
The Vietnamese - France Cultural Exchange Through Nude Art of the Generation of Artists of Indochina College of Fine Arts

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ABSTRACT: Nineteenth-century French art, with the advent of the Impressionist school in the 1860s, created an important turning point in the history of fine art, profoundly changing the face of world art culture. This innovation is not only reflected in aesthetics but also reflects the change in artistic ideology, towards a modern, personal and characteristic view in painting. In that context, Vietnamese painters of the Indochina College of Fine Arts generation are trained according to Western academic programs, mastering graphic techniques, anatomy, perspective and approaching many European schools. However, the artists skillfully applied these techniques to express traditional Asian themes and spirits, thereby forming a new style of painting, harmoniously combining European scholarship and Vietnamese cultural identity. During this period, the image of the female body was also gradually accepted more widely by society, creating conditions for the development and sublimation of nude art. In Vietnam, nude painting has become a unique demonstration of the delicate combination of French art style and Vietnamese aesthetics. The artistic intersection between Vietnam and France in the field of painting is a unique cultural phenomenon where traditional and modern elements are fused and distilled the quintessential values through the creative thinking and aesthetic sense of Vietnamese painters.

KEYWORDS: French art, Impressionism, academia, nude painting

1. INTRODUCTION

In Vietnam, although Confucianism is no longer an official ideology as in the past, it still has a profound and sustainable influence on the spiritual life of the vast majority of people. That influence is not only reflected in traditional moral standards but also deeply rooted in the value system and social concepts, forming a subjective frame of reference to evaluate fine customs and customs that have been preserved and maintained for many generations. These values have long become social frameworks and norms, governing the community's approach, perception and judgment of many socio-cultural phenomena, especially in fields and professions that are considered sensitive in both content and form.

The evaluation of sensitive professions such as performing arts, fashion, advertising, and contemporary art composition is often strongly influenced by prejudices and concepts derived from the Confucian foundation of etiquette, order, temperance and family ethics. This leads to a tendency to judge harshly, even conservatively, against expressions of innovation or disruption, which may conflict with values that are considered to be long-standing fine customs and customs. From the perspective of social sciences, this phenomenon raises the question of the relationship between the preservation of traditional values and the needs of modern social development, between creative freedom and the limits of community morality, and shows the role of education and communication in regulating and creating appropriate social concepts and cultural integration.

However, in the past, Vietnamese art, especially through folk paintings, has developed a form of composition using nude images, reflecting the concept of prosperity and unique metaphor. These works are not only decorative but also convey the wishes of multiplying, sufficiency and harmonizing yin and yang in cultural life. The nude image is expressed openly and symbolically, in order to express the philosophy of human life and folk beliefs, showing the delicate and skillful artistic thinking of the ancient Vietnamese.

Since the French came to Vietnam to establish the Indochina College of Fine Arts in 1925, the artistic movements of the nineteenth-century French realism and impressionism, along with the works of the post-impressionist school, would have a great influence on Vietnamese modern art. The Ecole des Beaux-Arts d'Indochine, the art academy that played a strong role in shaping the early development of Western-style painting in Vietnam in the first half of the twentieth century, promoted modern French aesthetics through expressive techniques, thus inspiring pioneering young artists in the years of formation through the process who will continue to establish a new line of modern art in Vietnam, (Quang Phong and Quang Viet, 2022).

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With the training method of the French Academy, Vietnamese painters began to get acquainted with the rich materials of oil paints, canvases, applications, observations, and comparisons of colors in nature. Practice perspective, shapes, portraits, and real people, and then draw nude models from exercises that study human body images.

Vietnamese painters and sculptors are trained according to Western scientific methods. Basic training includes basic subjects (human anatomy, laws of far, art history of Vietnam and the world, ancient architecture) and basic subjects such as: research

drawing, sculpture exercises, decoration exercises. In 1925 - 1937 the school was directed by painter Victor Tardieu. He is a talented painter, he has discovered the unique beauty of Vietnamese traditional art and the creativity and skillful hands of Vietnamese artisans.

In the new era, Vietnamese art in the meeting of the intersection of Eastern and Western cultures. The establishment of the Indochina College of Fine Arts, objectively, has trained a team of professional plastic painters, mastered Western scientific art methods, but from the national ideology and passion for creativity, it has smoothly combined the two lines of Eastern and Western art. promoting Vietnamese art to a new page to integrate with the world, including successes in various genres and typically the topic of nude body research, which has changed the traditional methods and concepts of Vietnamese people. Vietnam's pioneering modern artists have balanced the duality of French and Vietnamese cultural influences, connecting modern and old artistic traditions.

