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## Appreciation

The International Journal of Architecture, Art and Design (IJAD) was first launched in January 2023, with the aim of disseminating academic research and creative works to a broad audience. The journal welcomes contributions across a wide range of art and design disciplines, including—but not limited to—creative products (crafts, textiles, ceramics, media and digital artwork, and other design creations), creative spaces (architecture, interior design, landscape, built environment, urban planning, urban design, and other forms of place-making), and creative processes (design thinking, design solutions, and innovation). Submissions from other creators wishing to share their art and design work are also encouraged.

This third volume (No. 1 and No. 2) covers works published between January and December 2025; however, Vol. 3 (No. 1) was released online in September 2025 due to unexpected delays. Four articles are presented in this volume, beginning with a book review on Mascot Design for Promoting Business and Tourism in Thailand, followed by perspectives from Hanoi Grapevine in Vietnam, an article on intergenerational climate change education from Shanghai, China, and a study of Wat Thai Watanaram as a unique Thai–Myanmar temple in a border area.

On behalf of the IJAD editorial board and committee, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to all authors for their contributions. We hope this journal will inspire readers with insightful knowledge and exemplary practices across diverse cultural contexts.

Witiya Pittungnapoo  
Editor-in-Chief



## BOOK REVIEW

### **Mascot Design for Promoting Business and Tourism in Thailand**

Author: Waraporn Mamee (2022)

Naresuan University Publishing House. 208 pages, ISBN 987-616-426-252-2,  
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Mascots are essential design characters that have gained widespread popularity, serving diverse purposes in both city representation and the commercial sector. This book offers a comprehensive introduction to mascot design, ranging from foundational concepts to advanced techniques. Originally written in Thai under the English translated as *Mascot Design for Promoting Business and Tourism in Thailand*, the book is authored by Assistant Professor Waraporn Mamee from the Faculty of Art and Design at Naresuan University, Thailand. Drawing on her expertise in tourism promotion and the creative industries, she shares practical tips and techniques for developing mascot designs. Structured into nine chapters, the book presents its content and concludes each chapter with a concise summary to enhance understanding.

The book begins with an introduction to mascots, covering their general definition, historical background, significance, and evolution, accompanied by illustrative examples and summarised with infographic diagram. Notably, each chapter concludes with a summary helping to reinforce key points and ensure clarity for all readers.

**Chapter 1** introduces the different types and forms of mascots, categorised into three groups: natural elements (both living, such as humans, animals, plants, fruits, and flowers; and non-living, such as rocks, mountains, water, and the sea); manmade elements (including objects, places, culture, and traditions); and abstract elements (such as emotions and feelings).

**Chapter 2** outlines the key design principles for mascots, which include: 1) Creative thinking in design, 2) Memorability, 3) Practical usability, 4) Effective branding representation, 5) Aesthetic appeal, 6) Uniqueness and attractiveness, 7) Friendly characteristics, and 8) Ease of maintenance.



**Chapter 3** defines the key elements of mascot design composition, including shapes and forms, materials and textures, colour and mood, and size and proportion. Each element is illustrated with mascot design examples, and a summary diagram is provided at the end of each section to enhance understanding.

**Chapter 4** discusses the quality assessment of mascots in alignment with the design criteria outlined in Chapter 2. It also highlights how mascots can contribute to branding and promote a business's image. The author provides an example of an evaluation form to assess and compare three different mascot designs.

**Chapter 5** outlines the mascot design process, which includes three main steps: 1) Design brainstorming, 2) Drafting and development, and 3) Creation and implementation. Each step is illustrated with detailed diagrams to provide clear guidance.

**Chapter 6** explores the personality, color, and emotional expression of mascots. Personality is categorised into five traits: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. The chapter also examines how different color schemes evoke specific emotions, presenting a variety of palettes such as pretty, casual, dynamic, gorgeous, wild, romantic, natural, elegant, chic, classic, dandy, formal, clear, cool casual, and modern. Each color scheme is illustrated with relevant examples of the author's mascot designs to demonstrate its effect in practice.

**Chapter 7** discusses materials and considerations for mascot production, with a focus on wearable mascot heads made from either fiberglass or foam. Key aspects of mascot production include tools and equipment, structural design, decoration, budgeting, production methods, costume fitting, and transportation.

**Chapter 8** presents usage of mascots in various applications, for example, advertisement and public relations, offline and online media, place-making, packaging, tourism, and souvenirs. The chapter concludes with a summary diagram to visually reinforce the key points.

**Chapter 9** showcases examples of mascot conceptual designs, drawing inspiration from the author's award-winning works and best practices.

This book is highly recommended for mascot creators of all levels—from beginners to advanced practitioners—particularly those in Thailand. It provides detailed tips and techniques drawn from the author's award-winning mascot designs, which contributed to its recognition as the readers' choice 2024 by Naresuan University Printing House. If you are looking for inspiration to explore different design approaches and characteristics of mascots, this book will be an excellent resource—guiding you to enjoy the creative process of designing your own friendly and engaging mascots.



## Understanding Vietnam Art & Cultural Scene: A Perspective from Hanoi Grapevine

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### Abstract

This paper explores the transformative role of the Hanoi Grapevine, a leading non-profit independent platform, in shaping Vietnam's contemporary art and cultural landscape since its inception in 2007, with a particular focus on its strategic evolution and impact from 2019 onwards. Beyond its initial function as a news aggregator, the Hanoi Grapevine has cultivated a support system for artistic endeavors by facilitating connections among artists, spaces, and organisers, and by hosting vital educational and knowledge-sharing programs. Key initiatives such as the Proactive Audience Network (PAN) are examined for their success in building a highly engaged and discerning community of cultural enthusiasts. Drawing upon an insider's perspective, this study illuminates the critical contributions of independent organisations to cultural development in Vietnam, while also addressing existing challenges and the imperative of future collaborations, particularly with international partners, to foster a thriving and sustainable artistic environment.

