

Living Inheritance: The Path of Lingnan Painting School Resources Empowering the Development of Cultural Tourism Economy

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Abstract: To advance the deep integration of culture and tourism, empower socio-economic development through cultural empowerment, and effectively protect and dynamically inherit Lingnan culture, we will implement the Chinese Traditional Culture Inheritance and Development Project to establish a Chinese Civilization Identification System. Using the artistic works and commemorative scenes of the Lingnan School as carriers, we will create cultural tourism brands, build digital resource libraries, develop cultural and creative products, organize exhibitions, conduct public education, and open digital media platforms and online sales channels. This initiative will form a multi-dimensional cultural tourism industry cluster, transforming cultural resources into cultural consumption, achieving intergenerational inheritance of the Lingnan School spirit, enhancing the influence of Lingnan cultural brands, enriching research on the transformation of traditional cultural resources into cultural tourism, and providing a replicable model for regional cultural inheritance and high-quality development. Ultimately, it will empower the revitalization of traditional culture and boost local economic growth.

Keywords: Lingnan School of Painting; Cultural tourism economy; Living inheritance

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1. Introduction

The Lingnan School of Painting is a cultural hallmark of Guangdong. From Ju Chao, Ju Lian, Gao Jianfu, Gao Qifeng, and Chen Shuren to Guan Shanyue, Li Xiongcai, Zhao Shaoang, and Yang Shanshen, they influenced the Chinese art world for nearly a century, leaving behind a considerable number of outstanding works. To commemorate them and protect their legacy, later generations have restored and built the Ten Fragrance Garden, the Lingnan School of Painting Memorial Hall, the Gao Jianfu Memorial Hall, the Guan Shanyue Art Museum, the Li Xiongcai Art Museum, and the Lingnan School of Painting Masters Special Exhibition Hall at the Guangzhou Art Museum, forming a cluster of memorial buildings for the Lingnan School of Painting. Scholars hold symposiums, write and publish research findings, enhancing the cultural significance

of the Lingnan School of Painting. Artists organize exhibitions named after the Lingnan School of Painting, expanding its social influence. Moreover, the works of Lingnan School of Painting artists have been included in primary and secondary school art textbooks, and schools such as Yuan Gang Jianfu Primary School and Nanwu Middle School have been established as Lingnan School of Painting memorial campuses. The Chinese Painting Academy of Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts is a key center for the inheritance of the art at Lingnan School of Painting. Against the backdrop of building a culturally strong nation and revitalizing the economy through cultural tourism, innovating the cultural resources of the Lingnan School of Painting is timely and holds profound significance for driving the development of Guangdong's cultural tourism.

2. Distribution of Lingnan School of Painting's cultural and tourism resources: Static view and dynamic development

2.1. Distribution of Lingnan School paintings of works: Guangzhou as the hub, with multiple museums holding collections

The works of the Lingnan School of Painting are most concentrated in Guangzhou, mainly distributed in the Guangdong Provincial Museum, Guangdong Art Museum, Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts Museum, Guangzhou Panyu Baomo Garden Zhao Shaoang Art Museum, Guangzhou Art Museum, and Lingnan School of Painting Memorial Hall. Secondly, they are also collected in the Hong Kong Art Museum, the Chinese University of Hong Kong Museum of Cultural Relics, Shenzhen Museum, Shenzhen Guanshan Yue Art Museum, Shenzhen He Xiangning Art Museum, Dongguan Museum, Dongguan Keyuan Museum, Macao Art Museum, China National Museum in Beijing, Palace Museum in Beijing, National Art Museum of China in Beijing, Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing, Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Boston Museum of Fine Arts in the United States, San Francisco Asian Art Museum in the United States, Washington State Museum in the United States, and New York Public Library. Thirdly, they are also collected in Zhongshan Museum, Foshan Museum, Nanhai Museum, Shenyang Art Museum, Liaoning Museum, Guangxi Museum, Taipei Palace Museum, and Singapore National Gallery. A considerable number of works are also privately collected.

2.2. Distribution of the inheritance place of Lingnan School of Painting: The hometown of famous people and the places where they have been

The memorial venues of the Lingnan School of Painting include in addition to being a space for displaying its artworks, In Guangzhou, the city features the Lingnan School of Painting Memorial Campus at Shixiangyuan in Haizhu District and Nanwu Middle School, the Guanshan Yue Chinese Painting Academy of Guangzhou City Vocational College, and Chen Fu's Tomb ^[1] located 100 meters east of the back gate of Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts. These sites have launched the "Haizhu Lingnan School of Painting Red Culture Themed Tour Route." In Yuexiu District, the Chen Shuren Memorial Hall at Dongshankou and the Gao Jianfu Memorial Hall on Jiefang North Road are highlighted, along with the Gao Jianfu-Gao Qifeng Memorial Hall in Panyu's Nancun, Yuan Gang Jianfu Primary School, and the Chen Shuren-Chen Fu Hometown Garden in Hualong Town's Mingjing Village. The former Lingnan Art Garden site in Liwan District, associated with Zhao Shaoang, is also included. In Yangjiang City, the Guanshan Yue Cultural Exhibition Hall has been established at the cultural station of Buchang Town in Jiangcheng District, while Napeng Village has initiated the "Shan Yue's Hometown Art Origin" project. In Zhaoqing City, Dinghu Mountain, where Lingnan School painters once sketched, the stone inscription "Hometown of Talents" at Xijiang Bridgehead, and the Li Xiongcai Art Academy of Zhaoqing University are notable landmarks. In Taishan, Jiangmen City, the Yang Shanshen Lingnan Art Museum stands,

