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TRANSCENDENT BOUNDARIES: THE IMPACT OF ART FESTIVALS ON RURAL
REVITALIZATION IN EAST ASIA

BY

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in conformity with the requirements
for the Master's Degree in
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Abstract

This thesis explores the intricate relationship between biennial art festivals and rural development, offering a comprehensive analysis of how these cultural events contribute to the socio-economic development of global art exchange. Anchored in the study of biennial culture, with a historical lens on the pioneering Venice Biennale, the research digs into the evolution of biennial events from exclusive art gatherings to transformative cultural phenomena with global outreach and impact. It underscores the role of these festivals in fostering international cultural exchange, enhancing contemporary art visibility, and influencing social and economic landscapes in East Asia.

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Fig 1. *Light*, Ma Yansong, Mix-medium Installation, 2021(Photo by Tian Fangfang). Site-specific sculpture for “Art at Fuliang”, located in Hanxi Village, Jiangxi, China. Picture directly scanned form the exhibition guidebook. Copyright © The HUBART All Right Reserved.

Fig 2. *500 Brush Strokes*, Wu Jian’an, work on canvas, 2021(Photo by Tian Fangfang). Painting commissioned by “Art at Fuliang”, the work is in collaboration with local residents, located in Hanxi Village, Jiangxi, China. Picture directly scanned form the exhibition guidebook. Copyright © The HUBART All Right Reserved.

Fig 3. *QuanYou Rice Wine Tavern*, Tango, Mural Painting and Installation, 2021(Photo by Tian Fangfang). Site-specific installation for “Art at Fuliang”, the work consists of a village house and a interactive space, located in Hanxi Village, Jiangxi, China. Picture directly scanned form the exhibition guidebook. Copyright © The HUBART All Right Reserved.

Fig 4. *Tea for Two*, David Gerstein, Steel, 2021(Photo by Tian Fangfang). Site-specific sculpture for “Art at Fuliang”, located in Hanxi Village, Jiangxi, China. Picture directly scanned form the exhibition guidebook. Copyright © The HUBART All Right Reserved.

Acknowledgements

As an artist deeply passionate about site-specific sculpture and land art, I often reflect on the interconnections between art, society, and community. My journey into this field began in earnest in 2016 when I completed my first site-specific work, YILI PUZZLE, on the shores of Bali, Indonesia. This sculpture, consisting of a series of ceramic columns designed to form an artificial reef, was a communal effort supported by over a hundred local villagers and forty divers who volunteered their assistance. Over eight years, this piece has facilitated the growth of a vibrant coral reef, marking a permanent change in the local environment.

This profound experience shaped my artistic perspective and reinforced my gratitude toward the communities that embrace and collaborate with external artists. This gratitude deepened further during my first visit to Fuliang, Jiangxi, in 2021. The region's approach to integrating art into everyday life resonated with my core artistic concerns. Art festivals like those in Fuliang serve as catalysts, planting seeds of cultural development that promise to flourish into robust expressions of community and heritage.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who supported my research, particularly my advisor, Ágnes Berecz. Additionally, I want to thank my friend Tab Link for providing proofreading feedback on my article.

This thesis is a tribute to the art I love and the countless individuals who nurture its growth within their communities.

Introduction

The concept of the biennial originated from the world fairs of the 19th century, particularly the Venice Biennale, which is considered the first art biennial in the world. Early biennials were closely linked with international expositions and aimed to promote international trade and cultural exchange¹. They are often funded by national agencies and international organizations, reflecting the dynamics of globalization and geopolitics. According to the *Biennial Culture* by Caroline Jones, she views biennials as bridges connecting the past and future, building anticipation for the future through their periodic repetition. By showcasing art, biennials facilitate an understanding and appreciation of contemporary art and drive the globalization of the art market.² The structure of biennials includes exhibitions, awards, and markets, which collectively form an integral part of the biennial culture. The repetitive nature of biennials demands a connection with the constantly renewing present and future. Due to the repetitive nature, established artists and emerging artists can intermingle and rotate from year to year, thus ensuring diversity despite its repetition. In addition to cultural exchange, Biennials significantly impact urban infrastructure and tourism, often used as tools for city branding and attracting visitors. As the form of biennials continues to be adapted all around the world, its impact has extended beyond the urban scene. Under the influence of the biennial culture, many smaller forms of art festivals and gatherings have developed. The energy conveyed through art as a medium is potent and transcends boundaries, cultural heritage can utilize arts festivals as vehicles for transmission, and artists can, acting as observers, document history and influence the audience within specific contexts.

¹ Caroline A. Jones, "Old World / Biennial Culture," *The Global Work of Art : World's Fairs, Biennials, and the Aesthetics of Experience*, 2016, 81–112.

² Ibid.

Through the lens of these art festivals, this analysis explores the transformative potential of art. Suggesting that such cultural initiatives not only enhance the economic and social fabric of rural areas, but also rekindle a sense of identity and pride among their inhabitants. By intertwining art with communities, these festivals address critical societal challenges such as aging populations and labor migration, while fostering a renewed sense of cultural confidence within these communities. This underscores the broader implication that art, when strategically integrated into rural development strategies, can play a pivotal role in shaping sustainable, vibrant, and culturally rich rural communities.

In the face of global urbanization, rural areas across the world are experiencing profound transformations, often grappling with the challenges of economic decline, demographic shifts, and cultural erosion. Traditional strategies for rural development have frequently fallen short in addressing the complex issues facing these communities. Against this backdrop, an innovative approach has emerged, positioning art and cultural initiatives at the heart of rural development efforts. The significance of art in rural context extends beyond aesthetic enhancement. It encompasses the rekindling of local cultures, the stimulation of economic activity through tourism and local crafts, and the fostering of a renewed sense of community identity and pride.

To support this investigation, this thesis elaborates on two resembling case studies: the Setouchi Triennale in Japan and the “Art at Fuliang” in China. Both events, set in underdeveloped location contexts with distinct historical and cultural backdrops, serve as vanguards in integrating art with restoration and development of rural areas. The Setouchi Triennale, located in the Setouchi Sea's islands (Japan), has leveraged art to combat post-industrial decline, rejuvenating the local economy and community through sustainable tourism and cultural engagement. Conversely, the “Art at Fuliang”, located in a village within the

radiation of Jingdezhen (China), renowned for its porcelain and tea culture, merges traditional craftsmanship with contemporary art, fostering economic renewal and cultural renaissance. This thesis examines the broader frameworks within which these festivals operate, highlighting the alignment between cultural initiatives and governmental strategies aimed at rural development. This alignment underscores the festivals' roles not just in economic stimulation through tourism and local industry enhancement, but also in addressing pressing rural challenges such as aging populations and labor migration.

Through comparative analysis, this study synthesizes insights into the adaptability of art festival models to diverse rural settings, emphasizing the potential scalability of such initiatives. The findings contribute to a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted impacts of art festivals on rural areas, suggesting a symbiotic relationship between cultural vitality and rural sustainability. This thesis ultimately posits that art festivals, when thoughtfully integrated into cultural development, can serve as pivotal mechanisms for sustaining rural communities, nurturing cultural confidence, and ensuring economic growth.

This research is anchored in the hypothesis that art-centric development strategies can catalyze sustainable economic growth and cultural renewal in rural areas. It aims to dissect the mechanisms through which art and cultural festivals contribute to economic vitality and community cohesion, thereby offering a new lens through which to view rural development. Through a multi-disciplinary approach, combining insights from cultural economics, rural sociology, and urban planning, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of art on rural development.

