

*The Use of Contemporary Video Art Techniques to
Convey Buddhist Dhamma Teaching*

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the use of video art based on contemporary/western performing art and visual art techniques to convey eastern philosophy of Buddhist teaching of Truth or dhamma. The qualitative methods were used for data collecting and analysis. It is found in this research that contemporary/western video art techniques could facilitate the artist to better connect with ancient eastern philosophy of Buddhism. The video art based on contemporary/western performing art and visual art techniques could deeply embrace contemporary context conducive to the self-exploration of the artist. Thus, it could lead the artist to the intuitive understanding of Buddhist philosophy which generally explains the nature of human mind and nature.

Keywords: performing art, Buddhist dhamma teaching, visual art

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Introduction

Buddhist dhamma/Truth may seem to be difficult to approach and understand through reading ancient Scripture of Tripitaka.

However, Buddhist dhamma/Truth is all about the nature of Nature, especially within human mind, which is ever contemporary.

Thus, it might be interesting and useful to explore and apply contemporary medium in learning and conveying Buddhist dhamma/Truth: video art.

The key dhamma/Truth in Buddhist teachings is the law of nature, ' (the 3 characteristics of nature)': Anicca (impermanence), Dukkha (Sufferings from attachment to such impermanent nature, thriving to make it permanent), and Anatta (fundamentally, all things impermanent is nothing, thus should not be attached to as real when they are all illusive by nature).

Buddhist dhamma/Truth is thus approachable through the observation of our surrounding nature. It should be done through experiential learning.

The application of video art based on performing arts and visual art techniques of acrylic painting is thus an interesting medium to explore in learning and conveying Buddhist dhamma.

Objective

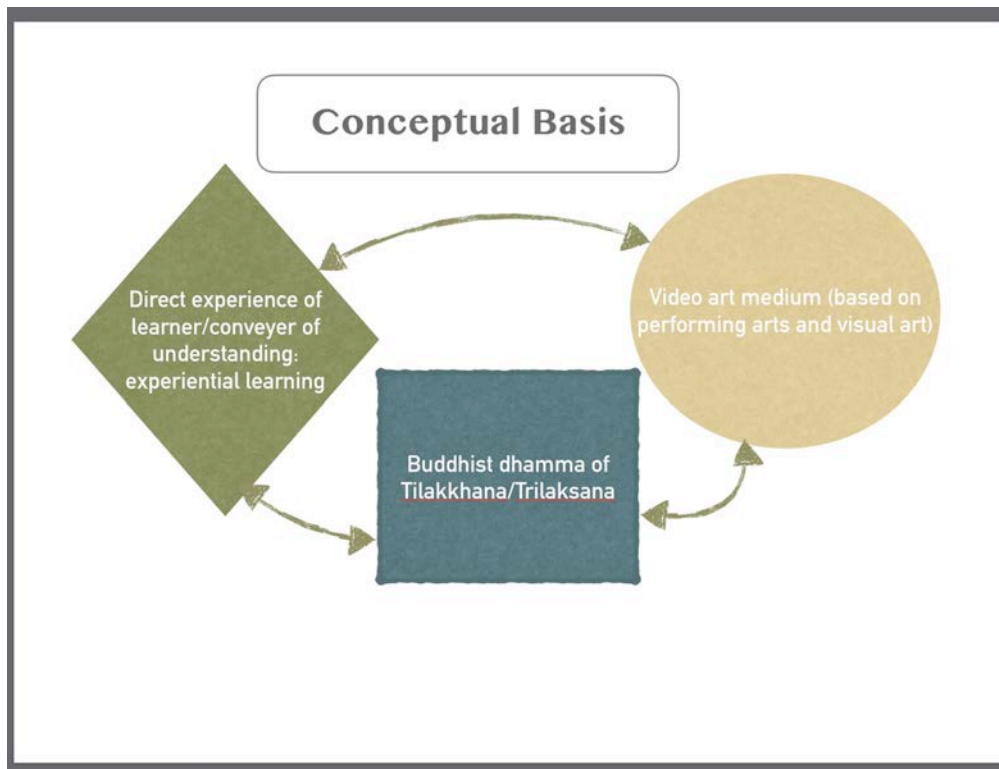
1. To study the application of video art techniques in learning and conveying Buddhist dhamma/Truth.

Methodology

Qualitative methodology is used in data collecting and data analysis: journal writing and content analysis.

Self-exploration of the researcher as the creator of artistic medium of video art is focused in this research, based on the concept of experiential learning and the concept of beginning the teaching from within.