while in Macau, the Pujie Chan Monastery, where Gao Jianfu and his disciples lived and taught, remains a cultural treasure. From museums and communities to schools and private residences, the Lingnan School of Painting presents a diverse spatial layout blending static and dynamic elements, public and private spaces, and urban and rural areas. The painters of the Lingnan School have frequently traveled to Shanghai, Nanjing, and Japan for study and exhibitions. Gao Jianfu once conducted research in India, while Guanshan Yue and Yang Shanshen lectured at Harvard University in the United States. These cultural resources offer endless potential for expansion and development.

3. Public welfare assistance, commercial excellence: Promoting the offline cultural tourism development of Lingnan School of Painting

3.1. Exhibition promotion and teaching synergy: Promoting the exhibition and public education of Lingnan School of Painting

Education and publicity have been instrumental in preserving the spirit of the Lingnan School of Painting. The Second High School and Chen have consistently organized art exhibitions, with Gao Jianfu and his students frequently hosting solo and group shows that mutually inspire and amplify each other's influence. Notable collaborations include exhibitions by Guan Shanyue, Li Xiongcai, Zhao Shaoang, and Yang Shanshen. In contemporary times, venues commemorating the Lingnan School of Painting have expanded beyond conventional displays by leveraging media platforms to host diverse exhibitions, attracting public interest, and strengthening its cultural legacy. The Guangzhou Art Museum launched the "Exploring the Lingnan School of Painting" initiative ^[2], while the Dongguan Lingnan Art Museum and Guan Shanyue's former residence in Yangjiang offer educational programs on Guan's plum blossom paintings and Ju Chao/Ju Lian's water-powder collision techniques. Changgang Subdistrict promotes the "Unity of Knowledge and Action: Lingnan School Inheritors Program," Dongguan's Bubugao Primary School implements project-based courses on the Lingnan School, and Wu Yueliu conducts workshops at The Chinese University of Hong Kong (Shenzhen) to cultivate potential visitors, ensuring the Lingnan School's cultural tourism development continues to thrive.

3.2. Carefully planned and diverse products: Promoting the Lingnan School of Painting tourism cultural route

The Lingnan School of Painting boasts abundant resources in texts, exhibition halls, and venues, forming a substantial brand system that has developed into a tourism industry cluster. Half-day tours typically include visits to the Lingnan Painting School Memorial Hall, Shixiang Garden, and Chen Fu's Tomb, or alternatively, the Gao Jianfu Memorial Hall and Chen Shuren Memorial Hall. One-day tours may incorporate the Gao Jianfu and Gao Qifeng Memorial Hall, Gao Jianfu's Former Residence, and the Guangzhou Art Museum. Two-day tours can extend to Dongguan Keyuan, while three-day tours add Shenzhen's Guanshan Yue Art Museum. Four-day tours feature the Hong Kong Art Museum, and five-day tours include Macau's Pujie Chan Monastery. Customized itineraries are also available, such as trips to Shanghai ^[3] and Nanjing, as well as international routes to Japan, India, and the United States. Beyond designing routes based on proximity, the school offers specialized themed tours for renowned artists and customized itineraries to meet individual tourist preferences.

3.3. To beautify life and boost economy: Launching high-quality cultural and creative products of Lingnan School of Painting

The revitalization of cultural relics is a vital mission for modern museums and art galleries, with the creation of

cultural and creative products serving as a key strategy. The Guan Shanyue Art Museum, through its exhibition “Fires for the Nation: A Map of National Spirit in Guan Shanyue’s Art,” has launched its own “Shanyue Cultural Creations” series centered around Guan’s masterpiece “Red Cotton and White Dove.” The collection includes shoulder bags, three-in-one organizers, fridge magnets, A5 notebooks, A4 folders, and film bookmarks, bringing classic works out of exhibition halls and integrating the spirit of peace into daily life. The Guangdong Museum of Art and Shanghai China Art Museum have introduced cultural and creative products inspired by Lin Lan’s “Linli” artwork, featuring bari-sash scarves and artistic folding fans. A retro metal brooch was created based on the little rabbit from Fang Rending’s “Leisure Days.” The Shixiang Garden Memorial Museum unveiled floral silk scarves inspired by Lin Lan’s “Ten Fragrances,” along with handbags derived from Ju Lian’s works, such as the “Starfruit and Mulberry Beetle” tote, “Lychee Cicada Bucket” bag, “Dark Green Embroidered Bird Bucket” bag, and “Lychee Book Lamp.” Silk New Year red envelopes, cosmetic gift sets, and stationery gift sets were designed using peonies and orchids from Ju Lian’s “Twenty-Four Flower Paintings”^[4]. Through these cultural and creative products, the image of the Lingnan School of Painting has entered contemporary life, showcasing cultural sophistication, enriching cultural heritage, and boosting economic growth.