The thesis is structured into five chapters, it begins with a global overview of biennial culture and the Venice Biennale's role in establishing the popularity of the model, setting the

context for a deeper exploration of the Setouchi Triennale and “Art at Fuliang”. Through comparative analysis, it aims to unearth the underlying principles that make art an effective catalyst for rural transformation. In navigating the intersection of art, economy, and rural development, this thesis aspires to illuminate the pathways through which creativity and cultural heritage can drive sustainable development in rural landscapes. As the world increasingly recognizes the value of cultural diversity and the need for balanced regional development, the insights gathered from this research may offer a path for future initiatives seeking to utilize the power of art in rejuvenating rural landscapes.

During the course of my research, I traveled to Fuliang County in May 2024 to conduct fieldwork and acquired the project report for the "Art at Fuliang" 2021 initiative. The insights gathered from this fieldwork will be incorporated into Chapter 3 of this thesis. This visit marked my second engagement with the "Art at Fuliang" project. Despite being between major exhibition periods, the site experienced a significant influx of visitors during the recent Labor Day holiday. While I was in Fuliang I engaged in several brief yet insightful conversations with local villagers to gather their views on the art project. These interactions provided valuable perspectives on how the project is perceived and its impact on the community. Moreover, I had the opportunity to meet with the project's chief coordinator, which offered deeper insights into the operational aspects and future plans of the initiative.

The fieldwork not only enhanced my understanding of the project's local reception but also highlighted the continuous cultural engagement and economic activity it stimulates within the region. These firsthand experiences and collected data will provide a comprehensive view of the project's influence on Fuliang County, contributing significantly to the broader analysis presented in this thesis.

Chapter 1: The evolution of Biennial Culture

Biennials, with their rich history and transformative impact on the contemporary art scene, represent a foundational framework that has shaped the structure and spirit of many cultural gatherings today. Emerging at a time when traditional art exhibitions were tightly bound to institutional and nationalistic paradigms, biennials introduced a revolutionary model that not only redefined the dissemination and consumption of art but also contributed significantly to cultural development on a global scale. The Venice Biennale, inaugurated in 1895, emerged as a transformative art event, redefining the relationship between art and audience through its new format and setting.³ Initially inspired by the global reach and public engagement of world's fairs, the Biennale adapted these elements to focus specifically on art, setting a precedent for future biennials. This chapter explores how biennials set the stage for the proliferation of art-centric gatherings.⁴ The contemporary art scene as we know it today owes much of its structure and vibrancy to the pioneering framework established by biennials. These events set the stage for art-centric gatherings that have since evolved into a variety of formats, including art festivals and triennials.

The Biennale was conceived as an independent, international cultural event, free from the direct influence of both the state and the church. This independence was crucial, allowing it to sidestep local conservative mores through the oversight of an "international" committee, which refused to censor controversial artworks.⁵ This framework established the Biennale not just as an exhibition space but as a platform for cultural dialogue and innovation, distinguishing it from

³ Caroline A. Jones, "Old World / Biennial Culture," *The Global Work of Art: World's Fairs, Biennials, and the Aesthetics of Experience*, 2016. Pp. 81-95

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

other art events that were often constrained by nationalistic and commercial interests. Additionally, in contrast to the exhaustive displays of industrial of world's fairs, the Venice Biennale focused exclusively on art. It kept off the broad array of goods, machinery, and sideshows that characterized universal expositions, positioning itself instead as a trade-specific venue dedicated solely to art. This focus allowed the Biennale to cultivate a market for modern art, distinct from the grand expositions which were becoming increasingly outdated by the end of the 19th century. The Biennale's model was nimbler and more frequent, responding quickly to new developments in the art world, unlike the sprawling universal expositions that Italy found itself underqualified to compete in due to its industrial limitations.⁶ The success of the Venice Biennale provided a replicable model that highlighted the potential for art to cross national boundaries and foster a cosmopolitan spirit. Later, its framework encouraged the establishment of similar recurring art events globally.

The very first **Venice** Biennale featured audacious artworks that included Giacomo Grosso's *Il Supremo Convegno*, a painting that captivated viewers with its bold and scandalous depiction. This painting, exhibited in a Gallery D of the Palazzo dell'Esposizione, portrayed a dramatic scene with a nude female figure triumphantly straddling a coffin, surrounded by other nudes peering into it.⁷ This image pushed the boundaries of the conservative Italian art scene of the time and was a deliberate choice by the Biennale's founders to challenge and modernize Venice's cultural scene. The provocative nature of the artwork stirred significant controversy, drawing attention from both authorities and the press, which ultimately increased public interest and attendance. Grosso's painting, receiving the highest public accolade at the Biennale,

⁶ Caroline A. Jones, "Old World / Biennial Culture," *The Global Work of Art: World's Fairs, Biennials, and the Aesthetics of Experience*, 2016. Pp. 81-94

⁷ Ibid.

exemplified how the event could catalyze public discourse around contemporary art. The Catholic Patriarch of Venice, alarmed by rumors about the painting, requested its removal. However, the Biennale's founder, Mayor Riccardo Selvatico, cleverly referred the matter to a committee that ultimately decided not to censor the artwork. This decision, lead to a fierce response from the clerical press, heightened public curiosity. As a result, Grosso's painting won a popular prize, further fueling controversy. This incident exemplified the Biennale's strategy of using publicity and populism to challenge local conservative and religious norms, fostering a modern and cosmopolitan public.⁸ Such incident sets an innovative and forward-thinking framework for the Biennale from its inception, the event was designed as an open platform for exchange and innovation. Such activities can connect the unique developmental traits of a region, using art as a medium to initiate dialogues, highlight issues, and provoke thought among its audience. This kind of event plays a crucial role in contemporary society by bridging the gap between local identities and global concerns, further enrich the cultural and intellectual landscape of a community. The transformative power of art makes it an effective tool for community engagement and social commentary.

Biennials are particularly notable for their role in promoting cultural development through their periodic yet persistent influence on cities and communities. They serve as incubators for new ideas and trends in the art world, often focusing on contemporary issues that resonate globally.⁹ This not only helps in nurturing and spotlighting emerging talent but also stimulates local economies by attracting international tourists and art connoisseurs. The cyclical

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

nature of these events ensures that they remain relevant, allowing them to adapt to changing artistic and cultural dynamics while continuing to engage a diverse audience.

The Biennale's success and its distinct format led to the questioning of the relevance of traditional world's fairs, particularly as they struggled to adapt to the changing cultural and economic landscape of the early 20th century. Critics in Venice and beyond began advocating for the replacement of these vast, unwieldy events with more focused, art-centric exhibitions. This shift was epitomized by the opposition in Nancy, France, against funding another Paris exposition, which reflected a broader European skepticism about the utility and cultural value of such large-scale industrial showcases.¹⁰ By the early 1900s, the sentiment had shifted significantly, with proponents of traditional expositions facing increasing criticism. The expositions were accused of promoting a homogenizing internationalism that diluted national identities and sovereignty. In contrast, the Venice Biennale was celebrated for its ability to foster a unique cultural exchange that respected and highlighted national differences while promoting international artistic dialogue. This nuanced approach to internationalism set the Biennale apart as a model for future art exhibitions and biennials globally.¹¹ Contemporary biennials continue to play a vital role in the art world, offering platforms for critical globalism and artistic innovation. While art fairs have become increasingly prominent, biennials retain their relevance by providing a space for more in-depth engagement with contemporary art. They offer a unique blend of cultural exchange, critical discourse, and artistic experimentation, maintaining their status as vital events in the global art landscape.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Nicolas Whybrow. "Contemporary Art Biennials in Europe: The Work of Art in the Complex City." *BLOOMSBURY VISUAL ARTS*, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350167001>.

