

TANJORE PAINTING – A TRADITIONAL TAMILNADU IS ART FORM INCORPORATED IN INTERIORS

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Abstract—Tanjore Artistry on Wood: Integrating Divine Grandeur into Furniture Design

This article explores the synthesis of Tanjore painting, a classical South Indian art form renowned for its vibrant colors, iconic compositions of Hindu deities, and signature 22-carat gold foil relief, with modern and traditional wood furniture. Originating in 16th-century Thanjavur, this opulent artistic tradition is characterized by a distinctive 3D relief effect achieved through intricate gesso work and embedded stones.

In interior design, Tanjore art transforms utilitarian furniture into heritage pieces, leveraging its dazzling brilliance and spiritual themes to inject grandeur and cultural sophistication into contemporary spaces. The integration is primarily achieved through two methods: Embedded Panel Art (the direct method), where traditional wooden panel paintings are recessed into structures like Pooja units and cabinet doors; and Stylistic Embellishment (the pattern transfer), where the distinctive Gesso relief, gold foiling, and motifs are applied to the decorative borders, moldings, and surfaces of the furniture. The choice of furniture material, ranging from high-end hardwoods like Teak to engineered wood, dictates the durability and optimal application of this luxurious artistic integration.

Index Terms—Tanjore Painting ; Embedded Panel Art ; Wood Furniture ; South Indian Art ; 22-Carat Gold Foil.

I. Introduction

Tanjore Painting is a classical South Indian art form originating in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, renowned for its rich heritage and distinctive opulence.

Dating back to the 16th century, these sacred artworks are characterized by **vibrant colors, iconic compositions of Hindu deities**, and the lavish use of **22-carat gold foil** overlaid on intricate **gesso work** and embedded with glass or semi-precious stones, creating a signature **3D relief effect**.

In **interior design**, Tanjore paintings serve as magnificent **focal points**. Their dazzling brilliance, cultural depth, and spiritual themes effortlessly inject **grandeur, tradition, and sophistication** into contemporary spaces, transforming a simple room into a vibrant display of artistic and devotional legacy.

II. Material and methods

1) Tanjore painting Material

Tanjore paintings are often painted on mango or jack board. Grind the tamarind and glue the thick cardboard to the top of the board without glue and without air bubbles. The first step is to glue the cloth in two layers on a well-dried board. Mix the limestone with the

powdered stone, mix well with the gum, knead lightly and apply two to three times on top of the board. Rub the surface of the board well with a smooth stone to make it a smooth, smooth surface. Currently modern artists use plywood. Artists were stationed in the nearby states of Tanjore. It was this Tanjore style that paved the way for the current style of Tanjore paintings during the Maratha rule.

2) Material for wood furniture

Material	Pros (Advantages)	Cons (Disadvantages)	Best for...
Kiln-Dried Hardwoods (Teak, Sheesham, Sal)	The Gold Standard. Extremely durable, resistant to termites/pests, and lasts for decades (often considered heirloom quality). Teak is known for its strength and resistance to moisture.	Most expensive option. Heavy and difficult to move. Needs proper maintenance and protection from water.	High-end, heavy-duty, or forever sofas that you do not plan to replace.
High-Quality Plywood (e.g., Marine or BWP Grade)	Very Strong and Stable. Excellent resistance to cracking, splitting, and warping due to its layered construction. More affordable than solid hardwood.	The quality varies greatly; avoid thin or low-grade plywood. Cannot be refinished like solid wood.	Modern sofas where stability and a reasonable price are key. A great mid-range, durable option.
Engineered Wood (MDF/Particleboard)	Most Affordable. Smooth, stable, and cost-effective.	Lowest durability. Not suitable for heavy use. Prone to irreparable damage from moisture (spills, dampness) and cannot be easily repaired if chipped.	Lightly-used or budget-friendly sofas , though generally not recommended for the main seating area.

III. Results and discussion

- 1) Tanjore art is integrated into furniture through two primary methods
 - a) Embedded Panel Art (The Direct Method)

This is the most authentic integration, leveraging the fact that Tanjore paintings are traditionally made on a **wooden plank** (Palagai Padam)

- **Pooja Units (Mandirs):** This is the most common application. A Tanjore painting is not just hung; it is the **back panel** or the **door panels** of a custom-built *mandir* or storage cabinet. The entire structure, typically made of **teak or jackfruit wood** (traditional *Palagai* wood), becomes the frame for the central deity's image.
- **Cabinet/Wardrobe Doors:** Large, stylized Tanjore panels (often depicting deities, floral motifs, or scenes from mythology) are recessed or flush-mounted into the doors of cabinets, almirahs, and armoires, transforming utilitarian storage into a decorative heritage item
- **Table Tops (Under Glass):** Finished Tanjore-style art pieces (or painted patterns) are sometimes used as the top surface of coffee tables or consoles, which are then covered with a protective sheet of glass.