**Keywords:** Vietnam, Art, Culture, Hanoi Grapevine, Cultural Ecosystem

### Introduction

In recent years, Vietnam's contemporary art and cultural landscape has undergone a period of dynamic transformation. From the emergence of independent creative hubs to the growing engagement of younger audiences and the expansion of regional collaborations, the country's art ecosystem is increasingly operating beyond traditional institutional frameworks. This shift has been accelerated by a combination of social, political, and economic factors—including the COVID-19 pandemic—which have disrupted conventional modes of cultural production, challenged state-led narratives, and prompted a fundamental reimagining of artistic labor, access, and infrastructure.

At the center of this evolving cultural terrain is *Hanoi Grapevine*, a hybrid platform for arts and culture founded in 2007 and operated independently since 2019. Initially conceived as a digital bulletin for contemporary art events in Hanoi, Hanoi Grapevine has





since developed into a multifaceted initiative that supports information dissemination, audience development, capacity-building, and curatorial experimentation. As both a media platform and an art organisation, it plays a distinctive role in cultivating informal networks among artists, organisers, and audiences. Its recent initiatives—such as the *Proactive Audience Network*, *Hanoi Grapevine's Finest* awards, and *The Grapevine Selection* exhibition series—reflect a wider trend across Southeast Asia toward bottom-up cultural infrastructures and community-rooted practices.

This paper presents a longitudinal case study of Hanoi Grapevine from 2019 to 2024, grounded in the author's position as the platform's director during this period. Adopting an autoethnographic lens, the study explores how Hanoi Grapevine has contributed to Vietnam's art and cultural landscape by nurturing participatory audiences, enabling cross-sector collaboration, and developing alternative models of recognition, archiving, and support. The analysis situates these efforts within a broader inquiry into how independent cultural actors address gaps in policy, funding, and institutional infrastructure—particularly in transitional contexts where cultural ecosystems are still emerging.

The aim of this paper is twofold: first, to document the development of the Hanoi Grapevine initiatives as a case of situated cultural practice; and second, to contextualise these initiatives within wider debates around creative industries, participatory culture, and cultural infrastructure in Vietnam and the broader Southeast Asian region. The study also reflects the epistemic and structural constraints that self-organised cultural actors face, as well as the strategies they employ to navigate challenges related to sustainability, recognition, and resource scarcity. In doing so, the paper argues for a more nuanced understanding of the role of independent platforms in shaping the cultural futures of postcolonial and post-pandemic societies.

## Methods and Materials

This study adopts a qualitative, practice-based research methodology that draws on a combination of autoethnography and longitudinal case study. As the author has served in leadership roles at Hanoi Grapevine from 2019 to 2024—first as Managing Partner and later as Director—the research is embedded in an insider perspective that offers direct insight into the platform's development, operations, and cultural impact. This dual position—as both practitioner and critical observer—enables a layered, reflexive analysis of the evolving forms of cultural infrastructure in Vietnam.

Autoethnography, as a method, foregrounds the experiences of the researcher as a source of knowledge. According to Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011), autoethnography connects the personal to the cultural by situating the self within wider systems, histories, and practices. In contexts such as Vietnam—where formal documentation is partial, institutional transparency is limited, and much of the creative field operates informally—autoethnographic inquiry provides access to insights often omitted from official narratives. Rather than minimising subjectivity, this method embraces positionality as a critical asset.



In this study, the author's direct involvement in the programming, design, and partnerships of the Hanoi Grapevine serves as both object and vehicle of analysis. The interpretation is grounded in reflective field notes, project evaluations, participant feedback, and internal communications, which are read alongside theoretical perspectives from cultural infrastructure and curatorial studies.

This study focuses on Hanoi Grapevine as a longitudinal case study over a five-year period, encompassing key moments in its institutional and programmatic evolution. These include the launch of audience development initiatives such as the *Proactive Audience Network* (PAN), the creation of cultural recognition frameworks like *Hanoi Grapevine's Finest*, the rapid digital transformation of the platform during the COVID-19 pandemic, and more recent educational initiatives such as *Đỡ Đàn*—a peer-support program offering professional guidance for artists and cultural workers. This five-year timeframe enables an in-depth, situated analysis of the ways in which independent platforms can operate as sites of both cultural production and infrastructural experimentation. While the Hanoi Grapevine is not representative of all Vietnamese arts organisations, its trajectory offers a compelling lens through which to examine broader patterns of self-organisation, adaptation, and innovation within the region.

The empirical basis of this study draws from multiple sources, including internal reports, event archives, public communications, and platform analytics. Documentation reviewed includes workshop materials, exhibition catalogues, nomination records, and correspondence related to program planning and evaluation. Quantitative data—such as audience numbers, participation rates, and voting outcomes—were analysed to assess the scope and impact of key initiatives. These materials were complemented by the author's fieldnotes and analytical writing generated during the implementation of projects.

### **The case of Hanoi Grapevine (2019-2024)**

Hanoi Grapevine was founded in 2007 by Canadian artist Brian Ring as a digital bulletin designed to disseminate information about contemporary art events in Hanoi. Informal in spirit and community-driven in scope, the platform initially functioned as a grassroots media outlet in a cultural landscape where mainstream visibility for the arts remained limited. Upon Ring's departure from Vietnam in 2017, leadership transitioned to Vietnamese journalist Truong Uyen Ly. In 2019, the author joined as Managing Partner and later assumed the role of Director in 2024. This leadership transition marked a significant shift in the platform's trajectory, as it began to evolve from a listings site into a multifaceted initiative for arts communication and education, experimental networking, and capacity-building within Vietnam's independent cultural sector.

