THE STUDY OF FORM AND CONTENT OF INTANGIBLE CULTURE IN THAI CONTEMPORY ART

Toeingam Guptabutra

Faculty of Painting, Sculpture, and Graphic Arts,
Silpakorn University, Bangkok 10200, Thailand
Corresponding author: toeingam@email.com

Abstract

"Form and Content of Intangible Culture" is a part of a practice-based art research entitled "The Role of Culture in Thai Contemporary Art". The overall research aims are firstly, exploring the roles of culture in Thai contemporary art, secondly, investigating three particular issues relating to the application of Thai culture in Thai contemporary art, and thirdly creating visual art that responds to the issues studied. The three issues include 'a comparative study between art and craft', 'form and content of the intangible culture', and 'a relation between culture and internationalism'. This research article will focus on 'Form and content of the intangible culture'only. This section has three objectives: (1) To investigate the meaning and implication of the intangible culture (2) To explore artistic media and applications of Thai intangible culture that appear in the artworks of Itthipol Thangchalok and Patyod Buddhacharoen and (3) To create a series of mixed-media art that show cultural meanings that reflect my artistic experience, perception, and interpretation of the intangible culture. Methodologies used are document reviews, fieldwork, interviews, observation, taking notes, studio practice, and analysis. The output includes three pieces of mixed-media art:*'Solitary Experience in Image, Sound, and Space'*, *'Solitary Expereince for Effort and Patience'* and *'Solitary Expereince for Kindness and Mercy'*. The analysis focuses on the meaning and implication of the intangible culture, the role of culture in

the mixed-media art, and my perception and interpretation of the intangible culture.

Introduction

It is common for many Thais that culture in their view takes a form of objects and activities that can be perceived through their five senses. Any cultural objects must have a clear and certain form. Woven fabrics, mural paintings, and Thai food serve as examples. They have a clear meaning, distinguished shapes, and designated functions. Any cultural activities must have obvious characteristics, must be carried out on a regular basis, and should not be changed, or can be adjusted only slightly. Examples of cultural activities include paying a respect to adults with a 'Wai' greeting, offering food to monks in the morning, and praying for rainfall during a dry season. Culture should not be identified on a surface or exterior level only. Anan Kanchanaphan proposes that culture that can disclose the remarkable dimensions of human's idea is actually dynamic, lively, and changeable according to time and social contexts. Kanchanaphan also proposes that the new creation of culture is essential for the development of society and community. In his view, it is rather not healthy for culture to remain in its original form forever. (Kanchanaphan, 2005) Culture is conditional to human directly. If there is no human, culture no longer exists. Humans naturally change and create new cultural innovations that encourage and empower their ways of life. Culture should be viewed as both fundamental social rules as well as freedom for groups of individuals in their society. These unfixed and changeable characteristics of culture seems to strike me as a practice-based researcher/artist, and lead to the main subject of this research, which is about culture that has *intangible* characteristics.

The research article contains the following details: (1) The meaning of the intangible culture (2) Two case study artists (3) Methodologies and artwork production (4) The analysis of mixed-media art.

The Meaning and Implication of the Intangible Culture

The intangible culture that especially embeds itself in human' system of thought, perception, and intuition is described here. They are part of the mind-oriented and action-oriented culture that has no productivity in object. The intangible culture can be investigated directly from human behaviour and their way of life. Although, the systems of thought, perception

and intuition are shapeless, they have content inside. David Matsumoto and Linda Juang define the meaning and implication of culture as follows:

"...human culture as a unique meaning and information system, shared by a group and transmitted across generations, that allow the group to meet basic needs of survival, pursue happiness and wellbeing, and derive meaning for life." (Matsumoto and Juang, 2008)

From the above quotation, specific meanings and information systems can exist in things that can be seen, listened, smelt, tasted, and touched, as well as things that cannot be seen, but felt. An example includes awareness or mental process that enables humans to transform their feelings to knowledge. Humans receive information from people, environments, including attitudes and beliefs. Then, they simply process the received information in order to generate their own ideas followed by a decision. Awareness, thus, contributes to the ways they build their attitudes and behaviours towards others and the world in which they live. It encourages them to seek for the true meaning of their existence in this world, and to create new things. The intangible culture has been passed on to them from previous generations of mankind. They have learnt, understood, and passed it on to future generations continuously.

Two Case Study Artists

For the past 60 years, the intangible culture has produced an enormous impact on a large number of Thai artists. The artists have been inspired by Buddhist philosophy and used it as a virtual concept in their art creation. They have given shape to the intangible culture with a reference to both traditional and nontraditional art media. The artists have used creative methods to develop their work. For example, many artists have utilised Western art visual language to organise Thai art symbols and motifs, and some have fully engaged Western art styles, however, charged with Eastern philosophy-based psychology while making art. Two case study artists are Itthipol Thangchalok (b.1946) and Patyod Buddhacharoen (b.1965). Thangchalok has created abstract paintings, and Bhuddacharoen has created

graphic arts and installations continuously from the late of 20th Century throughout the beginning of the 21st century. Their conceptual framework and artwork creation relating to the intangible culture will be described briefly.

