

WHAT SHAPE IS YOUR ELEPHANT?
The Art Heritage of Souvenir Elephants from the ASEAN Region: Part 1
Cambodia

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DL Hume - Draft

ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to survey the symbolic form given to souvenir elephant figurines across the ASEAN region and, in so doing, to trace the historic and cultural influences on the design of souvenir figurines that come to represent a touristic engagement with elephants. This first paper of two makes a case study of Cambodia. A second case study examines Thailand as a comparable subject.

The aims will be achieved by examining the form and configuration of souvenir elephant figurines produced, ostensibly, for the tourist market, in the South East Asian quarter of the ASEAN region. I will first apply an art historical approach to the analysis before subjecting selected artifacts, from museum collections and tourist outlets, to an analytical theory of souvenir language, in order to detect the cultural and historical location, or dislocation, of various formal elements that contribute to the design of elephant souvenirs and their effective representation of the tourist experience through their visual language.

It will be shown, from this survey, that the answer to the question, contained in the title, is more complex than first appears and that some anatomical features are favoured more than others, in terms of souvenir function.

KEYWORDS: *Elephants, Souvenirs, Material Culture, Sculpture, ASEAN, Museum Studies, Tourism*

INTRODUCTION

The question posed in the title of this paper arose at broad based tourism conference in the ASEAN region in 2013 and was uttered in response to a paper presented on the complex nature of souvenirs in general. The query was couched in terms of “surely an elephant souvenir from India is the same shape as one from Thailand.” The answer to the question is, of course, elephant shape. Yet when souvenir elephants are the subject at hand the answer is, as I will demonstrate, somewhat more complex and dependent on where the souvenir is from, what it represents and most surprisingly what anatomical features are selected to represent an elephant and by extension the society that produced it.

The elephant as a national and regional motif, is popular across Southeast Asia and most of ASEAN. Businesses and, in particular, tourism enterprises across the region utilise the iconic beast as an attraction, promotional motif, or as part of a branding strategy. This is a result of long engagement with the animal, through which its presence has become woven into the social and cultural heritage of the people, that today sees its presence and unique form established, to varying degrees, as a popular tourist attraction that, in turn, has generated a vast range of souvenir products.

Inevitably issues of authenticity arise in any discussion about souvenirs. It is not, however, the purpose of this paper to argue for authenticity in souvenir production, based on the cultural traditions and anthropological notions of authenticity discussed by Reisinger and Steiner, C. J (2006). Instead, I recognise the dynamic, evolving nature of all societies, what has been termed “emergent authenticity” (Cohen 1988), as a result of various stimuli, such as trade and tourism, and take an art historical approach that seeks to detect changes and development in the art form, as a result of tourism. That is how, as artifacts of cultural tourism, these souvenirs may be understood as representing “‘heritage tourism (related to artifacts of the past) and ‘arts tourism’ (related to contemporary cultural production).” (Richards, G. 1999), or in terms of Hall-Lew

and Lew's (2014) recent, language based study, how we might understand their visual language as a “tourism heritage resource.”

Elephants do not, of course, regularly roam the streets of major Asian cities, or any other urban metropolis, any more than, equally unique, kangaroos bask on the steps of the Sydney Opera House, or bound across the harbour bridge. Most visitors to either continent are likely to take specially arranged trips to locales where the wildlife has been, somewhat, domesticated for touristic viewing, or have at least, become used to the attentions of tourists.

Like elephants, kangaroos are a unique species, with limited variation, and range from the massive reds of central Australia, to small brown-gray rock wallabies. Their representation in souvenir shops is mostly uniform, of the soft toy or keyring type, or emblazoned on timber, ceramic and plastic souvenirs, size and colour being the only real points of differentiation. Elephants, likewise, come in two basic types, the massive African and the smaller, more subdued, Indian or Asian. Just as the kangaroo has come to represent Australia (Franklin, 2010, see also Leite & Graburn 2012), the elephant has become an essential symbol in the identity formation of different but related people and cultures across Southeast Asia.

Elephants, also, tend to appear as two character types, within most Southeast Asian cultures in which they are endemic, either as beast of burden, or as characters woven into the myths of particular primitive belief systems. Pinsri (2010: p 160) notes that the elephant's reputed strength, patience and intelligence, together with its engagement in labour, transportation and warfare have seen its status elevated to that of the higher realm of animals, including as a symbol of royalty and interwoven into Hindu and Buddhist mythology. One might say, they are manifested as both sacred and profane beings. The tourist perspective, particularly that of the Western tourist, adds further dimensions to the image of the world's largest land mammal, that of ultimate exotic creature, fun fair ride and circus performer, animated landscape feature and, given most filmic representations, cute creature of dim wits. In most instances, the Asian elephant is conceptualised as domesticated, in contrast to the wild noble beasts of Africa, viewed from afar by safari tourist.

The departure point for this paper is the belief that the variation and abstraction of each elephant figurine, is, in part, influenced by the myths and stories that exist about the animal within each different culture. That such representations are informed by the technical, social and economic development and the availability and selection of media. Artistic, or formal, elements that vary as a result are: architectural configuration, or sculptural form; perspective; surface treatment; balance; media; utility and of course souvenir function, both symbolic and utilitarian. In the area of souvenir function, the consumer also exerts an influence on the resultant form, scale, media and configuration. This is most visible in regions with a developing tourism industry (Richards, 2014; Hume, 2013; Littlefield Kasfir, 1999; Steiner, C.B, 1999).

In order to track the changes and convergences in the development of elephant souvenirs, this paper begins with a survey of ceramic figures, discovered in various museum catalogs and related texts, following which I trace the stylistic and cultural threads between surveyed museum artifacts and souvenir elephants, or in some cases identify points at which such historical threads ceased to exist and new ones have been introduced.

