

# **The Artistic Influence of Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art on Contemporary Chinese Art Creation**

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## **Abstract**

This research aims to explore the influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on contemporary Chinese art creation. The study focuses on analyzing how ancient aesthetic concepts, artistic forms, and techniques have been adopted or adapted by modern Chinese artists. The research sample consists of 20 contemporary Chinese artists selected through purposive sampling, ensuring their direct engagement with traditional Chinese art forms. The research instruments include semi-structured interviews, case study analysis of selected artworks, and a comprehensive literature review. Data collection involved interviews with artists, high-resolution imagery of artworks, and archival research. Data analysis was conducted using qualitative content analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns related to the influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art.

The research results found that Han Dynasty stone relief art has significantly impacted contemporary Chinese art in three key areas: aesthetic concepts, artistic forms, and techniques. Contemporary artists have drawn inspiration from the harmony between humans and nature, the use of simple and powerful lines, and multi-layered compositions, integrating these elements into modern creative practices. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the cross-temporal dialogue between ancient and contemporary art, emphasizing the continued relevance and influence of traditional Chinese cultural elements in modern artistic expressions.

**Keywords:** Artistic Influence; Han Dynasty; Stone Relief Art; Chinese Art Creation

## **Introduction**

In recent decades, the field of contemporary Chinese art has witnessed a significant shift in focus as artists increasingly seek to reconnect with traditional cultural elements, integrating them into modern creative practices. This shift marks a departure from the "85 New Wave" movement of the 1980s, which primarily emphasized anti-traditional values and the appropriation of Western concepts and techniques. Today, there is a growing recognition of the importance of preserving and revitalizing traditional Chinese art forms, not merely as a means of cultural preservation but as a source of inspiration for contemporary artistic innovation. However, despite this trend, there remains a significant gap in the research concerning the specific influence of ancient Chinese art forms, such as Han Dynasty stone relief art, on contemporary artistic practices (Xie, 2019).

Current scholarship has largely focused on the historical, cultural, and religious significance of Han Dynasty stone relief art, often overlooking its intrinsic artistic value and potential as a creative resource for modern artists. The few studies that do address the artistic aspects of Han Dynasty stone reliefs tend to be limited in scope, primarily focusing on their aesthetic features rather than exploring their influence on contemporary art creation. This lack

of comprehensive research presents a problem, as it not only limits our understanding of the continuity between traditional and modern Chinese art but also hampers the potential for further innovation in contemporary artistic practices (Wang, 2017). Given the increasing importance of cultural heritage in global art discourse, there is an urgent need to address this research gap and explore how ancient art forms can inform and enrich contemporary creative expressions.

Moreover, the global art scene's increasing focus on ecological and environmental themes presents another critical area where traditional Chinese art, particularly the philosophy embedded in Han Dynasty stone reliefs, can offer valuable insights. The concept of "harmony between heaven and human" (天人合一), deeply rooted in Han Dynasty art, resonates strongly with contemporary concerns about environmental sustainability and the relationship between humans and nature (Ding, 2020). Yet, despite its relevance, there has been insufficient research into how this ancient philosophy is being reinterpreted and applied by contemporary Chinese artists. Addressing these research needs is essential not only for advancing the academic understanding of Chinese art but also for supporting the ongoing evolution of contemporary art practices in a way that remains true to cultural roots while engaging with global issues.

## Research Objectives

1. To study the influence of the aesthetic concepts of Han Dynasty stone relief art on contemporary Chinese art.
2. To study the artistic forms of Han Dynasty stone relief art and their impact on contemporary Chinese art.

## Literature Review

1. Research on Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art by Domestic Scholars Primarily Focuses on the Following Areas:

1.1 Religion and Belief: The religious and belief elements in Han Dynasty stone reliefs have been a major focus of academic research. Scholars believe that these reliefs not only reflect the religious belief systems of the time but also demonstrate the importance of religion in everyday life. For example, in "Examining Han Dynasty Folk Beliefs Through Han Dynasty Stone Reliefs.", the author provides a detailed analysis of the myths and images of the celestial world depicted in the stone reliefs, revealing the Han people's beliefs and aspirations regarding the afterlife (Wang, 2016). By comparing stone reliefs from different regions and tombs, the study also identifies the influence of Confucianism, Taoism, and early Buddhism on the creation of these artworks.

Additionally, research has highlighted that the frequent depiction of deities, spirits, and celestial realms in stone reliefs reflects the Han people's belief in the immortality of the soul. For instance, the "Ascending to Heaven" (The Ascending to Heaven motif is a theme found in Han Dynasty stone reliefs, primarily depicting the ascension of the tomb owner. This theme holds significant importance in Han Dynasty art, reflecting the Han people's imagination of the afterlife and their longing for life after death).and " Feathered Immortal " (The Feathered Immortal in Han Dynasty stone reliefs represents a mythical figure of an immortal being, typically depicted with feathers and wings, capable of flying among the clouds. This image vividly reflects the Han people's desire for ascension to immortality. The belief in immortals was widespread during the Han Dynasty, with the aspiration to transcend and become an immortal being a common dream among the populace. The frequent appearance of the

feathered immortal figure in Han artwork symbolizes the Han people's pursuit of eternal life and their yearning for the life of immortals).images found in tombs express the desire for ascension and the pursuit of immortality after death. The prevalence of Taoist elements in these reliefs indicates that Taoist thought had deeply penetrated Han society, becoming an integral part of everyday belief.

