

Traces Of Memory: Exploring The Concept of Preserving Time and Beauty Through Ceramic Bas-Relief Artworks

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Abstract

This research investigates the potential of ceramic bas-relief artworks as a medium for preserving fragile and ephemeral memories, transforming them into enduring artifacts. The primary objectives are to explore the ability of ceramic art to safeguard transient memories, analyze how natural patterns, such as termite traces, can deepen understanding of temporal connections, and contribute to the broader discourse on the intersection of art, time, and cultural preservation. The study focuses on termite-inspired patterns, which symbolize impermanence and transformation, serving as metaphors for the connection between past, present, and future. The methodology involves the creation and analysis of ceramic bas-relief artworks. These artworks reinterpret ephemeral natural traces into durable ceramic forms, contrasting the transient nature of the original imprints with the enduring qualities of ceramics. The process includes observing and documenting termite traces, translating these patterns into artistic designs, and crafting ceramic pieces that embody the conceptual framework of preserving memory and time. The data consists of termite trace patterns, their artistic interpretations, and the resulting ceramic works. Through this method, the research produces tangible representations of temporal connections and explores how art can encapsulate cultural and emotional narratives. The anticipated results include the development of new approaches to artistic preservation of memory, providing a deeper understanding of how ephemeral elements can be immortalized through art. Additionally, this research contributes to academic discussions on art's role in cultural preservation and highlights its potential to inspire future generations to value shared histories.

Keywords: Memory, Time Preservation, Ceramic Art, Bas-Relief, Transformation

1. Introduction

Memory is an essential aspect of human existence, influencing the way individuals and societies connect with their past, navigate the present, and anticipate the future. Throughout history, cultures have sought ways to preserve memory, whether through oral traditions, written records, or artistic expressions. Art, in particular, has served as a powerful medium for capturing and transmitting the complexities of human experience (Mo & Shanks, 2023). The preservation of memories through artistic forms provides an opportunity to reflect on the past, safeguard cultural narratives, and maintain a sense of continuity over time. In this context, ceramic art, known for its durability and capacity to retain form over centuries, offers a unique opportunity to explore the preservation of fragile, transient memories. By transforming ephemeral experiences and natural patterns into enduring artifacts, ceramic art can bridge the temporal gap

between past, present, and future. The Value and Application of Traditional Knowledge in Craftsmanship Indigenous wisdom represents an invaluable repository of knowledge applicable across educational and practical domains. While traditional craftsmanship studies often prioritize aesthetic aspects, this emphasis neglects critical technical and material knowledge underpinning these practices. Examining traditional materials and methods offers insights into both cultural heritage and sustainable practices, informing modern innovations and preservation efforts. A balanced approach to studying craftsmanship—encompassing both artistic and technical aspects—ensures a comprehensive understanding of this cultural asset. By bridging this knowledge gap, we can effectively preserve and adapt traditional wisdom for contemporary applications (Sangwanpetch, 2024).

The interplay between time, memory, and materiality is central to the concept of this research (Smith, 2017, p. 14). The preservation of memory is not a passive act, but an active process of selecting and transforming experiences into forms that can be passed down through generations (Jones, 2018, p. 22). In the case of ceramic bas-relief art, this transformation occurs through the careful interpretation of natural patterns, such as the traces left by termites, into a permanent, tactile form (Clark, 2019, p. 31). The goal of this research is to examine how ceramic bas-relief artworks can act as vessels for preserving memory, encapsulating the fragility of time, and offering a tangible record of human experiences for future generations (Taylor & Johnson, 2020, p. 47). Through this exploration, the research aims to investigate the broader potential of ceramic art to preserve and transmit collective memories, providing new insights into the intersection of art, time, and cultural preservation (Jones, 2018, p. 25); (Smith, 2017, p. 16). The idea of preserving time and memory is not a new concept. In many cultures, the act of memorialization has been closely tied to the creation of monuments or artifacts that symbolize historical events, people, or practices. From ancient tombs and stone carvings to contemporary memorial sculptures, art has played a central role in recording history and preserving cultural identity. However, the approach of this study is distinct in its focus on the use of natural, ephemeral patterns as a source of inspiration for artistic expression. Specifically, the research draws on termite traces as a metaphor for the impermanence of life and the ongoing process of change. Termites, in their role as architects of nature, leave behind complex patterns that reflect the passage of time and the dynamic interplay between the natural world and human existence. By incorporating these patterns into ceramic art, the research explores how ephemeral marks from nature can be preserved and transformed into permanent, meaningful works of art.

