sources for your final research paper, but can be used in your proposal as they can give you background information and ideas and clarify concepts.

**(The following information must be submitted according to the assigned due dates and all should gradually be submitted in electronic format as one single extended document)**

**IMPORTANT: Please keep all of the weekly copies of your proposal and submit all 4 draft copies, with my feedback, when you submit your FINAL DRAFT on Thursday March 8, 2018.**

1. **Working Title (Week 2)**

The use of different symbols in Western and Asian art and aesthetic preferences of these two distinctive art styles.

# Proposed Research Question(Week 2)

What do certain symbols mean in Asian Art? How do these symbols shape cultural identities and aesthetic preferences?

1. **Short introduction to research topic (Week 3)**

Symbols carry an importance in every culture and they play a significant role in artistic expressions.

I will examine symbols and concepts used in Asian art and how do they shape their culture. I will also compare aesthetic preferences of Asian and Western art.

1. **Main Points to be discussed:** **(Week 5)**

* what will your main arguments be?

**A1: Cultural Anthropology**

**A2:** **Iconic/Prototype Symbols**

**A3: Imitation of Nature**

**A4: Historical Perspective**

* how do you plan to support these arguments? [+ details of sources to be used]

**A1: Cultural Anthropology:**

Certain symbols hold a great significance in most cultures, as they can be encountered in different forms in the culture it is considered important in. Those kind of symbols are called ‘’key symbols’’ of a culture. Anthropologists have long made use of “key symbols” as a means of understanding the different cultures in which they study (Denes). There are ways to determine the key symbols of any culture. Additionally, there can be more than one key symbols in a culture. Key symbols can effect its people in a positive or negative way. In either way, it can be said that they play an important role in identifying a culture.

<https://seap.einaudi.cornell.edu/sites/seap/files/denes_outline.pdf>

**A2: Iconic/Prototype Symbols:**

Nearly every Asian culture value different animals and associate various meanings to those animals. The animals are widely encountered in the culture as well as society, including mythology, religion, politics and arts. These animals symbolize a variety of meaningful things such as emperial power or military heroism. For instance, the elephant in Thailand holds a great significance like explained above in Thai culture. Visiting the Buddhist temple complexes in Bangkok, one would find that elephants of myriad colors and sizes appear in statuary as well as mural paintings (Denes). Out of all different depictions of elephants, especially the white elephant was attributed to emperial powers. It was believed that an earthly king who possessed a white elephant would have the godlike powers of Lord Indra to bring power, harmony, wealth and well-being to the kingdom.

Another example is dragon, pheonix and tiger in Chinese culture. Featured in painting, sculpture, and decorative ornament, they have flourished in the world of art, too (Wilson 286). These popular creatures often possess symbolic importance. The dragon and pheonix serve as emblems of the Chinese emperor and empress and the tiger symbolises military prowess.

Symbolism enhances the significance and power of images, and transforms ornament into complex coded diagrams (Wilson 286). Therefore, symbols appear in the culture in various forms frequently.

<https://seap.einaudi.cornell.edu/sites/seap/files/denes_outline.pdf>

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/25161297.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A05916131d6966447feb14d346e19475e>

**A3: Imitation of Nature:**

Symbols found in artworks are heavily influenced by the surroundings of the artist and the culture it was created in. An imitation of nature and its components such as animals appear often in symbolic art objects to this day. Ducasse states, the work of art is here more or less like a certain natural fact, because the feeling which the artist to express was obtained by him by contemplation of that natural fact, which objectified it (76). Furthermore, it can be concluded that men gets influenced by nature and uses it in the process of making art. This concept is very familiar to Chinese art and Yin-yang unit. One of the ideas, following rather than altering the objects’ nature, which has been widely applied in artistic and craft creation, stems from the Yin-yang theory (Xi Ye 1). The essence of “following” is about generating new things according to existing circumstance of an object, no matter in painting, gardening, poetry, craft, and architecture. They depict nature by applying the theory of Yin-yang in artworks.

<http://article.sciencepublishinggroup.com/pdf/10.11648.j.ijaaa.20160301.11.pdf>

**A4: Historical Perspective:**

Throughout the history, cultural changes can be observed in a culture. Those changes can alter aesthetic preferences as well as symbols used in artworks. Ducasse implies that by appropriate and assiduous cultivation a taste of almost any sort can be developed (8). Thus, it is possible for a culture to adopt different symbols and aesthetic preferences through the history.

For example, through Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, Chinese culture experienced a variety of changes. The distinct difference in the paintings of a historical period can be identified through religion.

Chan Buddhist artists transformed the everyday world into a misty and mysterious place to convey the unreal nature of existence and the fallcies of the dicriminating mind. For the Daoists, the artistis re-created the grottos, caves and verdant forested mountains where the immortals dwell, calling on the faithful to expand their efforts to achieve conjugation with spirits and everlasting life (Karetzky 358). This shows aesthetic preferences of two religions and their styles.

