



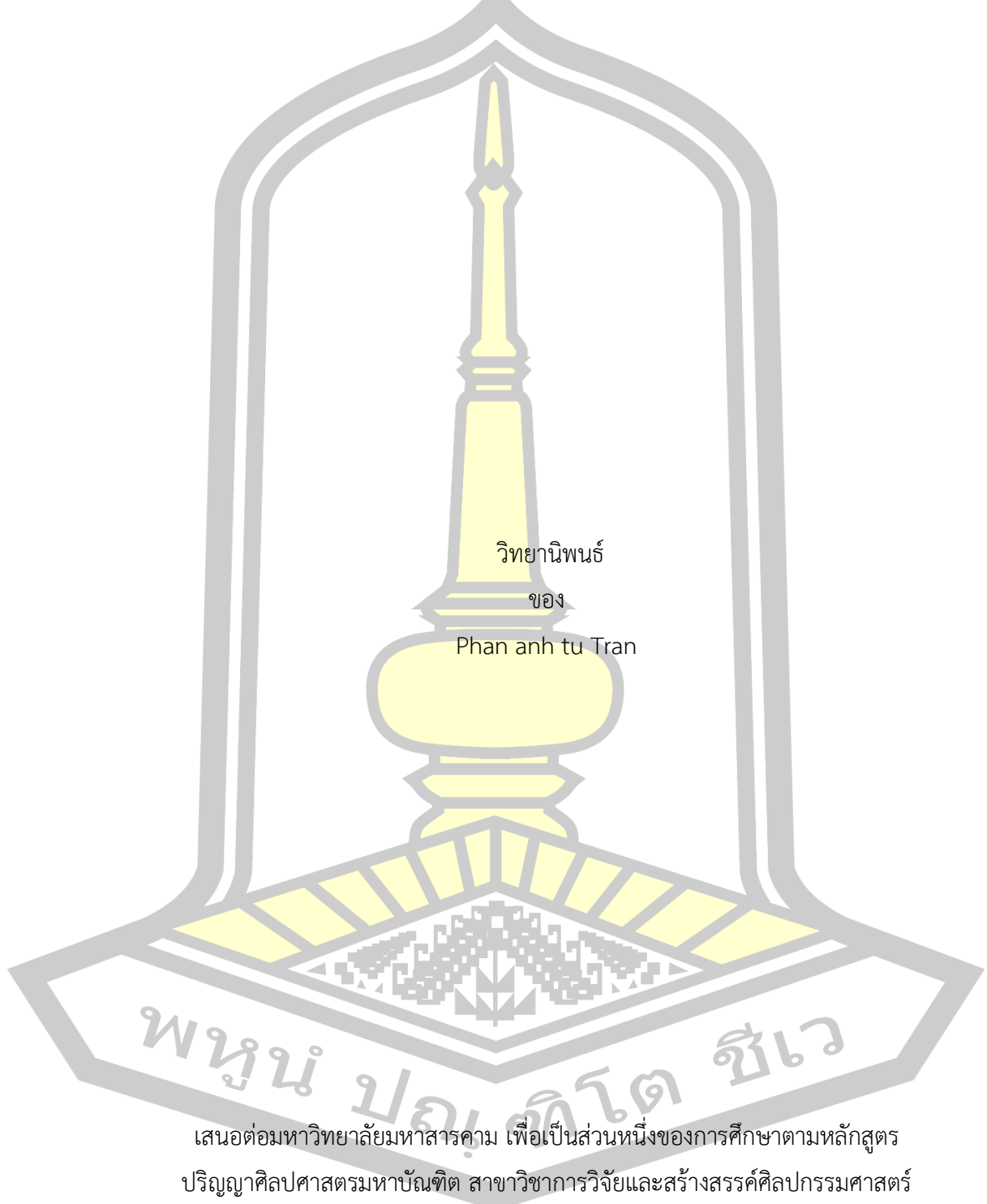
Binh Phong of Hue : Traditional Screens Transforming Styles and Re-Imagining Identity  
in the Modern Society context of Vietnam

Phan anh tu Tran

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for  
degree of Master of Arts in Fine and Applied Arts Research and Creation  
August 2023

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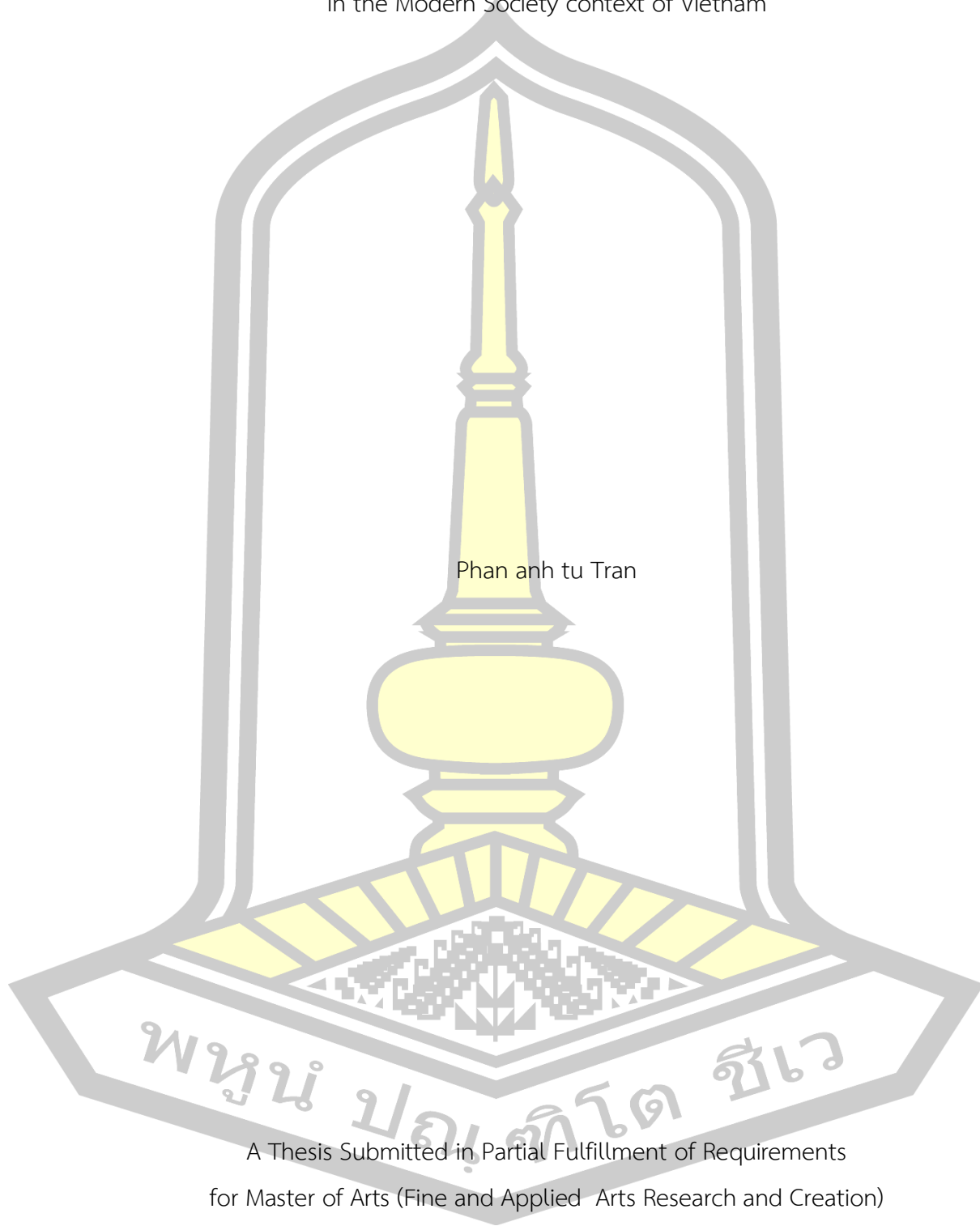
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### ABSTRACT

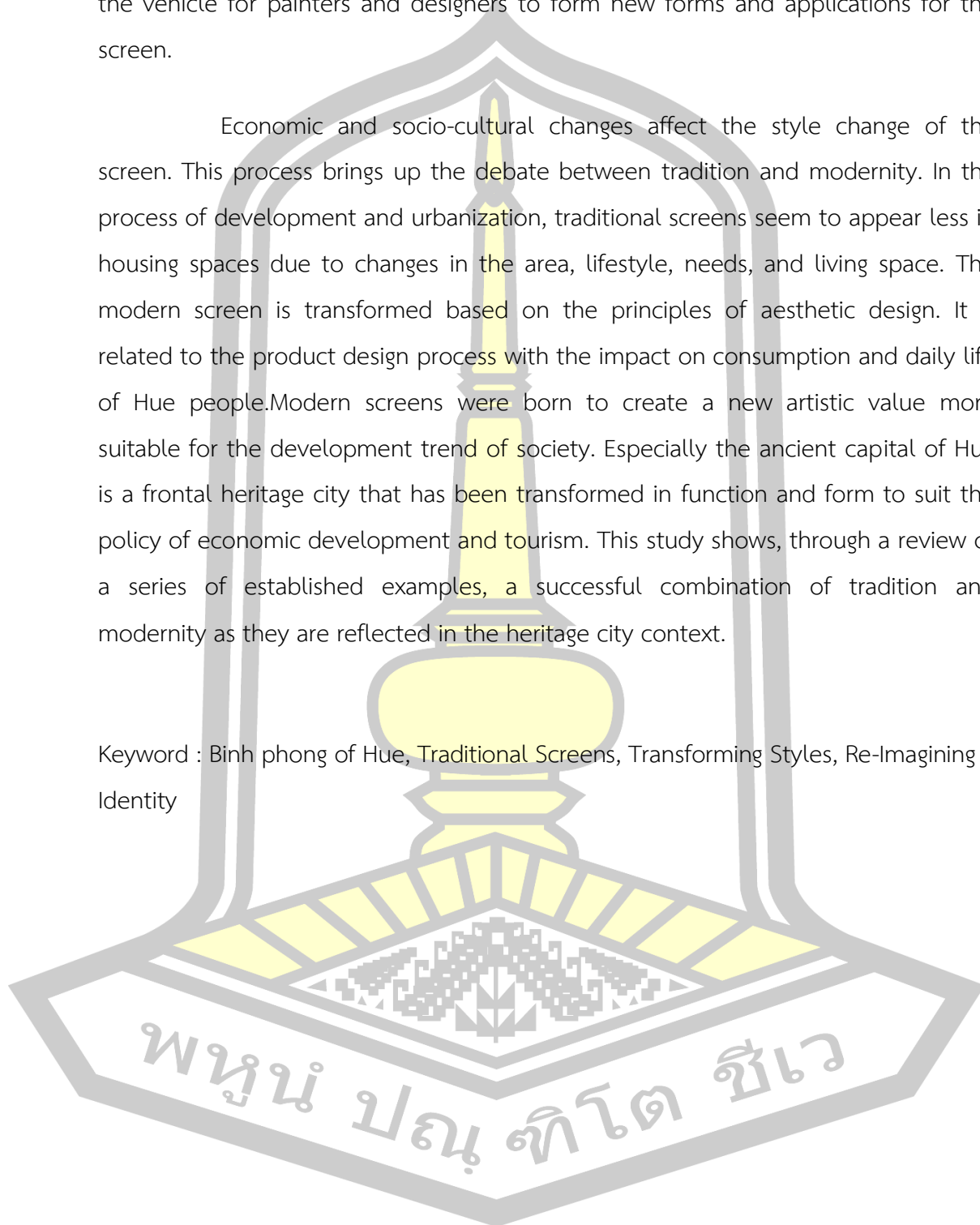
Hue's screen during the Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1945) is a typical product of Hue's traditional architecture. The creative form of the traditional screen on many materials, the ngoại án screen is mainly the construction technique of lime mortar, embossed, porcelain mosaic, the nội án screen shows the technique of carving, inlaid, and mother-of-pearl, sơn thếp. The function of the traditional screen is to cover and decorate, based on the concept of feng shui and spirituality. The content of the screen shows the decorative arts according to the projects and motifs related to social ranks. Cultural identity is also evident in the connection of the screen with people in rituals, beliefs, Confucianism, and ancestor worship, which gives Hue people a private and unique lifestyle.

Experiencing turbulent historical periods, the influence of Western modern art has created a challenge for artists to try to use national cultural heritages to create the cultural identity of the Vietnamese people. The modernity of the screen is shown more clearly through the process of Social Renovation. Through Re-Imagining the Identity of the screen, artists and designers create their own identities personal, and creative freedoms that are hallmarks of modern identity. Before Doi Moi, there were groups of artists who developed new art based on the traditional connection through the lacquer screen combined with a modern Western layout, the theme of exploitation close to social at the time social. After Doi Moi, the concept of

tradition also changed the advancement of technology, and materials science was the vehicle for painters and designers to form new forms and applications for the screen.

Economic and socio-cultural changes affect the style change of the screen. This process brings up the debate between tradition and modernity. In the process of development and urbanization, traditional screens seem to appear less in housing spaces due to changes in the area, lifestyle, needs, and living space. The modern screen is transformed based on the principles of aesthetic design. It is related to the product design process with the impact on consumption and daily life of Hue people. Modern screens were born to create a new artistic value more suitable for the development trend of society. Especially the ancient capital of Hue is a frontal heritage city that has been transformed in function and form to suit the policy of economic development and tourism. This study shows, through a review of a series of established examples, a successful combination of tradition and modernity as they are reflected in the heritage city context.

Keyword : Binh phong of Hue, Traditional Screens, Transforming Styles, Re-Imagining Identity



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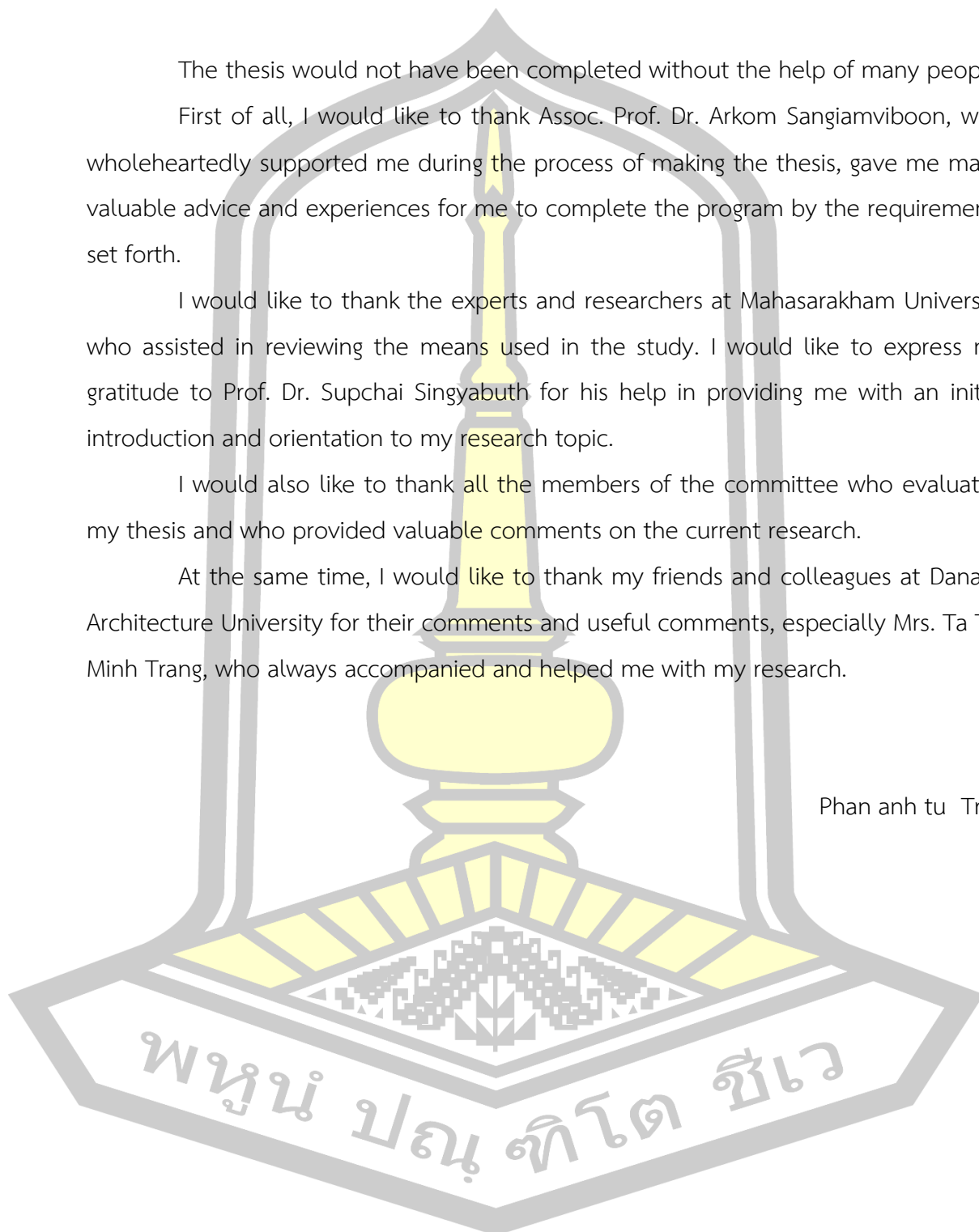
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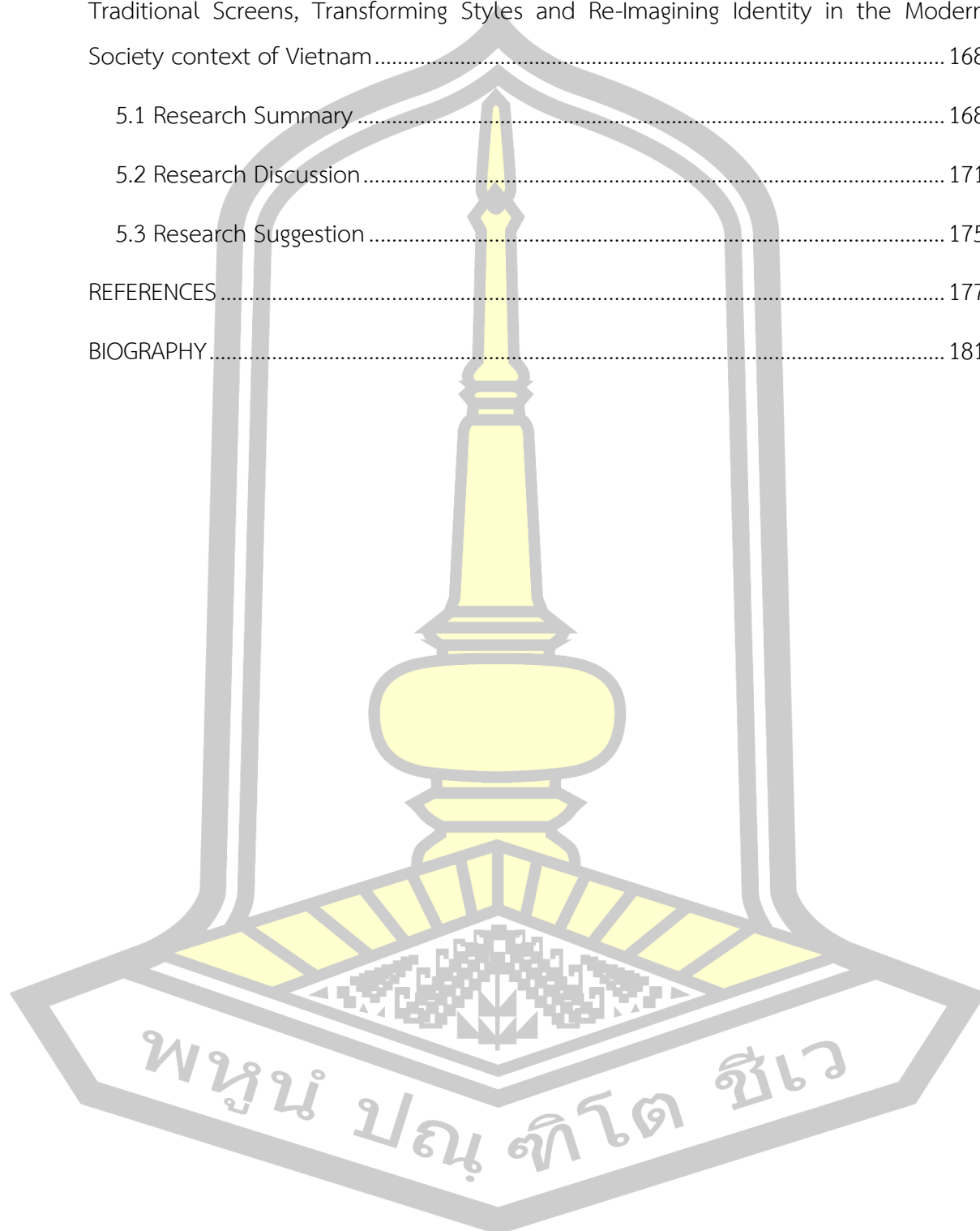
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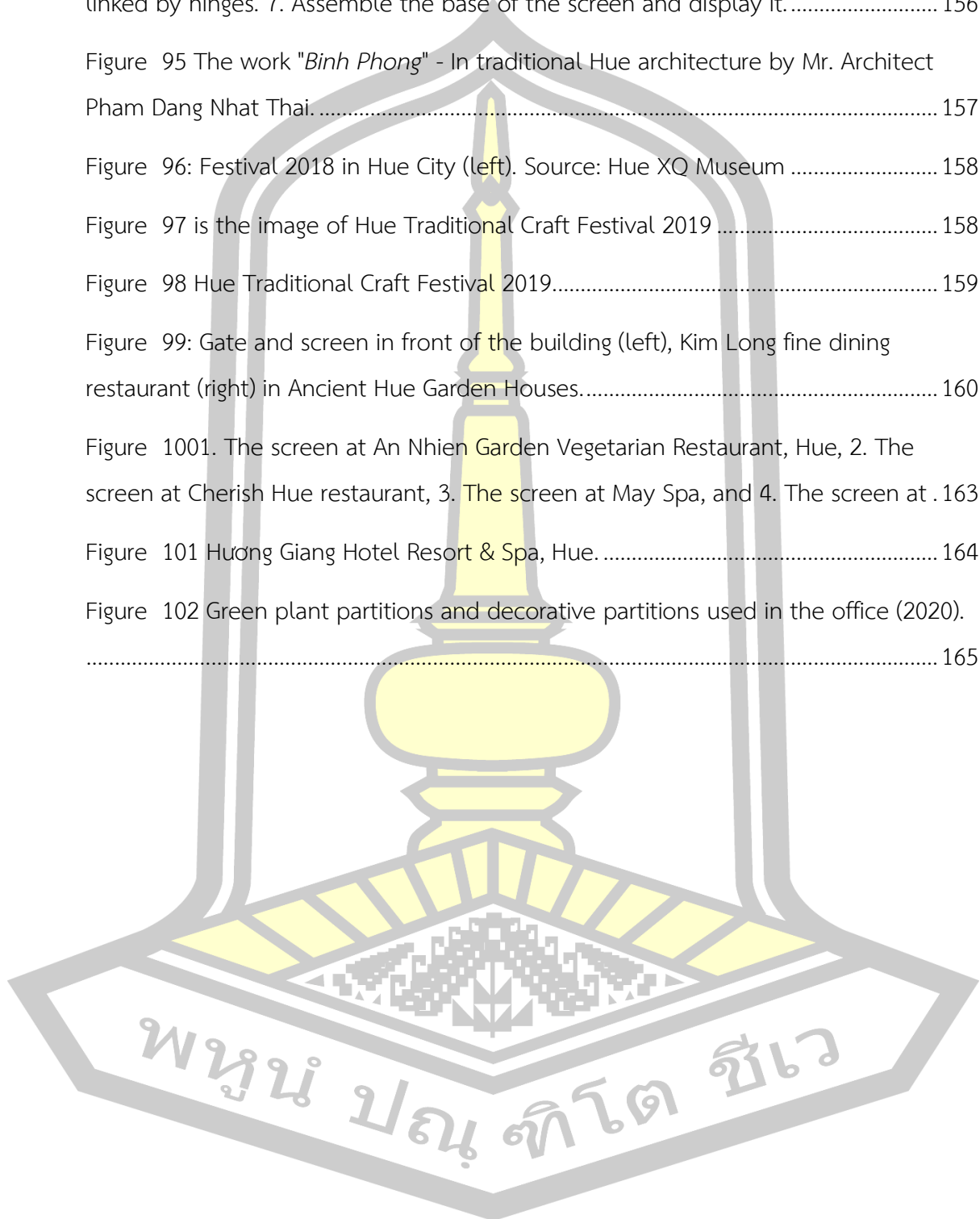
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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Background of Research

Hue screen is a typical product of the ancient capital of Hue, a symbol representing the lifestyle of Hue people in particular and Vietnamese people in general. The screen has a long history of development, associated with the spiritual and material life of the local people. The screen is the embodiment of folk architecture and is an item associated with traditional housing and other architectures in Hue city, a cultural heritage of Vietnam.

Hue is a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage City. This city used to be the capital of Dang Trong<sup>1</sup> under the rule of the Nguyen lords and the capital of Vietnam from 1802 - to 1945. Under the above context, Hue is a capital city that has many artifacts and cultural traits including “Binh Phong”, the traditional screens. Nowhere in Vietnam has so many types of screens preserved as in Hue. The Complex of Hue Monuments became a World Cultural Heritage in 1993. Up to now, Hue has five heritages recognized by UNESCO as a cultural heritage of humanity, and has become an attractive destination for domestic and foreign tourists. During the period from 1802 – to 1945, the Nguyen Dynasty left behind a lot of valuable and meaningful artifacts, including the long- standing existence of ancient screens of *ngoai an* and *noi an*. These are the sources of data to study clearly and in detail.

There are two main types of screens: *ngoai an* screens and *noi an* screens. The *ngoai an* screen is placed outside the architecture, always fixed, while the *noi an* screen is placed inside the house space, often not fixed and easy to move, and has many other names such as "Tran Phong, Thu Huyen Quan ". Therefore, the screens have reflected the role of "An" in architectural work. The "An" has different sizes depending on the scale of the works. In the process of exchange and acclimatization, the Vietnamese screen or Hue screen has its own features with typical regional characteristics plus specific and quite strict regulations.

Currently, the formation and development of fronts in Vietnam still have very few systematic research documents. The existence of the screen is present through the architecture. The screen appeared first in China and then spread to Eastern

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<sup>1</sup> Dang Trong: 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Nguyen kingdoms, controlling an area later known to the West as Cochinchina, with roots in the central region of modern Vietnam. (Li Tana. 1998)

countries and Europe under many different names but terms of meaning, showing the unity of concept and function of use depending on the characteristics, style ways, and cultural differences. When introduced to Vietnam, the screen was used by Vietnamese people with the original concept of Feng Shui and the concept of spirituality. The *ngoai an* screens at first applied from entities nature to shield in the front of large architectural buildings. The *noi an* screen first appeared in houses of Northern Vietnam with the primitive form of "*Tấm Gai*" panels made of bamboo, arranged in the middle area of the veranda.

Through the rise and fall of screen history, it has brought a unique cultural value and created its beauty and meaning, contributing to the treasure of traditional Vietnamese cultural knowledge. Thence, in the socio-cultural life of the Nguyen Dynasty, the role of parentage and ancestor worship was always highly valued by Hue people and it was mentioned in the research paper *Screen in Hue culture with the topic Screen in the function of incense in the great Hue family* by author Tran Dinh Hang.<sup>2</sup> He believes that ancestors worship is beliefs imbued with filial piety of people in the family environment. Under the feudal Confucian patriarchy, ancestor worship in the capital of Dai Nam country under the Nguyen dynasty, was notably important to the point of being elevated to the religion. In this regard, the screen worked as a bridge connecting the gate on the outside. At the same time, inside the house, all those aspirations were symbolized in the highest and the most sacred way through the use of incense bowl and the ancestral tablet on the altar, in the upper house, and the fire - the woman's kitchen, in the lower house. All that created a patriarchal element in Hue culture.

The Hue screen represents the earlier Vietnamese's lifestyles and customs, which have always been under the influence of Confucianism, Buddhism, and the ecological system in the middle of Vietnam.<sup>3</sup> Hue is considered a place to receive cultural exchanges from both ends of the country. In prehistory, it was a place of

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<sup>2</sup> Excerpts from the Workshop on Decorative Patterns – Hue's Binh phong under the perspective of applied training. Ho Chi Minh City Art Week, 385.

<http://tuanbaovannghe tphcm.vn/>

<sup>3</sup> Medieval Vietnam ecosystem: is the natural environment in the feudal period of Vietnam (10th century to the end of 19th century), mentioned here is Thua Thien Hue where the climate is harsh, influenced by a subtropical monsoon climate. This is the place with the most rainfall in the delta regions of Vietnam. The ecological environment of Thua Thien Hue can be divided into 5 ecosystems such as coastal, lagoon, agricultural, garden ecosystem, and mountainous forest ecosystem.

interference between Dong Son culture and Sa Huynh culture. Hue was where Dai Viet and Champa cultures crossed during the medieval period. In modern times, it was the convergence of the quintessence of all parts of the country, combining indigenous cultures to form Hue culture. The ecological environment in Hue creates favorable conditions for the formation of many communities living with different economic, social, and cultural practices, such as fishermen, farmers, traditional artisans, and hunters-gatherers. The existence of different god ranks shows the diversity in historical and cultural life in Hue. In addition to the presence of the screen in the housing space, the *ngoai an* screen seems indispensable in the areas of temples, communal houses, Buddhist temples, tombs, and palaces. For the relics of the Nguyen Dynasty, the impact of the ecological humanistic environment is very evident in the application of feng shui and the construction of the architectural works of the ancient capital of Hue. When King Gia Long<sup>4</sup> built the Imperial Citadel of Hue, he combined three factors including the inheritance of the traditions of the nation's history and the achievements of the Nguyen family in Thuan Hoa; the application of Eastern thought, especially translation and feng shui in architecture; the application of scientific knowledge on geography - ecology - humanities in the specific area of ancient Hue. In particular, Hue Citadel relied on feng shui to choose the front screen (Ngu mountain - a natural screen), Minh Duong (the Perfume River), left green dragon (Con Hen), and right white tiger (Con Da Vien).<sup>5</sup>

The above conditions gave Hue people have a private and rather unique lifestyle, just like how they arranged the screen to shield in traditional house architecture. The difference in lifestyle, religious beliefs, construction rules of the Nguyen Dynasty, and the climate and geographical characteristics of Hue significantly impacted the formation of typical architectural space. These factors also made Hue's traditional architecture different from other regions in Vietnam. The traditional housing space was organized and arranged according to the axis of symmetry. The *ngoai an* screen was put in a central position near the gate in front or behind the house. In the interior space, the screen was usually arranged in the middle, separating the worship area from other living spaces.

In terms of semiology or social symbol, the designs and decorative details on the screen also show the aesthetic sensibility of the people and the artists' talent through each period. The decorative elements on the screen are not only for decorated and feng shui purposes but also express the status and family background

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<sup>4</sup> Gia Long: Nguyen Phuc Anh, born on February 8, 1762, died on February 3, 1802, was the founding king of the Nguyen Dynasty, reigned from 1802-1820.

<sup>5</sup> Tran Duc Anh Son. "Thoughts on planning Hue Citadel under Gia Long Dynasty" (1996), "Hue – Nguyen Dynasty a look" (2018, p. 53)

of the owner in society. In the housing space, a beautiful screen has a significant impact on the entire interior as well as the residents' psychology. In addition, it partly reflects the lifestyle and aesthetic tastes of the homeowner and the wealth, nobility, or elegance of each class in society. (Ta. T. M. T, 2020) The subjects decorated on the screens are mainly congratulatory themes, spiritual animals, nature, botanical themes, etc., to express human ambitions and aspirations and bring happiness. Therefore, the screen is a representation of the identity and the social status of the house owner at the same time. Dang. M. A, 2015)

In different architectural spaces, the art of screen decoration in the Nguyen Dynasty did not stop within the strict pattern of the feudal class. The screens in kings' and lords' palaces were often decorated with the themes of Four Spirits, Two Dragons of the Day Dynasty, Two Dragons of the Moon Dynasty, Song Phung of the Dynasty of Long, Three of the Lions of Hy Bridge, auspicious owls, Duc Luu Quang and lucky figures such as Phuc, Duc, Tho. The screens in the temples and the communal houses were decorated with Long Ma, Ha Do, Dragon and Tiger fight, Ho Phu, etc. In addition, there were many external screens that were not mosaic, painted, or decorated but fitted with empty cells of "Thanh Luu Ly"/"Hoang Luu Ly" bricks or using bricks to form Quy Giap Van (Tran. D. A. S, 2016, p. 80). To a certain extent, the artists skillfully infused their works with the vitality and vibrancy of daily life as "folk in ideas, decorative themes, motifs, decorative techniques, folklore space in the material".

In 1858, Vietnam became a French colony. Vietnamese during the French colonial period was a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. In the second half of the 19th century, Vietnam had a division to form more classes such as workers, bourgeois, intellectuals, and urban petty bourgeoisie with more urban lifestyles and activities. A new social structure gradually formed and developed in the complex cultural context. It was the starting point for the contact between Vietnamese and Western cultures, more specifically, French culture. In Dang Mai Anh's thesis, there have been studies on "nội án" screens showing the widespread and quite popular application in the late Nguyen Dynasty period in housing spaces in Hanoi.<sup>6</sup> It shows that the urban lifestyle influenced by French culture considerably changed Ha Thanh people's lives. According to the recollections of the elders who lived during this period, almost every family used *noi an* screen, especially the Confucians and powerful families. However, the living spaces of Vietnamese people, whether in Western houses or Vietnamese houses retain the traditional characteristics,

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<sup>6</sup> Hanoi is a central city in the North of Vietnam, historically the capital of most feudal dynasties in Vietnam before the Nguyen Dynasty moved the capital to Hue in 1802.

embracing the customs and the hot and humid monsoon climate of the North. Northern people live discreetly and ceremonially, so a screen that subtly shields what goes on behind is also a decoration for their living space to keep the beauty of traditional culture. (Dang. M.A, 2015, p.31). At the beginning of the 20th century, many new and more rustic materials, such as terracotta, ceramics, etc., were used in decoration. Consequently, decorative themes were expanded, and their concepts changed. (Tran. D. A. S, 2018, p.417-419).

Since the end of the dynasty, Vietnam has been in the context of the war. Especially the inner war from November 1, 1955, until April 30, 1975. The domestic war has caused great losses of important architecture and ancient artifacts in Hue, a city of the former dynasty. At that time, many screens were destroyed. After 1975, Vietnam's diplomatic efforts shifted to mobilizing international resources to facilitate the "building of socialism" on a national scale and to end international isolation and economic embargo.<sup>7</sup> In 1986, the Vietnamese government announced the Doi Moi Economic Policy (Vietnamese: Đổi Mới)<sup>8</sup> as a free market development policy based on a socialist political system. The policy by Doi Moi has resulted in changes in Vietnam in all aspects. Doi Moi made Vietnam's urban society become a modern society and connected Vietnam people with the international community.

After the Doi Moi, an economic plan of the 1980s brought foreign investors into the country, and private enterprises were allowed. After UNESCO recognized

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<sup>7</sup> Lê Hồng Hiệp & Tsvetov. (2018). Vietnam's foreign policy under Doi Moi.

<sup>8</sup> Doi Moi policy has been implemented since the 6th Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam, 1986. Doi moi comprehensive economic reforms in three main directions: First, the transformation from single-ownership policy to one-ownership policy multi-sector economy with the existence of many forms of ownership to develop products and improve the efficiency of the economy; Second, shift from the mechanism of the State directly controlling the activities of the economy by planning or ordinances, associated with the subsidy mechanism, to a market economy mechanism with the management of the State at the macro level. scale, ensuring the business autonomy of each enterprise; Third, shift from a self-sufficient and self-sufficient economy to an economy that is open to the outside world.



Hue<sup>9</sup> as a World Cultural Heritage on December 11, 1993, Hue moved to a stage of sustainable development and focused on the concept of “heritage culture”. Identifying cultural heritage as the strength of the land, the preservation of Hue's cultural heritage was the foundation for the service industry to develop. Hue implemented projects: “Planning, Preserving, and Promoting the value of Hue monuments (1996-2010)”, “Adjustment Of Planning (2010-2020)”, “Planning For The Management Of The Complex of Hue Monuments ( 2015-2020) with a vision to 2030” and “Cultural Heritage With Integration And Development”. Hue Festivals were held in even years together with the Traditional Craft Festivals in odd years, creating a distinctive trademark with excellent resonance and attraction domestically and internationally. The development and promotion of heritage values also facilitated the restoration of traditional crafts, ceremonies, and arts and, therefore, met the expectation of the tourism industry.<sup>10</sup> In addition, the goal was to preserve and restore the frontal heritages damaged by the war of the local government. At this time, contemporary art had the opportunity to develop and screen products of *noi an* were commercialized, combining modern technology with crafts to create many products for all customers.

As Hue became a world cultural heritage city, many damaged original screens were repaired. Some of them are kept in the museum as a national heritage. Through the survey in Hue, most of the screens of *ngoai an* were still present in many traditional architectural works such as garden houses, but the ancient *noi an* screens of the Nguyen Dynasty were still very few, damaged or lost, except for some renovated. Currently, some *noi an* screens are kept in Hue Antiquities Museum, Vietnam Fine Arts Museum, Lam Dong Museum, Ho Chi Minh City History Museum, in private collections, and some are scattered abroad. At Hue Museum of Royal Antiquities, several beautiful screens are still preserved today, including a wooden screen made from a fixed plate or a composite of many rectangular knitted panels made of rattan on a wooden frame. There are also very delicately carved stone, silver, and ivory screens. They are truly national treasures that need to be preserved and studied further as a basis for later creations and interior product designs.

Notably, the original screen has been popular among younger generation artists, designers, and architects in the art industry. They have been developing a

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<sup>9</sup> UNESCO: short for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, is one of the major specialized organizations of the United Nations, established on November 16, 1945.

<sup>10</sup> Hue Monuments Conservation Center. (2016). The royal cultural heritage of the Nguyen Dynasty: Researching, preserving, and promoting its values.

new style of the screen to support the lifestyle of the modern society of Vietnam. Hence, the original screens were reinvented by creating fine arts, handicrafts, and applied arts. These modern designs reflect the contemporary lifestyle of modern society.

There are researches to study the art circle in the new context. The study *Between Tradition and Modernity: Female Artists of the Vietnam Renovation period* by Le Huynh Hong Quyen showed that Vietnamese fine art was considered modern when the Indochina Fine Arts College was established in 1924 under the influence of modern French art.<sup>11</sup> Modern art attracted young artists in the postwar period, leading to diversity and new artistic styles under the influence of traditional Vietnamese art and Western modern art. Doi Moi policies and the market economy created many advantages for the Vietnamese art scene, enabling it to integrate with the outside world and simultaneously serve as a cultural bridge to announce Vietnam to the world.

Research on *Vietnamese painting in the period 1925-1945 from a cultural perspective* by Dr. Nguyen Van Cuong (2016) mentioned that from 1925 to 1945, painting began to take shape when Vietnam was still under French domination. A class of artists was trained scientifically as an implementation of the Western art model. This model, with the participation of Western and Vietnamese scholars and painters, created a Franco-Vietnamese cultural encounter. Traditional aesthetics and Western aesthetics were not only non-contradictory but also spectacularly harmonized. The transition from folk art to modern art was academic, and painting left an impressive mark. Artists learned to absorb and change their compositions' genres, materials, and painting language. Composition genres were usually portraiture, life, landscape, and still life. The main objects of the living genre were people, typical images distilled from activities through psychological developments and their diverse relationships in life. The artists described the landscape genre with distinct methods and different looks, derived from the Vietnamese landscape, applying the

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<sup>11</sup> Indochina Fine Arts College was established on October 27, 1924 by decree of the Governor General of Indochina Martial Merlin, the principal is French painter Victor Tardieu. On April 25, 1938, the school was reorganized and became the College of Fine and Applied Arts. During this period, the school focused on developing lacquer art, then graphics and ceramics. On October 22, 1942, the Governor General of Indochina signed a decree on the separation of the College of Fine Arts including the disciplines of painting, sculpture and architecture from the School of Applied Fine Arts.

principles of European foresight, arranging the layout according to the conventional style, approaching the simple, romantic nature images, or reflecting social reality. (Nguyen. V. C, 2016, p.13-14). The creation of the screen was not only the work of the craftsmen but also the creativity of the artists. Famous painters such as Nguyen Gia Tri and Pham Hau created lacquered panels with themes of that period's nature, people, and social contexts. Through his art, Nguyen Gia Tri expressed a unique personality that espoused a contemporary ideology, an artistic philosophy that embraced Western and Eastern artistic principles. His artwork *Young Women in the Garden and Landscape* in 1939 was recognized as a National Treasure as a two-sided lacquered screen.<sup>12</sup> The work consisted of 8 panels assembled into a rectangular screen measuring 159cm x 400cm. The first side of the screen showed the picture of a young woman in the garden with the image of graceful young women in *Ao dai* in a romantic landscape of flowers and trees. The second side of the screen was a landscape painting depicting trees along with a mosquito net in a rural garden in the North. The screen now has more value in terms of artistic creation. To avoid being influenced by French colonialism, Vietnamese artists often incorporated traditional crafts and arts, such as lacquer, silk, and rattan, with modern aesthetics.

Contemporary art in Vietnam is emerging. The changes surrounding Doi Moi posed new creative challenges for contemporary Vietnamese artists. In the current period, society is developing, and urbanizing traditional screens seem to appear less in housing spaces due to changes in the area, lifestyle, needs, and living space. Variants of the screen have developed diversely and applied flexibly to suit contemporary life. In the interior space, *noi an* screens are still used and developed very little. Meanwhile, the family gets bigger, so the living space is divided, and the area for the garden is almost lost. The spiritual factor also changes, so its application is very limited. In addition, the aesthetic value of the interior screen is also appreciated when applied to the interior space to express the language corresponding to the architecture of the building, linking objects overall. (Ta. T. M. T. 2020, p. 45). In terms of landscape design, the garden is a screen built of bricks, fenced with trees, or combined with a semicircular lake, making the inside and outside glimpse shy. The entrance to the house is guided full of subtleties, like a "greeting" gentle and decent enough. It can be seen in contemporary spaces with

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<sup>12</sup> Nguyen Gia Tri (1908-1993) was a famous painter, graphic artist, a cartoonist in the early period of Vietnamese fine art, who graduated from Indochina Fine Arts College. He is known as the father of modern Vietnamese lacquer paintings. The work *Young Women in the Garden and Landscape* is currently on display at the Vietnam Fine Arts Museum.



oriental features such as resorts, restaurants, hotels, etc., the posters of antique costumes or variations are pretty rich, almost concurrently playing the role of "signs", the array of logos of the project. The former wooden, lacquered, or silkscreen panels are gradually transformed when entering the interior. The screen has become a new highlight, the fulcrum of many decorative methods with many modifications in shape, material, and layout, bringing new nuances to the housing space in the condition of "crowded land". The contours of shaping and surface treatment according to modern design have helped the screen get rid of classical constraints such as lacquer, Tu Binh, Long, Ly, Quy, Phuong, and become more personal is more suitable for today's young generation homeowners.<sup>13</sup> Today, variation shapes of the screen are used and flexibly combined with the interior space to become partitions, which can be movable, high, or low, depending on the function of use, or can become cabinets or decorative shelves. Dang Mai Anh has two works on the embossed screen "Sen" (2009) and the two-sided lacquered screen (2008): The first side is the theme "Nest" and the second side is "Sen" with motifs of the lotus is the central theme in the composition of the screen.