Ultimately, the Venice Biennale not only diverged from the model of world's fairs by focusing exclusively on art but also innovated the very concept of art exhibitions. It demonstrated that art could be both a subject of significant public interest and a catalyst for international dialogue. The Venice Biennale laid the groundwork for the proliferation of similar events worldwide, proving adaptable and resilient over time. Its legacy continues to influence how art is presented and appreciated on the global stage, making it a pivotal model in the history of art exhibitions. Moreover, the evolution from biennials to triennials and other art festivals demonstrates the adaptability and scalability of the biennial model. These events have diversified in terms of scope, scale, and objectives, addressing specific cultural, social, and environmental issues through the lens of art.

In addition to the historical origins mentioned above, biennial culture extends art from the artwork itself to the art experience. Jones mentions in the text "from art as an object of craft to art as expectation for experience"¹². During the cultural development of biennials, other art events similar to the Venice Biennale share a common characteristic: biennials are typically held in a specific city or region. A significant concept related to this is "aesthetics experience"¹³ The transmission of art is no longer a linear development, Nicolas Whybrow mentioned, "That responsibility can be taken to mean participation not only in the realization of the artwork's work (via some form of response or attempt to make sense) but also in the sense of realizing one's ethical obligation as witness to the event of encounter with the artwork."¹⁴ The sense of

¹² Caroline A. Jones, "Old World / Biennial Culture," *The Global Work of Art: World's Fairs, Biennials, and the Aesthetics of Experience*, 2016.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Nicolas Whybrow. "Contemporary Art Biennials in Europe: The Work of Art in the Complex City." *BLOOMSBURY VISUAL ARTS*, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350167001>. Pp18.

experience in art can come from various aspects. The format of biennials, through a theme and venues centered on art, provides not only a visual experience for the audience but also a more immersive sense of participation. If the participants of a biennial were solely professionals from the art industry, its impact would not have reached the heights we see today. The concept of the biennial is now applied across various fields of art development and is increasingly integrated with regional development, conveying messages to audiences worldwide from a cultural transmission perspective. This will also be a key focus of the subsequent chapters of this paper.

Chapter 2: The setouchi Triennale and its regenerative power

The Setouchi Triennale emerged as a response to significant challenges faced by the Setouchi Sea area, including economic decline due to industrial pollution and a dwindling population following World War II. These islands, once vibrant communities, experienced a gradual erosion of economic viability and cultural vitality, necessitating innovative revitalization strategies. Launched in 2010, the Triennale aimed to harness the transformative power of contemporary art to rejuvenate the Setouchi region, stimulating economic growth and reversing population decline¹⁵. The Setouchi International Art Festival has gained significant media exposure and is widely discussed in China's art community. This festival, along with the Echigo-Tsumari Art Festival (ETAF), also known as Art Field, is seen by the public as representing the art festivals of the sea and the mountains.

The fiscal and demographic slowdown in Japan during the twenty-first century is most evident in its mountainous rural regions. In the 1990s, sociologists began using the term “hamlets at their limits” to describe rural communities that have aged and depopulated to the point of collapse. These rural communities are a result of long-term rural decline, which contrasts with Japan's Tokyo-centric postwar economic growth. Greater regional autonomy, self-sufficiency has become a key focus of rural sustainable development in Japan.¹⁶ “Rediscovery' is a precondition of regional 'activation,' a vision of rural revitalization achieved through resident initiatives to

¹⁵ “Art Setouchi.” ART SETOUCHI. Accessed June 10, 2024. <https://setouchi-artfest.jp/>.

¹⁶ Bridget Love. “Sustainability at Dead-Ends: The Future of Hope in Rural Japan.” *RCC Perspectives*, no. 3 (2014): 95–100. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26241256>

awaken the dormant vitality of their homes."¹⁷ This statement is very applicable to the development of the Setouchi International Art Festival.

As early as the end of the last century, Japanese society began to pay attention to issues related to rural development. The "Setouchi Triennale" traces its roots back to 1985 when Fukutake Tetsuhiko, the CEO of the Fukutake Foundation (currently known as the Benesse Foundation), envisioned creating a global campsite for children. During his search for the perfect location, he identified Naoshima, an island not far from Okayama as an ideal setting for this project. In November of the same year, Fukutake Tetsuhiko formalized his vision by reaching an agreement with the mayor of Naoshima.¹⁸ They planned to develop a cultural and educational zone specifically for children in the island's southern region. This agreement marked the beginning of a transformative journey for Naoshima. The elder Mr. Fukutake's vision extended beyond merely building a campsite; he sought to create an environment that would inspire and educate future generations. However, six months later, Fukutake Tetsuhiko suddenly passed away, and his son, Fukutake Soichiro, took over the project. In 1987, the "Naoshima International Camping Ground" was completed, and under the supervision of Ando Tadao, it officially opened to the public in 1989.¹⁹

The younger Mr. Fukutake continued his late father's mission, further advancing the development of Naoshima. The Mayor Miyake Shinren²⁰ had a vision for the development of Naoshima: to transform the northern area into a mining and economic development zone, to

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Qu Meng 渠濛. "当代艺术节介入乡村地域再生的可持续发展研究" ("Study on Sustainable Development of Rural Area Regeneration through Contemporary Art Festivals"). *公共艺术 (Public Art)* no. 05 (2016): 38-45.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Miyake Shinren (1908-1991), served as the mayor of Naoshima for nine consecutive terms from 1959, over a period of 36 years.

centralize schools, government institutions, and residential areas in the middle region, and to dedicate the southern area to cultural facilities. This idea coincided perfectly with Fukutake Soichiro's concept, leading to the creation of the "Naoshima Cultural Village Plan." In 1992, a plan to create a museum and an art hotel based on the concept of coexistence of nature, architecture, and art was born on Naoshima. After the Benesse House was opened, the younger Mr. Fukutake started to shift his focus to the art and culture development. Since then, the journey of art festivals begins.²¹

Using culture to activate the vitality of a region is a suitable solution for this area. In 1994, an important art exhibition, "Open Air '94 Out of Bounds," changed the future of Naoshima, and that same year Yayoi Kusama's "Pumpkin" sculpture found a home on the island. In 1995, the first "Benesse Prize" (Offered by Benesse Foundation) was awarded to Cai Guo-Qiang, an artist at the 64th Venice Biennale. His work, "Cultural Melting Bath: Project for Naoshima," integrated Chinese feng shui elements with the island. Subsequently, contemporary art began to spread rapidly across Naoshima.²² As Naoshima developed, contemporary art gradually and systematically spread to other islands in the Seto Inland Sea near Kagawa and Okayama Prefectures, each possessing its own unique cultural and geographical characteristics. The "Setouchi Triennale," also known as the "Setouchi International Art Festival," is a contemporary art festival held every three years across several islands in the Seto Inland Sea.²³

²¹ Fukutake, Soichiro and Kitagawa Fram 福武总一郎 北川富朗. *艺术唤醒乡土 (Art Awakening the Regional Charm)*. Beijing: Beijing Qing Nian Chu Ban She 2017.

²² Qu, Meng 渠濛. "当代艺术节介入乡村地域再生的可持续发展研究" ("Sustainable Development Research on Contemporary Art Intervening in Village Regional Regeneration"). *公共艺术 (Public Art)* no. 05 (2016): 38-45.

²³ Ibid.

Its goal was to leverage the global platform of contemporary art to elevate regional culture to the world stage.