The concept of preserving memory through art has been explored across cultures and time periods. Clay and ceramics have been particularly significant in this regard, serving as durable materials that can withstand the passage of time and act as vehicles for transmitting memory (Eames, 2011; Basarab, 2023). The permanence of ceramics allows artists to create works that metaphorically represent fossils or historical artifacts, preserving cultural identity and human perceptions (Eames, 2011). Monuments and various cultural practices also play a role in representing and negotiating time and memory (Nelson & Olin, 2003). However, some artists deliberately choose ephemeral materials or create works intended to have a finite lifespan, challenging conventional notions of art preservation and display (Purpura, 2009). This approach to ephemeral art raises questions about the nature of preservation, the role of museums, and the relationship between impermanence and meaning in artistic expression (Purpura, 2009).

Ceramics serve as a unique medium for preserving memories and experiences due to their exceptional durability and resistance to decay (Eames, 2011, p. 45). The transformation of clay into ceramic through firing creates a metaphorical fossilization, allowing artworks to endure for millennia and act as historical records (Eames, 2011, p. 47); (Basarab, 2023, p. 22). This

permanence contrasts with the transient nature of other materials, making ceramics particularly suited for exploring themes of time, memory, and cultural continuity (Basarab, 2023, p. 23). The medium's ability to capture and preserve organic forms enables artists to reflect on the fragility and permanence of the human condition (Basarab, 2023, p. 24). Furthermore, ceramics offer opportunities for artistic transformation and sustainability, allowing for the alteration and development of existing works (Altay, 2022, p. 32). As technology advances, the integration of digital fabrication techniques with traditional ceramic practices presents new possibilities for artistic expression and exploration of embodied interaction (Rosner et al., 2015, p. 78).

The idea of memory as something fragile and fleeting is central to the project's exploration of the intersection of art and time. Memory, by its very nature, is subject to change. It evolves as it is passed from one individual to another and as it is interpreted by different generations. However, despite this fluidity, memory plays a crucial role in shaping individual and collective identities. Through art, memories can be preserved in a form that transcends the limitations of individual recollection. Ceramic bas-reliefs, by their very structure, provide a physical representation of memory that can be shared across time and space. The imprints of termite traces, which are often invisible or imperceptible in nature, are made visible and tangible through the medium of ceramic art. In this way, the artwork becomes a metaphor for the process of memory-making: fragile, fleeting moments are captured and preserved in a form that allows them to be shared with others, bridging the divide between past, present, and future.

Another important aspect of this research is the role of artistic interpretation in the preservation of memory (Jones, 2018, p. 34). While the natural patterns left by termites may be seen as simple marks in nature, their transformation into ceramic bas-reliefs involves an active process of interpretation, selection, and design (Smith & Taylor, 2021, p. 76). The artist's role in this process is not only to preserve the pattern itself but to imbue it with meaning and significance that reflects broader themes of change, continuity, and the transmission of memory (Clark, 2019, p. 29). By interpreting natural patterns through the lens of artistic expression, the research emphasizes the importance of art in preserving not just the physical traces of the past, but also the emotions, stories, and cultural narratives associated with those traces (Jones, 2018, p. 36); (Smith & Taylor, 2021, p. 79).

The ultimate goal of this research is to explore how ceramic bas-relief artworks can serve as powerful vehicles for preserving memory and cultural heritage. By focusing on the relationship between ephemeral natural patterns and the permanence of ceramics, the study highlights the potential for art to act as a bridge between temporal dimensions. The research aims to demonstrate how ceramics can encapsulate the fragility of memory while offering a lasting record for future generations. In doing so, it contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of art in cultural preservation and the ways in which artistic practices can safeguard collective memory for the future. Through this exploration, the research underscores the importance of memory as an integral part of human experience and the role of art in maintaining connections between past, present, and future.

1.1 Research Objective

- 1) To examine the potential of ceramic art as a medium for preserving fragile and ephemeral memories, transforming them into enduring and tangible artifacts.
- 2) To explore how artistic interpretations of natural patterns can deepen the understanding of temporal connections and emphasize the significance of safeguarding collective memories for future generations.

3) To contribute to the broader discourse on the intersection of art, time, and cultural preservation, highlighting the role of art in maintaining and transmitting shared histories.

2. Body of paper

Background and Context

Memory preservation has been a focal point of art and culture throughout history. From ancient cave paintings to contemporary installations, the act of documenting and commemorating has reflected humanity's desire to connect with its past. Ceramic art, known for its durability, plays a unique role in this preservation process. Unlike fleeting mediums, ceramics endure the test of time, acting as both physical artifacts and cultural narratives. This study builds upon this tradition, focusing on ceramic bas-relief artworks inspired by termite traces as metaphors for the impermanence and transformation inherent in memory.