Thangchalok has focused on the use of intuition and intelligence to communicate his abstract message with a reference to a traditional medium- painting. While painting, he has developed his realisation through wisdom and intuition, and exercised reasoning intelligence simultaneously. Both processes cannot be separated; they become one unified process. (Thangchalok, 2006) Thangchalok has created this unique process with help of the principle of abstract art in the West and the virtue of Eastern wisdom. What the artist wants to communicate is his abstract message on a mental level that demonstrates purity, simplicity, calmness, and happiness. These do not have a shape, and he has explored certain visual elements that are as close as possible to his message in order to create a composition on his painting. The selected elements include points and lines that do not produce a story. What is seen is that the physicality of his point-and-line composition arouses audience's perception and knowledge on an abstract level. The substance of his abstract message that is well received is developed through the principles and techniques of visual art, not linguistic rules and principles. As a result, audiences need to develop other types of skill that involve the method of *reducing* specific meanings of what they see, and then *creating* an abstract system of thought in order to comprehend the non-narrative meanings of Thangchalok's painting.
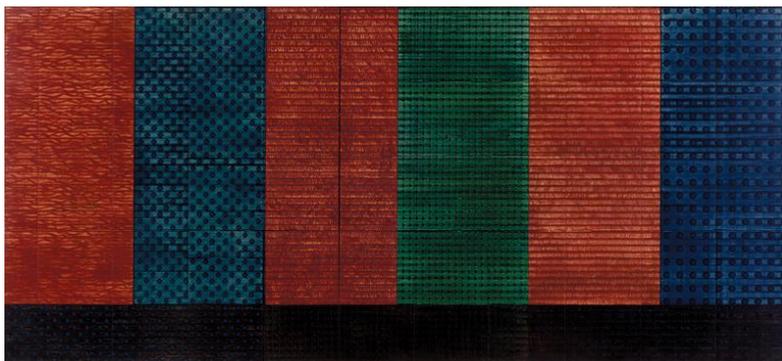
Image 1: 'Infinity' (2001), 110 x 240 Centimetres, Acrylic on Vinyl Tiles
Mounted on Plywood, Collection of Asia Plus Group Holdings
Public Company Limited

'Infinity' (2001) serves as an example. The painting has three main elements that include geometric planes, points, and colours. The artist devided the entire space into six vertical oblongs. The oblongs are filled with slightly different characters of point pattern. At the bottom of the painting lies a long and dark quadrilateral shape. The title 'Infinity', liguistically meaning endlessness, encourages a sense of calculation. An audience can count the amount of quadrilateral shapes in no time; however it may take a long time to count the amount of points. Furthermore, it is difficult to perform a caculation of the points on brick-orange oblongs as they appear as blurred traces.

The analysis of 'Infinity' are as follows: Firstly, 'Infinity' for Thangchalok may refer to the amount of points that are both countable and uncountable or difficult of be counted; Secondly, the artist has shown a creative method of turning a concept of infinity into 'image' that can be visualised; Thridly, placing a number of points contantly all over the canvas causes the absense of illusive dimension, which does not encourage the audience to look at any specific areas of the painting. The audiences are invited to visually consider the whole condition of the painting instead. This is a very important process. In this process, the audiences need to develop a new skill that involves the method of *reducing* specific meanings of what they see, and then *creating* an abstract system of thought in order to comprehend the meanings of 'Infinity' that bears no story.

The second artist is Patyod Buddhacharoen. For Buddhacharoen, Dharma is significant for him as an artist and person. He had a terrible car accident in 2005 that was resulted in his irregular bodily movement. In his solo exhibition entitled "Namo Buddhaya: Courteous Respect to the Lord Buddha Humility")2010), Dharma is treated as encouragement and principle for repairing and nourishing his life. Patyod has used the philosophy of Dharma and the forms of highly sophisticated Buddhist art to create a concept for his art installation.   The installation consists of embossed prints, three-dimensional objects, candlelight, moving image and light from a projector, and a musical composition. All visual elements lead to the creation of a hypothetical area that is dim and calm, showing deep thought of the artist.

Image 2: The exhibition "Namo Buddhaya: Courteous Respect to the Lord
Buddha Humility" (2010), Size variable, Mixed-media Techniques

Image 3: The exhibition "Namo Buddhaya: Courteous Respect to the Lord
          Buddha Humility" (2010), Size variable, Mixed-media Techniques

There are two interesting aspects. Firstly, the artist has given an
importance on the fourth dimension. The fourth dimension does not only refer
to the implications of time, but also the abstract dimension of his inner
thought, or, in short, his psychological time in the art space. Secondly, the
continuous operation of digital media (visual projection and music)
demonstrates the characteristics of the artist's contemplation of Buddhist
philosophy. His consciousness is comparable to the flow of time that could
not be stopped suddenly. One's consciousness works in a similar fashion as
the artist's. When pondering deeply about something, one cannot freeze one's
flow of thought at once. One has to slow it down and gradually cut it off. It is
possible to view that the use of digital media presents the characteristics of
the artist's contemplation of philosophy, his praying and meditating along
with the rhythm of visual and music composition in space and time. The artist

has explained that the function of digital media in this installation is to garnish his mind. In order to get rid of embellishments from human life, truly knowing and understanding the embellishments is the first and necessary lesson. Once understanding, he can let any life restrictions go, and reset his mind to be free.

Methodologies and Artwork Production

Methodologies started with the analysis of Thangchalok's painting and Budhhacharoen's art installation. Afterwards, I explored some examples of the intangible culture. Finally, I synthesised a series of my mixed-media art with a reference to the analysis of the case study artists and my experience of the intangible culture as the following chart below:

Thangchalok
1. Intangible concept
2. Using geometry to create the essence of feelings and meanings
3. Self-awareness and intuition

Buddhacharoen
1. Intangible concept
2. Creating the hypothetical area
3. Creating brightness and darkness with a reference to candlelight
4. The combination between analog media and digital media
5. The fourth dimension reflecting the individul's thought

