

## Thai Hoa palace's decorative sculpture art in Hue Imperial city

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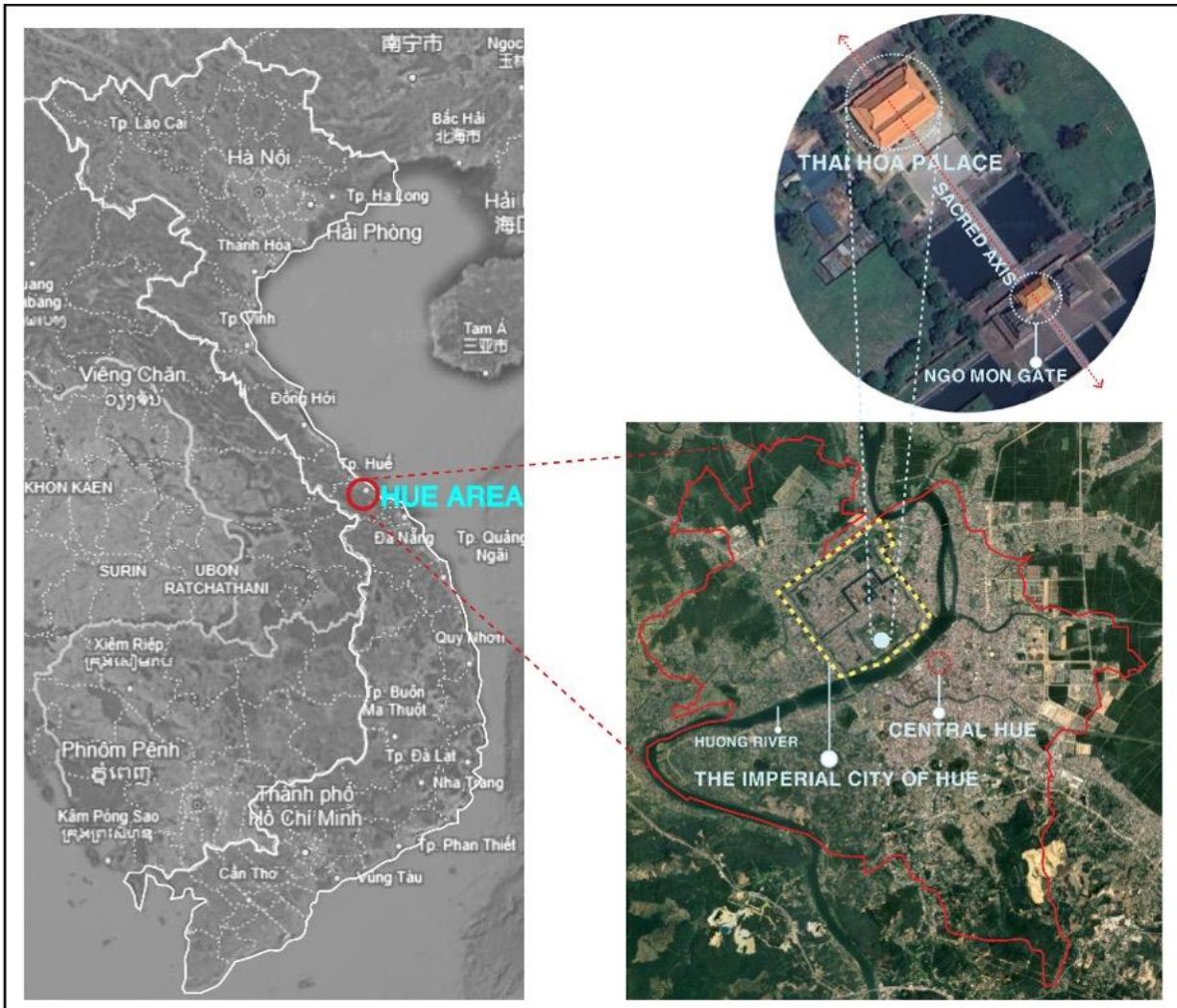
**Abstract:** Built in 1805 during the reign of King Gia Long, the final feudal dynasty in Vietnam, Thai Hoa Palace is the most significant structure in Hue Imperial City and the site of important Nguyen Dynasty rituals. Early in the 19th century, talented craftspeople and builders from all across Vietnam constructed this structure. The palace was built in the extremely distinctive Hue architectural style known as "double roof, duplex house" or "overlap beam, double roof" (Trùng thiềm, Diệp ốc/ Trùng lương, Trùng thiềm). The palace includes two interconnected residences. Each house has two overlapping roofs, without ceilings, exposing the carved and overlapping wooden beams. Thai Hoa Palace is also ornately embellished with stone sculptures, enamel, and porcelain inlays. The palace's decorative art has its own unique style and inventiveness because it combines traditional Vietnamese decorative art with the best elements of modern external fine arts. Currently, Thai Hoa Palace is housed within the complex of Hue's old capital remains, which have exceptional worldwide artistic worth in their carving and mosaic ornamentation.