1.2 Cultural and Intellectual Context of Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art: Yang Shanzhi (2020) analyzed early Daoist thought in the Han Dynasty stone reliefs of Xuzhou, pointing out the significant impact of Xuzhou's favorable geographic conditions, political status, and cultural background on the art's development and thematic content. Wang Na (2017) discussed the spatial layout, aesthetic implications, and classification of dance and music imagery in Han Dynasty stone relief art, exploring the formal beauty, expressive intentions, and harmonious aesthetics of these works, thus showcasing the unique artistic style of the Han Dynasty.

1.3 Aesthetic Features and Artistic Expression of Han Dynasty Stone Reliefs: Wei Si (2023) studied the aesthetic characteristics of dance and music imagery in Han Dynasty stone reliefs, analyzing the use of lines, the rustic beauty, and how these images convey power, elegance, and the fusion of cultural ideas. Pan Chan (2024) researched the aesthetic features and value of Han Dynasty stone relief art, discussing its diverse themes, rich techniques, and the inheritance and innovation of artistic methods, thereby highlighting the profound cultural depth and artistic achievements of the Han Dynasty.

1.4 Interdisciplinary Research on Han Dynasty Stone Reliefs in Education: Li He (2023) explored the integration of traditional Chinese culture into interdisciplinary teaching in middle school art education, using "Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art" as a case study. The study analyzed the effectiveness of interdisciplinary teaching in enhancing students' understanding of traditional culture.

2. Research on Chinese Contemporary Art by Domestic Scholars Primarily Focuses on the Following Areas:

2.1 Xie Huiying (2019) Through the case study of Fu Xinmin's artistic creations, the research explored how to activate and transcend traditional culture in contemporary art, emphasizing the importance and innovation of traditional culture in contemporary artistic creation. Xiao Feng & Ren Jianjun (2004) discussed the "Chinese Way" in contemporary Chinese art, emphasizing the effective transformation of traditional cultural resources and the establishment of a unique identity in the context of globalization.

2.2 Marketization and Ecological Art in Chinese Contemporary Art: Ding Zonghua (2020) studied how ecological consciousness permeates contemporary art creation, analyzing the manifestations of ecological art in China and its significance in addressing environmental issues and cultural change. Lu Peng (2021) provided an overview of the historical development and marketization trends of Chinese contemporary art, analyzing the impact of marketization on the independence and quality of artistic creation, as well as the current state of market adjustments and regulation.

2.3 Challenges and Reflections in Contemporary Art Creation: Liu Lirong & Huang Fengzhu (2016) discussed the challenges faced by Chinese contemporary art, particularly the excessive imitation of Western art and the problem of art commercialization. The study called for artists to focus on the independence and depth of their artistic creations. Liu Yanming (2008) analyzed the current state and development trends of Chinese

contemporary easel painting, highlighting the impact of political pop, image saturation, and vulgarization on artistic creation, and advocating for a pursuit of artistic depth.

## Research Methodology

### 1. Population and Sample

The population for this study comprises contemporary Chinese artists working within mainland China who have been influenced by Han Dynasty stone relief art. These artists include oil painters, traditional Chinese ink painters, printmakers, watercolor artists, and sculptors. The sample selection was conducted using purposive sampling to ensure that the selected artists have a clear and demonstrable connection to Han Dynasty stone relief art in their work. The final sample included 20 contemporary Chinese artists, selected based on their recognition in the field, participation in national art exhibitions, and their engagement with traditional Chinese art forms, particularly Han Dynasty stone reliefs.

### 2. Research Tools

The research employed a combination of qualitative research tools, including:

**Semi-structured interviews:** In-depth interviews were conducted with the selected artists to explore their perspectives on the influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on their creative processes.

**Case study analysis:** Detailed analysis of selected artworks was performed to identify specific elements of Han Dynasty stone relief art, such as compositional techniques, use of lines, and thematic content, and how these elements have been integrated into contemporary works.

**Literature review:** A comprehensive review of existing literature on Han Dynasty stone relief art and contemporary Chinese art was conducted to provide a theoretical foundation for the study.

### 3. Data Collection

Data collection was carried out through multiple channels:

**Interviews:** Audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed for analysis. These interviews focused on the artists' motivations, inspirations, and the specific techniques or elements of Han Dynasty stone relief art they incorporated into their work.

**Artworks:** High-resolution images of the selected artworks were collected, along with detailed descriptions provided by the artists. These images were used for visual analysis to identify stylistic influences.

**Archival research:** Archival materials, including exhibition catalogs, artist statements, and critical reviews, were gathered to provide additional context and support for the analysis.

### 4. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The process involved coding the interview transcripts and visual elements of the artworks to identify recurring themes and patterns. The analysis was guided by the research objectives, focusing on:

The influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art's aesthetic concepts on contemporary Chinese art creation.

The adoption and adaptation of Han Dynasty stone relief art's artistic forms and techniques in contemporary artworks.

The fusion of traditional Chinese elements with contemporary artistic practices.

## 5. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based on the theory of artistic influence, which examines how one art form or tradition impacts another across different time periods. The framework consists of three key components:

**Artistic Ideology:** This includes the philosophical and aesthetic concepts derived from Han Dynasty stone relief art, such as the idea of "harmony between heaven and human" (天人合一), and how these concepts are interpreted and reimagined by contemporary Chinese artists.