Kitagawa Fram, the general director of Setouchi Triennale, who is also the founder of Echigo-Tsumari Art Field (ETAF), has shared his thoughts on the concept of art festivals. As he noted in his book *Art Awakening the Regional Charm*, initially, both art festivals were predominantly focused on Asia, featuring artists and participants mainly from the region, and subject to extensive scrutiny by official bodies. Beginning in 2014, there was a notable increase in applications from mainland China. This surge was driven by China's "Beautiful Countryside" initiative, which motivated various regions, particularly the proactive younger generation, to engage in activities centered around "art and culture." The specific locations where artworks are created are often in cultural settings different from those of the artists. These areas are full of contradictions, conflicts, and complexities. Artists cannot passionately pursue their work without a deep respect for the local lifestyle and culture. The creation process frequently depends on local residents for materials and support, such as providing refreshments. Some works are impossible to complete without local assistance, necessitating cooperation.²⁴

As a result of this collaborative environment, the artwork becomes a product owned by both the artist and the local community. Residents take pride in showcasing these works to visitors, and this pride can lead to further opportunities. Such experiences need to be shared and gradually disseminated. Moreover, artworks that are created collaboratively are more likely to be fully appreciated or endure over time. While the process of working collaboratively with a community can be both costly and labor-intensive, similar to nurturing a child, it pays off in its

²⁴ Kitagawa Fram 北川富朗. "Introduction", *艺术唤醒乡土 (Art Awakening the Regional Charm)*. Beijing: Beijing Qing Nian Chu Ban She 2017.

ability to connect numerous caretakers. This dynamic is currently taking place at the Setouchi International Art Festival. The Setouchi Festival thrives on the interconnectedness among people, provinces, cities, governments, the private sector, and other unrelated entities. This cooperation seems to pave the way for international collaboration.²⁵

Since the 1990s, the Fukutake Foundation has been guided by a visionary perspective that stands out on the global stage. The inception of the Setouchi Art Festival marked the culmination of two decades of meticulous development on Naoshima and the surrounding islands of the Seto Inland Sea. This journey illustrates that cultural revitalization is a gradual process, markedly different from the volatile nature of the art market. It is precisely due to the complexity and difficulty of this endeavor that its societal impact carries long-term value.

This notion reminds me of a principle discussed by the renowned Chinese investor Zhang Lei in his book *Value*. He emphasizes the importance of "walking the path of long-termism, partnering with those who possess a grand vision, and becoming friends with time."²⁶ The development of Naoshima is a testament to this philosophy. It has been fortunate to benefit from the sustained efforts of two generations of the Fukutake family, their dedication, coupled with the early support from Mayor Miyake, laid a strong foundation for the island's cultural projects. More crucially, the shared vision and unwavering commitment of Kitagawa Fram and Fukutake Soichiro have been instrumental in driving the success of the Setouchi Art Festival. Their collaborative efforts and aligned goals have ensured that each initiative is rooted in a profound

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Zhan, Lei 张磊. *价值 Value*, (Hang Zhou, Zhe Jiang Jiao Yu Chu Ban She, 2020)

respect for the local culture and community. This alignment has not only fostered a vibrant cultural landscape but also created a sustainable model for regional development.

Every element, from the visionary leadership of the Fukutake family and the early institutional support to the dynamic partnership between Kitagawa and Fukutake, has played a important role in the festival's achievements. The Setouchi Art Festival exemplifies how long-term dedication, and a collective vision can transform a region, offering lessons in the enduring power of art to create lasting social value.

Setouchi Triennale	2010	2013	2016	2019	2022
Exhibition Duration (days)	105	108	108	107	105
Number of Venues	8 (7 islands and 2 ports)	14 (12 islands and 2 ports)	14 (12 islands and 2 ports)	14 (12 islands and 2 ports)	14 (12 islands and 2 ports)
Artists in Participation	75	200	226	230	118
Artworks	76	207	206	214	213
Activities	16	40	37	35	19
Visitors	938,246	1,070,368	1,040,050	1,178,484	723,316
Tickets	85654	92475	84208	100,985	59,177
Number of Employees	305	412	N/A	N/A	N/A
Economic Ripple Effect in JPY (Billion)	11.1	13.2	13.9	18	10.3
Economic Ripple Effect in USD (million)	69.5	82.6	87	113	64.5
Increase Percentage	N/A	118%	105.3%	129.5%	-57.2%
Budget in JPY (million)	727 (4.55 USD)	1,015 (6.36 USD)	1,231 (7.7 USD)	1,225 (7.66 USD)	1,202 (7.5 USD)

Table 1: data retrieved from the Setouchi Triennale General Report 2010-2022, Setouchi Art official website. ²⁷

From the data above, it is clear that the Setouchi International Art Festival has shown a significant annual growth trend in both scale and impact. Except for 2022, when there was a decrease in the number of visitors due to the impact of Covid-19, the number of participating artists and the investment costs have remained at the same level as in 2019. This indicates that its future development trend is still predictably optimistic.

The Setouchi Triennale has had a marked effect on the local economy, primarily through boosting tourism. The influx of visitors has translated into increased revenue for local businesses, including accommodations, restaurants, and retail outlets. This economic upturn has also facilitated job creation, not only within the tourism sector but also in ancillary services, contributing to a more stable and vibrant local economy. The festival's success in drawing tourists has provided a much-needed economic stimulus, creating opportunities for local entrepreneurs and revitalizing the business environment.

Beyond its economic contributions, the Triennale has profoundly impacted the social and cultural fabric of the Setouchi area. By engaging local communities in the festival's activities, including art installations and cultural events, the Triennale has fostered a sense of pride and ownership among residents. This engagement has revitalized local traditions and crafts, ensuring

²⁷ Rep. *Setouchi Triennale 2010, 2011*. <https://setouchi-artfest.jp/files/about/archive/report2010.pdf>.

Rep. *Setouchi Triennale 2013, 2014*. <https://setouchi-artfest.jp/files/about/archive/report2013.pdf>.

Rep. *Setouchi Triennale 2016, 2017*. <https://setouchi-artfest.jp/files/about/archive/report2026.pdf>.

Rep. *Setouchi Triennale 2019, 2020*. <https://setouchi-artfest.jp/files/about/archive/report2019.pdf>.

Rep. *Setouchi Triennale 2022, 2023*. <https://setouchi-artfest.jp/files/about/archive/report2022.pdf>.

their transmission to future generations while also integrating contemporary artistic practices. The involvement of local residents in the planning and execution of projects has strengthened community bonds and fostered a collective identity centered around cultural and environmental stewardship. The festival's primary objectives were twofold: to rejuvenate the socio-economic fabric of the area through sustainable tourism and to invigorate local communities by fostering a renewed engagement with art and culture. By focusing on these goals, the Triennale sought to create a vibrant cultural landscape that would attract visitors and foster a sense of community pride and cohesion. A significant aspect of the Triennale's success lies in its community-centric approach. The festival has actively involved local residents in its activities, ensuring that projects are not only environmentally sustainable but also culturally resonant. This collaborative model has strengthened community bonds and fostered a collective identity centered around cultural and environmental stewardship. By emphasizing local participation, the Triennale has ensured that the benefits of the festival are widely shared and that the projects reflect the unique character and heritage of the area.

Despite its successes, the Triennale has faced challenges, including environmental concerns related to increased tourism and the sustainability of art installations. In response, organizers have implemented measures to minimize environmental impact and ensure the festival's long-term viability. These measures include promoting eco-friendly practices among visitors and artists, such as waste reduction, recycling, and the use of sustainable materials. Additionally, efforts have been made to create installations that are durable and low-maintenance, reducing the environmental footprint of the festival.

The Setouchi Triennale exemplifies how art festivals can serve as powerful engines for rural revitalization, offering a model that balances economic development with cultural

enrichment and environmental sustainability. Its success story provides valuable lessons for similar initiatives worldwide, emphasizing the potential of art to transform rural landscapes into thriving cultural and economic hubs. By integrating traditional heritage with contemporary artistic expressions, the Triennale has created immersive experiences that resonate with both local residents and international visitors.

In summary, the Setouchi Triennale has demonstrated the transformative power of art in addressing complex socio-economic challenges. Through its focus on sustainable tourism, community engagement, and cultural renewal, the festival has revitalized the Setouchi region, creating a blueprint for leveraging art as a catalyst for comprehensive rural development. The lessons learned from the Setouchi Triennale highlight the importance of a context-sensitive approach that respects local traditions and fosters innovation. As art festivals continue to proliferate globally, the Setouchi Triennale stands as a testament to the enduring impact of art in enriching communities and fostering sustainable development.