**Keywords:** *Decorative sculpture art, Nguyen fine arts, Structures ornament, Thai Hoa Palace.*

### 1. Introduction

Thai Hoa Palace, Hue Imperial City, located in Thua Thien Hue Province, Vietnam, was built in 1805 under King Gia Long and is one of the most important palaces with typical functions and artistic values of the Nguyen Dynasty. Thai Hoa Palace, where the throne is located, has the function of serving the worship rituals and meetings between the king and the mandarins, symbolizing the authority of the dynasty, so it was built in the central position, on the zodiac axis, of the Imperial City system (Figure 1). Different from traditional architectures in previous centuries, the spatial layout follows the structure of Chinese types, such as the first character (一), the second character (二), and the J character (丁) ... or the internal public (工) and foreign public (国). The layout of Thai Hoa Palace and most other architectures in Hue is in the style of "double roof, double house". The front and back houses are connected to each other thanks to a system of trusses supporting the ceiling with a slightly curved shape like a crab shell, and the roof of the back house is higher than the roof of the front house. Inside the palace, there is no ceiling, revealing the "stacked beam, fake hand" truss system with the main role of bearing the force, supporting the entire roof system but standing out with sophisticated carvings by artisans from famous traditional craft villages across the country.

Accordingly, the study focuses on analyzing the very unique way of handling Hue's interior space through the structure of the building space and decorative techniques. The research also affirms the important role of decorative sculpture combined with the structural system bearing force, which has created creativity in the construction and treatment of Hue's very own interior and exterior spaces, leaving behind an artistic masterpiece containing many artistic, architectural, cultural, and historical values that will last forever.



**Figure 1.**  
Hue City, The imperial city of Hue, and Thai Hoa Palace.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Researches on Nguyen Dynasty Fine Arts

The beautiful arts of Hue were documented by the magazine *Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hue* periodical, which was edited by priest Léopold Cadière. According to Tran Lam Bien's "Hue, Nguyen fine arts, the unique things" and "Some features of the reliefs in Hue," the Vietnamese people's aesthetic vein is still there, and "Nguyen fine arts have something, not as people think" [1]. The Nguyen Dynasty's fine arts produced distinctive works that blended foreign quintessence with tradition in a harmonic way to produce a distinctive architecture and fine arts style. The book "Fine Arts of the Nguyen Dynasty in Hue" offered insightful details regarding the establishment of sculptures, artisan businesses, and other related topics. During the Nguyen Lords, the objective was to promote the growth of fine arts and handicrafts. By use of the decorative arts in the Hue Imperial Citadel, general characteristics of the look of artists and craftsmen produced the decorative style of the Nguyen Dynasty [2]. Nguyen Huu Thong describes the metaphor and symbolic language used in Nguyen Dynasty decoration in his book "Hue Fine Arts from the Perspective of Decorative Meaning and Symbolism" [3]. The book delves into how these artistic expressions not only served aesthetic purposes but also

conveyed deeper cultural and historical narratives. Through meticulous analysis, it highlights the significance of symbols and motifs that reflect the values and beliefs of the Nguyen society, thus enriching our understanding of this captivating era. Famous painters created the general notes and painted designs that were documented at the construction site in "Hue Royal Patterns" [4]. Tran Thanh Nam gives a unique approach on the subject of architectural decorative sculpture in the book "Architectural Decorative Sculpture of the Nguyen Dynasty" [5]. Determine the traits and ideals of this art form that make it stand out among the UNESCO-recognized global values. The language, form, meaning, and particular materials of decorative sculpture in the Hue Imperial City are all thoroughly examined in the content. This examination reveals how these elements not only reflect the cultural identity of the Nguyen Dynasty but also embody the philosophical and aesthetic ideals prevalent during that era. By analyzing the intricate designs and symbolic meanings embedded in the sculptures, one gains a deeper appreciation for their significance within the broader context of Vietnamese heritage and global artistic traditions.