Compared to many countries in the world, Vietnam is one of the very few countries that has built economic, social, cultural, educational, scientific, technological, and environmental policies into a separate institution in the Constitution. This proves that Vietnam is very interested in cultural issues and gives it its rightful place in the fundamental law of the State. Culture is an essential factor in preserving the identity of a country. The Communist Party of Vietnam has emphasized that culture is the spiritual foundation of society, the goal, and the driving force of socio-economic development. International integration is an inevitable historical trend that cannot be reversed. However, participating in global integration poses significant challenges for the Vietnamese people. The first is how to protect the national cultural identity and promote its value to create motivation for the country to develop rapidly and sustainably. International integration creates development opportunities, especially in economy and technology, facilitates cultural exchange, intelligence, experience and transfer of modern technology, materials for civilized development, and creates a favorable environment for economic growth.<sup>14</sup> The Vietnamese government has started promoting the cultural

<sup>13</sup> Vọng Bình architect (2021). "From a simple screen". Architecture & Life Magazine, 105. <https://nguoidothi.net.vn>

<sup>14</sup> Nguyễn Sỹ Trung & Vũ Hồng Vân (2020) Vietnamese Cultural Identity in the Process of International Integration, University of Transport and Communications, Vietnam Scholars Middle East Publishers, Dubai, United Arab Emirates Journal homepage: <https://saudijournals.com/jaep>

and creative industry recently.<sup>15</sup> Embodying a new economic model, the innovative lifestyle industry intends to move towards the experience economy by engaging consumers with lifestyle aesthetics. In undertakings and policies on social development, the education and training of people are also paid special attention by State. Currently, Universities that train in architecture, fine arts, and applied arts focus on traditional culture in the training process because it is a factor that evokes rich and different creative ideas distinctive to Vietnamese products. From the life and artistic images, each region's typical personality will bring unique creativity to the designers because of their individuality. It is also the link between traditional art and modern applied art. There are many topics explored in the design training process to link traditional culture with the modern design process, as in the seminar on Decorative Patterns - Hue screen from the perspective of applied training.<sup>16</sup>

In Hue, the heritage city, the changes in the screen are also an inevitable matter of life. The terms traditional and modern had discussed again based on the stylistic variation of the screen in Hue city. The survey of the "*ngoai an*" and "*noi an*" screen to see the reality in the social life of the Hue people after the Hue Imperial City was recognized as a world heritage site. The screen is also studied to see how was effective its current application is for consumer and travel solutions. Screens appear not only in noble places but also in people's lives. Screens appear not only in noble places but also in people's lives. In a modern living space, screens have arranged in with the furniture and space. The application of the screen is no longer a barrier to regulations like the traditional screen. Consumers increasingly have a higher aesthetic sense. They require the screen products made to ensure good use, aesthetic, and suitable for their living space. In recent years, young people have become interested in traditional values. Some designers in Hue plan to exploit the screen's traditional identity and modernity. They set out requirements that the screens made must be consistent with the identity and cultural characteristics of the Hue people. As a result, a designer's role entails understanding the design processes from concept to production, prototyping to marketing.

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<sup>15</sup> According to UNESCO definition, the creative industry includes creative products in the field of culture and art. It is an activity that originates from an individual's creativity, skills, and talents, with the potential to create wealth and jobs through the exploitation of intellectual property rights.

<sup>16</sup> Cao, N & Thanh, M. (2015). Ho Chi Minh City Art Week, 385.

<http://tuanbaovannghetphcm.vn/>

The aesthetic composition of pure art often emphasizes the beauty of freedom and individuality. The aesthetic creation of industrial products must establish a harmonious object environment that most fully satisfies people's material and spiritual needs. To achieve that, it is necessary to establish the formal qualities of objects constructed by industrial production, that is, the beauty of technology. Artists and designers have created modern screens based on new materials, new techniques, and new forms of shaping. Designers must grasp consumer needs and set out aesthetic trends and future applications of the screen to orient the design accordingly.

In addition to providing consumer solutions for the community and society, tourism development based on the screens' creative values was also a concern by local authorities. They had to take advantage of the architectural heritage of traditional houses and gardens and build cultural spaces for visitors to experience. To promote the development of traditional craft villages in Hue, the local government encouraged craft village festivals or organized contests to find creative ideas for tourism products. However, there was still some potential in craft villages that Hue did not yet fully exploit for social consumption and local tourism development.

Evaluation of existing studies showed that the research on screens in the historical period is still limited. From 1802-1945, there were some general studies on the culture, social life, people, and war in Vietnam. The book *Techniques of the Annamites* by Henri Oger (1909 & reprint 2009) studied the occupation of the Annamites and realistically reflected them through drawings, including screens. In the book *L'art de Hue* (1919), Léopold Cadière researched the Vietnamese people's living customs, traditions, and culture. Through the document, the author recorded detailed images of decorative motifs in Hue architecture, including some pictures of external project screens. "Nguyen Cochinchina: South Vietnam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" by Li Tana (1998) clarifies the life of the Vietnamese in Dang Trong during the Nguyen Lord's reign. These were scarce documents on historical and cultural issues that were recorded and recorded by foreigners. Research on peacemaking from 1945 to 1975 seemed to be very limited because the country was affected by the war. Most were fine art creations bearing modern artistic imprints and reflecting reality. "Vietnamese aesthetic from 1925 onwards" by Boi Tran Huynh overviewed Vietnamese art in historical periods from 1925 to after the Doi Moi period. Although the research paper did not refer to the composition of the screen, it was also the basis for comparison through the change of art style in the modern context of Vietnam.

The new screen has been an exciting topic for researchers in recent years. From different perspectives on the object of the screen, many authors reflected on the appearance of the screen. "Screen in traditional architecture" by Phan Thanh Hai

(2005) briefly analyzed the screen's birth, the screen used in traditional architecture, and focused on the main elements of Feng Shui. "Hue - Nguyen Dynasty One Look" (2018) and "Hue Style" by Tran Duc Anh Son (2016) mainly approached the history and culture of the Nguyen Dynasty and the cultural heritages of Hue. The study was an overview of external and internal project screens in architectural heritage and museums. However, most studies focused on the relationship between cultural identity and cultural heritage, not to mention the formation and development of modern screens. Some researchers analyzed more specifically the *noi an* screens such as "Ao Dai from Hue from the ancient screen", "Tran Phong Son Khac" in Hue Museum of Royal Antiquities", " Ha Thanh Danh The in Hue Museum of Royal Fine Arts", "Tran Phong Thien Tu Tu Than", "Ancient screen at Palace II Da Lat", "Screen in traditional Vietnamese architecture", etc. Behind each ancient screen was a historical story. These studies clearly showed the artistic value of the form and decoration of the screens. However, such works still expressed their individuality, and they couldn't locate where the screens were placed, which architectural spaces were used, or what production method.

In addition, Hue's ancient capital was also the subject of many national and international masters and doctoral theses. There were several studies on architecture and screen objects in Hue culture, such as "The decorative art of the screen in Vietnam" by Dang Mai Anh. She generally studied the screen's decorative elements, shapes, materials, and themes in many different architectural works, evaluating screens in Hanoi and Hue. "The artistic value of the screen in the interior design of the house" by Ta Thi Minh Trang (2020) was a new look at the layout solution of vases in residential space, an application topic. "When Heritage Goes Ways Apart: Heritagization and local involvement at the Complex of Monuments in Hue, Vietnam." by Quyen M. L (2019) and "Royal place heritage of the Nguyen dynasty under the current urbanization in Hue city" by Tran Van Dung (2020) clarified issues affecting the change of screens in architectural spaces. "Vietnamese cultural identity in the process of international integration" by Nguyen Sy Trung & Vu Hong Van (2020) showed the development problems in Vietnamese society during the process of Doi Moi, and international integration had a significant impact on the perception between tradition and modernity. These were supporting documents and information for the research process on the Hue screen, living space, and related objects.

Revolving around the subject of the screen, the cultural context, and the academic approach, this paper focuses on the main aspects: How the traditional screens were formed and meaningful in the cultural and social life of the Hue people? How did the Vietnamese reshape their re-imaging identity through the creation of modern screens? How is the screen transformed from traditional to modern in the World Cultural Heritage of Hue Ancient Capital?

The method of analyzing and synthesizing documents from the collected data was used during the research process. The actual survey in the locality was also an important issue. To further clarify the creations and applications of modern screens in the context of Vietnam's modern society in general and the world cultural heritage city of Hue in particular, this paper employed interviews, observations at screen production facilities, and research of the works of modern painters and designers. Based on the creative aesthetic method, it clarified the purpose of researching the product design process, identified consumer needs, and different flexible application trends of interior design screens in interior spaces.

The creation of screen art by modern artists and designers has served the needs of Vietnamese people in the context of modern society very well. Modern screens play an important role in shaping the identity of modern Vietnamese people. It is interestingly linked to the traditional screen foundation from the Hue World Cultural Heritage city. As a design teacher and a Master's student in Program Fine and Applied Arts Research and Creation, I am very interested in studying Binh Phong of Hue in the dimension of traditional screens, transforming styles, and re-imagining identity in the Modern Society context of Vietnam. The methodology is qualitative research. The main concepts are the Principles of Product Design, Cultural Identity, Image and Representation, and Consumptions and Everyday life. The main field of study is Hue, the world cultural heritage.

This research will be of great benefit in understanding the important issue relating to the transition of art style from traditional society to the creative form for modern society. And it is a direct benefit to learning advanced design in educational institutions that connect the subject matter to the actual phenomenon in current society.

## **1.2. Purpose of Research**

2.1 To study Binh Phong, traditional screens in the dimension of the cultural identity of the world cultural heritage.

2.2 To study the modern style of Binh Phong in the dimension of Re-Imagining Identity in the Modern Society context of Vietnam

2.3 To study the process of transforming the traditional to the modern style of Binh Phong in the world cultural heritage of Hue.

## **1.3. Research Questions**

3.1 In terms of the cultural identity of a world cultural heritage, how were traditional screens formed, and what was their role in connecting Hue people



socially in the past and present? Specifically, what were the screens' historical, cultural, functional, and artistic values?

3.2 In the context of Vietnam's modern society, what factors influenced the change in the style of the screen towards modernity, and how did the screen shape the imaging identity of modern Vietnamese people?

3.3 How was the process of transforming from traditional to modern screens in Hue, a world cultural heritage? Specifically, what were the consumer demands, design trends, and applications?

#### **1.4. Definition of Terms**

1.4.1 "Binh phong" or "screen" in this research means the artifact used to shield, block wind or decorate a house. Screens come in many designs and are made from many different materials. There are two types of architecture inside and outside.

1.4.2 "Traditional screens" in this study are screens that appear in traditional architecture, the folk architecture of Hue people, and Vietnamese society in the past and are still preserved and promoted to the present. Traditional screens link people's social life with local architecture and culture, bringing the concept of history, Feng Shui, beliefs, and national cultural identity.

1.4.3 "Transforming style" in this study deals with the process of transforming the style and function of the screens from traditional to modern. From handmade form to new form with the innovative design process to suit the development of society.

1.4.4 "Modern style" in this study refers to the screen products created based on the new trends of the times, the form is simple and different from the specifications of the traditional screen. Screen product is interested in the combination of layout, material, and function in living space.

1.4.5 "Modern social context" is the social context mentioned when Vietnam with the modernizing impact of the West and the progressive development process of Vietnam after Doi Moi to the present stage.

1.4.6 "Cultural identity" in this research means the identity formed by the relationship between the Hue people and their traditional Binh Phong or the screens.

1.4.7 "Image and representation" in this research means the image of modern Vietnamese people who want to indicate the "Vietnamese personality" through Binh Phong or screens.

1.4.8 "Consumptions and Everyday life" in this research means the daily life of the Vietnamese in modern society, which is related to the taste in selecting Binh Phong or Screens. It refers to decorations in homes and offices or various buildings at present.

## 1.5. Scope of Research

### 1.5.1 Research area

During the Nguyen Dynasty, Thua Thien was a palace until the French colonial period changed it to Thua Thien province, later called Thua Thien Hue. Thua Thien Hue province is located on the central coast of Vietnam, including the mainland and the territorial sea of the East Sea continental shelf. Thua Thien Hue shares land borders with Quang Tri province, Quang Nam province, Da Nang city, and Lao People's Democratic Republic and borders the East Sea. It has a tropical monsoon climate, featuring all four distinct seasons. The topography of Hue has a fairly particular step structure. The mountainous area accounts for one-fourth of the total area. The midlands, the abrasive and agglomerated plains with dunes, and lagoons account for 1,400km<sup>2</sup>. The river system that surrounds the city creates a harmonious nature and landscape.

Hue is one of the last fortified citadels of Southeast Asia. The complex of Hue Monuments is a historical-cultural relic advocated by the Nguyen Dynasty to build from the beginning of the 19th century to the first half of the 20th century. This relic was listed on the World Cultural Heritage list in 1993. This place conserves a large amount of material and spiritual cultural heritage, which is typical for Vietnam's traditional art and culture. As the capital of a unified Vietnam in 1802, Hue was not only a political center but also a cultural and religious center under the Nguyen Dynasty until 1945. The screens in Hue's architecture are diverse and of high artistic value, including the system of screens in the architecture of palaces, shrines, temples, mausoleums, pagodas, government, gardens, and houses where the architecture marks the 143-year reign of king Nguyen Dynasty, the last feudal dynasty in the nation's history. With its own style, Hue architecture is in harmony with the natural landscape, so Hue architecture is called landscape architecture. Up to now, Hue has five heritages of the Nguyen Dynasty registered by UNESCO: Complex of Hue Monuments (1993), Vietnamese Court Music - Nha Nhac (2003), Woodblocks of Nguyen Dynasty (2009), Transcripts of the Nguyen Dynasty (2014), Poetry on Hue Royal Architecture (2016).

The selection of Hue city as the research area is mainly based on the following factors:

From a political perspective, State and local policies always refer to the urban development of Hue city in parallel with preserving relics. Resolution 54 of the Politburo on “building and developing Thua Thien Hue province into a centrally run city based on preserving and promoting the value of the ancient capital heritage and Hue cultural identity, with the characteristics heritage culture, ecology, landscape, environmental friendliness, etc.”

In terms of culture, for other developed cities that race towards urbanization, Hue alone is home to many traditional heritage works, including present screens. Through the tangible and intangible heritage of the ancient capital of Hue, we can see the vividness and truthfulness of the traditional cultural activities of the Hue people. It is a combination of elements of exchange, integration, acculturation, openness, and creativity of generations of residents living on the land of the Huong River and Ngu Mountain to create cultural identity values.<sup>17</sup>

From an economic perspective, after liberation in 1975, Thua Thien Hue began rebuilding the homeland, building material foundations, and reviving the economic development devastated by the war. After 30 years of construction and development, it overcame the country's challenging conditions and the political crisis. Today, Hue city has achieved fundamental achievements. The goal of Hue city is to take the tourism economy as the core, so Hue has been known as a cultural-tourism center, a festival city, and a place that attracts many domestic and international tourists every year.

From an artistic viewpoint, the project of developing Hue fine arts 2020-2030, with the view of developing fine arts to contribute to the construction and development of Hue culture, was passed. The works of Hue's artisans, painters, and designers are still influenced by traditional artistic thought. However, in the modern context, in addition to its flexible functions, the screen is also a work of art, an object for artists and designers to research and freely create following modern trends. In addition, the training and development of applied art professions in Hue also thrived, encouraging creativity and creating applied art designs and products to serve the needs of the economic markets such as consumer goods, tourism goods, and exports.

#### 1.5.2 Time

Screens appeared for a long time in Vietnamese history, but the most characteristic and still present in Hue is the screen of the Nguyen Dynasty.

<sup>17</sup> Identifying and promoting Hue cultural identity in the development process.(2020).

Thua Thien Hue Newspaper. <http://bvhttdl.gov.vn/>



Researching the screens from the Nguyen Dynasty period in Hue city to the current time, I divide the time into three main periods for analysis as follows:

Feudal society of the Nguyen Dynasty, period of formation and development (1802-1945): This period included important historical milestones affecting the screens. In 1802 Nguyen Dynasty built the capital in Phu Xuan-citadel Hue street today. After 1858, Hue became a French colony. In 1925, Indochina Fine Arts College was established under the French management in parallel with Modern Art, and the feudal period of the Nguyen Dynasty ended in 1945.

The period of war, crisis, and recession (1946-1981): Civil wars and foreign invasions, including the wars against France (1945-1954) and the war against America (1955-1975). The screen and architectural heritages of the Nguyen Dynasty were severely damaged. After 1975 Vietnam was reunified and started to recover the economy, but it still faced many difficulties.

The recovery period (1982-2022): This period had essential milestones such as Vietnam's Doi Moi economic policy in 1986 and Hue's ancient capital becoming a World Cultural Heritage City in 1993.

## 1.6. Research Methodology

The study mainly uses the qualitative research method, considering the role of the Hue screen and its relationship with Vietnamese people and society in the past and present.

Descriptive analysis of qualitative research refers to defining qualitative methods based on research objectives, historical, cultural, and artistic factors through periods. Hue screens have become one of the cultural expressions of Vietnam in traditional house architecture. Through the artistic expression, it reflects the changes in the screens after the influence of Western art and the modern changes on the screen after Vietnam's reform and renewal. This paper employs inductive knowledge approaches, principles, characteristics of qualitative research, data collection methods, concepts, theories, and assumptions in qualitative research.

### 1.6.1 Population and Sample

1.6.1.1 Group of Hue locals who associated with traditional Binh Phong. It comprises academics, art historians, museum officials, Hue World Heritage City officials, locals who live in the traditional house and know Hue, etc.

1.6.1.2 Group of people who associated with modern Binh Phong. It comprises artists, product designers, modern art scholars, gallery officials, and modern Binh Phong consumers, including owners of modern houses, hotels, general

buildings, etc.

1.6.1.3 Other persons involved in the period of the research procedure.

#### 1.6.2 Instrumentation

Instruments or tools for Data Collection; Interview form, fieldwork notebook, audio recorder, camera, video, etc.

#### 1.6.3 Data collection

1.6.3.1 Field working: to collect the data by key informant interview, general interview, general observation and participant observation, etc.

1.6.3.2 Documentary data: to collect the information from books, documents, images, media, and the Internet.

#### 1.6.4 Data Analysis

This study uses a qualitative methodology, and the writing method used is descriptive analysis combined with pictures and diagrams. After collecting data by field survey and literature review, the data were divided into groups:

Data related to research subjects include historical factors, context, and social life, culture, traditional art, modern art, traditional and modern architecture, feng shui, local guidelines and policies, cultural heritage, etc, related to Hue's screen.

Data on research ideas include cultural identity, tradition and modernity, identity imagination, stylistic variation, image and representation, consumption and daily life, product design process, etc.

Overview data on the research model are research papers close to the screen topic, using research methods and results obtained in similar research to evaluate and develop further in this research.

#### 1.6.5 Research presentation

1.6.1 Full paper of research: a descriptive analysis.

1.6.2 Research article: International Journal.

### 1.7. Literature Review

#### 1.7.1 Literature review of research text

*Les Motifs de l'Art annamite* by author L.Cadière published in 1919: It studied the art of Hue royal patterns on architecture, houses, wooden furniture, etc., in the Nguyen imperial court. This included decorations such as character motifs, still lifes

(Bai Buu, Eight Immortals), flowers and leaves, leaves and fruits, animal motifs including dragons, unicorns, phoenixes, turtles, bats, monks death, tiger fish, landscape, etc., to pure sculptures or architectural details, furniture. The book was a collection of beautiful motifs about the artistic value of Hue. Several motifs were extracted from the project's screens that are very suitable as materials for the study and illustration of the topic. However, the number of motifs related to the screen was still very limited.

*Technique du Peuplle Annamite* by Henri Oger published in 1909 and latest reprint 2009: This was a study of material civilization in Annam about 100 years ago, done by Henri Oger and Vietnamese artisans. The book's content reflected the typical daily life of the people of the ancient North. The paintings were redrawn with a synthesis of topics from production, cultural activities, beliefs, and folk games to contemporary celebrities and the life of ancient people. In the document, simple drawings described images of screens of various styles and materials. It also mentioned that the layout of the screens on the screen porch of the North was the first form of the interior screen in Vietnam. This material was a valuable bibliography about the lives of Vietnamese people in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The research also systemized the professions of Vietnam.

Tran Duc Anh Son had the book *Hue Style* published in 2016, introducing people and characteristics of Hue culture, the way of life, and the way people interact with nature. The screens presented by the author in the living spaces of the Hue people were an indispensable component in creating the architectural shape of the Hue traditional house. Through the document, readers can understand the source of the screen and the types of screens in Hue, such as natural screens, artificial screens, which are idyllic screens made of lime brick, or chè Tàu tree slabs in front of garden houses. The screen was built and molded with sophisticated mosaic forms to shield palaces, mausoleums, temples, etc. The document mentioned the screen's design, size, materials, and decorative elements but was not specific about its meaning. "Hue - Nguyen Dynasty One Look" was a follow-up study published in 2018. The book was divided into two main parts, part one was about Hue - Cultural heritage, and part two was about issues and historical topics in Nguyen Dynasty. Although the book did not specifically analyze the types of screens mentioned above, it thoroughly depicted the Nguyen Dynasty's history and focused on exploring Hue's cultural heritage. In particular, the themes and the meaning of the decorative images, as well as the folk characters in decorative tricks and the materials, were interesting factors indicating that the folklore change was proportional during the Nguyen Dynasty. He believed that towards the end, the more the feudal system lost its majesty and the looser political institutions, the more folklore was promoted and diversified. Concepts and themes also changed. For example, the pomegranate tree used in decoration symbolizes reunion and prominent families, and the pomegranate

tree in folklore or the apricot tree was not only a symbol of pure white but also a symbol of a young woman in Vietnamese folk songs. In addition, the study clarified the Hue people's cultural values, customs, and practices. Besides his analysis of history and Nguyen Dynasty kings, he also mentioned the trade issue between Vietnam and China. This diplomatic relationship ended in 1884 due to the impact of the war by the French.

Another applied study on the screen was "The artistic value of the screen in the interior space design of houses" by Ta Thi Minh Trang (2020). The study was an overview of the screens in the interior space in Vietnam, referring to the contemporary housing space. In this study, the author evaluated the screen's application in the house's interior space to find out the aesthetic, functional, cultural, and spiritual values and the interaction of the screen in that space. A new thing in that paper was the in-depth analysis of the solution of the screen layout in the house's interior space. In particular, the detailed analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of the screen when applied to housing spaces proposed solutions to overcome.

In summary, concerning the perspective of the history and culture of the screen, L.Cadière, Henri Oger, Tran Duc Anh Son, and many other authors mainly recorded in the form of chronicles. Many studies documented all information about society, politics, culture, nature, and architecture, but the screens were mentioned as an indispensable component in Hue traditional architecture. Research topics on Hue heritage and conservation orientations such as *Royal place heritage of the Nguyen dynasty under the current urbanization in Hue city* (2020), *When Heritage Goes Ways Apart: Heritagization and local involvement at the Complex of Monuments in Hue, Vietnam* (2019), *The royal cultural heritage of the Nguyen Dynasty: Researching, preserving and promoting its values* (2016), *Transformation of Hue tradition garden houses* (2020). Research on the modern social context of Vietnam has topics such as *Vietnamese Cultural Identity in the Process of International Integration* (2020) and *Vietnam's foreign policy under Doi Moi* (2018).

From an artistic perspective, the screen was analyzed more clearly by Dang Mai Anh and Ta Thi Minh Trang about the screen's shape, function, and decorative theme. The traditional decoration was effectively applied on the screen, clearly showing the aesthetic and spiritual values of the ancient Hue people. Art studies such as *A Brief History of Vietnamese Fine Arts, Vietnamese Painting from 1925 to 1945 from a cultural perspective, Visual Arts of the Nguyen Dynasty, Values formed from regional cultural factors* (2020), and *Between tradition and Modernity: Women artists in post Doi moi Vietnam* (2020) showed that Vietnamese art was also quite rich. Traditional art, folk art, and modern art all reflected personal talents and national identity.

Although the above studies have assessed the presence of the screen in contemporary life, it does not refer to the product design process or the crafting process of the previous screen. The studies have not clearly stated the reasons for the change of the screen in the modern context of Hue. Therefore, I will use some research related to art and composition combining past social history and the modern social context of Hue after Doi moi period to analyze this issue. At the same time, I will analyze the product design processes and application solutions of the modern screen in the context of Hue, the world heritage city, and use the following research methods to conceptualize my research.

### 1.7.2 Literature review of research concept

#### 1.7.2.1 Cultural Identity

"Cultural identity" is one of the most popular topics in contemporary society. There are many concepts analyzed as cultural identity as identity in the process of globalization, the debate between traditional and modern issues, loss of tradition due to personalization and freedom, individualism, or identity re-imagining.

In the book *Questions of Cultural Identity* (Hall, Stuart and Gay, Paul du. 1996), there have been many debates in cultural studies and social theories about cultural identity. Contemporary questions about culture have become questions of identity. The question is whether the identities that have long defined the social and cultural worlds of modern societies - the distinct identities of gender, sexuality, race, class and nationality - are in decline, giving rise to new forms of identity and modern fragmentation of the individual as a unified subject. Through debate, identity discourse can tell us more about the present-day state of human society than conceptual and analytical results. Questions about identity and culture studies are focused on in chapter 6 of the book. This chapter aims to explore some of the questions about pre-modern cultural identity and assess whether an 'identity crisis' exists, what it consists of, and what direction it moves. The chapter address questions like What do we mean by an 'identity crisis? Did recent developments in modern society precipitate it? What forms did it have? What were its potential consequences? Hall (1991: 21) explained: "Identity is a structured representation that attains its positivity only through the narrow eye of the negative. It has to go through the other's needle eye before it can build itself. Therefore, the emphasis here is on the diversity of identities on difference rather than on a single identity. So, Cultural identity and logic of difference, Cultural identity and logic of the individual, Cultural identity and logic of time".

Similarly, Mercer (1992b: 33) described the "major thing" about the racial politics of the 1980s as a result of the fact that "we actively built a self-selected community of belonging through many different activities". Perhaps Hall and Mercer



would agree with the argument that, in specific contexts, identity can become a marker of people's existence in such a single community, where the community identifies the designation of a residence marks the way people belong in the structural bases of contemporary life. That would be an identity worth fighting.

In chapter seven, the issue of music and identity is homology, a structural relationship between material and musical forms. Music, like identity, is about performance and story. It describes the society in the individual and the individual in the society, the mind in the body and the body in the mind. Identity, like music, is a matter of ethics and aesthetics. We can point out the culture embedded in technique and technology: people produce and consume the music they can produce and consume; different social groups possess different sorts of knowledge and skills, share different cultural histories, and make music differently. Musical tastes do correlate with class cultures and subcultures; musical styles are linked to specific age groups; we can take for granted the connections of ethnicity and sound.

Through the analysis of Hall and other authors, this paper related the concept of Identity Re-imagining as the effect of the imposition on objects of past and present social order. Identity imposition, how did the authors use it to theorize identity formation? For example, artists impose their treatment of reality on the public. Artists who followed the new art schools would fight against the artistic traditions of their time, like thinking about the modern style of the West. Or in the case of Vietnam during its colonial period, the imposition of Western art tried to assimilate the Vietnamese in their way. To combat that, artists and designers found their way to create personal identities or identities for the social community in which they live.

#### 1.7.2.2 Image and Representation

The concept of "Image and Representation" is used in this study to analyze the issues of the image of the screen, and the image of Hue people, Vietnamese people, in the context of traditional and modern society. The screen is a representative image, a symbol of Hue culture, the connection between family relationships with the clan, connecting people with beliefs, and showing people's living habits in architectural space through Feng shui. In the past, screens could replace people's wishes through written language and decorative motifs according to different themes. Each screen image would represent the feudal period's social rank. Today, a screen work is a symbolic sign of the creator of its images. That image conveyed its creator's aesthetic form, talent, or individuality. Considering the image and representation, for example, the image of the lotus flower is often used by painters and designers in modern screen compositions. The lotus has a unique role and position in the Vietnamese people's spirituality and culture. It symbolizes the Vietnamese people's friendly nature, elegance, and courage. In traditional art, the

lotus is almost always shown by artists in decorative projects of places of worship or community cultural or architectural works.

"Image and Representation" by Nick Lacey was published in 1998 and reprinted for the second time in 2009. The author made it clear that the book was introductory for the undergraduate students of Media studies, and it can also be used as a textbook for similar-level courses. The book was full of diagrams, figures, and pictures. It provided the basic introduction to each concept with clear and straightforward definitions and then discussed the concept with help from examples and counter-examples wherever necessary. There were exercises available for the reader to understand the concepts and analysis. The current review also proceeded in a similar fashion, evaluating the concepts and definitions and applying them to an advertisement as an example. The book began with the famous saying: "Seeing is believing". The author argued that "seeing comes before words" before we read or listen, we see, we observe, and we develop a concept in our mind about the given situation or text, and then move on to the communication process. According to him, the first goal in Media studies should be to move from passive consumption of images to active reading of them. Moreover, to do that, it was necessary to understand how forms evolve and images are built.

The subject refers typically to the theme or about whom/what the image is. The author elaborately discusses the notions of Context, Contact, and Message. An iconic sign bears a resemblance to that which it represents. A photograph is an iconic sign of the person or thing photographed. An Indexical sign has a direct relationship, or causal link, to that it represents. In image analysis, we have to be aware of two interrelated facts, which are (Lacey 1998: 86): All the images are cultural artifacts and are therefore the products of a particular society at a specific time; Both the sender and receiver of any image have their own cultural backgrounds which have influenced, respectively, the creation and reading of the image.

The paper "Presentation" (Lacey 1998:131) initiated a discussion with Richard Dyer's Representative Typeface. He introduced them first as: Re-presentation - this covers the media language, the conventions used to represent the world to the audience; Representativeness - the extent to which types are used to represent social groups - this is addressed here in examining stereotypes; Who is responsible for the presentation; How the organization creates a media text affects the presentation - this is particularly controversial in terms of gender representation, as men are often represented; What the audience thinks about the representation.

The analysis was mainly about the field of media in general and images in particular. However, the author discussed more movies than analyzing images.

#### 1.7.2.3 Consumption and Everyday Life

"Consumption and Everyday life" in this study mean the daily life of Vietnamese people in modern society. Consumptions and Everyday Life examined contemporary issues, appreciating the diversity and complexity of consumption and everyday life. For the policy of innovation and economic development, the Vietnamese government was interested in the creative and cultural industries, so cultural consumption involved positive and meaningful creative activities. The characteristics of local consumption habits were illustrated in the case of Hue. The characteristics of local consumption habits were illustrated in the case of Hue. Hue city linked cultural tourism with traditional crafts, and *noi an* screen consumer demand with production. In the past, manual production methods were limited due to machinery, so they did not fully meet consumers' needs. However, in the industrial age, goods were mass-produced, so consumers had more choices. On the other hand, in the modern context, consumers are more knowledgeable and always choose the best products. Thus, the goods must be of high quality, and through this process, consumers have an aesthetic experience. Currently, in Hue, the reproduction of traditional screens is mainly used for tourism services or traditional houses, and modern screens are for indoor decoration, offices, and other spaces.

Consumption and daily life by Mark Paterson (2005) introduced all the key ideas and major theorists of consumption in a lively and engaging manner. This book drew on theories of everyday life and aspects of sociology, cultural geography, and cultural studies and presented a comprehensive exploration of the central themes in consumption and consumer culture. Readily accessible case studies describe familiar forms of consumption from areas of everyday life, grounding the debates and ideas discussed. Its key topics covered many aspects of daily life, creating the fundamentals for debates and discussion. The topics included: the semiotics of branding and advertising, the representation of 'nature' and the environment, the relations between consumer and producer, ethical consumption, and the tensions between local spaces of consumption and globalized markets. While each of the chapters summarized the debates in a specific subject area, it also resided within a larger argument concerning the ethics, poetics, and the politics of consumption in everyday life, making this essential reading for undergraduates in cultural studies, sociology, and cultural geography courses.

#### 1.7.2.4 Principles of Product Design

*Product design principles* are essential methods and tools for designing products with aesthetic and functional values. This paper applied the study of *Product design* documents by Paul Rodgers and Alex Miton (2011). Product Design offers a broad introduction to the field of product design and the role of product designers. Following through all the stages and activities involved in creating a new product from concept design to manufacture, prototyping to marketing, this



book also explores the diverse nature of product design, including new and emerging forms of practice. A rich overview of influential design movements and individuals, together with examples from prominent product designers, encourages the reader to challenge conventions and think about product design in new and exciting ways. In particular, this study also covers topics related to educational design, such as presentations, assessments, interactions with industry, and completion of product design work.

In this study, questions were raised to clarify issues such as:

What is product design? In its simplest definition, product design is the design of products. Still, it also has a broader meaning that includes the generation of ideas, developing concepts, product testing, and manufacturing or implementing a physical object, system, or service. The role of a product designer encompasses many disciplines, such as marketing, management, design, and engineering, and combines art, science, and commerce to produce tangible artifacts. Product design is also a commercial activity that can help businesses by ensuring they create and sell products that appeal to, please, or challenge consumers. It can provide ways of answering unmet needs, improving function and appearance, or offering new ways of critically engaging with objects. Design is fundamentally about making things better: better for consumers and users, better for business, and better for the world.

What are the history and social context of product design? It can be that product design is a relatively young discipline. It took shape in the wake of the British Industrial Revolution, which began in England during the eighteenth century, with the emergence of mass production, new production processes, and a division of labor. Until then, what is commonly described today as craft production existed as the sole means of producing objects. Since the emergence of product design as a profession, the discipline has been characterized by a spirit of reform. Several important reform movements emerged in the second half of the 19th century advocating a return to nature and crafts as a solution to the overgrowth of industry, large cities, and manufacturing series. Product design has undergone many development stages, from the original Arts and Crafts movements to the emerging twenty-first Century Design Trends. In Vietnam, the mass production industry developed more slowly than in the rest of the world due to the influences of feudal society, colonialism, and war. So in the early stages, modern product design still combines arts and crafts and small-scale production. The materials on the history of product design given in the book by the author will have some that are unsuitable for the context of Vietnam.

What is the product design process like? In the product design process, understanding a country's historical and cultural context is also important. It will help product designers or businesses to grasp market needs, styles, and consumer trends. The following process is to use research methods such as observation,

participation, analysis of collected information, creation of simulations, and evaluation of design proposals. The explanatory explanation also includes the impact of personal inspiration and context on a design project, with descriptions of many project triggers, such as interviews, document reviews, questionnaires and surveys, focus groups, and ethnography. The conceptual design phase involves detailing the tasks involved in drawing up some viable concepts and designing a satisfying aesthetic experience. The next stage is the detailed design, production, marketing, branding, visual language development, and sales. This paper incorporated this process into the concepts of Image and Representation.

The product design stages are analyzed quite concretely and logically by the author. However, this is the content of the overview research on product design suitable for large-scale production processes. Therefore, when going into a detailed study for a design process of a particular product such as a screen, it is necessary to establish more methods. Considering the current situation in Vietnam, the design of screen products for production is still limited because there are not many designers involved in this field. The screen still combines manual and industrial production methods and lacks machinery and technology. Products tend to be made for personal taste rather than mass production.

### 1.7.3 Literature review about research model

The thesis on Art deco screens in Vietnam by author Dang Mai Anh (2015) was general research on the decorative art of screens from *ngoai an* to *noi an* in Vietnam from the Nguyen Dynasty to 2015. The screen survey area was in the two ancient cities of Hanoi and Hue and some other urban centers in Nam Dinh and Hai Phong. The thesis referred to the screens' origin, development stages, characteristics and role in social life, and the current application status in architectural space. The study expanded on the function of the screen in architecture such as mausoleums, palaces, temples, pagodas, gardens, public buildings and tombs, private residences, private collections, etc. The concept was not clear about the topic's title. The problem focused on decorative arts, but the research content was quite broad in many fields. The research method of this thesis was a qualitative study, using field methods, field surveys, synthetic methods, and interdisciplinary methods of ethnography and folklore. The thesis aimed to preserve, embellish, and promote the artistic value of the screen in contemporary life and create material for the research process of ancient Vietnamese art.

She was interested in the theory of cultural space to study the frequency of screens' presence in different regions' social life. The screen was applied to create harmony with the living space and furniture. Analyzing the screens after 1945, she showed that the impact of the war and the change in living needs had lost many *noi an* screens. Decorative art is a special art form of humans, an aesthetic category, the

art of creating beauty to satisfy the needs of social life, associated with advancements and the inevitable development of human material and spiritual life. The art of screen decoration and design work is the process of idea formation, sketching, design, and presentation of finished products with full functionality and aesthetics. The thesis's main research topics were structure, materials, and decorative themes. These studies deciphered the problems of applying Feng Shui in human life, explaining the problems of traditional art. She also cited other art studies and surveys. However, there were no specific citations for putting her arguments on feng shui on the shapes of the screen. The curtain in contemporary life is analyzed based on the concept of charisma and applicability. Variations of *ngoai an* and *noi an* screens were also applicable to modern spaces. Throughout the research thesis, the Feng Shui factor was repeated by the author quite a lot from the analysis of the ancient screen to the contemporary one, which showed that the impact of modernization had not lost the notion of Feng Shui in the layout of houses of the Vietnamese. In this study, the author did not suggest the purpose of preserving the screen. It could have been a good document to study the screen's traditional culture if it were an academic document. The issues of product design and frontal application in the interior needed to be in-depth and supplemented according to the changes of the times.

In this research, I will mention the concepts of the study of cultural identity and traditional screens. I will thoroughly analyze the presence of screens in social life, notions in folklore, Feng Shui in architecture, and traditional decorative arts of Vietnam under the Nguyen Dynasty. For screen research in the modern context, I will have different research concepts from the author to better clarify the role of the screen in this period. The screen not only focuses on decorative elements or Feng Shui, but its creation also affects many factors in which people are important factors example, age, gender, social status needs consumption will be different. Designers are the mediators who create the trends and styles of the screen to suit that era. In addition, the socio-economic development policies in different localities will create favorable conditions for the development screen in different application directions. In the case of Hue, a world heritage city, the cultural tourism development will focus on developing the screens in a conservation way.

## 1.8. Concept, Theory and Conceptual Framework

### 1.8.1 Concepts of Research

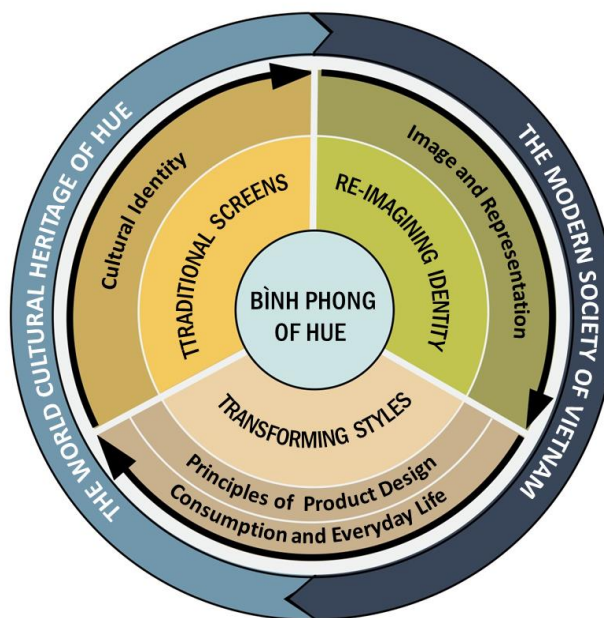
1.8.1.1 Principles of Product Design (*Paul Rodgers and Alex Miton. 2011. Product design. London: Laurence King Publication* ).

1.8.1.2 Cultural Identity (Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay. 1996. *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London : SAGE Publication, The Open University) to examine Binh Phong of Hue in the dimension of traditional screens is directly related to Hue people in the past.

1.8.1.3 Conceptual of Image and Representation (Lacey, Nick. 2009. *Image and Representation*. London : Red Globe Press, International Higher Education) to examines the screen in the modern context and re-imagines identity, building an image representing the shaping of the individual identity of modern Vietnamese through innovative ideas created by artists and designers.

1.8.1.4 Conceptual of Consumption and Everyday Life (Mark Paterson. 2005. *Consumptions and Everyday Life*. London and New York : Routledge Publication) to examines the concept of taste, lifestyle and habits for consumption. The Hue screen represents Vietnam in modern society.

#### 1.8.2 Theory and Conceptual Framework



In this research structure, Binh Phong of Hue is the main object of research. Hue's Binh Phong is analyzed in the dimension of traditional screens, transforming styles, and re-imagining identity in the Modern Society context of Vietnam. The methodology is qualitative research. The main concepts are the Principles of Product Design, Cultural Identity, Image and Representation, and Consumptions and Everyday life. The main field of study is Hue, the world cultural heritage.

### 1.9. Benefit of Research

1.9.1 This research was intended to benefit the academic circle, art history, product design, etc. This research was based on knowledge of history, culture, and society, which screen is an intermediary object that reflects the life and lifestyle of people in each period. It could work as a document to supplement knowledge about the development of the front in the current period.

1.9.2 Benefit for society and community: based on this research, local people and authorities could plan development policies on culture, arts, and tourism in the context of the world heritage city of Hue.

1.9.3 Other benefits: this research could be used as a research model for studying other fields. Besides, the information in research could support the development of related businesses.

### 1.10. New Knowledge Research

In the context of Vietnam's modern society, this study analyzed Hue's Binh Phong in terms of the traditional screen, transforming styles to create new values and re-imagining the identity of the screen. Based on three research objectives, this study analyzed the concept of cultural identity related to the formation of the traditional screen in the social context of the Hue Nguyen Dynasty. The research structure used new concepts such as the concept of image and representation related to the reproduction of the identity of the screen in a modern style in the context of modern Vietnamese society. The concepts of Principles of Product Design, Consumption, and Daily Life concerning the new style change of the Hue's screen in terms of its status, trends, and applications, were envisioned in the context of Hue as a world cultural heritage city.



## CHAPTER 2

### Traditional screens in the dimension of cultural identity in Hue city, theworld cultural heritage, the period of formation and development (1802-1945)

The second chapter is an overview of screen-related issues. The content analyzes the history of the formation of the screen, the screen in traditional architecture, and folk architecture in Hue's ancient capital. It also examines the relationship between the screen, living space, and people in each social context. It focuses on researching groups of typical traditional screens in palaces, garden houses, and internal case screens in museums during the Nguyen Dynasty from 1802 to 1945. This chapter also analyzes the values of cultural identity and uniqueness of the screen in terms of function, shape, layout, traditional decorative arts, and spatial organization.

#### 2.1 Overview of Hue's screen

##### 2.1.1 Definition of screen

"Binh Phong" was defined by researchers in different ways. The first known screens have been around since the Eastern Zhou Dynasty of 771-256 BC and officially appeared during the Han Dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD). The ancient Chinese considered the screen a human achievement, an essential part of traditional furniture and artwork.

In China, the screen is written as 屏風 (transliteration: pin fèng). It is a compound word of 屏 (shield) and 風 (wind). Two words combined are the windshield. For the Chinese, from a long time ago, the screen, in addition to blocking the wind, is also a wall separating activities in the same interior space and is a decorative object in the house. During the feudal period, the screen also had the form of *Toa Binh* 座屏, also known as the screen seat, covering the back of the seat, showing nobility and dignity. The screen is a type of device that is placed vertically. It has many panels connected by hinges or other means.

When introduced to Southeast Asia, the screen had different names. During the unification of Silla Korea, it was called Irworobongo, usually placed after the king's throne in North Korea and South Korea.

In Japan, screens were imported from China around the 7th or 8th century. The screen was transliterated as *Byobu* (屏風) (wind wall). *Byobu* is a Japanese term that connotes the meaning of enclosed or sheltered. *Byo* means against, *bu* means wind or protection from the wind. *Byobu*, also known as folding doors, was an

important traditional object. It was very artistically decorated and is used to separate interiors, wrap partitions for private areas, or other purposes. This screen is created from many panels joined together. It had both the decorative nature of a painting and showed the art of calligraphy. There were also other forms such as *Tsuitate* - a single screen used for entrance doors, *Fusuma* - a sliding door, *Shoji* - a door made of thin paper and traditional *shoji* paper, *Sugido* - a fixed screen and *Tobusuma* - a sliding screen made of wood.

The screen was introduced to Europe at the end of the Middle Ages in the 17th and 18th centuries. The screen in French is called *Paravent*, where *para* means the shield and *vent* means wind. In English, it is called *screen*, *windscreen*, or *folding screen*. In Catholic church architecture, the screen is also called *rood screen*, choir screen, chancel screen, and *jubé* (memorial membrane). It is a decorative partition between the church and the nave, made of wood, stone, or wrought iron. Westerners used screens as a tool to spread Western ideas and gradually penetrated back into the East by decorating screens with Western customs, practices, and geography.

Particularly in Vietnam, the screen was prevalent in the architecture of the Nguyen Dynasty. The screen (屏風) had many names and was distinguished inside and outside the architecture. The screen placed outside the architecture was always fixed and was called *ngoai an* or *tien an*, while the screen placed inside the house was called the *noi an*, *tran phong* (鎮風) or *Thu Huyen Quan*. *Noi an* was not usually fixed and easy to move. *Tran Phong* in the Nguyen Dynasty had a top in the shape of the letter Bat (八) in the middle, high and low on both sides. Screens became an architectural form, built in front of traditional houses for feng shui. Screen means shielding, stabilizing, and preventing evil from directly affecting people's lives.

Thus, the screen appeared first in China, then in Eastern and European countries under different names. However, they all showed the unity in concepts and functions of a shield but differed in styles and cultural characteristics. (Ta. T. M. T, 2020, p.13). The similarity in the conception of traditional use and form between Vietnamese and Chinese screens was evaluated to have interference and similarities. However, each group, each region, due to the influence of geographical, climatic, natural, and customary circumstances, had its individuality due to specific living



conditions, especially the spiritual cultures. (Dang. M. A, 2015, p.8). Although the screen was originally from China, modern screens are now used in many interior designs worldwide. This shows that the creation and application of the screen are integrated and widespread in many countries. In Vietnam, the screen forms gradually changed to match the aesthetic taste of the Vietnamese people.