**Artistic Form:** This component examines the visual and structural elements of Han Dynasty stone relief art, including the use of lines, compositional techniques, and narrative structures, and their influence on the form and style of contemporary Chinese artworks.

**Artistic Technique:** This focuses on the specific methods and techniques used in Han Dynasty stone relief art, such as carving and the use of simple, powerful lines, and how these techniques have been adapted or reinterpreted in modern art practices.

## Research Results

### 1. The Influence of Aesthetic Concepts in Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art on Contemporary Chinese Art Creation

Han Dynasty stone relief art is not just a part of ancient Chinese art; it profoundly embodies the concept of "harmony between the heaven and human" (天人合一), a deep and significant philosophical idea in traditional Chinese culture. The harmony between the heaven and human concept emphasizes the harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, and between humans and the universe, reflecting the Chinese people's profound understanding of the cosmos, nature, and human society. This idea is interwoven into the creation of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, showcasing the Han people's reverence for nature and their love for life. This philosophy has had a lasting impact on contemporary Chinese art creation. Contemporary artists, by understanding and applying this concept, have produced a body of work that reflects ecological awareness and environmental consciousness, highlighting the harmonious beauty between art and nature.

One example of Han Dynasty stone relief art (Figure 1) depicts a multi-layered scene where the depiction of humans, animals, and plants illustrates the harmonious relationship between humans and nature, encapsulating the idea of the concept of harmony between the heaven and human. In the upper section of the image, animals and plants are prominently featured, indicating their importance in the society of the time. In the lower section, although the main human figures are gathered around a pavilion, the presence of animals above creates a visual harmony in the overall composition. Humans and animals share the same space, suggesting a symbiotic relationship between humans and nature in Han society, emphasizing human adaptation to and dependence on the natural world.



**Figure 1** Banquet and Entertainment Scene Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220 CE). Nanyang Han Stone Relief Museum  
Source: By author, 2024

The middle section's plant motifs symbolize the flourishing of life and the power of nature. The plants coexist harmoniously with their surroundings, providing essential resources for humans and habitats and food for animals. This interaction between humans and plants reflects the close connection between nature and human life. The appearance of the pavilion in the image demonstrates human architectural activities within the natural environment. The trees and plants surrounding the pavilion show that human construction did not disrupt nature but rather integrated with it. This fusion of architecture and nature symbolizes the Han people's reverence for and protection of nature, as well as their wisdom in living harmoniously with the environment.

This Han Dynasty stone relief, through its depiction of the relationships between humans and animals, humans and plants, and humans and nature, expresses the Han people's respect and value for nature. The coexistence of humans, animals, and plants in a harmonious environment illustrates the ecological consciousness of Han society and their respect for natural order. Through these depictions, the image conveys the idea of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, a concept that continues to hold profound significance today.

In contemporary society, the concept of "harmony between the heaven and human" still holds important practical significance and value. As global environmental issues become increasingly severe and the construction of ecological civilization progresses, the idea of "harmony between the heaven and human" provides valuable insights and guidance. It reminds us to respect nature, follow natural laws, and live in harmony with the environment; at the same time, it emphasizes the importance of inner cultivation and spiritual pursuit, enhancing human

qualities and civilization levels; ultimately promoting social progress and sustainable development.

As global environmental issues become more pressing, ecological awareness is becoming increasingly important in contemporary society. Many contemporary artists draw inspiration from Han Dynasty stone relief art, inheriting and promoting the harmonious concept of "harmony between the heaven and human" This philosophy encourages artists to focus on the natural environment, reflect on the impact of human activities on nature, and create a series of artworks with ecological awareness and environmental themes.

The artwork "Under the Same Sky - United" (Figure 2) by Wang Wei and Qiu Jia features a vibrant array of birds and a lush forest as its primary elements, showcasing the vitality and dynamism of the natural world. Through the meticulous depiction of various bird species and the detailed portrayal of the forest environment, the artwork conveys a strong sense of harmony. The diverse bird species, each with its unique form and vivid colors, highlight the biodiversity of the natural world. These birds are depicted freely flying within the same space, symbolizing the harmonious coexistence found in nature.



**Figure 2** "Under the Same Sky - United" by Wang Wei and Qiu Jia (174x136 cm), Selected for the 14th National Art Exhibition

Source: By author, 2024

The different bird species collectively form a complete ecosystem within the painting, where their presence and interactions illustrate the interdependence among species in the natural world. This ecological balance is fundamental to the harmony of nature, reflecting the natural world's intrinsic ability to self-regulate and sustain itself. Through delicate brushwork and a rich palette of colors, the artwork captures the beauty of nature. This beauty is not only a visual delight but also resonates with the viewer on a deeper level, evoking a sense of the ideal harmony between humans and nature, encapsulating the concept of "harmony between the heaven and human" (天人合一).

The harmonious natural scene depicted in the artwork serves as a reminder of the importance of cherishing and protecting the natural environment, promoting sustainable development. This harmony is not only an internal balance within nature but also reflects the harmonious relationship that should exist between humanity and the natural world.