<http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzY4MTQ3Ml9fQU41?sid=dbd15782-8fb4-415d-88c6-8ad121928c49@pdc-v-sessmgr01&vid=1&format=EB&rid=1>

* what are the main opposing arguments?

**C1: Comparision of Western and Asian Art (Similarities / Differences)**

**C2: The Relevance of Religion**

* how do you plan to rebut the opposing arguments? [+ details of sources to be used]

**C1: Comparision of Western and Asian Art (Similarities / Differences):**

Western art and Asian art have distinctive preferences, they differ in a great many ways. In contrast to much of Western art, Chinese paintings celebrate the wonder and mystery of nature rather than man’s domination over it (Taoism and its Influence). Another aspect is the use of animals in Western and Asian art. While in Western art ‘lion’ is widely used as a symbol of power, in Asian art this animal is replaced with ‘tiger’. In Western art, lions are a staple element in heraldry. An ancient bronze statue of a winged lion is the symbol of Venice. In the same city, a splendidly slumberous lion guards the monument to the sculptor Canova in the church of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari (Sooke). On the other hand, in China and Korea, the tiger was respected as the king of animals, and the dangers of encountering one were well understood (Kim). These examples show that the meaning of power is attributed to different animals in Western and Asian culture.

Two art styles are different in many ways, however there appears to be some similar choices in some representations in visual artworks. Hatcher argues that we know very little about what is universally valued and what is culturally determined (9). However, a research conducted with Western and Chinese participants showed that landscapes were more preferable than people in a scene across different cultural groups indicating a universal principle of preferences for landscapes (Bao et al 1).

<http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20171201-why-the-lion-is-arts-most-powerful-symbol>

<https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/tidra/hd_tidra.htm>

<https://www.centerforfutureconsciousness.com/pdf_files/2008_Essays/Taoism%20and%20its%20Influence%20on%20the%20Arts%20of%20China.pdf>

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309308216_Aesthetic_Preferences_for_Eastern_and_Western_Traditional_Visual_Art_Identity_Matters>

**C2: The Relevance of Religion:**

Symbols on artworks with religious purposes, often found in Buddhism, can evoke different feelings to people depending on their background, ethnicity and culture. Those symbols can be very distinctively regarded by people sharing the same culture. According to Hatcher religious symbolism may be very differently perceived by the elite and by the folk, and the provincial, peasant (6). This indicates that even people sharing the same culture may not feel the same feelings towards a religious symbol.

An example of a religious symbol perceived differently by a person from another culture is cattle figures. Cattles are considered as sacred animals in Hinduism and one can also observe their use in India. While this animal holds a great significance in Indian culture, a Westerner would not consider a cattle the same way as an Indian would.

1. **Works Cited:** **(Week 6)**

* You should list the majority of the sources you have referred to and may refer to in MLA format. This means you should submit a *working bibliography*.
* **You MUST use at least 4 of the course readings and 6 sources that you find yourself while doing your research**. Your FINAL Research Paper must have at least 10 sources.
* Note: Wikipedia **is not** an acceptable academic reference but it can be used as a source to find them.

**Works Cited:**

Bao, Y, et al. *Aesthetic Preferences for Eastern and Western Traditional Visual Art: Identity Matters*. 2016

Denes, Alexandra. *Elephants in Southeast Asia.* PDF file.

Ducasse, Curt John. *The philosophy of art*. University Microfilms International, 1986.

Hatcher, Evelyn Payne. *Art as culture: an introduction to the anthropolgy of art.* Bergin & Garvey, 1999.

Karetzky, Patricia Eichenbaum. *Chinese Religious Art*. Lexington Books, 2013. EBSCO*host*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=681472&site=eds-live.

Wilson, J. Keith. *Powerful Form and Potent Symbol: The Dragon in Asia.* 1990.

Kim, Hae Yeun*. “East Asian Cultural Exchange in Tiger and Dragon Paintings.” In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/tidra/hd\_tidra.htm (October 2016)

Sooke, Alastair. *“Why the Lion Is Art's Most Powerful Symbol?”* 1 Dec. 2017.

Xi Ye. *Yin-yang Idea in Architectural Design – Following Rather Than Altering the Objects’ Nature*. International Journal of Architecture, Arts and Applications. Vol. 3, No. 1, 2016, pp. 1-10. doi: 10.11648/j.ijaaa.20160301.11

\*\*\*https://www.centerforfutureconsciousness.com/pdf\_files/2008\_Essays/Taoism%20and%20its%20Influence%20on%20the%20Arts%20of%20China.pdf

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