### 2.1.2 Classification of the screen

Traditional Vietnamese screens are classified by location and shape, including *ngoai an* and *noi an* screens.

*Ngoai an* is a screen placed outside and in front of a house or big architecture. The *ngoai an* screen includes types such as the tea screen, *the screen with the roof* (Che Tau), *the screen of the horizontal scroll* (Cuon Thu), and *the screen of rockery* (Non Bo).

*Noi an* is a screen placed inside the building, right behind the main door, divided into two main types: single-panel screen (bình phong một tấm) and composite screen (bình phong ghép tấm). In addition, there is a combination of variations of the screen.

A single-panel screen has many shapes. The most common is the letter screen that is firmly made, placed on a pedestal or called a fish stomach, with fixed legs, and when moving, it has to move the whole plate. Screens of this type usually come in many different sizes. It can be made from many materials such as gold, silver, jade, ivory, bamboo, rattan, and precious wood. Wooden screens are often gilded or inlaid with pearls. Expensive materials are often used for small screens.

The composite screen consists of many separate panels, usually rectangular or square, using even-numbered panels 2, 4, 6 to 12, 14 and odd-numbered panels 3, 5, 7, 9 panels joined together by hinges. Plates can be of the same size, or large panels combined with small panels. This type can be with legs or without legs when moving can be moved partially or disassembled for convenient transportation.

Variant screens are usually not arranged like traditional screens. They have free structures combining large and small panels, creating a harmonious composition. Variant screens can be formed from partitions, fixed or movable, low or high,

depending on the creativity and the space. The remarkable thing about these screens is that they can be combined versatily and flexibly with cabinets, decorative shelves, and other interior items.

### 2.1.3 Function of the screen

The screen is an indispensable component in traditional house architecture, creating the beauty of the building's appearance. The decorative elements on the screen show a high artistic value of traditional arts. Traditional screens have a feng shui function when placed indoors or outdoors. They are closely linked with the layout of the space and bring good things to the owner of the house. The screen also brings a sense of privacy and solemnity when placed in sacred places of worship. In the past, folding screens were often placed in rooms to serve as screens for ladies.

The modern screen was developed mainly as the internal project screen with more flexible functions. It is a means of shielding, separating, narrowing, or expanding space. Some types of screens can be folded and removed easily. Modern screens are also applied in other architectural spaces such as houses, restaurants, hotels, resorts, offices, etc. Many decorative themed screens focus on artistic elements, so they become artworks that highlight the space and interior of the house.

## 2.2 Overview of Hue city

### 2.2.1 Natural Features

Scientist Le Quy Don once praised this ideal land: "Phu Xuan is a great place, flat, beautiful as the palm of your hand, and the circumference can be more than ten miles wide". In the town hall, the inner court is in a higher place. It was a distinctively high ground in the middle of vast, flat land. This land (according to the ancient Eastern geography) was located in Can Phuong (Southern direction), facing Sun Phuong (Southeast direction), leaning horizontally on the dragon chain (dragon spine). In the front, many mountains protecting the town hall laid widely, and all received tiger and water currents (geographically). This is the land's source of wealth, power, and prosperity" (29, p.189). The conditions of the natural environment had a significant influence on the formation of traditional architectural features of the Nguyen Dynasty.

Thua Thien Hue province is located on the central coast of Vietnam, including the mainland and the territorial sea of the East Sea continental shelf. Thua Thien Hue shares land borders with Quang Tri province, Quang Nam province, Da Nang city, and Lao People's Democratic Republic and borders the East Sea. Thua Thien Hue has a tropical monsoon climate, featuring all four distinct seasons. “Thua Thien Hue has a rich terrain, converging mountains, rivers, and sea lagoons. The terrain is complicated, and the weather conditions are not favorable, so there have been different influences on the formation and development of culture in general and the visual arts in particular. However, natural conditions and circumstances with such regional characteristics have created different impacts and imprints on the process of self-purification and expression of many art forms in this land, including models, visual structures of the art of painting, sculpture, and architectural decoration, etc.” (Phan. T. B, 2020, p.67)

### 2.2.2 Historical factors

Phu Xuan became the place to be proclaimed the king and developed into the capital of unified Vietnam (Hue City now). Phu Xuan was where Lord Nguyen Phuoc Khoat<sup>18</sup> proclaimed himself king in the year of Giap Ty (1744), established a regime, and set a court of suspicion, officially creating a separate realm of Cochinchina independent of Lord Trinh in Tonkin. There is the period of completing the southern advance of the nation. Phu Xuan was where King Gia Long made sacrifices to heaven and earth and ascended the throne in 1802, changing Thang Long as the North citadel and choosing Phu Xuan as the capital. Leaving the strongest impression in the history of Vietnamese architecture here is Gia Long king (1802 - 1820) started the construction of the Hue citadel on the land of Phu Xuan on a large scale. Combining feng shui elements in nature with artificial architectural art creates great cultural values. The planning and construction of the Imperial City of Hue took place over 30 years, spanning the two dynasties of Gia Long King and Minh Mang King (1820-1841). Hue Citadel is a rich and complete architectural complex, including the citadel, royal palace, palace, temple, pagoda, mausoleum, royal garden, etc. (Tran. V. D, 2020, p.41)

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<sup>18</sup> Nguyen Phuc Khoat (1714-1765) also called and Vo Vuong was the 8th Nguyen Lord of the Cochinchina government, reigning from 1738-1765.

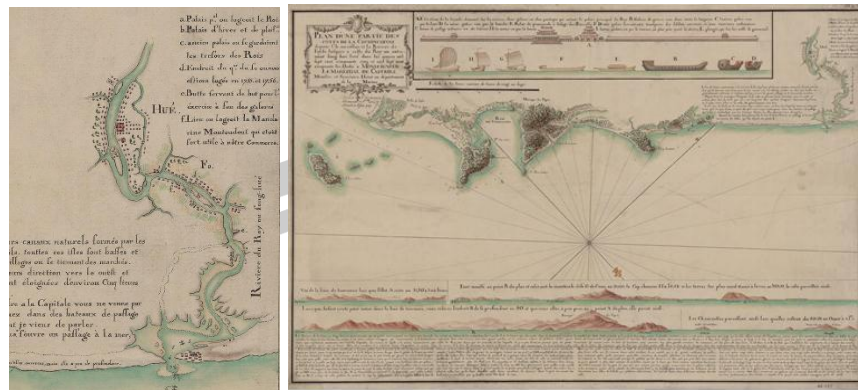


Figure 1 Phu Xuan citadel under the Nguyen lord. Source: Le Floch de la Carrière, 1755-1756

The change from "Phu Xuan" to "Hue" to "Thua Thien Hue" was a historical milestone. Hue Ancient Capital has become a country's political, economic, cultural, and artistic center since those historical periods. "The land of Hue has become the convergence of talents and resources of the whole country. The central government of the Nguyen Dynasty, when established, not only showed the political maturity of a dynasty, but by doing that, the Nguyen dynasty also wanted to affirm the position of an independent country. A prosperous country was no longer inferior to the general development level of the region and the world. During this period, Hue held the position of the locomotive of national art, noble court art, and lively and rich folk art." (Tran. V. D, 2020, p.28)

In the process of zoning and building architectural and urban complexes, Gia Long King inherited the traditional history of the nation and the achievements of the Nguyen family in Thuan Hoa land. He applied Eastern ideology, especially physics and feng shui in architecture, and used scientific knowledge about geography, ecology, and humanity in the specific area of ancient Hue.

Thua Thien Hue is a land of historical significance. In 1858, the French-Spanish coalition opened fire to attack Da Nang, setting up the first step for the French colonial governance in Vietnam, and the US later stepped in. In August 1945, the people of Thua Thien Hue rose to overthrow the Nguyen Dynasty, and King Bao Dai<sup>19</sup> abdicated, marking the end of the last feudal dynasty in Vietnamese history and opening a new era for the country. After 21 years of resistance against the US, Thua Thien Hue was liberated entirely on March 26, 1975. Thua Thien Hue made an

<sup>19</sup> Bảo Đại (1913-1997), born Nguyen Phuc Vinh Thuy, was the 13th and last emperor of the Nguyen Dynasty. He ascended the throne in 1925 while Dai Nam was still under French colonial rule.

essential contribution to the South's liberation, the country's reunification, and building along the path of socialism.

During the Nguyen Dynasty, Thua Thien was called the government. During the French colonial period, it was changed to Thua Thien province. In 1976, Thua Thien province merged with Quang Binh province and Quang Tri province into Binh Tri Thien province. According to the Decision dated June 30, 1989, at the fifth session of the 8th National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, these three provinces were separated again. Only Thua Thien province, after separation, was named Thua Thien Hue.<sup>20</sup>

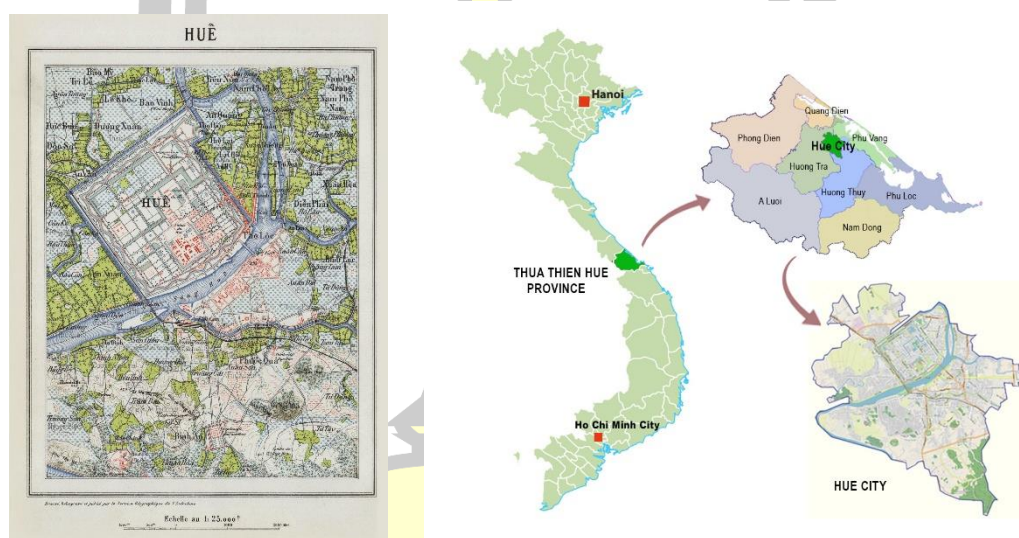


Figure 2 Map of Hue Citadel and its vicinity in 1910 Source: Thua Thien Hue Department of Culture and Sports Map of Vietnam, Thua Thien Hue province and Hue city today. Source: The author updated information and graphics based on the map of the Portal of Thua Thien Hue Province

The Complex of Hue Monuments suffered from the aftermaths of the wars, as well as modern development and expanding human settlements. Nevertheless, the complex of monuments within its landscape setting remained sufficiently well-preserved to demonstrate that the site's integrity was maintained. The Complex of Hue Monuments is owned by the Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. Guided by the 1972 Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural

<sup>20</sup> According to Vietnam Charming Magazine. "Phu Xuan – The land of claiming kings". (24/10/2013). <http://tapchisonghuong.com.vn/>



Heritage, the National Heritage Law (2001, revised in 2009), and some other provincial regulations and decisions, the Hue Monuments Conservation Centre, placed directly under the Thua Thien Hue Provincial People's Committee, is the institution responsible for the management of the complex and the protection of its outstanding universal value. Staffed by more than 700 people from many different professional backgrounds, this institution deals with all issues, including zoning, research, tangible and intangible heritage preservation, traditional material reproduction, visitor management, as well as the planning and protection of the landscape setting and associated features in the buffer zone and immediately surrounding area.<sup>21</sup> (Bruno Doucin)

After the Doi Moi, the process of "building and developing Thua Thien Hue into a centrally run city based on preserving and promoting the value of the ancient capital heritage and Hue cultural identity, with cultural characteristics, heritage, ecology, landscape, environmental friendliness" <sup>22</sup>. That shows that the task of developing tourism in association with heritage conservation and promoting the values of Hue cultural heritage has always been focused on.

Thua Thien Hue is the first locality in Vietnam to have the Complex of Hue Monuments recognized by UNESCO as a World Cultural Heritage in 1993. Hue is also the leading locality in the country in terms of conservation and promotion of cultural heritage values, using the potential and advantages of cultural heritage for development, especially the development of the tourism and service economy.<sup>23</sup> So far, Hue has five cultural heritages recognized by UNESCO. These heritages belong to the Nguyen Dynasty: Complex of Hue Monuments (1993), Vietnamese Court Music - Nha Nhac (2003), Moc Nguyen Dynasty Edition (2009), Nguyen Dynasty Edition (2014), Poetry on Hue Royal Architecture (2016).

Hue city was repeatedly divided into eighteen wards and five communes (according to decision 345/HDBT in September 1990). In 1992, Hue was promoted to

<sup>21</sup> Complex of Hue Monuments. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/678/>

<sup>22</sup> According to Resolution 54-NQ/TW dated December 10, 1999 of the Politburo on "Construction and development of Thua Thien Hue province to 2030, vision to 2045"

<sup>23</sup> Tran Van Dung. (June 3, 2020). "The legacy of princes and queens of poets". Song Huong Magazine. number 374, 04. <http://tapchisonghuong.com.vn/>

a class-2 city. In September 2005, Hue was promoted to a class-1 city under Thua Thien Hue province. Up to now, Hue city has expanded into 29 wards and seven communes, a historical milestone that creates opportunities for Hue city to have a good step transformation.

After the capital, Hanoi, and Ho Chi Minh City, Hue is an important political, cultural, tourist, educational and training, scientific and technical center of Vietnam. Hue has a rich culture and history. In the process of formation and development, Hue city has established its own identity, which is "Hue identity," along with material and spiritual cultural values. Hue has created far-reaching attraction, attraction, and persuasion domestically and internationally.<sup>24</sup> In addition, Hue city is also an ASEAN cultural city, an environmentally sustainable ASEAN city, a festival city, and one of the national urban centers.

Every two years, Hue organizes festivals to preserve and promote cultural values and develop tourism. "Festival has brought Hue tourism industry many opportunities to develop. From promoting the image, developing the existing potential of the locality, and increasing profits in accommodation and hotel services. Festival has created jobs, promoting economic development. The positive impacts of Hue Festivals help form nightlife products, handicrafts, new tours, and routes such as garden tourism, old town, green Hue, country markets, ancient villages, etc. Through Hue Festival, accommodation facilities, a system of restaurants, and garden houses have invested and improved service quality. The connection between tourism and culture is increasingly close, becoming a unique feature of Hue tourism."<sup>25</sup>

### 2.2.3 People and Society

During the Nguyen Dynasty, the Hue people had influenced by feudal ideology and Confucianism. Confucianism is considered a political theory to organize society, and whether that society is effective or not depends on the role of the gentleman (*quan tu*<sup>26</sup>). A gentleman must be a noble person with good qualities to be given the throne by God. Not only in Vietnam, but Confucianism also influenced most Eastern feudal countries in the process of interference and assimilation. "The purpose of the Nguyen Dynasty was to consolidate the feudal system, so it took the Qing model as the standard and took Confucianism as the root to strengthen the

<sup>24</sup> Hue City. (June 3, 2020). "History of formation and development of Hue city". Hue city portal. <https://huecity.gov.vn/>

<sup>25</sup> Quang Sang. (24/2/2020). "Festival with the role of tourism development". Thua Thien Hue Newspaper. <https://baothuathienhue.vn/>

<sup>26</sup> Quan tu: *quan* is the king, *quan tu* is the upper class in society.



position of the ruling class. However, Buddhism and Christianity continued to develop.”<sup>27</sup> Over the hundreds of years, Hue was an important center of politics, administration, and culture, where gathered many classes of aristocrats, mandarins, upper class, intellectuals, artists, etc. Hue's gathered power and spread during the 19th to mid-20th centuries gave people living in this place a chance to live here. Conditions for absorbing sophisticated, elegant, and stylish features in personality and behavior.

Hue played the role of the capital of a feudal dynasty with a political institution based on Confucianism and was once the capital of Buddhism. Besides the splendid royal architecture, Hue also preserves hundreds of ancient and solemn pagodas, peaceful among the wild mountains.

In 1981, when he visited the ancient capital of Hue, then UNESCO Director-General Amadou Mahtar M'Bow commented: "But Hue is not only an architectural model but also a spiritual peak. God and a vibrant cultural center - where Buddhism and Confucianism have penetrated deeply into local traditions, fostering a unique religious, philosophical, and moral thought." (Tran. V. D, 2020)

Hue's cultural and artistic life also holds a prominent position in the general cultural treasure of the country. Architecture, music, food, and voices of Hue people have become unique cultural features that have not mixed with anyone. The diversity in folklore, traditional crafts, customs, and rituals have become a valuable asset and a potential for the development of Hue Ancient Capital. In folk beliefs, Hue's community regularly organizes festivals associated with folk customs and immolates in the villages yearly. The lifestyle of the people of Hue is one of the reasons Hue still retains a lot of valuable ancient architectural relics. Hue's cultural and artistic life also holds a prominent position in the treasure of the country's culture.

The close relationship between the state, the family, and the society is essentially the same, so the Confucianists are very interested in family moral education. Family culture in Hue takes the values standard of etiquette, studiousness, self-respect, and self-reliance as the root of forming and developing a real family. In ancient Hue, three or four families lived together on a plot of land as a family tradition (nếp nhà). Each household had its rules, but the strict elders continually educated children in the family to live in a hierarchical, responsible, and non-arbitrary way. Therefore, the children in the family in Hue are imbued with morality from how they live, speak, stand and be on time for meals. In ancestor

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<sup>27</sup> Le Thi Thanh Thuy. (November 30, 2011). "Impressive Confucianism in Hue Royal Architecture".

worship, they understand the importance of worshipping on anniversaries or the altar arrangement. The space of the house, especially the central area of the altar, is always decorated with a diaphragm and couplets written in Confucian characters. Most of the wooden screens and ordinations in the olden days often carved poetic sentences with many concepts of blessing, teaching, wishing, etc. The primary purpose is also to teach children about etiquette. Home, education, and studying to pass are the top criteria for educating children.

Boys and girls must grow up to be aware that getting married means taking the whole family on either side of the wife or husband. In the old Hue families, the man would go out and work, and the woman would be a housekeeper. Therefore, the mother's role in educating her child was different. A woman exemplified the "four virtues" (housekeeping skills - beauty – appropriate speech – moral conduct). They were hardworking and always took care of household chores to support the family as their husband went out to work. Women also taught their children lessons of morality, ethics, and housework.

Today, the extended family is increasingly divided and giving way to the trend of nuclear families. In modern society, the role of the family is waning, transferring the educational function to the school and society. Although the standards and values of family in Hue are always preserved and developed, the downside of the market mechanism and the continuous development of the economy and society can somehow make those standards and values fade away and gradually disappear. Today, Hue culture can coexist with both values of traditional and modern. Hue culture preserves, maintains, and inherits tradition and transforms to develop a culture. That is the continuity and change of culture in general and family culture in Hue in particular.<sup>28</sup>

#### 2.2.4 Feng shui and ancient philosophical

According to the concept, how to use the screen to match feng shui is a complex problem to answer. Many books were about feng shui, but only a few mentioned this issue. The knowledge of feng shui was often transmitted orally or inherited from a geographer. According to Feng Shui researchers, the screens used in families or graves originated from the theory of *Trieu* and *An*. *Trieu* means to return or to look forward, stands for *Trieu Son*, indicating the mountain to return, to pay homage to the house or grave, like the symmetry between the host and the guest.

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<sup>28</sup> According to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. "The Good Tradition of Hue Family". <http://giadinh.bvhttdl.gov.vn/>

Feng shui is very fond of the *Trieu Son*, but it is often used for large-scale projects such as the Imperial City and the mausoleums of kings.

The subject here was humans. The early philosophers closely linked architecture with nature. Thus, the relationship between people, architecture, and nature was established. When building a house, it must follow feng shui, and the reason for placing a screen (both outside and inside) is to prevent fire from penetrating the house, causing harm to the owner.

Feng shui was based on the theory of the Five Elements (*Ngũ Hành*) (Metal – Wood – Water – Fire – Earth). It said that: the front of the building belongs to Fire (the South); the right side belongs to Metal (West), representing the owner; the left side belongs to Wood (East), representing wealth (wife, money); the rear belongs to Water (the North), representing the descendants; and the central position belongs to Earth. These rules were also easy to understand because in the old days, houses were built with soil (Earth). The house gave birth to the owner (Metal), and the owner then gave birth to their children (Water) and commanded the wife and workers (Earth). The philosophy mentioned above was only theoretical. The direction of the house and the screen's position needed attention because of many other conditions such as the owner's age, land location, and nearby architecture. Whether the Five Elements were in the mutual generation or overcoming depended on the time and the direction we place the work. If the front of the building faces the South, it is the most favorable direction for Vietnamese people when building a house: "Get a gentle wife, make a house facing the South". However, this will make Fire stronger and become harmful to the owner. Hence, a screen must be put up to prevent and reduce Fire. Buildings facing the North hardly use screens because the North belongs to Water, but Water conflicts with Fire. Because of these principles, when building a house (or a tomb), one must ask for consultation from a geographer. (Phan Thanh Hai, 2005)

#### 2.2.5 Hue city under the Nguyen Dynasty

In Vietnam, traditional architecture developed mainly in the feudal period before the 19th century. The economy was completely reliant on agriculture with low productivity and the life of society, in general, was poor and backward. Therefore, architecture had few development conditions. Only palaces, feudal class mansions, and some religious buildings, due to massive budgets, could be built on a large scale and last forever. However, the harsh weather, constant wars against the invaders, and the civil war destroyed many architectural buildings. (The wars lasted for 30 years, from 1945 to 1975).

In the architectural planning of Hue, the structure of traditional urban areas usually has three citadels, including the outer ring - the citadel, the middle ring - the imperial citadel, and the inner circle - the forbidden city. The layout is consistent with the Confucian concept of the Eastern feudal monarchy. The outermost ring of the city is for the urban class and artisans. The middle part is for the imperial and imperial mandarins. Last, the innermost is for the king and the royal family. In this defensive structure, the general principle of the arrangement of defense lines is the *Trench - Citadel - Fortress*. The residential areas are divided into many cells, and the roads are in the shape of a checkerboard or follow the main suburban traffic axes.

Hue Citadel is located in the charming mountainous land of Huong Binh, representing an architectural style, an artistic period, and above all, a cultural identity. The architectural style of the Citadel and the villas in the complex of citadels - villas in Hue express a combination of ideology and technology, the East and the West, and application and creativity. Despite using the Chinese model of logic, physics, and feng shui, the architects of the Nguyen Dynasty managed to take advantage of the terrain to build a capital city between two rivers like many other cities in Vietnam. The Imperial Citadel there was the center of the reign. It was constructed above sea level, with stable and high terrain. Hue Citadel is known as the famous defensive capital noted by UNESCO as "a typical example of urbanization and architecture of a defensive capital, demonstrating the power of the ancient feudal kingdom of Vietnam in its glory days in the 19th century".<sup>29</sup> Besides the royal palaces of the Nguyen Dynasty, inside are architectural works serving the needs of work, accommodation, beliefs, entertainment, and other activities of the Nguyen kings and mandarins. Some large areas have screens placed at the entrance as Dien Tho Palace (the residence of the Empress Dowager), Phung Tien Palace (the place of worship of the Nguyen Dynasty kings), Truong Sanh Palace (the garden later became the living quarters of the Empress Dowager, the Queen Mother), and Thai Binh Lau (where the king read books), etc.

Hue architecture's unique features are reflected not only in the planning of palaces and mausoleums but also in religious beliefs and garden buildings.<sup>30</sup> The screens are always associated with Hue architecture, forming the cultural garden houses as typical works of art in Hue. These spaces are formed from the harmony between the beauty of nature, the architecture, and the delicate soul and lifestyle of the Hue people. Hue's architecture has its style and characteristics in architectural

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<sup>29</sup> According to Unesco Press. (November 12, 1993), quoted in the Nguyen Dynasty Hue, a view of Tran. D.A.S (2018).

<sup>30</sup> Hue Monuments Conservation Center. (2016, p.36).

structure and interior and exterior decoration, with a harmonious combination of Eastern and Western techniques and art.

### 2.3 History of formation and development of the screen of the Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1945)

Previous articles by researchers did not determine when the screen appeared. All they mentioned was that in the East, during house construction, the concepts of feng shui gradually formed in life. Architecture and screens were also born based on the principles of that feng shui. The screen was used by Vietnamese people for feng shui and spirituality. The first *ngoai an* screen was applied from natural entities to project the front face of a large architectural building. The first *noi an* screen was present in Northern houses with the primitive form of “*Giai*” – bamboo sheets in the middle of the porch. *Technique du Peuple Annamite* by Henri Oger studied material civilization in An Nam more than 100 years ago. The drawings in the book were simple but covered various aspects such as production, manufacturing techniques, cultural activities, beliefs, folk games, contemporary celebrities, and the lives of people in the past. The book illustrated the screen in front of the porch on Tet holiday with Tet poles and firecrackers (Figure 4). In addition, the screens also appeared in worship activities and folk games. (Figure 5). Screens were made of many materials such as bamboo, wood, lime, and mortar with simple motifs.



Figure 3 The screen in front of the porch on Tet \_ Source: Henri Oger The screen in the folk game \_ Source: Henri Oger



Using "Giai" sheets in a house was a conventional and reasonable way of dividing space to block rain, sun, toxic wind, and evil spirits from bad angles crashing into the house. It blocked the direct view into the house, creating a "fake" partition. Especially for the family, if the direction of the house is not good, it is possible to set up a screen as an obstacle to bad luck in front of the entrance. "Giai" sheets have become a distinctive element that functions as a screen in Northern architecture. (Ta. T. M. T, 2020, p.19). Therefore, the screen in Vietnamese life is an indispensable element in traditional architecture. The emergence, existence, and development of the screen are the reasons for the screen to be present in the daily life of people and persist to this day.



Figure 4 Wild panels in front of the porch in the North, Vietnam Source: Friends of the Ancient Capital

"The screenplay" was mentioned in official documents that appeared in the Tran Dynasty (XIII-XIV centuries), perhaps also Vietnamese screens marking the use of screens by the Vietnamese. On the Tran Dynasty's screens, decorating the screen minimizes the selected nature, from which the painted screen is considered the standard of nature.<sup>31</sup> In the early days, the screen was simple and made from easy-

<sup>31</sup> Dang Mai Anh (2014). "Face in traditional and modern interiors".

<https://quangmt69.violet.vn/>

to-find materials such as bamboo, cork, wood, stone slabs, and even bushes. Later sustainable materials such as bricks and stones were increasingly used. The form of the screen was more and more sophisticated and diverse. As Vietnamese people were influenced by Chinese culture and feng shui theory from a very early age, the screen had become an indispensable part of Vietnamese households.

In 1687, Nghia King Nguyen Phuc Thai (1687-1691) became the fifth king of the Nguyen family to rule the land of Dang Trong. Immediately after ascending the throne, the Lord moved the capital from Kim Long to Phu Xuan, 3 kilometers east of the old government. The King took the old palace as Thai Tong's temple, moved his new palace to Phu Xuan, took the mountain in front as an *An*, built a wall, and built a palace. The researchers analyzed that the reason for that shift was because of a mountain called Mac Son, later renamed Ngu Binh Son. It was a mountain with a low shape, moderate width, narrow and square, located on the other side of the Perfume River. That formed a natural screen to shield against bad luck and absorb good wind (*Tang Cat Phong*) for the capital. Ngu Binh Mountain, along with the Perfume River, Hue Islet, and Con Da Vien, assemble into elements such as *Tien An*, *Minh Duong*, *Thanh Long*, and *Bach Ho* according to the feng shui concept as a reference system to shape the layout and appearance of the Hue temple. From here, a new era of Hue architecture was opened: the era of *screens*.

Hue people use the word screen or criminal record to refer to the rituals in front of the house or grave, to prevent negative impacts on the house, and at the same time make the house more cozy and safe. *Tien An* records that shield the capital, palaces, and tombs of kings are majestic mountains. The previous convictions for protecting families or people's graves are usually a brick wall, a stone slab, tea tree, or cotton in front of the house, trimmed into a green screen, or the sentence at the gateway. (Tran. D. A. S. 2016, p.77) Typically, when the grave is located in the mountains, it is more convenient to choose the *Trieu* and the *An*, but most houses are located in the plains, so it is difficult to find the *Trieu* and the *An*. Except for the king's massive palaces, the *Trieu* and the *An* must be found, but most commoners' houses only had the *An*. If they could not find the *An*, they often created substitutes such as building fences or partition walls.



The period from 1802 to 1917 is considered the period of applying traditional architecture with Chinese models and Western military construction techniques to form the basic appearance of Hue imperial architecture. Although based on the Chinese model of numerology, translation, and feng shui, the architects of the Nguyen Dynasty knew how to build an urban-style capital between two rivers (North and South banks) depending on the terrain. South of the Perfume River) like many other ancient cities in Vietnam, the architecture follows the Hue style.

In addition to the capital's architecture, the Nguyen kings also built a system of *Phu De*. *Phu De* was the living quarters for the royal princes and the mandarins. At its peak, there were up to 85 *Phủ Đệ* located in the imperial palace areas of Kim Long, Vy Da, An Cuu, and Ngu Vien. They turned Hue into a *garden city* with humanistic and ecological values of unique architecture. (Tran. D. A. S, 2018, p.109). *Phu* was the residence of the royalties and the princes after married. Depending on the owner's title, established by the royal court as a *cong* or a *vuong*, the palace could be called a *cong* palace or a *vuong* palace. *De* was the short term for *De Trach*, which was the place where the princess lived after she got married. Later, people often used the word "*De*" to refer to the residence of the married kings and queens. After their death, the main halls of the palace became a place for worshipping their spirits.

At the beginning of the Nguyen Dynasty, the palaces were arranged inside the Hue Citadel with the principle of "the men sit on the left side, and the women sit on the right side". It meant that the left side of the Citadel was for meritorious officials and the princes, while the right side was for the princesses. Although living in palaces with closed doors, the royals quietly visited their subjects, so the distance between the commoners and the nobles in the palaces was somewhat shortened. The royal culture, therefore, spread throughout the capital city.<sup>32</sup> Most of the palaces were built with a shielding screen. In addition to its feng shui function, the screens also carry a special decorative meaning. The shapes and decorations of the screens were

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<sup>32</sup> Tran, D. A. S. (2014) "The royal palace, the gardener of the nervous country".

very diverse. The most popular at the time was the form of *Cuon thu* (a horizontal lacquered board engraved with letters). "This shows that the screen appeared due to the needs and creativity of the Confucianists, with the desire to create a mark for the family, to promote Confucianism."<sup>33</sup> There were also many variations in other forms such as miniatures and *Non Bo*. The four spirits (Dragon, Unicorn, Turtle, Phoenix) were the most popular decorative themes, especially the dragon-horse.

Figure 7 is Phu Tuy Ly Vuong<sup>34</sup>. The house was built in 1847 at 140 Nguyen Sinh Cung Street, Hue city. The campus of Tuy Ly Vuong palace is about 2,000 square meters. Phu Tuy Ly Vuong has a three-way gate, so the external screen area is quite large, and the screen width is enough to cover the outside view of the main house. The screen size is 2.2 meters high, 4.3 meters long, and 0.5 meter thick. It is a type of screen with a roof and built of bricks. The decorative forms on the body of the screen in the middle position are the dragon-horse. On two sides of the screen is the word *Tho*. The boxes are decorated with the themes of Bat Buu, Bat Qua, and plants by the technique of crockery inlay on motifs of traditional houses. In its current state, the house still preserves the royal concubine painting, couplets, and old wooden furniture, but the *noi an* screen is not used.



<sup>33</sup> Dang. M. A. (2014) "Aspects of the external case screen of the Nguyen Dynasty in Hue". Journal of Intangible Cultural Heritage, issues 3, 48

<sup>34</sup> Tuy Ly Vuong (1820-1897) named Nguyen Phuc Mien Trinh, the 11th son of King Minh Mang, was famous for being an erudite man, good at composing poetry, and well-versed in medicine.

Figure 5 Screen at Tuy Ly Vuong palace – Source: Tran.P. A.T provided (January 2021)

For small-scale projects such as houses, the *ngoai an* screen is simple. The screen is often built of bricks, fences, or natural screens with green trees. Garden houses have brick gates, and two sides of the entrance are usually hedges of carefully trimmed hibiscus or tea trees. The entrance to the house never directly faces the main house, the purpose of the screen is placed to cover the path, so when entering the house, it must turn in another direction to enter the courtyard. Behind the screens are *Be Can* (shallow pools) and *Non Bo* (rockery). The *Non Bo* are the landscapes arranged by the owner according to their preferences, showing mountains, caves, rivers and streams, trees, bridges across rivers, streams, or scenes of people's activities. The *Be Can* is often built on a wild mountain. The owner makes it with plants and flowers that can live all year round or symbolize four seasons, such as apricot, orchid, chrysanthemum, pine, and bamboo.

The *noi an* screen is used for the daily activities of the people here. The screen is associated with the traditional architecture of the Ruong house. That is the home of the upper classes in Hue, from the middle to the upper. Whether the Ruong house is large or small, sophisticated or simple, depends on the financial ability of the homeowner.

Lac Tinh Vien was built in 1889 at 65 Phan Dinh Phung street, Hue city. The house's first owner was Nguyen Phuc Hong Khang (1861-1931), who built this palace to take care of his elderly mother. Currently, this relic is private property and well-preserved. Many researchers believe that is the place to preserve and most effectively transmit Hue's subtleties, elegance, filial piety, and benevolence. The space composition clearly shows the change in architectural styles over the years.

Due to living needs, the owner built three architectural buildings: Hy Tran Trai, Di Tam Thich The Duong, and Van Trai. These three buildings formed an architectural complex in the style of "three unions" for Lac Tinh Vien, a typical architectural layout of Hue. Lac Tinh Vien applied feng shui in planning: symmetrical layout, sophisticated architectural art, carving, naming, word choice, etc. The soul of that perfection was Hy Tran Trai, a three-room, two-winged building that served as a

place to worship ancestors and retain the humanism and religious values of a famous royal family in Hue. Next to Hy Tran Trai was a Van Trai with a veranda and decorative patterns influenced by Gothique architecture, known as the "modern building". It was where tradition meets innovation, and the East meets the West in architectural design and decoration. Furthermore, it represented the owner's wishes for his descendants, as carved on a horizontal lacquered board hanging here.<sup>35</sup> Past photos showed the gilded wooden screen placed in front of the central porch of the main house. It had a carved flat base. Currently, it is hung on the wall in the living room of Van Trai because the base of the screen is no longer available. In the past, the screen was also used as a backdrop for taking pictures and keeping family memories.

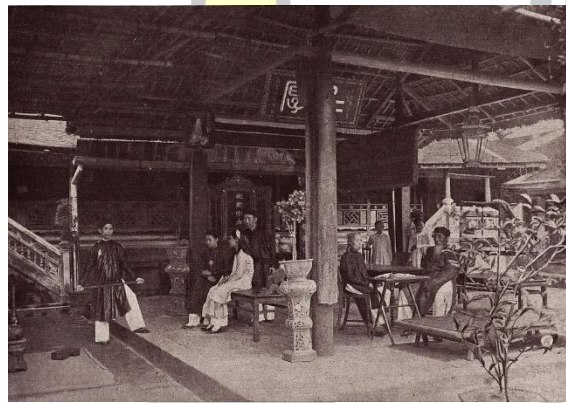


Figure 6 Prince Nguyen Phuc Hong Khang and his family at Lac Tinh Vien in the 1920s

Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos>



<sup>35</sup> Tran Duc Anh Son. Hue's soul in Lac Tinh Vien. <https://khamphahue.com.vn/>



Figure 7 The Hoanh phi and screen with gilded wood in Van Trai's living room (left) and *ngoai an* screen at Lac Tinh Vien (right) –

Source: Tran. D. A. S

From the main entrance, the project in front of the complex "Tam Hop Vien"<sup>36</sup> is a screen. According to feng shui, the screen is arranged to protect and prevent Lac Tinh Vien from calamities and uncertainties coming from the outside and create a necessary transitional space between the garden and the interior space. Without heavy royal elements, the screen at Lac Tinh Vien is designed like a scroll with geometric shapes, which manifests a three-mountain structure with undulations, a form of *Trieu Son* in feng shui. The simple form of the screen with the hexagonal honeycomb structure creates ventilation that looks very different from the countless types of screens in Hue. The interior decoration of Lac Tinh Vien's house shows that the cultural lifestyle, studiousness, and behavior of the aristocrats of the Nguyen Dynasty in the past are still full of poetic.

The period from 1917 to 1945 was the time for developing and adding modern European-style civil architecture. King Khai Dinh (1885-1925) became a key figure in bringing Western architecture and art into the complex of Hue monuments. The new styles and techniques with non-traditional materials such as reinforced concrete, colored glass, cement bricks (glazed bricks, porcelain), etc., were introduced into the construction of architectural works. Although using modern materials and techniques, the Nguyen Dynasty still adhered to decorative styles and motifs influenced by Confucian ideology. The architectural works of this period opened the way for modern architecture, creating a new look for the complex relics of the ancient capital. It was a way of reflecting the social reality history, tectonic history, and urbanization of Hue (Tran. D. A. S, 2018, p.112). The *ngoai an* screens made from porcelain to create decorative motifs were prevalent in many projects. The Vien Co Mat (Three Courts) was built in 1899 and completed in 1903. The screen here was put behind the three-door gate of the building and decorated with elaborate and meticulous motifs. With various themes such as the word longevity, four spirits, two dragons of the moon, a dragon-horse, a book of letters, a pen, a sword, etc., these details were inlaid with crockery on the body of the screen. (Figure 10)

<sup>36</sup> "Tam Hop Vien" are three old and new blocks connected, creating a space that is "closed" to the outside, "open" to the inside and is a weekend gathering place for three generations.



Figure 8 The screen at the Vien Co Mat. Source: Tran. P. A. T (January 2021)

is the palace worshipping Princess Ngoc Son<sup>37</sup>. The house was built in 1921 during the reign of King Khai Dinh. The shrine is 2,370 square meters wide and is one of Hue's typical traditional garden houses. The architecture here is different from that of Tuy Ly Vuong palace because this period was influenced by Western architecture, materials, and construction techniques. However, inside the house, the layout is still traditional. With structural wood frames, tiled roofs (*ngói liệt*<sup>38</sup>), and the main house with three *Gian* and two *Chai* of the traditional Ruong house. Unlike Hue's traditional houses, there is no screen in front of the palace worshipping Princess Ngoc Son. Instead, a rockery plays the role of *Tien an* along with *Minh duong* - the lotus lake and the dry pool. The left dragon and right tiger are arranged on both sides of the gate, ensuring the feng shui elements for the house. Inside the house, the owner places a *noi an* screen in the form of a plate separating the worship space from the reception space. Decorative elements are delicately carved on the columns of trusses, diaphragms, and Chinese-engraved objects. According to the owner, the new *noi an* screen was set up in 2017. The screen is made of *phap lam* (vitreous enamel)

<sup>37</sup> Princess Ngoc Son, whose name is Nuen Phuoc Hy Hy is the daughter of King Dong Khanh (1885-1889), she married Lieutenant General Nguyen Huu Tien (son of Nguyen Dynasty high priest). Currently, the worshiper of the temple is Mrs. Nguyen Thi Suong, grandson of Mr. Nguyen Huu Tien. Address 31 Nguyen Chi Thanh, Hue City.

<sup>38</sup> *Ngói liệt*: type of rectangular tile, size 15cm x 20cm, one side for carpentry, the other side is glazed, used to line the inside with the glazed side facing out.



on an inlaid nacre frame, creating a harmonious highlight for the house. In the middle of the screen is the word *Tho*. The four corners are the image of a bat with the theme of *Ngũ Phúc Phú Quý Thọ Khang Ninh*. The screen separating the worship and reception spaces provides privacy and dignity.

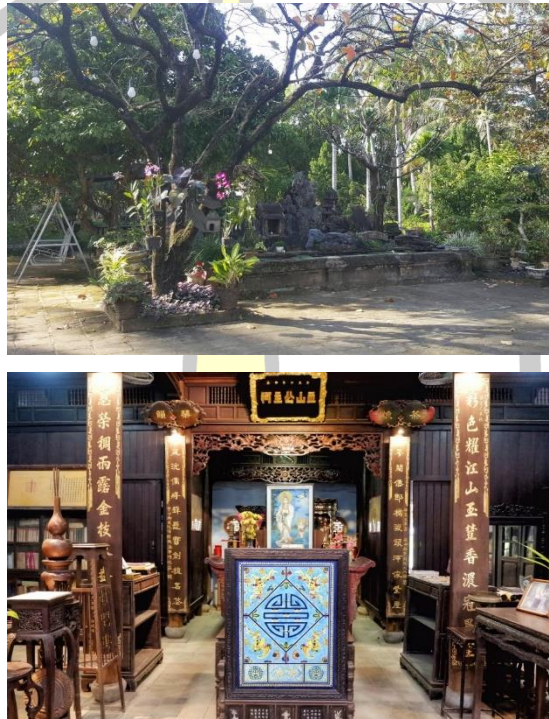


Figure 9 Screen at the palace to worship Ngoc Son princess –

Source: Tran. P. A. T (January 2021)

At Dien Tho Palace, the main hall area, built in 1804 and renovated in 1916, is the palace of Empress Dowagers of the Nguyen Dynasty. The front of the main hall has a *ngoai-an* screen with a roof. The screen length is equal to that of a three-way gate, with a traditional shape, but the decoration, mostly plants, is simple, mainly emphasizing the roof frills to form boxes. Most of the palace's ancient interior screens are no longer available inside the interior. Now only one screen is kept in front of the nave of this Ruong house architecture. The screen has three panels the form of the letter is modified with glass material on a modern wooden frame, with the motif of 'two phoenixes adoring the moon' on the top, decorative bats on the two sides above the book, and decorative accents on the bottom of the base. The information and documents written about this screen do not seem to be available. It is common knowledge that the screen is in the reception space of Empress Dowager. The interior in the spacious house is still intact. The decorative objects in the

architecture and the interior furniture clearly show the function of representing the woman (the mother), which other traditional spaces do not.



Figure 10 The screen of *ngoai an* (Left) and *noi an* (Right) at Palace Dien Tho. Source: Tran. P. A. T, (January 2021)

In addition to being used in the interior and exterior of a house, the screen is also a product used to congratulate and celebrate important occasions and festivals during the Nguyen Dynasty.

The screen of "The 40th Birthday Celebration" was a gift from the people of Annam to celebrate King Khai Dinh's 40th birthday in 1924. (Figure 13) The screen is made of gold. The Chinese characters are engraved on the background of the continuous "Van" script. The upper part of the screen is carved with a blueprint of the *Luong Long Trieu Nhat* (two dragons worshipping the sun), the lower part is carved with *Long Ham Tho* (dragon holding the word longevity), and two pillars on both sides are carved with dragon shape, placed on the body of two silver unicorns (Tran. D. A. S, 2018). There is also the screen plate consisting of 4 gold plates linked together. This was a gift from the people of Annam to the crown prince Vinh Thuy in 1923. (Figure 15) The screen has a length of 57.5cm and a weight of 1.66kg. On the screen, the first plate is embossed with a map of Vietnam, the second is a scene of Thien Mu Pagoda, the third is a scene of Phu Van Lau and Ky Dai Hue, and the fourth is an illustration of dragons, clouds and water wave patterns. The back of the screen is engraved with Chinese characters. The content is to congratulate the crown prince on good health and success in his studies to become the successor and build a free

and unified Vietnam. On the occasion of King Bao Dai's 40th birthday in 1953, the workshop made the screen of "The 40th Birthday Celebration". The screen is made of silver, engraved in Chinese with nine gilded words, fifteen silver words, and one red jewel on the top accompanied by dragon motifs winding around. (Figure 16)



Figure 11 A combination of motifs of the *Lương Long Trieu Nhat* and *Long Ham Tho* of gold was presented as a gift on the occasion of the Fourth of July of King Khai Dinh's birthday in 1924.