## 2.2. Researches on the Architecture of Hue Imperial City

Léopold Cadière wrote "The sacred capital – The marvelous capital" in the book Hue Imperial City & Nam Giao Altar [5]. As a priest who lived in Hue for many years, he deeply understood the customs, beliefs, religions, and culture—art of Hue; he believed that customs, beliefs, religions, and culture created Hue art, and they influenced the construction of the citadel. Phan Thuan An in the book Hue Monuments Complex identified the construction through its functional layout: "The palace is an architectural complex consisting of many large and small buildings, in which there are one or two main palaces located in the middle of the architectural complex. The palace is just a unit and architectural unit" [6]. In the book "From Ngo Mon to Thai Hoa Palace," Huynh Minh Duc introduced Ngo Mon Gate and Thai Hoa Palace, the two most important architectures in Hue Imperial Citadel. The book also describes important court ceremonies held here and activities in the Nguyen royal court [7]. Phan Thuan An, in "Hue Imperial City," Divination, explained that feng shui deeply influenced the thinking of the Nguyen lords and kings in choosing land to establish the capital as well as planning the Hue citadel [8]. The strategic layout of the citadel was designed not only for defense but also to align with the principles of harmony and balance inherent in feng shui. This meticulous planning reflects the Nguyen dynasty's commitment to creating a space that resonated with both political power and spiritual significance.

In general, these scientific publications have contributed academically to the study of Hue Imperial City in terms of architecture, fine arts, culture, and history. However, there has not been a comprehensive study of the decorative art of Thai Hoa Palace. This lack of research leaves a significant gap in understanding the full cultural and artistic significance of the palace within the broader context of the Imperial City. Further exploration of the decorative art in Thai Hoa Palace could illuminate its role in reflecting the values and aesthetics of the Nguyen dynasty.

## 3. Materials and Methods

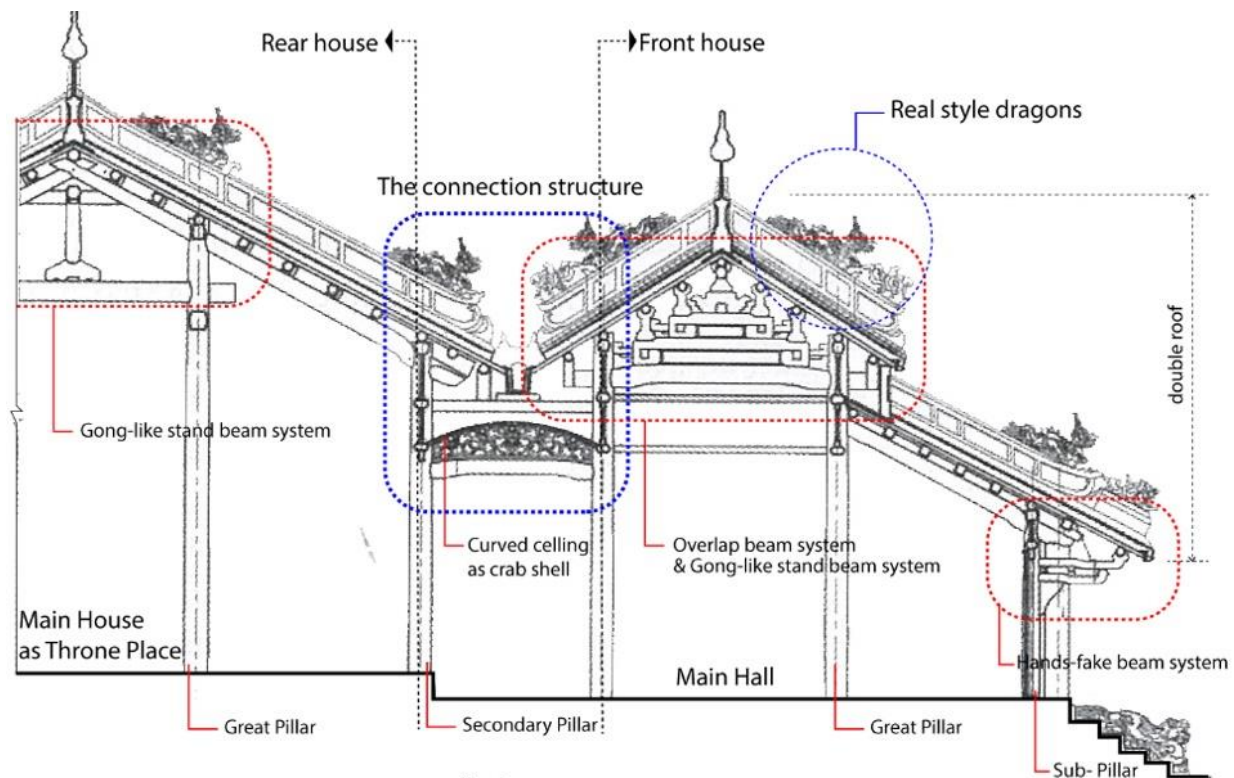
Analyzing the works' aesthetic effects and values by doing research in the field of aesthetics. Additionally, using the technique of examining decorative project structures based on the type, substance, and purpose of the building to which they are linked. Employing interdisciplinary research techniques to gain a more thorough understanding of the significance of decorative arts in people's material and spiritual lives, as well as the effects of historical context, religious influences, and cultural acculturation. Investigating the writings, records, and visual materials of both international and domestic researchers on Nguyen Dynasty decorative sculpture. To ascertain the uniqueness and differentiation in the language of decorative arts expression during the Nguyen Dynasty, the synthesis method is used to compare and contrast with records of earlier Vietnamese fine arts and some Western nations. Also, surveying the architectural works at Hue Imperial Citadel, analyzing the system of