From 2019 onward, Hanoi Grapevine expanded both its digital reach and its programmatic ambition, shaped by a growing awareness of the structural challenges facing artists, audiences, and cultural practitioners in Vietnam. At the heart of this evolution was the recognition that access to information alone was insufficient to sustain a thriving cultural



ecosystem. The platform thus began to move beyond documentation and event promotion, towards forms of active mediation—connecting artists, organisers, and art spaces in collaborative formats, while also encouraging audiences to engage not merely as recipients of content but as a critical and participatory public. This shift culminated in the development of several long-term initiatives aimed at building cultural infrastructure from the ground up, particularly in areas where institutional support remained limited or inconsistent.

Among the most consequential of these initiatives was the Proactive Audience Network (PAN), launched in 2019 with support from the British Council, the European Union, and the Vietnam National Institute of Culture and Arts Studies (VICAS), as part of the Cultural and Creative Hubs Vietnam project. Designed in response to the prevailing passivity of cultural spectatorship in Vietnam, PAN sought to cultivate a more engaged, informed, and critically responsive audience base. Initially comprising approximately 40 members, the network provided structured opportunities for participants to observe the creative process, interact directly with artists, and offer evaluative feedback through various modes of expression—including writing, video, and digital archiving. By 2024, the network had expanded to nearly 3,000 active members, indicating both a latent demand for participatory cultural engagement and the viability of peer-led audience development in the Vietnamese context.

The emphasis on participatory spectatorship and horizontal recognition was extended through the launch of Hanoi Grapevine's *Finest*, an annual initiative celebrating outstanding cultural contributions across three primary categories: *Finest Artists*, *Finest Projects*, and *Finest Organisers*, later expanded in 2023 to include *Active Curators/Producers*. Although the inaugural award ceremony planned for 2020 was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the platform adapted by producing its first printed publication of nominees, which was distributed to artists and cultural spaces across the country. Between 2019 and 2024, Hanoi Grapevine reviewed nearly 5,000 cultural events, issued close to 300 nominations, and facilitated public voting by thousands of audience members. What began as an experimental and decentralised model of recognition has since become one of the most anticipated cultural initiatives in Vietnam, offering symbolic affirmation and increased visibility for practitioners operating outside dominant institutional circuits.

In this way, Hanoi Grapevine has gradually assumed the role of a cultural intermediary—a platform positioned at the intersection of audiences and institutions, artists and funders, information and practice. No longer merely a media outlet, the platform now functions as a dynamic node of cultural infrastructure. The next section explores how this role was further shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath, through the platform's embrace of hybrid programming, digital pedagogy, and professional development.



## Hybrid practices and resilience during COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic marked a critical turning point for cultural production worldwide, and Vietnam was no exception. As national lockdowns and social distancing measures took hold in early 2020, the country's already fragile cultural infrastructure faced severe disruptions. Physical venues closed, public gatherings were suspended, and funding pipelines stalled. For a platform like Hanoi Grapevine—whose operations had traditionally been tied to physical events and in-person exchange—these conditions posed an existential challenge: how could it remain relevant when cultural activity, at least in its conventional form, had effectively come to a halt?

The response was swift, adaptive, and ultimately transformative. Beginning in March 2020, Hanoi Grapevine pivoted its operations to focus on digital content creation, curating resources specifically tailored to audiences now confined to their homes. Drawing on international sources, the platform localised and contextualised a wide range of materials—ranging from online art courses and virtual museum tours to archives on Southeast Asian contemporary art and cultural research. Initially published as informal blog posts, these curated compilations attracted unexpected popularity, with thousands of shares across social media. Their success prompted a strategic reorganisation of platform content structure, signaling a broader shift toward integrated digital programming.

This momentum led to a major collaboration with the British Council under the initiative #CultureConnects, a series of online training programs developed to support cultural and creative professionals during the crisis. Hanoi Grapevine contributed three foundational courses—*Writing in the Arts*, *Communications in Arts*, and *Copyrights: Arts and Multimedia*—each designed with accessibility and practical relevance in mind. Open to the public and free of charge, the courses reached over 15,000 visitors during the height of the lockdowns and issued nearly 3,000 completion certificates. Far from being a stopgap solution, these programs revealed a growing appetite for professional knowledge and peer exchange, especially among younger practitioners who lacked access to formal institutional training.

Rather than a temporary pivot, the pandemic became a catalyst for Hanoi Grapevine's long-term transformation. Its capacity to adapt to digital formats, new learning environments, and uncertain economic conditions, highlighted the potential of informal cultural infrastructures to remain responsive and generative in times of crisis. By broadening its scope from information dissemination to include training, knowledge exchange, and professional support, the platform effectively redefined what a cultural media outlet could be in the shifting Vietnamese landscape.

This expansion of mission also brought renewed attention to the structural precarity of the Vietnamese independent arts ecology. Prior to the pandemic, many of the Hanoi Grapevine programs, like those of other regional initiatives, were sustained through support from foreign cultural institutions, including the British Council, Goethe-Institut, the Japan Foundation, and EU-funded cultural networks. These institutions played a crucial role in



seeding innovative projects and subsidising risk. However, the pandemic exposed the vulnerability of this dependency. As global priorities shifted and mobility was restricted, the need for locally grounded, self-sustaining models became increasingly urgent.

In response, the Hanoi Grapevine began to reposition itself not only as a cultural connector but also as a capacity-building hub for practitioners navigating a post-COVID landscape. In 2021, the platform launched *Đỡ Đàn*, a practical support initiative offering guidance in writing artist bios, organising portfolios, managing documentation, and navigating copyright issues. The title *Đỡ Đàn* is an evocative Vietnamese phrase meaning both “to assist” and “to become less ignorant,” captured the project’s ethos of solidarity and informal learning. Designed to meet the practical needs of artists, particularly those working without institutional backing, *Đỡ Đàn* represented a new mode of engagement, one grounded in infrastructural care and peer-to-peer mentoring.