Figure 12 The screen of *Phuc Loc Tho Toan* is made of silver in Hue royal court, early 20th century at Hue Museum of Antiquities. Source: Tran P. A. T (January 2021)



Figure 13 The screen with gold, gifts from the people of Annam to King Bao Dai in 1923. Source: Tran Duc Anh Son

Figure 14 The screen *Van Tho Tu Tuan Dai Khanh* is made of silver material.  
Source: Lam Dong Provincial Museum

According to a research paper by Phan Thuan An, the screen *Thien Tu Tu Than* had the dimension of 159x141cm in the form of a book. In 1941, Pham



Quynh<sup>39</sup> held the Senior Secretary of the Ministry of National Education in the Imperial City of Hue. That year, he turned 50 years old. On this occasion, a group of officials at the Ministry sent him a celebratory gift of a beautiful wooden screen with a valuable and unique Chinese poem engraved on both sides<sup>40</sup>. *Thien Tu Tu Than* is also the title of the poem consisting of four Chinese characters 天子詞臣, which means literary servant of the king, embossed and gilded on the front of the screen. On the back is a *Duong luat* poem, the Vietnamese variant of Chinese Tang poetry. The poem refers to the lives of eight talented characters who are good at literature and have a strong will, filial piety, principles, good reputation, and dignity. This poem shows that Pham Quynh was recognized as a country's genius. Confucian values are expressed quite clearly in the themes of the screen. The top and bottom parts are both carved to create ventilation. Traditional motifs and themes are both employed, including the two dragons adorning the round shape, the two lions, the bird, and the reindeer. This is a work of high artistic value in both form and content.



<sup>39</sup> Pham Quynh (1892-1945) was a cultural writer, journalist, writer and a mandarin of the Nguyen Dynasty. He was a pioneer in promoting the Quoc Ngu script and used Vietnamese instead of Confucian or French to trace theories and research.

<sup>40</sup> Phan Thuan An (26/10/2012). The painting of the Son of Heaven from god. Song Huong Magazine, No. 284.

Figure 15 Front and back of the screen of *Thien Tu Tu Than*. Source: Phan Thuan An (2012).

The end of the Nguyen Dynasty is considered a historical transition from traditional to modern society. Changing society will lead to other changes in thinking, way of life, lifestyle, behavior, etc. It can be said that after the reign of King Khai Dinh to King Bao Dai, there was an influence of Western style in architecture. The screen forms have a modern direction, applying new materials in the composition.

Today, *noi an* screens are usually manufactured using industrial machines, but traditional screens still exist. They are mainly handcrafted and placed in houses and other service spaces in a traditional style.

## 2.4 Concepts, philosophies about tradition and cultural identity

To approach the research object from a traditional perspective, the thesis uses the method of cultural identity. 'Cultural identity is the individual values of the basic qualities, characteristics, and tendencies of the potential strength and cultural creativity of a nation in its history of existence and development. It is traditional, unique, and distinguishable. Thanks to its cultural identity, one nation does not mix with another. The originality attracts the world's attention, the uniqueness that creates a strong attraction.' (Nguyen. V. C, 2016)

Hue, like every other region in Vietnam, has unique local cultural nuances. In the flow of national cultural history, the art of the Nguyen Dynasty has inherited, transitioned, and developed to reach heights with works containing many aesthetic, spiritual, and great humane values. Along with the formation of artistic values are constant discoveries in materials, decoration techniques, shaping, and building ramparts and palaces. On the level of geometric art, the artistic values created by the classes of residents here clearly reflect the Hue culture that has always moved smoothly with an aesthetic depth, distinct styles, and cultural characteristics of which the typical part is the visual arts of the Nguyen Dynasty - the last feudal dynasty in Vietnam. It is a culture that contains the common foundation of the

national cultural tradition and forms the unique values of the culture and art in Hue. Thereby, the cultural silhouette of the Vietnamese people is realized. The Vietnamese soul in every region is a subtle and profound blend of Champa culture and indigenous inhabitants in Hue. (Phan Thanh Binh Episode 129, Issue 6E, 2020)

'Identity continues to be the problem it was throughout modernity', said Douglas Kellner. 'Far from identity disappearing in contemporary society, it is rather reconstructed and redefined', he added. If the modern 'problem of identity' was how to construct an identity and keep it solid and stable, while the postmodern 'problem of identity' is primarily how to avoid fixation and keep the options open. (Stuart Hall & Paul du Gay, 1996, p.19)

In the discussion topic on Identifying and promoting Hue's cultural identity<sup>41</sup>, the researchers made arguments to clarify the inherent cultural features of Hue's ancient capital. According to Tran Dinh Hang<sup>42</sup>, in the nation's history, Hue emerged as a unique phenomenon. From an "Evil land" in the Southern region to a major town, then the regional capital, and finally the capital of the Nguyen Dynasty, Hue brilliantly inherited many ancient achievements of the country. All of them were stacked and blended to create its own "Hue quality" that was hard not to recognize. Hue is a heritage city that still preserves quite a lot of tangible, intangible, and spiritual-cultural values. Regarding the issue of identifying Hue's cultural identity, writer Ho Dang Thanh Ngoc<sup>43</sup> commented that Hue culture existed in the Hue region for over 700 years of formation and development of Thuan Hoa - Phu Xuan - Hue. Hue Cultural Heritage city is a place of intellectual convergence of the whole nation, including the world heritages such as Complex of Hue Monuments, Nha Nhac, Woodblocks, Chau Bans, Poetry, and Literature on palace architecture. Hue

<sup>41</sup> According to Thua Thien Hue Newspaper, (3/3/2021), <https://bvhttdl.gov.vn/nhan-dien-phat-huy-ban-sac-van-hoa-hue-20210303150809689.htm>

<sup>42</sup> Tran Dinh Hang: Director of the Vietnam National Institute of Culture and Arts in Hue..

<sup>43</sup> Ho Dang Thanh Ngoc: President of the Union of Literary and Art Associations



communal house, in addition, is the place for worshipping Mother Goddesses and the art of Bai Choi. It is also a cultural heritage of art, cuisine, ao dai, Hue folk songs, Hue garden architecture, folk festivals, and school traditions. In in-depth research on Hue culture, Nguyen Huu Thong<sup>44</sup> shared, "we should understand and be proud that not every locality in this country has that. Why does Hue possess so much literature, poems, and music? Artists from all over the world come to Hue because of not only the beautiful scenery but also the personality of the local people. From my perspective, Hue is always mysterious and humble with its hidden pride, and urges people to discover". Therefore, exploiting Hue's domestic tourism has become essential in creating a regional culture or, in other words, national culture.

## 2.5 The cultural identity of the screen in the heritage city of Hue

### 2.5.1 Screen in the social life of Ancient Hue people

The appearance of the screen shows the role of a certain function. It is also a very familiar item that has entered the subconscious in the life of Vietnamese people since ancient times. In addition to the function of countermeasures and support for architecture, the feng shui function. The screen is also in evidence, reflecting the host's social status, lifestyle, and cultural life of a specific region or community. Through the screen, people also express their wishes for a better life with health, luck, peace, and success. In addition, Confucianism is also an ideology of religious morality and is the theoretical system of politics in Eastern feudal countries. The Nguyen Dynasty took Confucianism as the foundation of orthodox ideology, with the view that to develop a strong and prosperous country, it was necessary to organize an orderly society. In the Hue people's houses, besides architecture, interior, and the application of Confucianism on the horizontal lacquered board, parallel sentences, and screens, it is a tradition to teach children about family etiquette, work ethics, and the importance of learning.

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<sup>44</sup> Nguyen Huu Thong: Vietnam National Institute of Culture and Arts in Hue.

The social class division was partly due to the influence of feudalism. Social relations of the Hue people are formed from purposeful and planned social interactions. Social relations are stable relationships between the parties involved. These relationships are formed through stable, repetitive social interactions. These interactions can also take on other characteristics, creating different types of social relationships. Feudal society has a complex social structure: the ruling class includes kings, lords, bureaucrats, patricians, landowners, clergy, priesthood, etc., and the working class is poor peasants, laborers, small merchants, and serfs.

Regarding social class, Hue was where aristocrats, mandarins, upper class, intellectuals, and artists gather. Hue's power of gathering and spreading during the 19th to mid-20th centuries allowed the people living there to absorb sophisticated, elegant, stylish personalities and behavior.<sup>45</sup> For each period of the reign of the Nguyen Dynasty kings, the ideas, regulations, and visual arts also constantly changed, making Hue move incessantly in the flow of national culture.

Tran Duc Anh Son commented, "royal palaces and emperors' tombs do not represent Hue's character. Those royal places with strict regulations and taboos made it unpleasant in the eyes of the people. The new *Phu De* is the place to transfer the royal lifestyle and culture to Hue folks, thereby contributing to the formation of Hue's character." The word *Mệ* in the Hue language was also used to call kings and queens in Nguyen Phuoc clan. These aristocrats addressed themselves as *Mệ* when talking and exchanging with outsiders to express their noble origins.

Initially assessing the artistic values, functions, and style of the Hue screen, Phan Thanh Hai said that in general, although it is just a horizontal wall, the design and decoration of the vase are rich in abundance. The screen has many variations, showing that it appeared due to the needs of the Confucians with the desire to create a cultural mark on the Confucian family (Dang. M. A, 2015, p.20). The screens used in Hue architectural works are mostly *ngoai an*. The *ngoai an* screens of the

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<sup>45</sup> Nguyen Huu Thong (2020). The screen in Hue architecture from the perspective of culture and art.

Nguyen Dynasty are precious relics with many rich designs and decorative forms, reflecting the status, authority, wealth, and manner of the owner in society. It also shows the talent of the craftsmen of this period.

The Nguyen Dynasty strongly influenced Confucianism, adding discrimination on the basis of social class, not favoring people who got rid of poverty through trade or handicrafts. Perhaps, every farmer in an arid and disadvantageous land like Hue dreamed of becoming a mandarin through education. All the glory was for the students who passed the imperial examination to become mandarin. It was a topic that influenced the themes expressed in architecture, in which the screen was the most condensed place, reflecting the people's wishes. That hope was expressed through the book motif, symbolized by the image of paper and pen, reflecting the boiling process of history in the desire to live a better life. People expressed their traditional family status through symbols of a book represented on the front. Every Hue person cherished that, not only in the past but also in the present. (Nguyen. H. T. 2020)

In life, from the secrecy in the daily life of Asians, the *noi an* screens have created delicate "loose" gaps in relationships between people. The creation of very private and discreet spaces in large, non-closed areas in the village community created a discreet cultural behavior but was still open, bringing a unique feature, a very Vietnamese nuance (Dang. M. A, 2015, p.103)

In addition to the traditional Hue garden houses, *Binh phong* was also used in many other architectural works, such as schools, communal houses, temples, one-story houses, and French houses. This proved that *Binh phong* has entered the consciousness and become an indispensable part of Hue people's lifestyle. Through surveys of ordinary houses, the owners mostly believed that placing the vase in front of the house was mainly related to spirituality and feng shui. Those screens would help the family avoid evil spirits and misfortune from entering the house. Thus,

although the screens are different in size, shape, and texture, they are used for similar purposes, showing the unique culture of the people of the Ancient Capital.<sup>46</sup>

### 2.5.2 Screen in the traditional architecture of the Nguyen Dynasty

For relics of the Nguyen Dynasty, the impact of the ecological-humanistic environment is very evident in the application of feng shui and the construction of architectural works of the ancient capital of Hue. The screen is an architectural component that creates the aesthetics of the interior or exterior of the house. Hue architectural art harmonizes and connects the building with the natural environment, as a creation of nature on the one hand and people's creativity on the other. That combination forms a unified whole. Binh Phong is widely used in Hue culture. It is considered a testament to the adaptability and behavior of people, especially delicate and effective with the nature, climate, and culture of Hue.

In terms of feng shui, the screen in Vietnamese people's minds does not exist in any specific shapes but is often flexible in expression and creates a good effect in terms of function. *Trieu* and *An* have an important impact on both the *duong trach* building and the grave. They are the means and measures to prevent misfortune or the Fire from directly passing through the lobby of a building (Nguyen Huu Thong, 2020).

Hue traditional house architecture includes the *Ruong* house, the *Roi* house or the deformation of the *Ruong* and *Roi* houses, the traditional garden house, and the old French-style houses. Space organization includes the main house and annex house. In these buildings, the *ngoai an* screen is placed in front of the main house. According to feng shui principles, Binh Phong plays as the symbol of the Red Peacock of the house. Behind the screen is *Be Can*, a miniature or rockery. *Be Can* has the role of a Water Mouth in the house (Tung. N. N, 2020)

<sup>46</sup> Architect Tran Thi Quynh Huong, Dr. Architect Nguyen Ngoc Tung. Architect Tam An. Architect Dinh Bao Hieu (2016). The architecture of the screen in the Hue traditional garden house. Architecture Magazine, issue 07 2015.

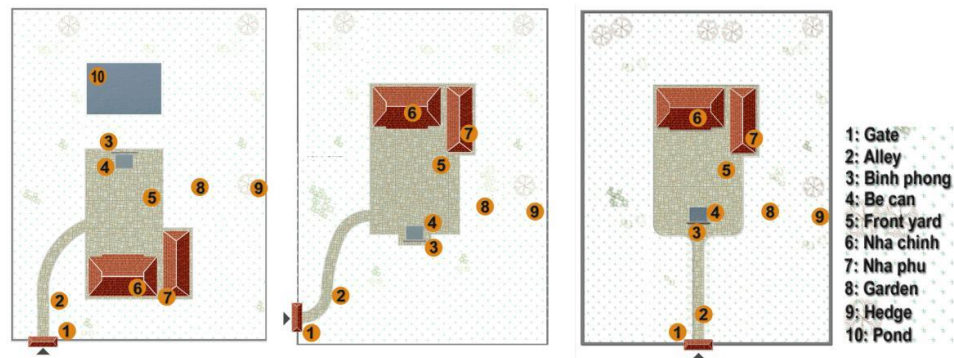


Figure 16 Extracted from the study: Three typical floor plans of Hue gardeners (after Hoang, 1999). Source: Nguyen. N. T (2020)

While Ngu Binh mountain and the Perfume river represent the screen and front door of Hue citadel, in the traditional garden house, the screen and *Be Can* reflect the layout and the miniature image of the citadel.

The distance and space from the *ngoai an* to the porch of the building is called the front yard or *Tieu Minh Duong*. The area of *Tieu Minh Duong* is often flexible depending on the location and scale of the work. This is the transitional space connecting the natural space with the architectural interior, and is also the place for the owner to decorate the lobby, connect ancillary buildings, and add or remove things to create good fortune. According to feng shui principles, through the *Be Can*, the rockery becomes a supporting screen (Nguyen. H. T). The houses are also classified based on the structure and number of compartments (one, two, three, or five from the façade). The number of rooms in the *Ruong* house is based on the social status of the original owner. The higher the position, the larger the number of rooms in the main house. The main house is separated from the outhouse. The outhouse is often placed on the left or right of the main house.

According to Nguyen Dynasty regulations, all buildings outside the Citadel must not exceed three rooms and two wings (*ba gian, hai chái*). Hue *Ruong* house is usually low, with sloping roofs. When building a house, homeowners often consider feng shui to find a convenient and beautiful location to match the owner's age. The favorable direction of the house is usually the South. The house was built in a space



with a garden, a row of areca trees in the front yard, a large gate, and a path leading to the house.

When building *Binh phong*, Hue people often put the screens behind the gates or the front of the house. The purpose of this screen arrangement is to create coziness, safety, and to prevent misfortune from affecting the owner. Screen sizes are also considered in the construction. According to feng shui, the air comes into the house from the gate and the door. If the gate and the door are in the same direction, the Fire will go directly from the front of the building. In traditional architecture, the middle door is the main door for the owner to enter, so the screen must be able to cover that. (Figure 19)



Figure 17 Gate and screen at Phu Hoang Hoa Thuan Cong. Source: Tran. P. A. T (January 1, 2021)

The position to place the *ngoai an* screen in buildings is quite flexible, but it is all based on the size of the works. According to most geographers, the distance between the house and the screen is usually equivalent to the width of the building. However, for some reason, if the external project must be located a bit far away, another layer of screen or *noi an* is required.' (Phan Thanh Hai, 2005). Figure 20 is a type of screen arranged on the veranda, the front of the house.





Figure 18 The screen is arranged on the porch of Nha Ruong's house. Source: Tran Vu Uyen Thu (June 2010)

In the main house, the most central space is the middle space for worship. In front of the altar, a screen is usually placed in the middle of the house layout. The application effectively creates a division between the main and secondary areas based on the open space feature. The position of the worship space is solemn but still very discreet. The right wing (Eastern *chái*) is the space for the owner and his sons to sleep and study. The left wing (Western *chái*) is near the annex where valuables are stored and is for the women. In front of the place of worship is a flexible, open space. The position in front of the altar, after *Huyen quan*, will usually have a screen to prevent division. In front of the screen can be a place to receive guests, a shared living room, a dining room, or sometimes a place for the owner to rest at noon. The kitchen and the storage are usually located in the annex, while the toilet and bath are usually located outside in the back of the house. In addition, a part of the former annex space can also be used as a bedroom for the women in the family (Ta. T. M. T, 2020, p.40-41). The use of modern materials such as bricks, cement, iron, and steel gradually replaces wood in the construction of outbuildings to save money and meet the sustainability of Hue's harsh climate.

The house's layout shows Hue culture's religious and belief characteristics. With the concept of using the screen in the traditional house space as a protective item, it is also possible to determine the class and social status of the homeowner. The *ngoai an* screen and *noi an* screens not only have feng shui functions but also show the discreet lifestyle of Hue people, making the screen popular and

indispensable there. Furthermore, it is the factor that creates the beauty and appearance of garden houses and palaces in Hue, unlike nowhere else.

In *Phu De* architecture, the screen is considered a component that creates aesthetic, cultural, and artistic values. Depending on the size and area of the main house, the screen will have the corresponding, suitable, harmonious size to ensure feng shui principles. Also, depending on the location of the building, the gate, opening, and the screen of the main house have different connections. Looking at the ground of Ngoc Son's *Phu De*, the gate moves to the back and the side of the main house. At this time, the screen does not have the function of blocking the air from the entrance gate. Landscape and rockery are the factors that explain *Minh Duong* and *Tien An* in front of the house, especially the location of the pond is a factor. This house is also arranged with good feng shui. (Figure 21)

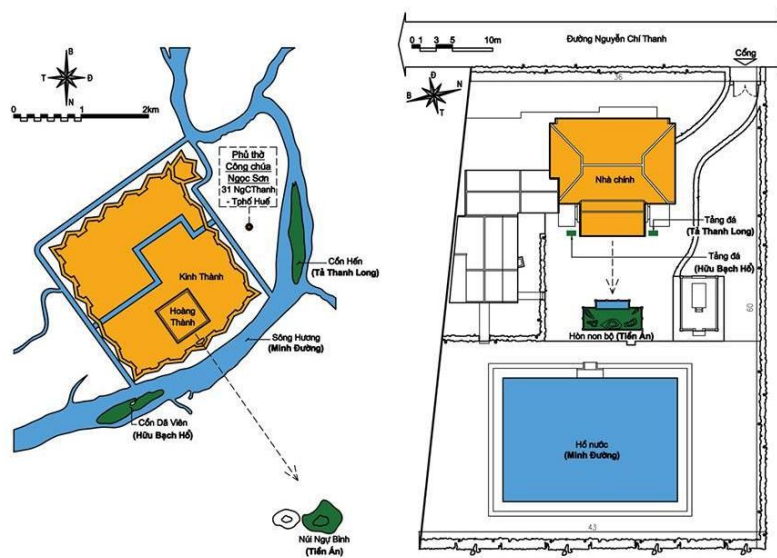


Figure 19 Plan of Hue Citadel and Princess Ngoc Son Palace. Source: Tung Ngoc Nguyen (2020)

It is also a reflection of the characteristics of the architectural art of *Phu De* and garden houses. The integration with the cultural space of the village created development opportunities and imbued the values of traditional and folk art in the flow of royal art of the Nguyen Dynasty.

The screen in the house is placed in the central position, so it plays a vital role in connecting the furniture and the house's overall style. The materials in the *Ruong* house in the royal palace are usually red lacquer trimmed with gold (*son son thép vàng*), so the town halls often use that material. For garden houses and the *Phu De* that have a black painted wooden structure, the same goes for the color of the wood used to create the screen. Depending on the social rank, the decoration of the screen will range from simple to complex. Whether sophisticated or simple, in addition to the shielding function, the screens also inherited the rusticity, the philosophies of Confucianism - Buddha - Lao-tian, and the spirit of the Nguyen dynasty. Since then, it has developed into an architectural space with its own characteristics and created harmony in the general style of the house.

### 2.5.3 Symbolism of the screen in Hue Culture

In addition to protecting and supporting architecture in terms of feng shui, the screen is also a symbol of the Hue people's lifestyle in particular and the Vietnamese people in general. The screen explicitly reflects the cultural life, customs, traditions, or ancestor worship.

Customs are all human life practices formed throughout history and became the standards recognized by the community and passed on from generation to generation. Customs are not fixed and mandatory like rituals and ceremonies but are not arbitrary like daily activities. It has become a relatively stable and relatively uniform social practice. Customs can be in a nation, locality, social class, or even a clan or clan. Customs is part of the culture. Hue culture is mentioned as a culture of beauty in art and lifestyle.

Religion and belief have an important role and position in spirituality, culture, and all areas of life, especially in the living space of Thua Thien Hue residents. The elements of Buddhism - Confucianism - Taoism have created harmony in the spirit and the mind of Hue people in a natural, simple and profound way. Religions and beliefs hold many spiritual values, of which the most obvious expression is through art. We can find delicate and meticulous decorative value in fine art products such as paintwork, gilded lacquerware, porcelain mosaics, embroidery, woodcarvings,

rattan and bamboo products, etc. In the living space, the Hue people always reserve a solemn place for the spiritual where there are always artistic attributes such as mural paintings on the altar, embroidered murals, hanging musical instruments, etc. (Phan. T. B. 2020)

Ancestors and ancestor worship are beliefs imbued with the filial piety of people in the family environment. Under the patriarchal Confucian feudalism, Hue was in the role of the capital of Dai Nam country under the Nguyen Dynasty, so the ancestor worship religion was given particular importance to the point of being raised to Taoism Ancestor Worship. People said that the house is the abode of the living and the grave is the abode of the dead. To build graves is to pay respects to the deceased and pray for a better life. The screen always appears for shielding and protection in the Nguyen Dynasty kings' tombs, such as the Gia Long Tomb, Minh Mang Tomb, and Tu Duc Tomb. The decorative forms also carry meaning.

Ancestors are not only for the deceased (to worship) but also for the living (to serve). Ancestor worship becomes a link connecting all family members or expanding the connection between family and society. Therefore, people often say that "the family is the cell of society." The previous Nguyen dynasty kings attached great importance to the role of the family community, all of which were legally <sup>47</sup> regulated and commonly operated in the moral <sup>48</sup> and social life. Besides complying with the principles of feudal patriarchy, the children in the family need to continue the tradition to fulfill their duty. The responsibility and obligation of a son are to serve the ancestors (dead and living ancestors: grandparents, parents) and take care of his wife, children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren to create blessings, cultivate virtues and morals, and do good deeds for the future children and

<sup>47</sup> Legal (Pháp lý): A term used to refer to commonly used concepts in legal science or law, which is the base of the theoretical basis of the law, in this case, the legal provisions of the Nguyen Dynasty.

<sup>48</sup> Ethics (Luân lý): Are the rules of conduct, the practices of right and wrong behavior, good and evil, virtue and evil, based on moral values.

grandchildren. Figure 22 is a kind of screen behind the altar, and it is finely carved with many motifs and poetrys.



Figure 20 Ancestor altar at Ruong house 19 Ngo Thi Nham, Hue city.

Source: Tran. V. D (2020)

The screens in daily life contain many meanings. Tran Dinh Hang said that the traditional cultural and religious lives of Hue residents were expressed through the layout of the garden space "Gateway has a God guarding the door, and the screen accumulates spiritual energy and suppresses toxic wind, bad things from the outside so that everything inside including the family and the ancestor worship can run smoothly. The upper and lower houses are attached to the incense bowl, and the fire has a clear and detailed delineation by the institution of incense (Huong Hoa). These factors create infinite resources connecting all members in the traditional family and bring vitality to the family over time. These are the basis for emphasizing the family's cultural imprint, the typical traditional values, and the ability to inherit and promote culture.

The screen has the organic function of shielding and preventing bad things and evil spirits from the outside. At *Tien An* position of the main house, the screen is located in the middle of the house, next to the *Be Can*. It can be made from stone, lime mortar, or trees. The screen also means a gathering place, crystallizing vital



energy and eliminating foreign invaders that can harm the family. The middle of the altar is the gathering point for the spiritual convergence of heaven and earth to transmit and support the family. That is the outstanding function of the screen in the cultural context of Hue gardeners.

## 2.6 Traditional decorative art forms of the Nguyen Dynasty screens

### 2.6.1 Style and structure

The basic types of *Ngoai an* screens include tea screen, roof screen, horizontal scroll screen, and other forms (non-trimmed and other variant). Notably, the horizontal scroll screen accounts for 75% compared to the remaining shapes.



Figure 21 The horizontal scroll screen at Hoang Hoa Thuan Vuong palace.

Source: Tran. P.A.T ( June 2021)

The simple screen structure consists of a flat wall, and more elaborate forms are often the three-fold horizontal scroll. The motifs are distributed on three planes, four cylinders, and around the frills of the planes. The screen structure is divided into three main parts: the base, body, and top (roof frill).

The base is usually as high as the *Be Can* placed in front of the screen. However, some houses do not have a *Be Can*, so this base can be lower, and some screens have a simple rectangular base. Others have patterns of clouds and water waves.

The body has two symmetrical wings, often inscribed with parallel sentences, drawings of four seasons, fruit bowls, bowls of treasure, etc. In the middle, the body



of the screen is usually written the word Tho, the word Phuoc or the image of the four spirits (Long, Lan, Quy, Phung).

The top of horizontal scroll screens does not usually have this part. Screens in the palaces usually have the top, the Sun and Dragon-phoenix motifs, (*lưỡng long triểu nhật*) dichotomy motifs, or floral motifs. The top part is embossed on the main wall and often has piercing details and no background, so it requires sophisticated techniques. (Tung. N. N, 2020, March 4)

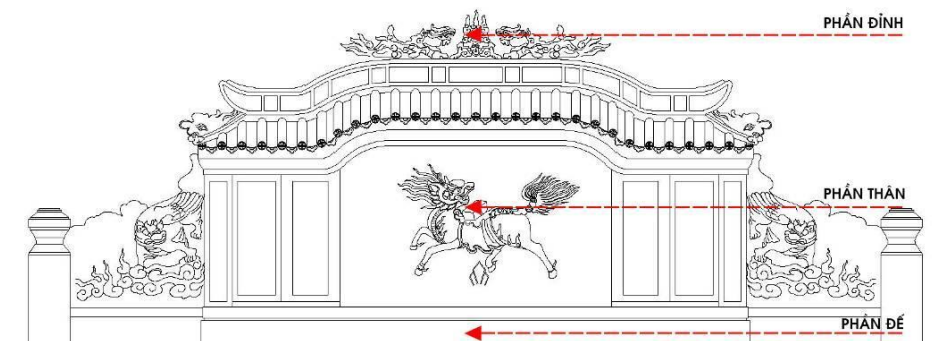


Figure 22 Screen with a roof at 38 Nguyen Phuc Nguyen - Kim Long - Hue city.

Source: Nguyen Ngoc Tung.

According to the research and survey by architect Nguyen Ngoc Tung and his team, the conventional ratio of the basic dimensions of the screens includes wing width (a), middle width (b), width height (B), and length (L) (Figure 25). The survey and analysis of the screen on 50 traditional garden houses showed that the screen dimensions correlated with each other. For example, the length of the screen (L) is usually approximately 1.73 times the height (B); the length (L) is approximately 1.41 times the height excluding the base (H); and the middle width (b) is usually twice the wing size (a).<sup>49</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Architect Tran Thi Quynh Huong, Dr. Architect Nguyen Ngoc Tung, Architect Tam An, Architect Dinh Bao Hieu (2016). The architecture of the screen in the Hue

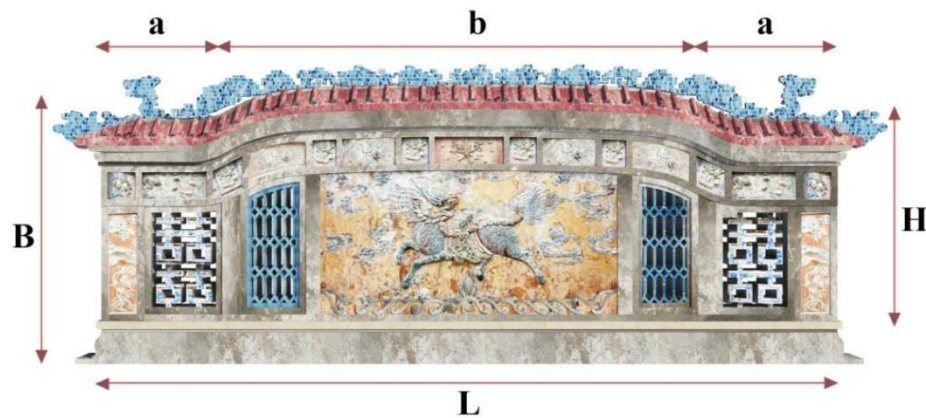


Figure 23 Size convention of the components of the Screen. Screen with a roof of Phủ Tuy Lý Vương.

Source: Nguyen Ngoc Tung.

The screen appeared due to the needs and creativity of the Confucianists, with the desire to create a mark for the family and to promote Confucianism in ancient culture and art. Therefore, the shape of the letter also symbolized education, luxury, and nobility. The two sides of the horizontal scroll screen were always shaped from the images of a pen and a sword, symbolizing intelligence and courage. All wishes expressed on the screen were for a peaceful and lucky life.

Variations of the *ngoai an* screen are often in the form of miniatures, mountains like the one in Princess Ngọc Sơn's palace. Here, the house's owner showed his creativity in employing the image of mountains and traditional bonsai. 'There are mountains, caves, human activities, the image of a fairy playing chess, a picture of a woodcutter collecting firewood by the stream and planting some flowers and grass that could live for all four seasons' (Dang. M. A, 2015, p.46).

Hue people love nature, plants, and flowers, so the screen is not only built of bricks but also trees. The screen brings the beauty of friendliness and the green to the house, while its ability to shield is still guaranteed. Not only in ordinary people's

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traditional garden house. Architecture Magazine, issue 07 2015.

<https://www.tapchikientruc.com.vn/>

houses but also *Phu De* still prefer the screen made of trees. Figure 26 is the screen in princess An Thuong's palace. It is a kind of natural screen. It is as simple as the princess's life, which is famous for her filial piety. The owner arranged the green screen, so it should be different from the layout in other houses. The screen is the frangipani tree with a *Be Can* and three legs. Its two sides are two stone slabs representing the mountains. In June 2021, some items in the house were repaired, including the yard, the roof, and the gate.



Figure 24 Tree screen in front of the main house of Princess An Thuong's palace





Figure 25 Mr. Trien, the current manager of the house in Princess An Thuong's palace

Source: Tran. P. A. T, June 2021

The traditional structures or the variations of the *ngoai an* screen manifest through its applications in feng shui and people's wishes for a good life. Therefore, they improvised to adapt and create harmony between nature and humans. Each screen created carries unique artistic values and creativity from the artisans and the house owners.

The *noi an* screens have various structures and shapes, including single-panel, composite and other variants. Each type of *noi an* screen has different meanings. For example, for the shielding function or protection, it usually has the shape of a horizontal scroll. The shape of the screens will express the owner's intention. Depending on the location, the screen size can be either large or small to create harmony with the furniture inside.

A one-sheet screen is usually in the form of a scroll, a rectangle, a square, or a circle. The square represents family ties. The energy of this figure brings good luck and lasting harmony to the family. Square-shaped objects or rooms mostly create a



sense of stability and solidity, although they do not guarantee balance and harmony completely. The circle represents luck and integrity. The circle promotes energy in a vortex, wavy and rhythmic wave. In the living room, the appearance of round objects will create a sense of equality between people. A full circle is better than a semicircle. However, a circle that is too large will cause unbalanced. The rectangle represents growing energy. A well-proportioned rectangle is better than a rectangle that is too long and narrow. The energy of a rectangle is similar to a square, but if it lacks balance, it will turn ugly' (Ta. T. M. T, p. 68).



Figure 26 Some typical shapes of a single-panel screen are like the book of letters (Left). Source: Hue Museum of Antiquities (2021)

Figure 27 Rectangular screen (middle). Source: Ho Chi Minh City Museum of History (2021)

Figure 28 Circular screen (right). Source: L. Cadi. Les Motifs de L'Art Annamite

Multi-panel screens also have many shapes, but most are rectangular. The multi-panel scroll screen usually has three panels together, linked by hinges. On the screen, the main decorative theme will be centered (Figure 31), and the two sides are the images of nature. Rectangular screens usually have four or more panels. They are diverse in decorative themes. Each panel can have different images, but they are linked to a common theme. (Figure 33) The panels usually take odd numbers like 3,5,7, even numbers like 2,4,6,8,10,12, etc.

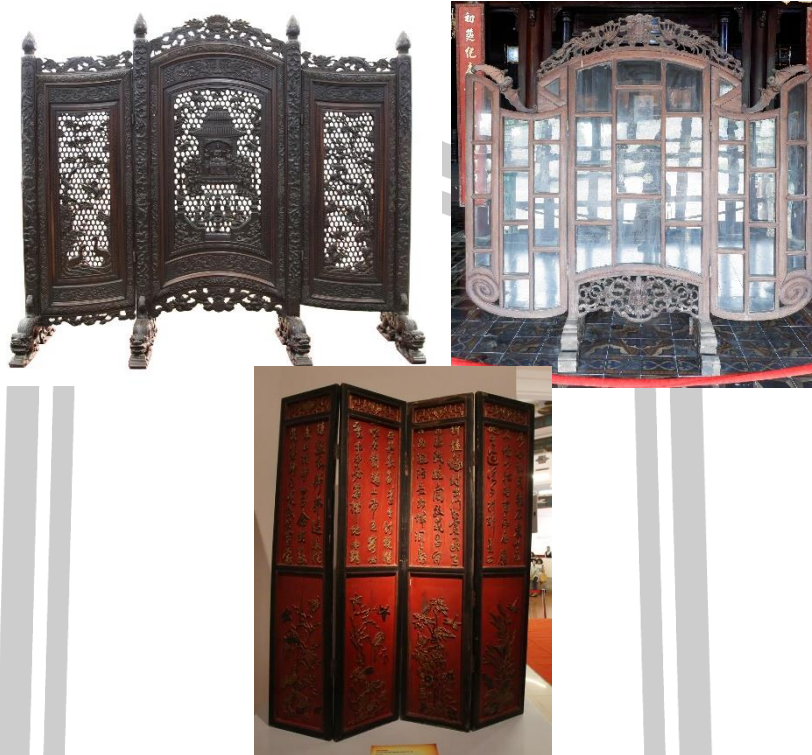


Figure 29 Plate grafting screens have a horizontal scroll shape. Source: Ho Chi Minh City Museum of History (2021)

Figure 30 Plate grafting screens have horizontal scroll shape in the reign of King Khai Dinh at Dien Tho Palace. Nguồn: Source: Tran. P. A. T, January 2021

Figure 31 Plate grafting screens have a rectangle shape. Source: National Museum of History (2021)

Western countries' single-panel screens were indeed works of art. Westerners have a simpler view. They mainly focus on the decorative motifs on the central part of the screen. Hence, the supporting leg is less concerned because it is just a structure for the screen to stand on the ground. These differences created diversity and affirmed the identity of each cultural region. (Dang. M. A, 2015, p.49)



### 2.6.2 Material

The art of making screens by artisans of the Nguyen Dynasty created the artistic values of ancient screens. Depending on the needs and conditions of each house, the *ngoai an* screens were made from different materials such as wood, brick, rattan, stone, bonsai, and bamboo. The most popular were still the screens built of bricks and stones, delicately carved and decorated with porcelain. Besides the screens, porcelain mosaic art was also used to decorate temple gates, communal houses, roofs, and windows.

In the art of decoration and architecture of the Nguyen Dynasty in Hue, porcelain mosaic art on palaces, mausoleums, communal houses, and temples was combined with *nễ họa* technique to create a decorative effect. “The art of porcelain mosaics has its roots in popular life. Since ancient times, people in villages have used pieces of porcelain from broken ceramic vases to decorate. For the practical needs of decoration, the artisans used pieces of porcelain, pottery, raw pottery, pieces of earthenware, and later pieces of bottles to create mosaics and decorative products in temples and houses. Therefore, porcelain is one of the most popular materials among the decorative materials of Hue royal architecture.”<sup>50</sup>

The *noi an* screen uses the most common materials such as wood, rattan, bamboo, stone, bronze, silver, gold, silk on a wooden frame, lacquer inlaid with pearls, and lacquered wood with gold. The precious stone screen in the reign of King Minh Mang (Figure 34) is a type of stone relief used to decorate the palace. It was carved with pavilion landscapes, trees, birds, rivers, and boats. The top of the relief is decorated with an image of a crane holding a scroll flying in the sky, expressing the desire to pursue goodness and wisdom. The back of the relief is an illustration praising the previous kings' merits for finding the sage's origin, admonishing the later kings to study, and cultivating morality to become wise kings. The base of the relief is made of ebony. It is also a work of art carved with a dragon and rattan. (Hue Museum of Royal Antiquities)

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<sup>50</sup> Phan Thanh Binh. “The shaping effect of *nễ họa* materials, porcelain mosaics to decorate the royal architecture of the Nguyen Dynasty”. <https://mythuatms.com/>



Figure 32 The front and back of the screen are made of precious stones during the reign of King Minh Mang. Source: Hue Museum of Royal Antiquities

Red lacquer and Gilt (*sơn son thép vàng*) was a traditional craft in Vietnam, in which *sơn son* is a type of paint of bright red or black, and *thếp vàng* is inlaid with thin gold foil on the surface of objects. In addition to the application on the screen, lacquer craft was also used to make diaphragms, scrolls, and couplets for important events such as housewarmings, job promotions, and ordinations. During the Nguyen Dynasty, Kings or families of high status used jackfruit wood as the best material for lacquer craft. Choosing jackfruit wood was about spirituality. This type of wood was said to be a "healthy, warm" wood, so it was used to make worship objects. Another reason was that jackfruit wood was a durable material.

The mosaic craft, in general, has existed for a long time in Vietnam. Mother-of-pearl inlay (or mussel shell inlay) is a craft that was developed during the ancient time due to the abundant raw materials in Vietnam. Mother-of-pearl inlay is often combined with lacquer craft. However, the mother-of-pearl inlay's background is usually a dark paint layer, not colorful like other handicraft products. The mother-of-pearl material itself creates many iridescent colors for the decoration. The motifs in

mother-of-pearl inlay can be about flowers, birds, butterflies, landmarks in Vietnam, or folk tales.<sup>51</sup>

The mother-of-pearl inlaid wooden objects that survived til today are mainly dated to the Nguyen Dynasty (19th century - early 20th century) with two main types: worshiping items and daily utensils. Due to their smoothness and solidity, the types of wood used in mother-of-pearl inlay were mainly mahogany and rosewood.

Materials needed in the inlay process include river mussels, shells, mother-of-pearl, and snails. The sophistication and ingenuity of the mosaic worker are partly reflected in the works. The mother-of-pearly inlay process includes many stages such as sawing, grinding, pressing snails and mussels, screw threading, optical painting, grinding, polishing, trimming, and portraying. The inlaid wooden furniture shows the aesthetics and arts of the Nguyen Dynasty as well as the rich spiritual life, especially of the Confucian class. Moreover, each mosaic work also shows the Nguyen Dynasty artisans' diligence, meticulousness, and creativity.<sup>52</sup>



<sup>51</sup> An Hiên (2016). "Traditional mosaic, a unique art form of Vietnam". National Historical Museum.

<sup>52</sup> Phạm Thị Huyền (2013). "Historical and cultural values are hidden behind a mosaic cabinet in the Nguyen Dynasty". National Historical Museum.

Figure 33 Collection of wooden furniture inlaid with pearls (left) and Binh Phong inlaid with pearls from the Nguyen Dynasty (1890) (right). Source: National Museum of History (2021)

Within the framework of Hue Traditional Crafts Festival 2017, the exhibition displayed antiquities with the theme "Golden brocade in the Nguyen Dynasty" by researcher and collector Hoang Van Kim and Tran Dinh Son. They own several valuable and well-preserved Nguyen Dynasty screens. The set of screens from the reign of King Khai Dinh is created from wood. The theme of the four spirits (Long, Ly, Quy, Phuong) is carved on each panel, combined with stylized birds and flower embroidery motifs on silk.



Figure 34 The set of screens from the reign of King Khai Dinh was made from wood, slowly engraved with four spirits. Private collection of mosaic carvings of the Nguyen Dynasty. Source: <https://baodansinh.vn/>

In summary, the materials used for traditional screens are quite rich and diverse. The *ngoai an* screens were mostly made from bricks or inlaid with porcelain. The *noi an* screens used wood as the primary material with extremely meticulous manufacturing techniques.

### 2.6.3 Decoration themes

In addition to the application of feng shui, the screen is considered a pinnacle art, where the artists show their talents in creating, conveying their thoughts, and choosing decorative themes. Decorative themes must support each other to add value to the function of the screen. Through research documents and surveys in Hue, it showed that the decorative themes of the *Ngoại án* screens are more diverse than those of the *noi an* screens. In the screen structure, the decoration was usually converged on the body of the screen. The patterns, motifs, or poetry chosen to decorate the screen all showed the ideology and lifestyle of the owner. The combination of decorative styles on the screens was intentional and followed certain principles. Sometimes it was a personal concept based on folk beliefs. The types of decoration were usually embossed, porcelain mosaics, glazed ceramics, decorative floral tiles, masonry (*ne ngoa*) , engraved, frescoes, and gouged honeycombs shapes. The royal family often popularized decorative patterns with the themes of flowers, leaves, *Bat buu*, and animals.

Images of spirituality, teaching, praise of learning, success, and wisdom appeared quite often. While shaping screens, the artist paid great attention to the function of the decoration, the details, and the aesthetic feelings attached to a specific image. Most Hue folklore or royal culture had a boundary. Depending on the size of the project, the screen showed the owner's position in society. Although the scales of those screens were different, the spirituality, representation, and aesthetics were the same.<sup>53</sup> The architectural features of screens in palaces, mausoleums, and kings' tombs were more complicated than ordinary screens in terms of patterns, textures, and sizes.

**Animal theme: the four spirits include a dragon, unicorn, turtle, phoenix, bat, and crane**

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<sup>53</sup> Phan. T. B. Rector of Hue University of Arts. Excerpt from the documentary video "The screen of Hue's architectural charm"



Hue's most prominent artistic image and decorative theme were the four spirits. Although these images appeared very early and underwent many feudal dynasties, they only developed significantly and had their own styles in the Nguyen Dynasty.

A dragon is a meaningful image to Vietnamese people. It symbolizes the origin of the Vietnamese. The dragon is also the god, the owner of water, bringing strong vitality and making crops grow. A dragon symbolizes strength, so kings use the dragon image to represent imperial power. Today dragons are still used in religious architecture. They have demon eyes, deer horns, animal ears, camel foreheads, wolf mouths, snake necks, carp scales, crocodile feet, and eagle claws. The image of a five-claw dragon is more or less directly used by the king, and for other people, the dragon has only four claws, which is a variant. The dragon also symbolizes the husband, the fiance, and often refers to the man (L.Cadiere, *Les Motifs de L'Art Annamite*). These variations often represent princes, royal relatives, and mandarin, including *mãng* dragons, *giao long*, and dragon-horses (*Long Ma*). Today, the artworks associated with the image of the dragon in the Nguyen Dynasty are still preserved. The dragon image was intricately sculpted on gold and silver material for the royal seals, priceless screens, and *Tran Phong*.<sup>54</sup> Dragons are often Feng Shui objects that bring the most potent effects, energy, luck, fame, and fortune. In addition, they are also used to reassure to find peace in life. According to ancient legends, dragons were originally sacred animals symbolizing goodness. The image of the dragon was depicted with a long body, a head with deer horns and mustache on both sides, legs with sharp claws, and skin full of scales. They were capable of swimming, flying, and breathing out the essence of heaven and earth.

Dragons of the Nguyen Dynasty were diverse. The whole dragons, or real dragons or *con giao*, were often the time when *Hoi Van Hoa Long*, leaves and *Day La Hoa Long* (vines turn into dragons). *Hoa Long* was also found in rattan, bamboo,

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<sup>54</sup> Dr. Phan Thanh Hai. (2018). Dragon - Phuong in the art of the Nguyen Dynasty. Hue Monuments Conservation Center.. <https://khamphahue.com.vn/>

pine, peony, chrysanthemum, and lily. The common dragon motifs were *Luong Long Trieu Nhat* (two dragons adoring the sun), *Luong Long Trieu Nguyet* (two dragons adoring the moon), *Luong Long Tranh Chau* (two dragons fighting for the jewel), *Hoi Long Huong Nhat* (two dragons return to the sun), *Long An Van* (dragon hiding in the clouds), *Ngu Long Hy Thuy* (carp playing in the water), fish. “Carp turning into dragon” was a metaphor for revival and intense vitality (L. Cadiere, *Les Motifs de L'Art Annamite*). On the *ngoai* and *noi an* screens, dragon motifs are often placed on the top and right in the middle. However, the dragon motifs mainly appeared on the *noi an* screens, and rarely on the *ngoai* screens.

