

# THE VISUAL AESTHETIC OF DREAM AND SOUL

**Jaruwan Mueangkhwa**

*Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan sunandha Rajabhat University*

*E-mail: jaruwan.mu@ssru.ac.th*

## ABSTRACT

Creation of the article entitled “The Visual Aesthetic of Dream and Soul” is a two-dimensional painting using an acrylic technique on canvas. This artwork depicts the image of the cats in a colorful atmosphere with starry sky which is likely to be an imaginary dream of faith and hope to stay alive. Cats have long been engaged with human beliefs. In each specific environmental area, there will be a history of different beliefs about cats from the past to the present. Nowadays, in the era of advanced technology that allows humans to embrace more knowledge and understanding of science critically and systematically. Human also enables to spontaneously receive information from all over the world without boundaries. Therefore, young people who are encouraged by these situations will have opportunities to create a lot of creative works even if they are in a highly competitive era. For new generations, there are different ways to achieve their dream depending on one individual. In Thailand, young people still have some beliefs that have been passed down from their ancestors. Even if there is scientific data as facts, human being needs encouragement to be used as a driving force to balance their preferences and duties. For some people, cat is considered as their company, source of happiness and good fortune for themselves.

From the above content, this acrylic painting was created and inspired by individual stories as well as spiritual beliefs. The painting reminds of hope, and our dream achievement. It is presented by using the image of the cat in colorful atmosphere that provides sense of aesthetics and beauty portrays images of hope, dreams and happiness which always be everyone’s wish.

**Keywords:** painting, cat, faith, dream, visual aesthetic

## INTRODUCTION

A dream is an inspiration of belief and hope. The Visual Aesthetic of Dream and Soul depicts the cats’ image in a colorful atmosphere that allows us to embrace happiness. It is people’s representative of dreams, hopes, and beliefs including the use of symbolism and various lucky amulets which is likely to be an imaginary dream of faith and hope to stay alive. Belief in good luck comes from a power of belief and hope. As a result, several symbols and signs are created. This work symbolized a cat with good luck and encouragement.

Luck and belief are always together. Even though it is probably unable to provide a supportive reason or be proved scientifically. Humans accept luck’s existence for a long time. For example, we pray for luck at night when there is a meteor. Another example is that garlic’s protective power against evil spirits. These are some of the beliefs in different cultures. As so

“love” and “belief”, we “cannot” find the reason for them easily, yet we may know the meaning of “love” and “belief” in our own way (Alys R. Yablon, 2009).

Cultural myths of belief and ritual in Thai society have been shown through the findings of symbols of meaning. The appearance of images about belief consisted of formats of belief and ritual. To illustrate, the Southeast Asian era was derived from traditional beliefs and rituals; The “Hae Nang Maew” tradition of praying for rain, myths of belief, faith in buying small Buddha images. (Suwanklang, P, 2022) To live in this world, we embrace encouragement and hope for ourselves. Aside from working dedication and doing our best, we would have different ways of hope and encouragement depending on the social context. One of the well-known beliefs is about doing something that is believed to bring in luck. Winning the lottery is a high hope for people. The ones who have luck would often win the lottery, unfortunately, not everyone would ever have that luck. Some people live with their preferred job. However, some could end with an unpleasant work life. Thus, to live our lives, simple happiness is a special power for us. Hope and belief are gradually imagined. Then the iconic symbol of luck is created. Beckoning Cat is commonly found in companies, businesses, and commercial places. It is a figurine of cats that are placed in front of the store or cashier counter. Because it is believed to be a symbol of financial luck. Not only for high positive profit to the owner but this decorative figurine also creates positive vibes.

The cat's belief in Japanese society has been produced into stories and commercialized, which clearly reflects the influence of Japanese society's beliefs, especially "Maneki Neko" (Hoahherm, P, 2021). Money Cat is called “Maneki Neko” in Japanese. The word Maneki means “welcome” or “beckon” and “Neko” means “cat”. Thus, “Maneki Neko” refers to a Beckoning Cat that brings wealth to its owner. Sometimes it is called “Money cat” (in Thai called Maew Kwak). The figurine is normally made from ceramic or porcelain. The cat’s appearances are fat, adorable, welcoming, and waving one leg in the posture of beckoning. In Japanese belief, the cat and its action are to embrace wealth or welcome customers. That is the reason why businesses or shop owners adore it. They always place the cat in front of or on the cashier counter. If we notice, we will see, the cat is colored in various tones. Additionally, its neck would decorate with an apron, bell, or gold coin.