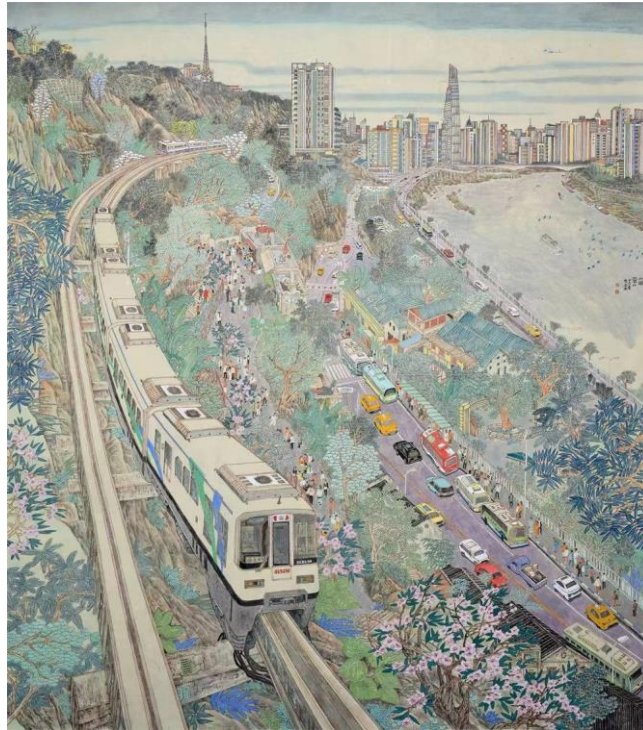
Chu Xiao's Chinese painting "Beautiful Day in the Mountain City" (Figure 3) illustrates the harmonious coexistence of modern urban life with the natural environment, emphasizing the balanced development of nature and cities. The composition skillfully combines dense trees and mountain ranges with modern skyscrapers and buildings, seamlessly integrating natural landscapes with urban architecture. Rather than conflicting, these elements complement each other, reflecting humanity's respect for and sustainable use of nature.

In the painting, a metro train is depicted traveling along tracks that weave through the mountains and the city, with the design of the tracks thoughtfully adapted to the natural surroundings, preserving the integrity of the mountains and trees. This showcases the harmonious development of modern transportation with the natural environment. The presence of the metro not only enhances transportation efficiency but also reduces environmental pollution, reflecting an increased awareness of environmental protection.

The painting also depicts numerous pedestrians and vehicles moving along roads, with people engaging in activities in the mountain areas, illustrating the freedom and enjoyment of humans within the natural environment. While benefiting from the conveniences of modern life, people are also able to connect with nature and appreciate its beauty. The lush trees and abundant vegetation not only beautify the environment but also improve air quality, highlighting society's concern for and protection of the ecological environment.

Through its depiction of the integration of modern cities with the natural environment, this artwork showcases the harmonious relationship between humanity, nature, and society, embodying the concept of "the unity of heaven and man" (天人合一). The harmonious ideology reflected in the painting emphasizes both the protection and sustainable use of the natural environment, as well as the integration of modern technological advancements with traditional culture and the natural world.





**Figure 3** "Beautiful Day in the Mountain City" by Chu Xiao Chinese Painting, 2024,  
Selected for the 14th National Art Exhibition of China  
Source: By author, 2024

Chen Zhiqiang's woodblock print "Symbiosis" (Figure 4) explores the theme of the vibrant coexistence and harmonious symbiosis of all living things amidst the processes of industrialization and urbanization. The artwork centers on an isolated, floating island, which serves as the focal point. At the heart of the island stands a robust, lush banyan tree with extensive roots, surrounded by a variety of subtropical plants and a diverse range of animals, representing a thriving natural ecosystem and a habitat for growth and development. Below the island lies a modern industrial and urban landscape, seamlessly integrated with the lively marine ecosystem.

The composition features various natural environments—forests, grasslands, wetlands, deserts, plateaus, glaciers, snow-capped mountains—and diverse species, including birds, beasts, flowers, fish, and insects, depicted on both sides of the artwork. The remaining space is interspersed with the concrete and steel structures that symbolize human urban civilization, enhancing the multi-dimensional spatial extension of the composition. The depth and breadth of the scene are accentuated through the use of blank spaces and cloud-like forms, suggesting spatial relationships.

In the artwork, various animals freely roam, fly, and navigate between different natural environments, consciously blending and overlapping these spaces and ecosystems. This approach breaks down the boundaries of different ecological systems and challenges conventional ways of perceiving natural spaces, creating a grand, complex, and dreamlike fusion of environments. The aim is to create an atmosphere that resonates with the theme of coexistence and interdependence with all living things.



**Figure 4** "Symbiosis" by Chen Zhiqiang Woodblock Print, 90cm × 120cm, 2024. Selected for the 14th National Art Exhibition of China

Source: By author, 2024

As society and human civilization progress, we must adhere to the laws of nature, striving to develop human society while preserving and protecting the ecological balance of the natural world. Maintaining biodiversity and advancing human civilization should go hand in hand to create a harmonious home where all living things can coexist.

In the face of increasingly severe global environmental issues, the concept of “harmony between the heaven and human” (天人合一) from Han Dynasty stone relief art has become particularly relevant to contemporary art. By inheriting and promoting this philosophy, contemporary artists can better express the harmony between humanity and nature in their work, contributing to environmental protection and the maintenance of ecological balance.