ornamental themes, and summarizing the merits of sculpture in relation to other art forms like architecture, painting, and graphics are all done utilizing the field research approach.

#### 4. Results

Thai Hoa Palace's architecture is a blend of local architecture, traditional Vietnamese wooden architecture, and the essence of Western wall construction methods (Vauban style). The "double roof, duplex house" or "double roof, overlap beam" architectural styles popularized by the builders of the Nguyen Dynasty are appropriate for Hue's climate and soil (Figure 2). Wood carving, stone carving, brickwork, and ceramic mosaic are examples of ornamental arts that have flourished due to the large internal space and the absence of ceilings that would have exposed the architectural structures.



**Figure 2.**  
Thai Hoa Palace longitudinal section: roof and beam system.

Since the early 19th century, the palace has contributed to the regal image Honorable but approachable of Hue Imperial City because "Hue is the meeting place of skilled craftsmen from all over the country, the place where the quintessence of the whole nation converged at one time," according to Nguyen Huu Thong. In this instance, the accomplishments are not indigenous but rather represent the splendor of Vietnamese art during the 19th and early 20th centuries in the process of national art growth [2].

Many scholars concur that "the inheritance of tradition is hidden in spiritual values, while the form of expression brings new vitality so that art can develop with breakthrough creations and unique visual language due to Thai Hoa Palace's exceptional and distinctive originality " [9]. In addition to enhancing Vietnam's cultural fabric, this blend of innovation and tradition encourages modern artists to push the limits of artistic expression while also exploring their heritage. As a result, the Thai Hoa

Palace's legacy keeps inspiring younger generations to respect their culture while adopting contemporary methods and concepts (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.**  
Thai Hoa Palace.

#### 4.1. The Palace Roof Decoration

Thai Hoa Palace was constructed and embellished to fit its function as the site of significant national events, including the Imperial Court Ceremony, the Ceremony of Receiving Foreign Ambassadors, etc. The royal court's authority and strength are demonstrated by the highly symbolic decorations. Dragons, which represent the monarch, adorn the top roof. This is also where the king sits, inside below. The dragon's image and the tile's color designate the Emperor's space and serve as a symbolic artistic indication. Numerous intricately produced ceramic sculptures with a dragon theme take up the dominant position on the roof system. The dragon of the Nguyen Dynasty possesses all the positive traits of nine animals in life: its nose is similar to a lion's nose, its horns are similar to deer horns, its ears are similar to cow ears, its body is similar to a snake's body, its scales are similar to carp scales, its feet are similar to tiger feet, its claws are similar to eagle claws, and its tail is similar to a rooster's tail (Figure 4). The dragon image is also used to exploit a number of other themes, such as fish turning into dragons and clouds turning into dragons. Sacred numerals that represent the King include the image of a dragon with nine swirling curves and five claws on its feet.



**Figure 4.**  
Dragons on roof top.

Thai Hoa Palace's roof is covered in glazed yellow tiles. In order to make clear where the "son of heaven" carry out his duties" and observe the significant court events, porcelain is used to inlay ornamental patterns featuring dragons and dragon-related subjects. Additionally, beautiful sculptures blend in with the surrounding landscape, softening the roof's horizontal separation in the overall architecture. The building architecture and ornamental arts has been greatly impacted by the Confucian concept of royalty and class. In the sculpture, the metaphor stands for the beneficiary's obedience as well as the owner's title, position, and personality.

