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CHRONICLES OF ARTISTIC EVOLUTION: ANALYZING ARTISAN MANAGEMENT, CONSERVATION, AND CULTURAL SHIFTS FROM SONG TO MING DYNASTIES IN THE OLD AND NEW WORLDS

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ABSTRACT

China's transition from the Song to the Ming dynasty is significant because it was a major political, social, and cultural change as it affected the art world. This historical context provides a wonderful backdrop for examining how art developed and was preserved in this dynastic transition. This study examined the visuals and artifacts of this historical period through the lens of archaeology, providing a singular opportunity to unlock insights into creative dynamics, conservation techniques, and cultural changes throughout the Song to Ming transition. The aim of this study was to provide a comprehensive understanding of artistic development in the context of the transition from the Song to the Ming dynasty. Its aim was to use archaeological data to track artistic change, identify variables that influenced artistic change, examine the patronage of artists, interpret cultural change, and develop an understanding of the modernity of historical practices. This study used a qualitative technique, conducting semi-structured interviews with 30 experts in Chinese history and art, including artisans, conservators, historians, and scholars. Thematic analysis of interview material was carried out with the use of transcription and coding. The study revealed sophisticated patterns of artistic evolution driven by political, social, and cultural changes. Artisan management was crucial in molding artistic creativity. Conservation methods have developed, aiding in the protection of cultural assets. Cultural changes were reflected in art's symbolism, form, and subject matter. Comparative investigation showed that the world is interrelated. This research contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage, improves art history, incorporates archaeological ideas, encourages interdisciplinary collaboration, draws contemporary relevance, increases cultural appreciation, and provides information for conservation and policy recommendations. Its conclusions provide light on the Chronicles of Artistic Evolution, bridging the gap between the past and present and allowing us to comprehend our cultural legacy more fully.

KEYWORDS: Artistic evolution, Song dynasty, Ming dynasty, conservation practices, cultural shifts

1. INTRODUCTION

China's history is an epic narrative of dynastic upheaval, cultural innovation, and artistic excellence. The transitions from the Song to Ming Dynasties are significant stages in this tale, symbolizing revolutions in governmental authority, social institutions, and cultural perspectives. These transitions not only impacted the trajectory of Chinese history, but they also had a significant impact on the realm of art. This research aims to provide a complete background and context for comprehending the significance of this historical time, as well as the motivations for our investigation of its creative history. Art and culture were closely linked to sociopolitical changes during these dynastic transitions. The Song Dynasty was well known for embracing Confucian principles, which sparked a revival of traditional Chinese culture. Neo-Confucianism grew to be the preeminent ethical and philosophical system, influencing the subjects and aesthetics of art (Bin and Freebody, 2009). Landscape painting prioritized peace with nature and reflection, as seen by artists like Fan Kuan and Guo Xi. On the other hand, the Ming Dynasty saw a return to more traditional Confucian principles, which influenced artistic topics and techniques. The Ming Dynasty saw the peak of porcelain manufacture when complex blue-and-white ceramics rose to great popularity (Wen et al., 2019). Additionally, as a result of the shifting cultural environment, personal and expressive styles began to appear in traditional Chinese painting.

The Song and Ming Dynasties, two of China's most distinguished eras, left an everlasting impact on history, packed with historical and archaeological value that captivates researchers and enthusiasts alike. The Song Dynasty, famous for its technological brilliance, bequeathed upon humanity technologies that formed the contemporary world (Hang and Zhang, 2023). From moveable type printing, which revolutionized information dissemination, to the discovery of gunpowder, which had a revolutionary impact on combat and following discoveries, the Song Dynasty's technological legacy lives on (T. Wang et al., 2021). The Northern Song era also saw a blooming of philosophical and intellectual ideas, particularly Neo-Confucianism, which has had a significant impact on Chinese culture throughout history. Luminaries like Su Shi and Zhu Xi retained this intellectual efflorescence in their literary works (Bone and Dein, 2021). As landscape painting to new heights and the creation of fine porcelain came to be associated with Song culture, artistic

magnificence also flourished. The Ming Dynasty, on the other hand, is historically significant because it marked the return of Chinese rule following the Mongol-led Yuan Dynasty. This time saw a revival of Chinese identity and cultural values, represented by the creation of Beijing's famed Forbidden City (Huang, 2016). Under Admiral Zheng He's command, the Ming era was also marked by marine exploration, exposing China's worldwide reach through diplomatic and trade trips as far east as East Africa. With the creation of highly prized blue-and-white porcelain and the birth of distinctive painting styles, this period saw a revival in art and culture (Yan et al., 2020). A wealth of items relating to the Ming Dynasty have been discovered during archaeological digs, offering priceless insights into daily living, craftsmanship, and cultural practices.

Our understanding of the historical period in China from the Song to the Ming Dynasties has been greatly enriched by archaeological investigation. The tangible artifacts that have been uncovered as a result of these excavations and discoveries provide invaluable insights into daily life, craftsmanship, trade, and cultural practices during these pivotal dynasty changes (Liu et al., 2022). A number of significant archaeological sites, relics, and discoveries from this time frame stand out as providing insightful windows into China's history. The Nanhai No. 1 shipwreck, located off the coast of Guangdong province, is one of the most fascinating finds. As its cargo includes magnificent pottery, rich metals, and other artifacts, this lost merchant vessel from the Song Dynasty demonstrates a vibrant maritime commerce network (R. Li et al., 2022). This discovery emphasizes the significance of maritime trade during this historical period and gives concrete evidence of products exchanged between China and distant locations. The "Porcelain Capital," Jingdezhen, has provided important archaeological information about Ming Dynasty porcelain production. Old kilns, workshops, and ceramic shards have been found in this region, exposing the craftsmanship and creative complexity of Ming-era porcelain, which was essential to Chinese culture and worldwide trade (X. Zhang et al., 2020).

The Forbidden City in Beijing is not only a marvel of architecture but also of archaeology. Numerous artifacts, from ceramics and coins to shards of architecture, have been unearthed during excavations at this imperial palace (Y. Li et al., 2018). These findings shed light on the lavish lifestyle of the Ming dynasty royal court. Archaeological excavations along the Grand Canal, a spectacular technical feat linking northern and southern China, have uncovered the infrastructure, locks, and docks

used for trade and transit throughout the Song and Ming Dynasties (Du et al., 2021). These results emphasize the economic significance of the canal system and its effect on China's regional interactions. Finally, the Ming Dynasty-commissioned Yongle Encyclopedia is an intellectual treasure. This vast collection of knowledge, though not an item, shows the times' intellectual ambitions and scholastic pursuits (L. Li et al., 2016). It emphasizes knowledge preservation and distribution, influencing Chinese intellectual history.