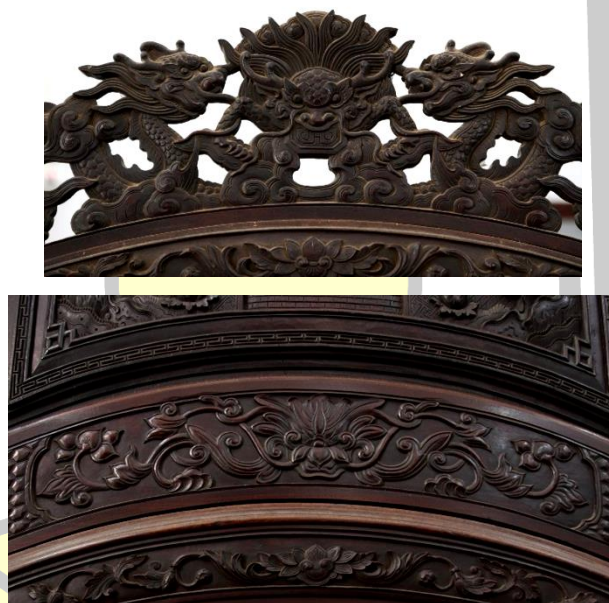


Figure 35 The dragon adoring on the top of the screen (left) and the Cuc Hoa dragon on the body of the screen (right). Source: Ho Chi Minh Museum of Fine Arts (2021)

The dragons of the Nguyen Dynasty in the royal court of Hue and the dragons of the Nguyen Dynasty in the folk architecture of this country are different versions when comparing the details of the head, horns, scales, claws, and tail. Moreover, the dragons in commoners' architecture were sometimes more vivid and expressive than the majestic dragons in the palace. This proved that there were no strict regulations

in monopolizing the image of the dragon in Hue royal art.<sup>55</sup> Dragons of the Nguyen Dynasty on the palace architecture still had some similarities with the Chinese Dragon of the Qing Dynasty. However, when dragon motifs became popular with Hue's people, many talented artisans created different variations of the dragon, a unique feature of the art of the Nguyen Dynasty.

The phoenix (Phuong) is the mascot represented for the upper floor. The phoenix is yin (âm), auspicious, dignified, and intellectual, often symbolizing the country's mother. A pair of phoenixes symbolizes the nobility of women in the royal family. The phoenix motifs are often decorated on the top and the body of the screens.



Figure 36 “*Song Phung Vong Nguyet*”, Two Phoenixes looking at the moon on a glass screen at Dien Tho Palace. Source: Tran. P. A. T (January 2021)

Contemporary artists showed the images of dragons and phoenixes of the Nguyen Dynasty on many different materials. In addition to symbolizing authority, the dragon and phoenix images are also a prayer for the regime's longevity and prosperity. From traditional art, when the images of dragons and phoenixes entered royal art, they were optimized to bring out the supremacy of kingship and the hope for a peaceful and prosperous society. The dragon and phoenix of the Nguyen Dynasty left a great legacy in architectural design, and they were multidimensional symbols of Vietnamese culture (Phan. T. H, 2018).

<sup>55</sup> Tran Duc Anh Son. (two thousand and thirteen). Dragon in art of the Nguyen Dynasty. Hue Monuments Conservation Center. <https://khamphahue.com.vn/>

The unicorn is also an animal in the four spirits: dragon, unicorn, turtle, and phoenix. The unicorn is an animal that signals good things, a symbol of longevity, magnificence, and great happiness. A unicorn is a combination of all good qualities of kindness and benevolence. The males are called *Kỳ* and the females are called *Lân*. A unicorn has the shape of a musk deer, with an ox's tail, wolf forehead, horseshoe, the skin of five colors ( red, yellow, blue, white, and black), and a clear voice. The unicorn is an animal symbolizing luck and has the effect of warding off evil, increasing auspiciousness for the family, helping the homeowner's career, and making a good fortune.

In addition, the unicorn is an animal that specializes in protecting and guarding the house. Its mouth opens wide to attract and suppress all kinds of weapons into the house, helping homeowners eliminate bad luck, things that wear the family down. Unicorns are found in many places in architecture. They were placed at the gate of Princess Ngoc Son's palace as a base for the interior screen



Figure 37 Unicorn at the foot of the screen. Source: Ho Chi Minh Museum of Fine Arts

Vietnamese equivalent for Bat is '*Buc*'. However, this word is pronounced almost like the word '*Phuc*' – happiness. Therefore, people took the image of this animal to indicate happiness. Besides its spiritual value, bat-shaped screens also express people's wishes and outlook on life. Bat-shaped screens were also of high aesthetic value, with the image of a bat hanging upside down with eye-catching

stylized wings. Bat motifs were often decorated in a pun with two tassels, called tassel bats. In some patterns, bats were transformed into images made of leaves, or "Leaves transform into *Phuc*". Nevertheless, they were mainly made of *Hoi van* with some leaves, so they were also called "*Hoi Van* transform into *Phuc*". A bat holding the word *Khanh* would mean good luck because the word *Khanh* means joy, happiness, and luck. Bats holding the words *Tho* and *Phuc* mean wealth and happiness.



Figure 38 Bat motifs on the external case screen. 53 Vo Thi Sau, Hue. Source: Tran. P. A. T (January 2021)

Figure 39 The pattern of bats holding the word longevity on a paneled screen. Source: Ho Chi Minh Museum of Fine Arts

The Crane (*Hac*) is a precious bird. The image of the crane often appeared next to the gods in Buddhism. The crane is an animal symbolizing purity and nobility. The image of the crane in Vietnamese culture "has a head of justice, its eyes represent the sun and the moon, its wings are the wind, its feathers are plants, its legs are the earth and symbolizes space, sky and yang force". Therefore, the crane is also an animal symbolizing longevity. It represents the aspiration for longevity and



symbolizes luck, harmony, and cohesion between the two extremes of yin and yang (heaven and earth). The topic of the crane and the turtle under the folk view: "It is pitiful to see the turtle wearing the crane to go to the temple and wearing the stele to go to the pagoda." Cranes are often decorated on screens in communal houses and pagodas.

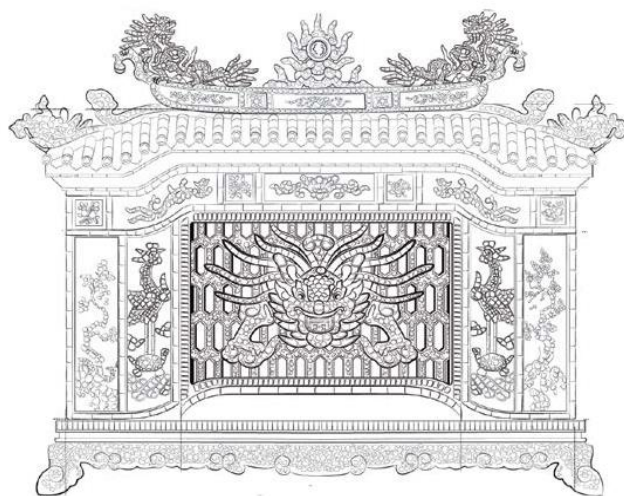


Figure 40 Dinh Ha Le Chanh, Hue. Source: Research project on ancient ethnic capital  
- Binh Phong Hue

In the architectural art of Hue, the image of the dragon-horse (*Long Ma*) appeared a lot. The dragon-horse, also known as the horse that turns into a dragon, is a symbol of the Nguyen Dynasty's architecture. *Long Ma* represents the crown prince. Its image is embroidered on the first-class martial arts uniform. It is a species that "has the head of a half-dragon and the half-animal, sometimes with only one horn and the mane of a dragon, the body of a musk deer, the tail of an ox, the forehead of a wolf, the scaly body of a unicorn, and the legs and hooves of a horse. It was said that *Long Ma* was the incarnation of the Unicorn, a combination of a unicorn, a dragon, and a horse. *Long Ma* signals good omens. It is a symbol of wisdom, longevity, and happiness. *Long Ma* is also the embodiment of the laws and order of the universe. The image of a *Long Ma* carrying *hà đồ* is a popular motif on the Hue screens. The image of *Long Ma* is used in Hue architecture for decoration and feng shui, preventing bad air and unfavorable factors for homeowners. The

image of the dragon-horse is often seen on the screens in the palace, village communal houses, and ancestral houses. The image of the *Long Ma* has been used as the symbol of the Hue Festival since 2002 until now.

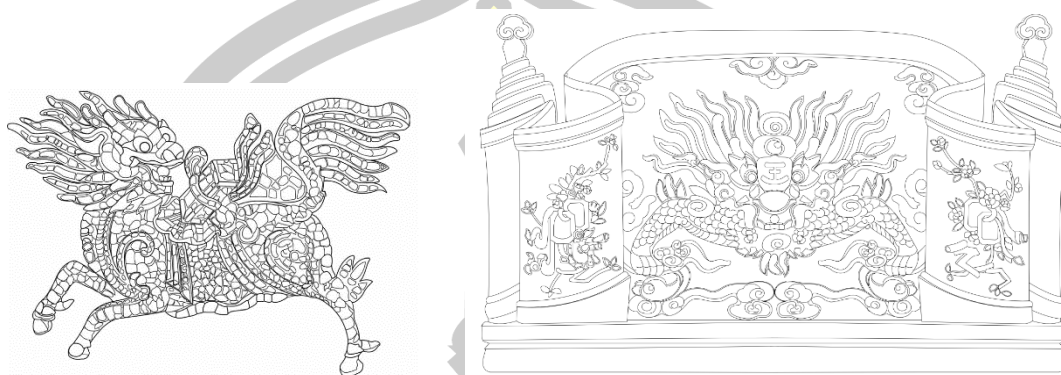


Figure 41 On the screen of Kim Long village, the front is a dragon horse, and the back side is a dragon. Source: research project on ancient ethnic capital - Binh Phong Hue

The carp (Cá Chép) is not only a symbol of wealth but also a symbol of the enrollment of Confucian scholars. This symbolism is expressed in the image of *Ly Ngu Hoa Long* depicting a carp turning into a dragon. *Ly Ngu Khieu Long Mon* depicts a carp going against the stream and turning into a dragon. This decoration object is derived from the score of Long Mon. it symbolizes luck, advancement, and success on the path of public education. Thus, the use of “carp turning into dragon” screens in the village communal houses implies the wishes for children and grandchildren to study hard and pass the imperial test to become mandarins.

In addition to the animals above, the screens also have images of elephants, deer, deer, tigers, buffaloes, pheasants, peacocks, chickens, and storks. However, the popularity of these projects is not equal to the four spirits and eight objects. The elephant image contributes to beautifying the screens and also contains the owner’s ideology. Elephants are protectors that bring good luck to their owners and are associated with worship.

The *ngoai an* screens are often decorated on both sides with mosaic craft or painted with dragon fish, tiger, dragon hiding in clouds, phoenix spreading wings, and dragon-horse. Embossed ephemeral motifs and lotus flowers carved on the

surrounding pillars carry auspicious meanings and blessings for the living. The image of the green bud on a scroll screen symbolizes the gentleman, which means the gentleman is like a lotus flower that holds its head high even in the mud.

**Botanical themes: the four quarters include conifer, chrysanthemum, bamboo, apricot or peach, lotus, chrysanthemum, and bamboo**

The paintings of four vases (pine, chrysanthemum, bamboo, apricot) with beautiful colors and flowers are also used for decoration. It also conveys the meanings of joy, peace, fulfillment through the image of chrysanthemums, blessings through the image of the apricot tree, and wishes for people to live upright in life through the images of pine and bamboo.

The base of the screen is usually covered with porcelain or carved with rattan motifs as a decoration. Each decorative drawing on each *ngoai an* project shows the meticulous investment in mind, intelligence, and skillful hands of artisans in Hue. The sophistication and artistic style of each *ngoai an* screen has become a unique highlight in the traditional architecture of the Nguyen Dynasty.

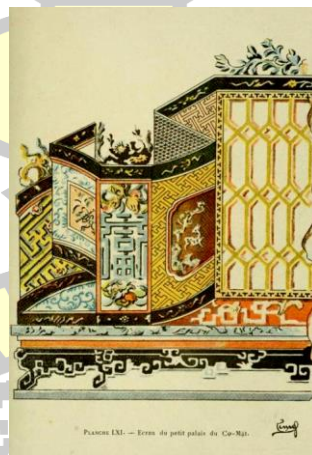


Figure 42 Les Motifs de L'Art Annamite. Source: L. Cadi.

Peach blossom motifs usually have only four slightly pointed petals at the top. The 'apricot flower' pattern has five petals, and the tips of the petals are round. The 'bèo flower' pattern has four petals, the edges of which are notches and crouch like roses. The 'lemon flower' pattern has eight petals, four long and slender, and the other four shorter. The 'asterisk' pattern has four intersecting circles, with four long

lobes that sometimes intertwine the petals. The 'anemone flower' pattern is made from the rim of the small circular petals. Flowers are not merely decorative motifs but are also symbols of fairy tales. A fairly familiar symbol is the 'four seasons', including the apricot tree representing spring, the lotus tree representing summer, the chrysanthemum tree representing autumn, and finally, the pine tree representing winter. Some people call the symbol of the four seasons the 'four quarters' consisting of the apricot tree, lotus tree, chrysanthemum tree, and bamboo tree. The specially stylized lotus flower evokes the Buddha's image of the lotus throne.

More specifically, each fruit tree, flower, and leaf has a symbolic meaning and the ability to "transform": The lotus flower symbolizes purity. The lotus that turned into a turtle was very popular in the decoration of the Nguyen Dynasty. Peonies represent wealth, joy, happiness, and noblewomen. The sea peonies that transformed into phoenixes were quite popular in rock carvings. The pine tree symbolizes strength, endurance, immortality, and the mettle of a gentleman. The dragon tree appears a lot in embossed masonry and porcelain mosaic art. The bamboo tree symbolizes the non-woven uprightness of the gentleman. It is also the tree of earthly life, representing wisdom and endurance with lives. The transformation of bamboo is like a pine tree. Apricot and peach trees have an anti-evil aura and are also symbolic images of girls. Apricot blossom transforms into many different forms as the apricot phoenix, plum bird, or peach that transforms into a dragon. The chrysanthemum tree symbolizes the strength of nature and the happiness of man. Chrysanthemum represents a profound and discreet beauty. Its natural feature is that the petals fall to the root when the plant dries. Chrysanthemum is also a symbol of faithfulness. Chrysanthemum flowers turn into phoenixes and five-colored clouds.<sup>56</sup>

Tree motifs are also traditionally transformed: apricot or peach branch motifs become 'phoenixes', pine and bamboo become 'dragon', lotus becomes 'turtles', chrysanthemum becomes 'unicorn'; and trumpet becomes 'dragon'. However, the

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<sup>56</sup> Pham Minh Hai. (2021). The symbolic meaning of "chemistry" in decorative art of the Nguyen Dynasty. Song Huong Magazine. <http://tapchisonghuong.com.vn/>

artist's improvisation also allows them to turn every tree into a mythical animal with mystical powers. Annam sculptors and painters often use fruit motifs in decoration such as pears, peaches, buddhas hands (phật thủ), pomegranates, spheres, grapes, melons, and gourds. For example, the pear pattern turns into 'unicorn' or the peach becomes 'turtle'. According to some studies, the four types of pears, pomegranates, peaches and custard-apple mean '*tứ hữu*' (meaning four friends).

Hue's decorative art is a feature of royal art mixed with folklore. In addition to the folklores in the motifs, there are also some realistic styles or stylizations of complex motifs. The Ky ha verses (Hoi van) are closely and consistently arranged in squares, rectangles, triangles, and circles, showing rich artistic information. Most of the decorative shapes, from the *ngoai an* to the *noi an* screen, have these methods. It contains themes in specified positions such as frills with decorative styles of apricot Mai Dieu (bird perched on apricot branch), Tung Loc (a crane standing under a pine tree or a deer standing under a pine tree), Cuc Diep (bird perched on apricot branch), and Lien Ap (蓮鴨 \_ Ducks swim by lotus flowers) connected with dynastic patterns, interspersed with legends of the fish turn into dragons, The lotus turns into a turtle, the orchid turns into a phoenix, and the tree and fruit turn into animals. Those were the folk style in Hue decoration.

**The theme of congratulation includes stylized Confucian characters such as Phuc (福 happiness), Loc (祿 fortune), Tho (壽 longevity), Hy (喜 joy), Van (卐 swastika)**

Besides the specific images, the screen is also decorated with many stylized motifs from Chinese characters such as *Phuc* and *Tho*, containing the ancients' message about the memory of the deceased and blessings for the living. On the *ngoai an* screen, the word *Loc* rarely appears. However, congratulatory themes such as the words *Phuc*, *Loc*, *Tho*, and *Hy* are usually placed in the center or two sides of the body of the screen, and the font size is large. These letters are usually empty boxes, which can be seen by people outside and inside. Specifically, the word *Tho* is nested in the center circle of the screen. This is both a decoration and a mirror. Thereby the guest can warn the host about his presence. At the same time, the host



can prepare for the reception in advance. Maybe this detail shows the sophistication in the culture of the Hue people.

Figure 46, The screen of An Hien<sup>57</sup> garden house is one of the beautiful and unique screens, shaped like a book with decorative flowers and leaves. The two sides of the screen are two parallel sentences. The central part is the word *Tho* expressing the wishes of the owner of the house for good health and longevity.



Figure 43 The motif of the word "Song Hy" on the screen of Tuy Ly Vuong palace (Left)

Figure 44 The word "Tho" on the screen of An Hien garden house (Right). Source: Tran. P.A.T (January 2021)

Still life: *Hoi van hinh ke* includes are often the place to put worshipping such as a triptych consisting of an incense burner, an incense bowl, and a lamp, or a five-piece set and two lampstands, or an elegant vase of flowers for offering food, a *Khanh* to represent great happiness, a store of books, and a long pen holder.

The Fire bead motif consists of a moon face (a circular disk resting on clouds) surrounded by flames). It usually has a moon-shaped variation on the dragon's head, looking straight ahead. This motif is often accompanied by two dragons or two phoenixes. This motif has the name "Luong Long Trieu Nguyet" or "Song Phung Trieu Nguyet". It is usually arranged on the top of the screen. Sometimes the fire beads combine with symbols of yin and yang, and peonies.

<sup>57</sup> An Hien garden house was built at the end of the 19th century, originally the residence of the 18th princess, son of King Duc Duc

The screen is decorated with themes such as Bat Buu (eight treasures). The set of Bat Buu includes a gourd, fan, sword, guitar, book, pen, flute, and cane (Phat Tran). In the book *Cour Supérieur d'Annamite* (Forensic Institute of Annam), the first semester of 1909, Mr. H. Tissot listed a bowl of treasures, including books, Nhu Y Stick, flower baskets, wine gourds, guitars, fans, and canes. Mr. G. Dumoutier in his book *Les Symboles, les Emblèmes, les Accessoires de Culte Annamite* (Symbols, Symbols and Characters of Annam) said that: Bat Buu includes two flutes paired, a pipa, a fan, a flower basket, the book, the letter, the stick, and the gourd. Nevertheless, it is a concept to bring good for people to enjoy all aspects of spirit and soul. As the flower basket symbolizes youth, the sword speaks of the glory of a soldier, and the Khanh shows the ultimate happiness.

In Buddhism, the Bat Buu includes the Dharma wheel, the horn, Bao Cai, Bao Tan, the canopy, the lotus flower, the bowl, the beak, and the continuous string. Sometimes there are more swastikas, four-legged incense burners, an ancient letter, and a bell. "These eight treasures have pearls, gold coins, scrolls (symbol of victory), letters (books), paintings (pictures), jade, a pair of wine cups with rhino horns, and bamboo leaves." Bat Buu is the desire to integrate with the natural world, the goodness, and the fullness.

#### **Themes of nature and people: mountain scenery, houses, people**

The theme of nature and people appearing on the screen is often in the form of variations such as rockeries, *noi an* screen. The screens refer to the image of people in the theme of daily life, in the royal court scene with the king, mandarins standing in front, soldiers holding umbrellas (Figure 47), or recreating the ceremony of the Vinh Quy Bai To

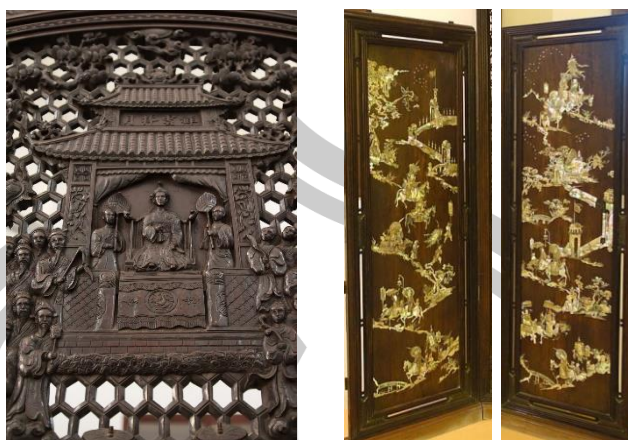


Figure 45 The image of the king and mandarin on the mosaic screen (left)

Figure 46 The honoring ceremony to worship the ancestors on the mosaic screen.

Source: Ho Chi Minh City Museum of Fine Arts (2021)

From the general analysis on the topics of using decoration on the screen and the external and internal projects, a detailed analysis of a screen by Ha Thanh Danh (Figure 49) clarified the artistic value and the concepts of screens against humans. The screen made of vermillion wood and Gold lacquer from 1915 is now kept at the museum of royal antiquities in Hue. The tower's decorative themes still adhere strictly to the classical layout, with the traditional horizontal scroll shape symbolizing wisdom and talent. On the top of the screen is a carved plate with the motifs of two dragons facing the sun, with two phoenixes following the dragon's tail flying in the clouds, symbolizing the harmony between heaven and earth and the son of heaven. The body of the screen is carved with a title consisting of gilded Chinese characters 河清名世 (Ha Thanh Danh The).

พหุมนุ ปณ จิต ชีเว

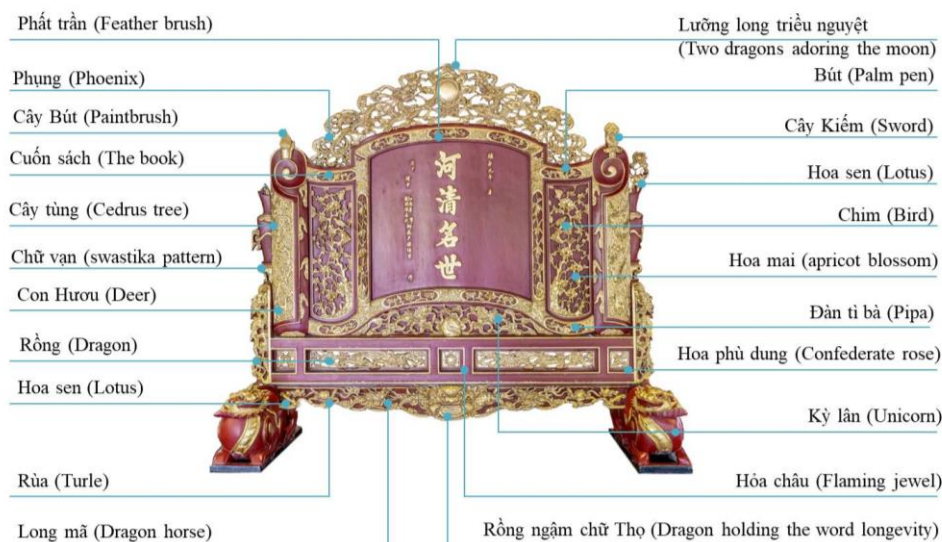


Figure 47 Analysis of decorative topics on the prestigious Ha town at the Hue Museum of Antiquities. Source: Tran. P. A. T (2022)

On the left and right are small letters about the date (spring of Duy Tan's 9th year) and the screen's origin (people under the Ha Trung tri government). The two sides of the book are decorated with the theme of Four Times (Tứ Thời) to create elegance and nobility as apricot blossom tree and pine tree, symbolizing spring and winter exactly as the date is written on the screen. In that natural picture, there is a concept of Confucian philosophy and a combination of the themes Mai Dieu (apricot flower and bird), Tung Loc (the deer and the pine tree), and Unicorn are also exploited in this decoration. The pen represents literature and words. The sword symbolizes wisdom, inner strength, and victory over evil spirits. The background and frame of the screen are embossed with swastika patterns. The layout is spread out into groups of Bat Buu motifs such as a fluttering ceiling, zither, book, and pen. In addition, decorated with chrysanthemums and bamboo trees. The dragon motif is repeated in many places on both sides of the book letter. The two dragons are heading to the fire pearl at the base. Under the base of the screen is a dragon with the word Tho symbolizing a good omen and wishing for long life. The two bases are two unicorns that represent the protection and suppression of weapons. Decorative



motifs and themes converge on the screen, manifesting spirituality, prosperity, authority, strength, desire for good, blessing, fame, education, and longevity.

To sum up, the traditional decorative art of the Nguyen Dynasty screens is self-synthesized in terms of shapes, materials, and decorative motifs. Different uses, objects, and ranks of people in society create richness. The motifs of Dragon, Phung, Ky Lan, Lotus, Mat Nhat, Bat Qua, and Bat Buu do not commonly appear on the screens in commoner's houses. Those motifs are decorated mainly on the screens of the palaces and buildings related to the royal family. In addition, geometric decorative motifs and the quartet also appear because they carry the meaning of good luck and express the owner's wishes. Flowers, leaves, and rattan are used most on the screen to create softness and closeness to nature. This decorative detail adds a soft, unique touch to the original screen. The screen with elaborate decorative art often serves the ruling class as in the royal court or the imperial family. On the other hand, the screen still connects with the folklife through its presence in the garden houses, village communal houses, and ancestral houses. The screens decorated simply with floral motifs in ordinary people's houses are the most popular type of green screen. However, to Hue people, considering the ideology and feng shui, the function of the screen is the same in every space.

## Conclusion

The development of the traditional screen is associated with the development of Hue society during the Nguyen Dynasty. The screen originated from China, but the way of building, decorating, and arranging it in the house followed the Vietnamese concepts. The screen became a symbol for traditional architecture, absorbing the traditional values of previous dynasties. The screen had a rich development and creativity following the natural conditions of Hue. Hue screens also use two to three layers to shield, such as the outdoor screen, the porch screen, and the inner screen to cover the altar. In terms of feng shui and direction, if the house's direction is bad, it is essential to have a screen to bring health to avoid bad things for



the homeowner. This arrangement shows the privacy and delicacy of the Hue people. They avoid the direct gaze of outsiders into the house and show the subtlety in behavioral culture. The *ngoai an* screen combines a shallow pool to create a landscape for people to connect with the garden and the outside nature. The *noi an* screen uses to shield and divide space, creating sanctity for the worship space, an important space associated with the ancestor worship beliefs of the people here. The Hue people attach great importance to education. The Confucian elements are shown quite clearly on the screen from the characteristics of the shape of the book letters, Confucian letters, poetry, and decorative themes to remind their children of their studiousness and love for learning family etiquette. The research results of the researchers and the survey results of the screens in the museum and ten traditional houses in the Nguyen Dynasty period show that the scale and shape of the screens are hierarchical. The scale and form of decoration on the screen depend on society's rank. The specific principles applied on the screen include the symmetrical layout, the height corresponding to the house, the width corresponding to the gate, the genre, and the decorative theme representing Confucianism and Taoism. Sophisticated crafting techniques often served people of high rank in palaces and the imperial places. People's houses often use text motifs and are popularly green screens. Later, elements of royal or folk decoration were also popularized in social life, especially on screens of communal houses, shrines, and places of ritual activities of local people. However, in any form, the screen shows good wishes and ideas about life.

The end of the Nguyen Dynasty was the transition period of modern art, which changed society's concepts and thinking. The shape and function of the screen also gradually changed for many different reasons, which will be analyzed more clearly in the next part of chapter 3.

## CHAPTER 3

### Changes and Re-Imagining Identity of the screen in the modern social context of Vietnam

#### Introduction

The third chapter deals with the factors affecting the change of the screen in the modern social context of Vietnam. Especially with the introduction of Indochina Fine Arts College, it is a premise for artists to find new values in their compositions and form thinking about modern art. 20th-century art in Vietnam underwent great changes from the Western approach to Modern art and experienced two wars against the French colonialists and the American imperialists. These influences significantly changed Vietnamese art in terms of Vietnamese aesthetics and the development of National Art. In the transition to modernity, Vietnamese artists chose the most relevant Western influence, and despite the impact of French art, local and traditional values are aesthetically integrated. This was proven by the introduction of new materials into Vietnam and the modern development of traditional lacquer craft. The modernity of the screen was shown more clearly through the process of Doi Moi. Through re-imagining screen identities, artists and designers created their own identities in their work. This chapter introduces and analyzes some prominent authors and works for the modern screen before and after the Doi Moi to clarify that issue.

#### 3.1 Changes of the screen in the context of modern society

##### 3.1.1 Screen from 1925 to 1945

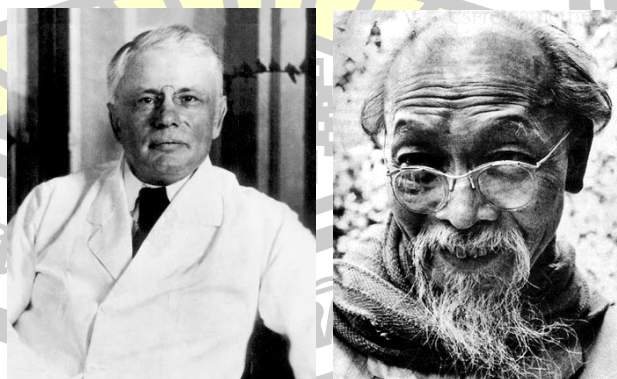
From the end of the 19th century to the first half of the 20th century, France ruled Indochina. Vietnamese society at this time was a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, with many profound changes in economy, politics, and culture. In the second half of the 19th century, Vietnam began to divide and form more classes such as workers, bourgeois, intellectuals, and urban petty bourgeois. A new social structure gradually formed and developed in the complex cultural context, which was the beginning period for the contact of Vietnamese traditional culture with Western culture, through imported French culture, both coercive and voluntary. (Nguyen. V. C, 2016, p.8)

When exposed to Western culture, Vietnamese culture received new features.

Art was formalized during the French colonial period, from 1858 to 1954, when they introduced the Western method of painting and scholarly theories and depicted artists as intellectuals and free thinkers. L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts de L'Indochine was founded by the French in 1924, encouraging experimentation and exploration, marking the turning point when Vietnamese artisans evolved from artisans to artists. (Le. H. H. Q, 2018, p.3).

Fine Arts College of Indochina (FACI)<sup>58</sup> was established on October 27, 1924, as the first fine art school, through the efforts of a French painter, Victor Tardieu (1870- 1937), and Nguyen Van Tho (1890-1973). He was known for his artistic pseudonym Nam Son. After establishing the Indochina Fine Arts College, Victor Tardieu was appointed as the principal, and Nam Son took on the instructor role. On April 25, 1938, the Governor-General of Indochina signed and promulgated a decree to reorganize the Indochina Fine Arts College (The FACI). Since then, the school officially became the College of Fine Arts and Applied Arts.

The establishment of the FACI was within the social framework of westernization and the 1920s drive for modernity. Breaking from the past predictions, some influential political and literary events of the era included: the Private Free School Movement, the blooming of new Romanised Vietnamese, and the rise of individuality against Confucian values as manifested in the new Romanised Vietnamese literature. (Boi. T. H, 2005, p.117)




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<sup>58</sup> Indochina Fine Arts College is the forerunner of today's Vietnam Fine Arts University.

Figure 48 Victor Tardieu (1870-1937), the founder and first Director of the FACL.

Figure 1: Nam Sơn\_ Nguyễn Văn Thọ (1890-1973), co-founder of the FACL.

Source: <https://designs.vn/>

As early as 1923, Nam Son had a draft of the outline of Vietnamese fine arts. It was the first time he mentioned the construction of national and modern Vietnamese fine art. He wrote: "Established a university to train talented artists to maintain the foundation of Fine Arts left by their ancestors, to renovate and create an oriental art with Vietnamese personality".<sup>59</sup>

The school's objectives were to train and foster fine arts, techniques, and architecture for Indochinese artists by combining traditional artists of Indochina countries. Along with guiding local artists to learn new techniques and aesthetic values of the West, the school supported them in promoting their country's traditional artistic identities and values. The proposal from the Acting Director of the Indochina Administration of Education was signed on October 10, 1924, and sent to the Governor-General of Indochina for approval of the "Draft Decree" on establishing the Indochina Fine Arts School. The report also stated that the slogan of the soon-to-be school was "not to deny the traditional art" and to learn "the common basic rules of aesthetics everywhere in the globe".<sup>60</sup>

The FACL inaugurated the most significant aesthetic shift in arts and crafts through its new vision and status for artists. It expanded painting practice so it was on equal terms with the existing tradition in sculpture and set up a distinction between fine and applied arts. It was strongly recommended that the conventional Asian planar perspective be replaced by the teaching of the western linear perspective, thereby creating a modern perception of the visual world. Furthermore, artists - the creators - started to sign their names on their works, an action that revealed individuality in Vietnamese culture, which had not happened before. (Boi. T. H, 2005, p.118)

The teaching content of the FACL was aimed at fostering local artists' practical and applied creative thinking. The curriculum covered three main areas:

Graphics, Painting, and Sculpture: included decorative painting, canvas painting, lacework, embroidery, lacquer practice, furniture design, ceramic surface

<sup>59</sup> Ninh Giang (2021). Painter Nam Son – The eldest brother of Vietnamese Fine Arts. Design and Art Magazine. <https://designs.vn/>

<sup>60</sup> PL & VTMH (2019). “Hồ sơ Mỹ thuật Đông Dương: Chương trình giảng dạy tổng quát từ năm 1924”. Bộ văn hóa thể thao và du lịch. 8. <http://ape.gov.vn/>

decoration, wood carving, metal engraving, decorative sculptures, carpentry, pottery, carving, and jewelry.

Decoration: included decorative and stylized composition, hands-on application based on sketches and interpretations, materials (stone, wood, metal, leather, lacquer, and fabric), and methods and tools applied in different manufacturing situations.

Architecture: was for all students studying painting and sculpture because everything in the art of painting complies with the requirements of architecture.

In addition to practical training, the school also focused on academic issues. The purpose of education was to improve the mind, awaken ideas, stimulate the enthusiasm of artists, and let them understand the noble mission of an artist in society. That goal was achieved through the subjects of aesthetics, art history, anatomy, perspectives, and composition, and completely different from the spatial estimation of traditional oriental art.



Figure 49 Works at the Studio (1930-1931) in Indochina Fine Arts School. Source: Fine Arts Magazine (2021).

On October 22, 1942, the Governor-General of Indochina signed a decree separating the College of Fine Arts, consisting of the main disciplines of painting, sculpture, and architecture, from the School of Applied Fine Arts. In 1937, the school's infancy and problems ended. Mr. Esvarist Jonchère holds the position of principal. In 1938, he focused on developing lacquer art and opened a lacquer faculty. On the other hand, he opened the department of graphics and ceramics. From 1983 to 1943, traditional products such as lacquer became commercial with the school's objectives shifting its focus to applied arts.

Arguably this was the most advanced art curriculum in Indochina at that time. From orientations on modern needs with good tastes and methods to capture the



tradition and preserve the unique identity. While absorbing the world arts, this diverse curriculum connected ethnic and modern elements in art education. This general curriculum soon addressed the teaching of lacquer as a vision beyond its time. It proved that the author of the program, a French, had foreseen the potential of this indigenous art material. In addition, the program was not only for art students to study the history of Western art, especially French art and the Far East art, but also included courses in aesthetics and art history for the public. The social and human significance of the "Victor Tardieu Art Education Program" for the cultural development of Vietnamese society in the process of international integration and cultural interference was very great. (PL & VTMH, 2019)

The college was where the creative method of modern Western architecture was taught. It meant that architecture with drawings opened a new phase of Vietnamese architecture with new creative and design methods and created new architectural works. Besides providing the human workforce in the colonial period (1920-1945), the purpose of the principal Victor Tardieu was to train “a generation of indigenous architects who could temporarily meet the shortage of experts. They can renew the colonial architectural style by creating an architectural style that is both modern and closely associated with Vietnamese culture”. This period had a strong and overwhelming influence of European culture on local culture, creating a “fracture” of traditional Vietnamese culture. This transformation created a turning point in the construction industry in Vietnam. First, buildings with modern functions and techniques appeared. Then there was the emergence of technical and design drawings for functionality and specificity. These techniques contrasted with traditional Vietnamese construction techniques used by traditional builders.<sup>61</sup>

The Fine Arts College of Indochina provided a reliable platform for indigenous artists to master art forms from their own heritage and to utilize ancient mediums as a means of individual expression. This pioneering academy initiated the first epoch of Vietnamese academic painting, encouraging artists to emphasize representations of nature, people and landscapes, together with the country's life, customs, and habits (Manh. H, 2016). The art of this period, like lacquer and silk craft, flourished in a modern direction. This trendy art form often served the bourgeoisie to find uniqueness and fancy in the interior space. The works were still traditional in terms

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<sup>61</sup> Nguyen Manh Tri. (2019). “The First Vietnamese Architects: Who Are They?”.

Architecture magazine. 4. <https://www.tapchikientruc.com.vn/>

of natural beauty through the distinct expression of authors such as Nguyen Gia Tri, Pham Hau <sup>62</sup>, and Tran Van Can.

After the Japanese coup in 1945, the Indochina Fine Arts School dissolved. During its 20 years of existence (1925-1945), the school had trained 149 students majoring in Painting and Sculpture, 50 students in Architecture and 30 students in Applied Arts, and three unfinished courses. Well-known artists who contributed to the Vietnamese fine arts included Nguyen Gia Tri, To Ngoc Van, Mai Trung Thu, and Le Pho. Moreover, the best-known architectures were Nguyen Cao Luyen, Huynh Tan Phat, and Nguyen Ba Lang. They all had typical architectural works still in use today. (Tran. H. Q, 2014)

When the Indochina Fine Arts College was born, the acquisition of European painting techniques was developed, and the graduates found opportunities to show their talents in big cities. Hue was the capital then, so its appeal to the artists was even stronger. Besides the local painter Ton That Dao <sup>63</sup>, other painters once appeared in Hue. They later became nationwide big names in paintings such as Nguyen Do Cung, Nguyen Duc Nung, Pham Viet Song, Nguyen Tien Chung, and To Ngoc Van. Among them were people who taught drawing in high schools, participated in drawing work for monasteries, or painted as a hobby. They and their works inspired the younger generations to pursue painting at that time. However, the important thing was that they created a new cultural atmosphere in Hue in the last years of the Nguyen Dynasty. <sup>64</sup>

Through the historical values left behind, although influenced by Western education, Vietnamese people tried not to assimilate into French culture, and so did Vietnamese artists. They often combined traditional arts and crafts, such as lacquer and silk, with modern French aesthetics in their works as a form of self-preservation. This defiant act created an art style that is still celebrated in contemporary Vietnamese art. The artists of this period often romanticized Vietnam and, at the

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<sup>62</sup> Pham Hau (1903-1994) was born in Ha Dong province, Vietnam. He graduated from Indochina Fine Arts School and was one of the founders of the National School of Fine Arts (1949), the predecessor of this Hanoi School of Industrial Fine Arts today..

<sup>63</sup> Painter Ton That Dao (1910-1979) was born in Phu Cat, Hue into an aristocratic family. He studied at Indochina Fine Arts College, class 6, and was the first principal of Hue National College of Fine Arts (precursor of present-day Art University).

<sup>64</sup> Dang Mau Tuu. (2015). "Hue Fine Arts Flow". Song Huong Magazine.

same time, put their expressions into the context of the people's struggle under French colonialism. The tranquil beauty of women, landscapes, or even idyllic moments in daily life is mainly depicted in the painting as a result of an agricultural ritual and the influence of Confucianism - a moral that focuses on harmony rather than creativity. (Le. H. H. Q, 2018, p.4)

Before 1925, Vietnam's visual arts mainly served religious or decorative purposes with black lacquer on wood, carving on wood, color on silk, woodblock printing, and printing on paper. Vietnamese art in the process of transformation and was formalized after 1885 to 1925, an important milestone in Vietnam's modern history. In the 1930s, due to the bourgeois-democratic revolutionary movements and the ongoing activities of the Indochinese Communist Party, there were many changes in literature and art, realism and romance, art for art's sake, and art for humanity's sake.

Along with the romantic trend, the realist trend in painting and sculpture also developed quite strongly and was almost opposite to the romantic trend. The main theme of this trend was rural life with hard labor. Although the voice denouncing the society was not strong, the realistic author's style partly expressed the mood of protesting against an unjust society.

In Vietnamese painting from 1925 to 1945, from a cultural perspective, the painters of this period researched, discovered, and successfully experimented with lacquer materials. Fine art witnessed changes in all forms in the approach imbued with national traditions combined with modern Western shaping.

The revival of lacquer material became an important movement for artists' work and a new chapter in Vietnamese modern art. Lacquer products inspired visionary French and Vietnamese artists during their training at the Indochina Fine Arts School. At the same time, lacquer work became globally famous as a specialty of Asian art of that era.

The development of the modern screen was recorded through many paintings at the Vietnam Fine Arts Museum. Some valuable modern artworks created in the early 20th century included: a two-sided screen by painter Nguyen Van Bai (1935) with a communion scene in a pagoda in the front and the Four quarters in the back, a two-sided screen by painter Nguyen Gia Tri (1939) with a landscape in the front and a girl in a garden in the back, the screen of Thay Pagoda (1944) by Hoang Tich Tru, the screens with topics such as the pagoda, young girls playing, plants and people in daily life. 'Commonly used materials such as lacquer and etching paint were the traditional materials Vietnamese people used for daily life items. These materials were transformed by artists into materials of painting and decoration,

expressing all artistic emotions and pushing them into the famous Vietnamese lacquer art.'<sup>65</sup>

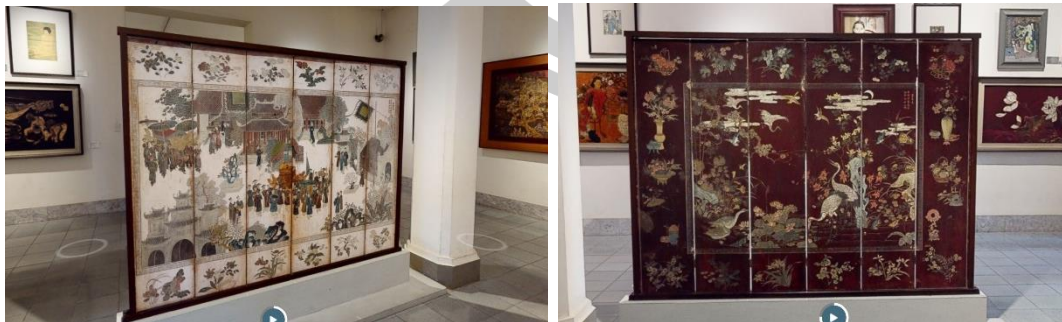


Figure 50 The two-sided screen of painter Nguyen Van Bai (1935) Photo taken from online tour at the museum

The beauty of Vietnamese women was idealized to become an expanded image in the decoration composition. They wore traditional costumes or innovative Ao Dai in harmony with the natural settings, gardens, or festivals. Painter Ton That Dao was a Hue artist. He worked with all kinds of materials such as lacquer, oil paint, and silk. The silkscreen painting by artist Ton That Dao depicted the theme of collective activities with a large number of characters, including men and women, the elderly, and children. However, the image of women wearing Ao dai with many colors seemed to overwhelm the composition of the whole picture. Activities that brought femininity evoked a feeling of joy and warmth. The image of a group of people gathering on *ngoai an* screen was an image representing Hue's traditional architecture: people blend in the garden landscape with verdant trees.



Figure 51 Hong Ha. Silk screen. The beauty of women in the paintings of artist Ton That Dao (12/2018)

<sup>65</sup> Dang Mai Anh (2014). "Face in traditional and modern interiors". <https://quangmt69.violet.vn/>



<https://sdl.thuathienhue.gov.vn/>

Ao Dai culture of Hue girls was shown quite clearly on a two-sided screen for King Bao Dai in 1937, created by a group of Indochina College of Fine Arts students, including Nguyen Gia Tri and Nguyen Duc Nung. For the first time, a new art of painting and engraving appeared in Hue. The motifs were made up of wood carvings in the style of plank carving to print Dong Ho woodblock prints. The screen comprised ten wooden panels of 170x30cm/panel size. The two screens of the temple were two consecutive paintings. The front side was the Ao Dai Festival, and the back side was the Mid-Autumn Festival scene. The screen's content described the daily life in Hue and the North. The development of the modern screen is recorded through many paintings at the Vietnam Fine Arts Museum, which are valuable artworks created in the early 20th century: screen two the face of painter Nguyen Van Bai (1935) Front: Communion scene to the temple, back side: Four quarters; 2-sided screen by painter Nguyen Gia Tri (1939) Front: Landscape, back side: Girl in the garden; The screen of Thay Pagoda (1944) by author Hoang Tich Tru, etc., the screens with topics such as the scene of going to the temple, the young girls in the play scene, the plants and people in daily life, bring joy to familiar.