Chapter 3: “Art at Fuliang” : Innovative thinking on Rural Revitalization

The implementation of the rural revitalization strategy is a significant decision made by the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China²⁸. For a long time, China has adhered to the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics in promoting rural revitalization. This path, rooted in over a century of rural policies and practices by the Party, has continuously evolved and developed, embodying profound and rich connotations, clear and distinctive features, and explicit development requirements.

The proposal of the rural revitalization strategy stems from two main factors: China's basic national conditions and the characteristics of its current stage of economic and social development. As a country with over a billion people, achieving modernization is unprecedented globally, with no existing route to follow. Despite the gradual reduction of the rural population due to urbanization, the total rural population remains significant, amounting to hundreds of millions. Achieving rural revitalization is an inevitable requirement dictated by China's national conditions to build a well-off society that benefits all people and a modernized country. As China enters a new era, the primary contradiction in society has shifted to the people's growing needs for a better life versus unbalanced and inadequate development. This imbalance is particularly evident in the lagging development of agriculture and rural areas. Therefore, the 19th National Congress emphasized the priority of agricultural and rural development and accelerating the modernization of agriculture and rural areas, by emphasizing the need to establish and improve systems and policies for integrated urban-rural development and accelerate the modernization of

²⁸ *The Report of 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China*. China Daily.
https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/interface/flipboard/1142846/2017-11-06/cd_34188086.html

agriculture and rural areas. Subsequently, the principle of "following the path of rural revitalization with Chinese characteristics"²⁹ becoming a crucial guiding principle for implementing the rural revitalization strategy.

Rural revitalization is a comprehensive task. Cultural revitalization is one of the five major revitalizations and serves as the spiritual essence and source of strength for rural revitalization. The Report of 19th National Congress calls for coordinated advancement in rural economic, political, cultural, social, ecological civilization, and Party construction, proposing the planned establishment of agricultural culture demonstration zones and characteristic cultural villages. It also aims to develop rural cultural and sports industries, revitalize traditional rural crafts, and stimulate the rural cultural market.

The "Opinions on Promoting Cultural Industry Empowerment in Rural Revitalization"³⁰ aims to integrate cultural industry empowerment into the overall framework of comprehensive rural revitalization. It focuses on key areas of the cultural industry, formulating policies for enterprises, talent, projects, and land, guiding cultural industry institutions and workers to support and invest in rural areas. This will help drive rural economic and social development, ensuring the consolidation and expansion of poverty alleviation achievements align with rural revitalization. The "Opinions" emphasize effective protection and rational utilization, strengthening land use guarantees for cultural and tourism industries, exploring new ways to

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Xinhua News Agency. (2022). 中共中央 国务院关于做好 2022 年全面推进乡村振兴重点工作的意见 (*Opinions on Promoting Cultural Industry Empowerment in Rural Revitalization*). 中共中央 国务院关于做好 2022 年全面推进乡村振兴重点工作的意见_中央有关文件_中国政府网. https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2022-02/22/content_5675035.htm

integrate primary, secondary, and tertiary industries in rural areas, and promoting the scientific and reasonable use of collective construction land.

The "Art at Fuliang" initiative, spearheaded by the Fuliang County Government and managed by Beijing HUBART Company, the president of HUBART, Mrs. Sun Qian, was appointed by the Fuliang County Government as the "innovation commissioner"³¹ for Hanxi Village in Fuliang County. "Innovation commissioner" is a unique role appointed title to an established individual who has the ability to bring innovative thinking to a place.³² From this appointment, "Art at Fuliang" has emerged as a new model for rural development under this institutional framework. HUBART is also known as Artfield China (authorized by Artfield Echigo-Tsumari Triennale) marks a significant cultural milestone for the region. The primary funding for this project comes from public funds, allocated for cultural development activities in Fuliang County. This project is the inaugural regional art project undertaken by Sun Qian and her team, following the methodology of *Art Awakening Regional Charm*.³³

Launched in 2021, the county's CPC (Communist Party of China) committee and government took the direction of integrated development of porcelain-tea culture, and introduced and implemented the world-class art project "Artfield", whose format is originated in Japan's Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale. This project not only celebrates the rich cultural heritage of

³¹ The HUBART team. *Art at Fuliang 2021 Project Review*. Beijing HUBART Internal Report. Unpublished. 2021.

³² Hu Yu and Sha Yao 胡钰 沙垚. "乡创特派员：破解城乡资源要素双向流动难题的制度探索" ("Rural Innovation Commissioner: Institutional Exploration on Solving the Problem of Two-way Flow of Resource Elements in Urban and Rural Areas"). *江西师范大学学报哲学社会科学版*. (*Journal of Jiangxi Normal University, Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition*) 55, no. 01 (2022): 101-109.

³³ Kitagawa Fram 北川富朗. *艺术唤醒乡土 Art Awakening the Regional Charm*. (Beijing: Beijing Qing Nian Chu Ban She 2017).

Fuliang but also aims to rejuvenate and showcase the area's unique traditions and scenic beauty through contemporary artistic expressions. Situated in Jiangxi Province, southeast of China. Fuliang County is strategically located just north of Jingdezhen, which is internationally recognized as a hub of porcelain art, known for producing flawless high-fire porcelain. The proximity to Jingdezhen, approximately a 30-minute drive, positions Fuliang advantageously as a cultural extension of this famous ceramic center, linking it to a broader narrative of artistic and historical significance.

Fuliang's historical prominence is deeply intertwined with its natural geography and agricultural legacy. For over a millennium, this region has been renowned for its exceptional tea production, a reputation well documented in historical texts such as the Dunhuang manuscripts. The manuscripts highlight Fuliang's ancient global appeal with the phrase "Fuliang zhezhou, sought after by many nations,"³⁴ underscoring its historical role as a significant player in the international tea trade. This illustrious past has made tea not just an agricultural product but also a cultural emblem of Fuliang, embodying the area's enduring link to its environmental and historical roots.

The modern era brought significant transformations to Fuliang. Following the founding of the People's Republic of China, the county experienced a pivotal moment in the 1960s when it became a new home for a wave of migrants from Zhejiang Province. Due to the construction of a dam, residents from Zhejiang were compelled to relocate to Fuliang, a region with similar agricultural advantages. Their original village was submerged by the dam's reservoir, leading

³⁴ Wang, Fu 王敷. *Discourse Between Tea and Wine* 茶酒论, Dunhuang Manuscript 敦煌遗书, Tang Dynasty (618-907).

them to settle in Fuliang, which, like their previous home, is known for its tea cultivation. This influx of new residents injected a diverse cultural dynamism into the local community, blending traditional Fuliang customs with influences from Zhejiang, thereby enriching the cultural tapestry of the area. These demographic changes also stimulated local economies and traditional crafts, including tea production, which adapted to new techniques and innovations brought by the

The "Art at Fuliang 2021" project leverages this rich historical and cultural backdrop to transform the county into a vibrant locus for contemporary art. By inviting artists from across the nation and around the globe to engage with the local culture and landscape, the project fosters a creative dialogue between the traditional and the modern. There are total of 26 artists from five different nations that are engaged in this project. Between them, they brought 22 amazing artworks to this small village, and most of which are site-specific works. In this exhibition, several key artworks vividly embody the curatorial team's vision, each offering a unique lens through which to explore the intersections of land art and human connections. Among these, Ma Yansong's "Light" stands out for its innovative use of natural and architectural elements, suggesting a luminescent dialogue between the earth and the sky. Wu Jian'an's "500 Brush Strokes" offers an interactive experience, inviting visitors to leave their individual marks in a collective tapestry of expression, blending personal contributions with communal artistry. Tango's "Tavern" transforms a local historical setting into a vibrant public space that bridges the gap between the traditional and the contemporary, echoing the essence of communal gathering spots. Meanwhile, Israeli artist David Gerstein's "Tea for two" captures the everyday beauty of simple moments, portraying the intimate and universal experience of sharing a cup of tea. Together, these works not only highlight the emotional and physical landscapes they inhabit but

also foster a deeper appreciation of the ways in which art can connect us to our environments and each other.



