

Research on the Inheritance and Innovation Path of Chinese Painting from the Perspective of Cultural

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of the cultural renaissance, Chinese painting, as an artistic medium that embodies the spirit and aesthetic ideals, holds profound significance in preserving cultural heritage and promoting the creative transformation of traditional art through inheritance and innovation. Based on the theories of cultural awareness and cultural confidence, this study systematically analyzes the challenges that Chinese painting faces in the contexts of globalization and modernization. These challenges include inheritance dilemmas, innovation obstacles, changes in the audience, and communication constraints. It puts forward multidimensional strategies: establishing an inheritance system based on cultural ontology, developing contemporary expressions in line with modern values, exploring innovative aspects in artistic language, and reconstructing the communication ecosystem through new media and international exchanges. The research findings offer theoretical references and practical insights for the creative transformation and innovative development of Chinese painting.

Keywords: Culture; Chinese painting; Inheritance; Innovation; Contemporaneity; Art communication; Cultural confidence

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1. Introduction: Historical context and research origin

The cultural revitalization strategy has created historic opportunities for the development of traditional art. As a unique manifestation of Chinese aesthetic ideals and cultural spirit, Chinese painting has evolved over thousands of years to form a comprehensive artistic system that encompasses philosophical concepts, technical frameworks, and aesthetic paradigms^[1]. Amid globalization and modernization, Chinese painting faces dual challenges: innovative opportunities emerging from multicultural integration and challenges in preserving traditional aesthetics in the context of changing modern lifestyles. Achieving the creative transformation of traditional artistic resources has become a core issue for enhancing cultural soft power.

Grounded in the theories of cultural awareness and cultural confidence, this study systematically analyzes the contemporary developmental dilemmas and opportunities for Chinese painting, explores effective pathways for heritage preservation and innovation, and demonstrates both theoretical significance and practical relevance.

Existing studies on the inheritance and innovation of Chinese painting primarily focus on two dimensions: technical inheritance and stylistic innovation. Technical inheritance research emphasizes the preservation and transmission of traditional brushwork, ink techniques, and compositional principles. For example, it explores the methodologies of Xieyi (freehand) and Gongbi (meticulous) painting, as well as the inheritance of representative artist schools and their artistic concepts^[2]. Stylistic innovation research, on the other hand, often discusses the integration of Western painting techniques, such as perspective and color theory, into Chinese painting, or the expression of contemporary social themes through traditional forms^[3]. However, these studies tend to either overly emphasize the conservation of traditional forms, leading to a disconnect from contemporary aesthetic demands, or excessively pursue Western artistic language, resulting in the loss of cultural identity. Additionally, research on the communication and audience acceptance of Chinese painting in the context of new media remains fragmented. There is a lack of systematic exploration of how to reconstruct the communication ecosystem to enhance its contemporary influence. This study, therefore, aims to address these gaps by constructing a multidimensional path that integrates inheritance, innovation, and communication, providing a more comprehensive theoretical framework for the development of Chinese painting in the new era.

2. Core values and functional positioning of Chinese painting from the perspective of culture

The artistic expression of Chinese painting embodies the unique cosmology and philosophy of life of the Chinese nation. Aesthetic concepts such as “harmony between heaven and humanity” and “vibrant energy and rhythm” constitute its spiritual core. Meanwhile, themes like landscapes, flowers, and birds, and figures convey spiritual and value pursuits through distinctive brushwork language^[2]. As an artistic crystallization of Chinese civilization, Chinese painting has evolved from primitive rock paintings to Song and Yuan literati paintings. Its stylistic changes and technical advancements have consistently resonated with the spirit of the times. Systematic inheritance and research not only safeguard China’s aesthetic and cultural genes but also facilitate “dialogue between the past and the present.” In the context of globalization, Chinese painting, with its unique visual language, serves as a symbol of cultural soft power in cross—cultural exchanges. By participating in international art biennials and establishing an Eastern aesthetic paradigm, it effectively promotes the international dissemination and enhanced influence of Chinese culture^[3].

However, the inheritance and innovation of Chinese painting face multiple challenges. The modern transformation has led to changes in the cultural ecosystem. Fast-paced lifestyles and image saturation have marginalized profound aesthetic experiences, creating a disconnect between young people’s aesthetic preferences and their demand for Chinese painting appreciation. The preservation of traditional craftsmanship is under threat. Since modern art education emphasizes conceptual understanding over technical skills, it undermines the master-apprentice transmission systems. The gap between conventional training methods and contemporary creative concepts risks disrupting cultural continuity^[4]. In terms of innovation, the imbalance between tradition and modernity has become prominent. Either rigid adherence to tradition results in works lacking contemporary relevance, or excessive pursuit of formal innovation erodes the spiritual

essence. Achieving creative transformation while preserving heritage remains the critical challenge for the development of Chinese painting. Additionally, limitations in traditional exhibition models and the relative lag in new media content production continue to constrain the contemporary dissemination effectiveness of Chinese painting ^[5].