In the works, the images of *Lau Ta* tower, stone bridge, wooden bridge, lotus pond in Hue style, and seventy-eight Hue girls wearing *Ao Dai* were participating in various activities. The colors and textures on the *Ao Dai* were also different. Each person had a unique look to form a charming picture, an *Ao Dai* festival in a lyrical scene in the land of a holy capital. There was also an image of older women wearing brown four-piece dresses and scarves, a familiar image of northern women's costumes. The scene behind the screen depicted a mid-autumn night in the North. The activities were recreated from the image of children divided into groups of lion dances while carrying lanterns. The screen's background was the carvings of children's toys during the Mid-Autumn Festival used for decoration, such as a paper doctor, paper elephant, paper horse, and lanterns in various shapes. (Tran. D. A. S, 2016, p.328)



Vũ hội áo dài trên bức trăn phong (mặt trước).  
Hiện vật của Bảo tàng Cổ vật Cung đình Huế. Ảnh: Trần Đức Anh Sơn



Cảnh tết Trung thu trên bức trăn phong (mặt sau).  
Hiện vật của Bảo tàng Cổ vật Cung đình Huế. Ảnh: Trần Đức Anh Sơn



Figure 52 Tran Duc Anh Son. Photos taken from the book Hue Style (2016, p.329)

To re-express the poetic value of Confucianism of the ancients, a group of authors from the Indochina School of Fine Arts co-composed a carved painting in 1938 (Figure 56). The screen had a height of 2.8m and a width of 4.5m (when the whole set of 10 panels was still there). It was a two-sided screen. The front side depicted the Imperial City of Hue scene, and the back was a poem in Chinese characters. Currently, at the Hue Museum of Royal Antiquities, the Hue Museum of Royal Antiquities still keeps and preserves four panels of the screen. The screen had the same origin as the siege paintings in the Governor General's Palace (Palace II) Lam Dong. The siege paintings were displayed in the dining room of the French Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City, and the screen appeared in the auction on October 5, 2015, at Sotheby's branch in Hong Kong. All four panels of the screen were made by engraving painting technique.

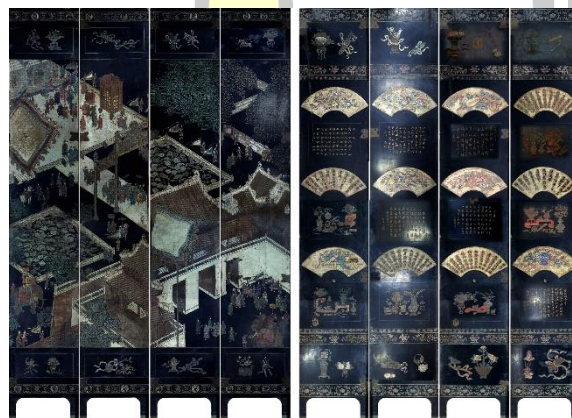


Figure 53 The front and back of the screen engraved paint. Source: Hue Museum of Antiquities (2021)

In his article, researcher Nguyen Phuoc Hai Trung said, "it was the first time he saw the calligraphy of Princess Mai Am through the screen in the early 20th century". The remains of the screen at the Museum of Ancient Royal Antiquities Hue city had 11 cells of kanji and 13 cells of bowls and antiques in the form of still lifes. The framing and frills were carved with stylized lotus and flower leaves. The Chinese poetry section presented five types of script: Khai Thu, Thao Thu, Tien Thu, Le Thu, and Hanh Thu. There were poems from the kings engraved on it: King Le Thanh Tong with one poem engraved, King Tu Duc with 11 poems, Thai Thuan with one poem, Tung Thien Vuong with two poems, Tuy Ly Vuong with two poems, and Bui Van Di with three poems. At that time, the kanji screens were copied by the model maker to engrave on lacquer, so the cells all had the names of the people who "Cung Luc"

(respectfully copied). Although the poems on the screens were the same, the words (calligraphy) carved on each picture were not. The most remarkable thing was that only the screen at Hue Museum of Antiquities had Princess Mai Am's calligraphy. The written word was highly valued in ancient society. It was considered an indirect tool for talent selection. Because above all, the written word expressed the writer's psychology and personality and was the symbol of intellect at that time. The screen was a combination of traditional themes, poetry, Confucianism, and new techniques of the painters at the Indochina Fine Arts School. The motifs of the *Tu Binh* and the *Bat Bao* are also re-imagined on the screen.

Figure 57 is the lacquer screen *Girl in the Garden and Landscape* (1939) by artist Nguyen Gia Tri. The lacquer screen was recognized as a national treasure. The work consists of 8 panels assembled into a rectangular screen measuring 159cm x 400cm. The first side of the screen shows a painting of a young girl in the garden with high and elegant quality. On the splendid and bright yellow background is the image of graceful young women in Ao Dai in a romantic landscape of flowers and trees. The second side of the screen is a landscape painting depicting mint trees in a rural northern garden with rustic and familiar strokes. Two-sided paintings are two unique visual languages for the artist's talent in materials and shaping techniques. The shimmering patches of eggshells, lipstick's red color, gold's brilliance, and the dark background's contrast make the vertical clumps stand out. The screen is currently on display at the Vietnam Fine Arts Museum. The work was recognized by the Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam as a "National Treasure" in 2017.



Figure 54 Front and back of the screen *Girl in the Garden and Landscape* (1939) by painter Nguyen Gia Tri. Source: Vietnam Fine Arts Museum. Visit online at the Museum of Fine Arts (2022).

is a lacquer painting screen *Spring Garden Trung Nam Bac*,<sup>66</sup> another work by artist Nguyen Gia Tri. It shows a uniform classical lacquer style with a 200x540cm size. The picture was painted in four colors red, black, yellow, and white. The main images and motifs are girls, gardens, and a story house. The screen applied pointillism and shapes and brought the whole picture into rhythm with countless white, bright dots, and countless shades of eggshells, and that was an extremely difficult drawing style.<sup>67</sup>



Figure 55 *Spring Garden of Center, South and North Vietnam* by Nguyen Gia Tri, in the Fine Art Museum, Ho Chi Minh City. Source: Tran. P. A. T (March 2021)

Painter Pham Hau applied the themes of landscapes, forests, and plants in his compositions. Although it is a natural scene, the colors in his paintings are warm with brown, yellow, red, and black color. The works painted on the screen were worthy of luxury spaces. He experimented with new colors and materials, allowing for more layers and new effects. Lacquer screen *Landscape of Thay Pagoda* (1936) was the graduation work of Pham Hau at Indochina Fine Arts College. The screen consisted of 6 panels of size 104x153cm/panel. Lacquer screen *Midland landscape* (1936) consisted of 6 panels showing the grounds of an ancient temple. The use of

<sup>66</sup> The screen is currently kept in the Ho Chi Minh City Museum of Fine Arts

<sup>67</sup> Ha Nhi (May 2019). Excerpt from Vietnam Fine Arts Magazine.

<http://tapchimythuat.vn/>



materials and composition gave the screen movement, depth, and light. The yellow color of the banana tree symbolizes wealth and fertility combined with traditional colors such as silver, red, and brown to create a rhythmic texture. (Figure 59)

Figure 60 is the lacquer screen *Nine carp in a lake* (1939). It consists of 4 vertical panels of 50x180cm/panel, made from multi-layer lacquer. The image of carp painted in silver glitters against the deep black river. The work has the concept of vitality and abundance; the carp's image is considered a blessing for prosperity in the traditional oriental concept. Although it is a work of modern art, the author still exploits the carp theme with the traditional concept of folklore.



Figure 56 Lacquer screen Midland landscape (1936)

Figure 2: Lacquer screen *Nine carp in a lake* (1939) by Pham Hau Source: Sotheby's

Figure 61 is three panels screen of *the Vietnam Rainforest* (1937) by Le Van De <sup>68</sup>. Each panel was 252.5x64.5cm. The painter explored new communication tools

<sup>68</sup> Le Van De (1906-1966) was born in Ben Tre, Vietnam. He was one of the first students to study at Indochina Fine Arts School. He is a Vietnamese painter who left his mark on the art of the 20th century.

within the framework of his original form and ventured on the same path as the most outstanding artists like Nguyen Gia Tri, with a subject different from his traditional one. It was a luxuriant and unique botanical scene. The work on the screen created a movable wall in the interior. The artist used purely decorative images such as scrolls and stylized flowers in the foreground. The palette embodied the author's realism of varying shades of gray and the subtlety of the penetrating technique in contrast to the deep blacks and original yellows. The work is reminiscent of the landscapes of the prevalent Art Nouveau style in early 20th century Europe. The painter assimilated his attachment to traditional Vietnamese culture and the modernity of European art to create a unique work (Peintres D'Asie, p.36).



Figure 57 Peintres D'Asie.(2019). Three panels screen of Vietnam Rainforest (1937)  
by Le Van De

Regarding architectural form and interior, it shows that the introduction of modern art and French architecture significantly influenced the screen's compositions. Since 1923, when the French carried out urban planning work in French Indochina, the head was architect Ernest Hébrard <sup>69</sup> - the proponent of the Indochina Style Architecture trend. This new architectural style used decorative motifs of traditional local art to increase artistic value. The common feature of this architecture is the use of indigenous architecture's structural solutions to overcome the disadvantages of weather and climate, which a pure Western architectural model could not. When combining indigenous elements, the houses following French

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<sup>69</sup> Ernest Hébrard (1875-1933) was a French architect and urban designer. He is the director of the French Indochina architectural planning department.



architecture no longer had *ngoai an* screens like traditional houses but changed in a new method. The screen at that time was not only used in the interior and exterior of a house but also became a symbol in some public buildings.

### 3.1.2 Screen from 1946 to 1981

In terms of historical value, this is a period of social instability. In Hue, due to the weakness of the Court, King Bao Dai abdicated in 1945. Some of the mandarins and intellectuals, tired of working as mandarins, retreated into hiding. They built elaborately sculpted Ruong houses, using royal decorative motifs that were previously used only for the court and the royal family. The reinforced concrete construction techniques of the West were introduced to Vietnam, allowing people to build firm houses. Then the modern and urban-oriented architecture in society gradually formed. However, when the war started, the historical values were changed, and so were the architectural complex of Hue, including the screen, which fell into a period of crisis, destroyed, and damaged quite a lot. During 30 years of two wars against the French and the Americans, the Hue urban area was severely damaged and later built and supplemented with many new architectural works, mainly residential buildings, due to the increase in population density.

The period after 1945 was considered the most remarkable transformation of modern Vietnamese art and opened a new era for Vietnamese art. From the core were some painters who worked secretly in the "cultural organizations to save the nation in the pre-insurrection period". Now the whole art world was attracted to the genre of poster painting expressing the people's will to protect the Fatherland's independence and freedom with many different materials. These works directed Vietnamese art into a new path, with a revolutionary outlook on life.<sup>70</sup>

After World War II, the French colonial power declined. Vietnam was divided into two countries in 1954: the Democratic Republic of North Vietnam and the Republic of South Vietnam. The artistic function changed to serve the situation of the two regions. For the North, art was a tool to promote national ideals by depicting images of soldiers, peasants, and laborers in the idealization of revolution and President Ho Chi Minh.

The focus on lacquer as an artistic form grew from the success it gained in colonial days and the intention of preserving tradition for the purpose of a 'national form'.

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<sup>70</sup> Excerpted from Vietnamese Fine Arts in Modern Times (from the 1945 Revolution to the Present)

After 1956, the lacquer industry at the School of Industrial Fine Arts constantly developed, carried the techniques and artistic methods of the painters of the Indochina Fine Arts School, and created new values. In addition to applying the lacquer on the screen, artists also created application products for social life. The applied art was promoted in line with the development of Vietnam's industrial age. During the resistance period, artists painted many different themes of life or fighting. The artistic images were affirmed and historical. The national theme and the fusion between tradition and modernity were seen in the style of expression and the monuments. Sculpture art also developed in the round and embossed statues.

In fine art, subjects like portraits and still lifes were considered inappropriate, and nudity, abstraction, and surrealism were prohibited. Political involvement in the arts divided the art community in North Vietnam. Many artists opposed the unification of social classes. They saw art as a form of showing themselves as social elites and intellectuals, not artisans working for the government. As anti-war sentiment developed in the United States, the Southern government banned pacifism and anti-war activities and considered them antipatriots. The state-approved North's propaganda art depicted war as one of liberation. Soldiers and political figures were portrayed as heroes. (Le. H. H. Q, 2018, p.6)

Trinh Huu Ngoc (1912 - 1997) was a master painter of oil painting. He also experimented with lacquer, but this was probably his only known carved screen. This engraved screen was painted on four panels of size 200x320cm with a red background of the theme: "Capital people welcome the troops to take over". It was completed in 1964. Artist also inherited the painting layout style from Nguyen Gia Tri but used the theme of social reality. The outer of the screen was engraved with modern, stylized motifs from images of flowers, leaves, the activities of soldiers, and girls wearing *Ao Dai*. (Figure 62)



Figure 58 Trinh Huu Ngoc. (1964). Taking over the capital, Son engraved (a four-panel screen). Private Collection, Hanoi

Confucian concepts and philosophies were now saturated in Vietnamese society. In the past, women were often pushed aside and of low societal position. The ultimate goal of this cultural revolution propaganda art was to make the most of female workers and their potential for revolution. The traditional Vietnamese society that valued men made women unacceptable in active roles. In the war, communist officials allowed them to advance and participate actively in the army. During the economic renovation process, artists changed the form and content of propaganda art toward women. It was easy to see the image of a gentle, loving woman in traditional clothes or strong at work in many fine art creations.

This postcolonial modernism can be perceived as participating in the currents of internationalism across the visual arts, literature, and architecture. This then ended in 1975 when the country was publicly united as a socialist country, and the result was the comparatively short-lived imposition of socialist realism as the only authorized mode of public artistic expression during this period. (Nora A. Taylor, 2019, p.14)

After 1975, Vietnam entered a period of recovery, construction, and development in all aspects. The period from 1976 to 1980 opened a new phase of the Vietnamese revolution, a period of fierce struggle of all people on two fronts, including the fight against plots and acts of sabotage and aggression by various types of enemies, building a new life in difficult conditions. It was also the period when the struggle and labor brought to light the heroic bravery and noble qualities of the working people in Vietnam.<sup>71</sup> The country's economy improved significantly and overcame the heavy consequences of the war. The state-owned economy and the collaborative economy in the North continued to consolidate. In the South, the socialist reform abolished the bourgeoisie and private industry and reorganized the production groups.

However, this period is the period of overcoming the consequences of war, so there are still shortcomings. From 1976 to 1980, Vietnam's production and income were not yet guaranteed for social consumption. People's lives and economies still faced difficulties, natural disasters, and enemy sabotage. Therefore, the socialist

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<sup>71</sup> Excerpted from the directions, tasks and main economic and social goals in 5 years (1981-1985) and 80s. (September 2015)  
<https://tulieuvankien.dangcongsan.vn/>

revolutionary line of Vietnam at this time was to build an economy and promote the people's mastery. Vietnam carried out three revolutions, including the revolution in relations of production, science and technology, and thought and culture. The revolution of science and technology was the key. Vietnam combined domestic economic development with expanding economic relationships with foreign countries, linking with the Soviet Union and the socialist community. At the same time, it solved the most urgent economic and social requirements in line with the country's capabilities.

During this period, records on the screen were very limited. Only some works of famous painters in Vietnamese fine arts, especially those still in museums, were preserved for studying screen forms.

After 1975, post-war art historians argued that the last Nguyen Dynasty's artifacts bore Chinese imprints. However, Vietnamese artisans left their distinguishing features while absorbing some Chinese concepts. (Boi. T. H, 2005)

### 3.1.3 Screen after the Doi Moi period from 1982 to the present

The 6th Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam in December 1986 marked an important decision in transforming Vietnam's economy into a market-oriented and global integration under the Doi Moi policy. The Doi Moi policy aimed to improve people's living standards by reducing government intervention in the market, ending the country's international isolation, and overcoming a severe economic crisis.

Regarding people's lives and the construction of facilities, it aimed to improve living standards through housing construction and public works to serve people's convenience. Modern high-rise buildings with fully furnished apartments popped up throughout the urban areas. Vietnam formed urban technical infrastructure systems and social infrastructure to meet the requirements of political, economic, cultural, and social development. The policy focused on boosting agricultural production, increasing the production capacity of consumer goods and exporting goods, and creating more energy sources and raw materials. At the same time, the country added some small and medium-sized equipment and machines for economic activities to promote key industries.

Regarding socialist reform, the state advocated using an economic structure with many components. The socialist economy is dominant, establishing and consolidating socialist production relations to stabilize the economic situation and develop on a healthy and correct basis.

The direction and policy of economic and social innovation affected the development of urban centers in the Central region, creating an urbanization boom in all regions of the country. The multi-sector economy made many changes to the lives of families, especially the emergence of the household economy. The non-state industrial development policy and the loosening of household registration control made urbanization faster, and the migration flow from rural to urban areas increased. (Tran. V. D, 2020, p.84) Regarding function, urban housing was divided according to needs, from the basic level of maintaining living activities to convenience and personal requirements. The change in structure and demand was reflected in the expansion of the functional space of various housing types, typically townhouses, apartments, and villas.

Due to the need for economic development and integration, there were changes in people's lifestyles and activities. The element of personal freedom was emphasized, leading to the change in the screen forms in housing spaces. Modern space goes hand in hand with modern equipment, so traditional styles will not be suitable for these types of architecture. The traditional three-room house was gradually concreted, built with cement mortar, reinforced concrete frame, and industrial tile. The living space and layout principles were still respected and preserved because traditional culture still influenced the Vietnamese community in urban areas.

Rapidly developing housing types broke through the pure simplicity of traditional housing to form new living spaces and aesthetic forms. The house appeared to have more separate spaces with specific characteristics such as classrooms, working rooms, entertainment rooms, and libraries. This period marked many rejections of traditional values, especially in shaping. Since houses followed modern architecture, the traditional screens changed. For example, the screen connected the stairs as a style of French architecture. Simple motifs were decorated on it as accents in front of the house. Hue people also incorporated symbolic green trees as the traditional screen arrangement in the Ruong house. Figure 63 is a type of external screen modified according to modern architecture, just like the traditional screen, which is usually the location of outdoor altars such as worshipping the land, worshipping New Year's Eve, and worshipping ghosts.





Figure 59 The *ngoai an* screen is a variant according to modern architecture influenced by French architecture and indigenous architecture of the 20th century.

Source: Tran. P. A. T (2021)

In the context of globalization, the cultural exchange and integration with the world Vietnam simultaneously took place with positive and negative factors. The European-American cultural and artistic wave increasingly strongly influenced all aspects of culture and artists living in Vietnam, both positively and negatively. That required people to "drain away the mud and bring in freshwater " to promote the advantages and eliminate heterogeneity and hybridization. First, art education is a prerequisite. Knowledge is an essential part of an artist's talent. Understanding this helps them observe more delicately and profoundly and see the problems to come up with new things. Second, acculturation is a law that cannot change within all cultures, including art. Third, cultural identity in all situations must play a fundamental role in development. (Nguyen. V. C, 2016, pp.21-22)

Contemporary art in Vietnam is emerging. Changes around Doi Moi posed new creative challenges for contemporary Vietnamese artists. First, a dominant commercial art market has emerged, delighting foreign visitors with romantic visions of Vietnam. Second, government censorship and regulations on creative expression remain strict as it prohibits any form of art that does not represent the positive side of the regime. The art of "ethnography" depicting the country through an idyllic lens is favored by domestic and international collectors, as a result of which art has become a touristic commodity and is no longer relevant in Vietnamese society. Kraevskaia, 2002, p.362, as cited in). Even in the modern era, rural landscapes, serene surroundings, and beautiful women in traditional clothes are still depicted in a French expressionist style. In the past, famous painters only focused on painting portraits of young women in middle-class families. Today similar motifs are used in a modern direction, and artists can also take advantage of it to commercialize their paintings.

Artistic autonomy increased during this reform, and the waning of Socialist Realism provided greater flexibility in subject matter and style. Through the development of an art market, there were new options for exhibiting art to attract consumers and expand art production. Furthermore, artists began to disassociate themselves from the strict national doctrine, preferring, instead, to express their individuality through the adoption of new media and exchange exhibitions.

In most of the works written on Vietnamese fine art, Doi Moi acts as a harbinger of the transience of contemporary art in Vietnam. Doi Moi is a landmark that describes not only the effects of an integrated global economy but also the corresponding transformation of the visual arts as a response. Vietnamese painting in the 90s revolved around individualism, unrestrained creativity, freedom of expression, and emotional openness.

The early 1990s saw an amplification of village craft traditions such as ceramics and basketry, paper-making, and lacquer. This did not include what we can classify as fine arts, such as painting and sculpture, predominantly produced in the art schools and studios of the urban centers of Ha Noi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Hue. As the economy prospered, so did the demand for luxury goods. After decades of state-controlled collective factories, families that had created goods for generations before the revolution could return to their craft industries. (Nora A. Taylor, 2019, pp.8-9)

At this time, abstract painting art began to appear in Vietnam. This new art advocated artistic expression away from the socialist realism that dominated popular art since 1975. Painters and designers fully exploited abstraction as a method to sharpen their skills. They were inspired primarily by local observations, integrated the ever-changing urban space, and corresponded to social issues faced as Vietnam entered globalization. Consumption activities become a commercial market customers easily find suitable works of art for new hotels, restaurants, and office space.

The gradual opening of the country to tourism allowed artists access to the outside world, which may enable a more comprehensive array of changes in artistic practices than the official Doi Moi policy. Unquestionably, the sense and reality of accelerating processes of globalization in the 1990s animated qualitative changes in the socioeconomic structures that facilitated and even produced “contemporary art” worldwide (Nora A. Taylor, 2019, p.26). The screen was mass-produced by industrial methods and served the mass. However, the character representing this period's aesthetic design was unclear. It could be a creative synthesis of many individuals, and that creativity was based on the norms of production. Some artists and designers chose their theme and design style based on client tastes.

As globalization accelerated in the 1990s, artists expressed an ambivalent relationship to contemporary art's very conditions of production, often embracing new routes of mobility and access to art markets while at the same time critiquing growing social and economic disparities and the cultural impacts of neoliberalism. As such, the relationship between "Vietnamese art" and "globalization" has taken different forms throughout history. (Nora A. Taylor, 2019, p.26)

### **3.2 Re-Imagining Identity of the screen in the context of modern society**

#### **3.2.1 Theoretical foundations of modern art**

Culture and cultural interference in Vietnamese architecture and art from the end of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th century have shown a unique cultural symbiosis. It is the self-regulation and self-change of the attitude of French architects from completely imposing to accepting to adapting. On the Vietnamese side, there is a corresponding change in attitude from being forced to accept because of being forced to admit to fusion, and finally to adapting efforts when actively seeking to integrate modern elements acquired from the West.

While Vietnamese Socialists were motivated by nationalism, evident in works displayed in the State Fine Arts Museums, it was arguable that the formation of Vietnamese aesthetics over the 20th century was driven toward modernity. While some aesthetic values were imposed by institutionalized guidelines, they were often adapted by Vietnamese artists and reworked in unique ways. The colonial influences were neither uniform nor inevitable but shaped by the specific contexts in which they emerged. As such, concepts of beauty and creativity are marked by changes in aesthetics from one era to another. (Boi. T. H, 2005, pp.2-3)

In modern society, there is no hierarchy, division, status, or class distinction, a democratic and equal lifestyle is created. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the advent of industrial production significantly changed the aesthetic views of living things and means of living. The printing press appeared to facilitate the sublimation of engineering and the graphic arts, and other machines also produced a series of large-scale media products. The industrial revolution was associated with mechanical manufacturing and mass production, gradually replacing the traditional single-piece manual method. On industrial products, people also paid attention to the use, structure, and materials, or a mixed combination between handicraft art and industrial products, between visual arts and products. The beauty that industrial aesthetic science aimed for lay in the organic relationship with the structure's rationality, the manufacturing's perfection, the convenience in use, the overall harmony, and the economy. The product itself must have the expressive power to evoke aesthetic emotions in the process of use.

On the way to find beauty in trendy industrial goods, industrial production was formed. Human beauty became more and more perfect. Industrial aesthetics was born on the foundation of applied art.

### 3.2.2 The spiritual meaning and applicability of the screen

According to the applicability, the screen in the interior space of houses always emphasizes the functional factor to divide or change space morphology. Regarding the concept of spirit, the screen helps neutralize, overcome unfavorable factors in the living space, and adjust the advantages and disadvantages of the architecture. When functional factors are achieved, a house interior space with a screen will bring multiple values to the building.

The *noi an* screen used to divide the house space will have mobility and flexibility, creating the value of functionality in the interior. For large or small residential spaces, the participation of the screen can transform the space into closed or open conventionally according to the needs and purposes of use of the space.

When modified, it can also create many solutions, purposes, suitable shapes and materials in new spaces. It can effectively separate sound and light when combined with the green element or integrated with desks and bookshelves. Based on the space environment, interests, and screen intentions, there is a variety of functional factors. (Ta. M. Trang, 2020, p.74)

The role of the screen changed based on human needs. It had different functions in each period, especially since this product was always in motion, but it still retained the original mobility value: an easy-to-use, convenient divider in each screen space.

### 3.2.3 Artistic Characteristics of the modern screen

The screen connects to the most intimate interior spaces of the interior and acts as a piece of furniture as a partial partition. The screen straddles the line between art and decoration. In the early stages, the groups of artists and designers thought that art was collective and cooperative. Their aesthetics did not distinguish between applied art and fine art. Some screens were the convergence of many artists in the same painting as the "Ao Dai dance", and "Tran Phong engraved paint" (as described above). Therefore, the screen was a perfect object to convey artistic goals in composition and its aesthetic role in living space.

After the Doi Moi period, the screen design problems made the designers of applied art grasp many elements of shape, decoration, materials, and functions to form the unique artistic value for this product. At this time, when the screen was put in the interior space, it acted as an intermediary between art and architecture.

The form of the *noi an* screen was changed by the influence of social development trends, the customs of different regions, and the homeowner's concept of use and behavior. The traditional screen depended on or belonged to established concepts and norms. Today, shaping has been "open" to many forms to satisfy social tastes. It is the designers' role to create an applied art product (Dang. M. A, 2015, p.47). Therefore, the shape structure of the modern screen must be evaluated based on forms and applied principles of the design process. Variant shapes are used quite a lot in modern society. (Figure 64)



Figure 60 Sen embossed screen (2009) and 2-sided lacquered screen (2008), side 1: Home, side 2: Sen. Source: Dang Mai Anh

Screens have a more complex relationship than mere aesthetics. The screen has to be considered for its form and possible meaning to emulate the flexibility of structured space in the interior. The folding screen is a structural device in the layout to show the interior of functional rooms such as the living room, bedroom, kitchen, and space divider.



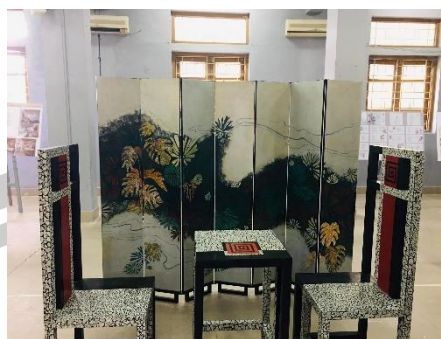


Figure 61 Lacquer screen and interior in the exhibition hall of Hue University of Arts.

Source: Tran. P. A. T (April 2020)

Unlike the traditional screen, the decorative theme of the modern screen is more extensive. There are two schools, using textures to decorate and not using decorative motifs.

The school of patterns often exploits creative artistic elements about nature, people (usually women's images), and social contexts. The screen often uses many images in composition, many types of patterns, or many themes. The images of people are often stylized, depicting human activities in space. On the subject of nature, most landscapes, flowers, and leaves are common themes on modern screens.

The school of not using patterns or limiting decorative motifs means that the design elements used before, especially in the decade of feudal artisans, have no place in modern times. The new product version with new design, technique, and materials is expected to attract market and economic growth. It is promoted by market culture than aesthetics. The screen can be a material that makes up a decorative element, such as glass treated with color or creating a surface effect. Bamboo and rattan forming a simple array of materials, trees, or cabinets can also become a decorative element screen without decorative details. This design often uses basic shapes, period lines, and decorative arts with colors and rhythms.

In addition, cultural themes, festivals, and themes from people's lives in all regions of the country are also exploited. The beauty of the H'Mong people in a market in the highlands is conveyed on the screen by the designer (Figure 66). The elements of folklore and traditional painting of villages are also new approaches to the modern screen, creating opportunities to combine traditional and modern languages.



Figure 62 Practical exercise on making a screen using lacquer materials by students of University of Industrial Fine Arts (2018). Source: University of Industrial Fine Arts

Modern screen layouts are often more liberal, with the dominant images creating the main highlight on the screen. Basic shapes, applied in a stylized form, create visual and color effects.

In the Webinar session themed "Awakening Tradition" on August 24, 2021,<sup>72</sup> designer Tran Thao Mien's presentation was quite impressive on the topic of "Static corner" (Figure 67). The screen with the theme of "Static corner" won the first prize in Vietnam Design Week 2020 in Ho Chi Minh City by Tran Thao Mien in December 2020. This work consists of a three-screen combined with a bronze table with legs made of indigo-dyed wood and sedge mats with different shapes that can add or decrease to suit each space. This product can be customized and put in different places indoors and outdoors. The meaning of the work is the connection between humans and nature in a customized way, building a language set with simple images of the moon, clouds, wind, water, and mountains. The stylized mountain image is shown on the screen, and the human image is shown on the sedge mat. The main material of the screen is the dyed fabric of the indigenous people in the Northwest mountainous region of Thai Binh. Modular design is easy to disassemble, assemble, and easy to move. It is both functional and a work of art.

<sup>72</sup> Webinar theme "Awakening Tradition" 24/8/2021

<https://www.facebook.com/vietnamdesignweek/videos/904524070138601>

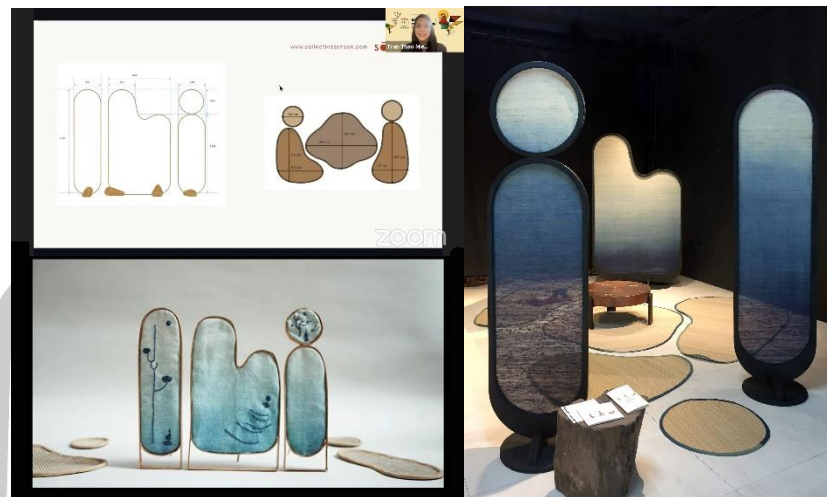


Figure 63 Binh Phong Theme " Static corner ". Source: Vietnam Design Week (August 2021)

Modular assembly forms are used a lot because of their flexibility to move, easy-to-change positions on the same product, and users can create more themselves. (Figure 68)



Figure 64 Lacquer screen, assembled in modul form, designed by students of the University of Industrial Fine Arts. Source: Ta. T. M. T (2019)

Traditional materials are still used in the *noi an* design as wood, rattan, bamboo, and cloth. Modern materials will develop according to the technology and techniques of each period. Modern materials commonly used for screens are iron, aluminum, stainless steel, glass, and composite.

Through many stages of development, wood materials are familiar in creating screens. In traditional residential architecture, wooden screens were often used due to the harmony with the structure of the building. Single-panel wooden screens were often intricately carved and combined with other materials. Other materials also add sophistication to this material. Currently, the screen made of industrial wood is quite popular, but there are advantages and disadvantages when applied to space. Industrial wood screens are easy to produce when cut and shaped by CNC technology. It is easy to produce, low cost, and easy to shape. However, the drawback of the industrial wood screen is the lack of aesthetic depth, and the use value is not high (Ta. M. Trang, 2020, p.74). However, industrial wood materials can make the production process faster and more flexible in the wood grain surface design. Designers have a wide choice of wood colors to match the screens and the partitions.

In the market today, many interior screen screens are made from rattan, bamboo, and sedge, with diverse designs. The popular type is the panel type, with a rustic and simple look. This material is often produced by craft villages or combined with manufacturers to create products on a larger scale. Artists or designers use traditional knitting techniques to create knots and patterns or mix multi-colored bamboo slats to create beautiful patterns. Themes and motifs can be printed directly on the bamboo curtain with the theme of Four vases or Four quarters. The screen frames are flexible in terms of materials, and bamboo frames can be replaced with wooden frames. Rattan and bamboo are friendly materials, easy to construct and shape, and are popular materials today (Figure 69). They are used in residential interior spaces due to their high decorative characteristics. This material type is suitable for nature-oriented interior styles such as Tropical, Country, and Vintage.

พหุ มั ฒ น์ ปณั ฑิ ต์ ชี เ ว





Figure 65 Bamboo and rattan screen at the store (left) and construction process at Phuong Nam Bamboo and Rattan Company's workshop. Source: Tran. P. A. T (June 2022)

In the 1960s, plastic material became popular in the production of consumer goods, and plastic screens were dyed and knitted to create decorative images. However, this type of screen is not durable, so after the 1990s, consumers also rarely used it.

Metal screens such as gold, silver, copper, and iron are precious and durable over time. Gold and silver are used to make the screens for kings with small proportions and sophisticated decorative elements with high artistic value. Currently, the use of gold and silver for the screen is no longer available. Instead, copper and iron are preferred when combined with other materials to create a strong effect and are easy to shape and suitable for different modern spaces (Ta. M. Trang, 2020, p.75). In addition, some materials such as aluminum, stainless steel, and gold-plated paint are also used by designers to create a modern style because they are easy to create space and have fast construction time.

Bendable iron material creates vivid shapes, easily expressing the theme of screen composition. Images of sails and swimming fish (Figure 70) are shown through the front works of students of the School of Industrial Fine Arts. Stylized motifs from simple shapes or improvisations from interwoven color arrays create a harmonious composition. In addition to iron materials, stainless steel is the most popular material today because of its low corrosion properties. The stainless steel surface is bright and glossy, which is very suitable for luxurious spaces. Screens made of this material can shape with many themes. The stainless steel plate can be CNC cut to create



textures. The screen wall will have a block, convex, large size because it can be connected.



Figure 66 Practical exercise on making a screen using lacquer materials by students of Hanoi School of Industrial Fine Arts (2018). Source:

<http://mythuatcongngghiep.edu.vn>

Glass material is popular in modern architecture. Glass can be applied in many spaces (Figure 71). Glass partitions help the space to receive light, and the materials have a waterproof feature, so it is also very suitable for the bathroom space. Interior designers also use these materials to develop patterns on the surface to create works of art. Glass frames use a variety of materials such as wood, iron, aluminum, stainless steel, and composite.

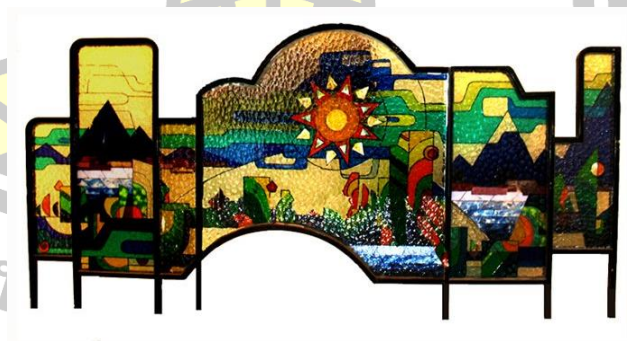


Figure 67 Practical exercise on making a screen using glass material by students of Hanoi School of Industrial Fine Arts. Source: Dang. M. A (2015)

### 3.3 Painters and designers have become representatives of Vietnamese identity through modern screens

It can be said that in each period, the creative styles of artists and designers changed, conveying aesthetic forms, talents, or individuality in their works. All images had a history that contributed to their meaning. When analyzing images from the past, it is necessary to be aware of the current codes at the time of the creation. They might have very different meanings to contemporary audiences. This section begins with a critical statement about image analysis: "examples of early naturalistic art suggest that images are as much a fundamental part of the human psyche as storytelling" (Lacey, 1998, p.123, excerpted from *Image And Representation*. J.A.H. Khatri review).

In the early stages of modern art, Nguyen Gia Tri became a figure representing modern Vietnamese visual art. With flying tricks and bold colors, he has harmonized the two cultures of East and West with knowledge and skillful technique. The inspirations for his compositions on the screen are often people and landscapes of the North. Because of his love of traditional materials, his modern lacquer screens have a unique style. Painter Nguyen Van Chien, Deputy Head of the Association of Fine Arts Critics, said: "Painter Nguyen Gia Tri is a pioneer in research and creation, bringing traditional painting materials, which are used to decorate, into lacquer materials. He was the one who brought lacquer to the top. He is revered as the head of the famous quartet of Vietnamese painting in the early 20th century, including "Nhat Tri, Nhi Lan, Tam Van, Tu Can". His lacquer world is both real and virtual, reflecting precious pigments and evoking an endless desire for beauty.<sup>73</sup> It can say that "the representation here is the extent to which categories use to represent social groups - this is addressed herein by examining stereotypes" (Nick Lacey). His frontal works became a template for the following group of artists. That follows and is more successful in exploiting traditional materials. In a quote from *Fine Arts Magazine* dated February 1, 2021, about lacquer in Nguyen Gia Tri's studio, Nguyen Gia Tri conveyed the methods and techniques of rendering a lacquer painting: "Do research, draw carefully and in detail are good, but when composing, you have to keep it simple, keep the essentials, and the necessary details in a large array to the whole composition. Creating pictures does not mean enlarging or copying materials. The important thing is to find beauty and clarify your creative intentions. From studying the actual notes to sketching and implementing the artistic intentions, to moving to paint is the process of feeling the visual beauty. It has to be done well in

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<sup>73</sup> Minh Hue.(June 2018). "Nguyen Gia Tri is a pioneer painter in Vietnamese lacquer creation". Vietnam News Agency News Magazine. <https://baotintuc.vn/doi-song-van-hoa/>

sketching, according to the size of the body, then sculpting on the body, mixing paint, expressing the image, annealing the paint, grinding, polishing, and perfecting a continuous process throughout". It shows that the artist is very interested in the technique of the steps shown in teaching to the next generations of artists.

Through the works of each period, people's aesthetic tastes are understood. The images of the natural environment and landscape or the daily social activities of people reflect truthfully. In other words, realism is a form of representation considered closest to reality. The image of women in the works represents the rejection of other Confucian thought that previously only valued men in feudal society, and the women also represented the beauty of Vietnamese people. A new ideology is a new development of culture in modern society.

In addition to the screen works from the early stages of modern art, such as Nguyen Gia Tri and Pham Hau, later painters and designers are still making significant contributions to creating new values for the modern screen. Designers are trained in both artistic and technical fields and focus on applied art's values in life. The screen developed in the interior has become a component linking the furniture inside, showing a unified style in harmony with the overall space.

The process of international integration and the effects of cultural import are a big challenge for artists and designers in the process of finding their own identity without losing their national identity. In the contemporary period, the trend of returning to tradition has attracted more and more attention from painters, designers, and architects.

Dang Mai Anh is the vice principal of the Hanoi School of Industrial Fine Arts. It can say that she is a representative of the transition between traditional and modern design in the contemporary period. She plays the role of an application designer exploiting visual language in traditional lacquer paintings. The number of works on her screen is not as many as other artists, but her love for traditional lacquer makes her works exude lightness and sophistication. Modern shape in the form of a variant screen, square and round lines are harmoniously combined. The themes of nature, especially the lotus image, are used effectively in her compositions. Bright colors differ from those of early modern art painters. In addition, her field of research has cultural values. For example, the document on Vietnam's decorative screen art is essential in preserving the cultural values of the Nguyen Dynasty fine arts. Through the study of the screen, it is clear that the spiritual values left by the ancients through the concept of spirituality and feng shui.

Painters and designers have also gradually created their own identity by employing traditional elements to transform into modern society. Representatives at this stage can mention Phan Hai Bang and Do Huu Triet, born and raised in Hue with

a passion for traditional materials. Do Huu Triet's original compositions were mainly based on preserving French art on the architecture of Hue Ancient Capital. Until now, his works are more applied, especially on the screen. He used traditional glaze crafting techniques combined with lacquer techniques to create unique glazed lacquered screens.

Through some pictures of lacquer material screens of students majoring in Lacquer Painting at Hanoi School of Industrial Fine Arts, it shows that the young generation has a new look in composition. The daily activities, customs, and folk festivals are also topics in the modern screen design. The combination of modern and traditional materials is also a unique creation. Although the screen is mainly made of lacquer material, when combined with a curling iron, glass, or plastic, it forms a variety of designs. The images for the main subject gradually become basic geometric lines, reducing the realistic details like the previous realism movement. Artists and designers have shown that the more modern, the simpler it is in form.

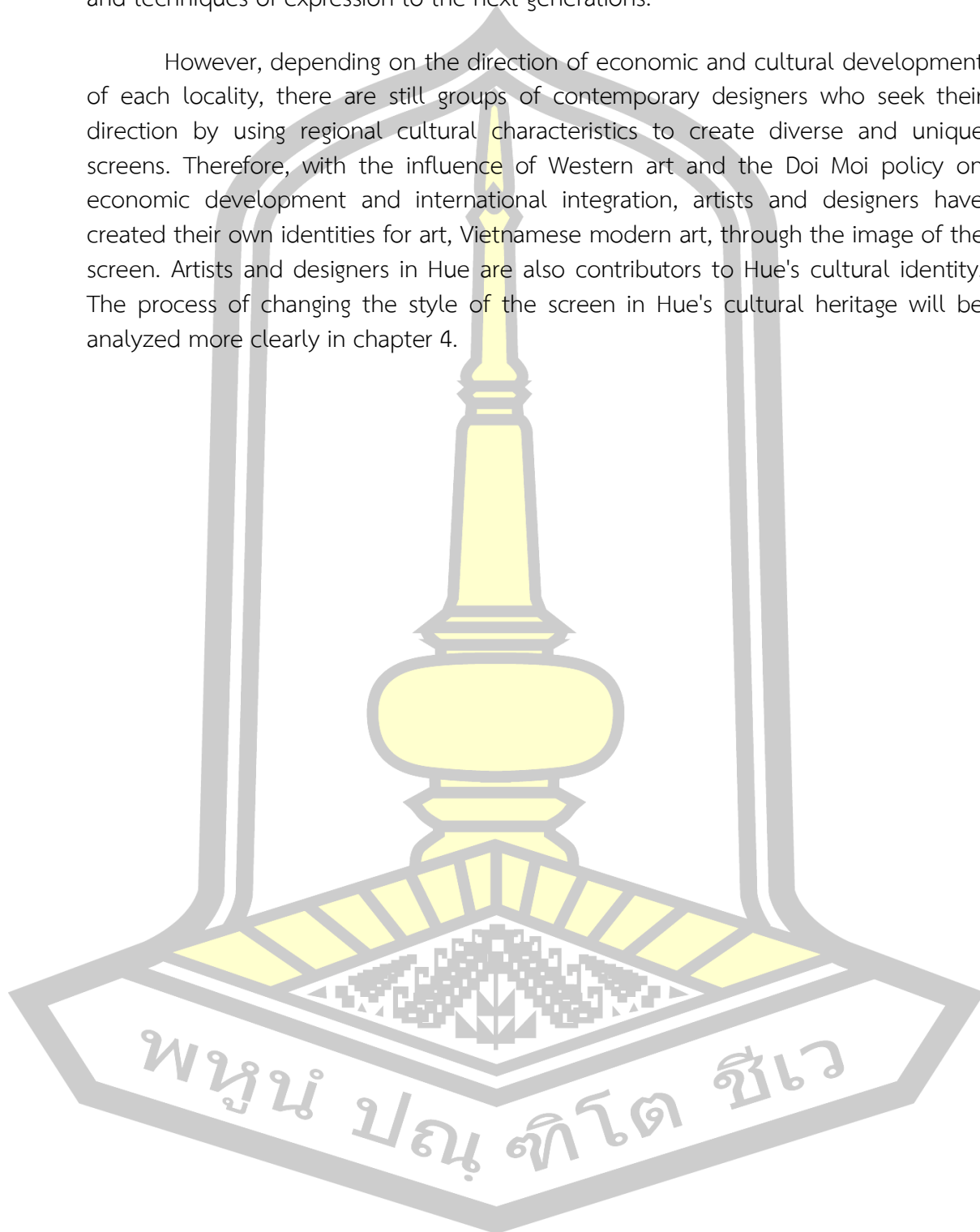
## Conclusion

In the modern period, due to social circumstances, the war's aftermath, and especially the influence of Western art, traditional screens' forms and concepts changed to adapt to social context. Vietnamese painters and designers are well-trained at colleges and universities in fine arts and design. In the pre-renovation period, the group of painters at Indochina Fine Arts College was provided with an art education foundation to connect the nation with the modern and absorb the world's art. The *noi an* screen became the art transmission language of artists. Modern screens are often simple and thematic in the direction of realistic and romantic art. Confucian philosophy is saturated in people's lives, so when decorating on modern screens, it is replaced with images from nature, landscapes, festivals, activities, and people, especially women in traditional dress. The original artisans, painters, and designers still used manual shaping methods, and the mosaic technique was replaced by lacquer and paint techniques. They developed traditional arts such as lacquer and silk with a modern French aesthetic. The most remarkable artwork was the expression of lacquer screen works of Nguyen Gia Tri.