This research seeks to examine the artistic development from the Song to the Ming Dynasties in detail. Several connected goals drive this research initiative. Its main objective is to illuminate the complicated artistic development that has shaped painting, ceramics, and other forms of expression during this major historical period (Table 1). The goal is to identify patterns of continuity and disruption in artistic styles, topics, and techniques to determine what's driving this movement. Second, this research examines how governmental and private patrons supervised

craftspeople and how these practices affected artists' creative freedoms. The question is essential to understanding modern aesthetics. Thirdly, the investigation looks at the development of conservation practices, covering methods and ideologies from the Song to the Ming Dynasties. This study sheds important light on the concepts and procedures that have stood the test of time and contributed to the durability of artifacts in the preservation and restoration of cultural heritage. Furthermore, the research attempts to explain the cultural alterations that occurred during this historical epoch and how they were mirrored in art and material culture. This includes determining how changes in society's values, ideologies, and worldviews manifested themselves in the symbolism, style, content, and function of art items. Additionally, a comparison of the Old World (China) and the New World (such as the Americas) is conducted to identify similarities and differences in the development of art and cultural shifts. This cross-cultural analysis highlights how linked current global cultural movements are.

Table 1. Research Questions and Objective

Research Questions (RQs)	Research Objectives (ROs)
1. How did archaeological evidence reveal the evolution of artistic expression from the Song to Ming Dynasties, considering the multifaceted influences of political, social, and cultural shifts?	1. To trace, through archaeological evidence, the evolution of artistic expression, including painting, ceramics, and other art forms, from the Song to Ming Dynasties.
2. What archaeological factors influenced the transformation of artistic styles, themes, and techniques during this dynastic transition, and what patterns of continuity and rupture can be identified through archaeological findings?	2. To identify and analyze, using archaeological data, the key factors and influences that drove the transformation of artistic styles, themes, and techniques during this dynastic transition.
3. How did archaeological evidence shed light on the management of artisans, whether by the state or private patrons, and its impact on the creative agency of artists during the Song to Ming Dynasty transition?	3. To examine, through archaeological artifacts and records, the role of artisan management, both by the state and private patrons, in shaping artistic production and the creative agency of artists.
4. In what archaeological ways did cultural shifts, encompassing changes in societal values, ideologies, and worldviews, manifest in the symbolism, style, content, and utility of art objects during this historical era?	4. To interpret, based on archaeological findings, the manifestations of cultural shifts, encompassing changes in societal values, ideologies, and worldviews, in art and material culture during this historical era.

This study has far-reaching and diverse implications. At its core, this study broadens our understanding of cultural preservation by looking into the methods and ideologies used to preserve art and heritage throughout a critical historical period. It not only broadens our understanding of art history, but it also aids archaeological study by providing significant insights into the past through discovered items and their interpretations. Additionally, the comparison of the Old and New Worlds broadens the lens through which we observe cross-cultural interactions, improving our understanding of how interrelated the world is. This study offers useful advice for current initiatives by comparing the difficulties faced by

ancient societies with the current problems with cultural heritage preservation. It promotes multidisciplinary cooperation and emphasizes how important it is for art to reflect societal values. In the end, it encourages cultural awareness, educational programs, and regulations that protect our priceless artistic legacies for upcoming generations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. *Historical Overview of the Song and Ming Dynasties*

Song Dynasty (960-1279 CE)

During the Song Dynasty, China underwent

profound political and cultural transformations. The Northern Song saw the rise of a centralized government with a robust bureaucracy, and with it came the introduction of a system for selecting officials based on their level of Confucian knowledge: the civil service examination (Yang, 2016). During this time, too, the economy grew tremendously because of innovations in agriculture and manufacturing, as well as the widespread use of paper currency (Fang et al., 2023). The Northern

Song Dynasty was split in two after military defeats at the hands of northern nomads, most notably the Jin Dynasty's capture of the Northern Song capital in 1127 (Fig. 1). Despite this, poetry, painting, and pottery all saw considerable advancements, as did the development of Neo-Confucianism (Yang, 2016). Landscape paintings, which celebrated the harmony between humans and the natural world, quickly became cultural icons.



Figure 1. Overview of Song Dynasty (Quillen, 2021)

Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE)

Traditional Chinese culture and government were revived during the Ming Dynasty, which succeeded the Yuan Dynasty, which had been dominated by the Mongols. Zhu Yuanzhang, also known as Emperor Hongwu, founded the dynasty to revive China's political might. Beijing became the new capital, and the Forbidden City was constructed there, but the civil service test system and the Ming Dynasty's highly centralized

government remained unchanged (Gao et al., 2023). The renowned admiral Zheng He oversaw an era of maritime exploration during the reign of Emperor Yongle that helped China's power spread into Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean, and East Africa (Huang, 2016). Ming opera improved performing arts with its distinctive style, while blue and white porcelain, known for its intricate cobalt-blue motifs, became an emblem of Ming creative superiority (Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Overview of Song Dynasty (Morris, 2014)

Table 2. Historical Overview of Song and Ming Dynasties

Aspect	Song Dynasty (960–1279 CE)	Ming Dynasty (1368–1644 CE)
Period	960–1279 CE	1368–1644 CE
Political & Social Developments		
Central Government	Strong central government and bureaucracy Civil service examination system	Restoration of Chinese rule, centralization of power, establishment of the Forbidden City
Economic Prosperity	Economic growth, agricultural and technological innovations	Economic prosperity, maritime exploration
Challenges	Military challenges from northern nomadic tribes Division into Northern and Southern Song	Restoration of Chinese rule, maritime exploration
Cultural Flourishing	Neo-Confucianism, contributions to poetry, painting, ceramics	Cultural renaissance, notable literary works, blue and white porcelain, Ming opera
Notable Artistic & Cultural Trends		
Art	Landscape painting, ceramics, poetry	Blue and white porcelain, literary classics, Ming opera