By 2023, this approach was formalised into a series of paid workshops and public talks focused on essential skills for artistic survival and development. Topics included grant writing, communication strategies, exhibition design, legal frameworks, and international mobility programs. The workshops reached more than 600 participants annually, with 16 sessions and five public talks held in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in 2023, followed by nine workshops and six public talks in Hanoi and Da Lat between 2024 and early 2025. Notably, these programs introduced modest participation fees, marking a critical shift toward financial self-reliance. While such fees might previously have been considered a barrier to access, their successful implementation suggested a growing recognition among cultural practitioners of the value of professional development, and a willingness to invest in their own sustainability.

In this way, the pandemic did not simply disrupt Hanoi Grapevine’s trajectory, it accelerated its maturation. What emerged was a more agile, multidimensional platform capable of integrating media production, education, recognition, and support into a coherent strategy for cultural sustainability. These hybrid practices, born of crisis, now form the foundation of Hanoi Grapevine’s post-pandemic vision and signal a broader paradigm shift in how cultural infrastructure might be reimagined in Southeast Asia.

### **Archiving and curatorial experimentation**

The scarcity of formal art archival infrastructure in Vietnam has long been recognised as a critical impediment to both historical research and the development of contemporary cultural policy. Unlike other Southeast Asian nations that have invested in national art museums, art institutions, and state-backed digital archiving projects, the Vietnamese contemporary art archive remains highly fragmented—distributed across private collections, sporadic institutional efforts, and ephemeral grassroots initiatives. In response to this lack, recent years have seen the emergence of a number of independent archiving projects, including the *Vietnam Contemporary Art Database* hosted by Heritage Space, Veronika Radulovic’s *Don’t Call It Art*, the APD (Center for Art Patronage and Development) *Open Archive*, the *Đỡ Đàn Library*, and the UK-based *An Viet Archives*.



These initiatives often arise from a mix of necessity, advocacy, and personal dedication, and aim to generate knowledge from the periphery while challenging centralised models of documentation and authority.

As the most comprehensive database of art and cultural events in Vietnam since 2007, with more than 18,000 entries the Hanoi Grapevine has uniquely positioned itself to contribute to this independent archival landscape. In 2023, the platform launched *The Grapevine Selection*, an annual exhibition series designed to serve both as a public showcase and as a living archive. Unlike traditional exhibitions organised around curatorial themes or specific media, *The Grapevine Selection* is structured around a peer-recommendation model: each year artists are nominated by a rotating advisory board and by previous exhibiting artists. This cumulative, intergenerational process privileges artistic integrity, underrecognised labor, and representational depth over market visibility or institutional endorsement. Works included in the exhibition are treated not merely as discrete objects, but as markers of their time, anchoring the archive in the lived realities and urgencies of contemporary Vietnamese art.

This curatorial framework challenges conventional hierarchies and instead centers on relational authority, that is, the trust and tacit knowledge that circulates within artistic communities. It also resists the seriality and trend-driven logic of many curated exhibitions by establishing a "landmark" model: each artist may only participate once in their career, with the long-term goal of building an index of creative production across the 2020s. The first two editions were held in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, with plans to expand to other cities in coming years. Each exhibition is accompanied by bilingual documentation, professional photography, and critical essays, contributing to a growing body of archival material in both digital and printed formats.

### **Institutional vacuum and the emerging role of coordinators**

The rapid expansion of Vietnam's contemporary art and cultural scene in recent years has spelled out the deficiency of institutional infrastructure. While new galleries, private collections, and creative hubs have proliferated, the field continues to operate within what can be described as an institutional vacuum, characterised by the lack of formal curatorial education, minimal state investment in arts administration, and few public institutions capable of supporting long-term cultural development. Within this context, the work of coordinators, that is those who manage, translate, and sustain the complex processes behind artistic production, has become increasingly vital.

Often overlooked or misclassified, art coordinators occupy a pivotal, but structurally invisible role in Vietnam's cultural sector. Unlike curators, whose labor is typically foregrounded in the presentation of exhibitions and public programs, coordinators work across disciplines and hierarchies: liaising between artists and institutions, managing timelines and logistics, interpreting creative visions into actionable plans, and ensuring the continuity of projects in highly fragmented conditions. In the unavailability of institutional scaffolding, coordinators have emerged not only as facilitators but as infrastructure-





builders—the ones who “make things happen” in a field that frequently relies on improvisation, informal networks, and personal trust.

The fluidity of roles within the Vietnamese art scene has only highlighted the significance of coordinators. It is common for a single cultural worker to serve simultaneously as organiser, educator, project manager, and even co-curator. This adaptability is often celebrated as a marker of resourcefulness, but it also signals deeper systemic gaps in labor recognition and professional sustainability. While the field has become more dynamic and interdisciplinary, the work of coordination, despite being central to nearly every artistic or institutional endeavor, remains underacknowledged, undercompensated, and under-theorised.

Recognising this gap, Hanoi Grapevine has taken active steps to reposition coordinators as key agents of cultural production. In 2023, the platform co-founded *ddur.production*, a production collective designed to support independent artists by providing curatorial, administrative, and logistical expertise. Unlike traditional curatorial teams, *ddur.production* operates as a modular and collaborative entity, assembling coordinators, cultural workers, and technical specialists on a project-by-project basis. Founded by the author in collaboration with artist Trần Thảo Miên, curator Nguyễn Hải Nam, and coordinator Nguyễn Bích Đào, the collective balances artistic autonomy with the structured support needed to realise exhibitions and public programs in non-institutional settings.

Since its inception, *ddur.production* has supported over 20 artists through nine exhibitions across Hanoi, Hue, Quy Nhon, and Ho Chi Minh City. These projects, held in diverse spaces ranging from repurposed studios to research centers and white cube galleries, reflect the collective’s commitment to decentralisation, access, and care. In many cases, the exhibitions themselves would not have been possible without the embedded labor of coordinators working behind the scenes to translate ideas into actionable frameworks. In this light, *ddur.production* is a production unit, and a curatorial proposition—one that centers coordination as a generative, intellectual, and political practice.