The palace has a straight roof structure. The porcelain inlaid dragons on the curved roof and the eaves at the ends of the roof are fashioned to curve upwards, producing a striking visual artistic impact that gives the roof a sense of elegance and grandeur. People who stand in front of the building experience a sense of harmony and intimacy between architecture and nature rather than being overpowered and repressed. The sculptures' intricately decorated porcelain inlay material, which is trimmed in vivid, contrasting hues, lends the structure a sense of noble aesthetics, as though a fresh vitality were feeding it. The sculpture and architecture are given a spontaneous and organic beauty by the patterns on the porcelain pieces made from cups, porcelain plates, etc., which are haphazardly merged like streams of water, clouds, forests, or swords. Hue culture and art scholar Jean Yves Claeys added, "The Central region has shown us a graceful and relatively gentle architectural art, where the architectural art has explored materials, porcelain pieces, bronze, and glazed ceramics, comparable to the makeup art of Hue women" [10].

In order to make complex, transparent, and deep scales that enhance the dragon's expressiveness, colorful glass pieces are glued to the dragon's body in some places. During the Nguyen Dynasty, Hue was known for its opposing hue pairs, which include yellow-indigo, orange-blue, red-green, purple-red, and yellow-purple. Decorative figures in enamel using Hue's own special color painting process add to the wide color palette. Somber highlights are added to the construction by the application of enamel to key locations on the roofs, such as the gourd vase, the top of the roof ridge, or the recesses (Figure 5).



**Figure 5.**  
Dragons' decoration.



The low-pitch roof and the roof ridge wall are separated into numerous panels, each decorated with eight priceless items, such as poems, which give the roof system a vibrant rhythm and variety (Figure 6). These ornaments "usually have active and quite lively patterns. The colors are carefully chosen and coordinated, creating vitality for the Hue roof system that is rarely seen in the roofs of ancient architecture in the North," according to Biền [11]. Ceramic mosaic sculptures' vivid color proportions only make up a small piece of the palace's natural surroundings. Against the backdrop of Hue's vast green grass, trees, and sky, the palace roof's ornamental colors are subtle and harmonious with the surrounding environment, gleaming like pearls. Environmental space is crucial to the creation of the piece's creative worth. Without the involvement of spatial art elements, the artwork would not be possible. Thien Tam claims that the artwork and the surrounding area form a single, cohesive whole [12].



**Figure 6.**  
The outside roof walls: one poem, one painting.

#### 4.2. The Palace Court's Decoration

In front of the Thai Hoa palace, the Dai Trieu Nghi yard was the site of several significant occasions for the 13 Nguyen Dynasty rulers, including the Grand Court ceremonies, ambassador receptions, and coronation rituals. Two levels make up the yard. From third rank (Tam Pham) to major first rank (Chanh Nhat Pham), civil and military Mandarins are assigned to the upper level, known as De Nhat Bai Dinh. For Mandarins of lower ranks, there is a lower level known as De Nhi Bai Dinh. Three steps separate the two levels. All of the paving in the yard is Thanh Hoa stone. The ranks of the Mandarins are inscribed on two rows of stone pillars facing one another, known as Pham Son (Figure 7).



**Figure 7.**  
The Dai Trieu Nghi yard with two levels.

The column bases, the stone unicorns, the stone kylin, and the dragons of the three levels are the most noticeable. Nine stone dragon pairs are positioned in front of the palace, while six pairs are behind it. A realistic-looking pair of dragons is carved along the middle axis, which follows the Emperor's journey (Figure 8). On both flanks, the left and right paths of the military and civil mandarins are carved with the motif "dragons transforming into clouds." Depending on the amount of stairs, the dragons on the main path can be either long or short, but they often have a triangular shape. The dragon's tail turns inward, and its head points straight out.



**Figure 8.**  
The stone dragon in realistic style on three steps.

Behind the Thai Hoa Palace, there are two fat and round dragons with nine tiers. The legs, horns, mane, and beard are all packed tight to the body to create a solid, durable block. The mane and flag are on the back; the head is rounded, somewhat elevated, and appropriate for the type of stone. In order to fulfill the purpose of serving as railings, the artists exaggerated the dragon's look, avoiding a sharp feeling that could be interpreted as dangerous.



The stance of the stone dragons on the steps is solemn, but neither aggressive nor tender. By using the generalization technique, the dragon's belly has gaps, the features at its feet are made simpler, and the blocks are gathered into the body more cleanly. This space is used to assemble cloud patches, which guarantee solidity, accurately convey content, and produce a visually appealing appearance. Despite their thinness, the carefully carved decorative themes of swords, spears, scales, and cloud stacks provide a consistent rhythm that is vibrant and full of vivid impressions across the entire composition.

