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## Global Context, Self-Awakening and Contemporary Reinvention

### *Chinese Lacquer Painting and the Asian Lacquer Culture Circle*

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#### Abstract

Judging from the perspective of globalization, lacquer is a unique material culture form in Asia, and also one of the most important art media. In the early 20th century, under the background of Art Deco movement and French colonialism, the lacquer culture formed the phenomenon of return and gave birth to the Vietnamese lacquer painting, which indirectly contributed to the formation of the Chinese lacquer painting in the modern sense. Therefore, judging from the historical perspective, the birth of lacquer painting has a globalized background. From the perspective of art history, in the course of nearly a century, Chinese lacquer painting has gone through three stages of development, from germination and popularization to development and reflection, to the formation of cultural self-awakening, which can be called the “triple stage”, and finally completed its own construction, presenting a prosperous appearance in the contemporary era. Thinking from the level of contemporary culture, with the Asian countries’ re-cognition of traditional lacquer culture, the new form of Asian lacquer culture circle is gradually coming to the fore, in this process, Chinese lacquer painting actively participates in and in a sense leads the reconstruction of the contemporary Asian lacquer culture circle, and the awakening of Chinese lacquer painting represents the systematic revival of oriental culture and aesthetics in contemporary Asia. Therefore, through the background of cultural return, the contemporary situation of triple steps and self-awakening, and the mission of reconstructing the Asian lacquer culture circle,

that is, the three nodes of the past, the present and the future, this paper points out that the development of Chinese lacquer painting is not only a matter of art itself, but also of great significance in reconstructing the contemporary global art discourse.

**Keywords:** Lacquer Painting; Lacquer Culture; Asian Lacquer Culture Circle

## 1. Introduction

Since the 16th century, with the development of the great maritime trade and the increasingly frequent exchanges between the East and the West, China's political system, culture and art, and local customs have aroused the admiration and imagination of Westerners, thus forming the "China Fever" in Europe. Against this background, Ming and Qing dynasty export art was favored in Europe, in which lacquer became a new fashion in Europe with mysterious materials, gorgeous techniques and rich images. Fantastic descriptions of Asian lacquer art can be found in the writings of Astana Hughes Kircher, John Stock, and Jean-Félix Vardin. During this period, the influence of Chinese lacquer reached every level of European society, ultimately shaping the era of a thriving European "Chinese style".

## 2. Spreading and Returning: The Globalization of Chinese Lacquer Painting

As we all know, the main direction of the lacquer art discipline in contemporary Chinese colleges and universities is lacquer painting, and there are two major sources for its formation, one of which is the exploration of modern lacquer art in the early part of the last century in China, with Pang Xunqin, Lei Guiyuan, and Shen Fowen as the main representatives. Among the above three, except for Shen Fowen, who studied in Japan under the master of lacquer art, Matsuda Gonroku, Pang Xunqin and Lei Guiyuan both studied in France, and Lei Guiyuan in particular was engaged in the restoration of

Chinese lacquer ware in Paris (Guo, 2016). Another source is Vietnamese lacquer painting, the landmark event of which was the exhibition of Vietnamese lacquer painting organized in Beijing and Shanghai in 1962.

The Art Deco movement in Europe can be considered the direct source of modern lacquer painting. During this period, the influence of export lacquer ware from the Ming and Qing dynasties and the boom of Oriental decorative arts at the beginning of the 20th century created many artists in Europe who were famous for using Oriental lacquer to create works, thus forming the Modern Lacquer Movement in Europe, of which the main representatives are Jean Dunand, Eileen Gray, Gaston Susse, and Picasso. Gaston Susse and Pierre Bobot. For example, Pierre Bobot's lacquer techniques and creations were inspired by the rediscovery of Ming and Qing dynasty export lacquerware, particularly the Juncai screens. These are the most representative type of Ming and Qing dynasty export lacquerware and were once considered by Europeans to be representative of Chinese lacquerware. Pierre Bobo's daughter, Marie-Thérèse Bobo, repeatedly mentioned Coromandel in her article "Remembering Chinese Lacquerware" as the influence of the Zancai screen on Pierre Bobo. We can be sure that an important feature of Pierre Bobo's work, the bird's-eye view composition, is entirely derived from the coromandel. At the same time, this has almost become the compositional characteristic of the Art Deco movement. It is worth noting that both Mr. Pang Xunqin and Mr. Lei Guiyuan had the educational background of the Art Deco movement, and they were also the pioneers of modern design education in China, thus determining that Chinese lacquer paintings have deep decorative genes and inheritance. For example, Professor Qiao Shiguang, a leading figure in Chinese lacquer painting, was a graduate student of Mr. Pang Xunqin.

In 1925, the Frenchman Victor Taraieu founded the Indochina Higher School of Fine Arts with the support of the French colonial governor Henri Merlin, an event that can be regarded as the beginning of modern art and education in Vietnam. Victor Tardou has always made the fusion of Eastern and Western cultures the aim of the school; for example, to broaden the horizons of his students, he introduced a course on East Asian art and instructed them to reproduce Chinese silk patterns of the Tang and Song dynasties, as well as seventeenth-century Japanese art. Of the early instructors, all but Nam Son came from France. Notable among them was Joseph Inguimberty (1896-1971), a graduate of the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, the epicenter of the modern lacquer movement in France, from which Gaston Suisse also came. Encouraged and guided by these teachers, Vietnamese students gradually discovered ways to combine lacquer materials with oil painting techniques in their practice, thus creating the artistic expression of rubbed lacquer painting, realizing the fusion of modernity and tradition and producing the first Vietnamese lacquer painters, such as Le Phu and Nguyen Khang (Nguyen, 2013). In 1962, Vietnam organized an exhibition of lacquer painting in Beijing and Shanghai, which attracted great attention from the Chinese cultural department, so that all the colleges and universities started the research and exploration of lacquer painting. It was against this background that Mr. Cai Kezhen, the first director of the Lacquer Painting Art Committee of the China Art Association, went to Vietnam to study lacquer painting.

It can be found that the two major sources of Chinese lacquer painting are closely related to the modern lacquer movement in Europe, which originated from the rediscovery of Ming and Qing dynasty export lacquer ware in the early 20th century. Therefore, in a sense, Chinese lacquer painting can be defined as the “cultural return” phenomenon of the Ming and Qing dynasty export lacquer ware in China after the westward transmission in the 17th century. The phenomenon of “cultural return”. Accordingly,

we can make a judgment that Chinese lacquer painting is a new form of Chinese lacquer art formed in the process of global evolution and transmutation and therefore has multiple and complex cultural attributes.

### **3. Triple Steps: The Self-Awakening of Chinese Lacquer Painting**

For more than half a century, Chinese lacquer painting has been closely related to the development of contemporary Chinese art and has also been indirectly influenced by international art trends. Judging from the creative outlook and conceptual awareness, Chinese lacquer painting from the 1950s to the end of the 1980s can be called the first stage, which was under the dual influence of the main line of decorative tradition and the secondary line of Vietnamese lacquer painting, and included two time periods, namely, the New Chinese Art Movement and the post-Cultural Revolution trend of decorative art, and was characterized by the coexistence and dislocation of the awareness of painting and the language of decorative art. The period from the 1990s to the early part of this century can be called the second phase, which was set against the background of the 85 New Wave of Fine Arts and the marginalization of the Chinese decorative system. During this period, on the basis of the reflection on the first phase, the lacquer painting creative group formed a fierce debate, but both sides of the debate essentially want to construct the purity of lacquer painting, and in the creative outlook. They all embodied the consciousness of de-decorating and the problem of “translation of materials”, and in fact this mode of creation still has a certain degree of universality in the contemporary era. In fact, this mode of creation still has a certain degree of universality in contemporary times. In fact, this mode of creation is still somewhat common in contemporary times. After about 2010, the lacquer painting creative group gradually formed the consciousness of “lacquer self-nature” and carried out effective exploration,

gradually forming the unity of ontological language, formal language and material language, and this trend can be called the “self-awakening” of Chinese lacquer painting. This trend can be called the “self-awakening” of Chinese lacquer painting.

Regarding the first stage of the development of Chinese lacquer painting, based on the analysis of the cultural background mentioned above, we can fully understand that the beginning of Chinese lacquer painting had two veins at the same time, that is, the Art Deco movement and Vietnamese lacquer painting. From the analysis of existing cases, it can be found that early Chinese lacquer painting is characterized by the coexistence and dislocation of pictorial consciousness and decorative language. Judging from the subject matter, it is clear that early Chinese lacquer painting was to some extent influenced by Vietnamese lacquer painting, which began to have an independent pictorial consciousness. Historically, the emergence of Vietnamese lacquer painting was accompanied by the national liberation movement, in which Vietnamese artists re-established their independent cultural spirit and national consciousness through the creation of a local painting style. Therefore, the themes of Vietnamese lacquer paintings are mainly anti-colonial war and socialist construction, and some figures and landscapes also contain similar ideology. For example, Nguyễn Gia Trí's work “Spring Garden - Central, Southern and Northern” in the collection of Ho Chi Minh Museum of Fine Arts shows three young women in the center of the picture representing the three regions of northern, central and southern Vietnam, which is an allegory for the national unification of Vietnam. This point played an important role in the formation of the consciousness of independent painting in Chinese lacquer painting. In terms of expressive language, early Chinese lacquer painting formed a different system from Vietnamese lacquer painting. There are two main reasons for this, one is the influence of the background of modern Chinese decorative arts system, and the other is the constraints of traditional Chinese lacquer crafts. in

the early twentieth century, the Art Deco movement had a great influence on China, including the founders of Chinese design education, such as Pang Xunqin and Lei Gueiyuan, who were both deeply influenced by the movement. Since then, Art Deco has gradually declined in Europe and the United States, but for a number of reasons, it continued to flourish in China until the 1980s and 1990s, and a complete education system was formed. At the same time, from the perspective of institutions, due to the problem of discipline setting, the development of Chinese lacquer painting at that time was mostly based on the Arts and Crafts specialty, which was based on the system of decorative arts, and was closely connected with the Arts and Crafts industry. Therefore, the early expression of Chinese lacquer painting presented strong decorative characteristics and craft tendency, which was also inevitable to some extent.

Under the background of decorative art, early Chinese lacquer painting borrowed the painting consciousness of Vietnamese lacquer painting, while continuing the expressive language of decoration, and tried to build a lacquer painting art system combining the ontological language of painting, the formal language of decoration, and the material language of craftsmanship. Therefore, this kind of misplaced construction method also leads to a different way of “from painting to lacquer” from Vietnamese lacquer painting. Although Chinese lacquer painting has been explored by some excellent artists, it has formed a reverse trend of “from lacquer to painting”. The defects of early Chinese lacquer paintings, such as decorativization and miniaturization, to a certain extent also reveal the mismatch between its ontological language and formal language.

In the 1990s, the second phase of Chinese lacquer painting gradually unfolded against the background of the rise of contemporary art. At the same time, due to the gradual marginalization of the Chinese decorative art system, the formal language of lacquer painting was also questioned and even

denied with the withdrawal of decorations, and the status of lacquer painting's academic discipline also underwent a crisis of identity. During this period, the lacquer painting creative group launched a new round of exploration, devoting themselves to thinking about the pictorial nature of lacquer painting. The theoretical debates in this period were very active, with continuous debates on the creation theory and ontology of lacquer painting, mainly including the "natural lacquer and chemical lacquer controversy" and the "big art and lacquer craft controversy". Judging from a contemporary perspective, the debates during this period were precisely the reflection of the lacquer painting creative group on the dislocation between the pictorial consciousness and decorative language of the first stage of lacquer painting under the impact of the "85 New Wave of Art". In essence, both sides of the debate realized the problem of dislocation, but put forward different solutions. One part of the creators' point of view is to weaken the craftsmanship component of lacquer, treating lacquer as an ordinary painting material and incorporating it into the category of fine art. On the other hand, some of the creators' viewpoints are based on the material characteristics of lacquer and launch the pure research of lacquer painting. Mr. Qiao Shiguang's article "Dancing in Shackles" was an important document at that time, from which we can have a look at the discussion hotspots of that year. As a matter of fact, if we review this history again today, we can judge that whether it is natural lacquer or chemical lacquer, if we judge it from the perspective of easel painting, it is actually a pair of shackles, and there is no essential difference. The controversy of the 1990s has continued to this day, and in fact, the problems that existed during this period have not yet formed a better solution.

Although there are sharp differences in creative theories, in terms of creative practice, both sides of the debate in general show the mode of "material translation". Lacquer creators looked for creative concepts and even patterns from oil paintings, Chinese paintings, prints and other kinds of

paintings, and studied how to convert them into material expressions of lacquer paintings, trying to realize the purity of lacquer paintings. As a result, the lacquer paintings of the 90s of the last century showed a strong appearance of “other kinds of paintings”. As a matter of fact, the creation based on the translation of this material proved to be incapable of realizing the artistic language of lacquer, and this situation has been criticized by other kinds of paintings in China and continues to this day. Although there are many excellent cases during this period, in general it can be summarized as a mismatch between the language of material and the language of form. As we all know, lacquer itself is a decorative craft with a history of at least 8,000 thousand years, but during this period, the main concern of the creators of lacquer paintings was how to abandon the decorative nature of lacquer in order to conform to the mainstream of the creation of the great fine arts in the same period. In essence, this was a paradox from a theoretical point of view, which led to lacquer painting passing by Chinese contemporary art in the last century.

It is worth noting that in the reflection of the double dislocation of the last century, the lacquer painting creative team of this century began to recognize the problem of “lacquer’s own nature”, that is, exploring the attributes belonging to lacquer paintings themselves, including their creative patterns and aesthetic forms, and using them as a basis for the construction of a unified ontology, form, and language system of materials. At present, we have already seen valuable explorations in the appearance of some of the works. One of the more common ways is to make a formal interpretation of the material language, such as making full use of the visual effects of lacquer gray layer and linen, reconstructing its unique formal language in a physical way, thus promoting the awakening of the ontological language and properties of lacquer paintings, which can be called the awakening of the “lacquer’s own nature”. To a certain extent, these problems may once again form a misunderstanding for the construction of

lacquer painting's own system or even blur the boundaries and paradigms of the discipline, leading to problems similar to those faced by the discipline in the 90s of the last century.

Judging from the three stages of development of Chinese lacquer painting, for more than half a century, the creative outlook of Chinese lacquer painting has mostly been in a state of wandering, which on the one hand reflects the continuous thinking and interpretation of the lacquer painting creative group, and on the other hand also shows that the complete language system of Chinese lacquer painting has never been constructed. Judging from the historical perspective, lacquer is a decorative craft and material, which does not have the ontological attribute of painting. For example, the lacquer screen unearthed in the tomb of Sima Jinlong of the Northern Wei Dynasty, although it has an extraordinary historical status, it is still a copy of the silk painting of the same period. Whether historical or contemporary, if we only explore from the direction of modern easel painting, lacquer painting will inevitably fall into the "material translation" of other kinds of painting. As a matter of fact, the same problem exists in Vietnamese lacquer painting, which has not been solved so far. Throughout history, judging from the aesthetic experience of Chinese local art, in terms of painting, what is pursued is the "creation of environment" based on modeling, which is also its significance. If analyzed from another perspective, lacquer art with a history of 8,000 years not only possesses the value of "creation of environment", but also the advantages and significance of another system, namely "creation of things". Therefore, the artistic language of lacquer and lacquer painting can never be fully opened if it is only converted from the concept of ordinary easel painting. Contemporary art forms are diversified, and the so-called easel painting also has many possibilities. The creative language of lacquer painting should not be limited to the easel painting's system of "creation", and the intervention of the language of the system of "creation" may expand its new ideas and form its own language through the fusion of the two

systems. Through the fusion of the two systems, it can form its own language characteristics and shape its local contemporary nature. Some of the works in recent years have shown the potential consciousness of the “creation” system, and have clearly put forward this idea in the relevant seminars, thus forming a different appearance from the past.