This ethos culminated in Hanoi Grapevine’s launch of the Art Coordination Annual Meeting, the first national gathering in Vietnam dedicated exclusively to coordinators and behind-the-scenes cultural workers. The meeting recognises these practitioners as foundational to the sustainability and coherence of the arts ecosystem. More than an acknowledgement, it offers a platform for collective learning, advocacy, and visibility, helping to articulate a new professional identity that sits at the intersection of production, mediation, and care. It also challenges existing hierarchies that privilege curatorial authorship or artistic celebrity, foregrounding instead the relational and infrastructural work that enables creative processes to unfold.

In placing coordinators at the center of its institutional imagination, Hanoi Grapevine advances a critical reframing of curatorial labor in Vietnam. Here, curating is not limited to aesthetic judgment or conceptual design, but is embedded in the everyday labor of making



things possible—of building conditions for culture to survive, circulate, and resonate. In a field still inventing its own infrastructure, the coordinator is not simply a supportive role but a cultural protagonist: a mediator of complexity, a translator of vision, and a quiet architect of the future.

## Conclusion

This paper has examined the evolution of Hanoi Grapevine between 2019 and 2024 as a case study in independent cultural infrastructure-building within Vietnam's rapidly transforming arts landscape. Through an autoethnographic and longitudinal lens, the study has traced how a platform originally conceived as a digital event listing has grown into a multifaceted cultural actor, simultaneously a media outlet, educator, curator, coordinator, and convener of networks. In navigating an institutional vacuum, shifting audience expectations, and the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, Hanoi Grapevine has expanded its scope and, at the same time, redefined its purpose: shifting from information-sharing to infrastructural support, from documentation to archiving, and from cultural commentary to field-building.

Central to this transformation is a practice grounded in participation, care, and contextual responsiveness. Initiatives such as the *Proactive Audience Network*, *Hanoi Grapevine's Finest*, *The Grapevine Selection*, *ddur.production* demonstrate that cultural labor in Vietnam is increasingly being carried by those working outside traditional institutions, by artists, educators, and especially coordinators whose work sustains and enables others. These initiatives propose an alternative model for what cultural institutions can be in postcolonial, post-pandemic contexts: flexible, relational, collaborative, and rooted in shared labor rather than hierarchical authority. In doing so, Hanoi Grapevine not only responds to gaps in Vietnam's cultural infrastructure, but helps reimagine what cultural work means, and who it is for.

At the same time, the case highlights persistent challenges: the absence of professional pathways for curatorial and coordination training, the instability of arts funding, and the structural marginalisation of the very labor that keeps the field alive. While Hanoi Grapevine's model has proven generative, it continues to rely on volunteerism, informal alliances, and personal networks that, while powerful, may not be sustainable without broader recognition and systemic support. The platform's evolution should not obscure the pressing need for policy reform and long-term investment in cultural infrastructure—from both state institutions and regional partners.

Looking ahead, Hanoi Grapevine's forthcoming initiatives, including the continued expansion of *The Grapevine Selection*, regional residency development through *AiRViNe* (*Artist-in-Residence Vietnam Network*), and the *Art Coordination Annual Meeting*, signal a deepening commitment to mobility, sustainability, and cultural stewardship. These projects also pose critical questions for the future: How can independent platforms scale without reproducing the very hierarchies they seek to resist? What ethical frameworks can support





peer-led forms of recognition, selection, and care? And how might the field better support the next generation of coordinators, producers, and infrastructural workers essential to cultural continuity?

As Vietnam's cultural ecosystem continues to evolve, Hanoi Grapevine offers not a blueprint, but a lived example of possibility. It demonstrates that cultural infrastructure need not be built from the top down, nor imported wholesale from external models. It can be assembled incrementally, from below—from relationships, shared labor, situated knowledge, and collective imagination. In doing so, it helps open space for more inclusive, resilient, and plural cultural futures—rooted not only in what is already visible, but in the invisible work that makes visibility possible.

### Acknowledgments

This paper would not have been possible without the tireless efforts, creativity, and commitment of the many individuals who have shaped and sustained Hanoi Grapevine over the years. I wish to express my deepest gratitude to all the contributors, collaborators, editors, coordinators, and audience members who have participated in this journey between 2019 and 2024. In particular, I would like to thank the Hanoi Grapevine core team members, past and present, whose invisible labor and collective care have made the platform what it is today. Special thanks go to the editors and contributors of the *Hanoi Grapevine's Finest* publications, whose intellectual rigor and curatorial sensitivity have helped document and honor the vibrancy of Vietnam's cultural scene. Each annual edition, from 2020 to 2024, was made possible through their careful selection, editorial dedication, and belief in the power of community-led recognition. Their names and contributions can be found in full within the digital archive: [https://bit.ly/HGF\\_pub](https://bit.ly/HGF_pub).

This paper is, in many ways, the result of a collective practice. While I have written from my own position and perspective, the work reflects the values and visions of a broader network of artists, writers, cultural workers, and coordinators whose presence and participation continue to reimagine what independent cultural infrastructure can be.

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# **Intergenerational Climate Change Education in Metropolitan China: Case Studies of Jing'an Elderly University and Nanhui New City University for Senior Citizens within the Shanghai Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Ecosystem**

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## **Abstract**

This study addresses the urgent need for effective climate change education in urban China examining how intergenerational learning within Shanghai's Education for Sustainable Development ecosystem can enhance climate literacy and social cohesion. The study conducted case studies of Jing'an Elderly University and Nanhui New City University for Senior Citizens, analysing their place-based curricula (industrial heritage/renewable energy workshops in Jing'an; smart-city infrastructure in Nanhui) through participatory activities, field trips, and community workshops. Both institutions successfully embedded climate education in intergenerational settings: Jing'an linked industrial heritage with green technology workshops, while Nanhui integrated smart-city infrastructure with traditional ecological knowledge exchange. These approaches demonstrably enhanced climate literacy and strengthened cross-generational social bonds. The findings provide actionable theoretical and practical insights for scaling culturally rooted, age-inclusive climate education models in metropolitan China and comparable urban contexts.