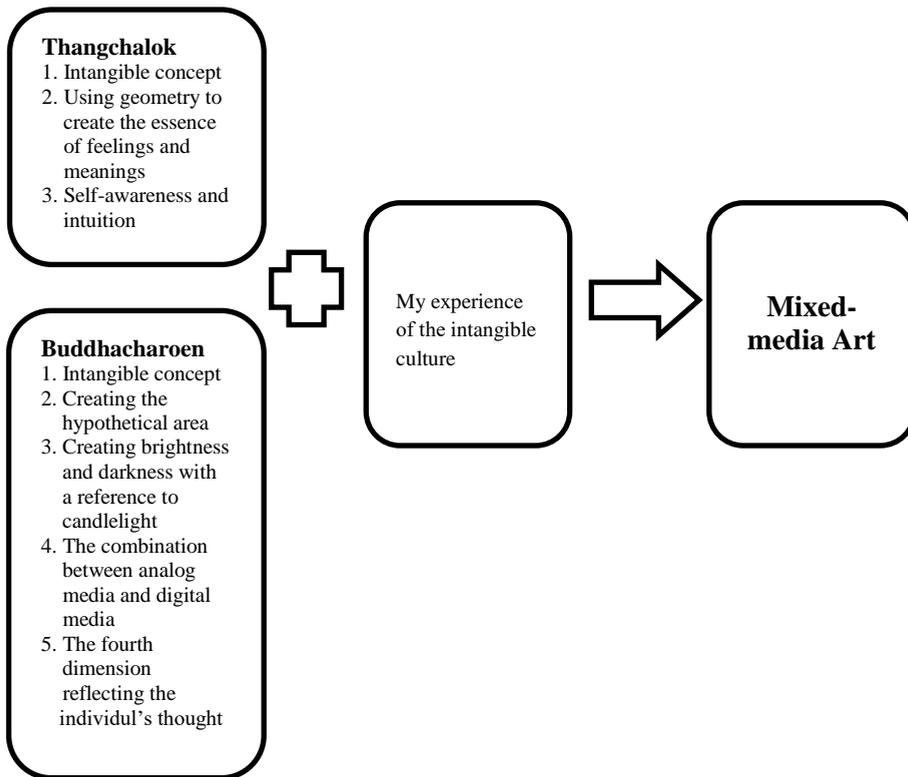My experience of the intangible culture

Mixed-media Art

Chart 1: shows methodologies starting with the analysis of the case study artists' works and my direct experience of the intangible culture

My experience of the intangible cultural took placed in 2009. This experience has broadened my perspective and provided a refreshing influence to my artistic approach. I isolated myself from others to work alone until midnight in a large building for six months. Every night I turned off all lights and walked in the dark from the third floor to the exit on the ground floor. During the first month, I prayed to myself to reach the exit quickly. Darkness stimulated both fear and imagination. When this happened regularly, darkness became a challenge and a test. I began to walk slowly and stood in the dark for a while. When I felt calm enough, I looked through the darkness and considered the image that I saw, sounds that I heard, and space that I was standing in were not separated. Image that presents the darkness inside the building and dim light shining in from outside cannot be separated from the space where I was standing. My experience of architectural acoustic inside the building was interrupted from time to time by the singing sound of cicadas from outside. Everything was related to one another. Importantly, I felt that I was dissolved and become part of this relation. This simple experience in 2009 is not only useful for my visual art, but also helpful for myself as a person to recognise the existence of self that I did not feel as often as I should have done for many years.

I began to explore a literature review about the relation between image, sound, and space, and found an interesting piece of religious information. That is about isolation in Buddhism and Islam's doctrines that will be described as follows:

The Naga scripture (224) of Buddhism describes that:

"...inferring to a decent elephant that gets bored with some bull elephants, cow elephants, adult elephants, and elephant calves as they create an irritation. Listen to me, monks! The decent elephant must have this idea: I am surrounded by bull elephants, cow elephants, adult elephants, and elephant calves. I ate some wrecked twigs that were previously eaten by other elephants, and drank muddy water. When I walked up from a pond, my body rubbed against other bodies. Therefore, I must decide to isolate myself from the herd. ...you should enjoy being alone in a peaceful place, for example, a forest, under a tree stub, a mountain, a gully, a cave, and

a graveyard. You can isolate in a forest under the tree stub or a vacant house. You sit cross-legged, stretch your body, and maintain your consciousness with no greed. Mind purification from greed and refrain from harmfulness is to have the mind without a revenge…"
(Royal Tripitaka Book 23)

The above Naga scripture implies that the unsuitable places for meditation are places crowded with people. People in these places cannot avoid seeing, hearing, smelling, and touching others. The cramped space between individual practitioners makes them aware of other people instead of themselves. This lesson of Naga scripture introduces the ideal space suitable for philosophical isolation. The ideal space can be any place in any conditions such as a forest, a cave, a cemetery, or an empty house. It might be said that the essence of the ideal space is tranquillity that does not necessarily mean silence. It is a kind of undisturbable space that has a motionless environment. This is a key element for promoting the concentration of meditation practice.

In Islam, the isolation in the Arabic language is عُزْلَةٍ (Ushla). It literally means isolation; however, a practitioner can live and associate with others as normal. In terms of history, before being appointed prophet, Muhammad always isolated himself in the Ashura cave to pay a respect to Allah, asking for blessings, and showing his loyalty. After being appointed God's messenger, he did not recommend anyone to isolate in the cave. Ibnu Atha'illah explained that Muslims should isolate themselves from others one hour every day or every night, and to take this moment of time to consider anything that can lead them to get closer to Allah. (*An Blackboard of Sunnah Students*)

It may be said that the Buddhist and Islamic isolation is a type of the intangible culture that gives importance to a practitioner' inner condition and abstract mind. It is the mental-oriented and action-oriented culture that has no productivity in object. Apart from the practitioner's mind quality, the success of their solitary experience depends on the relation between space, image, and sound, considered as basic elements that contribute to stillness and tranquillity to take place. These three factors are common and can be found everywhere. It is not the experience that comes with difficulty. The relation of these common things can support the practitioner to achieve his religious objective.