To sum up, Chinese lacquer painting has gone through three stages of development, gradually unified in the construction of the language system, which can be called the “triple stage”, and has presented the unity of language and local contemporaneity in contemporary times, which can be said to be of extraordinary significance.

#### **4. Reinvention and Re-dissemination: The Historical Mission of Chinese Lacquer Painting**

By analyzing the historical background and contemporary development of Chinese lacquer painting, we can understand its creative outlook and contemporary value in a more objective way. At the same time, through horizontal comparison, we can also find that Japanese lacquer painting does not have the burden of contemporaneity, for contemporary Japanese lacquer artists, tradition means contemporaneity. Vietnamese lacquer painting does not have the burden of history, since its birth in the early 1900s, Vietnamese lacquer painting has been exploring the issue of pictorial expression, and the lacquer painting itself is contemporaneity, there is no traditional lacquer painting to be troubled by. However, Chinese lacquer painting needs to think about the inheritance and transformation of the traditional craft on the one hand, and on the other hand, it needs to explore the concepts and patterns of contemporary art, so it has more complicated creative differences. Happily, through the unremitting efforts of the lacquer painting creative group, Chinese lacquer painting has not only come to the forefront in the study of material language, but also reconstructed its ontological language and formal

language in contemporary times. From many cases of creation, we can find that Chinese lacquer painting has already awakened the consciousness of “reopening”. Firstly, in terms of ontological language, its field of view has shifted from other painting types to the aesthetic scope of lacquer art itself, opening up the contemporary aesthetic construction of lacquer culture. Secondly, in terms of formal language, its appearance has shifted from the schematic imitation of other painting types to the self-expression of lacquer cultural language, opening up the contemporary form and even the ecology of lacquer art with a new context. It can be said that Chinese lacquer painting is a successful case of the contemporary reinvention of oriental lacquer culture, and it has a certain leading role in the Asian lacquer culture circle.

At present, Chinese lacquer painting is facing unprecedented development opportunities. First of all, under the guidance of the China Artists Association, the Lacquer Painting Art Committee was formally established in 2001, which has further developed academic activities and organizations nationwide, and strongly promoted the prosperity of Chinese lacquer painting. For example, in terms of organization construction, in recent years, lacquer painting art committees have been established in Shanghai, Shanxi, Shaanxi, Guangxi and Anhui, making the organizational structure of lacquer painting further complete. Secondly, in terms of brand construction, in addition to the National Art Exhibition, the China Lacquer Painting Exhibition, China Lacquer Painting Biennial, China Small Lacquer Painting Exhibition, and China Youth Lacquer Painting Exhibition have been set up one after another. In addition, the Hubei International Lacquer Triennial, Fuzhou International Lacquer Biennial and other events have also improved the contemporary ecology of Chinese lacquer painting to a certain extent, and embodied more cutting-edge academics in terms of curatorial concepts. Finally, with the rise of crafts in institutions, majors such as glass, jewelry, ceramics, lacquer, and fiber have experimented with the

combination of materials and contemporary art, entering the post-craft phase of institutions, also known as “art in the post-craft era”. This background has also indirectly contributed positively to the academic cognition of lacquer painting and has also provided certain inspiration and reference in terms of creative concepts.

There is no doubt about the success and potential of Chinese lacquer painting, but on this basis, we need to further think about the future development of Chinese lacquer painting and the cognition of cultural identity. Chinese lacquer painting has a deep historical background, and its own formation is characterized by the globalization of dissemination and reflux, a feature that is unique compared to all contemporary Chinese art disciplines. Since the beginning of the new century, China has put forward the initiative of “One Belt, One Road” and the concept of the community of human destiny and opened up a new round of international cooperation and exchanges. Therefore, based on the accumulation of history and globalization background, the contemporary value of Chinese lacquer painting is not only limited to its art itself, but also as a successful case and an important form of contemporary Asian lacquer culture circle, to reconstruct its global discourse, so as to contribute to the continuous promotion of the “One Belt, One Road”.

As a matter of fact, Chinese lacquer painting has already initiated the construction of a globalized discourse and the reshaping of the Asian lacquer culture circle. For example, under the influence of Chinese lacquer painting, South Korea established the Lacquer Painters Association and held the “China-Korea Lacquer Painting Exchange Exhibition” in Sejong Hall in 2013. In recent years, the number of flat lacquer paintings has far exceeded the number of three-dimensional lacquer works in Japan’s Japanese exhibitions, while the number of flat lacquer works in Thailand and Myanmar has also gradually increased. After 2016, the Asian Lacquer Exchange Program, which is the most

influential lacquer cultural exchange program on an international scale, has been held in Chiang Mai Thailand, Hanoi Vietnam, Bagan Myanmar, and Siem Reap Cambodia, jointly organized by countries in East and Southeast Asia. Chinese lacquer painters actively participated in it and comprehensively displayed the face of contemporary Chinese lacquer painting, thus leaving a deep impression on Asian countries. In 2017, the Lacquer Painting Working Committee of the Shanghai Artists Association organized a delegation to Vietnam, which visited Ho Chi Minh University of Fine Arts, Hanoi School of Arts and Crafts and other institutions and units, and exchanged views with Vietnamese lacquer painting educators and creative groups, discussing contemporary Asian lacquer painting's Discipline co-construction and related cooperation. In the same year, the article "Overview of Chinese Lacquer Painting" was published in "Vietnam Fine Arts", which caused great repercussions among Vietnamese institutions and lacquer painting creative groups and formed creative reflections.

In terms of international promotion, under the guidance of the China Artists Association, the "Contemporary Chinese Lacquer Painting Invitational Exhibition" was held at the International Exchange Center, University of Cambridge in 2018. A total of 31 works were displayed in the exhibition, representing the main outlook and concepts of contemporary Chinese lacquer painting. The opening ceremony was attended by leaders and experts from the Fitzwilliam Museum of the University of Cambridge and the Department of History of Art of the University of Cambridge, and so on They expressed their full recognition of the creative concepts, graphic language, and technical characteristics of Chinese lacquer painting, and reviewed the important influence of Chinese export lacquer art on Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries, thus pointing out the important potential of contemporary Chinese lacquer painting in the future cultural exchange between East and West. Following the exhibition at the University of Cambridge in the UK, the "Overseas Exhibition of Chinese Lacquer

Painting in Spain” was grandly opened at the Chinese Cultural Center in Madrid in 2019. This event is organized by the Lacquer Painting Art Committee of China Artists Association, undertaken by Madrid Chinese Cultural Center and Shen Shao'an Lacquer Art Research Institute, and co-organized by Spanish Chinese Artists Association and Barcelona Academy of Arts. During the opening ceremony, the guests highly affirmed the oriental poetic beauty and contemporary art form of Chinese lacquer painting and looked forward to another encounter between the oriental art and the western world, writing a new chapter for the cultural exchange between the two countries.

To summarize, Chinese lacquer painting is a way to open up the traditional lacquer art in the field of contemporary art, and in a new form, it provides the Asian lacquer culture circle and contemporary art with concepts and modes of thinking, thus further expanding the influence of Chinese lacquer culture in the world, and also providing an important revelation for the construction of China's contemporary cultural self-confidence.

## **5. Conclusion**

The prosperity of Chinese lacquer painting is gratifying, but at the same time, we need to think about the future direction of Chinese lacquer painting and lacquer culture. Art not only faithfully reflects the changes and visions of contemporary society, but also becomes one of the most important bridges for the exchange of ideas by virtue of its ability to cross linguistic and cultural boundaries. While perfecting its self-construction, Chinese lacquer painting has achieved remarkable success in various overseas activities in recent years, thus shaping and spreading China's excellent culture and highlighting the spirit of contemporary China through the artistic language of lacquer painting. It can be said that it

will be the historical mission of Chinese lacquer painting to re-recognize the history, establish cultural confidence and build a contemporary global discourse.

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## What is contemporary? Art in the Age of the Internet, Amnesia, and the Anthropocene

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### Abstract

What defines good contemporary art is a hotly debated question. This article argues that contemporary art is fundamentally defined by a superabundance of information: data upon data upon neverending data. The contemporary artist no longer needs to create anything new, there is already so many ideas, so much information, that the problem is a matter of the re-presentation of the ideas that have already been had, the information that has already been collected, the knowledge that has already been known, to the audiences that need to be exposed to that information at the right time. The role of the contemporary artist is closer, then, to the librarian or the curator, a figure who connect audiences to the resources they need, even if the audiences don't necessarily know it yet.

**Keywords:** Contemporary Art; Anthropocene; Environmentalism; Global Warming;

Art Criticism

### 1. Introduction

Contemporary art makes a mockery of us art historians, critics, curators, connoisseurs, and gallery-goers alike. It has been toying with us ever since Marcel Duchamp put a urinal in an exhibition and Andy Warhol started selling plywood replicas of soap boxes. And as it laughs with us, at us, because of us, we ask of it—again and again—that age-old categorical question: what is contemporary art? Is *this* art? How should we judge it? What (Brillo) box do we put it in (Warhol, 1964)? Of course, some would say the challenge of the contemporary began much earlier than the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

These questions have plagued critics since the renaissance. They are nothing new. Richard Meyer would have us remember that questioning the contemporary has been an essential aspect of art criticism since Modernism (Meyer, 2013). “Contemporary with what?” Paul Virilio and Tom McDonough (Binghamton) ask (Virilio, 2003). For these age-old questions, I turn to the age-old answers: “Why?” “Because.” “What is art?” “Art is anything made by humans.” “Art is that which makes the invisible, visible.” “What is good art?” “Good art makes the invisible, visible—and worth looking at.” Few definitions have been better than that one. That’s the rub, I suppose: how can we describe what we cannot perceive? The problem, in part, is our total immersion in it, which recalls David Foster Wallace’s parable of the fishes:

There are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way. He nods at them and says,

“Mornin’ boys. How’s the water?”

And the two young fish swim on for a bit and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes,

*“What the hell is water?”* (Wallace, 2005)

Like fish, we are immersed in a sea of contemporary art, ideas, and information. The sea surrounds us, pervades us, penetrates us. We eat, breathe, think, and live within this temporal ether called “contemporary,” and it is as invisible as water is to fish. If it is possible to describe that with which we are part and parcel of, then it is that very ability that separates the good art historians from the great ones. The greatest theorists of art history, such as Vasari, Walter Benjamin, Leo Steinberg, Linda Nochlin, managed (by luck or by genius) to distance themselves from their own contemporary aether. However this separation or transcendence occurs, such vision allowed these critics to achieve an Archimedean standpoint, to see their contemporary moment as a whole—paradoxically, to look inside from the outside while still remaining inside. Only with such comprehensive vision can a theorist see what pervades the contemporary moment,

what makes it all move, and, having understood the *primum mobile* structuring the present, find a way to communicate such a vision in spite of normative conventions. *Eppur si muove*, protested Galileo.

## 2. What Contemporary Art Is

Perhaps it's easier to answer this question of what contemporary art is by considering what it reveals: what does the contemporary show us that we didn't know was there, permeating our cultures? What does contemporary art, in its many shapes, media, and permutations, reveal to us about what we as a global society cannot see? What is this water in which we swim? (Paul Klee)

Leo Steinberg had a tremendous amount of trouble grappling with Jasper Johns and the Neo-Dada movement in the 1960s. His essay "Contemporary Art and the Plight of its Public" reflects his extreme discomfort on account of the fact that he was no longer "getting it." He wrote of his experience:

I am alone with this thing, and it is up to me to evaluate it in the absence of all available standards. The value which I will put on this painting tests my authenticity as an individual. Here I can discover whether I am man enough to sustain an encounter with a completely original experience. Am I escaping it by being overly clever? The things that I see—are they really me, or have I been eavesdropping on conversations? I have been trying to formulate certain meanings seen in this art; are they designed to demonstrate something about myself, or are they really an inward experience? Do the things I have just written seem very good to me? This threat of vanity is more serious than the mere rise of nonsense; and yet I wonder—ten years from now, will I look silly if it should become universally obvious that all this was junk? Or have I failed myself already in asking these questions, being overly conscious about myself, instead of surrendering to the experience which is reaching out to me? (Steinberg, 1962).

He realized—in a moment of remarkable humility, the sort of humility that is a type of genius—that the fault of the misunderstanding was entirely his own:

I was angry at the artist, as if he had invited me to a meal, only to serve something uneatable...I was irritated at some of my friends for pretending to like it—but with an uneasy suspicion that perhaps they did like it, so that I was really mad at myself for being so dull, and at the whole situation for showing me up (Steinberg, 1962).

The art, Steinberg realized, antiquated him. It had made him old, boring, no longer “with it.” A generational rift had opened up before his very eyes and threatened to swallow him whole into the chasm of obsolescence. And here is the lesson of Steinberg’s essay (a lesson everyone would do well to remember): Leo refused to be swallowed up. The whale spat up Jonah and Leo alike. Steinberg understood that it was not the art that was on trial, but rather, himself. Instead of turning his back on this new thing which he didn’t understand (a decision that would have doomed him to march headlong into obscurity), Steinberg chose to wrestle longer with these works lest they turn him lame. He ruminated over them again and again and, in turn, allowed the art “to conjugate him, [though] he is a sluggish verb, eager to carry out the weight of meanings but not always up to it,” as Brian O’Doherty described the play of modern art on the spectator (O’Doherty, 1986).

The same problem is occurring in the field of contemporary art history today: a generation of art historians is not “getting it.” The contemporary eludes them. For example, Pamela Lee’s *Forgetting the Art World* uses intensive analysis of four well-known contemporary artists in order to come to some conclusion about a few qualities of contemporary art, such as scalability, ether, superflatness, and immanence. Her greatest addition is the realization that each individual work of art creates its own story, community, reception, and its own “artworld” (Lee, 2017). Yet by scrutinizing these four trees, she misses the forest. Paul O’Neill analyzes how curators become artists themselves, how the medium of art can be the exhibition (O’Neill, 2012). His book, a fascinating expansion of O’Doherty’s *White Cube*, limits itself to curated art—which so much of contemporary art is not. Richard Meyer historicizes a series of contemporary moments prior to our own, but his conclusions about past contemporaries are far more interesting than any of the few conclusions he puts forward for the present contemporary (Meyer, 2013). Julian Stallabrass would have us believe that the glue bonding all contemporary art is economics. He is certainly correct, in part—but there is more that bonds contemporary art than simply the reflection and propagation of neoliberal capitalism (Stallabrass, 2004). Plenty of contemporary art is totally free and unassociated with capital, or tries its best to be. David Joselit wends his way toward some direct understanding of the contemporary by creating an entirely new set of vocabulary to describe the way art and ideas are now being transmitted and relayed. His

expansion of Benjamin's famous essay into the present has the most influence on my theorization of the contemporary (Joselit, 2012). The problem of defining the "contemporary" seems to be generational. Just as Leo Steinberg puzzled over Jasper Johns, contemporary art is vexing a generation of art historians who simply cannot grasp the profundity of a technological shift so pervasive and transformative that its effects would justly be compared to the printing press, the steam engine, or the nuclear bomb.