Many nude paintings in the middle of the twentieth century, the generation of Vietnamese painters of the Indochina College of Fine Arts knew how to apply and select the quintessence of Europe to improve the artistic level and sublimate the national character to create masterpieces of nude paintings with Vietnamese characteristics, evoking beauty that tran scends space and time (Nguyen Quan, 2010).

2. RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Nudity is a form of visual art that focuses on depicting the human figure in a state of undressed, which is considered a long and important tradition in Western art history. Since ancient times, the figure of a naked woman has served as a symbol of happiness, fertility, and the ability to maintain the species, as evidenced by many ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Greek artworks. In Egypt and Mesopotamia, reliefs, statues, and paintings often depict the female body with features that emphasize affluence, affluence, associated with beliefs and the desire for fertility and self-sufficiency. In Greek art, the nude figure reached the pinnacle of idealization, with the conception of the human body as a measure of beauty, harmony and proportionality, reflecting the philosophy of honoring man as the center of the universe.

The creation of nude paintings not only stops at the function of depicting body shapes but also shows the level of shaping techniques, understanding of anatomy, and the ability to express emotions and personality of characters through visual language. It is considered a distinct art genre because the human body is seen as the truly perfect embodiment of art – an eternal theme for painters, sculptors, and visual artists to exploit, research, and create (DK, 2022).

From the perspective of art research, nude paintings also play a role in reflecting aesthetic concepts, social value systems, and the cultural and historical context of each period. Shows the relationship between art and society in defining the norms of beauty, gender, power, and personal consciousness. The study of the tradition of nude painting is therefore not only aimed at restoring art history but also helping to deepen the understanding of humanistic thought and the changes in the way people see themselves over time.

In Vietnam, the depiction of nudity has long been considered a very sensitive issue, deeply influenced by a patriarchal culture with the concept of male contempt. In the traditional value system, the female body is considered a "mystery" that is not exposed in public, leading to strict rules of secrecy and moral standards. Through each generation, there has always been an opposition between the old and the new: on the one hand, there are conservative and strict notions of morality, on the other side is the need to innovate, breaking boundaries to express the freedom of artistic creation.

However, from the perspective of prosperous culture, which is a fundamental part of Southeast Asian folk art, Vietnamese artists have found inspiration to recreate the beauty of the human body in their own way. Nude paintings are created not only to show the body but also to create a unique, personal voice and reflect local cultural thoughts. In terms of content and form, these paintings often exude a very Asian beauty and spirit, showing the discreet and delicate characteristics of Vietnamese people. Each line, composition, light treatment and color all bring a sense of lightness and elegance, creating a harmonious, symbolic beauty without focusing on showing vulgarity. Therefore, the study of nude paintings in Vietnamese art does not stop at analyzing plastic techniques but also opens up a perspective on the relationship between art and society, between tradition and modernity, as well as how Vietnamese artists reconcile with cultural values to affirm their own creative identity.

The presence of the Indochina School of Fine Arts has left a profound and lasting impact on the formation and development of modern art in Vietnam. This is the first place to apply the Western academic art training system, forming a generation of Vietnamese painters who are well-trained in drawing, composition, perspective and especially oil painting techniques which have

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only been introduced to Vietnam for less than a century. Hundreds of artists graduated from this school have contributed to changing the face of Vietnamese art, bringing domestic art to international standards. Notably, many students and lecturers of the Indochina School of Fine Arts such as Le Pho, Vu Cao Dam, Mai Trung Thu have made works with the theme of nudity or semi-nudity, reflecting the spirit of East-West interference in art. Some of their works were selected to be exhibited at major international fairs and exhibitions such as Rome (1932), Milan (1934), Brussels (1935) and San Francisco (1937), attracting attention and receiving praise from critics and the public. Thanks to these achievements, Vietnamese artists of that generation have contributed to

the reputation of "The Paris School of Vietnam", affirming the position of Vietnamese fine arts on the world art map (Charlotte Aguttes – Reynier, 2023).

The establishment of the Indochina School of Fine Arts marked an important turning point in the history of Vietnamese art. The birth of this school not only opened a new era for domestic art, helping to gradually get rid of the thousand-year-old influence of Chinese fine art, but also created conditions for the absorption and development of Western academic spirit. At the same time, the university has become a bridge to attract Western painters and lecturers to Vietnam, promoting the process of discovery, research and bringing the image of Vietnamese people and indigenous cultural life into paintings, contributing to building an art that is both modern and imbued with national identity.

During his teaching career at the Indochina School of Fine Arts, French professors such as Victor Tardieu, Joseph Inguimberty, Gaston Rouillet, Léo Crasste and Rene Bassouls imparted Western art knowledge to Vietnamese students, contributing to the formation of the first generation of professional painters in the history of our country. At the same time, these professors themselves are also deeply influenced by local art and culture, leading to a creative exchange and continuation process. Western realism, introduced and communicated by French artists and Vietnamese students, is used to exploit many new themes, notably the paintings depicting nude women. These works not only show academic plastic techniques, but also open up a new way of looking at the human body, overcoming traditional barriers and reflecting the intersection of East and West art during the colonial period.