The indistinguishable relation between image, sound, and space has led me to creative methods for creating the solitary experience for the series of mixed-media art. I wanted to encourage the audiences' eyes to recognise image, ears to acknowledge sound, and body to identify space. Audiences' sensual perceptions work together, encouraging them to be able to feel of their self -existence without external involvement.

"*Solitary Experience in Image, Sound and Space*" (2011) is an experience simulation of being alone in the large building at night. Without a disturbance, I have discovered the three keywords for the first time - image, sound and space. These three keywords enable me to create an artistic condition conducive for audiences' self-realisation. Therefore, I explored the interior areas of this building by seeing, taking photos and sketching. Steen Elier Rasmussen explains how to engage the architecture as follows: The activities of the audience are as a creative activity. He creates a new phenomenon in the observations under the efforts to create a complete picture of what he saw. The action of a new creation is what usually happens to every observer. It is a necessary activity to build experience with what you see. However, what they see and what they create while observing the same object can be different and varied immensely. (Rasmussen, 1959)

I viewed my office building from inside and outside and tried to make sense of its architectural forms and interior space arrangement. I then utilized specific elements that I saw from inside for example angles, straight lines, and corridors, to create a composition expressing independent, yet co-existing visual elements in space. This is different from the fact; all architectural elements of the office building are well calculated as they support the weight of the whole building. The building is of course heavy, but during night time without a trace of any human, I felt absolutely light. I have hoped that creating a three-dimensional work whose element arrangement is completely unfastened, free from one another, and looks light in weight that can create a new image along with a new space at the same time.

During the visual data collection, I also observed sounds, noises, and human voices inside and around the building. The architecture is large and has an open and high space in the centre. During nighttime when there is no sign of human, this architectural space amplifies entering sounds and noises

louder and longer than usual. Sounds and noises that were initially expected to travel from a left side actually travel from a right side. This causes a confusion of the origin of the sound heard. Moreover, the origin of the sound located outside the building made me feel as if the sound were made inside the building. As a result, I investigated the relation between sound and architecture from Brandon LaBelle who informs that:

> *"Talking about architecture and sound is facing a complicated situation. ...The sound is often pinned to the conversation between sound and space, like the exchange and interaction with each other. It is because of the position of the sound within the space and affected by the materials used to create the space, their relationship to other areas and landscaped surroundings."* (Labelle, 2006)

Labelle explains that sound situation in architecture has never been simple. If I use the above description to clarify my experience of the architectural acoustic in my office building, the followings is my explanation: Firstly, if I turn on a rather loud radio on any floor of the building, sound that enters the open space in the middle of the five-storey building would travel to every floor and make a delay reverberation. This is because of all architectural materials used in the construction. Sound waves when hitting these materials always bounce backward to an opposite direction. They repeat this travelling manner again and again until they decline naturally. This is why sounds are longer and lounder than normal in this open space. Secondly, the singing voice of students travelling from outside the building made me fail to identify the original direction of their voices. When the sound wave enters the building, it hits cement walls, cement floors, and glass doors and windows at an opposite interior side first, and bounces back repeatedly all over the building. This is why many people including myself who use this building at night were always confused of the real direction of the voice. Lastly, when standing on the ground floor in the middle of the open space, I heard some light talking voices coming from upper floors. I thought that someone must be in the building. So, I walked up to check, and saw no one. This can be explained as follows: There are hundreds of windows on all sides of the building. Talking

voices of students from left and right parallel buildings travel to my building. However, the talking voices were not loud enough, so they did not travel far to the centre space. I heard the talking voices, but initially misunderstood that some students secretly stayed over night inside the building.

When I analysed the architectural acoustic phenomenon and understood the relation between sound and architecture clearly, I applied this knowledge to create my first artwork. I produced wooden geometric shapes imitating certain elements of the building, and attached small bells and beads to them. I hung them on the ceiling of the exhibition room of the gallery of the Faculty of Painting, Sculpture, and Graphic Arts, Silpakorn University, or in short PSG Gallery. Finally, I connected a rope with each of the geometric forms. The ropes were long enough for the audiences to pull them in order to make these shapes movable, so that they can create sound. The bell sound made a soft and gentle reaction to the resonance of the exhibition room. However, it was not the same reaction as that happened in the large building in which I work. The importance of "*Solitary Experience in Image, Sound and Space*" is my first experiment to create the relation between image, sound, and space.

Image 4: '*Solitary Experience in Image, Sound and Space'* (2011), Mixed-media Techniques, Size variable, Collection of Artist

Image 5: '*Solitary Experience in Image, Sound and Space'* (2011),
Mixed-media Techniques, Size variable, Collection of Artist

'*Solitary Experience for Effort and Patience*' (2012) is a creation of three-dimensional artwork. Form is made with two different types of natural materials: banana leave and coconut coir. Space inside is cave-like, and sound composition is played inside the cavity. I studied the interior characteristics of Phung Chang Cave in Phang Nga Province and used them as a guideline to create the artwork. Phung Chang Cave is a beautiful limestone cave that has stalagmites and stalactites. Their shapes and surfaces are astonishing. In the cave, there is less light. In some areas inside the cave, light could not shine in. It was the first time for me to have an experience of real darkness. When travelling in the cave came to an end, I was satisfied and amazed at the beauty of the cave, which took million years to develop. At this point, the abstract concept of *effort and patience* developed in my heart. Nature has taken millions of years to develop its beauty. If a human wants to create beautiful and valuable things, effort and patience are fine qualities that they should have. Being alone and the abstract concept of *effort and patience* developed in the cave have led to the visual creation. I chose the natural characteristics of cavity, surfaces, less light conditions, sounds from nature to create a cube construction that has a cavity within. The audiences could choose how to get in and out of this construction freely. Within the cavity, the audiences could see around and look up to the top of the internal space to explore shape,

43

surfaces, and shadows. I sewed, threaded, joined, cut, hung dried banana leaves and coconut coirs, recorded and improved the sound for more than 140 hours. I expected my audiences to perceive the abstract condition my *effort and patience* by considering the visual and audible composition of the artwork.