METHODOLOGY

Souvenirs, especially cultural souvenirs, are dubious objects, in that they exist outside of the museogallery system and require the consumer to engage with a different set of value judgements. As, conceptual artist Anish Kapoor stated when questioned about the touristic aspect of his massive public artworks, “Traditionally, we are very suspicious of anything popular or attractive in serious culture...” (Kapoor in Wroe, 2014). That suspicion extends to souvenirs, mostly with regard to the veracity of their representation of the culture of production, or the authenticity of the work as art. This author has long taken the view that tourist art and souvenirs amount to an imaginative representation of people and place, for the consumption of visitors from another culture (See Graburn 1976, Hume 2013) and furthermore, that the relationship between serious culture and souvenirs is complex and indelible.

Just as fine art needs to draw upon the viewers emotions to resonate with a world view, challenging or reinforcing the audience outlook, as it reconfigures history and cultures to succeed, so too souvenirs succeed through a similar affectivity. History and culture remain as crucial reference points in the inspiration of both contemporary art and souvenirs, the key difference rests in the process of consumption.

Stripped of the authority of the gallery system, in which the viewer is led to believe that the work contained within the white cube environment is, well, fine art and representative of contemporary culture, offering a reflection of the society from which it was generated, the artistic value of souvenirs is more difficult to define and judgements of taste among tourists are differently configured (Steiner C.B, 1999). The expression, or language, of souvenirs, exists within the objects formal qualities and is based upon a number of key elements, that according to Hume (2013) are: *Media*, understood as the raw material from which the artifact is produced and its status within the visited culture; the *Maker's Mark*, evidencing of producer's knowledge and understanding of the visited culture and artistic skills; the *Relational* that considers how the artifact reflect the people and or place visited; its *Invitational* nature, examining how in speaking of the culture and place of production it also leaves space for the layering of tourist tales through reflection or use, and last, but not least, its *Iconofetish* feature, a complex and often wavering perception that Hume explains as the attribute that “gauges the degree of... ‘largesse’ to be found in the souvenir; that is the iconographic reception of the artifact...the complex content of the narrative, while the *Relational* axis is concerned with the narrative in its simple reference to place, people and place, and people and/or place.”

As we progress, I will tease out the expressive features of souvenir elephant figurines from Cambodia, by examining the provenance of the artistic elements, that have come to contribute to their various forms. I will make reference to ancient sculptural artifacts discovered in respected museums, examining the artistic composition, selected media, balance, surface treatment, symbolism and utility of each figurine, before assessing the five key elements of the surveyed objects souvenir language, to discover and assess the effectiveness of their expression as souvenirs. That is what and how do such artifacts transmit an experience with a different culture. I will examine what characteristics of the visited site are invested into exemplified souvenirs, trace the convergence of some features and explain how the souvenirs report those features and characteristics to the collector.

MUSEUM ARTIFACTS OR PROTO SOUVENIRS OF CAMBODIA

The majority of artifacts surveyed here are ceramic and in that medium exists a wonderful irony in that, due to their fragility, ceramic wares are highly marginal as souvenirs. However, ceramic elephant figurines were among the many items souvenired, or perhaps plundered, by those involved in the colonial project and some may be found in the catalogues of notable museums. Clay is the most easily manipulated three dimensional medium and ceramic artifacts provide an excellent window into the past, enabling us to gain an understanding of historic sculptural form. In that respect it is fortunate that the colonial period, saw the collection of a vast array of exotic goods from places remote from Europe and that it subsequently led to the formation of national and other respected museums (Hume, 2013; Pearce, 1995; Torgovnick, 1990; Impey, 1977).

To understand the symbolic meaning of elephants across the ASEAN region it is necessary to gather an insight into the pre-colonial history of Southeast Asia, the spread of religion, with its attendant myths, together with the craft traditions and technical development of specific regions. The Angkor period, around the 11th to 13th century, is increasingly recognised as central to the artistic and ceramic development in the region, as well as an important civilisation in the spread of Buddhist and Hindu beliefs and myths. The surviving ceramic wares of the Angkor period are, according to Rooney (2010), seen as unique in artistic style, separate from that of neighbouring civilisations, yet related, in technological processes, to artifacts of the same period from China, Thailand and Vietnam. One such example is the independent development of certain glaze techniques more often assigned to Song dynasty Chinese ceramics, yet evident in some Khmer artifacts and the subsequent 13th to 15th century Sukhothai period of ancient Siam (Shaw 2012)

Buddhism, together with the Hindu religion are both littered with religious spirits given anamorphic form. Gnesha, the elephant headed god is probably the first to come to mind, while Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of spiritual and material wealth, is commonly crafted with the attention of two elephants. Both Buddhist and Hindu representations may be evidenced at the world heritage listed ancient Khmer capital of Angkor.

The Khmer kingdom stretched beyond the borders of present day Cambodia, notably into present day Thailand and was a major influence on the technical development of the Sukhothai style of Thai art and craft. As will be shown in a subsequent section of this research, Thai and Khmer elephant figurines seem to be largely unrelated in their form and purpose.

KHMER ELEPHANT FIGURINES

The dominant pose given to Khmer elephant figurines is passive, sedentary and wildly abstracted. Reaching back to the 11th -13th century; the Angkor period, and shortly after, a range of souvenired artifacts, preserved in museums, show portly to obese elephant figures modeled around vessels.