An aside: On May 7<sup>th</sup> 2013 at 8:40pm (EST), the New York Yankees played against the Denver Rockies at Coors Field in the first game of a series of three. The stadium was packed, the game was filmed, and thousands of pictures were taken and uploaded to the internet. One picture in particular ended up taking a fascinating road into the contemporary—from a seat high up in the nosebleeds behind first base, an anonymous person captured a photograph of the gameplay on their camera-phone at the moment a sublime lightning strike crookedly detonated some distance from the stadium. He uploaded the image to a popular aggregative website, Reddit.com, several hours later (nearly exactly at midnight, May 8th EST). [See Fig. 1] Coincidentally—even more coincidentally than capturing the bolt in the first place—another photographer on the other side of town, having climbed to a strikingly dangerous height near a construction zone, captured in nearly the same instant the very same lightning bolt. The shots couldn't have been taken more than a split second apart. He uploaded his image on May 7th at 9:41 EST, probably almost immediately after he captured the shot. [See Fig 2].

It took merely twelve minutes after the Coors Field photo was posted (at midnight) for a third person to recognize the amazing simultaneity of the two photographs. From there a discussion broke out in the comments section. How can we be certain these pictures are authentic, and not simply a trick of Photoshop? By 1 a.m., less than hour later, miscellaneous commentators from around the internet had proven that the coincidence was in fact authentic using triangulation, Google Maps, and Photoshop overlays. [See Figs 3 and 4] "What are the chances of that?" one redditor asked. "8 billion?" opined another. "...Considering that it happened, the chances are now 100%" a third quipped.

Such unfathomable coincidences are more common than we suppose. I found, through a quick search, that some nine months previous (August 9, 2012) a different lightning bolt had been serendipitously

photographed from more than one position simultaneously. This is, in part, my point. This sort of coincidence is an illustration of the power of the internet. We have reached the hyperbolic extension of Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Now, because of the omnipresence of the internet, the all-seeing ubiquity of camera phones, video cameras, dashboard cameras, security cameras, more and more of the world is filmed, replicated, uploaded, constantly. Bentham's panopticon has peaked. I cannot overstate the importance of the internet (nor do I aim to), the way it seems to, more and more, record and preserve everything as it happens. People's entire lives are uploaded on the internet: their streams of consciousness are on Twitter; their hobbies and wishes on Pinterest; their daily sights on Instagram; their social networks through Facebook; their dances on TikTok; their livestreams on Twitch. A person's entire psyche (regardless of how mundane), their experiences (regardless of how quotidian), are preserved, "embalmed" in digital form. For eternity? —perhaps. Surely the longevity of these digital manifestations of ourselves will not outdo the Egyptians. We film, snap, upload, download, record, comment, to such a spectacular degree that it is no longer possible for an instantaneous lightning strike to retreat into the sky without being immortalized in photography from multiple different angles. Every instant is eternal. The fleeting cannot flee. Every flashing, jotting, titling moment is redundantly recorded from the multiplicity *ad nauseum*. The internet is the closest thing we have to omnipresence and omniscience—and even, from certain perspective, omnipotence. We swim the internet sea like fish in water and we cannot escape it. For most, it is totally invisible, fully engrained into our daily habits. We've reached the millennial age in which, when the proverbial tree falls in the forest, it *does* make a sound, and you can listen to it on YouTube, should you be so interested.

What an unimaginable amount of (mostly useless) information stored! A frivolous, never-ending wasteful redundancy—there is simply so much information, too much information. There will soon be a time when the problem of maintaining football-sized warehouses of servers and hard drives whirring with our collected data will become so inefficient and wasteful that we will be forced to economize our databases or collapse under the weight of our servers. Why should it be that every person must have his own, individual digital copy of Kendrick Lamar's latest album? Can't we all just share one copy, if it is all the

same? The problem of the redundant and the unnecessary is a major one, both technological and artistic. Having managed to find a way to replicate nearly everything, we will eventually have to make decisions about what isn't worth keeping. Art, we might hope, will help us make wise decisions.

Is there a limit, a threshold of saturation or superfluousness? At what point do we protest that there is simply too much information? This condition of superabundant data is a condition of superexcess, a condition that makes us like bees drowning in our own data-honey, a condition that creates the need for a new sort of contemporary artist. The contemporary artist is no longer one who makes more art (though certainly this is still possible). The contemporary artist simply rearranges what already exists into new collages relevant to a group, a situation, space, event, or time (an "artworld" in the words of Pamela Lee). The contemporary artist is what James Joyce called a "scissors and paste man," but his materials are seemingly immaterial: digital (Joyce, 1957, p. 297). This artist re-presents information that was already recorded, that was already known—what wasn't known was that the information was *relevant*. The artist rescues data from superfluidity, snatches information from the maw of amnesiac obsolescence and restores it to relevance. The contemporary artist works in a digital medium, but their artistic logic, their genius, is one of relevance, of connecting information to people who most need it, and didn't realize that it already existed. The artist is something like a historian, studying the past, made relevant by rhyming with the present.

Consider the material artist who eschews the internet. She intentionally refuses to have any of her work reproduced digitally. She continues to exhibit ceramics, paint landscapes, construct sculpture, or perform dances at various venues and galleries. Without digital propagation of her work, however, she is doomed to anonymity, or something close to it. But such anonymity is unlikely if not impossible; if this artist shows her work to a public audience, she has no choice but to allow it to be photographed, filmed, reproduced, and incorporated into the internet. If she is excellent or lucky, or interesting, her work will likely become a sensation simply through the infinite distributive propagation of images of her work. Or she can choose to have some control over the process of her digital reproduction and put it on the internet herself, say, on a personal website. It is nearly impossible, however, for her to avoid digital reproduction

entirely. Even if she forbids cameras in the gallery, people will still find a way to take pictures if they feel compelled—the proscription against photography might even encourage picture-taking all the more. The contemporary artist, whether she likes it or not, is a digital artist. We cannot free ourselves from the internet any more than fish can free themselves from water. Benjamin’s “Age of Mechanical Reproduction” has transformed into the contemporary age of unconsensual digital reproduction. The social contract necessitates submission to the digital panopticon. Digital reproduction is simply part of our human condition.

### 3. New or Old

Contemporary art is not necessarily about making something new, though it certainly can be. We can always push the borders of human knowledge further. Originality still exists. Science still has its discoveries. New technologies will continue to shape our world and invent new ways to digitize our embodied selves. There will always be a specialized few experts expanding the brink of knowledge, discovering new unknowns. May they continue. But the world can no longer naively rely on the promises of science, technology, and modernity to create some new *deus ex machina* to save humankind from the excesses of the previous generations. We have all the information in front of us now. In fact, we have far, far too much of it—unsorted, horrifying masses of it. We’ve known, for example, since Charles Keeling’s climate data begun in the 1960s of the increasing CO<sub>2</sub> in our atmosphere. In fact, never before in history has humankind had more *data* about global warming, about the apocalyptic future we doom ourselves as to a result of our collective addiction to fossil fuel economies. Yet we still do nothing. Information, data, discovery, none of it is not enough. What is needed is the *curator*, the re-presenter of this data at the right time, in the right place, to the right audience, in the right way, to effect meaningful change. That will be the mark of genius in the contemporary artist.

Art must be about reorganizing and reformatting the old information, the old ideas, the information which we already knew, have known, forgotten, or failed to pay attention to. Of all the conditions of the modern world, the foremost of them is the condition of forgetting. We are all individually and collectively

forgetting everything we have ever known. We are generationally forgetting everything we have ever known and remembering bits and pieces as time folds upon us. Contemporary art is a process of strategic anamnesis. The best contemporary art is the art that presents to us the information that we already knew, but didn't know we had forgotten, and the moment when we most need it. It's not about new information or new art anymore. It's about re-knowing or renewing the old information. We have it written down and stored somewhere, but we no longer know where we left the metaphorical Post-it note to remind us. We have it indexed. And that index? —we indexed that too (indices of indices!), but we can no longer remember the first layer once we have abstracted to the third, or fourth, or fifth indexical layer. We have learned all these lessons and we must re-learn them eternally. It is about reconnecting nodes of seemingly obsolete information that happen to be uniquely useful to the present moment. The contemporary artist will be a genius of presenting what we do not know we desire at the moment when we least expect it.

#### 4. Desire or Need

Desire is the dangerous word. Meretricious contemporary art will focus on the desires of communities and feed those desires with the art that will sell. We might call this propaganda—sweets offered to the public when vegetables are necessary to stave off a heart attack. In America, we see this in the pernicious feeding of nativist fantasies, “Make America Great Again,” in which one embraces sweet denial—*no, the world isn't changing. No, I don't need to change. It is the world that needs to regress to what it was in my nostalgic fever dream.* This also is nothing new. Art has always responded to the desires, the sellable whims and wishes of communities (one thinks of Stallabrass, again). We can only hope such art will be exposed as bad art, given the test of time.

Good art, however, might reveal to communities things that they do not desire to see but need to see. *Need* is a better word: good art delivers messages that we need; the medicine may be bitter but it nonetheless cures the symptoms. Here is where the art critic comes in. Rather than simply being a critic of art and the art world, the contemporary art critic needs to understand communities and reception more than

ever before. Recognizing good art for what it is will be a matter of knowing the community and recognizing what a given community needs. Art critics are in a position to interpret this for communities.

I do not mean to suggest that we need more examples of lightning bolts photographed from different angles. We've been there; we've done that. So far I've been speaking abstractly and providing little in the way of concrete examples. What is an example of what I am trying to get at when I describe the contemporary artist as a "connector of lightning bolts"? What sort of information do we most need (or desire) to be connected to at this moment?

An example: A recent trending meme put side-by-side images of pictures taken from the same angle on different models of iPhones, mocking Apple's "Shot on my iPhone [Insert Model Number]" advertising campaign (Fig 5). This is consistent with arguments in Chapter 7, "Phagocene: Consuming the Planet" (Bonneuil, 2016). The ubiquitous iPhone advertising campaign attempts to convince consumers that they ought to purchase the latest iPhone in order to take advantage of the new camera on the newest model of the iPhone 14/15/16/etc. The pictures are of Lone Rock Beach, Utah; Briksdalsbreen Glacier, Norway; Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe; and a fish market in Hamburg, Germany. Though each photo is shot at the same angle, the photos are shot years apart (ranging from three to eleven years). Each of the more recent photos demonstrates mild to moderate technological improvements of the iPhone camera. The rub is that the material conditions of the pictured landscapes have steeply declined: the Briksdalsbreen Glacier has receded significantly; Victoria Falls has dried up; the Hamburg fish market has flooded; Lone Rock Beach has parched into a desert. The contrast is stark and the message is scathing: the relatively insignificant technological advancements of the upgraded iPhones—the endless cycle of planned obsolescence and the feverish consumerist push to purchase the latest phone—has come at the expense of the landscapes. The forces driving the endless upgrades to these cameras are indirectly responsible for the degradation of the landscape. Apple would sell us improved cellphone cameras at the price of the exploitation of the landscapes, inviting the would-be photographer to trade the subject of their art for the tool itself. Ecology, once again, has come at the expense of ecology, or, in the words of Aldo Leopold, "We are remodeling Alhambra with a steam-shovel, and we are proud of our yardage" (Leopold, 1949). This meme achieved

what I argue is the role of the contemporary artist: a connector of the relevant information, virally distributed, in an easily legible language, in this case, a simultaneously blunt and complex critique of one aspect of the capitalist mechanisms that have compelled us collectively to sacrifice the planet for a commodity. The artist has made visible the terrible fact that with every purchase, we choose to sacrifice the environment for the iPhone, we choose to sacrifice ecology for the economy, we choose to sacrifice the thing itself for the simulacrum/simulation (Baudrillard, 1994). What strange, perverse logic is expressed by these iPhone ads: we'd rather have a better tool for photographing the environment than have the environment which we purportedly value photographing.

## 5. Conclusion

There is no end to the amount of data that has been collected on global warming. The evidence is clear and the data continues to accumulate. Yet it is also clear that no amount of accumulated data has any effect on compelling meaningful interventions from the major actors (such as the United States and China) that have the power to do anything about it. The brilliance of this meme comes from the succinctness with which this message is conveyed in a visual language. This is all the more legible to the average citizen than are so many hundreds of thousands of pages of bleak, mind-numbing scientific literature from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. This example grapples with the capitalist chains that have bound us to our Anthropocene catastrophe—careening as we are, towards this seemingly inevitable environmental disaster of our own creation. Is there any art that can shake us from the condition of being both the source and destination of the asteroid of our own demise? Probably not. But we must try. The role of the contemporary artist is closer, then, to the librarian or the curator, a figure who connects audiences to the resources they need, even if the audiences don't necessarily know exactly what it is they are looking for, or even what question needs to be asked.

As Richard Meyer explored in *What Was Contemporary?* and Leo Steinberg heroically struggled with, contemporaneity has historical precedence. What is new is the technology, which reframes our thinking and imagination of the world around us as surely as the printing press, the photograph, and the

video camera did. The internet has connected us and pooled everything we've ever known and experienced. What shall we call this age? It will surely be named by whoever has the stickiest, most pithy, citable title, or whichever name gains the most buzz. Doubtless, whoever manages to create a name that sticks will have to use the internet to make it stick. Perhaps the age of Anthropocene art? I don't know. But I do know that the contemporary moment which we have been a part of will be named in a way that reflects the revolutionary transformation of art and thought by the internet. Most art historians settle on 1989 as the approximate beginning of the contemporary period—I think this date will likely be revised to reflect the period in which the internet began reaching millions and millions of people, perhaps around 1994. And as for artists in the age of digital reproduction: They will be geniuses of relevance, connectors of lightning bolts; their art will be reminders delivered at the right moments to the right people; they will leave us surprised by these ideas that were right in front of us, utterly flabbergasted by these things we already knew.

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Figure 1. A sublime lightning strike crookedly detonated some distance from the stadium  
(Cited from Reddit.com)

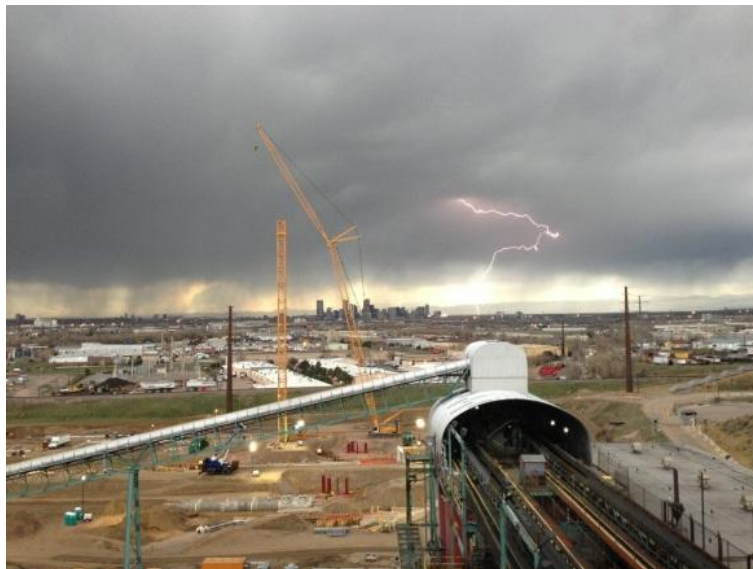


Figure 2. On the other side of town, captured in nearly the same instant the very same lightning bolt  
(Cited from Reddit.com)



Figure 3. Proven that the coincidence was in fact authentic using triangulation  
(Cited from Reddit.com)

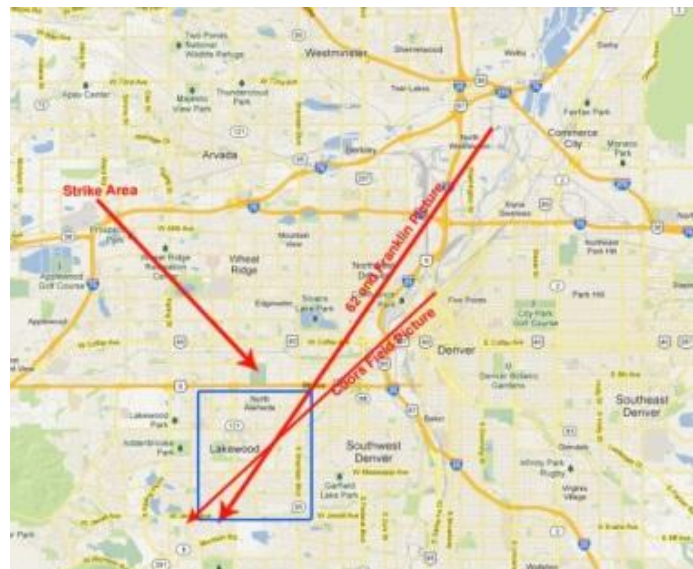


Figure 4. Using triangulation, Google Maps, and Photoshop overlays  
(Cited from Reddit.com)

## A Study on Naxi Life Education and Wisdom in Lijiang, China

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### Abstract

Currently, life education has become a crucial component in fostering the healthy development of young people, fulfilling their spiritual and cultural needs, and enhancing their quality of life. In China, the Naxi ethnic group's approach to life education encompasses practices that hold significant research value for promoting life education. This paper employs methods such as literature review and field research to conduct an in-depth analysis of Naxi life education. It examines the value and significance of Naxi life education and wisdom, offering insights and implications for the educational field.