Image 6: '*Solitary Experience for Effort and Patience*' (2012),
Mixed-media Techniques, 250 x 250 x 150 Centimetres,
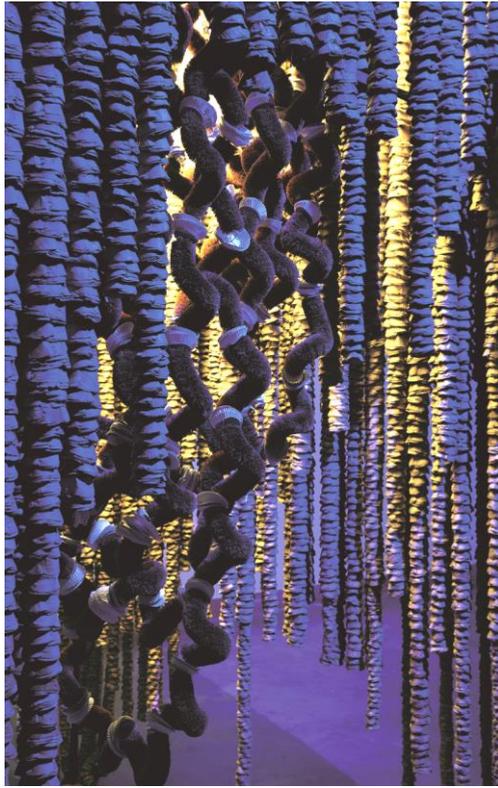Collection of Artist

Image 7: '*Solitary Experience for Effort and Patience*' (2012),
Mixed-media Techniques, 250 x 250 x 150 Centimetres,
Collection of Artist

'*Isolation for Kindness and Mercy'* (2012) shows a flat, horizontal, spreading out, and circle plane, lifted up 50 centimetres from ground. The visual plane looks like a landscape, and accompanying sounds are installed underneath the plane. The sounds are from a city far away. As it was impossible to isolate myself in Phung Chang Cave everyday, I alternatively isolated myself in a convenient area based on my everyday life. While standing still on the deck of my office building, looking down to landscape below, seeing and hearing the movements of people and vehicles like trains, trucks, cars, and motorcycles in the distance, I could touch the peaceful vastness of the sky along with light and low fidelity sounds below. The feeling of inner peace happened to me at last. I believe that this experience is

common and can happen to anyone. With the characteristics of the space that was less of visual and sensual complexity, the feeling of *simplicity* came across my mind fast and naturally. Therefore, I could not help to link to my abstract concept of *kindness and mercy* to the last piece of artwork.

To understand how my abstract thoughts developed through the awareness of *simplicity* on the rooftop along with *difficulty* in a capitalist society below, I began to create the final piece by making a drawing of the cityscape from the rooftop. Afterwards, I made a survey of the area below that I saw from the rooftop. I made a note of row-buildings, roads, and vehicles. Then, I created the artwork based on the survey. The space of my artwork is divided into two parts: a visible space and an invisible one, or part that is difficult to see through. The visible space presents my perception of *simplicity* through geometric shapes, material, and techniques that are not complex, and the invisible part presents my view of social complexity through small concrete cubes referring to row buildings and a sound composition of passing trains. The objective of this work is, therefore, to practice and to develop *kindness and mercy* in mind through the composition of image, sound, and space.

Image 8: '*Isolation for Kindness and Mercy'* (2012), 325 x 325, x 50 Centimetres, Mixed-media techniques, Collection of Artist

Image 9: '*Isolation for Kindness and Mercy'* (2012), 325 x 325, x 50
Centimetres, Mixed-media techniques, Collection of Artist

The Analysis

I analysed the series of mixed-media art in three aspects: cultural meaning and implication, role of culture in visual art, and perception and interpretation of the culture in the art situation.

1) Cultural meaning and implication

The particular meaning of culture that I studied refers to the system of cultural transmission that gives a significance to content expressing meanings and feelings, not decoded physicality like symbol and motif. This research of the intangible culture is treated as my proposition of making an alternative application of culture to create Thai contemporary art. Many Thai artists predominantly use familiar and recognisable characteristics of cultural forms to produce their mixed-media art. My proposition is that the application of culturally decoded physicality is not the only way. The application of cultural content in Thai contemporary art is an effective alternative. Therefore, my study of the intangible culture began with three independent variables: (1) the definition of culture in psychology (2) case study artists and (3) fieldwork. These three independent variables contributed to the creation of the series of mixed-media art.

The first independent variable is the meaning of culture in psychology by Matsumoto and Chuang. I learned that the intangible culture exists in the information system created by human beings. They receive

information, think about it, and send what they perceive to others. This information system has an important role; it affects humans' thoughts, beliefs, behaviours, and ways of life at personal, community, and social levels.

The second independent variable was the two case study artists - Thangchalok and Buddhacharoen. By considering the physicality of their art alone, Thangchalok's abstract painting relates to the first variable more than Buddhacharoen's installation. Moreover, the abstract painting is relevant to my objective that is to create a series of mixed-media art that does not display a clear and fixed form of culture, yet imply its vital content. It is clear that Thangchalok's art display the system of conveying his abstract information via his visual art. In addition, audiences can explore the information system from the visual elements: points, lines, and geometric shapes. Results of such exploration do not take a form of visual narrative, but the substance of feelings and meanings. Buddhacharoen's art installation is different from Thangchalok's in some characteristics. Buddhacharoen composed highly sophisticated Buddhist art forms to create the installation. These forms contain religious and cultural information. Therefore, it is necessary for the audiences to be equipped with basic knowledge of these forms in order to understand their meanings. To read points, lines and geometric shapes on Thangchalok's painting, audiences, on the other hand, do not need to have a specific knowledge because the objective of his artwork is to inspire audience's wisdom and intuition while viewing the paintings. However, the reason why I selected the installation entitled "Namo Buddhaya: Courteous Respect to the Lord Buddha Humility" as a case study was because of my interest in his creation of the fourth dimensional space, and the mixture between analogue and digital system that inspires me to create a new artistic approach.