**Key words:** Intergenerational Learning, Place-based ESD, Climate Literacy, Community Resilience

## **Introduction**

Shanghai has emerged as a pioneering city in advancing Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) by integrating climate change education with local cultural heritage and intergenerational collaboration. Notably, two institutions; the Jing'an Elderly University and the Nanhui New City University for Senior Citizens, illustrate how ESD initiatives can be deeply rooted in local identity while fostering community resilience and environmental responsibility across generations.



### **Jing'an Elderly University: Merging Heritage with Innovation**

Located in one of Shanghai's most historic urban districts, Jing'an Elderly University has developed a model of intergenerational learning that combines environmental education with cultural preservation. Through partnerships with local schools, community centres, and NGOs, the university organises a wide range of participatory activities designed to connect seniors and youth in meaningful dialogue and shared learning experiences around climate change (Senjooti Roy, 2022). One standout initiative involves joint field trips to the Suzhou Creek Industrial Civilisation Museum. Here, university students act as guides for elderly participants, prompting intergenerational reflection on Shanghai's industrial legacy and its evolving approach to environmental governance. This historical context becomes a springboard for critical discussions on the impacts of urbanization and the importance of sustainable futures.

Another layer of engagement is provided through creative, hands-on workshops such as building simple solar water heaters and capturing the natural beauty of Suzhou Creek through photography. These projects emphasise the blending of traditional craftsmanship with contemporary green technology, making sustainability tangible and personally relevant. In a further integration of innovation, participants are introduced to artificial intelligence tools to create digital art inspired by local landscapes — a practice that bridges generational gaps while celebrating both heritage and forward-thinking solutions (Sarah-Mae Nelson et al., 2022).



**Figure 1** University students are helping the elderly make simple solar water heaters

### **Nanhui New City University for Senior Citizens: Building Localised Green Hubs for Sustainable Development**

In the rapidly developing Lingang New Area, Nanhui New City University for Senior Citizens has positioned itself as a community-cantered hub for environmental learning and action. Its programs are rooted in the unique urban transformation of the area, emphasising the role of both elders and youth in shaping a smart, sustainable city.



Collaborating with industry partners and local organisations, the university organises field visits to renewable energy and waste management facilities, offering participants a firsthand look at the systems underpinning sustainable urban life. These visits are contextualised within Lingang's vision of green modernisation, providing a sense of place and purpose to climate education.

Crucially, the university promotes intergenerational knowledge exchange. Older adults share time-tested environmental practices such as traditional water conservation methods, while younger participants contribute insights into emerging technology and digital solutions for climate resilience (Pillemer Karl, 2022). This reciprocal learning not only honours the wisdom of elders but also empowers all participants to take shared responsibility for sustainability challenges.



**Figure 2** Learn about the Nuclear Power  
at Shanghai Electric Nuclear Power Group Company

## Conclusion

In historic Jing'an, the elderly university curates place-based programmes that fuse climate literacy with cultural memory. Joint excursions to the Suzhou Creek Industrial Civilization Museum frame Shanghai's industrial past as a living case study in urban sustainability. University student-guides and senior participants co-produce narratives that link yesterday's smokestacks to today's decarbonisation goals. Subsequent maker labs—building low-cost solar water heaters, photographing riparian recovery, and co-creating AI-generated art from local landscapes—translate those narratives into tactile, forward-looking action. By embedding green technologies within vernacular crafts and storytelling, the initiative widens climate knowledge, deepens intergenerational trust, and seeds a resilient, heritage-rich civic identity transferable to any historic urban core.

Amid Lingang's rapid eco-modernisation, Nanhui New City University re-purposes the district's renewable-energy plants and smart-waste systems as open-air classrooms. Multi-age teams tour these infrastructures, then reconvene in community studios where elders share traditional water-conservation techniques and youth reciprocate with digital



monitoring tools and climate-simulation apps. The co-designed outputs—citizen data dashboards, bilingual zines of ancestral eco-practices, and neighbourhood micro-projects—are immediately re-integrated into city planning consultations. This reciprocal praxis converts technical systems into shared cultural artefacts, amplifying both climate competence and social cohesion while offering a scalable template for smart-city districts seeking culturally rooted, age-inclusive sustainability pathways.

The initiatives at Jing'an Elderly University and Nanhui New City University for Senior Citizens exemplify how local culture, history, and intergenerational collaboration can enhance climate change education. By embedding ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) within community life and promoting mutual learning between generations, these programs not only foster environmental awareness but also strengthen social cohesion and civic engagement. As Shanghai continues to evolve, such models offer valuable inspiration for cities worldwide seeking to localise sustainable development through inclusive, culturally grounded education.

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# **Attractive Elements for Promoting Cultural Heritage Tourism at Wat Thai Watanaram, Mae Sot District, Tak Province**

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## **Abstract**

This literature review examines the distinctive characteristics of Wat Thai Watanaram, located in Mae Sot District, Tak Province, as a borderland religious site that embodies the cultural and artistic identity shaped by Burmese–Mon influences in Thailand. The study highlights three key aspects: architectural features, gold ornamentation, and the temple’s socio-cultural role within the multicultural context of the Thai–Myanmar border region. Findings reveal that the temple is distinguished by its tiered Pyatthat roofs, intricate gold leaf decorations, and vibrant colors characteristic of Burmese art. Beyond its architectural and artistic value, Wat Thai Watanaram functions as a spiritual and cultural hub for a diverse community—Mon, Burmese, Thai, Karen, and Chinese—through shared religious practices and local festivals. Moreover, the temple’s extensive use of gold ornamentation transcends aesthetics, symbolising sacredness, faith, and the construction of cultural identity in a borderland setting. The review recommends further research on the conservation of border temple art and advocates promoting the site as a center for cultural education and sustainable heritage tourism.