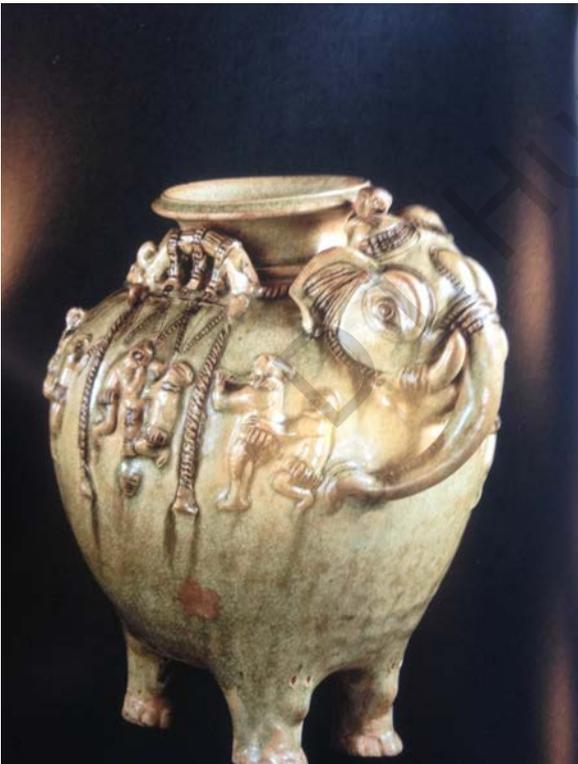
In the first example (Plate. 1.1) one can see a rotund beast, trunk swept to the left, grounded by its girth and stumpy, foreshortened legs, while, the tusks, proud of the inflated torso, are muted. It is clear that in this example the animal's form has been abstracted for utilitarian purpose, as a vessel, almost obscuring its unique anatomical form. A textured howdah provides the most culturally specific detail in this example, while the glaze tends to a light brownish hue.



INSERT- Plate 1.1 Jar in the form of a caparisoned elephant with howdah.

[Source: Brown, R.M. (2009) South East Asian Ceramics Museum.]

In the subsequent figurine, of the same origin and period, (Plate. 1.2) the howdah is replaced with a gang of workers clinging to the plentiful torso, in the process of fixing the livery. The trunk is swept to the right and the opening at the top is made more prominent. The same stumpy legs are retained, as is the bloated torso. The head, unlike Plate 1, in which it is formed as part of the body of the vessel, appears to have been attached after the architectural construction, but shows a similar level of tusk detail. The most interesting feature of this model is the greenish white glaze finish, suggestive of celadon development.



INSERT- Plate 1.2 Greenish white-glazed jar in the form of an elephant. Width 13 cm Height 38 cm

[Source: Brown, R.M. (2009) South East Asian Ceramics Museum.]

Further examples demonstrate this penchant for rotund elephants as vessels among the Khmer civilisation of Angkor (Plates 3 - 5), most fashioned as containers for lime, to aid the chewing of betel nut (Rooney, 2010 p.

79). Many of these figurines have been so inflated to the degree where their role as vessels has almost obscured their modeling upon an elephant, particularly plate 5, leaving any signs of such as a small addendum of detail in the form of a shrunken head, almost undifferentiated from the body, resulting in a rather piggish appearance. Any attempt to provide some form of realism, in the supporting feet, evident in plates 1 and 2, has also been abandoned in favour of simple cylindrical stumps.

The final offering in this section is dated from the post Angkor period, but still during the 13th century. This model retains the inflated torso and stumpy legs and while the trunk is again swept back to the left it is raised more from the body. Incised detail is reduced, tusks are absent and the rider, or mahout, is more prominent. Another key change here is in the slight extension of the forelegs that results in a shallow diagonal angle from head to hindquarters. This diagonal is also suggested in plate 1, but close inspection will show that it is the angle of the howdah that offers this illusion.



INSERT- Plate 1.3 Jar with elephant head and lid, brown glaze. Cambodia, 11th - 13th C, H: 10 cm, L 31.2 cm, W 30.6 cm. NUS Museum S2003-0001-033-0. [Source: Miksic, J.N. (ed.) Southeast Asian Ceramics - New Light on Old Pottery]



INSERT- Plate 1.4 Lime pot, earthenware in the form of an elephant. Thin brown glaze. Height 13 cm. [Source: South-East Asian Ceramics: Thai, Vietnamese, and Khmer - From the Collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia]



INSERT- Plate 1.5 Lime pot with globular body set on short unglazed feet, in the form of an elephant. Brown glaze Height 10.5 cm. [Source: South-East Asian Ceramics: Thai, Vietnamese, and Khmer - From the Collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia]



INSERT Plate 1.6 Elephant, Stoneware, glazed, Cambodia. Post-Angkor period (13th century) L: 28 cm; H: 26.5 cm; D: 20 cm. [Source: Rooney, D. Khmer Ceramics: Beauty and Meaning.]

In summary, Khmer elephant figurines, of the Angkorian period, show inflated torsos, foreshortened legs, and swept back trunks. The media is either earthenware or stoneware and glaze finishes are mostly brown to tan, with one anomalous example finished in pale green. All examples cited are vessels, while inscribed detail is reduced after the decline of the Khmer civilisation.

SOUVENIR EXPRESSION: KHMER ELEPHANT FIGURINES

The rotund Khmer elephant vessels, cited above (Plates 1 - 6), share a common style for the most part, permitting the assessment of them as proto souvenirs as follows.

Media: 2

The artifacts are made of clay and finished with a glaze particular to the Khmer region and period. However, this is only likely to be known from specialist knowledge of the history of ceramics or Khmer heritage and therefore should register a rating of 2 in that while the ceramic media formed

into any object tends, today to conjure notions of history, it is not of overriding importance in its function as a souvenir.

Maker's Mark: 8

Due to the particularities of the style, such as the obese form, they function well as souvenirs of Khmer heritage and therefore should register a rating of 8. This style of elephant figurine is unknown beyond the bounds of the old Khmer empire, and as souvenirs they offer a recognisably specific style that amounts to a strong collective signature or Maker's Mark.