The fourth dimensional space of Buddhacharoen refers to two overlapping contents: the temporal space and the psychological space of the artist. When viewing the installation, audiences can recognise the movements of music and candlelight that flow slowly and continuously along the time. When considering the content of the installation, audiences could touch a mind state of the artist who tries to fight against his unfortunate fate. The artist allows the audiences to access their thoughts and their peaceful effort.

For the mixture between analogue and digital information system, it might look even strange at first, but I have found that the mixture has helped in terms of techniques. It makes the artist's stream of thoughts flow continually.

The third independent variable was my fieldwork. I collected data from two fields: Visual Arts Sirinthorn Operation Building in Nakhonpathom province, where I work, and Phung Chang Cave in Phang-nga province. The two areas have a similar quality. They are spaces in which I have found indicators- images, sound, and space that led to the awareness of self-existence. I used all three indicators as tools to create the solitary experience in the art situation. The solitary experience reflects many practices of isolation in many cultures around the world. Besides the fieldwork, I also studied intensively the concepts of isolation in Buddhism and Islam.

The study of three independent variables led to following dependent variables as shown in the chart below.
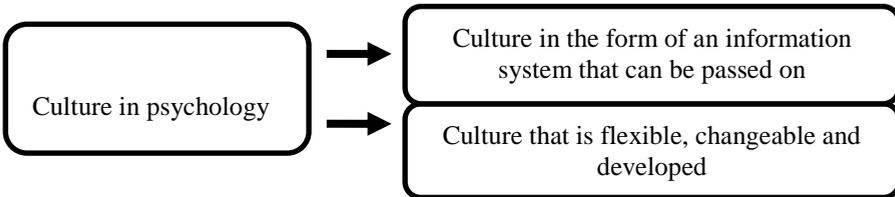
```
┌─────────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
│                     │   ───► │ Culture in the form of an         │
│ Culture in          │        │ information system that can be    │
│ psychology          │        │ passed on                          │
│                     │   ───► ├──────────────────────────────────┤
│                     │        │ Culture that is flexible,         │
│                     │        │ changeable and developed          │
└─────────────────────┘        └──────────────────────────────────┘
```

Chart 2: shows the first independent variable and two following dependent variables

```
                               ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
                        ───►    │ Formless idea                     │
                               ├──────────────────────────────────┤
┌─────────────────────┐ ───►   │ Using geometry to create the     │
│                     │        │ essence of idea and meaning       │
│ Case study artists  │        ├──────────────────────────────────┤
│                     │ ───►   │ Creating space by controlling    │
│                     │        │ light, shadow and darkness        │
│                     │        ├──────────────────────────────────┤
└─────────────────────┘ ───►   │ The combination of analog and    │
                               │ digital systems                   │
                               └──────────────────────────────────┘
```
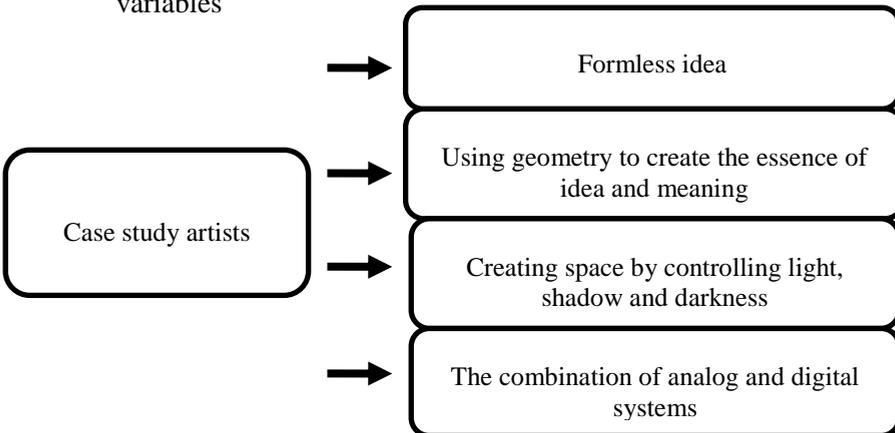
Chart 3: shows the second independent variable and four following dependent variables

```
                                    ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                         ──────▶    │  Images, sound, and space of │
                                    │         architecture         │
                                    └──────────────────────────────┘
┌──────────────────┐                ┌──────────────────────────────┐
│                  │     ──────▶    │  Images, sound, and space of │
│    Fieldwork     │                │             cave             │
│                  │                └──────────────────────────────┘
└──────────────────┘                ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                         ──────▶    │  Isolation and solitary      │
                                    │         experience           │
                                    └──────────────────────────────┘
```
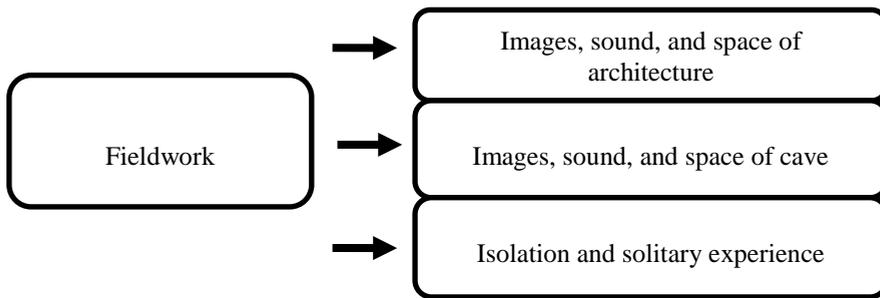
Chart 4: shows the third independent variable and three following
        dependent variables