In architectural decorative sculpture, the combination of round statues and reliefs creates a harmonious connection between the depth of the symbolic spatial layers of relief and the strength of three-dimensional blocks. In terms of expression, decorative art is versatile. By using the technique of contrasting repetition, it creates a very vibrant and eye-catching rhythm between blocks and lines, between rough and exquisite, and between reality and illusion. Although abstract but coherent, the twisted clouds, hooks, rolls, spears, eyes, noses, foreheads, and tails on the paths of military and civil officials, along with the "cloud-dragon" style (Figure 9), nevertheless evoke associations with the image of dragons, creating a false sense of separation between reality and fantasy. "The clouds that accompany the dragons and many other sacred animals seem to inform viewers that the space of the palace is not a worldly space but a space of paradise in a mystical and sublime fairyland," claims Nguyen Du Chi [13].



**Figure 9.**  
The stone dragons in cloud-dragon style.

In general, Thai Hoa Palace's architectural sanctification has been greatly aided by ornamental sculpture. The successful use of round statues and reliefs as sculptural language creates the illusion of space without sacrificing practicality due to the sculpture's thickness. The dragons on the steps have a consistent form, yet they can be rearranged to suit each unique situation. The dragons' bodies undulate, lengthen, or shorten according to the steps' height and lowness. The dragons on Thai Hoa Palace's steps exhibit their unique beauty, have multiple symbolic connotations, and are considered to be highly valuable artwork.

#### 4.3. The Palace Interior Ornaments

The throne's location is the main feature of Thai Hoa Palace's artistic art, with gilded wood carvings on the canopy above and the three-story platform below. During the reign of King Khai Dinh (1916–1925), the canopy ceiling was constructed of enamel rather than the traditional embroidered silk used in earlier kings. The density of dragon imagery is maximum on the throne. Highlighting the image of the King as a dragon winding in the clouds, the margins of the canopy are carved with dragons in an intricate openwork style using techniques of sunken carving, relief carving, and layered carving.

Gilded lacquer techniques are also used to embellish the platform and throne. The vivid color of the king's gilded lacquer contrasts with the deep red hue, which represents the lacquer's vitality and draws

attention to the dragon and clouds. The value and deep meaning of the ornamental sculptures have been increased by the blending of the painting's colors with the sculptures' shapes (Figure 10). The heart of Thai Hoa Palace has been transformed into a specific area by the abundance of ornamental sculptures, which highlight and draw attention to the location of the throne, as stated by Nguyen Du Chi, "... our ancestors from ancient times used decorative patterns as a signal of the law, of a necessary order in society" [14].



**Figure 10.**  
The King throne with canopy and three-story platform.

Decorations and sculptures contribute to the "dignity" and definition of functioning areas. They turn into ominous creative symbols that carry messages from the owner of the architectural masterpiece, a crucial role that is solely given to the "Son of Heaven," where the King represents heaven and where significant events pertaining to the destiny of the nation are held.

Aesthetic rhythms are produced by the carved panels of poetry between patterns on the triptychs. The arrangement in the "one poem, one painting" approach adds a playful element while breaking up the monotony of overlapping patterns. In contrast to the dark poetic panels, the gilded panels of patterns produce dazzling panels. Using the principles of dark-light and complex-simple, the ornamental panels' rhythmic variations give the triptychs a range of hues and vitality (Figure 11).

In the framed compartments, decorative panels with vine patterns, known as the "lien dang" or "lan dang" style, are intended to create a "second natural environment" that conveys a message of happiness and unity. Natural imagery used throughout the interior area symbolizes the owner's philosophy of "Harmony," which is also the palace's name, the balance of yin and yang, and the harmony between

nature and humanity. Additionally, Phan Thuan An clarified the Thai Hoa Palace's name by saying, "Loyalty is the great root of the world." The achievement of harmony is the world's path. Heaven and earth will be at peace, and everything will prosper when the ultimate harmony is reached [8].



**Figure 11.**  
The triptychs with decorative panels of one poem and one painting.

The oval-shaped patterns in the rectangular panels produce a varied opposing rhythm of opposites between curved and straight, active and static, and hard and soft. The major and secondary are created by contrast, and the beautiful form is created by rhythm. The shift in solidarity. On a lesser scale, artistic rhythms are produced by unity in change. Although panel design has existed for millennia, it has gained popularity and now characterizes Nguyen Dynasty decorative art in Hue royal architecture in general and Thai Hoa Palace in particular.