Relational: 8

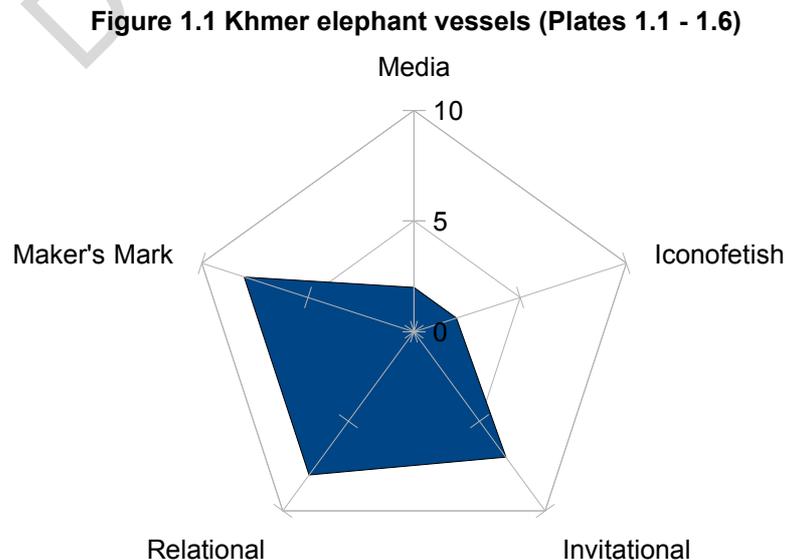
These artifacts clearly relate to people through their decoration and function, which is indelibly tied to place. The rating along this scale is therefore high at 8. A maximum rating here would only be achieved if the artifact actually stated clearly that it was of Khmer origin, which would then reduce the aesthetic and Invitational value.

Invitational: 7

Any artifacts that invite engagement beyond the decorative record a high rating along this axis point. As vessels these proto souvenirs may be utilised in such a way, if not for their original use. However, their use, like that of an ornate vase, is likely to be moreover ornamental, rather than in everyday use and therefore record a moderately high score.

Iconofetish: 2

The elephant is an icon of many nations of the ASEAN region but not Cambodia. While in this form they make some reference to the sculptures and friezes of Angkor heritage they do not mirror the elephant form represented at the world heritage site, itself an undoubted icon, so should be accorded a rating along this scale of (2) reflecting their fetishistic appeal.



INSERT: Figure 1. 1 Graph showing souvenir expression of Khmer elephant vessels (Plates 1.1–1.6)

From the above graphic summary it can be seen that the volume of souvenir expression in these proto souvenirs, rest with their ability to absorb the collector's tourist tales (*Invitational*), the distinct artistic style (*Maker's Mark*) and their representation of people and place, assessed along the *Relational* axis. The importance of the raw material, is likely to be negligible to the collector, while they tend to appeal more as an exotic fetish, eclipsed by the iconic nature of the site's architecture.

CONTEMPORARY ELEPHANT SOUVENIRS: CAMBODIA

Having established the traditional modeling styles of Khmer culture, through the above survey, I will now examine elephant souvenirs available in contemporary Cambodia, with reference to their cultural provenance and souvenir expression.

The Khmer tradition of modeling obese elephants, to maximise their capacity as vessels, has, with some variation, been maintained in souvenir form. In terms of sustained engagement, such artifacts, with their key utilitarian feature, lend themselves more so to souveniring than items that are purely ornamental (Hume 2013). The continuation of this style of vessel with elephant form can be discovered in the souvenir trade around the northern Cambodian city of Siem Reap, the departure point for visits to Angkor.

Located on Temple Road the Khmer Ceramics Fine Arts Centre (KCFA), formerly the National Centre for Khmer Ceramic Revival (NCKCR), was established as a non profit organisation, to address the parlous state of the Khmer ceramic tradition in the north of the country. At the time of my research it employed over 27 young artisans, with the director, Serge Rega, insisting that even sales staff should be experienced in the production process. The centre professes a desire to maintain a balance between commercial viability, tradition and artistic development, by highlighting Khmer ceramic traditions, encouraging contemporary design, based on traditional motifs, and producing pottery that appeals to tourists. In this we can detect a key activity of the souvenir, in sustaining traditional crafts and the informal education of the tourist as consumer.

The design work is initiated by the director, who welcomes input from the artisans, thereby providing an avenue for the contemporary and localised interpretation of his designs, based on the traditional motifs, found in the temple sculptures and wall friezes of nearby Angkor, or developed from images and schematics found in Vitharins' lexicon of Khmer ornamentation, *Kbach* (2005).



INSERT- Plate 1.7 National Centre for Khmer Ceramic Revival (NCKCR). Scented oil burner in the shape of an elephant. Slip cast ceramic with glaze. Specific dimensions unknown.

Of the broad range of tableware and ornaments on offer the scented oil burner, in the shape of an elephant (Plate. 1.7) is the most popular, among visitors and tourists. Technical advances, such as slip casting, have permitted some variation on earlier production methods, together with variation on the architectural design, driven by an introduced utilitarian feature. The trunk is more distinct, yet still swept back to one side, in a similar swishing loop to that found in plate 1.2. The head and particularly the ears are more detailed and differentiated from the body, while the tusks remain muted. It is in hollowing the torso and setting the oil bowl on the animals back that the most significant alterations are to be found, to cater for the burning of scented oils. Here the function of containment has been shifted and replaced with a hearth like space with cut away decoration in place of the howdah embellishment.

In its pose this souvenir does not seem to be based on elephant images found in the central Bayon Wat of the Angkor site, that tend to be depicted as engaged in the activities of war. Instead this souvenir tends toward the rotund form in style, representative of Khmer ceramics between the 11th-13th centuries. However, incorporating the vessel on the back of the elephant does seem to mimic the elephant depictions of the Bayon Wat stone frieze, as does grey finish. This souvenir clearly demonstrates a faithfulness to the traditional rendering of Khmer elephant figurines, in scale, form, pose, decorative placement and utility, while also incorporating the colour and fittings of the elephant depiction in the Bayon stone frieze.

The revival, or continuation, of traditional Khmer pottery is also found among the range of products available at the Angkor Pottery Centre. Labelled as a *Large Elephant Vase*, (Plate. 1.8) this pot demonstrates all the design features of the earlier Khmer elephant shape vessels. It is grounded on stumpy legs, in this instance with some semblance of anatomic detail, which support a bulbous body. There is the suggestion of a formal howdah and a minute mahout rides an enormous head. The trunk, small in scale to the head, is again swept back in a lazy loop to one side and the tusks are once more muted. The torso of the model shows combative figures that, while engaged in a different activity demonstrate a knowledge of, and reference to the style seen in plate 1.2, but more clearly reference the style of figures depicted in the Bayon stone frieze, an addition that demonstrates utility of the body of the animal as a canvas for the depiction of a related cultural motif. An extended aperture completes the vessel form of this model, which is cast from grey clay and finished with a clear glaze, that like the preceding souvenir (Plate 1.7) mimics the palette of Angkor Wat.