Fig. 1: Light, Ma Yansong, Mix-medium Installation, 2021

Ma's installations, situated in a remote hilltop surrounded by tea fields, epitomizes his philosophy of reconnecting people with nature. This installation, a delicate, semi-transparent film structure, adds a white vertex to the natural landscape, resembling a mist or cloud encircling the hill's summit trees. It draws the eye and encourages visitors to traverse the tea fields and ascend the hill, thereby rekindling the bond between humans and the picturesque countryside.³⁵ At night, the installation transforms, with the trees casting dynamic shadows on the films, creating a lively, lighthouse-like silhouette against the changing light. Through this simple yet profound language

³⁵ The HUBART team.,ed. *Art at Fuliang*. Fuliang: Hanxi Village, 2021. Exhibitiob Catalog.

of form that bridges art and architecture, Ma Yansong's work activates and celebrates the relationship between humans and their natural surroundings.

This artwork bears the beautifully romantic Chinese name "Lamp of the Earth," unfortunately, much of its evocative meaning is lost in translation. The lamp, central to the piece's concept, is deeply rooted in the soil, symbolizing a profound connection to the land. It conveys a sense of energy emanating from the earth itself, with the lamp serving as a tangible representation of this natural force. This embodiment of the earth's vitality not only highlights the intrinsic relationship between art and nature but also underscores the transformative power of the land, as captured through the artist's vision. Through this installation, the lamp becomes a beacon, illuminating the inherent beauty and strength of the earth, and inviting viewers to reflect on the subtle energies that sustain our world.



Fig. 2: 500 Brush Strokes, Wu Jian'an, work on canvas, 2021

In his "500 Brush Strokes" series, launched in Fuliang, Wu Jian'an invites local residents to engage in a unique artistic process he describes as a stroke game. Participants are given the

freedom to choose their brushes, whether large or small, and to decide on using color or traditional ink, and whether to apply it dry or wet. The only instruction is to leave an unstructured trace on rice paper, avoiding recognizable shapes or legible text. Wu then meticulously cuts out these individual strokes and assembles them onto a new blank sheet of rice paper. This results in the creation of a collective artwork that is both spontaneous and intricately orchestrated.³⁶ The strokes reflect the subconscious expressions of the participants, varying widely and carrying rich, personal histories that add depth to the artwork. This piece not only becomes a canvas of varied human expression but also a dramatic stage brimming with the vivid lives of Fuliang's residents. Wu Jian'an's artistic practices highlight how art can be a powerful tool in transforming a community's connection to their homeland. By integrating the personal artifacts and individual expressions of the villagers into his art, he not only preserves local heritage but also revitalizes it, creating new narratives that are deeply rooted in the community's identity and history.³⁷ Wu's engagement with the villagers not only fosters a creative collaboration but also empowers them to see the artistic potential in their everyday lives and surroundings. His role extends beyond that of an artist to that of a cultural custodian, nurturing an environment where art and community intertwine seamlessly.

³⁶ The HUBART team.,ed. *Art at Fuliang*. Fuliang: Hanxi Village, 2021. Exhibitiob Catalog.

³⁷ Ibid.



Fig.3: *QuanYou Rice Wine Tavern*, Tango, Mural Painting and Installation, 2021

The transformation of the historical residence of Wang Quan-you into the QuanYou Rice Wine Tavern is a testament to TANGO's commitment to engaging with and preserving local culture through art. Wang, originally from Chun'an, Zhejiang, was adept at brewing rice wine, a skill that led TANGO to reimagine Wang's former home in Fuliang, Jingdezhen, as a tavern. This project is part of his ongoing involvement in Artfield China, where he infuses traditional spaces with contemporary art. TANGO's artistic interventions in the *QuanYou Rice Wine Tavern* include a large-scale mural on the exterior that depicts Wang holding a jug of rice wine, gazing contemplatively into the distance—perhaps reminiscing about his hometown.³⁸ This poignant image not only captures the essence of Wang's legacy but also ties it beautifully to the physical setting, as Chun'an and Fuliang share the same latitude, linking their cultural and climatic similarities. Inside, TANGO has crafted a chic bistro-like atmosphere. Tables and chairs are thoughtfully arranged, and a selection of comic books, curated by TANGO himself, is displayed for visitors to enjoy, further enhancing the tavern's inviting and restful ambiance. Through these thoughtful artistic choices, TANGO has transformed the house into a holistic and artistic tavern

³⁸ The HUBART team.,ed. *Art at Fuliang*. Fuliang: Hanxi Village, 2021. Exhibitiob Catalog.

that celebrates local history and cultural preservation, inviting visitors to immerse themselves in a unique cultural experience where art and tradition harmoniously intersect.



Fig. 4: Tea for Two, David Gerstein, Steel, 2021

For the "Art at Fuliang" project, David Gerstein drew inspiration from a seemingly mundane yet essential element of daily life—tea. To Gerstein, tea represents the simplicity and indispensability of ordinary life, themes that resonate deeply in his work. His sculpture for the project features vapors from steaming tea rising to form the silhouettes of two faces gazing at each other, symbolizing the intimate gathering of close friends. This imagery not only reflects the long-standing cultural pairing of tea and companionship, as echoed in ancient poetry with phrases like "boiling tea to invite friends" and "a tea to reward soulmates," but it also fosters a genuine and intimate connection with Fuliang Village.³⁹

Set against the lush backdrop of Fuliang's tea fields, Gerstein's sculpture stands out distinctly. The unique cut-out technique employed in his work allows the natural colors and

³⁹ The HUBART team.,ed. *Art at Fuliang*. Fuliang: Hanxi Village, 2021. Exhibitiob Catalog.

textures of the tea field to interplay with the vibrant lines, colors, and overlapping planes of the sculpture. This not only highlights the youthful, free, and dynamic essence of his style but also integrates the art seamlessly into the environment. Gerstein uses color as if it were a musical instrument in his composition, infusing the scene with lightness and a celebratory feel that captures the essence of everyday life. This distinct approach ensures that his sculptures not only enhance their surroundings but also create a compelling focal point that draws viewers into a visual and thematic exploration of the ordinary turned extraordinary.⁴⁰

As a nation with a rich agricultural heritage, China has developed a profound emotional bond with its land and homeland over centuries of farming culture. This deep-rooted connection reflects the significance of agriculture in shaping the country's traditions, values, and way of life. The intimate relationship between the people and their land has not only sustained communities but also fostered a strong sense of identity and belonging, weaving the essence of the countryside into the very fabric of Chinese culture. The mentioned works present a harmonious and complete narrative to the audience, clearly demonstrating the impact and changes that art has brought to Hanxi Village and its residents. Mrs. Wang, a second-generation resident, shared her opinion on this regional development. As the owner of a local restaurant, she witnesses the community benefiting from the art project in two main ways. Firstly, a group of villagers have taken up occupations as tour guides, making extra money by showing visitors around. Secondly, the benefits are seen in their small businesses; during the tourist season, every household sets up stalls to sell beverages, food, agricultural products, and tea.⁴¹ While the organizers do not directly share the profits with the villagers, some exhibition spaces are rented from local farmers

⁴⁰ The HUBART team.,ed. *Art at Fuliang*. Fuliang: Hanxi Village, 2021. Exhibitiob Catalog.