**Keywords:** Naxi Life Education; Life Education; Approaches to Naxi Life Education

### 1. Introduction

The Naxi is one of the 56 ethnic groups in China. According to the sixth national population census conducted in 2010, the Naxi population numbered 326,295, with 240,580 primarily residing in Yunnan Province, constituting 73.7% of the total Naxi population. Renowned for their long history and vibrant culture, the Naxi people have gained international acclaim for their World Cultural Heritage site—Lijiang Ancient City, the World Memory Heritage—for Dongba ancient literature, and ancient Jinsha river rock paintings, among other cultural treasures such as Dongba culture and Baisha murals.

This research explores Naxi life education and wisdom in Lijiang through a combination of literature review and fieldwork.

## **2. Research Questions**

How did the Naxi, an ethnic minority group, create such a brilliant civilization? What kind of culture underpins the prosperity of this world cultural heritage? What is the impact of the enduring Naxi life education in their region? Exploring and studying the life education of the Naxi people and compiling some life education experiences that can be learned from this will undoubtedly be of significant value and relevance to contemporary education reform.

## **3. Literature Review**

The study of life education can be traced back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to the New Education Movement and the Progressive Education Movement that emerged in Europe and the United States. Figures such as William Albert Wirt, Marietta Johnson, and Parker F. W. advocated for various educational reforms that promoted learning through activities centered around learners' interests. One of the most representative figures in this movement is John Dewey. Dewey posits that education is not merely a preparation for future life; rather, education is the process of life itself, where people continuously form and transform their experiences within the living environment. Dewey's ideas greatly influenced Tao Xingzhi, who was studying at Columbia University in the U.S. at the time. Rosenberg, Marshall and Eisler (2003), applied the theory of life education to early childhood, primary and secondary education, as well as general higher education for research and practice. Stephen

F. Duncan and Goddard (2011) applied the life education theory to the study of family education, proposing a comprehensive framework for the implementation of family life education, program design, and so forth.

According to the China Knowledge Network database, a total of 22,520 articles related to “life education” were collected. Out of these, 3,001 articles specifically used the keyword “life education”, while only 31 articles were related to “Naxi education”, and a concerning zero articles were related to “Naxi life education”. The search results indicate that the interest in “life education” has been steadily increasing since 2000. “Life education” aids students in establishing a proper outlook on life, survival, and living. It serves as a vehicle for implementing national socialist core values, moral education, and quality education. If effectively practiced, it can also enhance the construction of China’s socialist core values, making them more appealing. Improved practice of “life education” would further promote the development of China's socialist core values and ensure that those educated truly benefit from it.

In the realm of life education theory as applied to curriculum resources development research, Zhang Jianzhong's *“On Tao Xingzhi’s Theory of Life and Aesthetic Education and Its Contemporary Revelation”* and Guan Xia’s *“Research on Tao Xingzhi’s Thought on Aesthetic Education”* both explore perspectives from “truth, goodness, beauty, knowledge, emotion, and intention, teaching and doing”. However, the two articles have distinct foci. The former delves more deeply into the logical aspects of “teaching and doing”, while the latter presents a more systematic argumentation of “truth, goodness, and beauty, knowledge, emotion, and intention, teaching and doing”. Nevertheless, the final chapter on

*“Tao Xingzhi’s Characteristics of Aesthetic Education”* is lacking in analysis. Zhang Yongwei's article, *“The Use of Living Teaching in High School Art Education”*, takes as its starting point the detachment of high school art education from students' lives. The study examines the dialectical unity between life and the history of art education, emphasizing the importance of life without standing on a certain theoretical height. Additionally, the study is deficient in practical application, as some teaching designs cannot be realized according to the analysis of the actual situation, thus becoming detached from the significance of teaching. Zhou Xiaoxiao’s *“Implications of the Life Education Perspective on Art Education in Rural Primary and Secondary Schools”* also studies the issue of art education under Tao Xingzhi’s life education perspective. However, its research direction is somewhat broad, focusing mainly on teaching space, relationships with other disciplines, and the use of local resources. This includes the development of art resources, but only as a symbolic reference without in-depth research and exploration. For instance, curriculum resources of the Stone painting and handmade calligraphy and painting paper have been practiced, but only photos serve as evidence, nor did it explain the problems encountered in the process of developing local resources under the guidance of the concept of life education and how they were solved. In summary, the study of curriculum resources in art education is a minor point that has not been thoroughly investigated.

According to the anthropology of education, one of the key dynamics of education is cultural integration. This involves the function of organizing and combining various cultural characteristics into a coherent system, which can significantly influence and be expressed through education. Without

cultural integration in education, cultural change within the educational system is not possible. The essence of cultural integration is not merely the summation of traits but a developmental process. In this process, educational administrators, implementers, and participants continuously construct educational practices through “cultural selection”. The outcome is directed towards cultural adaptation and educational innovation, meaning the evolution and advancement of education through “cultural selection” within a new cultural context.

The theory of cultural integration underscores the systematic, structural, and functional aspects of the cultural process in education. This perspective aligns with educational research that highlights the integrity of individual educational practices. From cultural integration to adaptation and innovation in education, the essence lies in the specific process of cultural selection, which is why this study centers around cultural selection as its core concept. Throughout the development and transformation of Naxi education, “selectivity” has been an intrinsic attribute of both culture and education, present from start to finish. The structural stratification and theoretical model of cultural integration more effectively elucidate this “selectivity”.

Professor Feng (2001) “*Anthropology of Education*” delineates cultural integration into three levels: Firstly, the level of survival and adaptation, which encompasses a significant amount of practicality and technology. This includes technology, customs, entertainment, socialization, etiquette, and ethics, among other elements. The primary focus here is on the practical and technical aspects of culture, which facilitate human adaptation to the environment and ensure survival. Secondly, there is

the level of group belonging, which builds upon the foundation of survival adaptation to express the need for communal affiliation. Lastly, the level of creative aesthetics reflects the “universal cultural values and shared wisdom and emotions of all humanity”, and is grounded in educational development and aesthetic progression.

#### **4. Methodology**

The method of fieldwork is to explore the life education and wisdom of the Naxi ethnic group. Consequently, the Naxi region of Lijiang in China was visited and researched.

#### **5. The Concept of Naxi Life Education**

The concept of Naxi life education is a choice that reflects Naxi culture and the outcome of cultural integration. The amalgamation of diverse cultural resources has shaped the concept of Naxi life education, encompassing the unique Naxi perspectives on nature education, wisdom education, humanity education, morality education, and life education.

##### **5.1 The Nature Education Concept**

The Naxi people hold the belief that everything possesses a spirit. Since ancient times, they have conducted sacrifices to the gods of nature. Additionally, the Naxi have long embraced the concept

that “man and nature are brothers”, a fundamental belief in natural ecology, which has effectively contributed to the protection of Lijiang's ecological environment.

The Naxi people revere nature, deities, mountain spirits, and their ancestors. They hold the belief that spirits inhabit all things and that natural phenomena and objects such as the sky, mountains, water, sun, moon, wind, rain, thunder, and lightning possess spirits. Following the introduction of Tibetan Buddhism to Lugu Lake, its influence has been assimilated. The Daba, lamas, and religious ceremonies, including sacrifices to mountain gods and ancestral spirits, as well as the insertion of flags and hanging ceremonies, facilitate communication between humans and nature, between humans and the spirits and deities, and the relationship between humans and their ancestors, promoting harmonious coexistence.

## **5.2 The Wisdom Education Concept**

Wisdom is an advanced form of creative thinking, rooted in the physiological and psychological faculties of life. It encompasses all abilities to perceive, memorize, understand, analyze, judge, and elevate nature and humanity. In our daily lives, wisdom manifests through the enhanced ability to solve problems.

Wisdom education has always been emphasized in the life education of the Naxi people. Dongba, considered the wise men of the Naxi, are spiritual teachers who embody the arts of witchcraft, medicine, and craftsmanship. Their thoughts are original and unique, and their wisdom and insight are unmatched. In the realm of life education, they interpret education from a perspective of wisdom,

elucidating the teachings found within the Dongba classics. The Dongba ancient literature, recognized by UNESCO and included in the Memory of the World Heritage List, documents aspects of astronomy, geography, calendar, folklore, and history within Dongba culture. It has become a seminal text of Naxi culture and is revered as the Naxi people's "Book of Wisdom".

### **5.3 The Humanity Education Concept**

The essence of humane education is humanistic education, and its core lies in the cultivation of the humanistic spirit. The humanistic perspective of education in Naxi life education is reflected in three aspects.

Firstly, the sentiments of loyalty to the rulers, love for the country, and preservation of unity are deeply rooted in family and national sentiments. These sentiments have been a continuous thread throughout China's 5,000-year history and have been the fundamental driving force for the Chinese nation to stand among the nations of the world. Family and national sentiments also serve as a thread to the history and culture of all ethnic minorities in China, forming an important cornerstone and lifeline for the survival and development of all ethnic groups. The Naxi people's family and national sentiments, with a long, deeply rooted, and richly unique history and culture, exemplify this. Despite their remote location and relatively small population, the Naxi people have consistently shone with the glory of loyalty to the country and filial piety in the historical development. They have sincerely repaid the country after the family, and family and national sentiments have long become the significant cultural genes flowing through the Naxi people's veins. The development of Naxi family and national sentiments

can be divided into five stages: The first stage is the ancient family and national sentiments recorded in the World Memory Heritage Dongba Ancient Literature, with a central reflection in the Dongba Classics, such as “*Human Migration*”, which is the source of Naxi family and national sentiments. The second stage is the national sentiments of the Naxi ancestors during the Han and Tang dynasties. The event of “*Song of the King White Wolf*” recorded in the *Tales of Eastern Han Dynasty* highlights the sense of national identity of the Naxi people’s affection of his motherland, marking a new chapter in the history of Naxi’s national sentiments. The third stage is during the Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties, where the Naxi people were cultivated to consciously safeguard national unity through major historical events such as “the Yuan tribesmen coming on an expedition on sheepskin rafts”, “Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang of Ming Dynasty granting the Naxi Chieftain the surname Mu”, and “Changing the Chieftain system to the system of state-appointed officials in minority areas”. “Sincerity for the country” is the profound connotation of family and national sentiments.

In the history of the Naxi people, a profound sense of family and patriotism has been the fundamental driving force behind the historical development of Lijiang. This is evident in the significant historical events and the judicious decisions and actions of key figures in Naxi history. From the late Song Dynasty, Naxi ancestors journeyed to the Jinsha River to assist the Yuan tribesmen coming on an expedition on sheepskin rafts, aiding them in their southern conquest of the Dali Kingdom and thus advancing the unification of the nation. Consequently, Lijiang gained widespread renown. By the dawn of the Ming Dynasty, the Naxi were known as “the first to come over and pay allegiance to the ruler,

highly appreciated by other ethnic groups, and serve the country sincerely”. During the Ming Dynasty, Mu’s Family in Lijiang was honored by the emperor on numerous occasions, and the region became known as “the wealthiest of all counties”, a borderland “versed in poetry and literature, imbued with civility and righteousness”.

Secondly, the economic mindset presented openness and inclusiveness, equality and mutual benefit. The Lijiang Ancient Town, with no walls, stands as an open city. *The ancient Tea Horse Road* traverses the entire Yunnan, Sichuan, and Tibet region, fostering interaction and exchange among various ethnic cultures. As a significant cultural town of the Southern Silk Road and the ancient Tea Horse Road, multiple religions and cultures converge here, achieving the Lijiang Ancient City’s World Heritage Cultural Status. Fei Xiaotong personally inscribed the phrase “living town of the ancient Tea-Horse Road, the old town of Dayan”; Professor Xie Ninggao, Director of the World Heritage Center at Peking University, noted that “Lijiang, the living town of the ancient Tea-Horse Road, continues to drive and promote the economic development of all ethnic groups along the ancient route”.

Thirdly, there was cultural integration. Edward Burett Tyfo posits that “in a broad ethnographic sense, culture or civilization constitutes a complex whole, encompassing knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and all other abilities and habits that individuals possess as members of society”. The architecture, religion, murals, music, and various other elements of the Naxi people are not merely products of the fusion and development of multi-ethnic cultures. Instead, they are the result of the interaction and exchange between diverse ethnic cultures, leading to the eclectic, harmonious,

and integrated Lijiang culture. This allows tourists from around the world to experience a profound oriental ambiance and Chinese essence in Lijiang, which stems from the absorption and integration of Central Plains culture into the local Lijiang culture.

#### **5.4 The Life Education Concept**

Dr. Shu-Mei Chang, a professor at Kaohsiung Normal University in Taiwan and a Doctor of Education, believes that education on the concepts of life and death is “an education that, through exploring the nature of death and the various phenomena of dying and mourning, prompts us to deeply reflect on our relationships with others, society, nature, and the universe, thereby realizing the ultimate meaning and value of life”.

For the Naxi people, the most profound education on the concept of death is imparted through funeral ceremonies. In the view of the Naxi people, the three most significant days in their lives are birth, coming-of-age ceremony, and the funeral. The ceremonies and education associated with these three big events also reflect the Naxi people's reverence for life, gratitude for existence, and love of life.

Firstly, there is the reverence for life. Compared to neighboring ethnic groups such as the Zang, Yi, and Bai, the Naxi population is smaller. Their desire for life is primarily reflected in the worship of reproductive fertility. Naxi women regard plumpness as a beauty ideal, as giving birth to many children is highly valued. The design of Naxi women's clothing, featuring the shape of a frog, symbolizes the frog's prolific reproductive capabilities, embodying the wish to bear many offspring.

Secondly, there is gratitude for survival. Associate Professor Tian (2008) from Beijing Normal University explores the Naxi people's philosophy of coexistence with nature in Chapter 2 “*Half Brothers of the Same Father and Half Mother-Traditional Naxi View of Departmental Nature and Its Modern Significance*” of *The Naxi People in the Afterglow of the World of Gods and Spirits: Changes of an Ancient Nation*. He found that the Naxi people have discovered the principle of living in harmony with nature through this belief, which has been passed down through generations. Their gratitude for nature and survival is heartfelt and is reflected in their actions. They demonstrate their appreciation for favorable weather conditions by performing ceremonies, seeking blessings from the gods.