## 2. The Influence of Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art Forms on Contemporary Chinese Art Creation

### 2.1 The Influence of the Use of Simple and Powerful Lines in Han Dynasty Stone Relief Art on Contemporary Chinese Art

One of the defining artistic characteristics of Han Dynasty stone relief art is the use of the chisel as a pen, carving lines into hard stone to create images. With just a few strokes, craftsmen could vividly outline figures, animals, and scenes. These simple lines not only demonstrate high levels of craftsmanship but also embody deep artistic and aesthetic value.

Contemporary Chinese artists have drawn inspiration from this use of simple and powerful lines, emphasizing the internal strength and emotional expression in their works. For instance, in modern painting and sculpture, artists often use simple lines to convey complex emotions and ideas. This minimalist aesthetic not only gives the works a modern feel but also enhances their visual impact and emotional resonance.

This set of artworks, "Enjoying Music," (Figure 5) illustrates the unique artistic charm through the depiction of human figures and natural environments. Lines play a crucial role in these compositions, as the stone reliefs from the Han Dynasty are renowned for their simplicity and strength. With just a few strokes, craftsmen were able to outline figures, animals,

and scenes, demonstrating not only their exceptional skill but also embedding profound cultural meaning and aesthetic value.

Contemporary artists have drawn inspiration from this use of simple and powerful lines, emphasizing the internal strength and emotional expression within their works. In "Enjoying Music," the lines are similarly simple yet powerful, highlighting the contours and postures of the human figures. Each line is precise and well-placed, neither overly complex nor lacking in detail, showcasing the artist's mastery of line control. These simple lines not only give the artwork a modern feel but also enhance its visual impact and emotional resonance.



**Figure 5** "Enjoying Music". Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220 CE).  
Nanyang Han Stone Relief Museum  
Source: By author, 2024

The lines in Han Dynasty stone reliefs are not only simple and powerful but also convey a strong sense of dynamism and rhythm. Whether depicting the posture of figures or the movements of animals, the use of lines captures a sense of dynamic beauty, creating a lively atmosphere. In these works, the fluidity of the lines infuses the composition with a sense of motion. The natural curves of the human figures' lines convey relaxed, restful poses, while the elongated, curved lines of the plants create a gentle sense of movement. This dynamic and rhythmic quality imbues the entire scene with vitality and energy.

Zhao Mengge, born in Henan in 1974, is a professional artist. She studied at the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) and its affiliated high school and was a visiting scholar at Georgetown University in 2011. Currently living and working in Beijing, she is a member of the China Artists Association, a guest professor at the Art Creation Institute of Communication University of China, a researcher at the Beijing Contemporary Chinese Expressive Oil Painting Research Institute, a director of the Henan Oil Painting Society, and a director of the Asian Women's Development Association.

From the perspective of artistic language, lines are the soul of Zhao Mengge's work. She is most fascinated by and adept at expressing herself through lines, a medium well-suited to her personality. The simple yet powerful lines, as well as the blend of abstraction and realism in Han Dynasty stone relief art, have had a profound influence on Zhao Mengge's artistic creation. By comparing two images (Figure 6 and Figure 7), one can see that the use of lines in Zhao Mengge's oil paintings draws heavily from the artistic characteristics of Han Dynasty



stone reliefs. In her works, she employs simple, flowing lines to outline figures and plants, avoiding excessive detail while emphasizing the expressiveness and decorative quality of the lines themselves. This approach not only enhances the dynamic feel and depth of the composition but also endows the works with a unique visual aesthetic, reminiscent of the decorative lines commonly seen in Han Dynasty stone reliefs.



**Figure 6** Zhao Mengge "Day and Night, Dawn and Dusk" 2014,  
100cm×140cm x 4, Oil on Canvas  
Source: By author, 2024

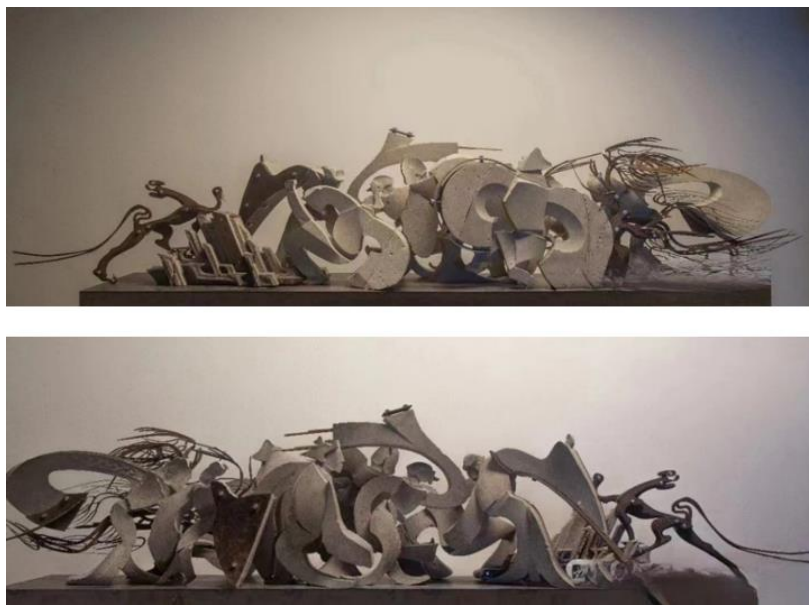


**Figure 7** Zhao Mengge "Pastoral Era" 2014, 140cm×556cm, Oil on Canvas  
Source: By author, 2024

Through her use of concise lines, Zhao Mengge not only adopts the linear style from Han Dynasty stone relief art but also integrates contemporary artistic concepts and methods into her creations, forming an organic blend of traditional and modern art. This influence exemplifies the enduring vitality of traditional art forms in modern creative practices, showcasing a dialogue and fusion between ancient and contemporary art. The linear aesthetics

of Han Dynasty stone relief art have not only enriched the expressive techniques of contemporary oil painting but also provided new inspiration and perspectives for contemporary art creation, highlighting the continuity and innovation within Chinese art.