The most remarkable aspect is that the ornamental sculpture is not heavy, seamlessly fusing painting and poetry, and transforming into an artistic element within the interior architecture. A new artistic image is created in the interior of Thai Hoa Palace through the synthesis of various artistic elements as inside structure ornaments (Figure 12).





**Figure 12.**  
Decorative sculpture of the inside structures.

The beautifully carved patterns on the consoles and crossbeams lessen the weight of the big wooden blocks, making the triples more graceful and lovely with the compartments. In order to accommodate the emotional layers of meaning that the decorative form offers, the decorations give the impression that the wooden structure's purpose has been neglected (Figure 13).



**Figure 13.**  
Decorative sculptures of the outside consoles and the beams end.

The King's themes are reflected in the shape and expression of Thai Hoa Palace's ornamental statues. Each architectural component unit is given richness and variation by their overall shape. While maintaining their load-bearing purpose in the structure, the crossbeams with geometric blocks, folds,

and gentle curves show how to change shapes in the decorative pattern to create aesthetically pleasant rhythms, forget their functionality, and increase their artistic worth. Thai Hoa Palace's architecture has achieved both expressive aesthetic value and practicality by creating a "space nourishing spirit" with the use of ornamental sculpture.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Color Harmony in Ornamental Sculpture

The colors that craftsmen utilize are frequently found on roof systems, painted with gold on wood, or utilizing the wood's inherent color and grain. Thai Hoa Palace's décor lacks color in comparison to the overall architectural correlation because of its modest scale and size. Léopold Cadière also notes that "the ridges, pillars, entrances, and screens are densely decorated with bright, sometimes garish colors". But when contrasted with the world's largest ancient wooden architectural complex, Beijing's Forbidden City (built in 1406), and Seoul, Korea's Gyeongbokgung Palace (built in 1395), the Hue Imperial City's use of decorative colors on wooden structures is significantly more pronounced.

Decorative sculpture does not heavily rely on color, but it does achieve high aesthetic expressive values by varying the sculpture's expression, which is not as massive and intimidating as its neighboring plastic arts. With various raw colored materials covering them, the gourd vases, knife heads, and dragons on the roof become attractive and spectacular. Thai Hoa Palace's ornamental sculptures have endured for more than 200 years, and in spite of the terrible effects of time and temperature, they still have material and color value. The ornamental sculpture's warm, dazzling color harmony is the magnificent focal point amidst the enormous green of the trees, grass, sky, and ground.

### 5.2. The Decor Patterns' Nobility and Closeness

The Thai Hoa Palace's decorative sculptures generally capture the spirit that must be communicated through the material, and since that spirit is embodied in the outward form, its own expression is in harmony with the artisan's spirit and perception as well as the royal ideology. Hegel states that the decorative sculpture's look there is in line with both its inner life and that of its creator [15]. As Nguyen Du Chi discussion of the cloud-hidden dragon pattern that the clouds accompanying the dragon and many other sacred animals seem to tell the user that the space of the palace is not a space of the earthly world; it is the paradise world of the gods, sublime and mysterious. This technique of "formalization" is prominent in the decorative patterns of the Thai Hoa Palace and has a metaphorical character that encodes many layers of meaning.

The general design and the mode of expression used to support the architectural work have been impacted by the decoration's content. Thai Hoa Palace's external and interior design elements faithfully convey the Three Religions in Harmony philosophy. The Four Noble Skills (music, chess, poetry, painting), the Four Gentle Souls (plum, orchid, chrysanthemum, bamboo), and the Four Sacred Characters (dragon, unicorn, turtle, and phoenix) are among the primary themes. The most well-known motif of the Four Sacred Characters can be seen on Thai Hoa Palace's roofs, particularly the striking, soaring representations of phoenixes and dragons that convey grandeur and wealth. In feudal society, they represent the Confucian class's many aspirations for life and social standing.

Natural plants have been transformed into colorful artistic representations by the creative minds and hands of craftspeople. The nation's pride in its cultural heritage and sense of independence are demonstrated by the poems carved on the panels that praise the peaceful, united, and wealthy scene. A new kind of synthetic art expression of poetry and painting has been created by combining the two art disciplines. In addition to adding elegance and grandeur, poetic language makes the purpose of the work clear.

