



Practical Exploration of Ethnic Intangible Cultural Heritage theme in the Thematic Art Creation of College Students

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Abstract: This paper focuses on the exploration and practice of ethnic intangible cultural heritage themes in university fine arts creation courses. It begins by highlighting the significance of intangible cultural heritage preservation and China's obligations under the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The paper reviews the current literature on the intertextual relationship between intangible cultural heritage, art creation, and the integration of intangible cultural heritage into university education. The authors examine the current situation of thematic art creation among college students, identifying challenges such as limited perspectives, technical focus over theory, prevalence of imitation, and inadequate teaching competence. They propose strategies to address these challenges, including guiding creative themes, leveraging regional cultural advantages, and integrating teaching resources. The paper concludes by emphasizing the importance of cultural inheritance, contemporary values, and personalized artistic expression in thematic artistic creation.

Keywords: intangible cultural heritage, ethnic subjects, thematic art creation, regional culture

I. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore and utilize the relevant resources of intangible cultural heritage of ethnic groups in order to apply them to the practical art creation courses for college students, stimulate their creative enthusiasm and innovative ability, and make use of the advantages of art resources in remote areas. This will enable college students to create art works that reflect the regional culture of ethnic groups using image resources in the information age. Ultimately, it aims to develop artistic creation methods and strategies with universal application value in the field of intangible cultural heritage. Contemporary college student art creation exhibits diversity, innovation, and a focus on social issues. Through free forms of expression and various media, students express their thoughts and observations about society, actively engage in interdisciplinary collaboration and practice. This diverse art creation provides a platform for college students to explore and express themselves, and it drives the development of contemporary art. However, there are also many challenges, such as time constraints and pressure, limited resources, lack of professional guidance and feedback, limited exhibition opportunities, and inadequate self-expression and innovation. To overcome these challenges, this study proposes the following strategies: approaching contemporary college student art creation from the perspective of intangible cultural heritage of ethnic groups, expanding and enriching its connotations. Art creation with ethnic themes can provide more opportunities for cultural education and awareness, enabling artists and audiences to better understand and appreciate art works with ethnic themes. Encouraging college students to embrace diverse perspectives and innovative thinking allows them to demonstrate unique and individual styles and expressions in art creation with ethnic themes.

The "Declaration on Intangible Cultural Heritage Education" issued by the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 2002 officially opened the door for the integration of intangible cultural heritage into the higher education system. Since then, major universities have introduced intangible cultural heritage projects with local characteristics into their teaching activities. "Theme-based art creation refers to the creation that revolves around a specific theme, with a certain plot, which can reflect the spirit of the times and align with the prevailing trends of the era."^[1] The introduction of intangible cultural heritage provides a good opportunity for college student art creation.

II. literature Review

Through searching academic databases such as CNKI, Wanfang Data, SuperStar Digital Library, and National Social Science Database, using keywords such as "intangible cultural heritage," "theme-based art creation," "ethnic themes," and "regional culture," more than 30 relevant articles were extracted and organized into three research sections: Research on the intertextual relationship between text, images, and art creation in intangible cultural heritage. Some related works include Zhang Zongjian's "Research on Folk Prints Influenced by Local Opera in Southwest