2.2. Artistic Evaluation

New insights into the Song Dynasty's artistic and cultural achievements have emerged from excavations of its associated sites. Excavations of ancient kilns and ceramic production sites have revealed the technological advancements that went into making the Song Dynasty's renowned ceramics (Table 2). Famous Jian porcelain and dark, glossy Celadon China are among these discoveries; their distinctive greenish glazes are instantly recognizable (Y. Li et al., 2018). Archaeological findings of Song Dynasty tombs and burial sites have illuminated burial traditions and creativity. Tomb figures, funerary ceramics, and sculptures show Song aesthetics and culture (Stefano and Cristofaro, 2020). These artifacts' complex features

and craftsmanship have revealed the Song Dynasty's shifting creative sensibility. One of the most important contributions to our understanding of Song Dynasty art has come from the study of old paintings on silk and paper (Fig. 3). Artists' ability to capture the splendor of nature in their paintings have been shown by their discovery of tombs and other archaeological sites (S. Wang and Phungamdee, 2022). Paintings from the Song Dynasty often feature landscapes, flowers, and birds, demonstrating the era's fascination with the harmony between humans and the natural world. The investigation of pigments, brushwork, and artistic processes by archaeologists has enriched our knowledge of the period's creative achievements (Hou et al., 2021).

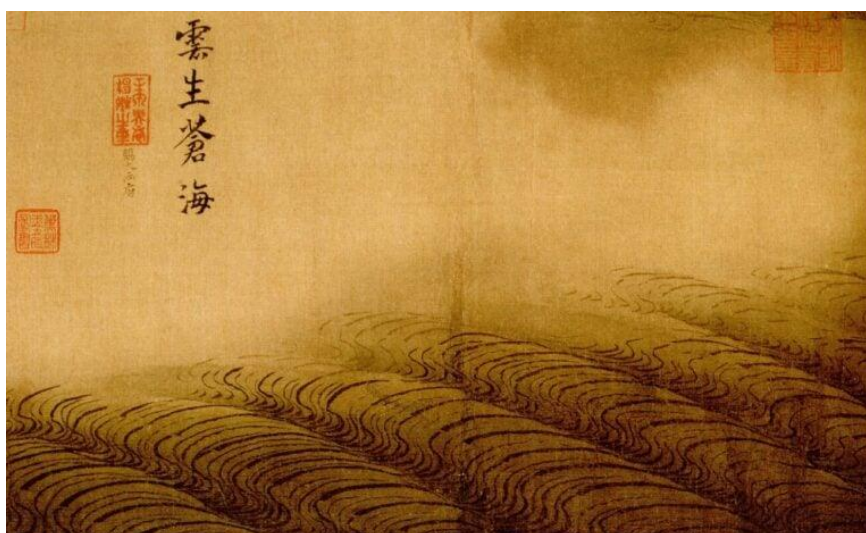


Figure 3. Artistic Evaluation During Song Dynasty (Russell, 2018)

In addition, archaeological findings have been crucial to understanding the development of the Ming dynasty's aesthetics. The excavation of Ming-era kilns and porcelain production sites has

revealed a lot of information on the quality of Ming porcelain's construction and the methods employed to create it (Tripathi et al, 2017). The distinctive blue-and-white porcelain of the Ming Dynasty has been

studied in great detail thanks to the preservation of numerous items. Archaeologists have used these discoveries to learn more about the origins and development of Ming porcelain, all the way to its peak of artistic achievement (Tai *et al.*, 2020). The achievements of the Ming Dynasty in architecture and urban planning have been illuminated by archaeological excavations of Ming-era urban centers, such as the capital city of Beijing (Fig. 4). For instance, the Forbidden City has been the subject of intense archaeological study, shedding light on its design, construction, and hidden

symbolism (Lei *et al.*, 2017). Along with physical items, Ming Dynasty tombs and funeral objects have been found. These findings illuminate Ming funeral practices, religion, and art. The Ming Dynasty preserved culture and aesthetics with elaborate tombs, sculptures, and burial items (Jiang *et al.*, 2018). Archaeology has also helped research Ming-era shipwrecks, particularly those from Zheng He's early 15th-century missions (X. Wang *et al.*, 2023). These undersea archaeological sites have revealed the Ming Dynasty's massive treasure ships and global trade networks.



Figure 4. Artistic Evaluation during Ming Dynasty (Kevozphotoz, 2018)

Table 3. Artistic Evaluation During Song and Ming Dynasties

Aspect	Song Dynasty	Ming Dynasty
Ceramics	- Celadon wares - Kiln excavations - Archaeological evidence of production techniques	Blue and white porcelain - Kiln excavations - Technical advancements
Tombs and Burials	- Tomb figurines - Funerary pottery - Paintings in tombs	- Lavish tomb architecture - Sculptures - Funerary objects
Paintings	- Silk and paper paintings - Depictions of nature - Analysis of pigments and techniques	- Influence of paintings on porcelain design - Ming-era urban centers - Forbidden City architecture
Urban Centers	- Notable cities - Urban planning - Architectural discoveries	- Capital city of Beijing - Forbidden City architecture - Urban layout
Maritime Archaeology	- N/A	- Early 15th-century shipwrecks - Zheng He's voyages

2.3. Artisan Management

Craftsmen of the Song Dynasty were organized into guilds, which thrived in the thriving cities of the time. Craftsmen relied heavily on guilds as a source of organization and regulation. They ensured that craftspeople could compete fairly, among other things, and they regulated business operations and set quality standards. These guilds gave artisans a voice in collective bargaining and problem resolution within their fields, fostering a sense of camaraderie and cooperation. Due to expanding markets, artisans prospered in the Song Dynasty's urban setting (Table 3). Rapid urbanization resulted in an increase in population and a rise in demand for handcrafted goods, including ceramics, textiles, metalwork, and carpentry (Qi *et al.*, 2022). In addition to giving

artisans a wide clientele, urban expansion also facilitated encounters and cultural exchanges that sparked originality and creativity. The prestige of artisans was further raised by state support. Because the government recognized the intrinsic worth of artisanal skills and workmanship, state-sponsored workshops were established. These workshops were entrusted with manufacturing high-quality goods for official and commercial usage (T. Wang *et al.*, 2020). As a result, craftsmen received substantial encouragement and support to advance their craft and create advanced techniques. The success of this patronage was evidenced by the blooming of ceramic arts, such as celadon and Jian pottery.