**Keywords:** Wat Thai Watanaram, Burmese Architecture, Thai–Myanmar Border, Multi-culturalism, Temple, Mae Sot

## **Introduction**

Wat Thai Watanaram is located in Tha Sai Luat Sub-district, Mae Sot District, Tak Province, Thailand. It is recognised as one of the most culturally and historically significant temples along the Thai–Myanmar border. Positioned near the Moei River, which serves as the natural boundary between the two countries, the temple embodies a fusion of artistic and cultural elements from both Thailand and Myanmar (Office of Culture, Tak Province, 2018). The temple has a long-standing history, originating as a site for meditation and religious practice for Mon and Burmese monks during the early settlement of Mon communities in the Mae Sot area. Over time, it evolved into a prominent religious institution recognised for its spiritual significance, artistic value, and role as a community hub (Jongrak, 2012).





Architecturally, Wat Thai Watanaram reflects strong Burmese influences, featuring tiered Pyatthat roofs, bell-shaped stupas, and intricately carved wooden decorations. The temple grounds also house a monumental Burmese-style seated Buddha image in the Maravijaya posture, prominently situated in the temple park (Department of Religious Affairs, 2017). Furthermore, Wat Thai Watanaram functions as a religious and cultural center for Thai–Mon–Burmese communities in Mae Sot. It hosts various cultural and religious events such as the Tan Khun Khao (rice offering) festival, the end of Buddhist Lent, traditional Mon dance performances, and Burmese puppet shows. These activities position the temple not only as a sacred site, but also as a space for preserving and transmitting local cultural heritage in a multi-cultural context (Sombun, 2019).

In the broader context of borderland cultural and architectural studies, Wat Thai Watanaram serves as a vital case study for understanding the convergence of Lanna, Burmese, and Mon Buddhist art. The aim of this article is to explore the temple's architectural features, historical background, and socio-cultural role in order to gain insight into the dynamics of multiculturalism along the Thai–Myanmar border.

## 1) Distinctive Features of Wat Thai Watanaram

### 1.1. Burmese–Mon Architecture

A distinctive feature of Wat Thai Watanaram is its Burmese-style architecture, which can be seen in the structures and elements throughout the temple compound—such as the pavilions, the ordination hall, and the pagodas. Of particular significance is the use of tiered, spired roofs known as Pyatthat, a distinctive hallmark of traditional Burmese religious architecture (Department of Religious Affairs, 2017). The temple is further embellished with intricately carved wooden decorations in Burmese patterns, showcasing refined craftsmanship and reflecting profound religious devotion (Sombun, 2019).

**Figure 1** Tiered Pyatthat roofs of Wat Thai Watanaram (Photo taken by Prakrit Nualpao, 2025)



### 1.2. The Large Maravijaya Buddha Image

Another distinctive feature and symbol of Wat Thai Watanaram is the large Maravijaya Buddha image, which is enshrined outdoors in the temple's park. Standing over 20 meters tall, the statue reflects influences from both Burmese and Mon artistic traditions, particularly in its serene facial expression and graceful proportions. This Buddha image is not only a sacred object of deep reverence for devotees, but also serves as a prominent landmark that attracts religious tourism (Netdao, 2020).



**Figure 2** The Great Maravijaya Buddha image (Photo taken by Prakrit Nualpao, 2025)



### 1.3. Color and Decorative Elements

The use of vibrant colors in architectural decoration distinguishes Wat Thai Watanaram, with gold, red, green, and blue serving as hallmarks of the Burmese artistic style. These vivid tones are further enhanced by mirror inlays and gold leaf ornamentation, producing a visually striking and majestic atmosphere. This decorative approach stands in contrast to traditional Lanna art, which emphasises simplicity and harmony with nature (Jongrak, 2012)

**Figure 3** The Entrance Gate of Wat Thai Watanaram  
(Photo taken by Prakrit Nualpao, 2025)



### 1.4. Cultural Diversity

Wat Thai Watanaram functions as a multicultural space, reflected in the religious and cultural activities of diverse borderland communities—including Mon, Burmese, Thai, Karen, and Chinese ethnic groups. According to the Office of Culture, Tak Province (2018), the temple hosts multiethnic festivals such as the Tan Khun Khao (New Rice Offering Ceremony), Poi Sang Long (Novice Ordination Ceremony), and the Mon-style Loy Krathong Festival. These events position the temple as a central gathering place for people of various cultural backgrounds who share a common Buddhism faith.



**Figure 4** People from different cultural backgrounds participated in special activity in Wat Thai Watanaram (Photo taken by Prakrit Nualpao, 2025)

## 2) Gold Ornamentation at Wat Thai Watanaram

Gold ornamentation is a central feature of Wat Thai Watanaram's artistic expression, reflecting the community's profound religious faith, exquisite craftsmanship, and the strong influence of Burmese and Mon art. Several studies have highlighted the role of gold ornamentation in conveying sacredness, grandeur, and religious symbolism within the context of borderland temples.

**Figure 5** Thepphanom (angelic figure) crafted on the holy column at the entrance of the main chamber of Wat Thai Watanaram (Photo taken by Prakrit Nualpao, 2025)







### *2.1 Gold Ornamentation in the Context of Burmese Art*

Sombun (2019) notes that the gold ornamentation at Wat Thai Watanaram closely reflects the artistic style of the Mandalay period in Burmese art. This is particularly evident in the application of gold leaf across various temple structures, including the ordination hall, stupas, and Buddha images. Common motifs include floral vines, foliage patterns, and Thepphanom (angelic figures), all of which symbolise cosmological beliefs and celestial realms, in accordance with the Theravāda Buddhist worldview characteristic of Burmese tradition.

