

Gong Renteng Transformation From Sacral to Profan

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One type of gamelan art that is developing in West Java is *Gong Rénténg* which used to be often used in sacred ceremonial activities. The sacredness built into the art is inseparable from the belief system adopted by the community as its supporting community. *Gong Rénténg's* whereabouts then and now are experiencing dynamics of change which are quite important to study, especially his journey which was stopped for various reasons. Stagnant regeneration factors, changes in people's perspectives due to changes in belief systems, as well as the influx of imported arts that continue to intrude on traditional art life, are some of the main reasons this art has experienced ups and downs in its life. The research carried out has the style of cultural research involving key informants as triggers to explore the depth of the material. There are three models of cultural research as approaches taken by researchers, including; Life Story models, Grounded Theory, and Personal Narrative. While the research method used still uses qualitative research by taking locations in two different areas, namely: (1) Ciwaru Village, Cimalaka District, Sumedang Regency, and (2) Kedungsana Village, Plumbon District, Cirebon Regency. In Ciwaru village, the object of research is the art of *Gong Rénténg Pusaka Langgeng*, while in the village of Kedungsana it is the art of *Gong Rénténg Ki Muntili*. The results of the research conducted obtained the following information: (1) The *Gong Rénténg Pusaka Langgeng* art still adheres to adat in a standard way even though the next generation continues to decrease, and (2) The *Gong Rénténg Ki Muntili* art does two ways to keep it alive, namely ritual ceremonies as part of ancestral traditions are carried out as well as the process of inheritance with new interpretations.

Keyword: Gong Rénténg, Sacred and Profan.

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INTRODUCTION

Gong *Rénténg's* presence in the cultural area of West Java, spread to several areas based on Didi Wiardi's search (2005:5). There are at least eight regencies/cities that have distinctive gamelan art, most of which are *koromong* shaped instruments, including; Bandung regency (Arjasari, Banjaran), Sumedang regency, Cimahi city (Cireundeu Traditional Village), Subang regency, Indramayu regency, Cirebon regency, Kuningan regency, and Majalengka regency (Wiardi, 2017). Information on the existence of *Gong Rénténg* conveyed by Wiardi, is also in line with Yaap Kunts's writing

(1973: 25) in *Music In Java* that in West Java there is an area as the spread of gamelan-shaped art which is also called *xylophone*. Kunts mentioned *Gong Rénténg gamelan in Tanjungsari and Ciwaru (Sumedang), Lebakwangi (Bandung), Talaga (Majalengka), Ciautum (Kuningan), Tambi (Indramayu), as well as in Mayung, Suranenggala, and Tegalan (Cirebon) (Kunst, 1973).*

To complete the information on the existence of *Gong Rénténg* in West Java, below will be presented in the form of a table.

Table 1. *Gong Rénténg's Existence in West Java Used to Be*

NO.	NAME	LOCATION
1.	Goong renteng <i>Embah Bandong</i>	Lebakwangi, Arjasari Bandung
2.	Goong renteng Ciwaru	Ciuyah, Sumedang
3.	Goong renteng Babakan Ranjeng	Situraja, Sumedang
4.	Goong renteng Ngalambang Panggugah Manah	Sukamulya, Kuningan
5.	Goong renteng Talagamanggung	Talaga, Majalengka
6.	Goong renteng Cibeusi	Jalancagak, Subang
7.	Goong renteng Cireundeu	Cimahi
8.	Goong renteng Cinangnang	Tambi, Indramayu
9.	Goong renteng Ki Sayu	Cirebon
10.	Gong renteng Cigugur	Kuningan

Source: Wiardi 2005:5

The above searches are only a small part identified, while some groups that have not been identified can be seen in the table below which

happened to be taken during the *Gong Rénténg Festival in Kedungsana Village, Cirebon Regency in 2019 (Lizam Gozali, 2019).*