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Shandong^[2], Wu Xiaodi's "Inspiration of Abstract Elements in 'Xilan Kapu' on Copper Plate Art Creation"^[3], and Liu Liying's "Research on the Subject of 'Xiao Hua Miao' in Painting Creation in Shuicheng County, Guizhou Province"^[4]. Research on the relationship between regional culture in intangible cultural heritage and theme-based art creation. Representative works in this area include Cui Xiaolei and Wang Yu's "Constructing National Epic through Aesthetic Consciousness: Theme-based Art Creation by Yu Wenjiang"^[5], Hu Yang's "Shaping Ethnic Images: Artistic Practice of Western Ethnic Themes"^[6], Rong Ting and Lei Tian's "Design Aesthetics: A New Perspective on the Inheritance and Innovation of Yao Embroidery, Intangible Cultural Heritage"^[7]. Practical research on the integration of national intangible cultural heritage into university art education. Relevant studies include Xu Yongkang's "Exploration of the Integration of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Southwest Ethnic Minority Areas into University Oil Painting Classroom Teaching"^[8], Wang Xueqin's "Construction and Practice of the Educational Inheritance System of Ethnic Minority Intangible Cultural Heritage in Local Universities"^[9], and Zhang Xiaotong, Tian Jingwen, and Zhou Hong's "Research on the Creative Development of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Chinese Traditional Handicrafts and the Cultivation Mechanism of University Inheritors"^[10]. Foreign research on the artistic creation of national intangible cultural heritage themes is relatively scarce. Most of them simply focus on the protection of intangible cultural heritage through policies and laws. For example, Japan has enacted the "Cultural Properties Protection Law", France has established "Cultural Heritage Day" and "Historical Cultural Heritage Protection Areas," and Italy has designated "Cultural Heritage Week," among others. As for the research on the integration of intangible cultural heritage into university art creation practices, there haven't been representative achievements.

III. The current situation of thematic art creation among college students

College students often face heavy academic workload and other study pressures, which limit their time for art creation. Course assignments, exam preparations, and other academic requirements may take up the majority of their time, making it difficult for them to dedicate enough time to art creation. Resource constraints are another challenge. Art creation often requires art materials, tools, and equipment. The lack of necessary resources may restrict the scope of their creation and their ability to experiment. Lack of professional guidance and feedback is another issue. Some students may struggle to find suitable mentors or professors who can provide art-related guidance and critique. The lack of professional guidance and feedback can hinder the students' artistic development and understanding. Limited exhibition opportunities are also a challenge. It is important for college students to showcase their works as it helps them gain recognition and feedback. However, the lack of exhibition opportunities and suitable platforms can make it difficult for students to showcase their works, limiting their interaction and engagement with the audience and the art community. Pressure for self-expression and innovation is another factor. In the college art environment, students may feel pressure to express themselves and be innovative. They may be influenced by comparisons and competition with their peers, worrying that their works are not unique or creative enough. This pressure can have a negative impact on their artistic freedom and confidence.

Based on the current teaching practices, it is found that some students have good basic skills but lack ideas and a broad vision. Under the influence of Western culture, some students who favor novelty are enthusiastic about so-called "contemporary art," abandoning the spirit of traditional Chinese culture. Their art creations often lack cultural content and taste. For thematic art creation, if college students lack enthusiasm and sincere dedication, lack practical life experiences and profound insights into the times, and only create based on abstract concepts in isolation, they will not be able to create art pieces that embody both ethnic cultural identity and resonance with the times, and have lasting value. Art creation tends to focus on skills rather than theory, concepts over culture. Painting skills are essential basic skills for art students. Without strong foundational painting skills, even the best ideas and concepts may struggle to be effectively expressed on the canvas. However, solely emphasizing technical training may result in skilled craftsmen lacking artistic character. There is a serious problem of imitation and lack of innovation and vitality in art creation. Courses such as sketching and art research are mainly meant for observing and experiencing life and collecting materials. However, many students treat these courses as mere tourism and leisure activities, without careful observation. Without attentive observation, it is impossible to discover and record materials that represent beauty. When collecting materials from life, students mechanically use cameras, resulting in artwork that is overly photographic and lacking vitality. Alternatively, they directly copy objects from life into their artistic creations, only portraying the physical attributes of the objects without extracting and expressing their spiritual attributes. They simplify thematic art creation by understanding it merely as illustrating the content of the "theme." Such works are unlikely to be outstanding thematic art pieces. The inadequate teaching level and lack of artistic experience among teachers also contribute to the challenges. In art teaching practice, teachers play a leading role while students are the main participants. Teachers' thoughts and concepts profoundly influence students' creative thinking. Therefore, teachers need to establish correct values and artistic views, re-examine the relationship between excellent traditional culture and art creation practice. Currently, there is a lack of coherence in art creation, with students' professional and graduation projects being disconnected, and theory and practice being disjointed. This situation hampers the in-depth development of students' art creation.