The Ming Dynasty, on the other hand, brought about significant changes in artisan management

that were a reflection of changes in government, societal ideals, and economic structures. In the Ming era, centralization emerged as a distinctive aspect of artisan management (Kadagi et al., 2021). With a special emphasis on porcelain, the imperial court played a more active role in controlling the manufacture of other handmade goods. Centralized workshops were set up, including those producing recognizable blue and white porcelain (Hang and Zhang, 2023). The development of fine porcelain items that gained international acclaim was the outcome of this centralization, which aimed to

assure strict quality control and maximize government revenue. The Ming Dynasty, however, was also marked by a shift in social hierarchy influenced by Neo-Confucianism (Table 4). This philosophical and moral framework emphasized the supremacy of academia and government service, resulting in a shift in artisans' perceived social rank (Mazzeo et al., 2004). While artisans continued to play an important part in society, they were positioned in the middle of the social ladder, below scholar-officials but above peasants and laborers.

Table 4. Artisan Management During Song and Ming Dynasties

Aspect of Artisan Management	Song Dynasty (960-1279 CE)	Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE)
Organization	Guild systems in urban centers; regulated trade	Centralized workshops under state supervision
State Patronage	State-sponsored workshops for quality goods	Centralization aimed at ensuring quality and revenue
Cultural Influence	Flourishing of artistic innovation and diversity	Renewed emphasis on tradition and classical art forms
Social Status	Artisans' position in a growing urban society	Social hierarchy and influence of Neo-Confucianism
Technological Innovation	Technological advancements, e.g., woodblock printing	Innovation stimulated by maritime trade and interaction

2.4. Art Conservation

The rigorous and interdisciplinary process of maintaining and safeguarding cultural assets, including artworks, objects, and historical structures, is referred to as art conservation. The basic purpose of art conservation is to ensure that creative and cultural artifacts are passed down unharmed to future generations. Conservation is a process that combines preventative measures, restoration, and documentation to preserve artworks' original integrity and aesthetic value while limiting the impacts of ageing, environmental variables, and human involvement. China saw significant advancements in art conservation techniques throughout the Song Dynasty, demonstrating the society's strong appreciation for its cultural history. Ceramics, a speciality of the Song Dynasty, were painstakingly repaired using skilled methods, such as lacquering gold or silver over shattered pieces (Yu et al., 2022). Additionally, a lot of writing and artwork were documented and catalogued throughout this time, which helped to preserve artistic traditions, styles, and methods. State-sponsored workshops, particularly those making ceramics, paid close attention to the value of maintaining aesthetic traditions, assisting in the survival of artisanal processes (Norris et al., 2022).

Neo-Confucianism's impact, which placed an emphasis on respect for tradition and cultural legacy, further highlighted the dedication to conservation.

Conservation strategies continued to grow as China entered the Ming Dynasty, demonstrating the dynasty's commitment to conserving cultural heritage. The era was defined by centralized workplaces, particularly for porcelain production. This concentration enabled greater quality control and the preservation of ancient processes, culminating in the production of stunning blue and white porcelain pieces renowned for their artistry and longevity (Zhao et al., 2023). Scholars continued to produce records and reference materials to preserve the continuity of knowledge and artistic traditions, and documentation and cataloguing remained essential. During the Ming Dynasty, restoration techniques progressed as well, with craftsmen improving their talents in mending damaged objects while keeping their original aesthetic and historical significance (T. Chen, 2012). The emphasis placed by the dynasty on the rehabilitation of traditional Chinese culture affected conservation procedures, ensuring that repaired artworks adhered to classical aesthetics while retaining their cultural and historical relevance (Table 5).

Table 5. Art Conservation During Song and Ming Dynasties

Aspect	Song Dynasty (960-1279 CE)	Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE)
Ceramic Restoration	- Use of gold or silver lacquer for repairs	- Continued development of restoration techniques for ceramics
Documentation and Cataloging	- Extensive cataloguing of artworks and	- Continued documentation and compilation of

Aspect	Song Dynasty (960-1279 CE)	Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE)
State-Sponsored Workshops	writings - Support for state-sponsored workshops	records - Centralization of workshops for stricter quality control
Influence of Neo-Confucianism	- Emphasis on reverence for tradition and cultural heritage	- Revival of traditional Chinese culture influencing conservation practices
Preservation of Traditional Aesthetics	- Focus on preserving classical aesthetics	- Adherence to classical aesthetics in restoration work
Continuity of Knowledge	- Preservation of artistic traditions and techniques	- Maintenance of continuity in knowledge and artistic traditions
Technological Advancements	- Invention of woodblock printing	- Advancements in ceramics and other artisanal fields
Stewardship of Cultural Treasures	- Recognition of the importance of preserving cultural heritage	- Commitment to preserving cultural legacies

2.5. Cultural Shift

Cultural transitions have a significant impact on the field of art because they modify the values, beliefs, practices, and customs of a society. Cultural transformations shape the themes, aesthetics, and methods used by artists as societies change, reflecting the varying viewpoints and sensibilities of the time. The values and ideals of society are mirrored in art, which also plays a part in challenging or altering those values. Art functions as both a reflection and an agent of these transitions. In China, the transition from the Song to the Ming dynasties demonstrates a substantial cultural transformation (Table 6). China saw economic growth, urbanization, and technological achievements under the

Song Dynasty. Neo-Confucianism, which emphasized education and government service, came to dominate and profoundly affect art (W. Zhang *et al.*, 2023). Art embraced traditional ideals, classical aesthetics, and a healthy relationship between humans and nature. The Ming Dynasty, on the other hand, saw a renaissance of traditional Chinese culture, with centralized governmental control over artisan workshops resulting in rigorous devotion to classical aesthetics. Blue and white porcelain, influenced by traditional Chinese motifs, became synonymous with this era (Wagner *et al.*, 2013). Neo-Confucianism remained influential, defining social hierarchies and the function of scholars, while artisans occupied an intermediate position.