Table 2. *Gong Rénténg's Presence in West Java Now*

NO	GROUP NAME	LOCUS	LEADER
1.	G.R. Ki Muntili	Kab. Cirebon	Gaos Lizam G
2.	G.R Pusaka Langgeng Ciwaru	Kab. Sumedang	Abah Soma
3.	G.R. Mari Kangen	Kab. Indramayu	Ki Tarka
4.	G.R. Mbah Bandong	Kab. Bandung	Ajud Erawan, Poepoe Soeriadireja
5.	G.R. Cireundeu	Kota Cimahi	Abah Emen Sunarya
6.	G.R. Cigugur	Kab. Kuningan	H. Sahri
7.	G.R Swara Gimbang	Kab. Indramayu	Sandy Bernard
8.	G.R. Sinar Surya	California	Mama Erik North
9.	G.R. Pangkur Tamu	Cirebon	Ki Mistra
10.	G.R. Si Kangkung	Cirebon	Ki Saniri

Source: Afryanto, 2019:4

Gamelan art, which has a peculiarity because it is different in physical form from almost all gamelan that develops in the Java island region, is rather interesting if discussed in terms of its function. As noted by Spiller: While there are very old gamelan that do resemble gamelan sekaten in the Priangan, they are not the property of the palaces (that is, the Kabupaten in the Sundanese case), but rather are the valued community property of a handful of

small villages. Such ensembles are called goong renteng, among other names (Sztompa, 2004). This indicates that the dynamics of *Gong Rénténg's existence* since its birth (around the 16th century AD) existed between two functions, namely sacred ceremonies and profane entertainment. To reveal all these functions, this paper taken from the results of research conducted for 2 months (effective) seeks to describe factual

conditions that depart from information in the field. For example, in the Tambi Indramayu area, in the past, the presentation of *Gong Rénténg* marked a big celebration the day before the implementation which also served to encourage the workers at the celebration place. In addition, there are also specific songs that apply to certain events, such as; the song *Wong Miang Ngangsu* which is intended for people who are fetching water in rivers or wells, the song *Mususi Beras* which is used when mothers wash rice, or the song *Rhizome* which accompanies the big celebration and the slaughter of a buffalo (Lizam Gozali, 2019). The entertainment dimension often colors the days of *Gong Rénténg* presentation which are occasionally colored by the joy of the people who witness it. This dialectic seems to inform the public that the excitement of *Gong Rénténg*'s presentation has a predictable time.

The next development, the art with a series of gamelan arrangements (*ngarénténg*) was used as a profane means of entertainment, but the ways before playing it had to go through several series of sacred rituals. As done by the people of Kedungsana Village, Cirebon Regency, where there is a name of the *Gong Rénténg* group named *Ki Muntili* (the name of the previous group owner), every year a ritual is held to wash and clean the gamelan. The series of rituals carried out by them believe that they can *make blessings* (get blessings) from the event by means of the remaining water (flower) used to bathe *Gong Rénténg Ki Muntili* if used for bathing or washing the face, has benefits for their lives. The event began from parading almost all *waditra* (the name of musical instruments in West Java) that had been wrapped in shrouds (white), then placed in a large enough area before cleaning the 7 kinds of flower water. The person who first washes one of these *waditra* is usually a community leader (such as *Kelapa Desa*) or an elder figure who is said to be in the area. In the form of pictures can be seen the ritual in question;



Figure 1. *Waditra* wrapped in shroud (white)
(Source Gaos Lizam G, 2019)

After the wrapped gamelan is placed, then some community members provide water sprinkled with several types of flowers / flowers to start the gamelan cleansing ritual;



Figure 2. Prepared flower water
(Source: Gaos Lizam G, 2019)

If various types of flower water are available, then the gamelan bathing event is started by a community leader as shown below;



Figure 3. The head of Kedungsana Village was the first to wash the *waditra*
(Source: Gaos Lizam G, 2019)

When the entire ritual procession of *bathing Gong Rénténg Ki Muntili* is completed, then the gamelan is wrapped again by a white cloth and the people present are divided into two groups. The first group prayed together for the safety of the community, and the second group used to bathe *Gong Rénténg Ki Muntili* to be used to bathe or wash their faces with the aim of *making* the blessing. The picture is as below;



Figure 4. Activities to pray together and take a flower bath
(Source: Gaos Lizam G.)

Ancestral traditions that are still being carried out until now aim to preserve and protect from various

threats, both from within and from outside. This is a signifier, although the paradigm of society continues to develop, in other countries Gong *Rénténg* art activists are timeless by the flow of change, even in some places tend to strive to be adaptive.