Yi Chao and Huang Jing's sculpture "Chu Style • Dance" (Figure 8) showcases complex abstract forms, evoking a sense of fluidity and dynamism. This artwork challenges traditional static concepts of sculpture by utilizing twisted, extended, and overlapping shapes, creating an active visual momentum. The layered, intersecting, and interwoven forms generate a rich sense of depth and spatiality. The combination of various shapes and lines produces a three-dimensional effect, allowing viewers to perceive the work's depth from different angles.



**Figure 8** "Chu Style • Dance" by Yi Chao and Huang Jing  
Source: By author, 2024

Lines play a crucial role in these sculptures. The extensive use of curved, twisted, and elongated lines generates a flowing dynamic. This approach breaks away from the static, flat appearance, making the work appear livelier and fuller of vitality. These powerful, expressive lines in modern sculpture are influenced by the art of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, where simple yet strong lines are employed to convey the internal emotion and strength of the piece.

## 2.2 The Influence of Han Dynasty Stone Relief Composition and Layout on Contemporary Chinese Art Creation

Han Dynasty stone reliefs often employ a layered layout, presenting figures, scenes, and events across different levels. This method not only enriches the content of the artwork but also guides the viewer's gaze, effectively conveying the story and emotions.

The compositional characteristics of Han Dynasty stone reliefs are primarily reflected in continuity, narrativity, and symmetry and balance. Through the arrangement of multiple stone slabs, a complete narrative picture is formed, As shown in Figure 9. The lines are simple and strong, and the images are arranged with attention to symmetry and balance, leading the viewer's eye along the sequence of images, creating a coherent visual experience. This type of composition enhances the overall unity and narrative quality of the artwork, while



the clearly defined layers of image arrangement create a rich visual hierarchy and guiding effect.

In contemporary art, these principles from Han Dynasty stone relief art continue to influence artists, who incorporate similar layered compositions, narrative structures, and balanced layouts into their work. By doing so, they create art that not only maintains visual interest but also effectively communicates complex stories and emotions. This blending of ancient techniques with modern artistic expression exemplifies the enduring impact of Han Dynasty aesthetics on contemporary Chinese art.



**Figure 9** Constellation of the Azure Dragon · Sun and Moon Conjoined  
Eastern Han Dynasty (25 CE - 220 CE) Nanyang Han Stone Relief Museum  
Source: By author, 2024

In contemporary oil paintings, the compositional characteristics of Han Dynasty stone reliefs have been skillfully borrowed and applied. In the artist's oil painting "Hospital Chronicle · 2024 (Figure 10)," the composition is divided into multiple sections, each depicting different scenes that collectively form a cohesive narrative, similar to the multi-scene arrangement often seen in Han Dynasty stone reliefs. This method of segmentation and arrangement allows the painting to present diverse content while maintaining overall consistency, thereby enhancing the narrative effect. Additionally, the principles of symmetry and balance are widely applied in contemporary oil painting. The arrangement of figures and objects is evenly balanced, creating a visually harmonious and aesthetically pleasing overall effect.



**Figure 10** "Hospital Chronicle · 2024" by Li Bo, this work was funded by the 2024 China National Arts Fund.  
Source: By author, 2024

Through the design of visual pathways, the positioning and actions of the figures in "Hospital Chronicle · 2024" guide the viewer's gaze sequentially through each scene, allowing them to experience a narrative effect like that of stone reliefs. These compositional features, inspired by Han Dynasty stone relief art, have enriched the expressive techniques of contemporary Chinese oil painting.

This Han Dynasty stone relief artwork uses a narrative composition to highlight the interaction between figures and scenes, with a densely packed layout that showcases the unique compositional characteristics of Han Dynasty stone relief art.

By comparing these two images (Figure 11 and Figure 12), it is evident that both display multi-layered arrangements of figures. The Han Dynasty stone relief arranges figures on horseback and other elements in an upper-lower tiered layout, while the modern transportation scene arranges figures on bicycles and motorcycles in a front-back layered composition. In both images, the figures and vehicles are densely arranged within the frame, with almost no empty space, creating a dynamic effect.



**Figure 11** "Traveling by chariot."  
Source: By author, 2024





**Figure 12** "Morning Melody" by Liu Bo. Silkscreen Print, 127×170 cm, 2024  
Source: By author, 2024

Demonstrates the influence of the carving techniques from Han Dynasty stone relief art. Tan Haonan is a renowned contemporary Chinese printmaker, of Manchu ethnicity, born in Longhua County, Chengde, Hebei. He is a member of the Printmaking Art Committee of the China Artists Association, Vice Chairman of the Hebei Artists Association, Deputy Secretary-General of the Printmaking Professional Committee of the China Cultural Promotion Association, Deputy Secretary-General of the Printmaking Institute of the China Cultural Promotion Association, Secretary-General of the Printmaking Institute of Hebei Painting Academy, and a master's tutor and professor at Shijiazhuang Tiedao University. He has held numerous exhibitions of his black and white woodcut prints. His printmaking work was recently selected for the 14th National Art Exhibition of China and qualified for display in Beijing (Figure 13).