2) The role of culture in visual art

All nine dependent variables in relation to the intangible culture
have an important role in my artwork creation as follows:

I treated three dependent variables (1) 'Culture in the form of an
information system that can be passed on' (2) 'Culture that is flexible,
changeable and developed' and (3) 'Formless idea' as a main principle for
creating the content of three mixed-media art. I applied the substance of
cultural isolation that has been passed on in my mixed-media art. These days,
a certain amount of monks still practice isolation in the deep forest. However,
it is hardly seen that laymen practice isolation in deep forests like the monks.
Laymen have adjusted to the ways of being alone, which suit their modern
way of life. It is likely that the isolation practice can be passed on to
subsequent generations who later flexibly modify the practice to suit their
daily environment and social contexts. It is likely that cultural isolation is
flexible, changeable, and adjustable. While isolating, a practitioner does not
need to think about any story. The isolated persons can indulge in their own
field of formless thought, focusing on their breath. Therefore, I emphasised
on presenting a concept without a fixed, decoded cultural form, as I did not
have an intention to tell any particular story. The audiences could visually
consider all the visual elements in order to perceive certain substances from
mixed-media art. This was how I adjusted and developed the formless idea of
cultural isolation that was appropriate to my situation at that time.

I applied the dependent variables from the two case study artists and the fieldwork as follows: For '*Solitary Experience in Image, Sound and Space*', I used this dependent variable 'Image, sound, and space of architecture' to create its physical structure. Architectural interior was applied to the open, sparse, and floating structure in the air. Hanging ropes, attached with the structure, allowed the audiences to move the geometrical shapes in order to audibly interact with the resonance of the gallery space. I also used this dependent variable 'Isolation and solitary experience' to hang the entire structure in mid-air, high above the audiences' head. They had to turn the face upward to view the visual elements that float freely. Turning the face upward helped to cut others off. This was how the audiences might be able to create a private relationship with the artwork without physical involvement from others.

For '*Solitary Experience for Effort and Patience*', I applied this dependent variable 'Images, sound, and space of a cave' to its main structure. I applied the exterior characteristics of Phung Chang Cave, which looks solid, and its interior character that is cavus to create this work. I made a square-shaped structure. Inside the structure, the audiences could walk in to see natural surface, natural colour, and electric light. The interior of this structure was a result of applying the dependent variable 'Creating space by controlling light, shadow, and darkness'. A yellowish light bulb was installed inside. When the light touched the natural materials, it created a mixture of shady, bright, coloured, and dark environment. For sound, I applied the dependent variable 'The combination of analog and digital systems' to create a composition of natural and synthesised sounds. Natural sounds are viewed as presenting the analogue system as natural sounds show continuous movements of natural things. Synthesized sounds are viewed as presenting digital system as they were completely transformed and transcoded. Lastly, I applied the dependent variable 'Isolation and solitary experience" to the limitation of the number of audiences. The small space inside allowed only two people maximum to walk in each time.

'*Isolation for Kindness and Mercy*' was assimilated to image, sound and space that I explored from both the rooftop and the ground. I simplified the landscape and applied this dependent variable 'Using

geometry to create the essence of the idea and meaning' to create a rather plain and flat structure. The simplified structure was raised 50 centimetres from ground. Part of the structure was wide enough for one person to step in it. I wanted to invite the audience to be part of the space in order to create a solitary experience. While standing in this pierced space, the audience could consider the flat wooden structure with slightly different levels, darkness underneath the structure, beams of light that could enter the dark space underneath, and small cubes scattering underneath.   From time to time, the audiences could hear the doppler effect of the passing trains running from a distance to an opposite direction, close to their feet.

It could be said that the culture plays a role in creating the content and the artistic methods for my works. My practice of isolation – the intangible culture – became the main content of three mixed-media art.   Such content gave the importance to my field of thought that does not have a story to tell, but feelings and meanings to communicate. The case study artists played an important role in creating the physicality of the mixed-media art, which can be explored from images, sounds, and spaces appearing in the mixed-media art.

3) Perception and interpretation of the culture in the art situation

The perception and interpretation of the culture in the art situation can be investigated from the information system that embeds in the mixed-media art. Therefore, the analysis of the intangible culture must concentrate on such a system. System refers to "*a group of things that are brazed into a unitary thing according to a principle of relation, based on natural order or academic logic for example a nervous system, a gastrointestinal system, a universal system, a social system, and a country's management system.*" (Office of the Royal Society, 2012) From the quote, there are two factors to be considered: the first factor is about things, and the second factor is about the principle of relation of things. If things and the principle of relation of things are well clarified, we could understand, perceive, and interpret the mixed-media art.

All three works consist of three main indicators or things: image, sound, and space. I united the three things based on my assumption that the three things together could lead to the creation of artwork or a unitary thing

that implies the information system of my concept. I would like to start with an explanation of things, and the principle that I used to create the relation of image, sound, and space. Then, I will analyse the perception and interpretation of the culture.

The three things - image, sound and, space - have different properties. I created a basic principle in creating the relation of image, sound, and space by looking for their existing similarities that could unite them together. The similarities include their physical dimension and the way of accessing them through human senses. The image of all mixed-media art has a three-dimensional property, so does the sound and the space. The sound has a four-dimensional property, so does the space. Finally, we need our senses-seeing, hearing, and touch- to access these things properly. The following explanation will briefly demonstrate how the things were united.