Nudity in modern Vietnamese art has been adapted and developed through the techniques of silk painting and lacquer, demonstrating a masterful synthesis of French painting approaches and Vietnamese traditions. The artists have depicted the female body with special sophistication, successfully exploiting materials such as watercolor, gold-plated lacquer, lipstick and egg care to create a world of shimmering images, fantastical and symbolic. As a result, nude art is not only a display of plastic techniques but also a testament to the process of intersection, cultural adaptation and unique creativity of modern Vietnamese art (Many Authors, 1993).

Nam Son is considered one of the first Vietnamese painters of contemporary painting to propose the idea of establishing an art school for Vietnamese students. With a long-cherished dream, he drafted a plan to establish an art academy that would provide a Western-inspired Beaux-Arts curriculum for local students in Hanoi. Thanks to his good relationship with Victor Tardieu, he enlisted the support of his French colleague and together lobbied the 23rd Governor-General of Indochina, Martial Merlin (1860–1935), to formally establish the school by decree issued in October 1924. The colonial government's sponsorship of such a prestigious multicultural project is seen as a powerful tool for the development of Vietnamese art, while facilitating the instillation of the aesthetics, history, and progressive spirit of French civilization through its entire brilliant visual beauty. In that year, the school officially opened as the Indochina School of Fine Arts, specializing in teaching Western classical art, with Victor Tardieu appointed as principal and Nam Son as vice president, both recognized as co-founders of the academy (Ministry of Culture and Information, 2023).

The Indochina School of Fine Arts was forced to close in 1945 due to the Japanese occupation of Indochina during World War II. After many years of hiatus, the school was reopened in 1962 under the new name of the Institute of Fine Arts. After that, the Institute of Fine Arts was merged with Hanoi University of Fine Arts to form today's Vietnam University of Fine Arts, continuing the mission of training generations of artists and lecturers in fine arts and contributing to the development of modern art in Vietnam.

During its 20 years of operation, the *École des Beaux-Arts de l'Indochine* (EBAI) has introduced to Vietnam important classical academic skills, especially anatomical painting and oil painting techniques according to Western academic standards. The Academy has trained a total of 128 full-time graduates, equipped with methodical knowledge and skills, many of whom have become famous names in the international arena. Typical painters are Le Pho (1907–2001), Vu Cao Dam (1908–2000) and Mai Trung Thu (1906–1980), all three of whom came from the first courses of the Indochina School of Fine Arts and later contributed to affirming the value of Vietnamese art. In total, more than 60 French artists taught at the Indochina School of Fine Arts, many of whom were key members of the modern art movements in Paris during the period between the two world wars. In particular, many lecturers such as Victor Tardieu, Alix Aymé (1894–1989), Joseph Inguimberty (1896–1971) and André Maire (1898–1984) have devoted their lives to teaching at the Academy, dedicated to training Vietnamese students and have a long-term commitment to teaching life in Asia (Giulia Pentcheff, 2012).

Figure 1: Alix Ayme, Nude Side Fan 1935, 70x90 cm



Source: <https://vietartview.com.vn/mot-buc-tranh-son-dau-dep-dang-de-suu-tap-cua-alix-ayme/>

Although Vietnam has a long tradition of artisans, the concept of "artist" is a completely new idea, marking a significant innovation in cultural life. Previously, in Vietnamese society, painters were often only called "painters" or "artisans", reflecting the traditional notion that there was no clear distinction between art and crafts. The transition from the position of "artisan" to "artist" requires a fundamental change in social role and creative personal consciousness, paving the way for the formation of a class of professional painters, self-aware as independent creative subjects with their own vision and style.

Fine arts during the French colonial period (1885–1945) witnessed many important innovations, reflecting the communication and influence of Western art on Vietnamese art. From the results achieved through exhibitions, the colonial government has opened many art schools to train highly skilled artisans to serve both traditional and export decoration needs.

Concrete:

- In 1901, Thu Dau Mot School of Fine Arts was established with four main disciplines: wood carving, mother-of-pearl mosaic, bronze casting and carving.
- In 1907, Bien Hoa School of Fine Arts was opened to train in ceramics, porcelain and bronze casting.
- In 1913, established the Gia Dinh School of Indigenous Arts (later renamed many times), specializing in training teachers and craftsmen in drawing, carving, hand-printing...
- In 1920, expanded to the North with the Hanoi School of Practical Arts, teaching bronze casting, carpentry, silver carving, lace making, etc (Nguyen Quoc Dinh, 2024).