⁴¹ This information comes from the author's field research.

who have idle buildings, allowing a small number of individuals to directly profit from the art project. The primary source of income in Hanxi Village of Fuliang County remains tea production. Due to the distinctive industrial characteristics of the area, there isn't significant population movement. However, the arrival of the art project has also attracted people from nearby areas to come here and do business.

"Art at Fuliang" shares an intriguing connection with the Setouchi Triennale through the involvement of Kitagawa Fram, the general curator of Setouchi, who was invited as an advisor to participate in the planning of the Fuliang project. Kitagawa is known for his role as the director of the Setouchi Triennale. He is also the director of the Artfield Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale. "Art at Fuliang" represents the first project in China by the Artfield China team, a group specializing in land art festivals. This project continues the core philosophies of the land art festival movement, using the successful model of the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale as an anchor, and achieves innovative localization within the Chinese context. The involvement of Kitagawa Fram in "Art at Fuliang" brings a wealth of international expertise and a proven track record in transforming rural landscapes through art. His approach typically integrates art deeply into local contexts, emphasizing sustainability and community involvement, which aligns perfectly with the goals of "Art at Fuliang".

The project aims to not only celebrate and rejuvenate Fuliang's rich cultural and historical heritage, but to also connect Fuliang with the global community, leveraging its longstanding reputation in tea production and its newer identity in the contemporary art scene. "Art at Fuliang" serves as a cultural bridge, connecting the artistic philosophies of Japan's renowned art festivals with China's rich cultural tapestry. This synthesis of art and nature not only enhances the aesthetic value of the rural landscape but also plays a critical role in educating

and engaging the public about the importance of cultural preservation and environmental consciousness. According to “Art at Fuliang 2021 project review”, which summarizes the project’s statistical data, economic benefits, and media exposure. Over the 32 days of the event, it attracted 30,000 visitors, the average per capita spending exceeded 800 RMB (approximately 115 USD), significantly boosting local industries such as dining, accommodation, and transportation. Official data show that 71% of visitors were from outside the province, 72% were female, and 51.4% were between the ages of 26 and 35, highlighting the project's appeal to a young, high-quality consumer demographic. The project received extensive multi-platform media coverage, with Sina Weibo topic readings reaching 1.7 million, Baidu entries around 5.73 million, and a total of over 20 million readers. Promotional clips were shown in cinemas and on smart screens in elevators nationwide, potentially impacting over 100 million people and greatly enhancing Fuliang County’s national visibility and reputation.⁴²

In conclusion, the "Art at Fuliang 2021" project successfully integrated culture and art with rural revitalization, drawing widespread attention and achieving significant economic benefits and media exposure, and providing a replicable model for cultural revitalization in rural areas. These artistic endeavors are not only intended to honor and revive the historical heritage of Fuliang but also to attract tourists and art enthusiasts, thereby boosting the local economy through cultural tourism. This synergy between art and rural revitalization is pivotal, especially in an era where rural areas worldwide are striving to maintain their cultural identity while seeking economic sustainability. Fuliang, with its strategic focus on integrating art with its historical and natural resources, sets a precedent for how rural regions can harness their cultural

⁴² The HUBART team. *Art at Fuliang 2021 Project Review*. Beijing HUBART Internal Report. Unpublished. 2021.

legacies to forge new economic pathways and social vibrancy. The festival's structure includes workshops, exhibitions, and collaborations that allow visitors to experience Fuliang's cultural offerings through an immersive, artistic lens. This not only enhances the visitor experience but also instills a deeper appreciation and understanding of the local culture and history.

Chapter 4: the role of “Art Projects” in culture sustainability and community engagement

The preceding chapters have laid the groundwork by discussing the foundational role of biennial culture in shaping contemporary art and cultural exchange. Art, as a medium, has deeply penetrated contemporary lifestyles, transitioning from the 'white cube' gallery spaces into every corner of the global landscape. It raises important questions for artists and practitioners to consider deeply: What drives art toward public accessibility and service to the masses? What has art festivals truly brought to our communities? Kitagawa Fram in his book discusses the "altruistic needs for community development"⁴³. The term "community" has become a frequent lexicon in contemporary art discussions. Since the last century, artists have often drawn inspiration from "community" in their creative processes. In my understanding, the core of "community" is a sense of belonging, which may stem from physical geographical constraints but more so from a mental understanding and empathy.

Kitagawa further elaborates on this by referencing American psychologist Abraham Maslow, who categorized human needs into five primary levels— "physiological needs," "safety needs," "love and belonging needs," "esteem needs," and "self-actualization needs." Kitagawa expands on this perspective by suggesting that behind the hierarchy of needs theory, a larger cause is the "sense of happiness." Basic happiness undoubtedly concerns issues of warmth and food; however, once these are no longer concerns, the challenges we face ascend to a higher tier. At this stage, enhancing cultural infrastructure becomes a critical element of development. The "altruistic needs for community development" is precisely the core theory behind Kitagawa's advocacy of "public capitalism." He proposes that current capitalism, which can be viewed as

⁴³ Kitagawa Fram 北川富朗. *艺术唤醒乡土 Art Awakening the Regional Charm*. (Beijing: Beijing Qing Nian Chu Ban She 2017). Pp.59.

"financial capitalism," has encountered developmental bottlenecks in today's materially abundant world. A new economic development model that could replace it should be predicated on the principle of "economics serving culture," where the core idea is about creating happy life experiences, ultimately aimed at developing cultural enterprises.⁴⁴

In the context of today's globalized development, once some regions have satisfied basic subsistence needs, the source of "happiness" is derived from cultural heritage and unique life experiences. Whether it is the enduring Venice Biennale or other similar forms of art festivals that have evolved from biennial culture, they all incorporate culture as a language in the context of development. The public is accustomed to witnessing the flourishing development of the art industry in mega-cities such as London, New York, Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Shanghai, where art transactions often involve large sums, an undoubtedly captivating moment for the artist and the market. However, when we shift to another context, introducing contemporary art festivals as a solution for sustainable development in rural area regeneration, the issues that need to be discussed extend beyond the sale of individual art pieces. Rather, they integrate a mix of tourism, community development, and regional economics. Revitalization is the goal of regional development, and maintaining a sustainable development model becomes a continually evolving task for festival organizers.

Koizumi's "Art project"⁴⁵ refers to cultural movements, art festivals, or exhibitions developed in social spaces outside traditional art venues such as museums and galleries. These

⁴⁴ Kitagawa Fram 北川富朗. *艺术唤醒乡土 Art Awakening the Regional Charm*. (Beijing: Beijing Qing Nian Chu Ban She 2017). Pp55.

⁴⁵ Koizumi Motohiro. "Connecting with Society and People through 'Art Projects' in an Era of Personalization." In *Cities in Asia by and for the People*, edited by Yves Cabannes, Mike Douglass, and Rita Padawangi, 177–200. Amsterdam University Press, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv7xbs0b.10>.

projects began to appear frequently in Japanese urban communities in the 1990s and have rapidly increased since the 2000s.⁴⁶ Art projects, as platforms for promoting cultural exchange and social interaction at the community level, strengthen connections among community members and revive community memory by holding cultural activities and exhibitions in non-traditional art spaces such as old schools and factories. These projects enrich the cultural life of the community and promote its diversity and vitality by encouraging citizens to participate in artistic creation. Artists play the role of "social designers," inadvertently establishing connections between individuals and the community through artistic activities, thereby driving the community's revival and development.⁴⁷ I believe the concept of "Art projects" is currently the most fitting term for large-scale art events, ranging from recent Venice Biennales to the art festivals mentioned in this text. These events, while centered around the theme of art, have evolved into products of interdisciplinary integration, encompassing various fields such as sociology, urban studies, and community development. The organization and execution of these events have transcended traditional boundaries, becoming comprehensive projects that involve collaboration among artists, curators, urban planners, and community members.