### *2.2. Techniques and Materials in Gold Ornamentation*

According to a report by the Department of Religious Affairs (2017), the gold ornamentation at Wat Thai Watanaram employs techniques such as gold-leaf application and colored glass inlay. These techniques extend beyond purely aesthetic purposes; they are intended to elevate the sacred space, imbuing it with a radiance reminiscent of a celestial palace or heavenly realm, in alignment with traditional Buddhist cosmological principles.



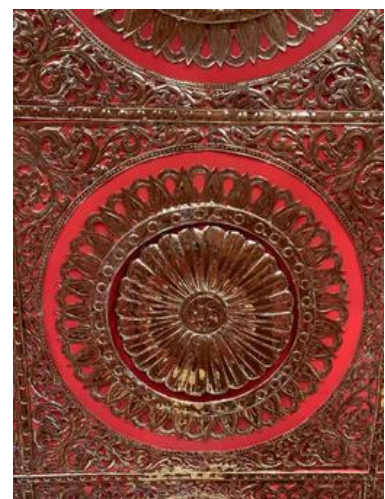
**Figure 6** Golden ornaments were applied into walls, and interior elements inside the pavilion at the front corridor of the chamber of Wat Thai Watanaram (Photo taken by Prakrit Nualpao, 2025)

### *2.3. Symbolic Meaning of Gold Ornamentation*

Jongrak (2012) emphasises that gold ornamentation carries profound symbolic significance. The color gold represents purity, prosperity, and the highest form of merit. Within Buddhist temples, gold decorations reflect the donor's intention to offer their finest contributions to the Buddha and the religious community. Furthermore, such ornamentation functions as a form of “visual merit-making,” inspiring spiritual reflection and devotion among worshippers.

### *2.4. Gold Ornamentation and the Construction of Borderland Identity*

The Office of Culture, Tak Province (2018), highlights the role of gold ornamentation as a tool for expressing artistic and cultural identity within the Mae Sot borderland community. At Wat Thai Watanaram, gold decoration is not merely an application of traditional Burmese art but is adapted and hybridised to align with local Thai aesthetic preferences. For instance, traditional Thai motifs are occasionally combined with Burmese patterns, particularly within the vihara (main chamber). This synthesis produces a form of “hybrid art” that embodies the multicultural character of the border region.



**Figure 7** Golden star ornaments were applied into ceilings of the main chamber of Wat Thai Watanaram (Photo taken by Prakrit Nualpao, 2025)



### **3) Cultural and Religious Significance**

#### *3.1 The Temple as a Spiritual Center for the Community*

Jongrak (2012) notes that Wat Thai Watanaram serves as a spiritual center for Buddhist communities living along the border—particularly among the Mon, Burmese, and Karen ethnic groups, who, like the Thais, practice Theravada Buddhism. The temple plays a vital role in fostering harmony among diverse ethnicities, acting as a sanctuary and place of emotional refuge for displaced persons and migrants in the region.

#### *3.2. The Temple and the Preservation of Traditions and Culture*

According to the Office of Culture, Tak Province (2018), Wat Thai Watanaram plays a crucial role in the preservation and transmission of local traditions. The temple hosts numerous culturally significant events, including the Tan Khun Khao (New Rice Offering Festival), the Poi Sang Long novice ordination ceremony, and the Mon-style Loy Krathong Festival. These events attract participants from both sides of the Thai–Myanmar border. Through such activities, the temple not only facilitates religious observance, but also contributes to the preservation of ethnic identities and the safeguarding of cultural heritage across generations.

#### *3.3. The Temple as a Multi-Ethnic Cultural Space*

Sombun (2019) analyses the role of Wat Thai Watanaram as a multi-ethnic cultural space, where various ethnic communities converge—such as Thai, Mon, Burmese, Karen, and Chinese. This diversity is evident in languages spoken, traditional clothing, cuisine, and religious practices within the temple grounds. Multiple languages, including Thai, Mon, Burmese, and Karen, are used for communication, while the coexistence of diverse ceremonies illustrates the adaptability and inclusiveness of Buddhism within a borderland context.

#### *3.4. The Temple's Role in Shaping Borderland Religious Identity*

Netdao (2020) emphasises that Wat Thai Watanaram represents a form of “borderland identity,” conveyed through its Burmese–Mon-inspired architecture, the attire of its monks, and its religious activities, which are influenced by cultural elements from both sides of the Moei River. The temple serves as a bridge between Thai and Myanmar communities, reinforcing not only cross-border relationships but also a shared spiritual and cultural identity. In this way, it serves as a central institution that encapsulates the religious and cultural interconnectedness of the Thai–Myanmar borderland.

### **4) Recommendations**

#### *4.1 Recommendations for Future Studies*

In-depth research is needed on the construction techniques and conservation practices associated with the Burmese architectural elements at Wat Thai Watanaram, particularly its gold ornamentation, which carries substantial cultural and artistic significance. Further comparative studies between Wat Thai Watanaram and other temples along the Thai–Myanmar border are recommended to examine stylistic, cultural, and social similarities and differences, thereby supporting more holistic approaches to preservation and cultural understanding. Public participation is another research process to preserve local



wisdom and cultural heritage to maintain unique of architectural legacy of Wat Thai Watanaram.

#### *4.2 Cultural Conservation Collaboration*

Collaboration among public and private sectors, including local organisations, should be strengthened to manage and preserve the tangible and intangible cultural heritage represented by unique religious architectures and associated activities. Lifelong learning initiatives should be promoted to enhance public awareness and foster a deeper understanding of local heritage significance, particularly across multicultural communities in border areas, thereby helping to prevent potential conflicts.

#### *4.3 Cross-border Cultural-based Tourism Development*

Wat Thai Watanaram has significant potential to become a key cross-border tourist destination, particularly in promoting multicultural tourism in Mae Sot District, Thailand. It is recommended that tourism routes be developed in coordination with other Thai-Myanmar temples in nearby border areas to create an integrated cross-border cultural landscape. Additionally, co-creative local tours could be initiated to support intergenerational participation and empower community-based tourism enterprises.

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