IV. Proposing strategies for improvement in art creation among college students

"Theme-based teaching is a teaching model that revolves around a specific theme. It allows students to engage in exploratory research and learning through various means, activities, and resources related to the theme. The primary goal is to enhance students' problem-solving abilities and cultivate their spirit of active inquiry." Ethnic intangible cultural heritage themes possess strong ethnic characteristics, embodying local and contemporary features through emotions, humanism, and linguistic forms. Students need guidance from experienced mentors with rich creative experience when selecting themes for their artistic creations, such as what theme to choose, how it relates to social and cultural development, and how to express it using appropriate methods. When exploring creative subject matter, teachers should also focus on the depth of thematic content, namely the profound connotations of the subject matter. Ethnic intangible cultural heritage is a vast treasure trove of spiritual resources, with rich spiritual and value implications. It is an indispensable internal support in fine arts creation. To properly and comprehensively understand and learn from outstanding traditional culture, students must actively contemplate and deeply integrate it into their artistic creations. Only then can they produce fine artworks with profound cultural connotations.

Leveraging Regional Cultural Advantages to Achieve Breakthroughs in Creative Content

In the artistic creation of ethnic themes, it is crucial to seize the advantages of regional culture, explore and integrate various elements, and strengthen the recognition of ethnic intangible cultural heritage. Regional culture encompasses distinct cultural characteristics, primarily focusing on culture as an entry point to showcase the cultural uniqueness of different regions. When artists incorporate regional culture into their artistic designs, they can incorporate cultural regional characteristics that align with their design concepts, thereby forming a unique artistic style that enhances the potential appreciation value of their artworks. By incorporating their understanding of the geographical location and natural environment of a region, artists can infuse their emotional connection with the region into their artistic designs. Through the use of regional cultural display forms in their artworks, they can emphasize their interpretation of regional culture, resulting in distinctive artistic creations.

Integrating Internal and External Teaching Resources and Transforming Teaching Methods

Ethnic intangible cultural heritage with distinct regional characteristics should be taught based on its uniqueness. Its survival and development are inseparable from specific cultural contexts, and the cultivation of talent in universities should align with the needs of the job market. The dissemination of traditional culture also relies on the active participation of the younger generation. Therefore, teaching should focus on the overall improvement of students' abilities in protection, inheritance, practical skills, research literacy, innovative thinking, and promotion and dissemination. To achieve this, it is essential to integrate both internal and external teaching resources, combining in-class and after-class practical exercises, and integrating online and offline promotion and dissemination. Emphasizing comprehensive, design-oriented, and innovative practical teaching methods can help foster students' work methods, research abilities, and contribute to the development of distinctive courses, teaching methods, and achievements. It is also necessary to establish a teacher-guided team that focuses on regional and ethnic culture as a specialized research topic within the field of fine arts.

V. SUMMARY

In summary, to enhance the level of thematic art creation among college students, it is necessary to adopt various approaches. These include addressing resource limitations, providing guidance and mentoring, guiding the choice of creative themes, leveraging regional cultural advantages to achieve breakthroughs in creative content, encouraging collaboration, and creating platforms to showcase their artwork. By implementing these strategies, institutions can create a vibrant and supportive environment that nurtures students' creative growth as artists.

The socialist core values are deeply rooted in Chinese culture, and art itself is an integral part of traditional culture. Cultural inheritance is the fundamental guarantee of art creation. Guiding contemporary values with outstanding Chinese culture and adhering to a realistic approach in artistic creation that reflects the aesthetic pursuits of contemporary people is the best way to promote cultural confidence among college students. Stimulating their enthusiasm for creation and their innovative abilities, leveraging the advantages of art resources in remote areas, and utilizing thematic art creation based on national themes, we can showcase the vitality of contemporary college students and their highly individualized artistic expression.

In conclusion, art is inseparable from life, and college students need to delve deeper into life, continuously accumulate real-life experiences, closely adhere to themes, and further explore and contemplate the ideological connotations of thematic art creation.

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