FOR EXAMPLE this image created using **Ai** which shown **Figure 1** .



Figure 1: wooden chest of drawer using Tangore painting style

b) Stylistic Embellishment (The Pattern Transfer)

This involves applying the distinctive **Tanjore aesthetic**—specifically the gold and Gesso relief technique—to decorative sections of the furniture

- **Borders and Molding:** The Gesso relief and gold foiling are applied to the decorative **moldings, borders, legs, and arches** which shown in **figure 2** of the furniture piece (e.g., around a mirror frame, on the headboard of a bed, or on the drawer fronts of a console)
- **Printed or Decoupage Patterns:** For more commercial or modern pieces, the *patterns* (especially the floral motifs and gold-work designs) are digitally printed or transferred onto the furniture surface and sealed with a protective lacquer. which shown in **figure 3**

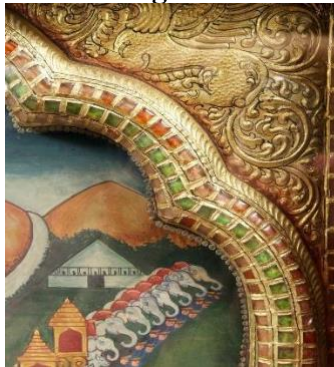


Figure 2 : Borders and Molding



Figure 3: Printed or Decoupage Patterns

2) Preference For Tanjore Painting Styles - Analysis

The data reflects a strong cultural connection to Tanjore painting among respondents. While tradition remains highly valued, almost half are open to customized versions—showing a blend of heritage and personalization. Modern styles, however, hold limited appeal which shown in **figure 4** in a pie chart form.

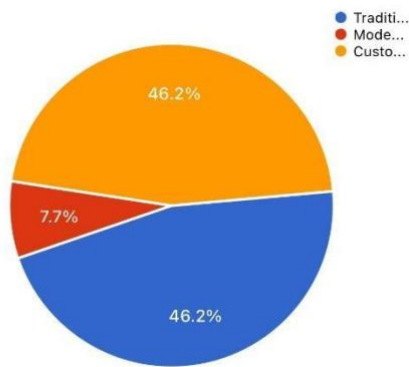


Figure 4: This pie chart shows data of Tangore painting style which people prefer in their furniture using google form.

3) Use of Traditional Tanjore Motifs

Instead of deities, include:

- Floral patterns (lotus, jasmine, creepers)
- Peacocks
- Elephants
- Vines and ornamental borders
- Paisleys and mandalas
- Mythical animals (yali, makara) without religious meaning

These motifs can be carved, inlaid, painted, or embossed onto furniture.

4) Placement of Tanjore-styled Furniture

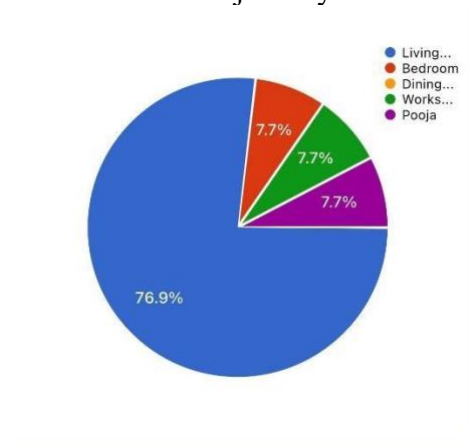


Figure : 5 Placement of furniture according to analysis

Key Insights

Living Room dominates heavily (76.9%)

Most respondents prefer placing Tanjore-styled furniture in the living room. This shows that people see Tanjore elements as a display focal point suitable for a common, welcoming area.

Bedroom, Workspace, and Pooja Room (each 7.7%)

These indicate niche preferences—some may want Tanjore themes for personal or spiritual spaces. which shown in **figure:5**

Interpretation

Tanjore motifs are primarily valued for aesthetic display and cultural expression, making the living room the ideal space for visibility and décor enhancement.