These training institutions not only preserve and develop traditional crafts but also demonstrate efforts to innovate Vietnamese art through contact with the West. In this context, Vietnamese painters are deeply influenced by French art and modern art schools. The subject of nudity, which is very new in the Vietnamese tradition, is exploited by painters and sculptors with a bold, powerful and disruptive perspective, influenced by schools such as Impressionism, Cubism, Semi-Abstract and Surreal. However, no matter how the visual language changes, the works still share the same purpose of honoring and praising the beauty of women.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Historical method, understanding the social context of Vietnam during the French colonial period and the process of forming the Indochina School of Fine Arts.

Comparative analysis and characteristics of Vietnamese and Western nude paintings, pointing out the elements of adaptation and creativity.

Collecting, describing and classifying typical works of the generation of Indochinese painters. Criticize and interpret art, analyze nude images from cultural, social and aesthetic perspectives.

Interdisciplinary, combining art history, sociology and cultural studies to approach the problem comprehensively.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1. Vietnamese Folk Painting

With a long history of development, forming and serving the cultural and spiritual needs of a large number of people. One of the important characteristics of Vietnamese folk painting is the ability to integrate the element of prosperity with a strong symbol of the desire to multiply, be full, harmonize yin and yang and family happiness through simple forms of expression, close to life. The element of prosperity is not only intended to show the body but also is metaphorical in nature, rich in religious meanings and views on life.

Among the folk paintings, Dong Ho paintings in the North are considered typical with wood carving techniques and bright color schemes, coherent compositions, simple but symbolic forms. Some works have become good examples of how to express nudity and prosperity in folk art. For example, the painting Jealousy uses a direct depiction of the human body with simple but clear lines, frankly expressing the beauty of the body while maintaining humor and social criticism.

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Especially interesting is the painting Coconut Catch, where the element of prosperity is pushed into a subtle metaphor with the boy tossing two coconuts, the girl tossing her skirt to excite, evoking the harmony of yin and yang and the desire to multiply. Although evocative, the painting still retains its charm, wit and delicateness. Everyday details such as rural landscapes, folk costumes, and the character's warm smile help the work balance between prosperity and fine customs, reflecting the simple but vibrant life of Vietnamese villages.

According to Ly Khac Cung (2010), in the book Vietnamese Prosperous Culture, there is a comment on the uniqueness of Vietnamese folk paintings in general and Dong Ho in particular lies in the fact that the element of prosperity is not considered vulgar but becomes a separate artistic language, helping viewers receive the message of the joy of life. the desire to reproduce and family happiness through an expression that is both rustic and skillful rich in art (Lý Khắc Cung, 2010).

Continuing the tradition of prosperity and nudity in folk paintings, it can be seen that a special expression through the painting "Fairy bathing" is a line of Kim Hoang paintings. Here, the content of the painting becomes more intense when exposing the female figure clearly, especially in the scene of "fairy bathing", reflecting a certain break from the discreet norms often seen in Vietnamese folk paintings. The figure of the naked woman is recreated not only as a legendary folk figure, but also evokes the idealized and admiring view of the West, where the naked woman is glorified as the image of the "Goddess". This shows the perspective of cultural interference, when Vietnamese artisans themselves absorb, adapt and reflect Eurasian aesthetics in expressing the content of folk paintings (Henri Oger, translator Tran Dinh Binh, 2009).

Figure 2: Painting of Kim Hoang Tien bathing



Source: <http://vanhoanghethuat.vn/buc-tranh-tien-tam-do-hon-xua-luu-dau.htm>

In terms of compositions in folk paintings that mainly depict semi-nude, painters often avoid directly depicting sensitive parts, but instead focus on exploiting the female body from a general perspective or from the back of the model. The posture of the characters in the painting often shows a shy and cautious look, reflecting self-awareness of social norms and moral standards. This shows the profound influence of Confucian thought in Vietnamese folk art, when the nude element, although it appears, is still restrained and integrated discreetly and delicately to suit the concept of traditional fine customs and customs.

Over time, the theme of prosperity in Vietnamese folk paintings is no longer just specific images but has developed into a cultural value that contains many layers of meaning. To become a place to preserve and reflect the spiritual beauty, beliefs, art, architecture and lifestyle of Vietnamese people throughout thousands of years of history. As a result, folk paintings are not only considered as simple art products but also valuable cultural heritage, helping future generations understand and appreciate the profound traditional values of the nation.

In the works of Vietnamese folk artisans, Vietnamese and Asian characteristics are clearly shown through human brushstrokes, especially the image of women with a natural and intimate appearance. The physiques and gestures in the paintings are often

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everyday life, sometimes mixed with a bit of humor and wit, contributing to creating their own identity and unique vitality for Vietnamese folk art.