As illustrated in table 2 above, that is the *Gong Rénténg* group that still exists and adapts in certain spaces. If you read information from several reliable sources, almost the average rise of each group ranges from the 60s to 70s. After previously vacuum. As stated by Abah Soma in Ciwaru, Gong Rénténg Pusaka Langgeng was active again around the 1970s, while Gong Rénténg Mbah Bandong which is now entering the eleventh generation was active again around the 60s with its collective leader ([Karimun Ahmad, 2011](#)). It is possible that other Gong Rénténg groups have experienced the same development, such as Gong Rénténg Ki Muntili which has reappeared recently driven by an energetic young generation. No exception in traditional villages such as in Ciautumn - Kuningan and Cireundeu - Cimahi, these groups are still maintained because the customary law is quite strict. Some differences in treatment between villages as owners of *Gong Rénténg*, one indication of which lies in the dynamics of the buffer community including some things related to its existence as an art that plays an important role in the life of the community. As stated by Sukrit in Widiana ([2019: 62](#)) that gamelan has different instruments, forms, functions, repertoire, and supporting artists. Each village has differences in the use of gamelan devices that at least function as *pelangkap* (givers of religious atmosphere) and sometimes become a staple element in the implementation of ceremonies ([Widiana, 2019](#)).

An interesting aspect of the emergence of *Gong Rénténg* today is the motivation carried out by the younger generation who are on average in villages (mainly because of changes in function). They have the motivation to re-exist the heritage of the ancestral tradition with a fairly challenging event, especially among the older generation who still hold rigid traditions. In order to obtain various information about the existence of *Gong Rénténg* in West Java, the group of young people led by Gaos Lizam Gozali from Kedungsana village – Cirebon regency, continued to conduct surveys to several areas. The result is that there are no other *Gong Rénténg* groups such as in Cirebon regency,

Cirebon city, Indramayu regency, Sumedang regency, Bandung regency, Kuningan regency, Sumedang regency, Subang regency, and Cimahi city that are recorded for festival purposes (seen in table 2). These data initiated the emergence of *Gong Rénténg buhun tradition art* in the format of 'crossing tradition'. Why is it called the 'tradition of intersection', considering that there are several tendencies that still position the *Gong Rénténg* into two functions, between sacred and profane. The courage of this group of young people later gave birth to the *Gong Rénténg* festival which was held with a model of community empowerment or *empowering*.

RESEARCH METHODS

Oscar Lewis (1959: 130), one of the inventors of the qualitative method of *life story*, proposed four ways that must be done in tracing life history as a qualitative research model used, namely; (1) data on the family to record its material culture, economic life, social relations, and religious relations; (2) intensive autobiographical data about his family, including family members who are closely related psychologically or in an individual atmosphere that shows the dynamics within the family; (3) selection among family members or also called family psychodynamics that will produce data on differences between individuals, and (4) comprehensive observation of typical families to obtain depth of study material. The activities of cultural actors (including art actors) are inseparable from the influence of the environment in which they are located. There are at least three factors that will affect a person in his life, namely; family, community (culture), and education ([Gomes, 2003](#)). When the process of interaction in family dynamics gets the spotlight to be examined, it is certainly closely related to the tendencies carried out by the cultural actors in question. Research with a *life story approach* is the first possibility that can be done, considering the cultural process that subsequently produces various products, inseparable from the process of interaction of cultural actors where they come into contact with the surrounding environment.

Another approach taken in this study is what was done by Strauss Corbin (1967: 21) one of the people who developed the *Grounded Theory approach*. Strauss found several characteristics of research by adhering to the principle of *grounded theory*, namely; the collection of data on the symptoms of sociocultural phenomena became

the main basis of theoretical development, meaning that the theory was based on patterns found from empirical data, not from inference or association of ideas; the construction of a theoretical framework according to inductive data analysis that is different from quantitative, meaning that the activity of comparing constantly between Emerging theories (codes and constructs) with new data, as well as theoretical preparation require four main criteria that maintain erroneous analysis of data (Staruss, 1998). The four criteria in question, including; the compatibility between theoretical and reality that occurs in accordance with the object under study; theory as a model that can approach the description of real reality, the resulting theory covers various fields with variations applied to the phenomenon of the context, and the theory found can give birth to hypothetical statements that can lead to subsequent research. The *grounded theory* approach will be the second possibility that seeks to stimulate data findings in the field that lead to achievement targets as conclusions.