Thirdly, there is the love of life. The Naxi people exhibit a unique love for life, which Naxi scholar Cai (2002) describes in “*The Fascinating Aesthetic Psychological Characteristics of the Naxi*” as “natural humanitarianism”. The Naxi live freely in the shadow of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, spending half their time in self-reflection and the other half in communion with the gods. Even when a family member passes away, the community remains vibrant with singing and dancing, setting up hot pots to guide the deceased's spirit back to the land of ancestral spirits. Although the departed may be long gone, the living continue to celebrate life joyfully. This is so profound that Naxi myths have created a kingdom of love and beauty for suicide for love, a place where there is no trouble or sorrow, where hundreds of flowers bloom, herds of cattle and sheep graze, and the harvest is plentiful and abundant. In this realm, they love one another and live like gods, forgetting all the world's suffering and transcending all its pain.

### **5.5 The Moral Education Concept**

Xu (2007) stated in his article “*Religious Influence and Countermeasures on Education in Borderland Minority Areas*” that religion has played a significant role in the dissemination and development of national culture. It serves not only as a special function of human spiritual activities—including moral, cognitive, aesthetic, and emotional functions—but also has an integrative effect, producing a far-reaching and long-lasting influence.

In the Naxi heroic myth, “*The War Between the Black and the White Tribes*”, the three exemplary virtues of honesty and trustworthiness, loyalty to the community, and filial piety to parents, displayed by the protagonist A Lu, illuminate the essence of heroism. These virtues also serve as a good example for the Naxi to teach their young. In “*The War Between the Black and the White Tribes*”, despite his parents' objections, Ah Lu still ventures to create the sun and moon for the White Tribe, solely to fulfill his promise.

### **5.6 Approaches to Naxi Life Education**

Firstly, education through words and example is fundamental in one's life. Historically, the Naxi Chieftain's family members have been loyal to the country, guarding the borders for generations and fulfilling their duties with dedication as their values. The Mu family has shown absolute obedience to the central leadership, possessing a sincere patriotic heart, and has been wholeheartedly attached to the central ruler's jurisdiction. The central dynasty cherished the Mu family's loyalty, bestowing upon them the surname “Mu”. Throughout the ages, the chieftains passed down their teachings from generation to

generation. They have taught by example, instilling loyalty to the ruler and love for the country. Through extensive reading and learning, they cultivated a heart to serve the nation. By amassing a wide collection of books and inviting the world's finest teachers and elders, they have educated through three methods: reading, listening, and observing. As a result, the Mu family's six chieftains have become outstanding poets and artists.

Secondly, there is education through rituals. Rituals create an environmental and spatial field for individual life, fostering an atmosphere that encourages personal growth. They constitute a form of cultural and life education. As Ruth Benedict stated in her book *Patterns of Culture*, rituals are indeed a form of cultural and life education. She noted in “Cultural Patterns” that “it is widely acknowledged that puberty is a social issue, and the various rituals conducted during this period symbolize the transition from childhood to adulthood. This so-called transition into adulthood is not merely a biological event, but rather a culturally defined rite of passage”. For the Mosuo people, a branch of the Naxi, the coming-of-age ceremony is a pivotal event. In Lijiang, whether in Dadong, Fengke, Mingyin, or around Lugu Lake, Naxi children celebrate their Bar Mitzvah at the age of thirteen or fourteen, with boys receiving pants and girls donning skirts. The significance of this ceremony extends beyond acknowledging the child's growth into adulthood; it also signifies the child's readiness to assume familial duties and represents a prime method of family education.

Naxi funeral rites serve not only to appease the souls of the departed but also to impart lessons to the living. Through the Dongba funeral rites, the souls of the deceased are guided back to their

ancestral homes, retracing their lives and extolling their spiritual virtues. This practice ensures that the living remember the ways of their ancestors and preserve the nation's core values. For Naxi children, most life education is conducted during the funeral ceremony, which includes a retrospective of national history, elegies for the deceased, and reflections on aging, sickness, and death. In Naxi philosophy, there is a profound respect for life and contemplation of death, making the funeral ceremony a living lesson in life education.

Thirdly, there is the enlightenment from mythological stories. Naxi myths are rich and colorful, encompassing the origins of heaven and earth, the creation of the sun and moon, the birth of humanity, and the genesis of all things. The creation myth "*Song of Human Migration*", the heroic myth "*The War Between the Black and the White Tribes*", and the love myth "*Luban Lurao*" are considered the three jewels of Dongba mythology. These myths serve as the finest life lessons for Naxi children and youth, with their robust characters and compelling, emotive storylines. The creation myth "*Human Migration*" depicts the long and arduous journey of human and Naxi ethnic development, where flood myths, the creation of humanity, and other narratives reflect the nation's strong creativity and pride.

In the heroic myth "*The War Between the Black and the White Tribes*", the Naxi people's simple philosophical view of the black and white world and their magnificent imagination of creating the sun and the moon have sparked our contemplation of the dichotomy between black and white; the love myth "*Luban Lurao*" has influenced the Naxi people's concept of love, instilling in them a persistence, strength, and bravery to die generously for their love from generation to generation.

Fourthly, there is growing up amidst song and dance. Folk dances and folk games are integral to Chinese culture and embody the wisdom of the Chinese working people over millennia. They are rich in cultural significance and educational value. In the context of Naxi life education, folk dances, folk games, and folk sports all play a crucial role. The Naxi people are renowned for their musical talents and possess a vast repertoire of intangible cultural heritage, including folk songs and dances. Among these, the Naxi's large-scale classical instrumental suite, “*Baishaxiyue*”, known as the “living fossil of music”, “*Remeicuo*”, and the colorful “*Naxi Nursery Rhymes*” have been designated as national-level intangible cultural heritage. Naxi song and dance music serves not only as a calling card to promote national culture but also as a vital bridge for fostering cultural exchange and communication, and even identity. It is a medium that connects hearts. There exists an international common language in music melodies, universal values in the protection of nature, education through entertainment, the dissemination of truth, goodness, and beauty, and the building of a harmonious society. At the same time, it can serve as the vernacular of the nation and culture to rejuvenate its roots, to strive for the country's glory, and to seek common ground among humanity.

Yang Fuquan (1990), a professor at the Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences, analyzed the reasons behind the Naxi people's reverence for bravery and martial arts in his paper titled “*Exploration of the Naxi People's Spirit of Bravery and its Origin and Development*”. He identified traditional culture and life education as significant cultural genes. Professor He Chunyun from Yunnan University in his paper “*On Naxi Hunting Culture and Leisure Sports*” also explored how the Naxi traditional hunting

culture shaped the primitive sports of the Naxi people. He noted that Naxi sports and leisure activities significantly influence the development of Naxi youth, fostering a sense of manhood that emphasizes courage and martial arts. Up to now, the traditional sports of the Naxi ethnic group are still widely inherited and carried forward. This tradition has continued until the 1970s. Nearly 10 members of the Yunnan football team are from the Naxi ethnic group in Lijiang.

As mentioned above, the methods of Naxi life education encompass teaching through words and actions, ceremonial education, initiation through myths and stories, and development through songs, dances, and games, as well as through participation in production and labor, and engagement in festive customs. These methods collectively form the essential components of Naxi life education, enriching the physical and spiritual growth of Naxi children and fostering a conducive environment for their healthy development.

## **6. Conclusion and Reflection**

Tao Xingzhi stated that “life is education”. In China, Naxi life education embodies a form of educational wisdom, boasting abundant life education resources and offering extensive scope for research. Tao Xingzhi's philosophy that “life is education” promotes the notion that education should be centered on life. Consequently, our educational practices and teaching methods should also focus on life, as should the development of curriculum resources. By integrating curriculum development with

the students' lives, education can revert to its essence, embracing the beauty of education and the arts, and fostering students' ability to learn with flexibility.

Besides, incorporating life education and national cultural wisdom into the development of curriculum resources can enhance the school's brand by shaping a new image that supports local economic and social development, as well as the inheritance and innovation of national culture. In terms of scientific research, it can foster the integration of industry, academia, and research, thereby elevating the service level for local technological innovation. In education and teaching, it promotes the preservation and inheritance of national culture, solidifies teaching characteristics, and cultivates a distinctive teaching brand. This approach increases the competitiveness and influence of majors and courses, develops their unique features, and more effectively promotes the overall brand building of the university.

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## Exploring the Sustainable Management of Chinese Drama Creation from the Perspective of New Media

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### Abstract

With the rapid development of information technology, new media has become the main channel for information dissemination in contemporary society, profoundly influencing various aspects of the cultural and artistic fields, including the creation and dissemination of drama. The rise of new media has provided a broader communication platform and richer creative resources for drama creation, but at the same time, it has also brought many problems. This article takes the sustainable management of Chinese drama creation from the perspective of new media as the research object, deeply explores the challenges and opportunities faced by drama creation in the new media environment, and proposes sustainable management strategies such as technological innovation, content innovation, market expansion, and talent cultivation. Through this study, the aim is to provide theoretical support and practical guidance for the development of drama creation in the new media environment, help drama creators maintain their creative enthusiasm in the new media era, improve the quality of their works, and achieve sustainable development. The rapid development of new media technology has not only changed the dissemination methods of traditional drama, but also promoted the innovation of creative forms. The application of technologies such as virtual reality and augmented reality has injected new vitality into drama creation, while also placing higher demands on the artistic expression of traditional drama. In addition, the promotion of drama on new media platforms is facing problems such as content homogenization and insufficient copyright protection, and it is urgent to establish an effective management mechanism. In the future, drama creation needs to further integrate new media technologies, explore cross media narrative modes, and strengthen industry standards and talent

cultivation to adapt to the market demand of the digital age and achieve the coordinated development of art and technology.

**Keywords:** New media; Drama creation; Sustainable management; Content innovation;  
Communication strategies

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Research Background

With the rapid development of technology, new media has become an important channel for people to obtain information, exchange ideas, and enjoy culture. Under the influence of new media, traditional Chinese art forms such as drama are also facing unprecedented opportunities and challenges. New media not only provides a new communication platform and expression method for Chinese drama creation, but also has a profound impact on the audience positioning, content innovation, market operation, and other aspects of Chinese drama.

From the perspective of new media, the creation of Chinese drama is no longer limited to traditional stage performance forms, but can be disseminated through various new media channels such as live streaming, short videos, and social media. The transformation of this dissemination method has greatly expanded the audience of theatrical works and provided more creative inspiration for theatrical creators.

However, with the widespread application of new media, drama creation also faces some new problems and challenges. On the one hand, the fast dissemination speed and large amount of information of new media require drama works to constantly innovate in content, form, style, and other aspects to attract the attention of the audience; On the other hand, the interactive and participatory characteristics of new media also require drama creation to pay more attention to interaction and communication with the audience to meet their personalized needs.

Therefore, from the perspective of new media, sustainable management of Chinese drama creation is particularly important. Sustainable management not only requires drama creation to maintain innovation and competitiveness, but also requires efforts to protect the rights and interests of creators, improve the

quality of works, and expand market channels. Exploring the sustainable management of Chinese drama creation can provide useful theoretical guidance and practical experience for the development of drama art in the new media era.

## **1.2 Research Significance**

The research on sustainable management of Chinese drama creation from the perspective of new media has important theoretical significance and practical value, which can help promote the innovative development of drama art, promote the sustainable development of the cultural industry, and enhance the competitiveness of the entire industry.

### **1.2.1 Theoretical Significance**

This study helps to explore the impact of new media on Chinese drama creation from a theoretical perspective, reveal the integration mechanism between the two, and provide theoretical support for the innovative development of drama art. As an important component of the cultural industry, the sustainable development of drama is of great significance to the prosperity of the entire cultural industry. This study takes drama creation as the research object and explores strategies for achieving sustainable management in the new media environment, which helps to expand the research perspective of sustainable development of the cultural industry and provide theoretical basis for the formulation of relevant policies. At the same time, the discipline of art management involves multiple aspects such as art creation, communication, and marketing, among which drama creation is an important field. The study of sustainable management can help enrich the theoretical system of art management and promote the development and improvement of the discipline.

#### **(1) Technology Empowerment Theory from the Perspective of Media Ecology**

The theory of media ecology emphasizes the symbiotic relationship between media technology and social environment. New media technology reconstructs the ecology of drama creation through the following mechanisms:

Temporal and spatial narrative reconstruction: Projection technology breaks through the

physical spatial limitations of traditional realistic drama. For example, "Beijing Fayuan Temple" constructs multidimensional historical scenes through dynamic projection, presenting non-linear narrative features in stage time and space. This technology empowers drama to break through the physical constraints of the "fourth wall" and form a symbiotic relationship between technology and art.

Expansion of creative subject: New media platforms lower the threshold for creation and form a "professional+non professional" joint creation model. The Drum Tower West Theater's "Pillow Man" achieved creator socialization through online script collection, confirming the practical value of Henry Jenkins' "participatory culture" theory in the field of drama.

The communication efficiency has soared: social media has achieved "viral communication", and the National Theatre's "Live Founding Ceremony" reached young audiences through the Tiktok Topic Challenge, verifying the applicability of McLuhan's "media is information" theory in the digital era.

## (2) The Industrial Sustainability Model in Art Management Theory

Based on the theory of art management, constructing a sustainable management model for drama creation requires attention to the following dimensions: Content innovation mechanism: Modern translation of classic texts: Lai Shengchuan's "Secret Love for Peach Blossom Spring" achieves a dialogue between traditional narrative and contemporary aesthetics through multimedia stages, reflecting the theory of "creative transformation".

Deep exploration of realistic themes: In 2024, "Lilac, Lilac" uses holographic projection technology to restore historical scenes, confirming the creative principle of "art reflecting reality".

Technological ethical balance: Avoiding 'technological alienation': Peter Brooke's theory of 'empty space' warns of the risks of technological abuse, such as excessive reliance on special effects in some experimental plays leading to narrative hollowing out.

Following the principle of "artistic ontology": technology should serve the "presence" essence of drama, such as the animation projection of "Pillowman" always serving to create a suspenseful atmosphere.

Business model innovation: Online theater construction: The "Of course there is drama" platform of Damai achieves synergistic growth in box office revenue and IP derivative development through the "online+offline" dual theater model.

Data driven operation: using big data to analyze audience preferences, such as optimizing tour city selection through ticketing data for "Deling and Empress Dowager Cixi".

### (3) The Audience Reconstruction Theory in Cultural Communication Studies

The audience relationship in the context of new media presents the following characteristics:  
The rise of participatory culture: new forms such as bullet screen theater and virtual character interaction reconstruct the relationship between viewing and performance, confirming Jenkins' theory of "participatory culture"

Circled communication characteristics: Station B "Guochuang Theater" achieves cross circle communication of the Three Body stage play through anime cultural circle communication.  
Intergenerational aesthetic differences: Research shows that Generation Z prefers "immersive theater," while the silver haired group tends towards traditional realistic styles, verifying the intergenerational applicability of Hall's "encoding/decoding" theory.

#### 1.2.2 Practical Significance

Exploring sustainable management strategies for Chinese drama creation can help promote the healthy development of the drama industry. In the new media environment, the drama industry needs to constantly innovate and adapt to market demand in order to achieve long-term stable development. As an important component of the cultural industry, the development level of drama directly affects the competitiveness of the entire cultural industry. This study will provide new ideas and directions for the cultural industry, which will help enhance the competitiveness and influence of the entire industry.