INSERT- Plate 1.8 Khmer Pottery Centre, *Large Elephant Vase*. Glazed ceramic, H. 31cm x W. 28 cm.
[Source: www.angkorpotterycenter.com]

SOUVENIR EXPRESSION: *CERAMIC ELEPHANT SOUVENIRS: CAMBODIA*

Media: 3

In assessing the souvenir language of these souvenirs, we begin with the media that is a somewhat generic clay, as is the applied surface finish. The colour and glaze finish, however, are not in keeping with the brown tones evident in the traditional style of ceramic works from the Angkor period, but as noted, instead correlate with the palette of the Bayon stone carving. In this respect the palette is of the represented period, but does not reflect the colour tones of the media of that period. Both works should therefore achieve a low to moderate rating along the Media axis of around 3, as their expression here tends toward a representative souvenir, rather than acting as a sample of the visited site.

Maker's Mark: 7

It is along the second axis point: Maker's Mark, that these works speak loudest and this is achieved through their verifiable style that is honest to their cultural provenance. Both models are clearly based on the traditional Khmer vessel form and as such clearly express the collective style of the culture of production and should therefore receive a reasonably high rating of around 7. An overt stamp on the reverse would see this increase.

Relational: 6, 8

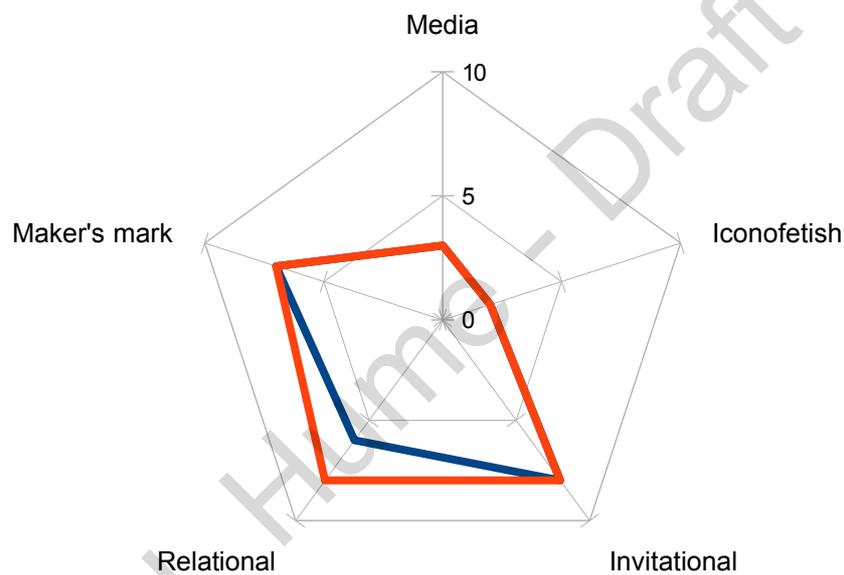
The Relational axis point is similarly strong in that both artifacts relate to people and place, particularly the latter, (Plate. 8), through its detail of combat activity that may be read as extracted from the Bayon stone frieze. As a depiction of primitive combat this imaginative addition, while not contained on the traditional ceramic vessels, functions well as an historical reference point to Khmer activities illustrated at the world heritage site. The rating here should therefore be reasonably strong around the 6 and 8 mark respectfully.

Invitational: 8

As functional vessels the invitational expression of these works is loud. By engaging with the object through its functionality the experience of the visited site is likely to be sustained for longer, as too is the tourist narrative of the visit, as there also exists increased opportunity for others to engage with the souvenirs and generate the retelling of the experience. A rating as high as 8 would be suitable along the Invitational axis.

Iconofetish: 2

The final axis point assesses the objects standing as a fetish or icon. It is more than reasonable to argue that architecture is the iconic attraction of the Angkor site and that the elephant exists as a wildlife motif, fun fair ride, much further down the scale of attractions for tourists to modern day Cambodia. The elephant must therefore be recognised as an exotic fetish in terms of Cambodian tourism and receive a rating to reflect that of 2.



— Plate 7 NCKCR Scented oil burner in the shape of an elephant — Plate 8 Khmer Pottery Centre, Large Elephant Vase

INSERT- Figure 2.2 Graph showing comparative souvenir expression of ceramic Cambodian elephant souvenirs (Plates 1.7 & 1.8)

It can be seen the above graph (Fig. 2.2) that as result of the artisans faithfulness to the Khmer style of obese elephant vessels, that a similar pattern to that expressed by the museum artifacts, is delineated here.

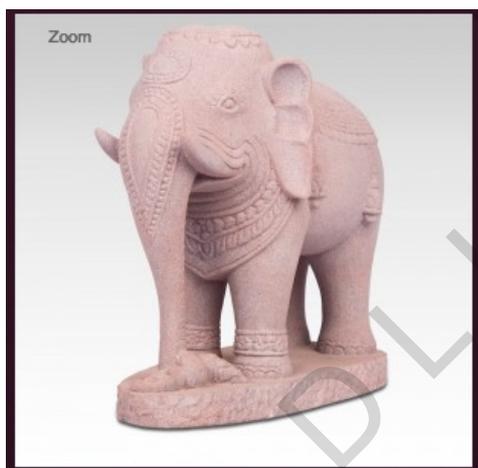
SANDSTONE ELEPHANT SOUVENIRS

A much more expansive range of souvenirs are to be found at Artisans d'Angkor, Chantiers Ecoles. An NGO supported crafts enterprise, set up to provide craft skills to orphans from the region, this enterprise produces quality wares of silk, stone and wood, and other durable media. They originally included ceramics in their range of souvenirs and designer wares, but the production of fine ceramics has been discontinued due to a market that was not supporting its product.