Another approach, namely *Personal Narrative* which is closer to what is conveyed by someone who in a research position is used as the main source. Fisher (1989:10) explains that individual narratives are the most interesting stories in cultural analysis, especially with regard to how new conversations about representation and otherness feel (Fisher, 1989). However, the process of distortion can occur when a person is dominated by his subjectivity rather than the ultimate goal that the researcher wants to achieve. However, of course this will be interesting if the researcher himself carefully and patiently is able to direct little by little to the research goals to be achieved. This is based on the reality that the view of individuals in cultural phenomena is inseparable from the connection between individuals with one another, because in fact culture is collective and communal. Cultural values are a reflection of very collective and communal interests that depart from personal experiences. Maybe, the three research models that have been presented above are the opening when going to conduct cultural research with various variants of their fields. This research uses the sacred and profane approach of Mircea Eliade (2001:3): Something sacred always manifests itself in a reality that as a whole has a different degree from the "natural" realities (Mircea Eliade, 2002). Furthermore, Eliade noted about propan (2002: 13): For religious humans space is not

homogeneous, it experiences interruptions, changes in it there are some parts of space that are qualitatively different from others, this shows that there is a place or area that has more value in quality (sacred) that distinguishes it from other places in everyday life (profane). The intended space or area related to the existence of Goong Renteng is its activity from the beginning of its presence until now. The research frame with Skaral and Propnya Mircea Eliade was combined with the application of the three models selected in this study.

The application of the three models above is applied with different locations according to the characteristics of the research object being targeted. For example, for the approach to the Gong Rénténg Pusaka Langgeng art group, we use the life stroy *and* grounded theory models, while for the Gong Rénténg Ki Muntili group, we bring it closer to the Personal Narrative model. In the Gong Rénténg Pusaka Langgeng group, the data collection time is carried out through two phases, namely; the interview phase at the *kuncén* residence named Abah Soma, and the second phase at the location of the sacred tomb of the first owner of the art. As for the Gong Rénténg Ki Muntili group, research was carried out almost some time, especially when the group will carry out a festival entitled "Gong Rénténg Festival 2019", starting from preparation, implementation (4 days) and after the completion of the festival activities in question.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Interesting things obtained after research was carried out on the objects Gong Rénténg Pusaka Langgeng and Gong Rénténg Ki Muntili. There are proverbs saying *other grasshoppers* or *characteristics of sadésa* (Sundanese) ways show that the customs of each region can be carried out in their own relatively different ways. Maybe in Kedungsana Cirebon the way to treat Gong Rénténg gamelan as stated in the introduction, but in the Ciwaru area of Sumedang regency it is different again. Abah Soma as the *kuncèn* and heir (I don't know what generation) Gong Rénténg Ciwaru, remained loyal even though the times continued to change. After a three-period hiatus, namely in 1828 and revived in 1925, it only constantly continued to exist from the early 70s. This one buhun art, originally used as Islamic syiar, where the performance time is only 4 times a year, namely: 1 Shawwal, 10 Rayagung, 12

Maulud, and 14 Rewah, now these times are part of an inseparable ritual cycle. What is interesting and unique is the way they treat gamelan as heirlooms, which is stored on a stage where below is the sacred tomb of the first heir *Gong Rèntèng Pusaka Langgeng*. Also, when the sound medium art was to be performed, drummers, all of whom had to be of lineage, could walk without any practice. Either it goes into a transcendental situation, whether it flows because of habituation and that is the dynamics of sacredness that prevails in the Cimalaka sub-district.

When we were going to do research, Abah Soma took us to visit the sacred tomb with the intention of making a *rekés* (*request*) or request to the first generation *Gong Rénténg* owner who had died. The condition of the tomb is well preserved covered with white mosquito nets, and several *Gong Rénténg waditra* and some utensils are neatly arranged on top of the sacred tomb. If the *rekés* is approved, then the next step is to determine when the *Gong Rénténg* can be sounded as well as how the activities are structured.