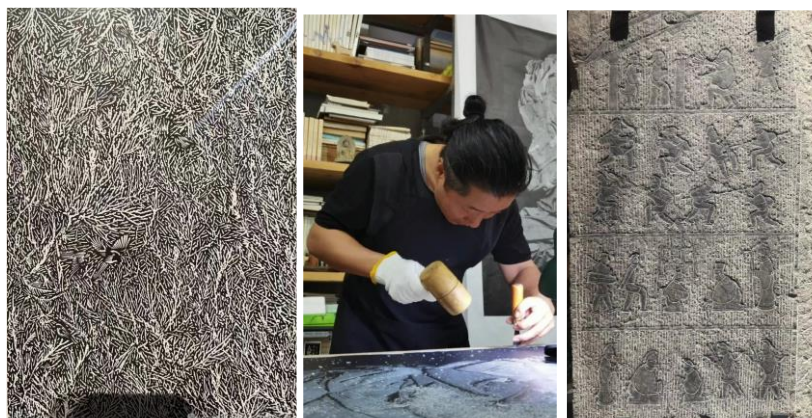
**Figure 13** "Spring Breeze Awakens All Life" by Tan Haonan  
Black and White Woodcut, 180 cm × 120 cm, 2024. Selected for the 14th  
National Art Exhibition  
Source: By author, 2024



Han Dynasty stone relief art holds a significant place in Chinese art history, renowned for its unique carving techniques and artistic style. These techniques have had a profound impact on contemporary Chinese printmaking. By analyzing the carving techniques of Han Dynasty stone reliefs and comparing them with contemporary printmaking (Figure 14 and Figure 15), one can see the artistic influence of Han Dynasty stone reliefs on modern printmaking.



**Figure 14** Tan Haonan "Spring Breeze Awakens All Life" (Partial View) Black and White Woodcut, 180cm×120cm, 2024. Selected for the 14th National Art Exhibition in Beijing  
Source: By author, 2024



**Figure 15** The process of creating "Spring Breeze Awakens All Life" by printmaker Tan Haonan  
Source: By author, 2024

In the carving techniques of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, artisans were able to depict intricate details and rich emotions on hard stone surfaces through meticulous craftsmanship. These detailed carvings not only enhanced the artistic expressiveness of the works. In contemporary printmaking, artists also employ fine carving techniques to depict complex details. The handling of details in modern printmaking shows a clear lineage from the carving techniques of Han Dynasty stone reliefs.

## Discussion

### 1. Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this research were to study the influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on contemporary Chinese art creation, focusing on the aesthetic concepts, artistic forms, and techniques that have been adopted or adapted by modern Chinese artists. This study also aimed to explore the cross-temporal dialogue between ancient art forms and contemporary creative practices, highlighting how traditional elements have been preserved, reinterpreted, or innovatively fused with contemporary artistic expressions..

### 2. Research Results

The study revealed several key findings:

**Aesthetic Concepts:** The concept of "harmony between heaven and human" (天人合一), deeply embedded in Han Dynasty stone relief art, has had a profound influence on contemporary Chinese art. This philosophy has been reflected in modern artworks that emphasize ecological awareness and the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature. Artists like Wang Wei and Qiu Jia have integrated this concept into their works, such as in "Under the Same Sky - United," where the natural world is depicted in harmony, highlighting the relevance of this ancient idea in addressing contemporary environmental concerns.

**Artistic Forms:** The use of simple, powerful lines and layered compositions in Han Dynasty stone relief art has been adopted by contemporary artists. For instance, Zhao Mengge's oil paintings exhibit a clear influence from the linear aesthetics of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, blending traditional and modern techniques to create works that resonate with both historical and contemporary art forms. Similarly, the multi-layered compositions and narrative structures of Han Dynasty stone reliefs have inspired modern artists like Li Bo, whose work "Hospital Chronicle · 2024" echoes the continuity and symmetry found in ancient art.

**Artistic Techniques:** The study found that contemporary Chinese printmakers, such as Tan Haonan, have drawn inspiration from the carving techniques of Han Dynasty stone reliefs. His work "Spring Breeze Awakens All Life" showcases meticulous detailing reminiscent of ancient stone carvings, demonstrating how traditional techniques can be adapted to modern mediums while preserving their intrinsic artistic value.

### 3. Reflection

These findings are consistent with the growing trend in contemporary Chinese art to reconnect with traditional cultural elements. This study contributes to the understanding of how ancient art forms, such as Han Dynasty stone relief art, continue to inspire and influence modern creative practices. The research results align with the work of Xie Huiying (2019), who explored the activation and transcendence of traditional culture in contemporary art, emphasizing the importance of innovation rooted in tradition. Similarly, the findings support the views of Pan Chan (2024), who highlighted the aesthetic value and cultural depth of Han Dynasty stone reliefs, and their continued relevance in contemporary artistic discourse.