Elephants, though, feature prominently within a broad range of crafted goods and the form given to these figures offers a valuable insight into the convergence of South East Asian styles of elephant representation.

Within the range of carved sandstone statues, are three different elephant models. Beginning with the largest, *Elephant of Mebon* (Plate 9), is a reasonably faithful miniature representation of the life size free standing sculpture at the temple from which it draws its name.

Carved from pink sandstone, it is of realistic proportions, embellished with a majestic howdah, evident on the original statue. In keeping, also, with the original, the trunk is thick, long and drooping passively without curve, tusks are proud but not over large, although exaggerated slightly from the original. The head has been stylised a little, with the two distinctive bumps on the forehead of actual elephants having been smoothed away, leaving the top of the head rendered flat. The most curiously stylised feature, however is the ears, modeled, it would appear, on that of the human, partitioned into three separate parts, curved by cartilage to a concaved shell at the top, with a loose flapping lobe at the bottom, rather than the natural leaf like form. Standing 18 centimetres tall it is not beyond a reasonable size for a souvenir, but is perhaps a little on the heavy side for the average suitcase or backpack. However, Artisans d' Angkor is more than a simple souvenir shop and much of its range caters to discerning, well heeled, tourists that seek domestic designer wares, or quality souvenirs, to decorate their personal spaces, as well as record the experience of Angkor. There is perhaps the air of a Grand Tourist one stop shop in the boutique like decor of the enterprise and this particular product would fit snugly into that market.



INSERT- Plate 1.9 Les Artisans d' Angkor. *The Elephant of Mebon*, Sandstone, W. 8cm x H. 19cm x L. 18cm.
[Source: <http://www.artisansdangkor.com/shop/en/stone-animals/>]

The second offering in the sandstone range is *Elephant Crouching* (Plate 1.10). Smaller in size than the previous statue, this model is more playful in its pose and appears to be based upon a young elephant. Its trunk is fully raised back over its round forehead, which, together with the absence of tusks, enhances the playful nature of this small statue. There is some decorative detail in the form of a ceremonial type howdah but it is far from the grandeur of *Elephant of Mebon*. There is little evidence to suggest this model is derived from a local style, or reflective of stone temple decoration. However, it is a much more suitable souvenir in size.



INSERT- Plate 1.10 Les Artisans d' Angkor. *Crouching Elephant*, Sandstone, W. 5cm x H. 10cm x L 11 cm.
[Source: <http://www.artisansdangkor.com/shop/en/stone-animals/>]



INSERT- Plate 1.11 Les Artisans d' Angkor. *Elephant and Baby*. Sandstone, H. 10cm x L. 11cm x W. 7cm.
[Source: <http://www.artisansdangkor.com/shop/en/stone-animals/>]

The final model from this suite of sandstone figurines also falls within the more conventional souvenir scale. *Elephant and Baby* (Plate 1.11), is also carved from a single block of sandstone, is roughly the same size as the *Crouching Elephant* and is decorated to a similar level of detail. There is, in part, due to the compact nature of the model, less anatomical detail, the head barely differentiated from the body, and in this it bears a closer resemblance to the elephant heads found in the Khmer ceramic tradition than the others from this suite.

SOUVENIR EXPRESSION: SANDSTONE ELEPHANT SOUVENIRS: CAMBODIA

Media: 9

The strength of these sandstone models rests in the selected media. In choosing the pink sandstone the models reflect the stone used in the construction of the much visited Bateay Srei Temple within the Angkor complex. Popularly known as the Women's Temple, or Citadel of Women, it is the only pink temple within the world heritage site. If not carved from the exact same material, this suite of souvenirs at least makes a

solid reference to that specific temple and so therefore should record a strong rating along the Media axis, somewhere in the range of 8–9. as they function well as a sample of the visited site.

Maker's Mark: 8, 5

The Maker's Mark is divergent in this range of souvenirs. The *Elephant of Mebon* shows the clearest reflection of traditional style, based on the original and should, as result, gain a rating in the range or 7 – 8. The smaller pieces are more contemporary, or introduced in style, reflecting filmic images of elephants and therefore are less reflective of traditional modeling style, so should receive a reduced rating in the range or 4 – 5

Relational: 9, 5

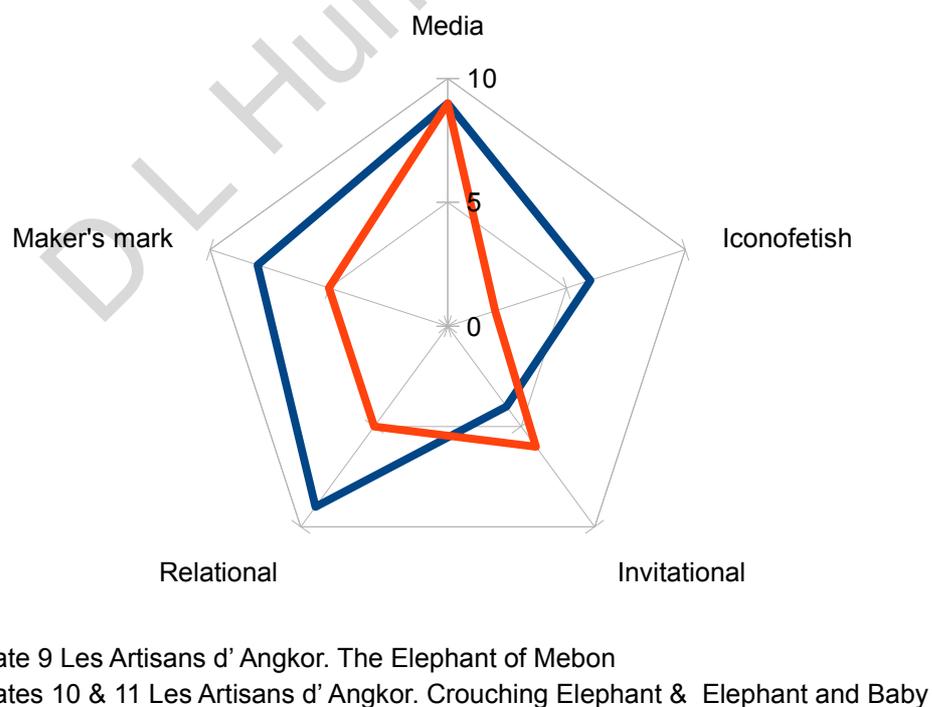
The Relational axis rating is similarly divergent for these three models, in that *Elephant of Mebon* relates to people and place and is accorded a rating of 9, while the later two illustrate a connection to place only and receive a reduced rating of 5.