IV. Preference for Tanjore Painting Styles – Analysis

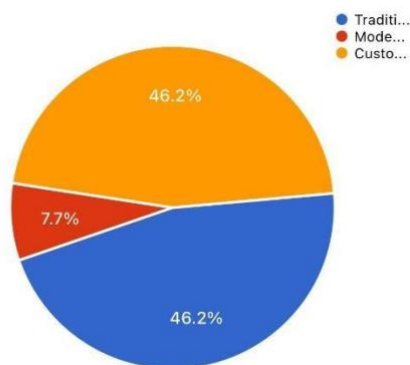


Figure : 6 This chart represents respondents' preferences for different styles of Tanjore painting when used in interior design. The results highlight contrasting tastes in traditional and customized forms, with minimal interest in modern styles.

1) Equal Preference for Traditional and Customized Styles

Traditional Style: 46.2%

Customized Style: 46.2%

These two categories share the highest preference, showing that respondents value both authentic classical Tanjore paintings and modern customized adaptations equally.

This balance suggests a flexible appreciation for art—some favor the original cultural essence, while others prefer personalized or contemporary reinterpretations.

2) Low Interest in Modern Style

Modern Style: 7.7%

Only a small segment prefers modern variations, indicating that Tanjore art is primarily appreciated for its cultural and traditional roots rather than modern reinterpretations.

3) Overall Insight

The data reflects a strong cultural connection to Tanjore painting among respondents. While tradition remains highly valued, almost half are open to customized versions—showing a blend of heritage and personalization. Modern styles, however, hold limited appeal.

V. Awareness & Knowledge

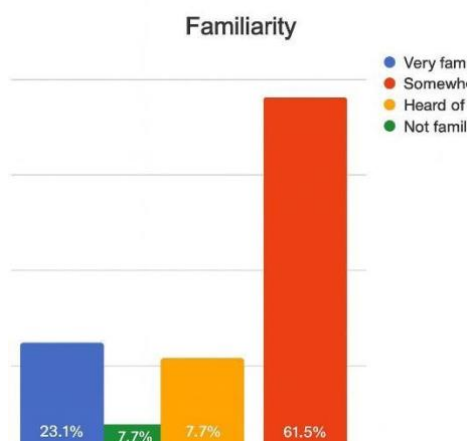


Figure : 7 the bar chart presents how familiar respondents are with the subject (likely Tanjore painting, based on your project). The responses fall into four categories, showing varying levels of awareness.

Key Insights

1) Majority Are Somewhat Familiar

61.5% of respondents selected “Somewhat familiar,” making it the largest group.

This suggests that most people have a basic understanding or awareness but may lack detailed knowledge.

2) Moderate Level of Strong Familiarity

23.1% of respondents are “Very familiar.”

This indicates a significant portion has good knowledge or deep exposure to the subject.

3) Minimal Awareness / Unfamiliarity

Only 7.7% have “Heard of it,” showing very limited knowledge.

Another 7.7% are “Not familiar,” indicating they have no prior exposure.

4) Conclusion: Tanjore Art in Furniture Design

Tanjore painting, a classical 16th-century South Indian art form featuring vibrant colors, intricate gesso relief, and 22-carat gold foil, successfully integrates with wood furniture, transforming ordinary pieces into sophisticated, heirloom-quality heritage items.

The integration is achieved primarily through two methods:

- **Embedded Panel Art:** Recessing traditional Tanjore wooden panels directly into structures like Pooja units and cabinet doors for the most authentic display.
- **Stylistic Embellishment:** Applying the signature gold and gesso relief aesthetic to decorative elements like borders, moldings, and legs of the furniture.
- This synthesis injects grandeur, cultural depth, and spiritual sophistication into modern spaces. The best results are achieved when pairing this opulent art with stable, durable materials like Teak or high-quality plywood. Market analysis shows a strong preference for traditional styles,

with significant interest in customized versions and the use of non-deity motifs (e.g., florals, peacocks) for broader application.

- The outcome is a powerful convergence of South Indian craftsmanship and interior design.

VI. Acknowledgment

References

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[2] Recreating the Traditional Tanjavur Arts and Crafts in Interiors — project / conference paper (JETIR). (Project report about converting Thanjavur painting motifs/techniques into interior elements).

Note: design-project that explicitly explores ways to adapt Tanjavur arts into interior products and finishes. Jetir

[3] Manifestation of Traditional Techniques and Material... — IJFMR (2025).

Note: recent paper discussing continuation/adaptation of Tanjore painting techniques, authenticity vs. innovation — helpful for literature review about contemporary practice. IJFMR

[4] authoritative technical overview (materials, gesso, gold foil, panel preparation) — good for method & materials section. Dsource+1