Table 6. Cultural Shift from Song Dynasty to Ming Dynasties

Aspect	Song Dynasty (960-1279 CE)	Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE)
Ceramic Restoration	- Use of gold or silver lacquer for repairs	- Continued development of restoration techniques for ceramics
Documentation and Cataloging	- Extensive cataloging of artworks and writings	- Continued documentation and compilation of records
State-Sponsored Workshops	- Support for state-sponsored workshops	- Better quality control can be achieved by the consolidation of workshops.
Influence of Neo-Confucianism	- Emphasis on reverence for tradition and cultural heritage	- Conservation techniques are influenced by the revival of traditional Chinese culture
Preservation of Traditional Aesthetics	- Focus on preserving classical aesthetics	- Restoration work that adheres to classical aesthetics
Continuity of Knowledge	- Preservation of artistic traditions and techniques	- The preservation of knowledge and creative traditions
Technological Advancements	- Invention of woodblock printing	- Ceramics and other artisanal fields have advanced.
Stewardship of Cultural Treasures	- Recognition of the importance of preserving cultural heritage	- dedication to safeguarding cultural legacies

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

In-depth interviews served as the primary technique of information accumulating on this study's qualitative technique. This method was selected because it can be used to recognize the complicated ancient and cultural procedures that

underlie the cultural adjustments that occurred in China from the Song to the Ming dynasties and to compare them to people who came about within the New World. Interviews, particularly, supplied a rich source of information that allowed for in-intensity research of complicated phenomena.

3.2. Selection of Participant

The meticulous selection of interview participants was an essential part of this study

since it allowed for a full analysis of the cultural changes that took place in China between the Song and Ming dynasties and their huge impacts on art. A carefully chosen sample of 30 interviewees from various backgrounds was sorted into four groups that complemented one another. First up was the "Experts in Chinese History and Art," a team of eminent historians and art historians famous for their in-depth familiarity with Chinese history and art. Their scholarly background gave vital historical context, insights, and understanding of the cultural shifts and artistic developments of the Song and Ming Dynasties. Second, "Artisans and Crafts persons" who have first-hand experience and training in the classical Chinese art styles that were popular throughout the Ming and Qing dynasties were consulted. Their observations revealed the

eras' workmanship, skills, and aesthetic traditions accurately, as seen through the eyes of a practitioner. The third group consisted of "Conservators and Curators," or specialists in preserving and presenting Chinese art and antiques. Their insights were crucial in demystifying the intricacies of conserving and exhibiting works from the Song and Ming dynasties in museum settings. Finally, the presence of "Historians and Scholars" increased the depth and diversity of the interviews by drawing on their diverse academic backgrounds, which included cultural studies, anthropology, and archaeology. Their diversified viewpoints substantially contributed to the study's comprehensive grasp of cultural transitions, socioeconomic background, and the subtle interplay between art and broader cultural trends during these dynastic periods (Table 7).

Table 7. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Participant	Gender	Age Range	Educational Background	Expertise/Profession
1	Male	45-55	Ph.D in Art History	Art Historian
2	Female	30-40	M.A. in Archaeology	Archaeologist
3	Male	50-60	Ph.D in History	Historian
4	Female	35-45	M.F.A. in Fine Arts	Artist/Craftsperson
5	Male	40-50	M.A. in Cultural Studies	Cultural Anthropologist
6	Female	55-65	Ph.D in Conservation	Art Conservator
7	Male	28-38	B.A. in Art History	Art Gallery Curator
8	Female	45-55	Ph.D in Archaeology	Archaeological Researcher
9	Male	50-60	M.A. in East Asian Studies	East Asian Studies Scholar
10	Female	35-45	M.F.A. in Ceramics	Ceramic Artist
11	Male	40-50	Ph.D in Cultural History	Cultural Historian
12	Female	60-70	M.A. in Museum Studies	Museum Curator
13	Male	30-40	B.A. in Chinese Literature	Chinese Literature Scholar
14	Female	55-65	Ph.D in Art Education	Art Educator
15	Male	48-58	M.A. in Asian Art	Asian Art Specialist
16	Female	32-42	Ph.D in Anthropology	Cultural Anthropologist
17	Male	58-68	M.A. in Art Conservation	Art Conservator
18	Female	38-48	B.F.A. in Sculpture	Sculptor
19	Male	43-53	Ph.D in History	Historian
20	Female	28-38	M.A. in Chinese Studies	Chinese Studies Scholar
21	Male	55-65	M.F.A. in Painting	Painter
22	Female	42-52	Ph.D in Cultural Studies	Cultural Studies Scholar
23	Male	47-57	B.A. in Archaeology	Archaeological Researcher
24	Female	33-43	M.A. in Art History	Art Historian
25	Male	52-62	Ph.D in East Asian Art	East Asian Art Scholar
26	Female	37-47	M.F.A. in Ceramics	Ceramic Artist
27	Male	44-54	Ph.D in Cultural History	Cultural Historian
28	Female	60-70	M.A. in Museum Studies	Museum Curator
29	Male	31-41	B.A. in Chinese Literature	Chinese Literature Scholar
30	Female	56-66	Ph.D in Art Education	Art Educator

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Semi-structured interviews, which were used as the main mode of data collection, gave 30 carefully chosen participants a place to have in-depth discussions. These individuals contributed a variety of skills in the study's focus areas of Chinese history,

art, conservation, and scholarship. Semi-structured interviews were used because of their adaptability and ability to let participants express their viewpoints on the cultural changes that occurred throughout the Song and Ming dynasties and how those changes affected the field of art. A series of

open-ended questions and major themes served as a framework for the open and exploratory interviewing. This strategy made it possible for a wide range of responses, guaranteeing a complete investigation of the research issue. Comprehensive records were kept during each interview, including thorough notes and, when consented to, audio and video recordings. These multimodal records made comprehensive documenting of the interviews possible, ensuring that no significant insights were missed throughout the data collection process. The next step in the data analysis process was transcription and coding. The development of a written record of the interviews was made possible by the verbatim transcription of the audio and video recordings, ensuring accuracy and facilitating analysis. The transcribed interviews were subjected to thematic coding, which involves finding recurrent themes, patterns, and significant insights. The massive amount of data gathered was organized and categorized systematically through the use of qualitative data analysis software and manual coding. Data triangulation was used to improve the rigor of the research by cross-

referencing interview data with other sources. Historical documents, scholarly literature, and artworks from the Song and Ming dynasties were included. The triangulation method validated the data and interpretations, ensuring that the conclusions reached were well-supported and robust.

3.4. Ethical Consideration

The rights and well-being of the participants were carefully protected in this study by ethical considerations. Each participant's informed consent was obtained after receiving thorough information about the study, and participation was guaranteed to be voluntary. Participants' personal information was handled with strict secrecy, and participant identity was preserved by using participant numbers or fictitious names (Fig. 5). In order to ensure that the research was carried out in an ethical and responsible manner while exploring the cultural transformations from the Song to the Ming Dynasties and their impact on art, these ethical standards supported the principles of respect for autonomy, privacy, and beneficence.