Invitational: 4, 6

The invitational qualities of these models follows a similar pattern. They are all ornamental and as such do not invite engagement beyond that appreciation. That the larger model is titled provides a starting point for the expansion of the tourist narrative, but may also confine it, so attracts a rating 4. The smaller models are more open to the tourist narrative and therefore acquire a higher rating of 6.

Iconofetish: 6, 2

In keeping with the analysis of the museum artifacts, all elephant souvenirs from Cambodia, tend to toward the fetishistic appeal of the exotic. However, an argument may be mounted that the larger model contains an iconographic element as a result of its specific title, so a rating of 6 and 2 should be accorded respectfully.



INSERT- Figure 1.3. Graph showing comparative souvenir expression of sandstone elephant souvenirs (Plates 1.9-1.11)

Once again, it can be seen from the above graph that the Relational and Maker's Mark axis dominate the souvenir expression of the *Elephant of Mebon* model, as has been seen with the museum artifacts and ceramic souvenirs (Figs. 1.1 & 1.2). The expression of this particular souvenir is further enhanced through its iconic status, as a reasonable miniature copy of the statue in situ at the Angkor site, and maximised by the selection media that references the pink temple. Both these latter axes also register strongly on the smaller models, while their reference to people and/or place and traditional artistic style is reduced.

OTHER CAMBODIAN ELEPHANT SOUVENIRS

Much more in keeping with souvenir dimensions is a second suite of elephant figurines from this enterprise. Carved from softer soapstone (See Graburn 1976 for an account of similar use among the Inuit), these models: Lucky, Prosperity and Respect, come in three different poses, each one, dubiously claiming, "According to Asian beliefs," (Artisans d' Angkor) to represent a different attitude depending on the position of the trunk. While the sweeping Asian reference suggests a lack of specificity to the visited site, there also appears to be no consensus to support this marketing claim. Further distancing the specificity to the Angkor site is Artisan's own note that the medium is sourced from a western province and that its historical use is dated as after the Angkor period. However, what is commendable about these models is the realism with which they have been carved: including the forehead bumps.



INSERT- Plate 1.12 Les Artisans d' Angkor. *Elephant Lucky; Elephant Prosperity; and Elephant Respect*. Soapstone, W. 14cm x H. 10cm x L. 6cm. Or: W9.5cm x H. 6.5cm x L. 4cm.

[Source: <http://www.artisansdangkor.com/shop/en/stone-animals/>]

A similar design approach is also applied to wooden elephant figures produced by Artisans d' Angkor. Two of the three figures on offer mimic *Elephant of Mebon* and *Crouching Elephant*, while the third, *Royal Elephant*, follows the *Elephant and Baby* motif, this time carved as two separate animals, each enhanced with silver plated copper leaf, howdah and skull cap. What is slightly disconcerting about the *Elephant and Baby* set are the tusks attached, in that they appear to be the same size on both models, leaving the smaller to look like a rather well developed baby.

One last elephant figure, contained in the collection of Artisans d' Angkor, makes use of the contemporary media of polychrome as a finish over a wood base, which is then completed with the addition of white gold leaf gilded tusks. The polychrome provides a smooth, glaze like finish that is maintained throughout. The

absence of skin folds and other characteristic features is balanced well in this abstracted elephant souvenir, by huge oval ears, detailed forehead bumps, contoured legs and a picked out spine.



INSERT - Plate 1.13 Les Artisans d' Angkor. *Happy Elephant Poly*, polychrome over wood with white gold leaf gilding, L. 39cm x 21.1 cm x H19.5 cm. [Source: <http://www.artisansdangkor.com/shop/en/46-polychrome-statues>]

SOUVENIR EXPRESSION: OTHER CAMBODIAN ELEPHANT SOUVENIRS

Media: 4, 0

In exploring the souvenir expression of these models, firstly any notion of sampled media is absent, although the soapstone carvings are remotely related and a rating of around 4 would seem reasonable, while the polychrome model receives a 0 rating, being more distanced from operating as sample souvenir.

Maker's Mark: 2, 1

The non specific poses and absence of ceremonial enhancement, also leaves the Maker's Mark wanting, although the tenuously claimed, generic Asian association of the soapstone elephants poses may be seen as recording a moderate rating of 2, while the polychrome model should receive a low rating along this axis of 1.