Many people believe that the Chinese dragon had a significant influence on Nguyen Dynasty dragon art. The dragon of the Nguyen Dynasty was more varied in its expression and was not ferocious or oppressive, although being based on the Northern form. Despite being a symbol of royal authority, the dragon is also frequently depicted in folk art and beliefs in many forms in temples, pagodas, and

community homes throughout Vietnam. "The vitality of national art is hidden in the consciousness and subconscious of every Vietnamese person," claims Tran Lam Bien. This trait has allowed Vietnam to maintain its timeless identity, which in turn has helped to protect the nation. The Nguyen Dynasty dragon in Thai Hoa Palace and the folk are thus close to one another and have come to represent Vietnamese culture.

### 5.3. *The Balance Between Utility and Beauty*

Thai Hoa Palace's architecture has been expertly blended with ornamental sculptures to create a composite work of plastic art. It is impossible to tell the difference between the decorative pattern and the architectural framework. The solidity of the building is created by the harmonious fusion of Nguyen architecture's practicality and beauty through the interconnected wooden architectural structures. This is demonstrated by the extremely elegant decorative sculptures, like the flower bud-shaped supports that soften the edges and the mountain statues situated beneath the stylized dragon-shaped triple links attached to the columns. The palace's interior decorative sculptures have a meaning that is nearly an important expressive attribute of the architectural language. The wooden buildings appear to be figurative in their position and function of generating interior space; occasionally, the rich and varied presence of decorative features overshadows the practical function. Architectural constructions have been "breathed life" by decorative sculpture, which transforms inert wood blocks into visually stunning ornamental elements. Nguyen Quan and Phan Cam Thuong confirmed that Hue architecture closely combines with applied decorative arts and makes these arts develop in a style consistent with the general style of architecture after examining the relationship between architecture and decoration during the Nguyen Dynasty. The weight of wooden constructions is lessened by decorative sculpting. In wooden constructions, the aesthetic sense of beautiful shapes takes precedence over the perception of practicality.

## 6. Conclusion

Decorative sculpture has been a living testament to the priceless artistic legacy of our ancestors throughout the history of Vietnamese fine arts. Numerous decorative items have evolved into great art pieces with significant cultural worth in the nation, becoming an inherent aspect of human civilization. Thai Hoa Palace is a surviving example of Nguyen Dynasty architecture. The Nguyen Dynasty followed the law of natural development and renewal in the visual arts during the historical transition from feudalism to democracy. In the spirit of cultural assimilation, it welcomed many new artistic elements in decorative styles and patterns from Europe and neighboring cultures to enhance the language and artistic expression, giving Thai Hoa Palace's architecture a distinctive beauty.

The chosen ornamental patterns and patterns that are affixed to Thai Hoa Palace's architecture help to make the work's meaning more understandable. They have the role of recognizing and creating certain functional spaces, "sacred" and "luxurious," in the architectural work, depending on the site, whether it is directly related to the architecture or stands alone in the architectural context. Decorative sculptures, by their very nature and role of forming architectural elements, become "ambular" objects since they strive for purpose (use value) in addition to aesthetic and spiritual aspects. The architectural structural units are able to evoke visual connections and satisfy the physical criteria of bearing force. The entire roof structure appears lighter and more-airy thanks to decorative sculptures that lessen the visual weight of big wooden blocks.

Despite being limited by the stringent laws and regulations of the royal court and the devotion of Confucianism, Thai Hoa Palace's system of artistic themes had a big influence on decorative art. Decorative sculptures did not, however, have a drab or uninteresting aesthetic. The limitations of the material served as a lever for the investigation of new modes of expression, while the themes' restrictions tested the craftsmen's inventiveness. The Vietnamese spirit was molded in accordance with national aesthetics from foreign ornamental styles, but under the expert hands of ancient artists, it became totally Vietnamese and near the people's aesthetics, not at all hybrid, ostentatious, or



impoverished. Though small in size, the decorative art of Thai Hoa Palace in Hue Imperial City is of significant spiritual worth and is not extravagant due to its grandeur. Instead, it is the beauty of elegance.

One of the highest achievements of the royal court's ornamental architecture in Hue Imperial City is undoubtedly Thai Hoa Palace, where nearly every aspect of decorative sculpture, construction methods, and spatial art comes together. They produce a distinctive ornamental style. In addition to helping to establish the value system for Thai Hoa Palace's architecture, the ornamental sculptures have given the interior and exterior spaces an air of luxury, value, and solemnity. As such, they are a priceless addition to the wealth of Vietnamese cultural and artistic heritage, which is a treasure trove of aesthetics, symbols, use, and spirit.

### Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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