However, the study also reflects some inconsistencies with previous literature. For instance, Liu Lirong & Huang Fengzhu (2016) discussed the challenges of excessive Western influence on Chinese contemporary art, suggesting a dilution of traditional cultural elements. In contrast, this research demonstrates that traditional elements, particularly from Han Dynasty stone relief art, remain vibrant and influential in contemporary practices. This suggests a more complex interaction between Western and Chinese cultural influences, where tradition is not merely overshadowed but actively integrated and reinterpreted.

## Conclusion

The research on the artistic influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on contemporary Chinese art creation reveals that this ancient art form has impacted contemporary art in three key areas: aesthetic concepts, artistic forms, and carving techniques. By studying and drawing from Han Dynasty stone relief art, contemporary Chinese artists are better able to preserve local culture, maintaining a strong sense of cultural and artistic identity and originality. Therefore, studying the influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on contemporary Chinese art creation not only has significant aesthetic implications but also offers valuable insights into the preservation of cultural heritage.

Firstly, this study fills a gap in the research on the relationship between Han Dynasty stone relief art and contemporary art creation, enriching the content of cultural and artistic studies and providing new perspectives and resources for academic research.

Secondly, by revealing the artistic influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on contemporary art, this study helps enhance people's recognition and pride in traditional culture, promoting cultural inheritance and innovation.

Finally, this study provides contemporary artists with a wealth of creative ideas and technical references, driving the diversification and innovative development of contemporary Chinese art creation.

While this research on the artistic influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on contemporary Chinese art creation has achieved certain results, there are still some issues that need to be addressed and improved. Firstly, Han Dynasty stone relief art has not yet received sufficient recognition and attention in contemporary Chinese society. As a traditional art form, Han Dynasty stone reliefs remain relatively marginal in the field of traditional Chinese art, and their popularity in contemporary art is not prominent.

Additionally, contemporary Chinese artists have explored the application of Han Dynasty stone relief art in a limited manner. Therefore, in promoting the influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art, it is necessary to further strengthen technological innovation and explore cross-disciplinary and integrative approaches with other art forms to achieve a comprehensive contemporary expression of the value of Han Dynasty stone relief art.

To address these issues, this study proposes several improvement strategies and suggestions. First, efforts should be made to enhance the promotion and dissemination of Han Dynasty stone relief art, changing traditional perceptions and increasing public awareness and acceptance of this art form. Second, the influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art can be expanded through various avenues, such as exhibitions, design, and artistic creation. For example, combining it with modern technology, using virtual reality, 3D imaging, and other new technologies, to create a richer artistic experience. Additionally, hosting special seminars and academic exchange events can facilitate deeper dialogue and interaction between Han

Dynasty stone relief art and contemporary art, further promoting its influence in contemporary art.

In summary, by strengthening promotion and dissemination, expanding application fields and forms, and enhancing technological development and innovative practice, the artistic influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art in contemporary art can achieve more fruitful results, providing valuable reference and inspiration for the sustainable development of contemporary Chinese art. Thus, this preliminary exploration aims to draw the attention of contemporary Chinese artists, ensuring better preservation of China's indigenous culture..

## **Suggestions**

### **1.Theoretical Suggestions**

1.1 Further explore how Han Dynasty stone relief art influences contemporary Chinese art creation through a cross-temporal artistic dialogue. Research can focus on how art exchange and dialogue across different historical periods help understand how contemporary artists reproduce or reinterpret traditional art elements in their works.

1.2 Construct a systematic theoretical framework that thoroughly analyzes the mechanisms of artistic influence, particularly how inspiration is drawn from traditional art elements and innovatively applied. Theoretical research can involve fields such as aesthetics, art history, and cultural heritage to deepen the understanding of the relationship between traditional and modern art.

1.3 Investigate the impact of the simple yet powerful lines, symmetrical compositions, and other forms found in Han Dynasty stone relief art on contemporary art creation. Research can focus on analyzing how these artistic forms combine with modern art concepts and styles, thereby forming new artistic expressions..

### **2.Policy Suggestions**

2.1 Suggest that relevant government departments not only protect cultural heritage but also promote its influence on contemporary art creation. This can be achieved by establishing special funds or projects to support artists in deeply researching and applying traditional cultural elements.

2.2 Promote the incorporation of traditional culture into art education, integrating Han Dynasty stone relief art and its aesthetic concepts into art education curricula. Policies should encourage educational institutions at all levels, especially art schools, to include traditional art forms in their course offerings, fostering students' understanding and creative use of local culture.

### **3. Further Suggestions**

3.1 Given that contemporary Chinese artists often draw on Western art techniques, it is recommended to further study specific cases of Sino-Western art integration. In particular, research could explore how, under the influence of globalization, Han Dynasty stone relief art can be reinterpreted to achieve an organic fusion of Chinese traditional art with Western art, forming a uniquely Chinese contemporary art style.

3.2 Future research could attempt to combine qualitative analysis with quantitative research, analyzing the frequency and effect of Han Dynasty stone relief art elements in contemporary art works. Quantitative data can provide strong support for qualitative research, making research conclusions more scientific and comprehensive.

These suggestions aim to further advance the study of the influence of Han Dynasty stone relief art on contemporary Chinese art creation, focusing on both theoretical exploration and practical application, thereby providing valuable insights for future art creation, education, and policymaking.

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