For '*Solitary Experience in Image, Sound and* Space', the image featured a three-dimensional property that was installed overhead of the audiences. They had to turn face upward to explore floating geometric shapes, similar to my experience of looking up at the open space inside the building. While looking, the audiences would have to explore the space. Within the space, they might consider the relationship between themselves and the artwork, that of themselves and the space, and that between the artwork and the space. Finally, the sound heard had a three-and-four-dimensional characteristics. Small bells and beads were part of the image, so does the sound. The sound together with the image appeared scatteringly and periodically in the gallery space. The space embraced the entire image and was active from time to time by the sound of small bells and beads.

For *'Solitary Experience for Effort and Patience'*, the image featured a three-dimensional property that surrounds the audiences, whether it was on top, on side, in front or rear. The audiences could look around to explore shapes, textures, colours of the natural materials, similar to my exploration of the caves in a dim atmosphere. Audiences would gradually consider the space in which they stood. The space was narrow and dark, and they could smell the natural odour of dried banana leaves. Finally, the audiences could hear the combination of two sounds. The first sound is from banana leaves directly, and the second sound is from synthesising the natural

sound of banana leaves. The composition of concrete/ analogue and abstract/ digital sounds travelled within the dark and narrow space inside. The sound activated the space as well as the image or what the audiences saw.

For *'Solitary Experience for Kindness and Mercy'*, the image featured a three-dimensional object on the ground. The audiences would have to bend down to investigate the visual elements: flat and leveled shapes, light, shadow, objects, and sound. While standing in the pierced space wide enough for one person, the viewers could feel the relationship between themselves, the image, and the space, between the upper space and the underneath space, between the underneath space and the Doppler effect of passing trains.

An analysis of perception and interpretation can be divided into two main themes: physicality and content.

Firstly, considering the physicality of the mixed-media art, the audiences could infer where the concept of each artwork came from by observing from the overall shape and the accompanying elements. However, the audiences could notice and perceive that each artwork did not try to guide a story or symbols for interpretation, but subjects that are architecture, cave and landscapes. In this way, it is likely to analyse that each artwork acts like a theatre scene. Without actors on stage, the scene is only a motionless slide without life. The theatre-like scene acts as a representative of space that might exist somewhere. The scene would start to come to life when an actor came in, and took their role as an audience. All three artworks present the representative of the subjects, and wait for the audiences to walk into and explore. When understanding the information system of image, sound, and space, the audiences can gradually realise that the mixed-media art does not have a story or a symbol to be interpreted. The only thing that the audiences could do is to explore things through their eyes, ears, and bodily movement.

The second point is about the content. The deprivation of story and symbol reflects my research objective that is to create the solitary experience in order for the audience to focus on the presented subjects with no need for them to create a new story over the mixed-media art. During my fieldwork, I concentrated on the architecture, the landscape, and the cave, and did not embellish these subjects. I simplified them, created simple forms, and arranged simple compositions. This can be assumed that I showed the quality

of my concentration for the audiences to realise. At this point, the audiences are very important. They are as important as an actor on the stage. Without them, the stage is completely meaningless. Being in the art situation of no storytelling encourages the audiences to gradually consider the visual elements. Viewing all the elements would take time and probably cause the audiences to slow down. Images, sound, and space together could hold the audiences' concentration for a while and encourage them to bring their own experiences from the past to take its role in the present time. It might say that the end point of visiting my mixed-media art does not finish at the mixed-media art themselves, but at the audience. Here, it is possible to specify that the 'content' directly depends on the audiences, not on the creator or the physicality of the mixed-media art.

Conclusion

I studied the particular meaning of the intangible culture that is about the isolation that can take place in a remote area and a domestic environment. It is a cultural practice that has no shape and object as a result. This isolation practice helps the practitioners to be close to their own self. This intangible culture plays the role in the creation of content and methods for the three mixed-media art. I presented the artistic condition of being alone with no storytelling. Emancipating oneself from any narrative structure by releasing, omitting, and not thinking about anything can be a kind of cultural practice in order to balance one's life.

The cultural perception and interpretation in the art situation might not be able to take place through visually exploring the mixed-media art alone. The audiences might take part in the mixed-media art to realise that the true content was significantly developed through the audiences's experience. In conclusion, *'Solitary Experience in Image, Sound, and Space'*, *'Solitary Experience for Effort and Patience'* and *'Solitary Experience for Kindness and Mercy'* have demonstrated ways of thinking, explanation of value, principles, and reasons of ideas related to culture and visual art. The isolation provides the area of thinking exercise that leads to the processes of learning, creating, applying, producing new things, practicing a freedom, and nourishing the freedom of thought.

References

Kanchanaphan, A. (2005) *Theories and Research Methodologies: Breaking research framework and Trap of contradictory Concept*. Bangkok: Amarin: 111-112.

LaBelle, B. (2006) *Background Noise: Perspective on Sound Art.* London: Continuum International Publishing Group: 126.

Matsumoto, D. and Juang, L. (2008) *Culture & Psychology.* California: Thomson Wadsworth: 12.

Office of the Royal Society. (2012) *Royal Institute Dictionary*. 2nd Edition. Bangkok: Nanmee Book Publishcation: 979.

Rasmussen, S. E. (1959) *Experiencing Architecture.* Cambridge MA: MIT Press: 3-36.

Thangchalok, I. (2006) *Intuition and Intellect*. Bangkok: Amarin: 11-16.
    A Blackboard of Sunnah Students. [Online URL:http://www.sunnah student.com/forum/index.php?topic=3725.0] accessed on June 20, 2011.

Royal Thripitaka Book 23. [Online URL:http://www.watamrin.com/ attachemnts/article/55/พระไตรปิฎกฉบับหลวงเล่มที่ ๒๓.pdf] accessed on June 20, 2011.