4.2. The study of nude paintings by Vietnamese painters.

Unlike the European tradition of seeing and expressing body shapes clearly, Asian artists in general and Vietnam in particular often emphasize the lines and symbolism of things. Vietnamese painters of the Indochinese generation, when absorbing the technique of drawing nudes in the style of Western academia, adjusted their expression to suit Asian aesthetics. In many nude paintings, they often retain the element of gentle cover with "overalls, dresses, lotuses, paper fans...", creating a feeling of discreetness and delicateness. The style of expression is gentle and soft, avoiding strong blocks or pressing muscles like the body in bodybuilding, thereby building a distinct visual language, with Vietnamese characteristics.

The nude paintings of the painters of the Indochina College of Fine Arts have many special aesthetic values, showing the harmonious intersection of Western academic techniques and Asian spirit. When comparing the nude paintings of the Indochinese painter generation with the works of the Renaissance or the Impressionist school in Europe, it is possible to see the differences in the expression of form, emotion and culture. Vietnamese artists often choose discreet and delicate expressions, focusing on lines and symbolism instead of emphasizing strong shapes or idealized muscles. Recently, efforts to research and introduce this art form continue to be maintained. For example, Culture Information Publishing House has released a beautiful book "Nude Paintings" (*Culture Information Publishing House, Hanoi, 2009*), a collection of works and research by more than 52 authors who created nude paintings and statues in the period from about 1975 to 2009. This work shows the inheritance and development of Vietnamese nude art from the Indochinese tradition to the modern period, contributing to affirming the value and position of this genre in contemporary Vietnamese art.

The nude paintings of the artists of the Indochina College of Fine Arts often exude lightness, simplicity and very gentleness, avoiding the obvious and unpretentious. It can be said that it is the discreet, delicate and deep personality of Vietnamese people that has been skillfully conveyed by talented painters into their works. When painting people or things, painters always pay special attention to the *formes*, because it is the beauty from within that the artist needs to explore and express. To grasp the "form", the essence of the form, requires the artist to observe and understand the whole person or thing in the whole. It is that "formes" that is the soul of the divine transmission in art. Although it sounds simple, when drawing people, complying with body anatomy, the laws of proximity as well as moderation or choosing sexy details requires delicate and elaborate skills, it is not easy for the artist (Nude Picture Book, 2009).

The characteristics of nude paintings of artists of the Indochina College of Fine Arts such as Nguyen Phan Chanh, Le Van De, Nguyen Khang, Mai Trung Thu, Le Pho, To Ngoc Van, Tran Van Can often have few full nude paintings, but mainly semi-nude, in line with the concept and aesthetics of Vietnamese people. This reflects the continuation of the folk art tradition, when looking back at all Dong Ho paintings, village communal carvings or water puppet art, we see that the most common form is semi-nudity, while total nudity almost does not appear.

In terms of shape, most of the characters in the paintings of Indochinese painters are expressed in a flat array style, with little obvious emphasis on blocks. This style is sometimes reminiscent of Modigliani with its flat, flexible body and soft outer border but still retains its Asian character and evokes a light enough volume. This way of painting is different from Fernand Léger or Picasso, who create free, strong and unnatural blocks, instead Vietnamese painters choose moderation, sophistication, in accordance with national aesthetics and sensibilities.

The nude paintings of the artists of the Indochina College of Fine Arts have a distinct style, showing the process of intersection and adjustment between Western academic art and Asian aesthetics. A prominent feature is the very restrained use of lines, the strokes are often minimized to a minimalist level, only appearing hidden in the outer contours to shape the shape or play a role in describing the surface material in the painting. Unlike European paintings, which often build shapes with detailed anatomical lines and coherent blocks, the paintings of Indochinese painters often prioritize flat surfaces, light color patches and emphasize the overall harmony, helping the viewer to add an interesting part of imagination or curiosity.

The lines in Indochinese nude paintings are sometimes treated in a decorative way, inspired by Japanese paintings and graphics, which are famous for using bold borders to encapsulate the image, creating a sense of emphasis but still being flexible and aesthetically rich. The painting of painter Mai Trung Thu is a typical example of the application of this decorative style. Lines not only describe the shape but also create a visual rhythm, evoking romantic emotions and dreaminess that is very characteristic of Asian art.

Figure 3: Mid-Autumn Apricot (1906-1980) Woman in the Bathtub, 1968 Ink and color on silk, 64.5 x 94.5 cm Source: <https://www.aguttes.com/lot/99455/10799952-mai-trung-thu-1906-1980-femmes-au-bain-1968-encre-et>



When compared to the European nude art tradition, the difference is even more pronounced. In Europe, especially from the Renaissance to the 19th century, nude painting often emphasized precise anatomy, prominent muscle mass, and there was almost no concept of "semi-nude" in the way of celebrating physical beauty, the figure was often depicted completely naked, becoming the main subject to be admired and idealized. On the contrary, Indochinese painters have actively adapted this theme according to the concept of Vietnamese aesthetics and social ethics: they mainly exploit the form of semi-nudity, using light covering details such as bibs, thin towels, floral backgrounds, etc. to keep a discreet and thoughtful look.