Figure 5. Sacred Tomb of the Owner *Gong Rénténg Pusaka Langgeng*
(Source: Afryanto, 2019)



Figure 6. Presenting *Gong Rénténg Pusaka Langgeng*
(Source: Mujib, 2019)

The activity seen in figure 6 above is almost most of the perpetrators are relatives in one lineage (no other party should be held) and the time is carried out on 12 Maulud 2019. Such results can be held if permission is obtained during the *previous rectés*, of course, with a number of conditions that

have been determined as conditions for carrying out rituals. This may be a stipulation that playing *Gong Rénténg* gamelan is inseparable from the belief system he adheres to. As stated by Bandem (1982:2) in Surlanta (2017:8) where the existence of Balinese gamelan life cannot be separated from religion, especially Hinduism, although in its development Balinese gamelan has dominance in various types of performances that do not exist in a religious context, but it still exists today (Surlanta, 2017). Of course, it is very different from the *Gong Rénténg Ki Muntili* group in maintaining the existence of its ancestral heritage, which is trying to interpret *the pakem* through a fairly long adaptation process. One of his initiations was to hold a festival involving *the surviving Gong Rénténg* groups. There are several objectives of organizing the *Gong Rénténg Festival* initiated by a group of Karang Taruna youths from Kedungsana village – Cirebon regency, including; (1) efforts to revitalize one of West Java's traditional music that is almost extinct, (2) inherit the next generation of West Javanese traditional music, (3) introduce *Gong Rénténg* more widely which was loved by the community before other gamelan arts spread, and (4) conduct data collection for the benefit of digitizing traditional music in the framework of filling content on *data-based* Buhun songs that can still be saved. Because it is really done through the self-help of the village community, with a little help from village funds, this festival resonates abroad. This is evident from the many participants who participated, one of them was the *Gong Rénténg Sinar Pusaka* group who came from California – USA led by Erik North. The attraction invited sympathy from several *existing Gong Rénténg* groups, because the organizing committee made a headline with four sub-themes of the activity, namely; Cultural Sarasehan (*Gong Rénténg* Declaration and Discussion), Reject Bala, Ruwatan, and Alam Raya Dance. The four sub-themes that are used as a foothold, no doubt cause their own crowd. Even some *Gong Rénténg* groups that were not going to participate, because the festival was quite successful, the festival continued in two volumes. Some of the festival activities with the four sub-themes can be seen through the series of posters below;



Figure 7. *Sarasehan and Reject Bala Theme Poster*
(Source: Afryanto, 2019)



Figure 8. *Ruwatan Theme Poster and Nature Dance*
(Source: Afryanto, 2019)

In a way to convince *Gong Rénténg's* fanatical group of traditional rules, the group of young men managed to exceed expectations. Although some *Gong Rénténg* groups had to leave their habitat (because it was taboo to go outside the habitat), they worked around this by first performing rituals to ask for permission and safety. Some are in their place of origin and some are done where the festival takes place, such as the example below:



Figure 9. *Offerings for rituals at the festival site*
(Source: Afryanto, 2019)

The enthusiasm of the spectators and festival participants is inevitable, besides being rarely held in the village, the *Gong Rénténg* festival is also the first time organized by the community as its owner. The impact of these activities was finally able to also bring sponsorship from various *stakeholders* as listed in the posters above. There are several interesting things about the *Gong Rénténg Festival* in Kedungsana, in addition to the involvement of participants from California who invited the attention of the community and related agencies that deal with cultural affairs, there is also generation transfer as part of their inheritance system. Participants from California came at their own expense without sponsorship, but it was quite surprising for the cultural office who felt ahead of time because the festival that was planned to be regional in West Java became expanded internationally. Why is that, not only local participants and it turns out that there are also sympathizers from Japan, South Korea, and China, Taiwan.



Figure 10. *Gong Rénténg Sinar Pusaka group from California*
(Source: Afryanto, 2019)