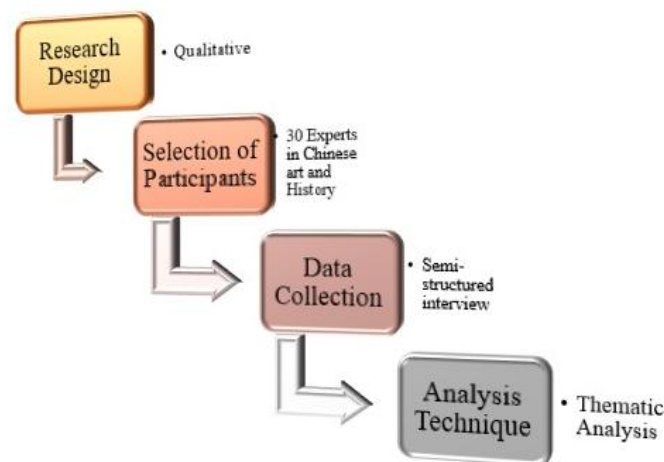


Figure 5. Layout of Research Methodology

4. RESULTS

4.1. Theme 1: Cultural Shifts and Artistic Evolution

Sub-Theme 1.1: Socio-political Transformations

The transition from the Song to the Ming Dynasties was marked by significant sociopolitical changes. The importance of dynastic movements and changes in

government arrangements as significant influences on the art of these periods was emphasized by participants. The cultural and political landscapes of China altered as dynasties changed. Dynastic shifts frequently marked a reevaluation of societal norms and values, which found expression in the arts. Adaptability and a desire to reflect the changing power dynamics were characteristics of artistic manifestations throughout these times of transition. For instance, the ascent of

new political ideas and rulers frequently led to a reworking of conventional artistic topics. Artists and craftspeople infused their creations with narratives and symbols that reflected the dominant ethos because they were constantly sensitive to the shifting geopolitical environment. By allowing new styles and topics to grow alongside established ones, this adaptability encouraged artistic diversity.

Sub-Theme 1.2: Technological Advancements

During this time, technological development had a tremendous impact on how art evolved. The interviews brought to light the significant impact of new materials and manufacturing processes, particularly in the printing and ceramics industries. New materials and technologies altered the process of making art, allowing creators to produce more elaborate, technical, and detailed works. Participants observed the invention of high-fired porcelain during the Ming Dynasty, a significant technological innovation that enabled the manufacture of delicate and translucent ceramics. Ceramics production innovations not only extended artistic possibilities, but also improved the quality and visual appeal of artworks. From a larger viewpoint, artistic inventiveness and technological advancement collided to produce amazing works of art. The symbiotic tie between technological development and artistic development is proof of the artisans' flexibility and innovation during these dynastic changes.

4.2. Theme 2: Artisan Management

Sub-Theme 2.1: Workshop Organization

Archaeological data and historical records show that the organization of artisan workshops changed significantly over this time period. These changes were seen in the hierarchy of workshops as well as the specialization of workers. The dynamics of artistic creativity were influenced by changes in artisan management. Participants drew attention to shifts in the hierarchies of the workshops, where senior artisans and master craftsmen were crucial in directing the production process. The mastery of various

methods was clearly prioritized throughout the Ming Dynasty in particular. Due to this specialization, workshops were established around certain crafts including metallurgy, textiles, and pottery. As artisans gained expertise in their respective fields, art production became increasingly sophisticated and specialized. These developments have far-reaching consequences. The organization of the workshop controlled the distribution of labor and the development of competence, which had a direct impact on the sorts of art produced. The artisan management organizational structure was critical in defining the character and quality of artistic productions.

Sub-Theme 2.2: Patronage and Markets

Participants emphasized the impact of patronage and changing marketplaces on artisan management as well. The art created between the Song and Ming dynasties was significantly influenced by changes in patronage practices and market demands. The imperial court and scholar-officials were important patrons of the arts during the Song Dynasty. Artists were frequently commissioned for specific works like ceramics, paintings, and calligraphy. This patronage developed a tight interaction between artists and their patrons, which influenced artwork subjects and techniques. The Ming Dynasty brought with it a wider range of patrons, including newly wealthy merchants and urban leaders. As artists reacted to the shifting preferences and requirements of their patrons, this change in patronage patterns increased the range of artistic production. The commercialization of art intensified, resulting in a variety of artistic genres and themes.

4.3. Theme 3: Conservation Practices

Sub-Theme 3.1: Materials and Techniques

Archaeological discoveries and historical records shed light on the materials and procedures used in the conservation of artworks throughout this time period. Participants saw considerable changes in the materials employed as well as the sophistication of conservation methods.

Conservation efforts during the Song Dynasty frequently focused on safeguarding artworks made of delicate materials like silk, paper, and ink. In order to restore damaged or deteriorating artworks, conservators used techniques that were sensitive to the fragility of these materials. Delicate paintings and calligraphy, for instance, were supported and safeguarded using traditional Chinese mounting procedures. Conservation materials and procedures advanced during the transition to the Ming Dynasty. Conservators began to experiment with new materials such as high-quality paper and adhesives. These materials gave conserved artworks increased resilience and lifespan. Participants also mentioned the advancement of more sophisticated technologies, such as multi-layered mounting, to improve the structural integrity of artworks.

Sub-Theme 3.2: Restoration Challenges

There were difficulties in the conservation attempts during the Song to Ming Dynasties. Participants talked about how difficult it is to restore artworks, particularly as they age and are exposed to environmental variables. The deterioration of objects and works of art offered specific difficulties for conservators. One significant problem was the restoration of artworks that had faded or degraded in color over time. This prompted novel ways to revive color vibrancy, sometimes involving the careful application of pigments or dyes. Participants also emphasized the significance of historical accuracy in restoration efforts, with the goal of preserving the authenticity and integrity of artworks while addressing damage and deterioration.

4.4. Theme 4: Cultural Shifts in Artifacts

Sub-Theme 4.1: Iconography and Symbolism

Archaeological artifacts give us a visible record of how cultural values and beliefs have changed over time. Participants observed that changes in iconography and symbolism were frequently seen in artifacts from the Song to Ming Dynasties, representing changes in societal consciousness. Artifacts from the Song Dynasty, for example, frequently included classic Confucian and Daoist emblems.