After Doi Moi, the screen was not only a work of art but also a product applied in living spaces. Painters and designers of this period developed the screen in the direction of abstract and social realism. The screen no longer had the concept of a social class but became a commercial product suitable for many objects in many spaces. The screen design styles and shapes were diverse. In screen art, there was a search for new materials, a combination of art and technology. Their contributions

were great in maintaining the national cultural identity and passing on the methods and techniques of expression to the next generations.

However, depending on the direction of economic and cultural development of each locality, there are still groups of contemporary designers who seek their direction by using regional cultural characteristics to create diverse and unique screens. Therefore, with the influence of Western art and the Doi Moi policy on economic development and international integration, artists and designers have created their own identities for art, Vietnamese modern art, through the image of the screen. Artists and designers in Hue are also contributors to Hue's cultural identity. The process of changing the style of the screen in Hue's cultural heritage will be analyzed more clearly in chapter 4.





## CHAPTER 4

### Assessment of the current situation, the process of style transformation, and application solutions of the *noi an* screen in the world cultural heritage Hue Ancient Capital

#### Introduction

The fourth chapter assesses the actual situation of the style transition of the screen from traditional to modern in Hue city. This section analyzes the screen's transformation from handicraft to industrial products, and indoor functions into travel products based on Hue people's taste and daily life, aesthetic and material design principles. As a world heritage city, Hue sets goals for conservation and promotion based on traditional artistic and cultural values along with developing economy and tourism. This chapter also evaluates the role of the *noi an* screen based on the product design process and the application solution of the screen in contemporary life

#### 4.1 The current situation and the process of style transformation of the *noi an* screen in Hue city

##### 4.1.1 Current status of traditional screens in Hue ancient capital - a world cultural heritage city

Hue city has affirmed its position in culture, politics, and humanity to the country, the region, and the world. This was demonstrated by the fact that Hue was recognized as "Vietnam's typical Festival City" (2007), "ASEAN Cultural City" (2014), "ASEAN Environmentally Sustainable City" (2014), and "National Green City" (2016). However, many challenges arise for Hue when preserving and developing the environmental landscape of the historical and cultural land in the face of the explosion of modern urbanization. At the moment, Thua Thien Hue is continuing to develop and strive to successfully achieve the goal of becoming a municipality in 2025 by preserving and promoting its cultural values and identity.

Urbanization of Hue city has been promoted more and more and created many changes in the economy, culture, and society. Since then, those factors have created favorable conditions for Hue city to preserve and promote the value of cultural heritage, including those of the Nguyen Dynasty. Due to economic development, people now can pay attention to restoring and embellishing royal

heritages, restoring worshipping objects, and diverse offerings. However, besides the positive results, the current urbanization process has dramatically affected the heritage of the Nguyen dynasty. Overall, it seems that the current urbanization development situation in Hue city is very worrying. Modern buildings popping up in the conservation zone of Phu De, Hue city is an intricate problem that the departments in charge of conservation and management must solve.

Screens still exist in many traditional architectures, especially garden houses, but the number of screens is decreasing. Many historic *ngoai an* screens were majority rebuilt because the old screens were destroyed, and the details were no longer the same as the original. The shape, structure, and proportions were changed when the screen was renovated. The screen size was too big or too small compared to the architecture, and the color lacked harmony with the overall house. Therefore, Feng Shui principles did not work as the original builder intended. Many new screens were built according to modern architecture and simple decorative arts, and they dropped Nguyen Dynasty royal symbols such as dragons, phoenixes, and dragon horses. Some screen structures changed through many restorations, and the rockery mosaic details were peeled and damaged. Flower pots replaced the Be Can and rockery elements. The garden area was shrinking, and the appearance of architectural works was progressively changing.

People's daily life gradually overwhelmed the living room and worship space. Over time, children and grandchildren are born and grow up, so the house area has to be divided for each family member, and even the living space must be split using temporary dividers, partitions, or curtains. The *noi an* screens were removed or moved to other locations to divide the living space for family members. In these houses, some new structures will be converted into living spaces for new families or space dividers for contemporary use. From Hue people's point of view, the family worship space should be the most solemn. The main house is still used as a worship space, shared by family members on special occasions such as Tet holidays, worshipping ancestors and clans. This place is like the common house for members to gather, maintaining the family's traditional cultural values. Therefore, the existence of the traditional cultural elements is still parallel with the change in modern society.

At An Thuong princess's palace, except for the main house preserved for ancestor worship, the outbuilding had changed in structure and function. The outbuilding area was small, so the owner divided the space with glass partitions on both sides to make a bedroom. In front of the altar in the middle, there were curtains instead of screens to cover the altar and facilitate air circulation. In addition, on the worship grounds, there were three more blocks for brothers and descendants of the family to live together.



Figure 68 The outbuilding in the courtyard worships Princess An Thuong and Mrs. Ha Thi Nhu Mai, the house owner (right).

Source: Tran. P. A. T (June 2021)

Several studies addressed the loss of the screen. Due to the war, the diaphragm, the couplets, and the screens were stolen, burned, or decayed. In some other cases, by not knowing the value of these precious antiques, the palace owner sold them to antique dealers. The great loss of artifacts and couplets changed the palace's interior, degraded the traditional beauty, the studious spirit, and the appreciation of the literature of the ancient royal families. Hue has a tropical climate with a long rainy season and a long river, so it is often flooded. The impact of nature influences the maintenance of houses and furniture. Ancient architectures were mainly made from specific wood materials, and even the best types of wood with the highest water resistance will also be damaged, so wooden screens cannot avoid that.

According to the research by Nguyen Ngoc Tung (2020), some traditional houses were converted for business services or road expansion, causing the disappearance of screens, fences, and its original gateway.

Dr. Tran Van Dung (2020) research surveyed 60 of the Nguyen Dynasty's palaces, and the result was that the external project screens in 48% of the palaces were still preserved, and 52% no longer existed. Currently. It meant that only 29

palaces still kept the screens, including the Chinese tea screens in Nghia Quoc Cong, An Thuong princess, the screens with roofs in Kien An Vuong, Kien Thai Vuong, My Hoa Cong, and Tung Thien Vuong, horizontal scroll screens in An Hoa Cong, An Thanh Vuong, Cam Xuyen District Vuong, Princess Dien Phuc, Gia Hung Vuong, Ham Thuan Cong, and Hoang Hoa Thuan Vuong, and rockery screen in Ngoc Son Cong Chua. The old screens were kept almost intact in the palace of Tuy Ly Vuong, Tung Thien Vuong, and Vinh Tuong Quan Vuong. Moreover, the *Be can* behind the screen was intact in Vinh Tuong District Vuong, Tuong An District Vuong, and Princess Ngoc Son.

Besides the palaces, Hue garden houses are also considered valuable assets contributing to Hue's cultural characteristics. The Garden house is also one of the components of Hue's cultural heritage because of its history and existence associated with the process of urbanization. Many garden houses were restored and preserved quite well by the state and local authorities. After the restoration, these garden houses often develop sightseeing tours for tourists to explore and experience.

An Hien garden house at 58 Nguyen Phuc Nguyen, Kim Long wards is a typical example (Figure 73). Before 1895, An Hien garden house's first owner was the 18th princess of King Duc Duc. This place was the princess's residence at that time. However, due to the unique circumstances of each owner and the historical context, the house changed hands many times. Currently, this garden house is a favorite destination of many domestic and foreign tourists. There are often musical activities such as Ca Hue to serve tourists.

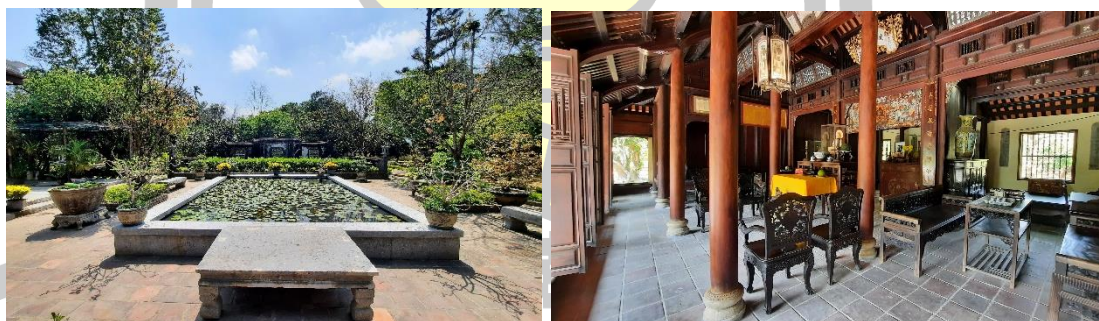


Figure 69 Screen and *Be Can* in An Hien Garden House. Source: Tran. P. A. T (June 2021)

Some houses are privately owned. They used to have a large campus, but because of family circumstances and financial problems, many houses were divided between children and grandchildren or sold, and the main house area became narrow, dilapidated, and not repaired.

Figure 74 is a garden house built during the Khai Dinh period at 57/2 Nguyen Cong Tru street. The inside of the house is the style of Ruong Cot architecture. The



outside is covered with a system of walls and French decoration. The house is currently owned by Mrs. Mai. This main house has only been used for worship since her grandfather's time (he was a martial mandarin in the Nguyen Dynasty). The house was renovated to expand the space as the owner changed the column structure. The *noi an* screen no longer exists while the brick *ngoai an* screen deteriorates and is covered with dense trees. The screen of this house has the form of a horizontal scroll with the word *Tho* on the main body. In the house space, there was a fairly modern decoration, showing that the house is a combination of East-West style. An architectural form developed during the reign of King Khai Dinh, also known as Indochina architecture.



Figure 70 The back of the screen (left), inside the house (middle), Mrs. Mai in the front of the main house (right). Source: Tran. P. A. T (June 2021)

For economic development and personal income, some traditional houses are also converted into many other functions to serve business and trading needs. Figure 75 is the screen in the house of Ruong. This space is converted into a business space, a form of functional transformation commonly seen in Hue. The *ngoai an* screen in Ton Nu Vien was retained as a typical highlight, a typical symbol of Hue.



Figure 71 The Ngoai An Screen at Ton Nu Vien Coffee, 298 Phan Chu Trinh. Source: Tran. P. A. T (June 2021)



The formation of new urban areas and a modern lifestyle also mean the loss of heritage values and the tradition of garden houses. The conversion of functions in the house also removed the *ngoai an* screen. Most information on ancient *noi an* screens was rarely brought up by researchers. The *noi an* screens mentioned above are mainly kept in the Museum of Hue Royal Antiquities, including the silver screen of Phuc Loc Tho Toan (used in the Nguyen palace at the beginning of the century 20), The Ha Thanh Danh The screen, and Thiep Tu Tu Than screen. The preservation of artifacts is also not good because the weather in Hue is quite harsh with high humidity. Currently, some damaged screens, such as rattan screens, silkscreens, and engraved paint screens, have only four panels left in the warehouse of Hue Museum of Royal Antiquities and cannot be displayed. This is a pity for researchers and visitors who want to access decorative art forms on this particular piece of furniture. Although the number of screens displayed in the museum is small, they are valuable artifacts for students at universities to study, draw and record for learning purposes. Figure 76 is an activity of recording ancient motifs on the screen of students of the Danang University of Architecture in practical subjects.



Figure 72 Students take notes on motifs on the screen at Hue Museum of Royal Antiquities. Source: Tran. P. A. T (June 2022)

Looking around some typical garden houses and palaces, the traditional *noi an* screens seem to disappear. A few still exist in Hoang Hoa Thuan Vuong's palace, and some are newly added in Princess Ngoc Son's palace. The *noi an* screens in the traditional form in Hue are now rarely used in people's houses because their houses are newly built or expanded for other functions and forms.

Some records on the origin of the *noi an* screen are incomplete and do not specify where it was placed in ancient architectural works. Most of the *noi an* screens with the artistic value of the Nguyen Dynasty were passed into the hands of many

antique collectors and collectors of fine art or sold abroad. Picture 77 is Tran Phong in silver from the Le Thien Gia's collection. In an interview with the collector, he showed a great interest in beautiful and high-value screens, especially royal wares. His screen collection includes a variety of screens such as lacquered gilded, gilded silver, embroidered silk, stone, and precious wood. According to him, each screen contains unique historical, cultural, and artistic values, which will contribute to honoring Hue's identity and culture if used at the right time and place. The collector's purpose is to preserve a bit of Hue's past, serve the economy, exchange, and donate or cede to museums.



Figure 73 Gold-plated silver screen in the Le Gia collection.

Source: Le Thien Gia (2022)

Conservation organizations in Hue Citadel collaborated with researchers, artisans, painters, and architectural designers to preserve, restore, and renovate architectural heritages and the lost screens. However, the restoration of architectural monuments, including the screens, encountered many obstacles, and the funding for this task was small. After being restored, many architectural details were changed from the original version. Because ancient manufacturing techniques are almost lost, there is a lack of skilled workers and documentary images in this field to perform accurate restorations. In the past, the Nguyen Dynasty mainly recruited artisans and skilled workers from different places to build architectural components. The Nguyen Dynasty's screens were usually made in the Quang Xuong and managed by the court.

Currently, some craft villages in Hue are gradually disappearing, such as traditional lacquer craft villages, causing obstacles to finding skilled workers. Because authentic gold materials are expensive, the workers no longer paint the screens, diaphragms, parallel sentences, and worship objects according to the traditional lacquer technique. This technique is preserved and passed down at Hue University of

Arts. Therefore, for the restoration work to be practical, it is necessary to have enough knowledge to preserve it properly without affecting the local people's lives.

#### 4.1.2 The reality of modern screens in Hue City

The documents of the Hue screens after 1945 are still limited and mainly collected from surveys of the current situation in the contemporary period. Since 1925, Vietnamese *Binh phong* has had its distinct features as transitioning from traditional to modern style. Hue was the capital of the Nguyen Dynasty, a long period of feudalism, so the influence of historical and social changes was inevitable.

While other cities like Da Nang and Ho Chi Minh City are on the path of modern development, Hue is still developing quietly. The forms of the screen also change according to the general development of modern society. Traditional decorative patterns and indigenous materials are also applied in the designs. It is a unique feature and identity that only Hue people have. However, there are also many difficulties in coordinating between conservation and development.

The *ngoai an* screen, although still containing traditional Feng Shui concepts, is the space's highlight. However, to survive in contemporary context, the decorative art of *ngoai an* screens changed into diverse and impressive forms of miniatures, mountains, fountains, and rocks. This transformation gave the *ngoai an* screens new looks, along with the development of the era. (Dang. M. A, 2015, p.148)

The house at 109 Nguyen Sinh Cung, Vi Da ward, with Indochinese architecture, has a rather strange and unique screen. The house's owner got the idea from the rolling mountains. The screen blocks the gate as in a traditional house layout, and behind it is a water tank covered with ceramic tiles (Figure 78). It is a variant rarely seen in other houses in Hue.



Figure 74 A strange screen has a shape variation from nature, at 109 Nguyen Sinh Cung, Vi Da ward, Hue.

Source: Tran. P. A. T. (January 2021)

Through the stories of middle-aged homeowners in Hue, they believe that in the past, houses often had screens to cover the altars as a way to pay respect to the deceased. Since the 1960s, apart from wooden screens, fabric and plastic fiber screens on iron frames were favored and used a lot. Almost every house had a screen, but these screens were damaged over time. Moreover, as Hue people's living styles became more open, screens were less used. The forms of plastic fiber screens on iron frames were one of the early examples of modern production methods.

After the Doi Moi, especially when the Hue Heritage Complex was recognized as a World Heritage, there was a policy of adjusting economic development to accompany local cultural development. As a result, the screen styles changed spontaneously according to the owners of houses, painters, architects, interior designers, and businesses. These transformations were to create novelty for the screens. There were many reasonable solutions to create a good living environment. However, not all new ones were effective and appropriate.

In the contemporary context, the concept of feng shui still exists and is increasingly promoted, especially in the residential space. In most urban areas today, owners who want to build a house or move to a new house need to see the location, direction, date, and time for groundbreaking and entering a new house. The primary feng shui function is for spiritual support. Therefore, by calculating the size, position, and shape, the screens are constructed on feng shui to create a harmonious living environment so that people living in the housing space can enjoy long-term benefits. (Ta. T. M. T, 2020, p.81)

In modern housing architecture, the screens are facing many challenges due to the lack of space. In modern houses, the role of the *noi an* screens in the interior are not as strict as in traditional houses. The position of the screens is quite flexible in different spaces. Screens can become partitions or space dividers to close or expand spaces.

With the traditional concept that the screen functions as a windscreen to help prevent foul air from entering the house, modern architectures apply this feng shui principle differently. Findings from research survey of modern houses in Hue show that the screen or its partition variant is still used quite a lot in the worship space. The Vietnamese culture of spirituality and ancestor worship has always been preserved. It is a traditional element. Modern architecture makes spatial organizations change. Houses are getting higher and higher to cope with narrow building areas and to make enough room for all family members. The worship space is usually in a separate space on the top floor of the house. The purpose is to ensure solemnity, and it is also a space that is not used often. If the worship space is combined with



other uses, the homeowner will put on a screen to separate and create privacy without affecting the concept of spirituality (Figure 79, 80, and 81)



Figure 75 A cloth screen on a wooden frame shields the worship room, at 104/1 Dien Bien Phu. Source: Tran. P. A. T (June 2021)

Figure 76 The screen covers the upstairs worship space and the decorative partition separates the living room from the kitchen. Source: Tran. P. A. T (June 2022)

Figure 77 Wooden CNC-patterned folding screen shields the worship room. Source: Danang CNC SP partition

Mr. Hung's house was built in 2021. It is a two-floor structure with contemporary architecture. The ancestor worship space is on the second floor, facing the front. The family uses an additional screen to shield the worship space. It is a composite screen made of floral fabric stretched on an aluminum frame. This screen is easy to move and can be folded to expand the space. Between the living room and the kitchen of the house, there is a fixed partition for feng shui to cover the kitchen and decorate the staircase area. This is a common dividing solution in houses today in Vietnam.

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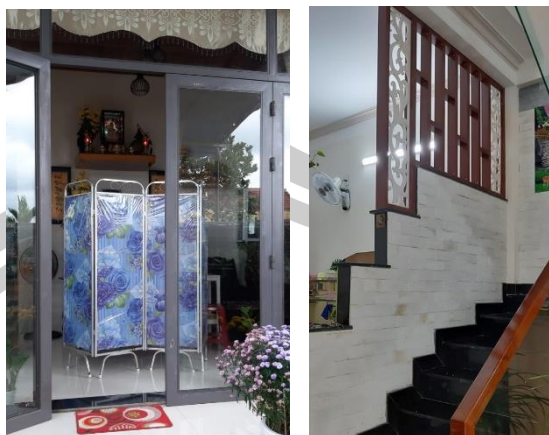


Figure 78 Folding screen in the worship room of Mr. Hung's house.

Source: Tran. P. A. T (June 2021)

The house owned by Mr. Kien was built in 2016. It also has a similar layout, using a screen in the worship space. "At first, when placing the altar under the living room, I bought a screen to cover the worship space to make it dignified. Now it is on a high floor, so the screen is folded to avoid space entanglement", Mr.Kien said. The screen consists of four panels made of Cam Lai wood, and dark brown PU paint. The motifs on the body of the screen are the theme of four quarters (pine, chrysanthemum, bamboo, and apricot), and the base is decorated with Ky Ha motifs (Figure 83). The screen is intricately carved, combining the details of leaves and leaves turning into dragons. The decorations on the screen are modeled after traditional screens, but the motifs are not entirely similar to those of the Nguyen Dynasty. Mr.Kien bought this screen because it was affordable, while the store had many models to choose from, and the prices varied by each screen's decoration and size. He uses a wooden screen because it matches with the furniture in the house.



Figure 79 Folding screen in the worship room of Mr. Kien's house. Source: Tran.

P. A. T (June 2021)

The demand for amenities for young homeowners is increasing day by day. Transforming a house to a new form is a must. An old renovated house in Hue was designed by architect Nguyen Quang Khai (NK Architects & Associates). This house was built more than 50 years ago and was severely degraded, so the young couple renovated it. The designer captured the topography and climate of the area to come up with suitable solutions for modern living needs. The practical solution for the house was to use ventilation tiles on the front to block the direct sunlight and ensure light and air circulation. The indoor space from the living room to the dining room to the kitchen is also separated by ventilation tile partitions. These partitions create the aesthetic and ensure feng shui in necessary positions such as the kitchen and separate the dining room.



Figure 80 Renovated housing in Hue, renovated premises and spaces (2016)

Source: Photographer Tran. V. T. M

## 4.2 The process of transformation the style of the noi an screen

### 4.2.1 Transformation based on consumption and everyday life

Based on the assessment of the current status of traditional and modern screens, the screens' style transition from traditional to modern is inevitable for many reasons. Regarding consumption habits, Hue city linked tourism culture with traditional crafts and the consumer demand of *noi an* screens with production. Currently, in Hue, the reproduction of traditional screens is mainly for tourist services and traditional houses, and modern screens are for people's consumption as indoor decoration, offices, and other service spaces.

As for the *noi an* screen, in terms of structure, materials, and traditional decorative forms, it is still a great example in the creation of the screen, along with traditional concepts and people's wishes for goodness. The development of science and technology has brought many new materials, contributing to the creative design of screen products that are diverse in styles and forms (Dang. M. A, 2015, p.148). When *Binh phong* changed its style to modern, the traditional screens were still maintained, serving as models for improving the modern ones.

For Vietnamese, tradition is a continuation of a culture, which can be reproduced or updated according to random circumstances of each time in history. Tradition has nothing to do with easily copying the formulas of the past. Thus, to maintain the tradition, it is necessary to re-evaluate, strengthen and enrich its universality in modern society. Today designers' constant effort in their creative design process can help them gain more knowledge, experience, imagination, and vision so that the value of art can be recreated, renewed, and developed in a new way effectively. The previous traditional screen creation was based on the strict regulations of the Nguyen Dynasty in the use of decorative themes and motifs, clearly delineating social rank and status. The type of screens with letter motifs in Confucian characters has been simplified, only retaining a few typical stylized characters such as happiness, fortune, longevity, and joy (Phuc, Loc, Tho, Hy). Part of the reason is that today people rarely use Chinese characters because the official language has changed. Furthermore, geometric motifs are more popular because they are suitable for modern spaces or spaces combining modern and traditional styles.

Social life is constantly developing and moving, so the screen is integrated into the general trend. The element representing the class has changed. Dragon and phoenix motifs are no longer the symbol of the upper class. Modern and diverse themes, unique ideas, and forms expressing an individual's distinctive imprint make the *noi an* screen attractive. In addition, combining cultural and artistic values with trends will create diversity for the decorative elements of the *noi an* screen in the residential interior design. (Ta. T. M. T, 2020, p.72)

Until the 1950s, consumption made sense only in relation to production, so a study on consumption assumed that consumers were also producers or, at least, involved in the production of the goods (Mark Paterson, 2005, p.2).

Findings from the research survey show that consumption habits and screen consumption culture in worship spaces are not lost but are richer in expression. The use of prefabricated folding screens is also chosen by many people, as it is flexible and has various price ranges. The materials are abundant and suitable for each house with different design styles. Folding screens are usually made of lightweight materials

that are easy to move. However, there is also an aesthetic limitation due to the lack of synchronization in the organization of space and furniture because not all house owners have aesthetic taste and are knowledgeable about materials. In contemporary life, some screens still function as a feng shui item, and some arise into new functions suitable for human activities.

Aesthetics and everyday life are the products of a continuous interaction between iconic creations of artists, individuals, and specific circumstances in which they find themselves. Images, information, and products the media and cultural industries provide become resources for individuals to use in everyday negotiation. It is a process that involves the reflexive construction and expression of identity and the formation of habitable spaces. As such, it is perceived as an aesthetic space. Another aspect that shows the importance of interaction in everyday life is the advancements in technology, such as the Internet, collectively known as 'media'. In recent years, online shopping services have grown stronger, partly due to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic. Screen products are advertised by many businesses very specifically in terms of shape, size, price, and quality, as well as their visualization in the interior space by actual application images or 3D images. That helps consumers have a comparison, expand their aesthetic thinking, and have more information and suitable choices for their needs.

Young people are readily receptive to new things. The development of communication technology has a significant impact on the perception of their modern life. Due to their greater interactivity, new technologies such as the Internet open creative possibilities for those not attached to previous forms of communication. Media in the forms of advertising and business offers opportunities for consumers to participate in a new culture. Moreover, the Internet provides an accessible medium by which young people can discover and promote their own identities and interests for individual and collective creativity. They will increase the demand for better products when they feel the beauty and the good.

In the past, folding screens were mainly used for residential spaces. Currently, in Hue, services such as hotels, restaurants, and spas are developed to serve the increasing needs of accommodation, travel, experience, and dining. Therefore, the use of the screen has flexible conversions in functions and aesthetic forms. Screens in these spaces are divided by function to create privacy but are not entirely closed. Figure 84 are folding screen made of fabric and plastic fibers on an aluminum frame. These screens were divided and separated the aisles in the medical space.





Figure 81 Folding screens can be flexibly used as partitions in medical areas, orienting and dividing aisles.

Source: Tran. P. A. T (March, 2022)

#### 4.2.2 Transformation through aesthetic and material design principles

Aesthetics play an important role in product creation. However, for aesthetic design to achieve integrity, it must connect with consumer needs, functionality, economy, and standardization.

Consumer demand consists of two sides, consumption power and level of consumption force. Industrial aesthetics have a significant impact on consumer power. The higher the aesthetic quality, the more suitable it is for consumers, and the greater the effect of stimulating product consumption, promoting production speed, and creating a premise for product quality improvement. The level of the consumption force has an important impact on the product's aesthetic quality. The aesthetic design force must be able to ensure and improve the aesthetic quality of the product. A passive industrial aesthetic will produce a passive consumer group and vice versa. In order to create aesthetic values, the first consideration is market demand. The designer must consider consumption force and aesthetic solutions to reach the consumption goal. Mediocre design solutions lead to consumers with mediocre aesthetics, which leads to passive consumption. There is a mutual migration in the daily relationship between tools and people. Consumption in a passive state will give rise to a passive consumption force. At that point, the consumption force will not have enough knowledge to fully feel the humanity, aesthetic and symbolic level of tools, and means of living in the surrounding physical world.

During the reign of the Nguyen Dynasty, Hue's visual arts mainly served religious or decorative purposes. In addition to precious materials such as gold, silver, bronze, jade, and stone used for court gifts, the *noi an* screens often use black



lacquered wood, carvings, lacquered wood with gold, and colored silk. After 1925, lacquer material became popular on the screen, and painters combined it with Western techniques to create highly artistic screens. After the reform and Doi Moi, modern materials were increasingly used on the screen to replace traditional materials. However, for a cultural land like Hue, the application of traditional materials and creativity based on those materials are still a source of inspiration for contemporary painters and designers.

When Hue city takes tourism as the core for economic development, international integration will create opportunities for consumer demand to increase. To meet consumer demand, aesthetic elements must be improved to suit local, domestic and international tourists' tastes. Several artisans, painters, designers, and businesses have joined forces to create products featuring Hue's culture.

Engineer Do Huu Triet, MS, is one of the people who preserved and restored the unique *Phap Lam* craft (enameled bronze art). *Phap Lam* technique originated in China. When imported into Vietnam, there were changes according to the Vietnamese's technology. When the rule of the Nguyen Dynasty ceased, the *Phap Lam* technique also disappeared. Currently, the enameling technique applied to the products is usually *Phap Lam*'s technique of painting and separating the drawers. *Phap Lam*'s decorative motifs are still ancient, dragons, phoenixes, patterns combined with Confucian letters, and landscapes. In addition, there are images of Hue's monuments and landscapes, daily life, lotus flowers, roses, and chrysanthemums. Today, *Phap Lam* products preserve the beauty of the royal culture and aesthetics while embodying the beauty of architectural art and a harmonious lifestyle between man and nature. In addition, some Buddhist-themed bas-reliefs use *Phap Lam* technique. Hue lacquerware products are mostly handmade by skillful hands and the creativity of artisans. The most special advantage of products made from *Phap Lam* technique is the bright, rich, diverse colors and durability.<sup>74</sup> Hue's *Phap Lam* craft has contributed to honoring Hue's Traditional Craft Village Festival from 2009 to the present. It became an art with traditional aesthetic and cultural values in modern forms according to the development of society.

Surveys at the workshop and display area of TTNH Thai Hung, at 66 Chi Lang, Hue city (Figure 86), show that there are many applied products of *Phap Lam*. The screen is the largest compared to other products applying *Phap Lam* technique. The shop displays single-panel, multi-panel, and small decorative screens. Moreover, for this material to be more suitable for the screen, Mr. Do Huu Triet often combines *Phap Lam* technique with lacquer (industrial lacquer) to create unique lacquered

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<sup>74</sup> Phan Dinh Vu. Ups and downs of the French Lam Hue. <http://huetourism.gov.vn/>

mosaic screens. The screens are usually composite panels with decorative themes of lotus, Four Quarters (Figure 87), dragons, phoenixes, turtles, and dragon horse, in a modern stylized manner. He often applies the theme of lotus in his compositions. His screen products are usually made-to-order, so the quantities are limited.



Figure 82 Phap Lam workshop of Do Huu Triet (left). Source: Tran. P. A. T (February 2021)

Figure 83 Phap Lam screen with a wooden frame (middle) and the screen of the four spirits (right). Source: Do Huu Triet (2021)

Figure 84 is the exchange and the process of making Phap Lam. The process of Phap

Lam is the combination in the preparation of enamels with the techniques of casting, hammering, welding the metal core, and baking products. The stage of creating copper core is the most important step in shaping the product's shape. The first layer of enamel sprayed on the surface of copper reinforcement is called the lining enamel for the product. This glaze has a white color that is easy to melt. After that, the copper core will be enameled, left to dry, and put into a kiln at a high temperature. Burning is the most difficult stage because it is necessary to ensure the right temperature and time for the glaze can adhere to the copper surface without cracking. Phap Lam enamel belongs to the silicate system like ceramic glaze combined on metal, essentially two different materials when combined necessary to have a specific glaze suitable for elasticity, for these two materials to stick. After firing with the first layer of enamel, the product will be painted by the craftsman with different colored enamels. Enamel for painting on the surface of cyan products will add an appropriate amount of oxidized metal pigments, thereby forming a qualified

enamel color for the Phap Lam process. These products have been made with three main techniques. First is the technique of painting on the enamel coating of the copper. Second is the technique of carving with enamel on the copper material. And the last one is the technique of making patterns from copper thread on copperware.



Figure 85 The documentary film "The art of painting in Hue" by Vietnamese television station VTV4

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/>



Figure 86 Lacquer screen inlay Phap Lam plate grafting with theme Tu Quy (right).

Source: Do Huu Triet (2021)

Assessing the transformation in traditional and modern lacquer materials, Mr. Do Huu Triet said that traditional lacquer materials, also known as *Son Ta*, for making paintings or application products are now mostly replaced by industrial paints

because the time to complete the work is faster, the price is cheaper, and they do not affect workers' health. Since the French came to Vietnam, *Son Ta* changed to lacquer. *Phap Lam* products were usually made from copper with enamel on the surface, and this technique changed when combined with lacquer. Lacquer at workshops usually uses Japanese paint, but lacquer painting technique follows traditional painting techniques. *Phap Lam* paintings were often made in a 4-panel layout with the theme of Four Quarters (Tứ quý) or Four Spirits (Tứ linh) to hang on the wall. Depending on the customers' needs, the production facilities have designed more screen frame models from wood with natural color, PU paint, or color coating.

*Phap Lam* is an art for the nobility in ancient times, introduced to Vietnam during the reign of King Minh Mang in 1827. It appeared in household items, utensils, and palace architecture. When the Hue court declined, the art of *Phap Lam*, or the technique of *Phap Lam*, was lost for a long time. Although it has been restored and redeveloped, it mainly serves for the restoration of Hue's relics. Today, the application of *Phap Lam* in daily life is still limited. Do Huu Triet's development of *Phap Lam* art or the combination of *Phap Lam* technique and lacquer in furniture is a new step to increase its applicability so that it can get closer to domestic consumers and international tourists. Many *Phap Lam* screens in interior are also quite effective in creating sophistication and elegance through their deep colors.

Besides carpentry, rattan, bamboo, and *Phap Lam* screen, *Truc Chi*, a new material, was also born in Hue. *Truc Chi* is a noun to designate a new cultural value created and experimented with by artist Phan Hai Bang in 2011. *Truc Chi* is a type of paper made from bamboo, and the new art form based on the traditional papermaking craft is called Trucchigraphy (*Truc Chi* graphic technique). It is based on the effect of visuals and shape. Images are formed by using water pressure to change the paper's structure, creating different levels of thickness. The images will be clearer under the light. The techniques and the materials combine to create exceptional creativity. Each *Truc Chi* product is unique. When it was first born, this material was mainly for graphics and painting. In recent years, Phan Hai Bang has incorporated communication tools in promoting his brand. The products gradually evolved into practicality, and the screen was used as a new instrument for expressing this art. *Truc Chi* paintings have existed for a very long time, but the application of *Truc Chi* paintings to screens and partitions has only been developed recently. *Truc Chi* screens and partitions are just new applications introduced into home spaces. *Truc Chi* partitions are beautiful and often used as decoration in the living room. The artworks on *Truc Chi* carry the classic beauty of Vietnamese tradition. The themes of *Truc Chi* are diverse with bamboo groves, lotus flowers, and recreated folk paintings. The *Truc Chi* screen is formed from many panels, and there is often a continuous theme between panels. The screen's frame form received much attention in terms



of design. The placement of the *Truc Chi* creates a suitable decorative accent for the overall screen. (Figure 90)

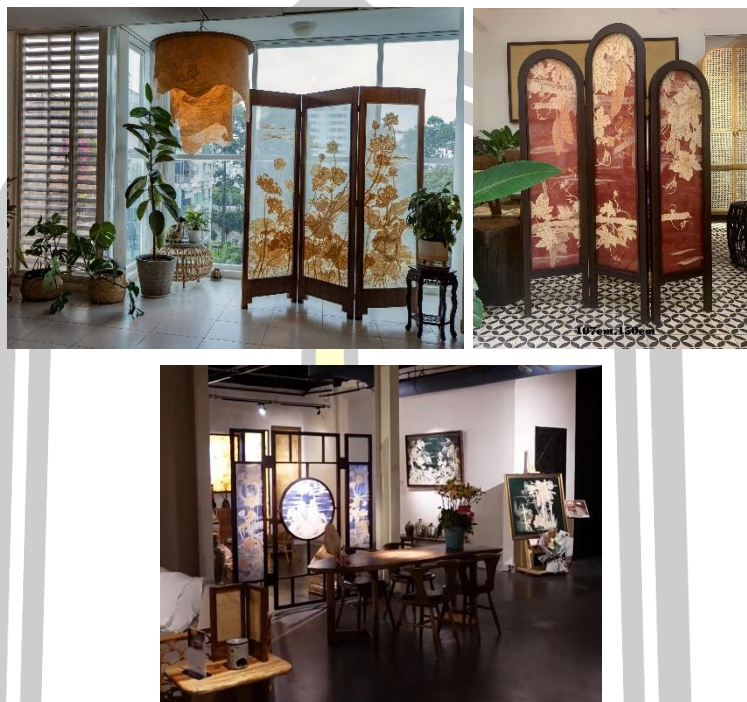


Figure 87 Truc Chi screen: Hoang Sac Lien Van (left), Country soul (middle) in exhibition space in Hue and Truc Chi screen in Ho Chi Minh City (right)

. Source: Truc Chi Gaden (2022)

*Truc Chi* graphics change the color of the paper in shaping, making the surfaces more colorful and detailed in expressing the pictures or decoration details. The themes used on the screen are usually flowers and leaves, and the lotus image also appears a lot. *Truc Chi* craft village became a place for experience and a playground for artists with the same passion. This material is also applied in teaching and learning. (Figure 91)





Figure 88 Phan Hai Bang in a session to instruct students on the history and process of creating Truc Chi. Source: Tran. P. A. T (June 2022)

*Truc Chi* Garden often organizes events in Craft Village Festivals to give customers a deeper understanding of this art. For instance, the exhibition "No Words" with the theme of narratives was held at Lieu Quan Buddhist Cultural Center, Hue City, on May 27, 2022. Each piece in this exhibition was a song that whispers to the beholder. Through *Truc Chi* art, the works illustrated folk beliefs, Zen nature, flowers with shaping techniques, and a new perspective from the ancient capital. (Figure 92)



Figure 89 Truc Chi screen at Lieu Quan Buddhist Cultural Center (left) and sightseeing activities at Truc Chi garden (right).

Source: Nguyen. P. B. M, Thua Thien Hue Department of Tourism (2022) & Truc Chi garden

*Truc Chi* Garden becomes an interesting destination, a place to organize learning, sightseeing and experience activities for domestic and international tourists.

#### 4.2.3 Transforming the production process from manual to industrial

Painting or embroidering on fabric is a popular technique from the past. To this day, that technique can be replaced by printing or machine embroidery. Embroidery is often applied to clothes, utensils, paintings, or screens. A double-sided embroidery screen is a new form of transformation. It is a technique created by artists and widely applied in the art of paintings and screens. This type of screen can be viewed from two sides and is convenient for spatial arrangement. Results from

the research survey at the XQ Embroidery Museum in Hue show that the embroidery works are diverse, with many decorative themes represented by elaborate embroidery techniques. Although the original form of embroidery is handcrafted, XQ Hue's products are professionally made in an industrial production process. XQ Embroidery expands and distributes in all regions of the country. The artisans here are well-trained and assigned to a specific stage of the production process.

Ms. Thu, a manager at the XQ gallery, said that "to make embroidery screen, the evolving parties have to go through many processes such as creating, sketching, choosing patterns and fabrics, embroidery, assessing colors, designing the frame, and arranging concept of the artwork." Embroidery works are evaluated on the following principles: the content of the painting, embroidery technique and color mixing, space and time expressed in the painting, anatomy, perspectives, and embroidering time. The embroidery screen's verification process includes: Step 1 is to evaluate the pencil sketch based on its theme and the stories of the design. Step 2 is to put the sketch through the embroidery work using the method of 'Dialogue' to choose embroidery thread and color to match the surreal values in the sketch. Artisans perform the technique with emotion, technique, knowledge, and thought. When the product is completed, the embroiderers write down artistic commentary (an analysis of the content of the picture) about the historical significance, the aesthetic value, and the finishing technique of the work.



Figure 90 Embroidery and finishing stages at XQ Hue Embroidery Museum.

Source: Tran. P.A. T (June 2021)

is embroidery and finishing stages. First, the artist will sketch on decals using a pencil based on the shades of the picture. The artist and the artisan have to discuss the brightness of the picture so that the artisan can mix the embroidery colors according to the artist's intention. The artisan can create a colorful painting from a black and white sketch. There is a technical supervisor to evaluate the coloring process. The color scheme requires at least 50 colors, mixed from light to dark. This

process is meticulous in creating a lifelike work of art. Depending on the details, an embroidered screen requires at least two artisans. Unlike traditional screens with no size regulation, modern screens have standards. The inner side of the picture must match the outer frame of the picture so that the details can assemble logically. The screen has many sizes. The multi-panel screen often has 70x110cm/panel with a smaller picture inside. The 70x90cm screen has 110cm legs. The four-panel screen is usually over 2m long. The screen frame is made of natural wood such as merawan giazza, and pyinkado, and is premade according to standard sizes. The details can be simple frames, CNC cut, or carved. Frame designs for screens are also diverse and mass-produced, with many models for customers to choose from.

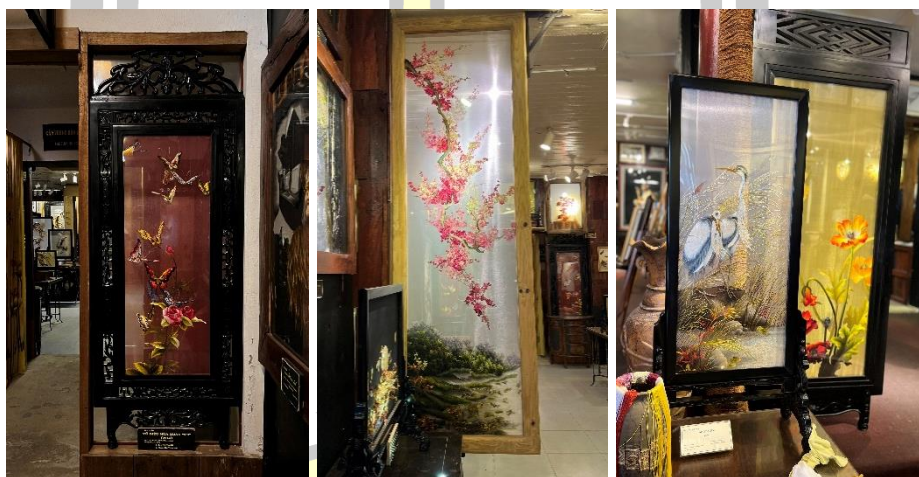


Figure 91 Sample of a single-panel and composite screen in Hue XQ museum.

Source: Tran. P. A. T (June 2021)

The company was established in Da Lat in 1992, and the branch office in Hue was open in 1996. Usually, on the occasion of the Hue Festival, XQ company organizes events or ancestor worship on the 12th of the sixth lunar month every year. Paintings and screens are mainly used for decoration. These products are often bought as gifts by companies or international delegations. Assessing product demand, XQ Company has also expanded its branches in the US and Canada. Screens used indoors are often placed in the living room or bedroom to decorate and divide space.

Although the headquarters is in Da Lat, the Hue branch helps cultivate the region's cultural identity. Products with unique characteristics are created through Hue artists' and artisans' skills. The themes presented on the screen are modern and close to nature, such as nature, flowers, animals, and portrait embroidery. At XQ Company, customers can experience aesthetics, order samples, send request forms or choose from available products according to their preferences.



Sophisticated hand-crafted screens such as embroidery, lacquer, *Phap Lam*, embroidery, and hand-carved wood seem too expensive for ordinary people, so mass-produced industrial screens are popular in Hue. Machinery helps products made faster and more detailed, and the production stages are specialized. At the same time, the use of materials is flexible when it is possible to combine various materials. To get this valuable craft product into the hands of more consumers, designers and manufacturers often use a combination of craft and industry.

Through interviewing interior designers in Hue, the demand for partition-shaped screens was high. On the other hand, partitions are also necessary to make the space more convenient and aesthetic. The materials used for this type are richer and easier to incorporate into the design process. Most houses and apartments are modern with small areas, so the partitions are often made of industrial wood, natural wood, iron, glass, and CNC patterned mica to make the living space look lively and more spacious. CNC partitions have a variety of designs and patterns, so they are mainly used in the interior decoration of offices, shops, and cafes. While CNC partitions are used to divide space, they can connect rooms and are a remarkable highlight in the house.