It is thanks to the harmony between Western academic techniques and Asian spirit that the generation of painters of the Indochina College of Fine Arts has found a specific direction for Vietnamese nude paintings. They proved that the topic of nudity, which was new and once considered sensitive, can still be Vietnamized into a separate visual language that is subtle, elegant and associated with national cultural identity. Thereby, they not only expand the borders of contemporary Vietnamese art but also lay the foundation for the sustainable development and international integration of Vietnamese art in the 20th and 21st centuries.

4.3. The study of nude painting by European painters, (anthropometric nude painting)

The study of nude paintings by European painters (drawing according to Western anthropometrics) reveals a long and systematic tradition. In particular, Renaissance painting, which began in Italy in the 15th century and reached its peak in the period 1483–1520, is considered a period of restoration and strong development of classical aesthetic values of Greek and Roman art. After the "long night of the Middle Ages" dominated by strict religious dogma, Renaissance people awakened, upheld humanistic ideals, and honored the true value of themselves and the real world.

In art, this is expressed through the rigorous study of anthropometrics with the goal of faithfully reproducing and idealizing the human form. Nude painting became one of the pinnacles of creativity, where painters not only accurately depicted the anatomy of the body, but also showed harmonious beauty, charisma and humanistic ideals. The three most brilliantly developed art fields of the Renaissance, painting, sculpture, and architecture were all based on these great discoveries, laying the foundations for modern Western aesthetics and ushering in a new era for European art.

Renaissance painters have dedicated to mankind three major fundamental and lasting discoveries for world art.

Firstly, in terms of spatial depth, they develop perspective clairvoyance, which allows for accurate and logical representation of three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional plane, opening up the possibility of vividly and scientifically reproducing the real world.

Secondly, in terms of the depth of time, they rediscovered and revived the humanistic values of ancient Greek and Roman art, making painting independent, capable of recreating a private world imbued with symbolism and historical consciousness.

Thirdly, in terms of human depth, they combined the study of anatomy with the understanding of psychology, creating conditions for painting to develop as a creative form to praise the beauty of the body, the spirit and the inner life of man, and at the same time affirm the central position of man in the universe in the spirit of humanity.

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Since then, the study of nude drawing has formed as an intensive field in art, in order to explore and reproduce humans in the universe in a realistic and vivid way. Talented artists use clairvoyance to create a sense of three-dimensional space, making the viewer feel like they are directly facing a vivid figure in front of them. They focus on observing and describing the large, small, fat, and specific appearances of human beings in flesh and blood, and at the same time looking for characteristic colors to express the charisma, temperament and mood of the characters. As a result, nude painting not only stops at copying body shapes but also becomes an art of expressing emotional depth and human values.

European painters, when studying anatomy and drawing, developed the ability to grasp the internal structure of things scientifically and systematically. When drawing people, they not only observe the appearance but also understand the internal anatomy, grasp the structure of the skeleton, muscle groups and the connections between them to create vivid and realistic shapes. However, this level of research is not as rigorous as the medical profession but is adapted for artistic purposes. Thanks to its anthropometric approach, European nude paintings are freely expressed from all angles, not bound by social and moral reservations or caution as in Asian culture. The European painter was not afraid to assert a strong creative self through nudity, reflecting the age-old foundations of this delicate art form in Western history. Even the poses of the characters in the paintings are constructed to give the viewer a comfortable, natural, and very real feeling, which is especially evident in the works of French Impressionist painters (Claire Goble, Susie Hodge, 2017).

4.4. The intersection of Vietnamese and French cultures through nude art

The intersection of Vietnamese and French cultures through nude art is very evident right from the French establishment of painting schools and art schools in Vietnam in the early 20th century. An important turning point was the introduction of physical anatomy into teaching in a methodical and serious manner according to Western academic standards. The study of anatomy is not only to practice the skill of drawing the human figure accurately and vividly, but also to play an important role in distinguishing techniques and artistic concepts between traditional painting, typically folk painting with the form of flat and simplified patches and modern painting influenced by the West with a deep body structure. three-dimensional space blocks. As a result, the generation of painters trained at Indochina Fine Arts Schools has formed a new visual language, both absorbing Western techniques and seeking to adapt to Vietnamese aesthetics and identity.