The story of “Maneki Neko” is from a traditional Japanese folktale. Originally, turtle shell was believed to be a lucky amulet in the Japanese culture. The turtle shell’s color often appears in red, black, and brown. When Maneki Neko becomes a symbol of luck, that would be related to the turtle shell. The initial history of Maneki Neko originated in the Edo period (around 1603 - 1867). According to a folktale, a virtuous Samurai was riding a horse passing a temple. He saw a cat sitting on the stairs as if it was beckoning. He was surprised and curious by its action. Then he stopped and came to the cat. Suddenly, a thunderbolt struck directly at the previous spot where he stood. He was extremely appreciative of the cat because it saved his life. He donated a huge sum of money and land for patronizing the temple. The story spread around and become a legend of “Maneki Neko”. Another story tells that there was a couple who raised a cat with love and mercy. They shared their food with the cat every day. Eventually, with their poverty, they could not raise the cat. They decided to abandon the cat which brought them sorrow. She dreamt of a cat. It told her to make the cat sculptures with that would bring them

good fortune. The woman made a clay cat sculpture, and it was sold successfully. She was able to save enough money as a result to re-adopt the cat (Alys R. Yablon, 2009)



**Figure 1** Maneki Neko or Money Cat

**Source:** KABOCHA SUSHI/ Craft Story. (2022). The origin of Maneki Neko  
Access on 20 January 2023, from <https://www.kabochasushi.com>

Maneki Neko is popular and often believed to bring wealth to Japanese and Chinese culture. Especially, China Town in The United State of America. It is commonly found in places such as homes, offices, restaurants, and shops. Maneki Neko is adopted by some feng shui practitioners as a good luck symbol. A spot for Maneki Neko is important according to feng shui. It is believed that if it is placed in front of the entrance, or showcase, it would attract or bring in customers. Some taxi drivers display Maneki Neko in the car because they believe that it would help bring in passengers. It is obvious that "Maneki Neko" beckons in a unique way. Beckoning with its right leg means bringing wealth and plundering even more money. Meanwhile, if it beckons with its left leg, it brings in a lot of customers to the store. Nowadays, with its positive meaning behind the figurine posture, there is a Maneki Neko piggy bank to save money (Alys R. Yablon, 2009).

The belief in the lucky cat has existed for centuries and spreading across societies, cultures, and nations. Although luck may seem to be a coincidence that cannot be proved mathematically or merely supported by statistics. Maneki Neko is still symbolized widely as a lucky cat. This belief represents a beautiful culture that is full of human fascination and creativity. It is a long story from past to present. Consequently, this research is influenced by the belief in a symbol of a lucky cat. The article supports the reader to maintain hope and encouragement to live their lives. The artwork is a creation of a two-dimension drawing on canvas. The artwork depicts different postures of cats among the colorful atmospheres that would energize people positively.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