### 1.3 Research Objective

#### 1.3.1 Analysis of the Impact of New Media on Drama Creation

This study aims to analyze in depth the impact of new media on various aspects of Chinese

drama creation, including creative concepts, content selection, expression techniques, and communication channels. By comparing the differences between traditional Chinese drama and new media drama, this study reveals the new trends and characteristics of Chinese drama creation in the era of new media, providing theoretical support for the innovative development of drama art.

### 1.3.2 Exploring Sustainable Management Strategies for Drama Creation

In the new media environment, drama creation faces challenges such as fierce market competition and diverse audience demands. This study will explore sustainable management strategies for drama creation, including how to optimize resource allocation, improve creative efficiency, and enhance market competitiveness. Propose targeted and actionable management recommendations through case analysis, empirical research, and other methods.

### 1.3.3 Promote the Integration and Development of Drama Art and New Media

New media provides new opportunities and space for the development of drama art. This study will focus on the integration and development of drama art and new media, exploring how to apply new media technology to drama creation and dissemination, and how to expand the audience and market space of drama art through new media platforms.

### 1.3.4 Enhancing the Social Value and Influence of Drama Creation

As an important cultural and artistic form, drama has unique social value and influence. This study will focus on the social value and influence of drama creation in the era of new media, and explore how to improve the artistic quality and social influence of drama works through sustainable management. At the same time, we also pay attention to the positive role of Chinese drama creation in inheriting and promoting excellent traditional culture, promoting social civilization progress, and contributing wisdom and strength to the prosperity and development of drama art.

## 1.4 Research Status in China and Other Countries

### 1.4.1 Research Status in China

In China, the research on sustainable management of drama creation from the perspective

of new media is still in the initial and exploratory stage, but it has attracted extensive attention. In recent years, with the rapid development of new media technology, the combination of drama creation and new media has become increasingly close. The new media platform provides more display space and interactive opportunities for drama creation, but also brings many challenges.

Chinese scholars' research on the sustainable management of drama creation from the perspective of new media mainly focuses on the following aspects:

(1) Research On the Application of New Media Technology in Drama Creation

Scholars have discussed how new media technologies can provide more possibilities for drama creation, such as the application of virtual reality, augmented reality and other technologies in drama performance, and how new media platforms such as social media and webcast can provide new channels for the promotion and dissemination of drama.

(2) Research on the Integration and Development of Drama Creation and New Media

Scholars analyzed the current situation, problems and Countermeasures of the integration and development of drama creation and new media, and discussed how to realize the innovation and development of drama creation in the new media environment.

(3) Research on Sustainable Management Strategy of Drama Creation

In view of the challenges faced by drama creation in the new media environment, scholars have proposed corresponding sustainable management strategies, such as strengthening copyright protection, optimizing content production, and improving audience participation.

However, there are still some deficiencies in China's research in this field, such as relatively single research methods, scattered research content, lack of systematic theoretical construction, etc. Therefore, future research needs to further strengthen interdisciplinary cooperation, adopt a variety of research methods, and form more comprehensive and in-depth research results.

#### 1.4.2 Research Status in Other Countries

In other countries, the research on sustainable management of drama creation from the perspective of new media has achieved some results. Scholars from other countries have conducted extensive and in-depth research on the application of new media technology in drama creation, the integrated development of drama creation and new media, and the sustainable management strategy of drama creation. Specifically, studies in other countries mainly focus on the following aspects:

##### (1) Innovative Application of New Media Technology in Drama Creation

Scholars from many countries continue to explore the innovative application of new media technology in drama creation, such as using virtual reality technology to provide more immersive drama viewing experience for the audience, and using new media platforms such as social media to strengthen the interaction between the audience and drama.

##### (2) The Integrated Development Mode of Drama Creation and New Media

This paper analyzes the various modes of the integrated development of drama creation and new media, and discusses the role of these modes in promoting drama creation. They generally believe that the integrated development of new media and drama can not only provide more resources and support for drama creation, but also expand the audience and market share of drama.

##### (3) Sustainable Management Practice of Drama Creation

Combined with specific cases, scholars from many countries have discussed the sustainable management practice of drama creation in the new media environment. They put forward a series of effective management strategies and methods, such as strengthening copyright protection, optimizing content production process, improving audience participation and so on, in order to achieve the sustainable development of drama creation.

## 2. The Impact of New Media on the Creation of Chinese Drama

Chinese drama, as a unique cultural treasure of the Chinese nation, is undergoing unprecedented changes in its creative methods and communication channels under the impact of new media.

## **2.1 Application of New Media Technology in Drama Creation**

### **2.1.1 Application of Virtual Reality (VR) Technology**

Virtual reality technology provides a new perspective and experience for drama creation.

Through VR technology, the audience can feel the scene and atmosphere of the drama, and get a more real performance experience. In the process of drama creation, creators can use VR technology to simulate a variety of complex scenes and environments, providing actors with more real performance space. At the same time, the audience can also participate in the interaction of the play through VR devices, and have real-time interaction and communication with the actors to enhance the participation and interactivity of the play.

### **2.1.2 Application of Augmented Reality (AR) Technology**

Augmented reality technology can add virtual elements in the process of drama performance to enrich the content and form of performance. Creators can use AR technology to integrate virtual characters, props, etc. into real performance scenes, bringing more rich visual experience to the audience. At the same time, AR technology can also be used to create interactive drama works, allowing the audience to interact with the virtual elements in the drama through mobile devices, so as to improve the audience's sense of participation and experience.

### **2.1.3 Application of Social Media**

Social media has become an indispensable part of modern people's life, and also provides a new communication channel and interactive platform for drama creation. Creators can use the social media platform to release the publicity information, cast, performance time, etc. of the play to attract more audience attention and participation. At the same time, the audience can also express their views and comments on the drama works through the social media platform, and interact and communicate with the creators in real time. This interactive enhancement not only improves the audience's sense of participation and belonging, but also provides more feedback and inspiration for the drama creators.

### **2.1.4 Application of Big Data Technology**

Big data technology can analyze and mine the preferences and needs of drama

audiences, and provide more accurate data support for drama creation. Creators can understand the changes of audiences' preferences and needs by analyzing the audience's performance records, discussions on social media and other data, so as to provide more targeted guidance for the creation and performance of drama. At the same time, big data technology can also be used to evaluate the performance effect and market performance of drama, and provide data support for the sustainable development of drama.

## **2.2 Changes of New Media to the Mode of Drama Communication**

The new media's change in the mode of communication of drama not only widens the audience and market space of drama, but also has a far-reaching impact on the sustainable management of drama creation. New media technology provides more innovative possibilities for drama creation, such as the application of virtual reality, augmented reality and other technologies can bring new artistic effects and viewing experience for drama creation. The interactivity and real-time nature of the new media platform provides more feedback and inspiration for drama creation, and helps creators adjust the direction of creation and improve the quality of works in time. The diversified communication channels and personalized recommendation function of the new media platform provide wider communication space and more accurate audience positioning for drama works, which helps to improve the market competitiveness and social influence of drama works.

### **2.2.1 Break Through Regional Restrictions and Realize Global Communication**

The dissemination of traditional drama mainly depends on theater performance, and the audience needs to watch it in person. However, the new media technology has broken the geographical restrictions, making the drama can be broadcast globally through live webcast, online video and other means. Audiences can watch dramas from all over the world anytime and anywhere through Internet devices, which has greatly expanded the audience range of dramas.

### **2.2.2 Real Time Interaction to Enhance the Sense of Audience Participation**

The new media platform provides the function of real-time interaction, so that the audience

can have real-time communication and interaction with other audiences or actors in the process of watching the play. This interaction not only enhances the audience's sense of participation, but also improves the appreciation value of the drama. For example, the audience can express their views and comments on the play through the social media platform, discuss with other audiences, and even interact with actors through bullet screens.

### 2.2.3 Diversify Communication Channels and Improve Exposure

The new media platform provides diversified communication channels for drama, such as social media, short video platforms, online video websites, etc. These platforms have huge user groups and high interactivity, and can quickly promote drama works to a wider audience. By publishing the publicity information, highlights and other content of the drama on these platforms, the exposure and popularity of the drama can be effectively improved.

### 2.2.4 Personalized Recommendation to Meet Audience Needs

The new media platform uses big data and artificial intelligence technology to make personalized recommendations according to the preferences and needs of the audience. For drama works, this means that relevant drama works can be recommended according to the audience's interests and viewing history, so as to improve the audience's viewing experience and satisfaction. At the same time, it also provides more accurate market positioning and audience portrait for drama creation, which helps creators better grasp the market demand and audience preferences.

## 2.3 Impact of New Media on Drama Market

### 2.3.1 Expand the Audience and Enhance the Market Potential

New media technology has broken the geographical restrictions of traditional dramas, enabling audiences to watch dramas through live webcast, online video and other ways. This change in the mode of communication has not only attracted the audience of traditional theatres, but also attracted more young people, Internet users and other new audiences. These new audiences have brought greater market potential and commercial value to the drama market.

### 2.3.2 Real Time Interaction to Enhance Audience Stickiness

The new media platform provides the function of real-time interaction, so that the audience can have real-time communication and interaction with other audiences or actors in the process of watching the play. This interaction not only enhances the audience's sense of participation, but also improves the audience's stickiness and loyalty. Audiences can express their views and comments on the play through social media platforms, discuss with other audiences, and even interact with actors through bullet screens. This interactive enhancement makes the audience have a deeper emotional connection with the drama works, and then promotes the sustainable development of the drama market.

### 2.3.3 Diversify Marketing Channels and Improve Market Exposure

The new media platform provides diversified marketing channels for drama, such as social media, short video platforms, online video websites, etc. These platforms have huge user groups and high interactivity, and can quickly promote drama works to a wider audience. By publishing the publicity information and highlights of the drama on these platforms, the market exposure and popularity of the drama can be effectively improved. At the same time, the new media platform can also make personalized recommendations according to users' preferences and needs, so as to improve the click through rate and viewing volume of drama works.

### 2.3.4 Business Model Innovation and Expansion of Revenue Sources

The development of new media technology has also promoted the innovation of drama business model. In addition to the traditional box office revenue, drama works can also realize a variety of income sources such as paid viewing, copyright sales, derivatives development through the new media platform. These new business models not only bring more economic returns to the drama creators and investors, but also promote the diversified development of the drama market.

## 3. Challenges of Chinese Drama Creation Management from the Perspective of New Media

### 3.1 Technical Challenges

### 3.1.1 Technical Challenges of Digital Copyright Management

In the new media era, the digital transmission and storage of drama works has become the norm, but it also brings the technical challenges of copyright management. How to ensure the copyright security of drama works in the process of digital communication and prevent unauthorized copying, dissemination and tampering is an important technical problem faced by drama creation management.

### 3.1.2 Cross Platform Communication Technology Challenges

There are many new media platforms, and there are differences in technical standards and protocols between different platforms, which brings technical challenges to the cross platform communication of drama works. How to ensure the compatibility and stability of drama works on different platforms and achieve seamless communication is a technical problem that needs to be solved in drama creation management.

### 3.1.3 Challenges of Interactive Technology

The ways of interaction between audience and drama works are increasingly rich, such as bullet screen, online comments, virtual gifts, etc. However, how to effectively manage these interactive contents, ensure the standardization and safety of the interactive process, and provide high-quality interactive experience is the technical challenge that drama creation management needs to face.

### 3.1.4 Technical Challenges of Data Analysis and Decision Support

Data analysis has also become an important tool for drama creation management. However, how to collect, sort out and analyze data from different channels to provide effective decision support for drama creation is a technical problem that needs to be solved in drama creation management. In addition, how to ensure the accuracy and reliability of data analysis is also a technical issue that drama creation management needs to pay attention to.

## 3.2 Content Challenges

### 3.2.1 Challenges of Content Innovation

In the new media era, the audience's demand for drama works is increasingly diversified

and personalized. They not only pursue artistry and depth, but also hope to see novel and unique content. However, the creation of drama often faces many difficulties in content innovation, such as the limited choice of theme, the exhaustion of creative inspiration and so on. On the basis of maintaining the artistic characteristics of traditional drama, how to integrate new media elements and create works that meet the aesthetic needs of modern audiences has become an important challenge for drama creation management.

### 3.2.2 Challenges to Content Quality

In the era of new media, the speed of information dissemination is fast, and drama works are vulnerable to the influence of network public opinion and audience feedback. This requires that drama creation must strive for perfection in content quality to ensure the artistry and ideology of the works. However, in the actual creation, due to the limitations of time, capital, talent and other aspects, drama works are often difficult to achieve the ideal quality standard. How to ensure the quality of drama works under the limited resources is the challenge that drama creation management needs to face.

### 3.2.3 Challenges of Content Regulation

In the new media era, the communication channels of drama works are more extensive, and the audience can watch the works through the network platform anytime and anywhere. However, this also brings the challenge of content regulation. On the one hand, it is necessary to ensure that the content of drama works is healthy, positive and upward, and to avoid the negative impact of vulgar and vulgar content on the audience; On the other hand, it is also necessary to protect the copyright and interests of creators and prevent piracy and infringement. How to ensure the quality of content and strengthen the supervision of content is a problem that needs to be solved in the management of drama creation.

### 3.2.4 Integration Challenges of Content and Market

In the new media era, the relationship between drama creation and market is increasingly close. The audience's needs and preferences for drama works directly affect the box office and reputation of the works. However, how to combine the content of drama works with the market demand to create works that are both in line with the law of art and the law of the market is the challenge that drama creation

management needs to face. This requires drama creators not only to have artistic literacy and creative ability, but also to understand the market dynamics and audience needs, and grasp the pulse of the market.

### **3.3 Market Challenges**

#### **3.3.1 Challenges of Audience Demand Diversification**

In the new media era, the audience's demand for drama works is increasingly diversified. They not only pay attention to the plot and performance, but also pursue unique watching experience, deep cultural connotation and interactive participation. This diversified demand makes the drama creation management need to pay more attention to market research and audience analysis, so as to better grasp the audience demand and create works that meet the market demand.

#### **3.3.2 Challenges of Fierce Market Competition**

With the popularity of new media, the competition in the drama market is increasingly fierce. On the one hand, the competition from other art forms such as films and TV plays is increasing; On the other hand, the competition between drama works is becoming increasingly fierce. This competition makes the drama creation management need to pay more attention to the quality and characteristics of the works, as well as the innovation and differentiation of marketing strategies, in order to attract more audiences and market share.

#### **3.3.3 Copyright Protection and Infringement Challenge**

In the new media era, the means and channels of communication of drama works are more diverse, but this also brings the problems of copyright protection and infringement. On the one hand, drama works need to be spread and promoted on the new media platform to expand influence and market share; On the other hand, the infringement phenomenon on these platforms is also common, which brings the challenge of copyright protection to the drama creation management.

#### **3.3.4 Innovation and Adaptation of Marketing Strategy**

In the new media era, the traditional marketing strategy has been unable to meet the needs of the drama market. Drama creation management needs to pay more attention to the innovation and adaptation of marketing strategies, such as using social media for publicity, cooperating with e-commerce

platforms for ticket sales, etc. However, the application of these new marketing strategies also requires drama creation management to have certain technical ability and market sensitivity.

### **3.4 Talent Challenge**

#### **3.4.1 Talent Structure Simplification Challenge**

In the new media era, drama creation needs talents with cross-border integration. They should not only have a solid foundation for drama creation, but also have the knowledge of new media technology and market operation. However, the current talent structure in the field of drama creation is relatively single, lacking such compound talents. This leads to the inability of drama creation management to cope with market changes and innovate the mode of communication in the new media environment.