By transforming spaces like old schools, factories, and village houses into vibrant cultural hubs, these art projects foster social interaction and community engagement. They not only provide platforms for artistic expression but also contribute to revitalization and cultural enrichment. The intricate planning and coordination required to bring these events to life highlight the artistry involved in their organization. Thus, organizing these events can be seen as

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

an art project, demonstrating creativity, innovation, and a deep understanding of the interplay between art and society.

“Cultural Heritage Tourism Planning and Development: Defining the Field and Its Challenges”⁴⁸ by Walter Jamieson states that cultural heritage tourism is a growing segment of the tourism industry. It involves experiencing visual and performing arts, historic buildings, regions, landscapes, and unique lifestyles, values, traditions, and events. This form of tourism encompasses crafts, language, cuisine, art, music, architecture, sense of place, historical sites, festivals, and events. It also includes cultural resources related to workplaces, technology, and religion.⁴⁹ Jamieson emphasizes the need for responsible and sustainable tourism activities that protect cultural heritage resources. This requires finding a balance between meeting tourists' interests and enjoyment, promoting economic and social development, and enhancing heritage and cultural values. Managing cultural heritage and tourism resources as tourist attractions involves considering various aspects, such as community tourism planning, heritage and cultural product development, conservation techniques, site management, marketing, community involvement, and partnership approaches.⁵⁰ Contemporary development are not only pivotal in understanding the current landscape of contemporary art but are also essential for anticipating future trends and challenges. As we delve deeper into the implications of these dynamics, we can better appreciate the complex interplay between art, community, and economics that shapes our modern world. This understanding is crucial for anyone engaged in the art sector, whether they

⁴⁸ Walter Jamieson. “Cultural Heritage Tourism Planning and Development: Defining the Field and Its Challenges.” *APT Bulletin: The Journal of Preservation Technology* 29, no. 3/4 (1998): 65–67. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1504616>.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

are creators, curators, or critics, as it highlights the broader impacts of their work on society and its development.

Focusing on contemporary development, the benefits and challenges of globalization deserve careful consideration within regional growth. One of the most effective strategies in regional development has been the use of art as a means of cross-disciplinary integration, evident in its marked success. Events like Japan's Setouchi Triennale and Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale, as well as China's "Art at Fuliang," showcase this strategy, even though the driving forces behind each festival differ significantly.

In Japan, the festivals are heavily influenced by the need for regional revitalization, spearheaded by individual like Kitagawa Fram and backed by substantial capital investments. These initiatives often rely on consortia established by corporations with the aim of developing business in revitalizing areas. Such consortia become major shareholders in businesses, using dividends to fund cultural projects. This model allows for cultural activities organized by consortia to continue semi-permanently without the constant need to seek donations. The Fukutake Foundation, for instance, holds a 5.2% share in Benesse Holdings (the company in charge of art projects on Naoshima, Toshima, and Inujima in Setouchi Sea area). Fukutake Soichiro, the chairman of this foundation, shared in an interview his views on the current era:

Excessive materialism can lead society to overlook the spirit of human-centric values. This trend is likely to continue. Asia is considered the region with the most potential for development, but blindly emulating the development models of advanced nations greatly increases the risk of repeating their mistakes. Hence, we must not follow the old paths of developed countries. Of course, achieving a happy and prosperous life is, to some extent, inseparable from economic development, but an over-reliance on economic growth can trap people in a chasm of desire and competition, leading us toward a world rampant with materialism, distorted values, and the belief that money can solve all problems.⁵¹

⁵¹ Ibid. Pp.20

Such beliefs fuel the commitment of visionaries like Fukutake Soichiro and Kitagawa Fram, who dedicate their time and energy to the artistic development of the Setouchi islands. In contrast, the situation in China presents a different scenario. Rural revitalization in China is supported by top-down government policies that systematically identify paths that cater specifically to local developmental needs, seeking innovative ways for sustainable development. Although the fundamental directions of development in these instances differ, their goals align in bringing sustainable development solutions to rural construction.

When considering contemporary art festivals as a means for sustainable rural development, the conversation extends beyond just the art itself to include tourism, community growth, and regional economics. The core aim remains revitalization, with sustainable development models posing ongoing challenges for festival organizers. This strategy highlights how art can drive wider progress and cultural involvement. Revitalization remains the objective of territorial development, wherein maintaining a sustainable development model continues to be an evolving challenge for festival organizers. This approach exemplifies a strategic use of art in fostering broader socio-economic growth and cultural engagement.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The global proliferation of art festivals highlights their transformative potential in fostering cultural exchange, economic growth, and social revitalization, especially in rural settings. These events, exemplified by notable festivals in East Asia, are not merely artistic gatherings but powerful catalysts that blend cultural heritage with contemporary expressions, creating immersive experiences that resonate with both local residents and international visitors. Art festivals play a crucial role in rejuvenating local economies, rekindling cultural identities, and fostering community cohesion. These festivals serve as incubators for new ideas and trends, often addressing contemporary issues that resonate globally. They help nurture emerging talent, stimulate local economies, and foster a sense of community and cultural pride. The cyclical nature of these events ensures their relevance, allowing them to adapt to changing artistic and cultural dynamics while engaging diverse audiences. In the context of global urbanization, where rural areas face economic decline, demographic shifts, and cultural erosion, art and cultural initiatives offer innovative solutions for sustainable development. The success of these festivals lies in their adaptability and sensitivity to local contexts. By integrating traditional heritage with contemporary artistic expressions, they create immersive experiences that resonate widely. This alignment between cultural initiatives and regional development strategies underscores the importance of a nuanced, context-sensitive approach to organizing art festivals. Moreover, these events have demonstrated that art can play a pivotal role in addressing broader societal challenges such as aging populations and labor migration. By engaging local communities in the creation and celebration of art, festivals foster a renewed sense of identity and pride, contributing to the social fabric and long-term sustainability of rural areas.

As art festivals continue to grow globally, there is a growing concern about the homogenization of their operation models. To ensure their continued success and impact, it is crucial for organizers and artists to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. Instead, they should strive to develop events that respect and reflect the distinct cultural and historical backgrounds of their host regions. This involves a deep understanding and appreciation of local traditions, customs, and socio-economic contexts. Respecting and reflecting the distinct cultural and historical backgrounds of host regions ensures that festivals remain authentic and meaningful, contributing to their long-term sustainability and impact. By doing so, art festivals can maintain their unique identities and continue to serve as meaningful platforms for cultural exchange and community revitalization. When international dialogue enters rural settings, the introduction of new ideas and practices inevitably leads to changes in traditional ways of life and the natural environment. Balancing the preservation of cultural heritage with the need for innovation and modernization can be a challenge. Art festivals must navigate this delicate balance, ensuring that new developments do not overshadow or erode the cultural and environmental essence of the host region. This balance is crucial for maintaining the integrity and sustainability of these festivals.

In conclusion, the burgeoning of art festivals worldwide presents both opportunities and challenges. As these events continue to evolve, it is essential for organizers and artists to remain mindful of the need to avoid homogenized operation models and contents. By honoring the differences between regions and cultural backgrounds, art festivals can maintain their unique identities and continue to make meaningful contributions to cultural exchange and community revitalization. The experiences of major festivals in East Asia demonstrate that when thoughtfully integrated into cultural development strategies, art festivals can serve as pivotal mechanisms for sustaining rural communities, nurturing cultural confidence, and ensuring

economic growth. As the world increasingly recognizes the value of cultural diversity and the need for balanced regional development, the insights gathered from these case studies offer valuable lessons for future initiatives seeking to utilize the power of art in rejuvenating rural landscapes.

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