In terms of generational transfer, especially the *Gong Rénténg Ki Muntili* group has initiated the birth of two different groups, namely *Ki Muntili Kids and Ki Muntili Girls*. The presence of these two groups has opened the veil of taboo that has been lingering in the art of *Gong Rénténg*. It is known that together, especially gamelan drummers among women, in traditions that once existed was forbidden or taboo. This is in line with the principle of *antagonistic duality* that is still adopted in Sundanese culture (Sumardjo, 2010). So the gamelan is a symbol of women, while the drummers must be men. But again a group of young men were brave enough to go against the provisions of tradition, and the result was indeed a fairly positive conversation among Cirebon Artists and Culturalists themselves. Perhaps, this

raises the interpretation of updates in terms of responding to the current transformation that has taken place in today's society. Society as a system has certain interconnected segments, including; economic, political, and cultural aspects that qualitatively continue to develop. While the system itself is a complex whole, it consists of various interrelationships and is separated from the surrounding environment by certain limits (Talcott Parsons, 1978:76). Cirebon and its surroundings, which are quite known for their syncretic culture, continue to wriggle in the midst of changes that give birth to new ideas in their cultural interpretation (Parsons, 1978). Of course, this is seen as a dynamic that needs to get a response that needs further research, especially in relation to intertwined norms in matters of human life.

As stated by Sztompa (2004:10) that relationships between individuals are possible will be determined by four aspects as bonds that arise in a society, namely: (1) ideas, (2) normative, (3) action, and (4) attention (Sztompa, 2004). Sztompa further explained that ideas (beliefs, stances, and understandings) are the ideal dimensions of common life in order to give birth to social consciousness in which norms (values, provisions, and ideals) exist in it as a normative dimension of common life, namely; its social institutions. While the ideal and normative dimensions influence what is traditionally known as culture which is also supported by action as a dimension of interaction in common life, it is better known as social organization. Even so, with social organization, it will gradually form networks (life opportunities, opportunities, access to resources) to get opportunities in common life (social hierarchy). Cirebon, which is more interpreted as *Caruban* (intercultural mix), allows the dynamics of people's lives to continue to develop according to the interpretation of the initiators who grow from time to time.



Figure 11. *Gong Rénténg Ki Muntili Kids and Girls*
(Source: Afryanto, 2019)

Gong Rénténg Ki Muntili Kids and Ki Muntili Girls groups as pictured above, slowly became the attention of various groups in Cirebon Residency. Some of those interested are the manager of the largest Mall in Cirebon who stages them at certain times, the Cirebon Train Station, the manager of the *Goddess of Compassion Temple*, and the City Government and Regency Government of Cirebon who often perform these two groups in certain events. Directly or indirectly, traditional art that was not glimpsed by the community in the past can now be said to be a place for entertainment in the context of tourism. The efforts made by the Karang Taruna youth group who initiated the rebirth of *Gong Rénténg art* should be appreciated, considering that there is rarely a process of awareness in that direction carried out by the current millennial generation. Not limited to the issue of generational transfer, the motivation for the emergence of the younger generation group among school students who have begun to inherit the traditions of their ancestors, is nothing else so that they avoid the bad habits of most of the younger generation in their village environment who often have mass brawls. Especially the village chief who initiated the *Gong Rénténg* group reappeared, one of which aims to establish togetherness and foster love for his homeland. This may be an important part of the framework to form characteristics for the younger generation that have begun to disappear in current conditions. It is well known that the character of adolescents is now regressing and this situation also shows that education is considered to fail to develop the character of students (Lanang Jelantik, 2017). This phenomenon that has been symptomatic, of course, there must be alternative solutions as a solution to the problem. As expected by Karmini (2020: 23) that efforts are needed to prioritize the movement of love for the motherland, namely a way of thinking, behaving, and doing that shows loyalty, care, and high respect for the language, physical, social, cultural, economic, and political environment of the nation (Karimun Ahmad, 2011). Hopefully the efforts made by the younger generation in Kedungsana village which are being discussed in this paper, can be used as one of the milestones to return the younger generation to have the character of loving their homeland again.

CONCLUSION

Two examples from several *Gong Rénténg* communities that are used as research objects,

have shown life dynamics that are interesting enough to be studied more deeply. Of course, this is also in line with the normative system that applies in every culture that supports its existence. *Gong Rénténg* has shown an important role and function in the constellation of people's lives in the areas where they used to be used. These roles and functions, in a limited environment, still persist even though they tend to be exclusive. Only in the next development, it is not inevitable that *Gong Rénténg* whatever its form and function will continue to undergo changes through a long adaptation process, of course with the hope that even if it "changes" but does not leave the traditional values contained in it as a normative reference for its buffer society. The presence of dynamism in Goong Renteng which was originally sacred to become profane is clear evidence, that gamelan art is experiencing dynamism because of the people who inherited it.

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