#### **3.4.2 Brain Drain and Training Challenges**

With the increasingly fierce competition in the drama creation industry, the problem of brain drain has become increasingly prominent. On the one hand, excellent creators and actors may turn to other industries due to treatment, development opportunities and other reasons; On the other hand, the drama creation industry also faces many difficulties in the cultivation and introduction of talents. This problem of brain drain and lack of training has seriously affected the sustainable development of drama creation.

#### **3.4.3 Team Collaboration and Communication Challenges**

In the new media era, drama creation management needs to pay more attention to teamwork and communication. However, as drama creation involves many fields and departments, such as screenwriters, directors, actors, stage artists, marketing and so on, there are often obstacles in the communication and cooperation between various departments. This leads to difficulties in integrating resources and improving creative efficiency in the new media environment.

#### **3.4.4 Challenges of Talent Incentive and Guarantee Mechanism**

In the new media era, drama creation management needs to pay more attention to the incentive and protection of talents. However, the incentive mechanism and guarantee mechanism of the current drama creation industry are relatively lagging behind, unable to meet the actual needs of creators and

actors. This leads to the lack of enthusiasm and creativity in the creative process, which affects the quality and influence of drama works.

#### **4. Sustainable Management Strategy of Chinese Drama Creation from the Perspective of New Media**

##### **4.1 Technology Innovation Strategy**

###### **4.1.1 Strengthen Technology R&D and Innovation**

In view of the technical challenges of digital copyright management, cross platform communication, interactive technology and data analysis, drama creation management should strengthen technological research and innovation, introduce advanced technical means and management tools, and improve the efficiency and effect of management.

###### **4.1.2 Establish Perfect Technical Standards and Specifications**

In order to ensure the compatibility and stability of drama works on different platforms, drama creation management should establish perfect technical standards and specifications, clarify the technical requirements and agreements between different platforms, and promote the smooth cross platform communication.

###### **4.1.3 Strengthen the Management and Supervision of Interactive Content**

In response to the challenge of interactive technology, the management of drama creation should strengthen the management and supervision of interactive content, establish an effective interactive mechanism, encourage the audience to express positive views and opinions, and delete adverse information in time to maintain a healthy and harmonious interactive environment.

###### **4.1.4 Introduction of Professional Data Analysis Team**

In order to improve the accuracy and reliability of data analysis, drama creation management can introduce a professional data analysis team to collect, sort out and analyze data from different channels, so as to provide effective decision support for drama creation.

## **4.2 Content Innovation Strategy**

### **4.2.1 Strengthen Content Innovation Research**

In view of the challenge of content innovation, drama creation management should strengthen the research of content innovation, pay attention to social hot spots and audience needs, and tap new themes and creative inspiration. At the same time, we should also pay attention to the integration with new media, and use the new media platform to provide more diversified materials and inspiration for drama creation.

### **4.2.2 Improve Content Quality**

In view of the challenge of content quality, drama creation management should improve the level of content quality, strengthen the script review and rehearsal supervision, and ensure the artistry and ideology of the works. At the same time, we should also pay attention to the cultivation and introduction of talents to provide high-quality talent guarantee for drama creation.

### **4.2.3 Strengthen Content Supervision**

In view of the challenge of content supervision, the management of drama creation should strengthen the content supervision, establish a perfect supervision mechanism and system, and ensure that the content of drama works is healthy, positive and upward. At the same time, it is also necessary to strengthen cooperation with relevant departments to jointly combat the occurrence of piracy and infringement.

### **4.2.4 Strengthen Market Awareness and Service Ability**

In view of the integration challenge of content and market, drama creation management should strengthen market awareness and service ability, understand market dynamics and audience needs, and grasp the pulse of the market. At the same time, we should also pay attention to the interaction and communication with the audience to improve the participation and satisfaction of the audience. By strengthening market research and service capabilities, the effective integration of drama works and the market can be achieved.

### **4.3 Market Expansion Strategy**

#### **4.3.1 Strengthen Market Research and Audience Analysis**

In order to better grasp the audience demand and market trend, drama creation management needs to strengthen market research and audience analysis. By collecting and analyzing audience data and observing market dynamics, we can understand the audience's needs and preferences, and provide strong market support for drama creation.

#### **4.3.2 Improving the Quality and Characteristics of Works**

In the environment of fierce market competition, drama creation management needs to pay more attention to the improvement of the quality and characteristics of works. Through careful planning, strict screening and fine polishing, we can create works with depth, uniqueness and artistry to attract more audiences and market share.

#### **4.3.3 Strengthen Copyright Protection and Rights Protection**

In order to protect the copyright and interests of drama works, drama creation management needs to strengthen copyright protection and rights protection. By formulating strict copyright protection policies, strengthening copyright registration and monitoring, and safeguarding rights in a timely manner, the legitimate rights and interests of drama works and market order can be maintained.

#### **4.3.4 Innovative Marketing Strategies and Channels**

In the new media era, drama creation management needs to pay more attention to the innovation of marketing strategies and channels. Through the use of social media, e-commerce platforms and other new media platforms for publicity and sales, improve the popularity and influence of drama works. At the same time, we also need to pay attention to the differentiation and personalization of marketing strategies to better meet the needs of audiences and market trends.

### **4.4 Personnel Training Strategy**

#### **4.4.1 Broaden Talent Training Channels**

In order to meet the challenge of the simplification of talent structure, drama creation

management needs to broaden talent training channels. By strengthening cooperation with other art fields, universities and enterprises, we will jointly cultivate interdisciplinary talents with cross-border integration ability. At the same time, we should also pay attention to the introduction of international talents and improve the overall level of the drama creation industry.

#### 4.4.2 Improve Talent Incentive Mechanism

In order to retain talents and stimulate their creativity, drama creation management needs to improve the talent incentive mechanism. By improving the treatment, providing development opportunities, and strengthening the protection of intellectual property rights, the creators and actors can receive due rewards and respect in the process of creation. At the same time, we should also pay attention to creating a positive creative atmosphere, so that talents can get better development in the drama creation industry.

#### 4.4.3 Strengthen Team Cooperation and Communication

In order to improve the team cooperation and communication efficiency, the drama creation management needs to strengthen the communication and cooperation between various departments. Promote information sharing and resource integration among departments by establishing a sound communication mechanism and collaboration platform. At the same time, we should also pay attention to the cultivation of team spirit and sense of cooperation, so that all departments can form a joint force in the process of drama creation.

#### 4.4.4 Establish and Improve the Guarantee Mechanism

In order to protect the rights and interests of talents in the process of creation, drama creation management needs to establish and improve the protection mechanism. By strengthening the protection of intellectual property rights, improving laws and regulations, and providing legal aid, we can provide strong legal protection for creators and actors. At the same time, we should also pay attention to providing psychological counseling, health security and other support for talents, so that they can maintain a good attitude and state in the process of creation.

## **5. The Shaanxi People's Art Theatre**

### **5.1 The Shaanxi People's Art Theatre Background**

The Shaanxi people's Art Theatre (hereinafter referred to as “Shaanxi people's art”) located in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, China, was founded in 1948. As an important force in the Chinese drama industry, it has actively explored the sustainable management strategy of drama creation from the perspective of new media in recent years. Through continuous innovation and reform, Shaanxi people's art has made remarkable achievements in drama creation, performance and marketing, which has injected new vitality into the inheritance and development of drama art.

### **5.2 Shaanxi People's Art**

#### **5.2.1 Content Innovation: Stick to Tradition and Integrate Modernity**

Shaanxi people's art has always adhered to the concept of realistic artistic creation in the creation of drama. With the characteristics of “Shaanxi style drama”, Shaanxi people's art has created a series of works with profound cultural connotations, such as “White Deer Plain” and “**Ordinary World**”, through in-depth exploration of Shaanxi's local culture. At the same time, they also actively try new creative techniques and forms of expression, such as the introduction of multimedia technology, augmented reality (AR), etc., to make the drama works more contemporary and modern. This innovative strategy of sticking to tradition and integrating modernity has enabled Shaanxi people's art to maintain its continuous innovation and competitiveness in drama creation.

#### **5.2.2 New media Marketing: Expand Communication Channels and Enhance Interactive Experience**

Shaanxi people's art association makes full use of the new media platform for marketing and promotion. Through the establishment of official websites, social media accounts, short video platforms and other channels, the content such as the preview of the play, actors' trends and behind the scenes gags is released to attract the attention and discussion of the audience. In addition, they also actively interact with the audience and let the audience participate in the creation and performance of the drama through online

question and answer, voting and other means, so as to enhance the audience's sense of participation and belonging. This new media marketing strategy not only widens the communication channels, but also enhances the interactive experience between the audience and the theater.

#### 5.2.3 Talent Training and Incentive Mechanism

Shaanxi people's Art Troupe attaches importance to talent cultivation and the construction of incentive mechanism. They cooperate with colleges and universities to set up a drama performance major to provide systematic training and guidance for young actors. At the same time, the theater has also set up a number of awards and honors to commend and reward outstanding actors and creative personnel to stimulate their creative enthusiasm and enthusiasm. In addition, the theater also encourages cooperation and communication between actors, and improves the performance level of the whole team through team cooperation and mutual learning. This talent training and incentive mechanism provides a strong talent guarantee for the sustainable development of Shaanxi people's art.

#### 5.2.4 Cross Border Cooperation and Resource Integration

Shaanxi people's art actively seeks cross-border cooperation and resource integration. They cooperate with the film and television industry such as film, TV series and online short plays to jointly launch cross-border works and broaden the audience. At the same time, the theater also interacts with cultural tourism, commercial brands and other fields, and realizes resource sharing and mutual benefit and win-win results through the combination of drama performance, tourism and commercial activities. In addition, the theater also actively strives for the support of the government and enterprises to provide more funds and resources for drama creation. This strategy of cross-border cooperation and resource integration provides a broad space and opportunities for the sustainable development of Shaanxi people's art.

### 5.3 Case Effectiveness and Enlightenment

Through the implementation of the above sustainable management strategy, Shaanxi people's Art Theater has achieved remarkable results. Their plays have been widely praised in the market and the audience has been expanding. At the same time, the brand influence of the theater has also been significantly improved and has become an important force in the drama industry. From the perspective of new media, Shaanxi

people's art has realized the sustainable development of drama creation through the efforts of content innovation, new media marketing, talent training and incentive mechanism, cross-border cooperation and resource integration.

The case of Shaanxi people's Art Theater provides us with valuable enlightenment. In the new media era, in order to achieve sustainable development, drama creation needs to focus on content innovation, new media marketing, talent training and incentive mechanism, cross-border cooperation and resource integration. Drama groups need to keep pace with the times, actively embrace new media technology, and expand communication channels and audience base. At the same time, we also need to pay attention to the construction of talent training and incentive mechanism to provide a strong talent guarantee for the inheritance and development of drama art. Through continuous innovation and cooperation, Chinese drama creation will radiate new vitality and vigor in the new media era.

## **6. Conclusion**

After in-depth discussion of the challenges faced by the creation and management of Chinese drama from the perspective of new media, the following conclusions are drawn.

### **6.1 Challenges and Opportunities Coexist**

New media has brought unprecedented opportunities for the development of Chinese drama creation, but also brought unprecedented challenges. These challenges include the simplification of talent structure, brain drain and training, team cooperation and communication, and talent incentive and guarantee mechanism. However, it is these challenges that also urge us to re-examine all aspects of drama creation management and seek a more scientific, efficient and sustainable management mode.

### **6.2 Cross Border Integration Is the Key**

In the new media era, drama creation management needs to pay more attention to cross-border integration. This includes the integration of art and technology, creation and market, and talent and resources. Through cross-border integration, we can break the limitations of traditional drama creation, expand new creative fields and audience groups, and enhance the artistic value and market value of drama works.

### **6.3 Innovation Driven Is the Core**

Innovation is the core driving force to promote the sustainable development of drama creation. In the new media era, drama creation management needs to pay more attention to innovation. This includes content innovation, form innovation, technology innovation and management innovation. Through innovation, we can continuously meet the increasingly diverse needs of the audience and enhance the attraction and influence of drama works.

### **6.4 Talent Training Is the Foundation**

Talent is the key to the management of drama creation. In the new media era, we need to cultivate more talents with cross-border integration ability, innovation spirit and teamwork ability. By improving the talent training mechanism, optimizing the talent incentive mechanism, strengthening team cooperation and communication, and establishing a sound security mechanism, we can provide strong talent support for drama creation.

### **6.5 Sustainable Development Is the Goal**

The sustainable development of Chinese drama creation is our ultimate goal. In the new media era, we need to promote the transformation and upgrading of drama creation management through cross-border integration, innovation driven and talent training strategies. At the same time, we also need to pay attention to the market demand and audience changes, and constantly adjust and optimize the creation strategy and management mode to ensure the sustainable development of Chinese drama creation.

To sum up, the sustainable management of Chinese drama creation from the perspective of new media requires us to face up to challenges, seize opportunities, focus on cross-border integration, innovation driven and talent training. Only in this way can we promote the sustainable development of Chinese drama creation and bring more excellent works to the audience.

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## Beuys and the Beast: Symbolic Conflict in Human-Animal Performance

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### Abstract

The relationship between humans and animals, as depicted in works of art, presents a compelling avenue for exploration, particularly in the context of today's increasingly critical ecological crisis. Art can serve as a potent medium for encouraging reflection on the spiritual significance of animals and for fostering a more harmonious relationship between humans and non-human creatures. In this regard, specific animals, within particular cultural contexts, can symbolize not only their species but also embody the unique values, identities, and civilizations that emerge from human interactions with them. When an artist selects a particular animal as the focal point of their creative endeavor, this choice is rarely arbitrary; it is often imbued with layers of profound symbolic meaning, reflecting complex cultural, historical, and ecological narratives. A notable example of this is found in the works of Joseph Beuys, whose performance art frequently incorporated animals as key elements. Beuys's use of animals transcends mere symbolism; it delves into the realm of contrasting and often conflicting symbolic elements, wherein the animal subjects evoke both ancient traditions—such as folk customs, mythologies, and witchcraft—and confrontations with dark historical realities and absurdities of modern existence. Through his art, Beuys explores the tension between the idealized, spiritualized representations of animals and the brutal, often unsettling realities that humans impose upon them. This duality reflects the broader symbolic conflict between nature and civilization, innocence and violence, tradition and modernity, thereby offering a poignant commentary on the fractured relationship between humans and the natural world. In doing so, Beuys's work challenges the viewer to reconsider the ethical and spiritual dimensions of humanity's interaction with animals, while also highlighting the urgent need for ecological and cultural reconciliation.

**Keywords:** Joseph Beuys; Performance Art; Animals

## 1. Introduction

Joseph Beuys (1921-1986) remains one of the most influential figures in the history of performance art. His works, particularly the performances *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965) and *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974), transcend the boundaries of visual art, encompassing ecological, political, and philosophical discourses. These performances are prime examples of how Beuys utilized the presence of animals to challenge human-animal relationships, reframe anthropocentric paradigms, and pursue broader spiritual, ecological, and political aims. This paper examines these two performances through the lenses of animal symbolism, ecological thought, and Beuys's conceptual approach to the body, arguing that they embody an attempt to reconcile humanity's fractured relationship with the natural world and its inherent violence toward animals.

