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Please provide a 500 words abstract outlining your thesis; you may wish to attach a table of contents or any other relevant material:

THESIS ABSTRACT

This thesis comes from a concern for the rapidly evolving state of the Taiwanese Aboriginal people's cultural identity and cultural heritage re-construction, particularly after the end of martial law in 1987. Aboriginal autonomy has increased in response to a newly awakened national identity resulting from Taiwan's cultural reforms and, as a result, Aboriginal art has evolved towards a new type of creative expression which is motivated in part by a desire to rebuild their cultural heritage.

Through observation of Taiwan's museum practices and analysis of cultural conservation policies, the thesis argues that the tangible forms of Aboriginal art, being maintained by the state, were presented in ways that primarily corresponded to the nation's nationalism discourse. Another, more effective approach to conserving Aboriginal art heritage is, in fact, through supporting the practice of contemporary Aboriginal artists. Such artistic practice represents an assertion of local values and provides Aboriginal communities with a sense of identity. After exploring the emergence of intangible cultural heritage in the international conservation context, the thesis proposes that the continuing practice of contemporary Aboriginal art in Taiwan is an important instrument for maintaining Aboriginal groups' cultural vitality.

Three groups of features are identified as keys to the understanding of contemporary Taiwanese Aboriginal art: tribal, regional and personal artistic feature. This identification was developed from a combination of research strategies, which included a reading of the literature, an assessment of publication and reports, and analysis of information about current practice derived from interviews with artists, museum curators and scholars in the field. Current Aboriginal art practice in the tourism context and the response in terms of Taiwan's national cultural policy were further analysed. As a means to explore how Aboriginal art practice might be better supported, the thesis considers what Taiwan can learn from the experience in Australia of promoting its Aboriginal art. This international comparative analysis is focused on three aspects: artistic creativity that is persistently presented in artworks, sound protection measures for Aboriginal intellectual property issues and Aboriginal involvement in community based developments.

This study concludes that the Aboriginal identity in Taiwan's political climate is shifting as the minority moves towards achieving a better social relationship based on equality with the dominant Han Chinese population. Art can serve as a vehicle for the better understanding between ethnic groups. The study offers new insights for the conservation of Aboriginal art heritage: in today's context, although cultural diversity is celebrated however the safeguarding of Aboriginal local traditions and intangible cultural heritage can only be possible if local values and practices are encouraged and accommodated in strategic operational planning and management.

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