4. Staying ahead of the times and boosting economic growth: Establishing an online cultural tourism operation and maintenance for Lingnan School of Painting

4.1. Infrastructure development: Establishing a digital resource repository for Lingnan School of Painting cultural tourism

The rise of digital technology has transformed artistic leisure into handheld media and immersive audiovisual experiences. While digital platforms exert greater physical impact than traditional paper-based media, they deliver superior communication effects. The Lingnan School of Painting’s spiritual legacy continues to evolve with the times. The Guangzhou Art Museum, leveraging its collection of Lingnan School masterpieces, collaborated with the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts’ digital media design team to create “Lingnan Four Seasons: Water Mirroring Artistic Landscapes.” Through analyzing works by Lingnan masters, the project explores color usage, composition, and artistic expression. Using programming algorithms, it digitally recreates the traditional “water collision” and “powder collision” techniques. By deconstructing classic paintings by artists like Li Xiongcai, the work employs pixelated particle effects to depict the delicate textures of spring rain, presenting a vibrant spring scroll that symbolizes the hopeful revival of all things. This digital reconstruction of Lingnan School art breathes contemporary charm and inspiration into its legacy, while establishing a systematic resource repository^[5] that lays the foundation for revitalizing Lingnan painting art resources.

4.2. Quality enhancement and capacity expansion: Establishing a Lingnan School of Painting cultural tourism integrated media resource matrix.

Based on the digital resources of the Lingnan School of Painting, through new media operations, the popularization and hotspot dissemination of Lingnan School of Painting’s cultural and tourism resources are achieved. New media platforms have become the primary medium for contemporary people to receive visual culture, with immersive, dynamic, and personalized experiences being the most popular reception methods. Creations such as films, micro-dramas, short videos, animations, games, plays, dances, music, and literature of the Lingnan School of Painting are disseminated through streaming media, allowing the spirit of the Lingnan School of Painting to permeate modern leisure life. By forming a converged media matrix through platforms like WeChat, TikTok, Bilibili, Xiaohongshu, and Kuaishou, high-quality works are continuously produced over

an extended period, enhancing user engagement and making consumers genuinely appreciate both the form and content. After users experience the pleasure and comfort, a tiered payment system is established. For instance, by studying works of the Lingnan School of Painting and recording credits, users can earn corresponding levels of paid points to access more premium resources, thereby expanding the implicit financing scope to some extent.

4.3. Sharing economy: Building an online marketing brand for the creative industries of Lingnan School of Painting

When users develop emotional attachment to Lingnan School of Painting's film and television media, we concurrently develop cultural and creative products. By creating tangible items tailored to diverse tastes and purchasing power, we cultivate a sense of fulfillment. This approach fosters both spiritual satisfaction through owning Lingnan School of Painting cultural symbols and material satisfaction through product use, guiding users to embrace and actively promote the school's cultural ethos. We offer discounts to loyal fans, developing them into brand ambassadors. Through high-quality academic lectures, expert face-to-face sessions, guided tours of masterpieces, product promotions, and discounts, we elevate fans' appreciation, turning them into VIP members. These members participate in brand operation planning and maintenance, earning corresponding rewards that enhance their sense of belonging. By organizing regular and special events, we continuously engage the audience, keeping the Lingnan School of Painting cultural tourism brand vibrant and dynamic.

5. Retrospect and prospects

The artistic legacy of the Lingnan School of Painting stands as a cultural treasure trove, embodying historical, artistic, and economic significance. Systematic documentation and innovative transformation are essential for cultural advancement. By mapping the distribution of these artistic resources, we have developed integrated offline-online initiatives, including cultural exhibitions and public education programs. These efforts have yielded creative products and curated travel routes while leveraging a multi-platform media matrix and customer engagement strategies. This approach elevates material products through cultural value^[6], creating a win-win scenario where cultural empowerment fuels economic growth and economic success safeguards cultural preservation.

However, this study constructs an ideal matrix for the cultural empowerment economy of the Lingnan School of Painting based solely on existing cultural and tourism resources. While this represents an optimization grounded in actual resources, its implementation requires mobilizing the initiative of all stakeholders to establish a mutually beneficial collaborative framework. By adopting approaches such as proximity-based initiatives, short-term projects, small-scale group collaborations, exemplary leadership, and radiating synergies—progressing from small to large-scale implementations—the theoretical framework can ultimately be monetized, bringing tangible and spiritual benefits to the public.

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Disclosure statement

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