Conceptual Basis



From this diagram, the Buddhist dhamma/Truth of Tilakkhana/Trilaksana, that is, the impermanent nature of all things, which could cause sufferings through attachment to their illusive reality, could be learnt through direct experience of learner, that is, experiential learning, through the process of creating video art medium which is based on performing arts and visual art techniques. This, in turn, could convey the understanding of Buddhist dhamma/Truth of Tilakkhana/Trilaksana to others, deepening it through own experience of the creator of the artwork.

Literature Review

1. Tacit learning: learning by doing/Experiential learning

a. Ikujiri Nonaka & Hirotaka Takeuchi: explicit and tacit knowledge process.

The internalization process is the process of understanding and absorbing explicit knowledge to tacit knowledge of individuals. This process is mainly the experiential process, through one's own practice/action, in real situation or simulating situation. This would provide the opportunity for one to directly experience and understand the actual concept and methods. This process is the process of transferring explicit knowledge to other individuals or groups. (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995)

b. Michael Polanyi: Tacit knowledge

Polanyi explains human learning process that we learn through bringing ourselves into relation with the object learnt, in the manner of 'indwelling'. Polanyi states that most of our knowledge is tacit knowledge. He explains, 'We can know more than we

can tell'. While explicit knowledge could be transfer through systematic language, tacit knowledge could only be understood through one method, that is, giving one the opportunity to teach oneself.

From these concepts and theories on learning process and tacit knowledge transferring, we could see that they are in accordance with the transferring method of Buddhist dhamma/Truth as suggested by dhamma Teachers in Buddhism. Buddhist dhamma could only be understood through one's own direct experience (paccatang wēditabbo). Teachers could only serve as 'true friends' who could only act as 'navigator' in the process of learning. (Polanyi, 1969)

2. Key Buddhist dhamma/Truth of Tilakkhana/Trilaksana (the 3 characteristics of nature)'

The key Buddhist dhamma/Truth of Tilakkhana/Trilaksana (the 3 characteristics of nature) are Anicca (impermanence), Dukkha (sufferings from attachment to such impermanent nature, thriving to make it permanent), and Anatta (fundamentally, all things impermanent is nothing, thus should not be attached to as real when they are all illusive by nature).

Research Results

The learning of Buddhist dhamma/Truth is the experiential learning of researcher as creator of artistic work. This has been done through 2 major mediums:

1. Visual art medium: acrylic painting
2. Video art medium (based on performing arts and visual art of acrylic painting)

1. Visual Art Medium

For the visual art medium of acrylic painting, the researcher, as the creator of paintings, learnt Buddhist dhamma/Truth through exploring surrounding nature in painting. That is because Buddhist dhamma/Truth could be found everywhere in surrounding nature.

The examples of the acrylic paintings are as following:



The cycle of life of frangipani



The ever-changing wave



Super moon, super illusive reflection.



The Illusive Reflection Hunting: The painting of a fisherman trying to fish the reflection of the full moon in the water, falling in love with it.



Peace and Treasure: The comparison of true happiness and the happiness of the material world.



Time on Sandy Beach:
The fragility of our short life on earth

2. Video Art Medium

Based on performing arts and visual art medium of acrylic painting, it is found through the creation of the video art medium as following:

- a. Strong point - various artistic mediums could be combined/applied: photos, performing arts, paintings, and music.
- b. Weak point - editing process requires focus to maintain unity of the whole piece of art.

Themes explored in this video art creating on Buddhist dhamma/Truth teaching:

- Impermanent cycle of frangipani
- Impermanent happiness of 'Little Lady'
- Impermanence of lotus
- Impermanence of rice
- Impermanence of 'Time'
- Impermanence of pasta boiling bubbles

Discussion and Conclusion

Tilakkhana/Trilaksana (the 3 characteristics of nature), the key concept of Buddhist dhamma could be found everywhere in our surrounding nature: Anicca (impermanence), Dukkha (Sufferings from attachment to such impermanent nature, thriving to make it permanent), and Anatta (fundamentally, all things impermanent is nothing, thus should not be attached to as real when they are all illusive by nature).

The video art medium helps accelerating the cycle of impermanence in nature to affirm us of the Truth of Anicca (impermanence nature of all things, which creates sufferings (Dukkha) when attaching to their illusive reality nature (Anatta)).

The visual art medium of acrylic painting provides good opportunity for the researcher/painter to deeply and slowly explore the impermanence and illusive nature of objects while painting.

Experiential learning through artistic work creating is similar to meditation: focus and deep observation.

Experiential learning enhances tacit learning, true understanding of Buddhist dhamma/Truth within.

The nature of Tilakkhana/Trilaksana could only be understood through direct, personal experience. The teacher/conveyor of such knowledge could only be a 'guide or navigator'. The journey has to be traveled by each person herself/himself.

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