Figure 92 Design model on 3D (left), construction (middle) and installation (right) into space. Source: Interior designer Phan Hoai An & Tran. P. A. T (2022)



Figure 93 Folding screen and a plate in the restaurant. Source: Vong Binh Architects & Truong An (2021)

CNC cutting techniques are easy to apply to many materials. To create a Binh Phong, the raw material will be processed through the CNC cutting machine to have the designed shape. The factories surveyed about the CNC screen production process were quite similar in terms of the construction method. According to Mr. Tuan, a designer and also the factory owner described: Initially, the designer will choose the specifications and design the pattern, texture, and layout of the screens so that they are harmonious. When the design plan is approved, they draw CNC samples with Jdpaint or Corel software, and the file is transferred to Studio software for cutting. According to the survey in Figure 92/2, the material selected to make the screen is Melamine wood. CNC cutting techniques have two forms cutting or embossing. When exporting the CNC machine running process, the cutter tip can change from 2D to 2.5D. At this time, the machine will automatically move the cutter. Upon completion, the plates and the screen stand will look as shown in figure 92/3. Then comes the cooling stage. The worker uses a sander to remove excess material stuck on the cutting plates and then finely sands the pattern's edges and the cut's crevices. The coating technique has two types industrial paint and PU coating. For 3D carved screens, PU paint is the main thing, but industrial wood is usually covered with industrial paint. After finishing the surface, the craftsman will install the frame for the screen and link the panels together with hinges. Then assemble the screen leg to create stability



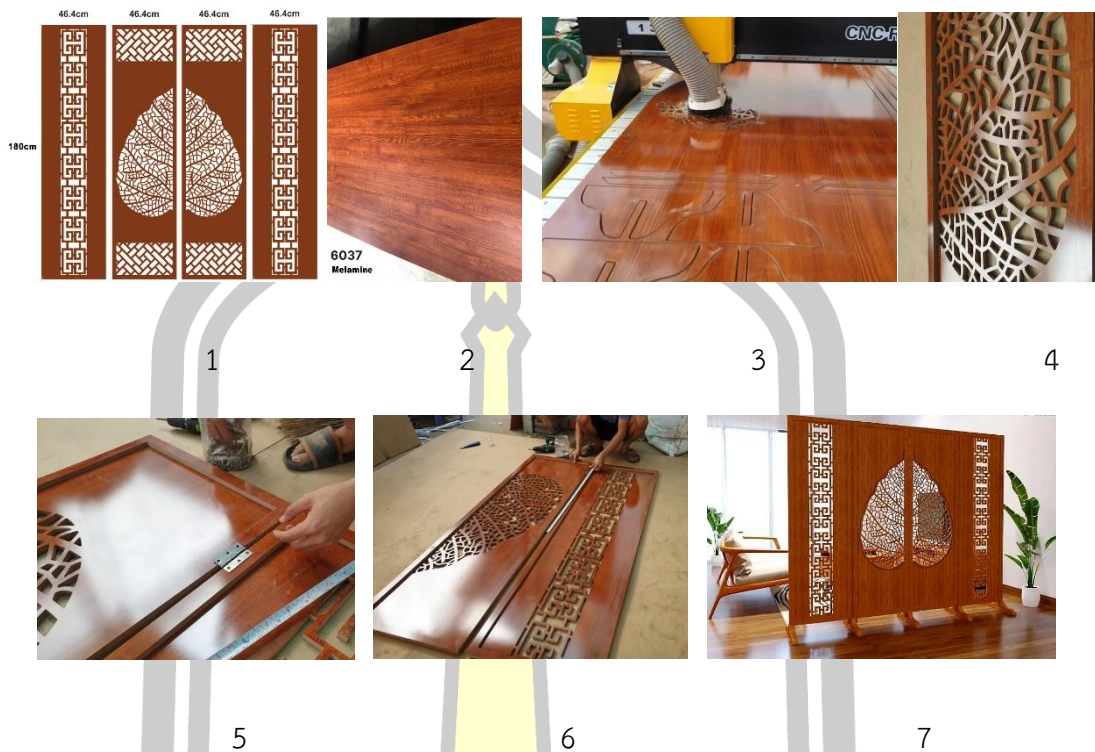


Figure 94 The production process of industrial wooden screen includes the following steps: 1. Design the model and create the size file, 2. Material selection, 3. The CNC machine running process, 4. The cooling stage, 5 & 6. The panels are framed and linked by hinges. 7. Assemble the base of the screen and display it.

Source: Tran. P.A. T (June 2022)

Modern society will go along with modern industrial production methods. The mass-produced screens will limit models' uniqueness and the fussiness in the production line, but not so that they lose their aesthetic creativity. Families with high incomes demand more functional and aesthetic products. They want to live in a space that must be beautiful, unique, and not similar to other houses' designs. A good product can make consumers willing to pay a lot of money. A good screen design must be accompanied by practical use and closely associated with consumers to create comfort, convenience, and suitability for their living space.

#### 4.2.4 Converting functions used in houses to tourism products

Currently, along with the conservation and restoration of damaged or lost screens, the architectural images on the screen are also used by artists to create products for tourism. The article "Proposing using the screen in traditional

architecture as a tourism product" by Pham Dang Nhat Thai (2021) shows that introducing Hue's screens into tourist routes to emphasize and explain will contribute to preserving and promoting the value of Hue's *Binh Phong*. At the same time, developing experience tourism and manufacturing tourism products and souvenirs at Hue's traditional craft villages is also necessary and effective for the economy.

The screen's diversity in shapes, designs, and decorative motifs implied cultural values. Historical stories or folk legends are also suggestive topics for screen creation. Besides, different materials, colors, and implementation processes can be associated with handicraft industries such as jewelry making, sculpture, bronze casting, ceramics, carpentry carving, fine arts crafts, and *Phap Lam* art to create screen products. The application and combination with modern technology and machinery will create better products for the tourism market.

The provincial Department of Industry and Trade in Hue organized a handicraft product design contest in 2020. The competition had four criteria: feasibility, creativity - originality, and aesthetics. The Hue traditional *Binh Phong* gift collection of architect Pham Dang Nhat Thai won the second prize. This proved that the organizers highly appreciated *Binh Phong* for its ideas, cultural values, and orientation in creating unique souvenir products for Hue tourism. (Pham. D. N. T, 2021)



Figure 95 The work "*Binh Phong*" - In traditional Hue architecture by Mr. Architect Pham Dang Nhat Thai.

Source: Perfume River Magazine (2021)

The ideas proposed by the author are suitable for specific tourism programs and souvenir products. Its purpose is for customers to experience and better understand the artistic value of the screen and its historical values. The goals set out by the designer show the importance of the screen in social life, with the desire to turn the Hue screen into a provincial and national artistic architectural heritage in the future.

Cultural products through the shape of the screen, popular with tourists, can promote Hue's culture to the world. Screen products from *Phap Lam* and *Truc Chi* are small and can be used as souvenirs. Their exhibitions also become the place where visitors can come to experience the production methods and better understand the unique arts of Hue people. In addition to business motivation, enterprises such as XQ Company also participated in Festival craft village activities organized by Hue city. Community factors are also important in connecting villages, culture, and tourism. Therefore, the screen becomes a cultural symbol when participating in community activities such as village cultural performances, folk games, local festivals, or Hue Festival.



Figure 96: Festival 2018 in Hue City (left). Source: Hue XQ Museum

Figure 3: Festival 2016 in Hue City (right). Source: Thanh Ha.

<https://www.vietnamplus.vn/>

Figure 97 is the image of Hue Traditional Craft Festival 2019 with the theme of Vietnamese craft quintessence. The festival was held at Hue Quoc Hoc Bia <sup>75</sup>, a symbol built according to the screen architecture. The local

<sup>75</sup> The original Quoc Hoc Bia was a memorial structure called the Martyrs' Monument, built to commemorate the French and Vietnamese soldiers in the central provinces of Central Vietnam who fought and died in World War I (1914 -1918). The monument of the fallen soldiers is an architecture in the form of a scroll-



government uses this place to organize festivals to honor Hue's traditional cultural and artistic values.



Figure 98 Hue Traditional Craft Festival 2019.

Source: Quang Nhat, <https://nld.com.vn/thoi-su/khai-mac-festival-nghe-truyen-thong-hue-2019-20190427062129503.htm>

Hue is considered a well-developed locality of traditional-style tourism services. Most resort spaces took advantage of the landscape and specific gardens, such as Ancient Hue Garden Houses (Figure 102). Those architectures were built in traditional style. The layouts are similar to old Hue garden houses but with some modern facilities. The resort service space integrated villas, restaurants, lounge bars, spas, and swimming pools.

Traditional architectural symbols used in the construction include gates, screens, *Be can*, and *Ruong* architecture. From the entrance is a screen built and embossed with stylized phoenix, lotus, and rattan motifs, creating a modern look. The space inside is arranged to ensure the comfort of a modern villa. The space is fully furnished, arranged in open spaces, and divided by a wooden partition screen. The partitions are carved with geometric or hexagonal motifs. Kim Long fine dining restaurant is a cluster of restaurants following *Ruong* architecture. In the middle of the main house is an altar to worship Buddha. A horizontal scroll screen shields the center of the altar, creating a highlight and imbuing Hue culture. The decoration on the screen includes a Chinese poem with a mother-of-pearl inlay technique, and

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shaped screen nestled in the middle of a three-door gate, with two floors, with a roof. Author Ton That Sa, a teacher at Ba Cong Hue School is the designer.

other motifs and themes are carved and embossed. The furniture, diaphragm, couplets, and screen all use black wood to create unity. Although the functional use of the building is not the same as that of the old traditional house, a part of the space design has retained cultural features such as the altar, the *ngoai an* and *noi an* screens.



Figure 99: Gate and screen in front of the building (left), Kim Long fine dining restaurant (right) in Ancient Hue Garden Houses.

Source: <https://ancienthue.com.vn/ancient-hue/>

In Hue, traditional businesses such as hotels and resorts perform well in tourism as a resting space for visitors to the city. It also shows that the culture of Hue garden houses is friendly and reflects aristocratic royal features. This is also the trend to help tourists approach Hue culture most appropriately. The screen is like a signal that transmits the fastest when visitors step into architecture. They will quickly recognize its presence. The *noi an* screen is not a central element in the space, but it contributes significantly to dividing the space, dissolving the disadvantages of feng shui, and is an aesthetic highlight.

Tourism is a means of transmitting consumption, and tourists are consumers. They can personally choose a specific tourist destination and experience that place, and experience is a practice form of daily life.

In summary, like other modern Vietnamese societies, Hue has some changes suitable for the locality's social and current situation. The process of transforming to the modern style of the Hue screen is not straightforward as in other cities in Vietnam, but Hue still has an identity that not all localities have. Outsiders who have not yet approached Hue may assess that Hue still has limitations due to its tradition because it will affect the development of the modern design. However, it is not because of the cultural tourism policy that Hue cannot keep up with the pace. The city still maintains a traditional culture in the field of tourism. On the other hand, Hue develops a commodity and consumption economy and selectively updates



world trends. Businesses and local authorities have basic solutions for promoting their cultural product. In many ways, the screen has been present in exhibitions, festivals, and traditional craft villages. The creativity in expressing techniques, new materials, and new product forms of artists and designers is small but adequate and appropriate. The shaping of the screen also shows the talent of the artists, painters, and designers who have constantly innovated and improved all objects for human life.

From traditional products bearing the concept of feng shui, and strict regulations in the layout and decoration theme, the screen had many changes when converting to modern, but a part still recreated the traditional identity. The modern screen also becomes a work of art, thereby increasing the aesthetic taste of the user and beautifying the living space. Decoration art moves to a new modern style that is simpler but more colorful. Engineering techniques with the support of machines are faster and more creative. Depending on the type of screen with different forms and prices, it will be suitable for each customer's financial ability and preferences.

#### **4.3 Application solutions of the noi an screen in contemporary life**

Traditional spaces in Vietnamese families continue to be preserved as ancestral worship spaces and guest spaces for reunions. In the contemporary context, worship culture is flexible, and worship space can be organized according to functional areas. Feng shui art declines. Community and hospitality are shrinking. Ownership is reflected in the boundaries of the house. Therefore, in the process of designing the screen product, attention must be paid to the screen's function and the space to place it.

In its simplest definition, product design is the design of products, but it also has a wider meaning that includes the generation of ideas, the development of concepts, product testing, and manufacturing or the implementation of a physical object, system, or service. Product design is also a commercial activity that can help businesses by ensuring they create and sell products that attract, delight, or challenge consumers (Paul. R & Alex. M, 2011).

A designer has to deal with more work than a visual artist. Design is a productive art field, so designers must first have an aesthetic aptitude and creative talent that is more specific than some other arts. Designers need to have a logical and flexible mind. 'The role of a product designer encompasses many disciplines, such as marketing, management, design, and engineering, and also combines art, science, and commerce in the goal of producing tangible artifacts.' (Paul. R and Alex. M, 2011)

As an interior designer, I am very interested in product design issues. In other words, designers make the product easier to use by improving the product's functionality. For the product to be effective, it must combine production methods and technology under the supervision of designers and builders. The application of materials to products also needs to pay attention to the cost and novelty of the materials. The most important thing is creativity in design to make the product more emotionally attractive to the user, promoting aesthetic value for human life.

Regarding shaping, interior design, or architectural design, creativity includes function, aesthetics, and spatial organization. In addition to the artistic value and originality, the screen must be functional and suitable for the space containing it. If a product is mass-produced, its design, style, size, materials, and the market should be confirmed in advance. The reason screen products such as *Phap Lam* and *Truc Chi* have a high artistic value and have not yet met the needs of many people is that the products are still handmade in limited quantity and high in price. If there is an improvement and combination with interior designers, surely the product will be more suitable for application purposes. If there is an improvement in design, combination with new materials, and more emphasis on function, the product will indeed have a new development step. The *Truc Chi* graphics are just a promise for application in screen design and further development in the future. It is necessary to have a connection between the artist and the interior designer to have the products more suitable for the consumption needs of the community.

In addition to conveying traditional values, the contemporary screen not only marks the difference due to the change in concept but also shows the change in visual decoration with various styles. Adapting to the modern lifestyle has turned the screen into a versatile object, with many rich and attractive variants bearing personal and contemporary imprints. Variant screens are also developed with assembly forms such as modules to create change, diversity, and decorative forms in the interior space, helping users discover and enjoy the process used.

To avoid division and losing harmony in the overall space when placing the screen in the interior, it is necessary to have an overview of the design process. 'The screen application in modern housing spaces no longer has the barriers of traditional use elements. Today, the individuality in each housing space is clearly shown, the diversity in styles, trends, and trends through their homes. The screen is no exception but develops differently depending on the type of house or the context to express itself separately (Ta. T. M. T, 2020, p.88).'

The current screen applied in housing has changed in concept. Modern house architecture also loses the appearance of the *ngoai an* screen. Instead, the *noi an* screen are transformed into many forms to suit as partitions, bookshelves, movable partitions, and indoor plants screen. The living room is often the most important

because it is the welcoming place and the first approach space for homeowners and guests. Many families use the living room as a commonplace for the whole family. Therefore, the furniture and equipment focused on the arrangement to create comfort. Partitions combined with TV shelves increase aesthetics and convenience, saving a lot of space. Partitions of this type usually come in two forms, column bar partitions or patterned partitions. Partitions and screens are usually installed in places that cover and separate the stairs from the living room or the kitchen from the living room. This form of partition can be used in the bedroom because it divides more space, increasing privacy for each family member.

Besides using the screen in houses, the screen also appears in other spaces such as offices, restaurants, and hotels. These are service spaces and public workspaces, so organizing spaces that are both open and private is problematic. Therefore, screens and partitions are a reasonable and flexible solution for these spaces. Screens used in restaurants are often arranged to divide dining areas, create privacy, or shield other functional areas. A Nhlen Vegetarian Restaurant in Hue designed a gentle and quiet atmosphere. Figure 103 is a variant screen placed in the restaurant to shield the preparation area from the dining area. The lines of the screen harmonize with the space.



Figure 1001. The screen at An Nhlen Garden Vegetarian Restaurant, Hue, 2. The screen at Cherish Hue restaurant, 3. The screen at May Spa, and 4. The screen at

Sosono Spa . Source: Tran. P.A.T (January 2022)

The color and material of the modern screen are the most apparent innovation compared to the traditional screen. 'In traditional architecture, the color of natural materials, bamboo, and wood often has a deep, cozy, and close brown color. Even this also creates habits and concepts when using color. In the current development conditions of science, even though there are hundreds of colors, the direction to use colors in space harmoniously and naturally is always set out in the interior and exterior design.' ( Dang. M. A, 2015, p.136)

All screens or partitions must be designed synchronously based on style, visual language, and harmony for the overall space to bring a suitable and best product to the user. Figure 104 is a variant of the screen, arranged in suitable positions to divide the living room and bedroom space. Screens made of bamboo and rattan materials are designed in harmony, creating accents unified with the furniture of beds, cabinets, tables, and chairs in the hotel bedroom. The color of bamboo and rattan becomes the primary accent color for the space.

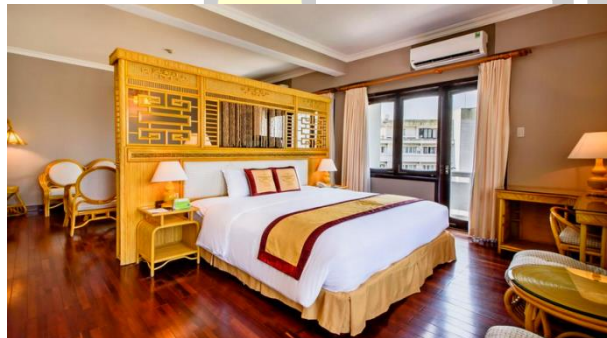


Figure 101 Hương Giang Hotel Resort & Spa, Hue.

Source: <https://ndh.vn/nha-dep-o-hue/>

In terms of function, the trend of harmonizing with nature made the screen change its materials to green plants in the interior. Furthermore, it can make use of environmentally-friendly materials, and semi-closed or semi-open partitions to take advantage of good light and wind. The trend of increased flexibility and versatility refers to the coordination level of living spaces using movable screens and partitions. Individuality makes conventional screens become more aesthetic and unique. 'Currently, the trend of using green *noi an* screens is also popular in today's housing layout. It is possible to arrange a rattan and metal screen combined with green trees to create flexibility in the living room and dining room. At the same time, it helps the



green space to easily harmonize and connect people with nature in every corner of the house.’ (Ta. T. M. T, 2020, p 74)

In addition to solutions to bring nature into houses, green offices have been a growing trend in recent years. Screens and partitions now become a green wall, or shelves become effective partitions that both function and separate spaces to create a feeling of ventilation and coolness. (Figure 105)

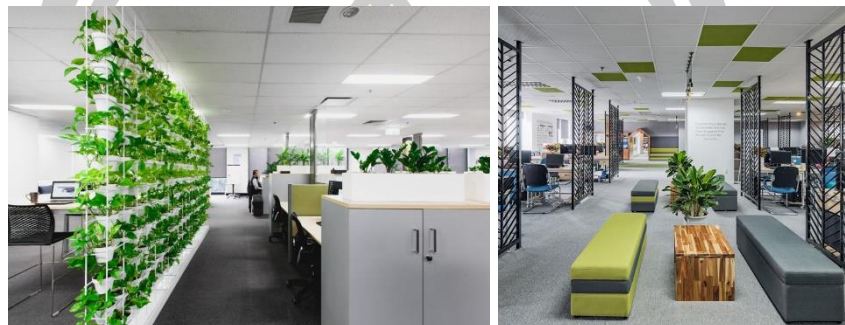


Figure 102 Green plant partitions and decorative partitions used in the office (2020).

Source: <https://saigonfurniture.com>

To sum up, the stylistic transformation of the *noi an* screen is divided into two groups: the general trend group (the screen is in harmony with nature, flexibility and versatility, and individuality) and the distinctive trend group affected by Vietnamese culture (community and traditional screens). By this distinction, it is inferred that the general trend group will continue to develop in the future; The distinctive trend group is a condition for employing and identifying tradition. Increasing these characteristics' interference means inheriting and developing a traditional culture in the housing and tourism spaces. Thus, the inheritance of traditional culture and the development of modern forms of the Hue screen is the transformation of aesthetics based on the principles of aesthetics and function, primarily related to the objects of use when there is a hierarchy. This is a conversion method suitable for current development conditions; while promoting the role of technology application in creativity while avoiding copying old forms. Traditional aesthetic values can be changed by transforming the original or only a part. Developing the traditional identity of the screen to make it more suitable for modern society will include maintaining the old traditional aesthetics and creating new traditions. Both methods identify ethnicity and identity; demonstrate the flexibility of the mining process to match the general trend of the world.

Currently, the issues of applying the screen or the traditional motifs on the screen are also getting more attention through seminars or research plans at



universities. Workshop "Applied arts on the way to find Vietnamese cultural identity" (October 2014) and Seminar on Decorative patterns - Hue screen from the perspective of applied training (2015) was the cooperation between the Faculty of Fine Arts, Van Lang University, Museum of Fine Arts Ho Chi Minh City and Vietnam National Institute of Culture and Arts - Hue Branch. The content of these seminars was the exchange of activities on the identity, preservation of ancient capital relics, methods of training, and education of ancient capital for students to approach and apply heritage values in the future. There were recommendations on training content to supplement knowledge about national culture and art history and suggest traditional topics in the subject project. The workshop proposed to launch valuable contests on the topic of national identity for students, students, and citizens to participate. These were the educators' concerns for future designers. In the integration period, a market-oriented economy using culture to develop is necessary and promises good results.

In applied design training, such as architecture and interior design, students have used the theme of national traditions quite a lot in their projects. Their designs emphasize the practicality of using the screen to increase the aesthetic value of the living space. The screen design solutions applied in local tourism products must also be further promoted. It is necessary to organize many contests focusing on traditional values in contemporary art so that young designers will have the opportunity to approach traditional culture profoundly, creating a playground and stimulating creativity. At the same time, it is necessary to consider young people as the bridge to bring new knowledge from advanced cultures to integrate into Vietnamese society. Therefore, a national policy is necessary to develop the cultural industry on the existing heritage. Other benefits could include raising awareness, creating customers, and creating a future market for cultural industrial products.

### **Conclusion**

The effects on the style transformation of the front were already mentioned. The problem of urbanization was one of the reasons for changing the screen structure and social space. Doi Moi and international integration changed Hue people's perception and daily activities, especially young people. They live openly and approach new thinking. Although the ngoai an screens were rarely used due to the narrow housing area, they still retained the traditional concepts of feng shui. The screen was converted into a miniature landscape, rockery, fountain, or rock to suit modern life. Through the survey of modern houses in Hue, the noi an screens were primarily used in the ancestral worship space. The screen played an aesthetic role in other house spaces, flexibly dividing the space. The screen transformed its inherent function in other spaces, such as applications in restaurants, hotels, offices, and spas.

Its flexibility should be a good choice in the field of access to applied composition today.

The technology of screen making in Hue was transformed by a combination of craft and industry such as wood carving, Phap lam, embroidery, and Truc Chi. Some traditional materials, such as industrial wood, metal, glass, and composite, were replaced with industrial materials to suit society's consumer needs. Carving and carpentry were replaced by manufacturing processes designed, programmed, and performed by machines. The art of creating a screen had new steps but was still based on the traditional art of Hue. As a city with many heritages recognized by UNESCO, Hue became a land full of potential. The documents on the preservation of monuments showed that the city officials were interested in restoring and embellishing the values of the traditional screen. At the same time, there were specific policies to support and promote education, festivals, tourism, and Hue Festival activities. Experience tourism such as traditional craft villages, Truc Chi, Phap Lam, and embroidery paintings connected domestic and international tourists. It was also the modern identity inherited from the cultural identity of the traditional screen transformed in a new way.



## CHAPTER 5

### Research Summary, Discussion, and Suggestions for Hue's Binh Phong: Traditional Screens, Transforming Styles and Re-Imagining Identity in the Modern Society context of Vietnam

#### 5.1 Research Summary

The research topic of this thesis is Binh Phong of Hue: Traditional Screens, Transforming Styles and Re-Imagining Identity in the Modern Society context of Vietnam. This thesis adopts qualitative research as a research method.

5.1.1 To study Binh Phong, traditional screens in the dimension of the cultural identity of the world cultural heritage.

By analyzing the history of the formation and development of the traditional Hue screen in the Nguyen Dynasty, it can be seen that the development of Hue's traditional screen is associated with Hue people, society, and traditional architecture throughout a historical period. The screen met the social needs of the ancient Hue people, became an important component in architecture, and expressed the concept of spirituality and people's desire for good things about luck and success. Hue people apply Feng Shui in building houses and placing screens. The purpose of putting the screen indoors or outdoors is to block the wind and overcome the negative impacts on the homeowner, especially in the ancestral worship area. Through the screen, it can be seen that the family and lifestyle of Hue people create their own identity. The screen connects people and connects people in a harmonious relationship with nature. The cultural identity of the screen is expressed through the custom of ancestor worship. The uniqueness of the screen is reflected in the function, shape, layout, and decorative art. The layout and decorative art of the screen comply with the exact shaping rules according to the regulations of the Nguyen Dynasty. The themes and motifs decorated on the screen are diverse, expressed in many materials and processing techniques such as woodcarving, lacquer, mother-of-pearl inlay, mortar masonry, and porcelain mosaic. The

studiousness and belief are reflected in Confucianism and Taoism, so the screen often has the shape of a scroll, and the decorative themes of the *noi an* screen often have Confucian characters, poetry, and literature. In terms of economy and society, the screens in traditional architecture become cultural and tourist products for the city, bringing practical benefits to the locality. Therefore, the traditional screen leaves many cultural values, which are still present in traditional architecture, houses, and daily activities of Hue's people.

#### 5.1.2 To study the modern style of Binh Phong in the dimension of Re-Imagining Identity in the Modern Society context of Vietnam

Considering the general change of Vietnamese society when entering the modern period, the birth of Indochina Fine Arts College is a premise for artists to find new values in their compositions and form their thinking about modern arts. The new screens and materials created by the group of artists after 1925 have served the modern movements quite well. The construction techniques and materials imported into Vietnam create new architecture and modern urbanism. The screen thus also changed to suit the social situation. In the process of *Doi Moi* and international integration, artists and designers integrate with the general trend of the world and selectively absorb advances from other countries. To protect the national identity, they combine the traditional cultural heritage of the nation. The new screen was created based on the traditional screen of Hue during the Nguyen Dynasty in the direction of re-identifying. The core of cultural identity on the screen has not changed. Traditional lacquer and engraving techniques are still widely used in screen making and are more relevant in the lives of artists and designers combined with modern techniques and materials. The shape and size of the screen are not regulated like a traditional screen but are formed based on the area of the room size and use function. The modern style of the screen still reflects the aesthetics and spirit of the Vietnamese people by exploiting representative images of people, nature, customs, and traditional materials to create unique elements most representative of Vietnamese culture in general and Hue people in particular. The *noi an* screen is not only a consumer product but also an art product. Although the screen's participation in housing has decreased, the core of cultural identity on the screen is not changing. The policy of economic development and integration of the state has created significant changes in people's lifestyles and activities. The need for personal freedom is enhanced, leading to changes in the forms of the screen in the housing space.

5.1.3 To study the process of transforming the traditional to the modern style of Binh Phong in the world cultural heritage of Hue.

Based on the survey and use of research methods to assess the current situation of traditional and modern screens in Hue city in the contemporary period. Hue ancient capital of land with a long history, associated with traditional architectural works. The screens were affected by many social changes, prolonged war, and the impact of nature, so many were lost, especially the *noi an* screen. However, the concepts of the traditional screen still preserved feng shui elements and artistic values.

After Doi Moi, Hue's ancient capital had a turning point when the complex of Hue relics was recognized as a world cultural heritage in 1993. Heritage and traditional values were taken care of by the state through economic, cultural, and educational policies. The traditional screens were associated with heritage buildings, so they were preserved to this day. The traditional screen has become a physical heritage associated with architectural works, so it has been preserved and preserved to this day. Doi Moi and international integration changed the perception and daily activities of Hue people. Especially young people, they were the ones who easily accepted the introduction of modern lifestyle and living conditions that affected the behavior and family habits of Hue people. When converting from traditional to modern style, Hue people also positively changed the conception of function and the application of the screen. Feng shui was no longer important, and spiritual function was no longer the main factor. The participation of the screen in the worship space also narrowed. The style transition to the modernity of the interior design screen is based on consumer needs and daily life. Designers in Hue create screen products to serve daily activities and functions such as restaurants, hotels, offices, and spas to divide flexibly and increase functionality and aesthetics. The stylistic transformation is also through the principles of aesthetic and material design, to see that the screen from traditional shapes such as scrolls, panels, and panels develops into modern forms of variations shape. The decorative motifs of the screen were reduced to simpler lines, shapes, and themes such as scenes, nature, or expressive and abstract images. Modern materials such as industrial wood, glass,



metal, and composite replaced traditional materials. The change in materials and production processes created opportunities for handmade screen products to be developed into larger-scale industrial products. Although the screen develops in a modern style, the Hue people still promote traditional designs and materials such as embroidered screens, Phap lam, lacquer, and Truc Chi. Production and business establishments also contributed to the promotion of tourism products. They created effective experience and service spaces with the policy of economic development and local tourism. Traditional and modern elements of the screen are used parallel to create their own identity and are typical of the regional culture of Hue.

## 5.2 Research Discussion

The research topic “Binh Phong of Hue: Traditional Screens, Transforming Styles and Re-Imagining Identity in the Modern Society context of Vietnam” is related to the history of the development of screens in Vietnamese society, especially in Hue. The development and transformation of the traditional to the modern screen came from the acculturation of new art from the West to the Doi Moi policy. The fact that UNESCO recognized Hue as a world cultural heritage created a more valuable historical and cultural screen. In this study, the researcher analyzed the transformation process of Hue’s traditional screen and reconstructed the identity in the modern social context of Vietnam from the point of view of research text and research concepts.

In the previous studies on the screen in the historical period, the researchers mainly focused on the formation process of the Nguyen dynasty screen and its meaning. They concentrated on studying feng shui, the value of visual arts on traditional screens, and mainly the *ngoai an* screen. They also mentioned of the relationship between the *ngoai an* screen and people in society, but not in details. The *noi an* screen was rarely mentioned. In this research, the focus was on clarifying the concept of cultural identity research and the traditional screen. The paper analyzed the presence of screens in social life, conceptions in folklore, feng shui in

architecture, and traditional decorative arts of Vietnam under the Nguyen Dynasty. It classified the types of screens in traditional architecture from the palace, the palace, and the garden house, clarifying the scale and decorative forms associated with each object and the social rank of the ancients.

The book *Les Motifs de L'Art Annamite* focused on redrawing traditional decorative motifs in Nguyen dynasty architecture. However, the analysis did not discuss the relationship between the textures on the screen and the people. This study drew knowledge from the synthesis of motifs on a screen representing the ideas and wishes of the ancients about a good and successful life. This study focused on analyzing art prices, traditional motifs, especially poetry and Confucianism on the *noi an* screen. It showed that the screen was not only for decorative elements and feng shui but also affected many factors in which people were the center. For example, age, gender, and social status were reflected in the difference in the screen, and consumer demand will be different. In addition, the research section compiled some additional documents to clarify the screen's identity through the Hue people's customs and habits, such as spirituality, beliefs, ancestor worship, and characteristics.

The method of studying cultural identity is also a popular method for topics related to tradition and culture. The book "Hue - Nguyen Dynasty - a look" (2018) and "Hue styles" (2016) by Tran Duc Anh Son, the multi-dimensional view of human ecology was employed to analyze and evaluate history, events, linking factors, and elements of culture. In this study, the specific limitation of the research object and the clarification of the Hue screen's identity contributed to social life. Through the results of other researchers and local surveys, this study analyzed the role of the screen in the past and present beliefs and lifestyles of Hue people.

Previous studies only mentioned the reasons for the disappearance of the traditional screen, while the modern screen changed based on historical, social, war, and Western influences. They were mainly related to the current status of traditional architecture and its societal changes. In this study, several issues were clarified, such as the causes of the change and the preliminary process of changing the screen style based on the development process of Vietnamese fine art. The development and

transformation of Hue's screen were related to the change in society, the progress of the economy, and the development of science and technology. From a component in architecture, the screen becomes a cultural symbol, expressing the thinking and daily life of the Hue people. Although the research topic is limited to Hue, it can help deepen the research content about the lives of Hue people and their need to use screens. In the contemporary period, the Hue screen in the heritage city does not separate the relationship between the traditional and modern screens that supports development in many areas of life and the policy of developing culture and tourism of Hue city. To do that, this study also mentions the educational role of designers and artists in the design process and the method of aesthetic and cultural education in both traditional and modern aspects to preserve and promote the screen in the future.

In the research thesis, Vietnam's decorative screen art (2015) uses functional theory and cultural theory space to apply to the topic, considering the screen is a specific aspect of culture and one of the means to meet the need to improve the surrounding environment of people. The research methods in this study are similar but mainly evaluate the relationship between the screen and people in society. Compared with the research model of Dang Mai Anh, like the author, this study also mentions the presence of vases in social life, conceptions in folklore, feng shui in architecture, and Traditional decorative art of Vietnam under the Nguyen Dynasty. Regarding the element of traditional screen art, most documents often mention a typical type of screen for analysis. There is no synthesis and classification of screen designs to give specific characteristics common to the traditional screen. To solve those problems, this study was based on the results of synthesizing materials from the screen and the field of Hue's architectural works and monuments. Classification of screens according to objects of use, rank, and scale of architectural works shows a clear difference in the screen's form and technique of fabrication. This study discovered that the spiritual concept of Hue people attaches great importance to the ancestral altar, so the screen is often used in the back or front to both protect and show respect, respect and gratitude to the ancestors. In addition, there is also a layer

of the screen outside the architecture to protect family members, demonstrating the principle of behavior and relationships of each family member, between the living and ancestors, and between man and nature. It adds new information by surveying artisans, painters, and interior designers to better see the role of modern screens in Hue people's lives today.

Image and Representation is a new concept applied in this study. The screen in the past was the representative image and symbol of the Hue people's architecture and culture, connecting family relationships with clans, connecting people with beliefs, and expressing the lifestyle of the people in architectural space through Feng Shui. In the old days, screens could replace blessings through written language and decorative motifs according to different themes. Each image used on the screen will represent social rank. In modern society, Image and Representation is a research method to clarify the artistic views that modern groups of painters and designers express in works on screen at each stage of development to create their own identity. At the same time, they consider the reproduction of identity in the form of shapes, materials, and national themes of the screen in modern society. Through modern screens at an early stage, the image of Vietnamese women with traditional Ao Dai becomes a new representation of the decorative theme on the screen, replacing the Confucian motifs of the past. Furthermore, the images of lotus flowers are also used a lot in contemporary screen designs. Each work is a separate, free creation, not strictly regulated like the theme of traditional screen decoration.

In other studies, the issue of preserving heritage is mentioned but not the role of traditional and modern screens in the context that Hue city is a world heritage city. This study, using research methods on consumer and Product design principles, Consumption, and everyday life, shows screens' different roles and practical applications in residential spaces and the significant contributions of screens to economic development and tourism in Hue. Artists and designers must rely on aesthetic thinking, design principles, versatility, and flexibility of the screen, to form screen products of high aesthetic value that attract consumers.

Most previous research in the field of interior design did not mention the role of product design when recreating screen identity in the modern context. In the research thesis on the value of screen art in interior space design of houses by Ta Thi Minh Trang (2020), there were similarities in aesthetic research, front solutions in layout arrangement, and similar cooperation with spatial shapes, colors, and furniture. However, in the author's research, it was not clear how the changes in the Hue screen form modernity, not to mention the process of designing and expanding the application of the screen in other spaces. In this study, the product design principle method was used to examine the current situation in Vietnam. It approached artists, painters, and designers to clarify the creative processes of the screen. The product design process showed that the process from the screen product design to production was still limited because it lacked machinery, technology, and designers in this field, so the screen still combined manual and industrial production methods. This study collected information from businesses, galleries, and screen consumers to clarify Hue's need to use screens. The screen products are being made to satisfy individual preferences rather than mass production. The aesthetic needs of the screen are enhanced, and the function is flexible and increasingly popular in the service space. The case of developing a traditional screen in the form of heritage and a modern screen bearing the Hue people's own identity has partly served society and tourism in the city.

### 5.3 Research Suggestion

5.3.1 For the traditional screen, Painters, designers, and researchers in Hue should be concerned about the value of screens in social life, promoting the participation of screens in many fields, especially tourism development. Local authorities need to pay attention to the management, conservation, and promotion of heritage, historical, cultural, artistic, ethical, and aesthetics, expressing the ideological tradition of respecting the ancestors of the Hue people. Expand design competitions, and seek solutions to apply traditional decorative arts of the screen on tourism products.

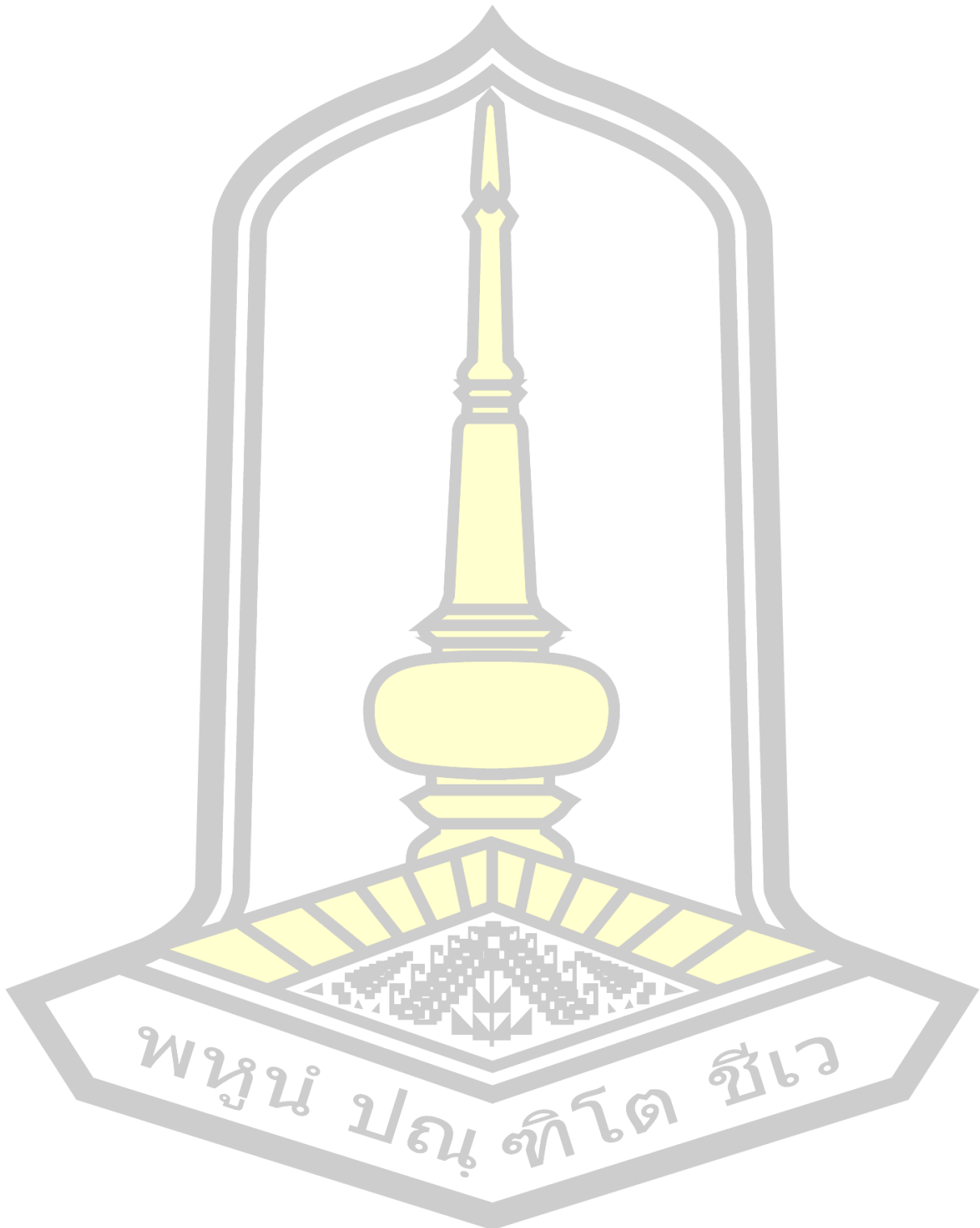


5.3.2 For the modern screen, some mass-produced products on the market have not yet met the aesthetic needs, so it is necessary to improve the quality of aesthetics and materials. If it is a handmade product, it needs to be supported by machines so that the product can supply more quantity for the needs of the people. In Hue, many craft villages have not yet been exploited economically and effectively, such as bamboo and rattan craft in Bao La Bamboo and Rattan Village, Quang Dien district, Thua Thien Hue province. The people here still keep the traditional knitting technique, the main products, and items for daily life, not much development in the field of furniture products. The current interior trend is very popular with this material bamboo and rattan are natural and environmentally friendly materials. Therefore, the study of bamboo and rattan screen is also a good proposed direction for shaping, decoration, and application solutions in interior space.

5.3.3 For painters, designers, and researchers, the field of composition is an essential factor in creating new aesthetic trends. Therefore, to promote that art more, artists must collaborate creatively with designers to create more applicable and more suitable products for consumers. Designers need to be more knowledgeable about the traditional value of the screen to have a basis for designing new screens with a more distinctive identity, making a difference compared to similar products. In colleges and universities in the field of art and design, in addition to modern design orientation, it is recommended to increase the teaching contents of traditional culture and exploit cultural characteristics to apply in composing. That way is also a way to the direction to preserve cultural identity and promote traditional culture for the future design team. These research papers will be supporting documents for other researchers as evidence for future research development trends.

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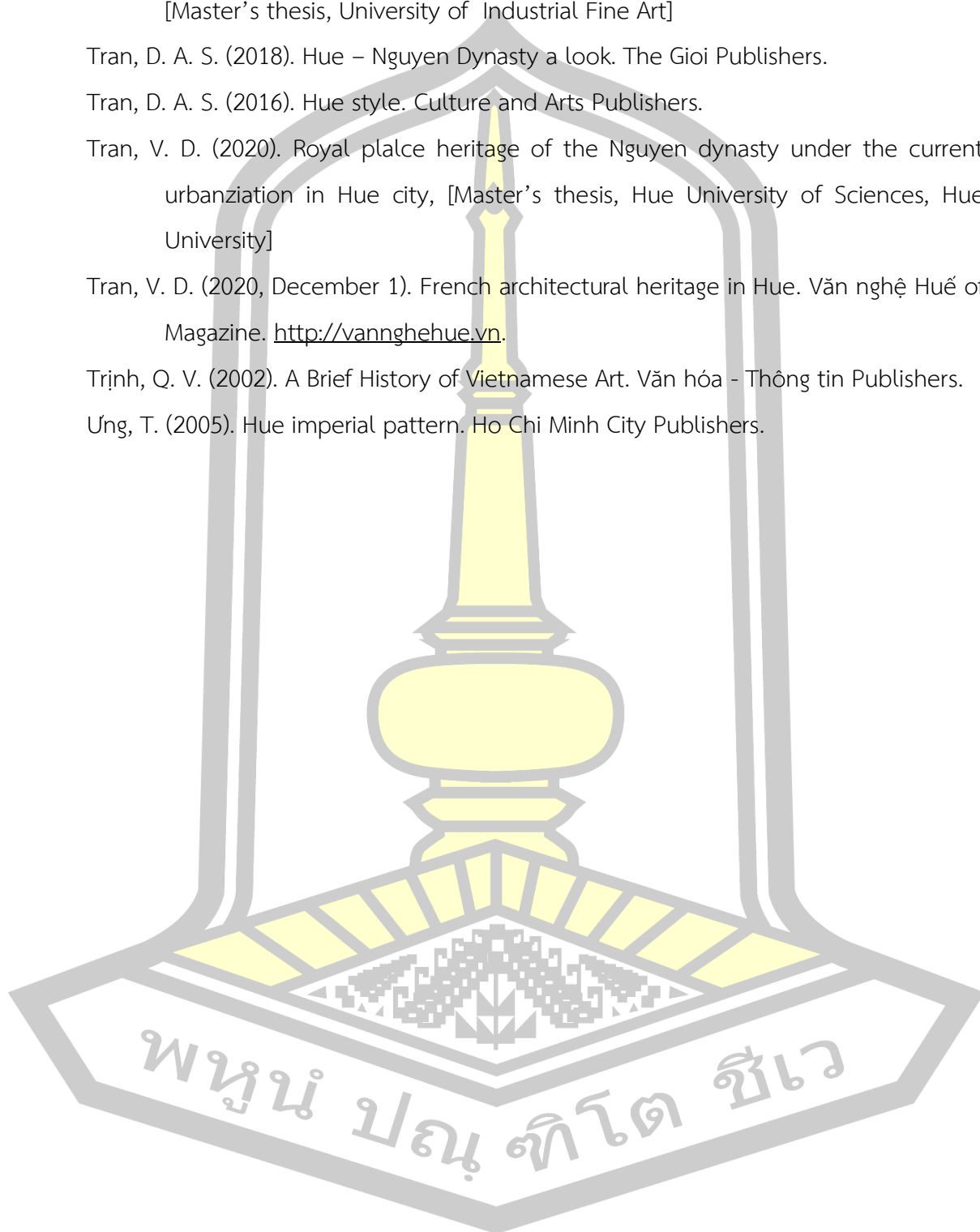
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