However, as the Ming Dynasty ushered in a new sociopolitical age, existing symbols were reinterpreted and new ones emerged. Symbols linked with the newly founded Ming regime coexisted with Confucian and Daoist symbolism. These symbols were frequently used to express signals of loyalty, stability, and legitimacy to the ruling dynasty. Iconography and symbolism in objects changed with time, mirroring the shifting cultural environment where social ideals and allegiances were concerned. These changes were expressed through artifacts, which later generations might use to understand the cultural dynamics of the time.

Sub-Theme 4.2: Technological and Stylistic Innovations

Participants underlined that archaeological findings from the transition between these dynasties typically demonstrated technological improvements and stylistic developments. Artifacts often displayed technological and stylistic innovations that matched societal advancements. In the field of ceramics, for example, the shift to the Ming Dynasty represented a considerable advancement in porcelain manufacture. The era was symbolized by high-fired porcelain, which was famed for its translucency and durability. The employment of innovative glazing processes and decorative motifs signalled a break from previous styles, reflecting advances in ceramic technology and creative taste. Furthermore, Ming Dynasty artifacts showed improvements in calligraphy and painting methods. The use of new brush techniques and ink application techniques produced artworks with rich details and figurative lines. These stylistic and technological advancements were a reflection of a culture that fostered artistic exploration and development.

4.5. Theme 5: Comparative Analysis of the New World

Sub-Theme 5.1: Parallel Shifts and Unique Trajectories

Participants in the interviews made interesting analogies between possible changes in the New World during that time and

cultural shifts seen in China from the Song to the Ming dynasties. Although there were shifts in both regions, it soon became clear that these shifts had both parallel trajectories and distinct, context-specific routes. **Parallel Shifts:** Participants identified occasions where cultural developments in China and the New World appeared to coincide, particularly transitions in leadership, governance systems, and societal values. These analogies suggested that we were all experiencing societal progress at the same time. **Unique Trajectories:**

Participants, however, emphasized the distinctive cultural, historical, and geographic elements that contributed to the two regions' unique trajectories. Cultural changes in China were significantly influenced by its long history, philosophical traditions, and connections with adjacent cultures (Table 8). In contrast, indigenous cultures, colonization, and the entrance of European influences impacted the cultural dynamics of the New World.

Table 8. Themes and Sub-themes

Themes	Sub-Themes
1. Cultural Shifts and Artistic Evolution	1.1 Socio-Political Transformations 1.2 Technological Advancements
2. Artisan Management	2.1 Workshop Organization 2.2 Patronage and Markets
3. Conservation Practices	3.1 Materials and Techniques 3.2 Restoration Challenges
4. Cultural Shifts in Artifacts	4.1 Iconography and Symbolism 4.2 Technological and Stylistic Innovations
5. Comparative Analysis of the New World	5.1 Parallel Shifts and Unique Trajectories

5. DISCUSSION

The study's findings offer a diverse perspective on the cultural transformations from the Song to the Ming dynasties and their tremendous impact on the realm of Chinese art. These findings are consistent with earlier scholarly studies, providing a thorough knowledge of the historical, technological, and societal influences that affected art throughout this momentous age. The first theme, "Cultural Shifts and Artistic Evolution," emphasizes how societal changes and artistic manifestations interact dynamically. Significant socio-political changes occurred during the change from one dynasty to another. The subjects, forms, and symbols present in artworks were profoundly influenced by dynastic upheavals and changes in governing institutions. These results are consistent with earlier studies, especially that of de Jong (2013), who emphasized how sensitive Chinese art is to changes in the political environment. According to de Jong (2013), Chinese artists were skilled at modifying their creations to reflect the political philosophies and authorities of the day. Technological breakthroughs have emerged as a driving force in the evolution of art. Notably,

material and technical advances, such as the development of high-fired porcelain, transformed creative production. This supports prior study that emphasizes the impact of technological advancement in shaping Chinese art. The study emphasizes the symbiotic relationship between technology and artistic innovation, with material improvements allowing artists to experiment with new forms of expression. The second theme, "Artisan Management," explores the organizational setups, functions, and affects on craftspeople during the Song to Ming Dynasty transition. This idea is consistent with reports in the history of artisan management in the Ming Dynasty. Key characteristics of this era included workshop specialization and the prominence of master craftspeople (Luo et al., 2013). The results of the study confirm the historical veracity of these narratives and provide insight into the organizational dynamics in artisan workshops. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the impact of sponsorship and changing markets on artistic creativity. Changes in patronage patterns influenced the sorts of art created, from imperial and intellectual patronage during the Song Dynasty to broader sponsorship by affluent merchants and urban elites during the

Ming Dynasty. This is in line with previous study on Chinese art patronage, which emphasizes how commercial needs and patron preferences drive artistic output (Pollard and Liu, 2022). Thus, the data validates the view that the economics of art and patron tastes play a critical role in driving artistic creativity.

The third theme, "Conservation Practices," provides details on the procedures and strategies employed at the time to save and repair artworks. The findings of the study are consistent with earlier studies on the development of Chinese conservation practices (W. Chen *et al.*, 2018). The durability and endurance of preserved artworks have been significantly improved thanks to advancements in conservation materials, such as the use of premium paper and adhesives. This reflects the historical movement in the field of conservation toward increasingly advanced techniques and materials. Conservation issues, such as the restoration of faded hues and the preservation of historical authenticity, are reminiscent of the complexities confronting conservators today (He *et al.*, 2022). The paper stresses that these obstacles are not unique to modern conservation initiatives, but have historical roots in cultural heritage protection. The fourth theme, "Cultural Shifts in Artifacts," explores how alterations in cultural beliefs, aesthetics, and technology are reflected in archaeological data. Reinterpreted symbols and new ones appearing in artifacts are consistent with earlier studies on the symbolism of Chinese art and its relationship to cultural values (Derenne *et al.*, 2020). These symbols give us important new perspectives on the shifting cultural environment, where society's ideals and allegiances were concerned. Ceramic and painting technological and aesthetic changes mirror advances in artistic expression. This discovery is consistent with scholarly work on Chinese art history, which highlights how art frequently reflects the advancement of its time (Wen *et al.*, 2019). The study emphasizes that technological advances in materials and processes were visible not just in art production but also in the preservation and restoration of artworks. "Comparative

Analysis with the New World," the fifth theme, offers a worldwide viewpoint on cultural changes. Participants made perceptive analogies between China's cultural changes and possible changes that could occur in the New World at the same time. This strategy is consistent with comparative research that investigates local adaptations and cross-cultural interactions (Cooper, 2011). It emphasizes how crucial it is to take into account both universal human experiences and context-specific elements when comparing cultural changes between China and the New World.