3. Path construction for the inheritance and innovation of Chinese painting from the perspective of culture

3.1. Consolidating foundations and nurturing essence: Deepening research on cultural roots and skill transmission systems

In-depth interpretation of classical texts lays the foundation for consolidating artistic fundamentals. It is advocated that artists and scholars revisit classic works and systematically study historical painting theories and philosophical texts. Through interdisciplinary research, they can uncover the cultural essence of Chinese painting, thus providing theoretical support for artistic creation. Equally crucial is the dynamic preservation of traditional techniques and materials. By using modern technological tools to establish databases of classic artworks, conducting high-precision reproductions and virtual exhibitions, educators can strengthen cultural confidence through technological inheritance ^[6].

Establishing a multi-tiered inheritance mechanism is crucial for consolidating foundational elements and nurturing cultural heritage. At the higher education level, it is essential to strengthen basic Chinese painting instruction. This can be achieved by introducing core courses on traditional classical copying techniques, developing unified teaching syllabi and evaluation standards, and attaining deep integration of inheritance and innovation through educational reforms and faculty development initiatives ^[7]. Regarding master-apprentice transmission, support should be provided for renowned artists' studios to utilize the "mentorship model" for skill transmission. At the same time, intangible cultural heritage inheritors should be encouraged to engage with campuses to organically combine traditional techniques with modern education. The construction of digital resource libraries offers technical support for inheritance. High-definition scanning, motion capture, and virtual reality technologies are utilized to digitally preserve endangered painting techniques and master artists' creative processes, thereby establishing open educational research platforms. Expanding social aesthetic education serves as a vital supplement to the inheritance system. Through thematic exhibitions, interactive experiences, and online courses, geographical barriers can be overcome to achieve widespread dissemination and profound transmission of Chinese painting techniques.

3.2. Bridging past and present: Exploring contemporary spiritual expression and cross-cultural dialogue

Engaging with contemporary themes is the fundamental approach to bridging the past and the present. Artists should be encouraged to base their work in the present moment, capturing the pulse of the times by integrating realistic subjects, modern lifestyles, and traditional brushwork techniques, thus infusing their creations with contemporary spirit and humanistic concern. While rationally borrowing from Western modern art is essential for broadening perspectives, it is crucial to maintain the subjectivity and cultural identity of Chinese painting. By critically evaluating and selectively absorbing outstanding achievements from global modern and contemporary art, we can achieve creative transformation, expand the domains of artistic expression, and enhance visual impact as well as conceptual depth.

3.3. Breaking the cocoon to become a butterfly: Promoting diverse experiments and boundary expansion in artistic language

Experimental innovation in media and techniques is the catalyst for artistic transformation. Educators encourage the exploration of novel paper types, pigments, substrate materials, and painting tools to introduce fresh perspectives and conceptual approaches to artistic expression, while emphasizing the integration of material innovation with the spiritual essence and cultural attributes of artworks. Breakthroughs in compositional structures and expressive techniques are a crucial aspect of artistic innovation. This involves transcending traditional compositional conventions, incorporating modern compositional concepts and diverse perspectives, and exploring the interplay between meticulous brushwork and freehand expression. Through innovative formal language, educators aim to meet contemporary aesthetic demands and visual experiences.

3.4. Smart empowerment: Building an omnimedia communication framework and enhancing international influence

The strategic application of new media platforms is the cornerstone of intelligent empowerment. By leveraging digital technologies and internet platforms, educators create high-quality content, innovate communication formats, host virtual exhibitions using VR technology, develop digital collectibles, expand emerging business models in art e-commerce and online education, and establish a diversified, multi-dimensional communication matrix. Digital projects like “Digital Dunhuang” have set successful benchmarks for cultural heritage dissemination, achieving global sharing and educational accessibility through high-definition imaging, motion capture, and virtual interaction technologies.

High-level international cultural exchange is a vital pathway to enhance global influence. By participating in top-tier international art events such as the Venice Biennale and Documenta Kassel, curating thematic exhibitions, establishing collaborative mechanisms with overseas art institutions and universities to host academic forums and workshops, implementing the “Inviting Experts In” strategy through scholarship programs to attract international scholars for research visits, organizing reciprocal artist exchanges between China and foreign countries, we can cultivate art professionals with global perspectives and promote the worldwide dissemination of Chinese painting art.

4. Conclusion

In the era of cultural development, the inheritance and innovation of Chinese painting are of strategic significance for strengthening cultural confidence and promoting the national spirit. This study reveals that the core strategy for achieving the sustainable development of Chinese painting lies in achieving a dialectical unity of “consolidating the foundation” and “pioneering new horizons”: on one hand, being deeply rooted in cultural traditions, preserving the spiritual essence and formal characteristics of Chinese painting through classical studies and skill inheritance; on the other hand, embracing contemporary perspectives and a global vision, integrating modern experiences, cutting-edge concepts, and technological means to endow Chinese painting with contemporary qualities and cross-cultural dialogue capabilities through multi-dimensional innovation. With the emergence of new technologies such as the metaverse and artificial intelligence, as well as the deepening of global cultural exchanges, Chinese painting will embrace broader development prospects and innovative opportunities. Under the premise of upholding cultural subjectivity, promoting the creative

transformation and innovative development of Chinese painting—this artistic form embodying Eastern wisdom—will undoubtedly rejuvenate and contribute unique Chinese colors to the diversity of human civilization.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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