When the subject of drawing was introduced and taught in a methodical way, it fundamentally changed the way Vietnamese painters saw and painted methods. Previously, Asian plastic art in general and Vietnam in particular was mainly based on the style of drawing borders, emphasizing the line surrounding the shape known as a single line of charts. In this type of painting, the image is decorative, with very limited or almost no perspective. Perspective in traditional Decoration is usually approximate, with characters arranged in flat layers, the same distance size almost the same, and the perspective is often from the top down without following the law of three-dimensional perspective. The study of Western painting with the ability to study anatomy, block, light, and clairvoyance has provided Vietnamese painters with a new approach, helping the body to become more profound and realistic, paving the way for modern art to develop.

Vietnamese painters are often particularly interested in painting and studying personal and collective memories, so in many of their works they show very clearly the depth of the author's content and inner life. The element of memory becomes an important source of inspiration, helping the painting not only reproduce images but also convey personal experiences, feelings and reflections, enriching the expressive value of Vietnamese art (Nguyen Duc – Lam Trinh, 2004).

The study of male and female nude body painting is a subject that almost runs through the training process of art students, not only in Vietnam but also on a global scale. The study and practice of nude painting helps artists master anatomical structures, proportions, blocks, light and movement, thereby developing the skill of accurately and expressively reproducing the human figure. To this day, nude painting has grown more and more diverse, with many artists committing themselves to choosing this subject as a separate creative field.

In particular, Vietnamese painters often have a unique view of Eastern culture, influenced by the theory of the Five Elements: Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, and Earth. These are not static concepts but dynamic systems, mutual, interrelated, and mutually transformative. Therefore, in character creation, they are not only interested in anatomy but also consider the overall harmony, personality, and "general" associated with the 12 zodiac signs, reflecting the concept of human life and the traditional view of the universe. In fact, these elements are also exploited in many contemporary art genres, including cartoons, to personify characters, create images rich in symbolism and close to local culture.

When composing nude paintings, the element of beauty needs to be placed in the center as a basic aesthetic criterion, affirming the artistic value and humanistic significance of this genre. The reproduction of the human body is not only a technical exercise but a process of expressing the artist's views, emotions and philosophy of life. Therefore, the artist must be responsible for composing seriously and be highly aware of the artistic value of the work. They need to avoid all vulgar, cheap or vulgar expressions, in order to keep nude paintings a worthy position in mainstream art.

This also reflects the relationship between artists and the public: the creator not only shows his skills and personal senses but also

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plays a role in orienting and educating aesthetic tastes for viewers. When the work is created with a high sense of art, the public has the opportunity to approach and enjoy the beauty of the human body in a pure and delicate way. They can feel the beauty of body proportions, lines, light, charisma, as well as the profound human values conveyed in the paintings.

Nude paintings, when expressed seriously and artistically, help affirm the artist's creative freedom, expand the boundaries of visual language and enrich the national artistic heritage. At the same time, this is also a measure of the maturity of cultural and artistic life, when society knows how to recognize, evaluate and appreciate the beauty of the human body not only as a biological object but also as a symbol of dignity, freedom and creative spirit.

The theme of nude paintings by the artists of the Indochina School of Fine Arts mainly focuses on the image of women, expressed through perspectives close to daily life and rich in folk colors, imbued with traditional Vietnamese cultural identity. These works not only reflect the intersection of East and West in techniques and artistic concepts, but also preserve the Vietnamese spirit through rustic, symbolic and bold Vietnamese expressions. Notably, many artists of the Indochinese generation have brought nude paintings to be exhibited at many international exhibitions, making an important contribution to helping Vietnamese modern painting be known and appreciated by Western friends. In addition to the boldness in the expression of composition, lines, and colors, the nude paintings of Indochinese painters always uphold the purity, holiness, and sophistication of the visual language, affirming the profound human value of this genre (compiled by Phan Cam Thuong and Nguyen Anh Tuan, 2010).

A successful nude painting often achieves a harmonious combination of vulgar and vulgar elements, reconciling bold breakthroughs in composition with simple colors in the traditional spirit. The topic of nude women not only stops at satisfying simple aesthetic needs but also meets a very basic psychosocial need, which is the need to maintain, protect and affirm the value of femininity in culture. At the same time, recreating the beauty of the female body in art is also a way to honor natural beauty, praise love, proliferation and harmonious relationships between people and the world. Therefore, nude painting is not only a product of plastic techniques but also a means of expressing human values, expressing respect and honoring the image of women in the spiritual life of society.

The painters of the Indochina College of Fine Arts are often honored as the founding masters of modern Vietnamese art who have played an important role in shaping and developing the East-West intersecting visual language. Trained in European academic methods, they receive basic knowledge of body anatomy, spatial perspective, composition and light, which are the core values of Western art. However, instead of copying the originals, Indochinese painters have actively adjusted, transformed and Vietnamized these techniques, so that they integrate with the indigenous aesthetic tradition and the Vietnamese cultural value system.