1. To create a two-dimension drawing that is inspired by the belief of Maneki Neko (Lucky Cat)

2. To develop and present the artwork for aesthetic inspiration and encouragement to the viewers

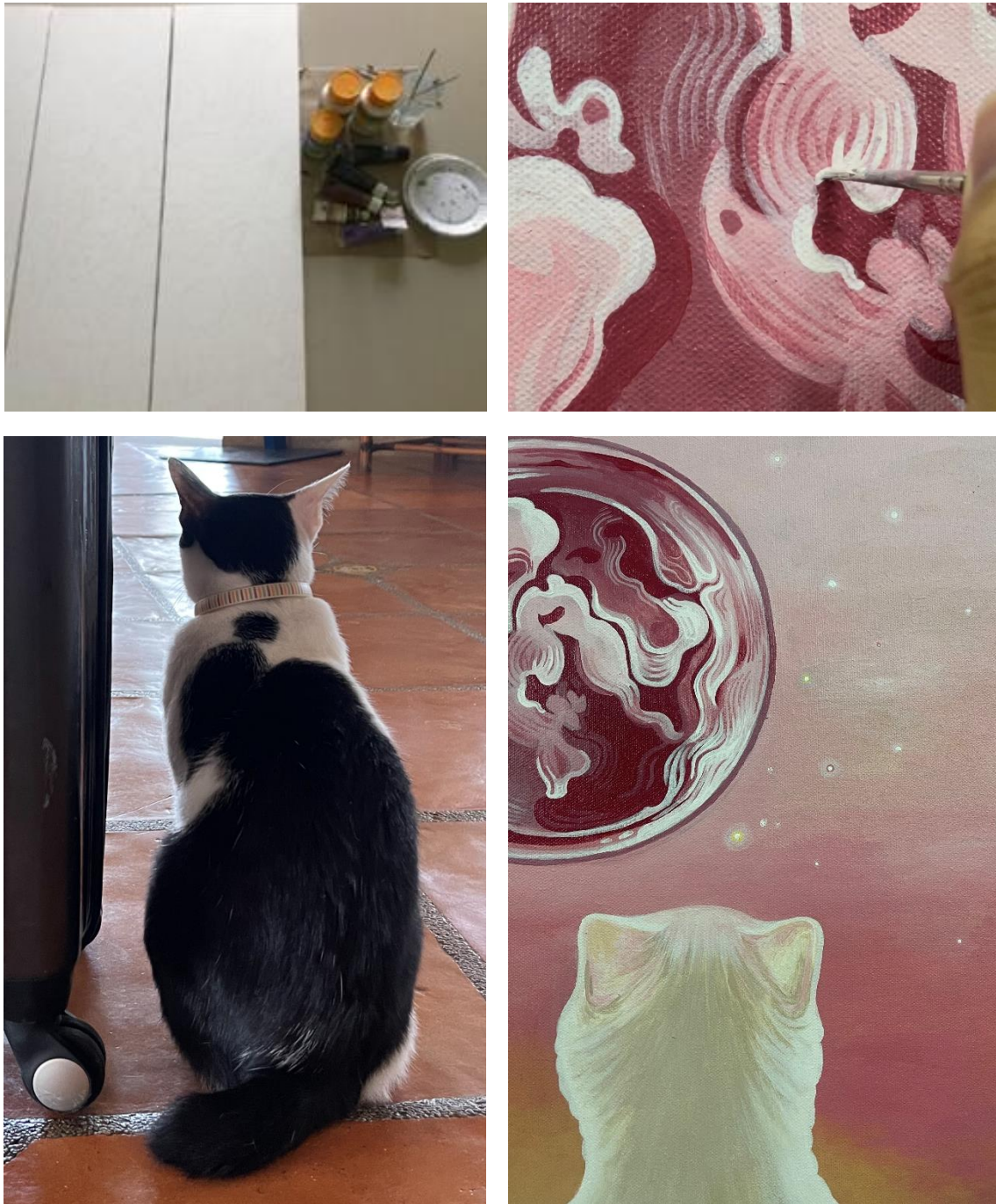
## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

1. Researching stories and beliefs of cat
  - 1) Studying from listening to myths and tales about cats from adults, such as grandfather, grandmother, grandmother, etc.
  - 2) Reviewing from available sources such as books/ documents and related creative works.
2. Collecting data, analyzing, and sketching
3. Drawing and developing the artwork based on concepts/objectives.
4. Depicting and presenting the artwork



**Figure 2 Sketch**

**Source:** author



**Figure 3** The work process using drawing on canvas.

**Source:** author

## RESEARCH RESULT

### Artwork

Based on the introduction, research rationale, and objectives, the details of this artwork are as follows.

- The two-dimension of the canvas painting under the title of “Friend”
- Using an acrylic technique
- the artwork’s size is 60 X 80 cm



**Figure 4** Friend, the acrylic on canvas drawing size 60 X 80 cm.

**Source:** author



**Figure 5**  
Thai – Lao Contemporary Arts Exhibition.  
at National Institute of Fine Arts from 25<sup>th</sup> July to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022  
**Source:** author

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Conclusion**

To sum up, this section is the outcome of the analysis of the research that is done through the production of visual arts and presenting visual aesthetics to the general public.

### **Work Creation Analysis**

It is possible to investigate the lucky cat's belief using myths, folktales, books/textbooks, and pertinent materials. It is a long last relationship between humans and the belief in luck and fortune. Numerous cat models, figurines, and sculptures have been used to convey these views. These beliefs have been expressed through a variety of models, figurines, and sculptures of cats. In this artwork, the cats are presented in different colors and postures, and sizes. It refers to hope for peace and fertility that reflects the way of livelihood in each area, and connecting the traditional way of life to the present day and giving a positive sense.

The artwork depicts the auspicious cat as a symbol in a set of vibrant colors, the use of lines, and the weight of various colors, as well as the shape and posture of the cat, all of which express a favorable impression of a lasting connection between cats and people in society.

### **Summary of Research Results and Benefits**

The study discovered strong cultural and creative connections between cat beliefs and aesthetics in literature and art. This belief may have its roots in history and the experience of previous generations. With a philosophy that inspires us to live happy lives and is optimistic. It is regarded as a representation of contemporary society's adoption and artistic degradation of an older generation's belief in cats.

The purpose of this study is to shed light on the modern belief in the lucky cat. This artwork is unique showing a cat while also reflecting the cat's beauty and vibrant surroundings. This may raise some concerns about our level of happiness in life with the hope, inspiration, and motivation of the viewers. The answer would depend on each person's environmental background or what they value the most.

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