6. CONCLUSION

This study delved deeply into the fields of art, artisan management, conservation techniques, and cultural dynamics in order to explore the cultural changes that occurred in China between the Song and Ming Dynasties. This research has revealed a tapestry of insights about the complicated relationship between societal changes and artistic progress throughout this transformative age through a qualitative approach that includes expert interviews and an analysis of historical and archaeological evidence.

The first theme, "Cultural Shifts and Artistic Evolution," shed light on the complex relationship between politics, society, and art. Dynastic transitions caused changes in governing systems, beliefs, and values, which were vividly expressed in artworks. This is consistent with prior research that has emphasized the responsiveness of Chinese art to the political context. Furthermore, technological improvements appeared as accelerators for creativity in art creation, correlating with previous studies that highlighted the role of technology in creating Chinese art. The second theme, "Artisan Management," provided insight into the workplace relationships in artisanal studios. According to historical records of this time period, the transition between the Song and Ming Dynasties saw a trend toward workshop specialization and the prominence of master artisans. Additionally, the impact of patronage trends and market forces on artistic production supported the idea that economics and patron tastes are crucial in determining the state of the art. The third theme, "Conservation Practices," illustrated how materials and methods for safeguarding and repairing artworks have evolved over time. The development of conservation techniques and materials followed that of art technology. The study also made clear

that the difficulties conservators confront in maintaining historical authenticity and dealing with fading hues are not new, but rather have a long history.

"Cultural Shifts in Artifacts," the fourth theme, demonstrated how archaeological evidence bears witness to changes in cultural values, beliefs, and aesthetics. The reinterpretation of symbols and the formation of new ones in artifacts mirrored shifts in the cultural landscape, a well-documented phenomenon in Chinese art history. In addition, technological and artistic advances in ceramics and paintings highlighted the dynamic interplay between art and societal progress. The fifth theme, "Comparative Analysis with the New World," promoted an international viewpoint on cultural changes. Participants compared China and the New World, highlighting both universal human experiences and regional characteristics. This method emphasized how crucial it is to acknowledge the various global cultural trends.

7. IMPLICATIONS

Our understanding of art, culture, and history in relation to China's change from the Song to the Ming Dynasties is enriched by the study's findings, which have significant implications for a variety of fields. These revelations broaden our grasp of how art closely reflects societal changes in the field of art history and give academics a more nuanced perspective on the delicate connection between cultural change and artistic development. On a broader cultural and societal level, this research emphasizes the importance of art as a cultural artifact that encapsulates the values, beliefs, and ideologies of its time. This discovery has far-reaching consequences for cultural studies, stressing how art both reflects and contributes to the dynamic cultural milieu of its period. The study's conclusions provide cultural heritage specialists and conservators with useful information on conservation procedures. Understanding earlier conservation techniques and difficulties can greatly influence current conservation techniques, ultimately assisting in the more efficient preservation of works of art and cultural heritage. Furthermore, the study's findings on artisan management emphasize the significant impact of economics and patronage on artistic creativity. This has ramifications for understanding past cultures' broader economic dynamics and their direct impact on the art environment. Scholars are encouraged to investigate comparable transitions and shifts in other regions during the same period in accordance with the theme of comparative

analysis with the New World. A more comprehensive understanding of historical eras and their significance is fostered by this comparative method, which also improves global historical studies and emphasizes the interconnection of human experiences. In terms of practical applications, educational curricula and cultural initiatives can use these findings to improve students' and the general public's comprehension of Chinese art and history. Museums and cultural organizations can incorporate these findings into their exhibitions and educational programs to provide visitors with a more enriched and contextualized experience. The relevance of multidisciplinary research is also shown by this study, which shows how cooperation between historians, archaeologists, art historians, and conservators may produce thorough insights into historical eras and cultural shifts. Other historical periods and geographical areas can benefit from using such interdisciplinary approaches. Last but not least, the study promotes the ongoing preservation of cultural assets by highlighting the necessity of conservation measures and the difficulties associated with preserving artworks. It underlines the necessity of continued efforts to save priceless artifacts and ensure their accessibility to future generations.

8. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Several intriguing routes for future research arise from this study's findings, which can expand our understanding of art, culture, and history in the context of China's transition from the Song to Ming Dynasties. To begin, academics can perform in-depth regional studies to see how different sections of China responded to cultural shifts and artistic evolution over this time period. Investigating regional differences can provide a more nuanced view of the intricacies of these transformations. Cross-cultural comparisons are another way for academics to broaden their perspectives. Comparative studies of the same time period in other regions of the world might reveal common global patterns and distinctive regional developments. This larger viewpoint can provide insightful information about the processes of cultural shifts. Longitudinal examinations of specific art forms, techniques, or materials spanning multiple dynastic transitions are another interesting path. This type of investigation can uncover patterns of continuity and change in Chinese art and handicraft. Technological advancements can potentially have a significant impact on future research. To recreate old artworks, digital

reconstructions and 3D modelling can be used, revealing insights into their original appearance and the techniques used by painters and artisans. Interdisciplinary cooperation is still crucial, too. The complex interrelationships between art, culture, and history can be fully understood through fostering ongoing collaborations between academics, conservators, archaeologists, and art historians. Another area that is open for investigation is conservation science. Innovative methods for preserving and restoring cultural heritage can be developed as a result of interdisciplinary research involving materials scientists and conservators. Initiatives for educating the public and promoting public engagement are essential for highlighting the value of art, cultural heritage, and conservation. The initiative in these endeavors can be taken by museums and educational organizations. Archaeological digs, whether in China or elsewhere, have the ability to

turn up new objects and shed light on hitherto unknown facets of cultural transitions and creative development. The creation of extensive digital archives of historical items, documents, and works of art should be pursued through increased digital archiving and documentation activities. This promotes more research and guarantees their accessible for future generations. The effects of environmental and climatic changes on the preservation of historical artworks and cultural assets can be studied in order to develop conservation techniques in changing climates. Exploring the importance of global trade routes and interactions in shaping Chinese art and culture throughout this time period provides a more comprehensive view of cultural trends. Contemporary artistic reactions to the art of the Song and Ming Dynasties can be examined to gain a better understanding of historical art's ongoing influence on present creative expressions.

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