In the theme of nude painting, that combination is particularly clear. The influence of anatomical painting methods and the composition of the Western academic golden ratio helped Vietnamese painters master the shape, erect the pose accurately and convincingly. But besides, they still retain the Asian spirit through moderation, discretion, symbolism and gentle and serene expression. The element of "semi-nudity" is often exploited to reconcile the need to realize the body with traditional Vietnamese moral and aesthetic concepts, which are deeply influenced by Confucianism and village culture.

The Vietnamization of Western technology does not only stop at the formal aspect but also opens up a new artistic thinking, affirming the creative ego of Vietnamese artists. The nude paintings of the Indochinese generation are therefore not only the product of borrowing but the result of a process of conscious adaptation and creation, building a specific art style, reflecting both modern and traditional at the same time.

The works through many international exhibitions and exhibitions have been highly appreciated by professionals and the foreign public, making an important contribution to bringing Vietnamese art into the orbit of modern art in the world. This recognition is also a testament to the success of the generation of Indochinese painters in finding their own path, both receiving the quintessence of Western scholarship, preserving and promoting national identity in the visual language, affirming the long-term value of Vietnamese art in the process of global cultural exchange and integration.

In addition, many Vietnamese painters have adapted European nude paintings to express the Vietnamese spirit, typically Mai Trung Thu's compositional style. Instead of just copying Western forms, he has transformed the language of shaping and expressive content to suit aesthetics, the spirit and values of Asian culture. In Mai Trung Thu's nude paintings, we notice the sophistication in the lines, the coherent but gentle composition, the mellow colors, rich in decoration and rich in poetry, all of which reflect a discreet and elegant view typical of the Vietnamese people. These works are considered Oriental versions of the theme of nudity, which is popular in Europe, but have undergone a cultural adaptation process to become a separate art product, imbued with Vietnamese identity (VietTimes, 2023).

The paintings exhibited at exhibitions in Hanoi, Saigon, Paris, Tokyo, and Rome in the 1930s and 1940s marked the remarkable presence of a young generation of Vietnamese painters on the international stage. Although the process of forming modern painting in Vietnam took place quite late compared to some countries in the region, these successes still made a strong impression, affirming the value and identity of Vietnamese art. In particular, most of the artists participating in those exhibitions came from the Indochina School of Fine Arts, which played a key role in the introduction and dissemination of Western academic training methods. Thanks to the process of cultural exchange and adaptation between East and West, a unique indigenous art nuance has

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been developed, harmonizing national tradition and modern spirit, laying the foundation for the sustainable development of Vietnamese painting (Thai Ba Van, 1998).

5. CONCLUSION

Vietnam, with a long history of building and preserving the country, has formed a unique art tradition, originating from prehistoric times and developing continuously through the periods. In traditional folk nude paintings, the element of prosperity is expressed discreetly, rich in metaphors, associated with agricultural beliefs and Confucian moral standards. In contrast, Western nude art, especially from the Renaissance, is based on the study of anatomy, perspective, and the idealization of the body, emphasizing individual freedom and humanistic values. This difference reflects two distinct worldviews and aesthetics, and shows the importance of cross-cultural research in fine art.

As Vietnamese art entered a period of innovation and communication with Western art, Vietnamese painters selectively and systematically embraced the quintessence of academia and world culture. Vietnamese painters not only learn modern techniques and visual thinking, but also promote their own creative potential, applying the unique beauty of traditional Vietnamese art to their works. As a result, Vietnamese art has formed a unique style, reconciling modern elements and national identity, affirming its position in the context of contemporary art.

The birth and operation of the Indochina College of Fine Arts marked an important turning point in the history of Vietnamese fine arts, when for the first time the country had a professional and systematic training center for plastic artists. The training program combines Western academic methods with the study and acquisition of traditional Chinese and Japanese painting styles, helping students develop multi-dimensional artistic thinking and a solid technical foundation. As a result, the generation of Vietnamese painters not only masters modern shaping skills but also knows how to exploit and create on the basis of national cultural identity. In the context of the current strong development of global information, this platform continues to facilitate an increasingly rich and extensive world art exchange.

Vietnamese painters, especially the generation trained from the Indochina School of Fine Arts, have actively chosen a creative direction with their own identity, contributing to building Vietnamese modern art that is both national and internationally integrated. By selectively absorbing Western academic methods and combining Asian-European styles, he creates nude paintings with a simple, metaphorical and poetic visual language. The images of naked women are expressed gently and deeply, reflecting Vietnamese cultural concepts, and at the same time affirming the ability to continue the creativity and humanistic values of national art in the global context.

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