Relational: 1

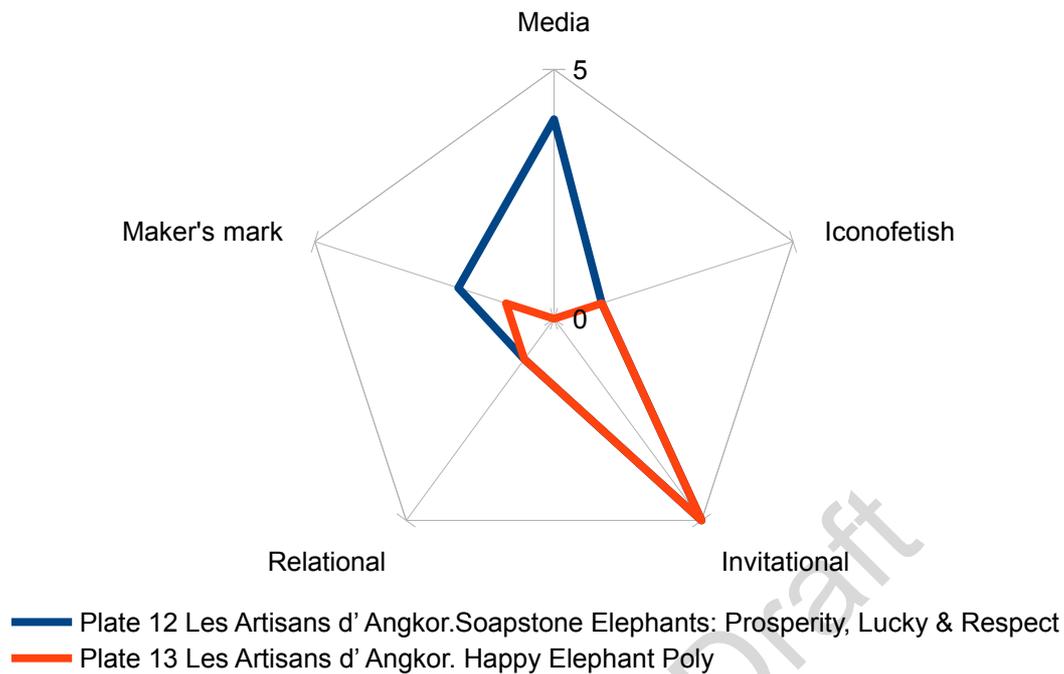
Likewise, expression along the Relational axis is low, as such models could relate to any region where elephants are to be found or viewed, so therefore should be accorded a rating of 1.

Invitational: 5

The Invitational axis, is where the greatest potential exist, in that the appending of the tourist narrative is completely open, although restricted by the solely ornamental engagement. A rating of 5 would be suitable to reflect this openness.

Iconofetish: 2

The Iconofetish rating is that of the previous examples of around 2.



INSERT- Figure 1.4. Graph showing comparative souvenir expression: other elephant souvenirs (Plates 1.12 & 1.13)

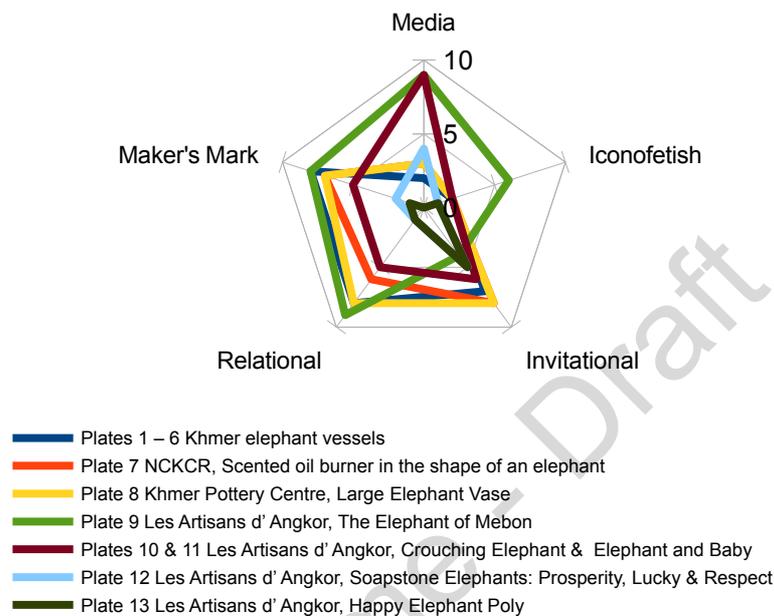
This final suite of souvenirs register somewhat different patterns to that of the sandstone and ceramic models. They are all largely dependent on their ability to invoke and accept the tourist's tales of the visit, while the soapstone models gain some expression from the tenuous media link and craft style.

CONCLUSION

From the local traditions, in tandem with touristic development, an economic and socially profitable souvenir industry has emerged, as tourists seek a moment of a once in a lifetime experience, an aide memoir that will recall a deviant engagement with an(Other) place, people or lifestyle. To achieve this the object must speak of the place and/or people but also provide space for the inscription of the touristic narrative, thereby keeping the experience alive. From the above graphs it can be seen that all of the above souvenirs achieve this to varying degrees, utilising a range of visual expressions. A summary of the comparative souvenir language of each surveyed artifact is illustrated in figure 1.5, in which it can be seen that most aggregate toward the Maker's Mark, Relational and Invitational axis, while the pink sandstone models, (Plates 1.9 -1.11) also register a strong expression through their media. In terms of volume, the *Elephant of Mebon* is the most profuse, however, its excessive size, is likely to restrict its appeal as a souvenir for many tourists. The two ceramic souvenir models, (Plates 1.7&1.8) also show a reasonably balanced expression, but the size of the Khmer Pottery Centre model is also likely to be restricted in uptake due to its scale, while fragility of both ceramic models will probably impact on their success.

With that in mind, perhaps the most appealing and enduring souvenir expression is to be found in the *Crouching Elephant* and *Elephant and Baby*, registering strong and moderate ratings along four assessment points, while being of a more conventional souvenir scale.

INSERT- Figure 1.5. Comparative souvenir expression of Cambodian elephant models



From a formal perspective the commodification of traditional elephant models has seen emphasis placed on the animal's unique features, with the trunk and tusk receiving increased enhancement, which rest in contrast to diminished features of the museum artifacts.

Other anatomical features have also been represented more realistically, such as legs and feet, together with the animal's girth and proportions. This can be understood as the need for a realistic representation to satisfy a consumer that is less familiar with the animal, therefore reducing the abstraction present in the museum artifacts.

Poses more familiar to Western consumers, such as the playful filmic image, is also evident, as is the tendency to impart human features, notably in the ears of Elephant of Mebon and the polychrome model, which demonstrate the producers' desire to satisfy the consumer's idealised view. Related to the playful attitude of most of the souvenirs cited above, including the museum artifacts, or proto souvenirs, is the passive nature of the given poses. However this is in contrast to those included in the Bayon stone frieze, but in keeping with the relaxing, fun and peaceful nature of cultural tourism.

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