Natural patterns such as termite traces are symbols of both destruction and creation. These intricate, transient forms represent the passage of time and the fragility of existence, making them an ideal inspiration for artworks that explore the intersections of memory, time, and permanence. The use of bas-relief as an artistic approach allows these patterns to be preserved in a tangible and visually impactful form, enabling viewers to engage with the concept of memory on both emotional and intellectual levels.

Methodology

Artistic Process

The study employs a practice-based research approach, focusing on the creation of ceramic bas-relief artworks. The process begins with observing and documenting termite traces in natural settings. These traces are studied for their intricate patterns, which are then reinterpreted and adapted into artistic designs. The next stage involves creating clay prototypes, carefully replicating the essence of the natural traces while allowing room for artistic expression.

Once the designs are finalized, the clay pieces undergo a series of processes, including firing and glazing. Particular attention is given to selecting glazes and finishes that enhance the naturalistic quality of the termite patterns while reinforcing their metaphorical significance. The transformation from raw clay to fired ceramic encapsulates the essence of memory preservation—transient marks made permanent through the creative process.

Conceptual Framework

The study adopts a multidisciplinary approach, drawing on theories from art, philosophy, and cultural studies. It explores the concept of time and memory as fluid constructs, examining how art can serve as a bridge between past, present, and future. The termite-inspired patterns

are positioned within this framework as symbols of continuity and change, reflecting the dynamic nature of human and environmental histories.

Result

The results of this study are presented through a series of ceramic bas-relief artworks that explore the interplay between transience and permanence by transforming the fragile, ephemeral beauty of termite traces into enduring forms. These pieces invite reflection on memory, time, and preservation while highlighting the potential of ceramic art to convey complex temporal narratives. By juxtaposing fleeting natural patterns with durable materials,

the artworks create a visual and conceptual tension that bridges the gap between nature and human culture, reflecting universal themes of transformation, continuity, and heritage. Through this reinterpretation, the termite traces, once impermanent and overlooked, become monumental, serving as an effective medium for preserving cultural and emotional narratives, fostering a tangible connection to the past, and inspiring future generations.

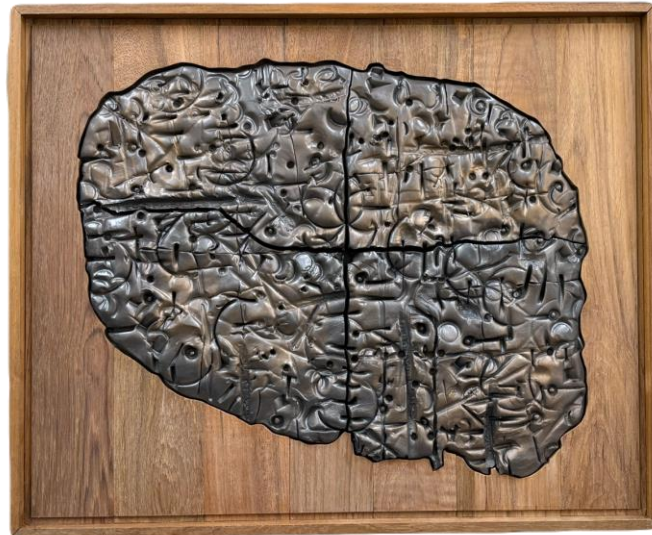
*Fig. 1 Traces of Memory no.1, 2024 by Pasutt Kanrattanasutra,
Ceramic, Wood, 5 × 49 × 49 cm*



*Fig. 2 Traces of Memory no.2, 2024 by Pasutt Kanrattanasutra,
Ceramic, Wood, 5 × 59 × 59 cm*



*Fig. 3 Traces of Memory no.3, 2024 by Pasutt Kanrattanasutra,
Ceramic, Wood, 5 × 69 × 59 cm*



3. Conclusion

The research demonstrates how ceramic bas-relief artworks can act as vessels for preserving memory and time, transforming ephemeral natural patterns into lasting artifacts. By drawing inspiration from termite traces, the study emphasizes the importance of safeguarding fragile and transient elements of life and culture.

The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between art, time, and cultural preservation. They highlight the potential of ceramic art to encapsulate the fragility of memory while creating enduring connections across temporal dimensions. This exploration underscores the role of artistic practice in documenting and transmitting shared histories, offering new perspectives on the preservation of beauty and memory through creative expression.

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