## 2. Literature Review

Concerning *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, there are three key academic articles worth mentioning. One is "Truly Human, Truly Animal" (Delapaix, 2013). In this article, Delapaix points out that the core concept of the performance art *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* is the state of flow and fusion of various energies. He believes that in this performance art, Beuys showed his special fascination with witchcraft. Through this secret technique that exists in human blood, Beuys tried to communicate with the souls of animals and tried to eliminate the alienation between animals and humans. Delapaix links Beuys's artistic concepts with Deleuze's philosophical concepts, and further points out that Beuys presented a Bohemian anti-capitalist attitude. From his point of view, the performance art *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* challenged the limitations of the rationalist worldview and achieved the mutual transformation and mutual penetration of the material world and the spiritual realm.

The second article worth mentioning is "Joseph Beuys and How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare" (Takac, 2020). Takac believes that the importance of the performance art *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* lies in the fact that it encompasses almost all aspects of Beuys's artistic philosophy and methodology, including mythology, anthropology and psychoanalysis. According to his perspective,

through this performance art, Beuys explored the possibilities of visual narrative and symbolic performance, and discussed the construction of the artist's identity.

The third article worth mentioning is "Beuys + Vieira: Critical contribution to the performance of the action *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* and the sermon of Saint Anthony to fishes" (Santos, 2007). This article positions performance as a critical category by comparing Beuys's 1965 action with Vieira's 17th-century sermon, tracing how performative acts bridge historical and cultural divides. Beuys's ritualistic engagement with a dead hare—a work often interpreted as a commentary on the limits of human communication—demonstrates performance's capacity to destabilize anthropocentric hierarchies. By analyzing the "performative features" of both works, the authors underscore how Beuys's piece critiques rationality through embodied, non-verbal interaction with animality. This aligns with the central concern of *Beuys and the Beast*, which examines the symbolic conflict between human dominance and animal agency in performance. The article's historical perspective contextualizes Beuys's action within a longer tradition of performative storytelling, suggesting that his work reanimates archaic forms of human-animal dialogue to challenge modern epistemologies.

Concerning *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me*, there are four important scholarly articles that deserve attention. One is "When Joseph Beuys Locked Himself in a Room with a Live Coyote" (Mann, 2017). Mann recognizes that the United States in the 1970s through the eyes of Joseph Beuys was a nation divided over its involvement in the Vietnam War and, particularly, a country whose white population oppressed indigenous, immigrant, and minority populations. The message Beuys wanted to convey through this performance art is: American society could only begin to cure its social ills through direct communication and understanding among its own varied populations. In Mann's view, the coyote is not only a symbol of resistance to environmental change, but also a metaphor for the resilience and potential for change of American society. He placed *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me* within the context of 21st century American society, and further exposed how even though the United States's division problem still exists and its historical guilt is still questioned, Coyote, as a symbol, reminds people of the possibility of resilience and change, and has become a metaphor for the complex history and reality of American society.

A second article is “Stories of Iconic Artworks: Joseph Beuys’ I Like America and America Likes Me” (Wolfe, 2023). Wolfe places this performance art in a broader context and explores its contemporary global significance. “In fact, with white nationalism”, Wolfe writes, “fear-mongering, and racism towards minority groups prevalent not only across the United States, but also in Europe, Beuys’ profoundly moving communication with the wild coyote is a work of art that people can continue to learn from and seek answers and inspiration in. It appears that basic human and animal communication are in desperate need of a revival”.

The third article worth mentioning in this regard is “American Beuys” (Levi-Strauss, 1999). Levi-Strauss describes Beuys’s Coyote action as a therapeutic ritual aimed at addressing the “psychological trauma point of the United States’ energy constellation”—namely, the violent clash between Native American cosmologies and Eurocentric materialism. Beuys’s adoption of shamanic tools (the felt cloak, the triangular pendant, the staff) frames him as a healer of the “wounded” social body, a concept deeply rooted in his anthroposophical beliefs. His references to Paracelsus—a physician influenced by shamanic traditions—further reinforce the idea that Beuys saw his art as a form of medicine, bridging spiritual and ecological crises. This aligns with Beuys and the Beast’s investigation of performance as a site of symbolic conflict, where the artist’s role oscillates between mediator and colonizer. Does Beuys genuinely engage with the coyote as an equal, or does he appropriate indigenous symbolism for his own Eurocentric narrative? Levi-Strauss’s emphasis on Beuys’s vulnerability (sleeping on straw, allowing the coyote to urinate on the Wall Street Journal) suggests an attempt at humility, yet his orchestrated control over the ritual raises questions about power dynamics in interspecies performance.

This article also provocatively asks whether Beuys’s work prefigured the animal rights movement, given his founding of the “Political Party for Animals”. Yet it also acknowledges that his approach was more symbolic than activist—his dialogue with the coyote was metaphorical, not a call for structural change. This tension is crucial for Beuys and the Beast, which questions whether performance art can meaningfully challenge human-animal hierarchies or if it inevitably aestheticizes oppression. The text’s conclusion—that we have “much to learn” from the coyote—suggests an unresolved dialectic, one that contemporary artists continue to grapple with.

It is necessary to mention a fourth article as well: “Becoming-with-Animal: Cultivating a Feminist Understanding of Human-Animal Transformation in Contemporary Performance Art” (Fitzgerald-Allsopp, 2019). The thesis of this article is that feminist interpretations of human-animal transformation expand the discussion by framing Beuys’s practice within the Deleuzian-Guattarian concept of “becoming-animal” and ecofeminist critique. While acknowledging Beuys’s influence—particularly his shamanistic approach to interspecies healing, Fitzgerald-Allsopp critiques the gendered limitations of his work, arguing that contemporary female artists (e.g., Marcus Coates, Simon Whitehead) more radically subvert patriarchal constructs through animal alliances. This tension is pivotal to Beuys and the Beast, which interrogates whether Beuys’s symbolism reinforces romanticized hierarchies (the artist as shaman, the animal as passive muse) or genuinely dismantles them. The article emphasizes how “becoming-with-animal” (after Haraway) proposes an alternative framework, where performance fosters mutual vulnerability rather than appropriation. This resonates with this study’s exploration of how Beuys’s hare—simultaneously a sacred object and a lifeless prop—embodies the paradox of animal representation in Western art.

In examining the scholarly discourse surrounding Joseph Beuys's performance artworks *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* and *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me*, several critical perspectives emerge, each shedding light on different aspects of Beuys’s artistic philosophy and social commentary. Delapaix’s article, “Truly Human, Truly Animal”, offers a compelling analysis of Beuys’s performance as an exploration of the fusion of material and spiritual energies, emphasizing his fascination with witchcraft and his desire to bridge the alienation between humans and animals. Delapaix aligns Beuys's concepts with Deleuze’s philosophical ideas, positioning the performance as a challenge to rationalist worldviews and a call for anti-capitalist transformation. In contrast, Takac’s “Joseph Beuys and How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare”, highlights the performance's role in encapsulating Beuys's broader artistic methodology, drawing connections between mythology, anthropology, and psychoanalysis. Takac emphasizes the symbolic narrative of the performance and its exploration of the artist’s identity construction.

Turning to *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me*, Jon Mann’s analysis in “When Joseph Beuys Locked Himself in a Room with a Live Coyote” places Beuys’s performance in the

historical context of 1970's America, noting the country's societal divisions, particularly around the Vietnam War and the oppression of indigenous and minority populations. Mann interprets the coyote as a symbol of resistance to environmental change and a metaphor for American society's potential for resilience and transformation. Wolfe's article, "Stories of Iconic Artworks", expands this analysis by situating the performance within a global context, linking Beuys's communication with the coyote to contemporary issues of white nationalism, racism, and the urgent need for renewed communication between humans and animals. Wolfe sees Beuys's work as a powerful and timely call for reflection on the state of human and animal relationships in a troubled world.

Together, these scholarly contributions provide a multifaceted understanding of Beuys's work, highlighting its philosophical, social, and political dimensions, while also acknowledging its continuing relevance in the face of contemporary global issues. Each article brings to light different layers of meaning in Beuys's performances, from its critique of capitalist structures and rationalism to its engagement with environmentalism, social justice, and the interconnectedness of all species.

### 3. Research Method

This study employs a multi-method qualitative research framework to analyze Joseph Beuys's two seminal performances, *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965) and *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974). By integrating historical analysis, symbolic interpretation, and critical theory, the research aims to uncover the layered meanings of Beuys's work, particularly in relation to human-animal dynamics, ecological ethics, and performance art as a medium of social critique.

#### 3.1 Primary Research Methods

##### 1) Archival and Documentary Analysis

**Primary Sources:** I examine Beuys's interviews, manifestos, and recorded statements (e.g., his 1983 interview in *Club 2*), alongside contemporaneous reviews and documentation of the performances (e.g., Caroline Tisdall's photographic records of *Coyote*).

**Secondary Sources:** I analyze critical texts such as Delapaix's "Truly Human, Truly Animal" (2013) and Levi-Strauss's *American Beuys*, which contextualize Beuys's work within shamanism, ecology, and post-war European art.

## 2) Semiotic and Symbolic Analysis

**Object Ethnography:** I do close reading of the materials used in Beuys's performances (e.g., felt, honey, gold leaf, the dead hare, coyote) through frameworks of cultural anthropology (Victor Turner's ritual theory) and folklore studies (Claude Lévi-Strauss's structuralist symbolism). For instance, the hare's association with fertility in Germanic myths and the coyote's trickster archetype in Native American traditions are decoded as multivalent signs.

**Visual Rhetoric:** I apply Tzvetan Todorov's rhetorical trichotomy (*non-realistic*, *double*, and *contrasting* expressions) to dissect the performances' narrative strategies, as seen in the juxtaposition of Beuys's "civilized" body with the coyote's "wild" presence.

## 3.2 Performance Studies Frameworks

**Embodiment Theory:** Drawing from Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and Judith Butler's performativity, the study analyzes how Beuys's bodily actions (e.g., wrapping himself in felt, whispering to the hare) enact a ritualized dialogue between human and animal, challenging Cartesian dualism.

**Post-humanist Critique:** I engage with Donna Haraway's *becoming-with* and Cary Wolfe's posthumanism to interrogate the ethical ambiguities of Beuys's work—e.g., whether the coyote's participation reinforces anthropocentric control despite its symbolic elevation.

## 3.3 Theoretical Approaches

### 1) Ecocritical and Animal Studies

**Peter Singer's Utilitarianism:** This study evaluates the moral implications of using animal bodies (dead hare, captive coyote) in art, asking whether Beuys's symbolic goals justify potential exploitation.

**Ecofeminism:** Via theorists like Val Plumwood, I examine how Beuys's performances intersect with critiques of patriarchal domination over nature, particularly in *Coyote's* gendered symbolism (e.g., the felt as a "womb" of transformation).

### 2) Anthropological and Shamanic Theory

**Mircea Eliade's Shamanism:** This study positions Beuys as a modern shaman whose performances mimic rites of passage (e.g., isolation, animal communion) to heal societal "trauma".

**Anthroposophy:** Rudolf Steiner's influence on Beuys's belief in art as a vehicle for spiritual evolution is analyzed, particularly in the use of materials like fat and felt as alchemical mediators.

### 3) Political and Ideological Critique

**Decolonial Theory:** This study interrogates Beuys's engagement with Native American symbolism in *Coyote*, questioning whether the performance appropriates indigenous cosmologies or critiques colonial violence (e.g., the coyote as scapegoat).

**Marxist Aesthetics:** Fredric Jameson's dialectical approach unpacks the tension between Beuys's anti-capitalist stance (e.g., urinating on the *Wall Street Journal*) and his commodification as an art-world icon.

### 3.4 Interdisciplinary Synthesis

The study bridges art history, philosophy, and critical animal studies to argue that Beuys's performances oscillate between subversion and complicity. For example:

**Linguistic Analysis:** The ironic title *I Like America and America Likes Me* is dissected using Roland Barthes's mythologies to reveal how Beuys deconstructs nationalist rhetoric.

**Ethnographic Parallels:** Comparisons to Siberian shamanic practices (via ethnographic records) highlight the transcultural dimensions of Beuys's rituals, while also exposing potential exoticization.

## 4. Process of Analysis

### 4.1. Analysis of *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965)

#### 4.1.1 Introduction to the Performance: *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*

On November 26, 1965, Joseph Beuys performed a three-hour performance at Galerie Schmela in Düsseldorf, Germany, titled *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (DACS, 2024). At the beginning of the performance, Beuys locked the door of his gallery hall from the inside, leaving the gallery audience outside so that they could only observe the scene inside through the window. During the performance, Beuys held a dead rabbit in his arms, with honey and gold foil smeared all over his head and face. A steel sole was tied to his right shoe, and a felt sole was glued to his left shoe. Equipped

like this, he explained the paintings collected by Galerie Schmela to the dead rabbit in his arms. The process lasted three hours and ended with Beuys sitting in a chair with one leg wrapped in felt.



Figure 1: *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* performed by Joseph Beuys

(Cited from <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/626352260647474520/>)

#### 4.1.2 Symbolism of Objects Used by Beuys

This performance is imbued with profound symbolism, where each object selected and utilized by Beuys carries distinct and significant meaning. The manner in which these objects were presented, and the relationships they formed with the artist, are both peculiar and thought-provoking.

When Beuys applied a mixture of honey and gold leaf to his face, it resulted in the creation of a unique mask. Gold, in Western traditions, is emblematic of wisdom and purity, and is often associated with the life-giving power of the sun. In ancient Egyptian culture, gold was considered a symbol of resurrection, and the Egyptians believed it represented the flesh of the gods. For members of the royal family, inscribing their names on golden masks and utilizing spells for resurrection were considered of paramount importance, which is why the pharaohs meticulously crafted golden masks and embossed them with their own likenesses (Schorsch, 2017). Honey has always been regarded as a

medium for rebirth by the Germanic and ancient Indian peoples. In addition, honey is a product of bees, symbolizing production and creation.

The steel and felt soles symbolize hard rational logic and warm emotional experience respectively. Beuys's two feet are stepping on different soles, symbolizing that human beings are a fusion of rationality and sensibility.

#### **4.1.3 The Role of the Dead Rabbit**

The central prop in this performance is a dead rabbit, which Beuys engages with as the object of his communication. In European culture, rabbits are often symbols of fertility, abundance, and the regenerative power of reproduction. The phrase "mad as a March hare" originates from the behavior of male rabbits during early spring, when they engage in intense competition for the attention of female rabbits. The female rabbits typically resist the advances of the males until they ultimately relent, resulting in a mating display that resembles a frenetic dance or revelry. Rabbits are renowned for their remarkable reproductive capacity, with a female capable of carrying a second litter while still pregnant with the first. This phenomenon, known as superfetation, is a rare form of ectopic pregnancy, further emphasizing the extraordinary fertility associated with these animals (Thompson, 2022).

The rabbit is indelibly associated with Easter. In the languages of the Germanic and Slavic peoples, the term "Easter" derives from an ancient pagan goddess, the goddess of spring. According to myths and legends that date back thousands of years, the goddess of spring once rescued a bird whose wings had been frozen in the winter and transformed it into a rabbit. Because the creature had once been a bird, it retained the ability to lay eggs, despite rabbits being mammals that do not naturally lay eggs. From this myth, the rabbit became a symbol of Easter. In German, the "Easter Bunny" is referred to as the "Osterhase", where "Hase" specifically denotes a wild hare, not a domestic rabbit, thus highlighting its vibrant wildness and unbounded fertility (Wilson, 2023).

In his youth, Beuys developed a profound interest in the behavior and ecology of rabbits, dedicating considerable time to studying their natural habits. He observed that wild rabbits possess a remarkable ability to adapt their environment to suit their survival needs, an instinctive behavior that he regarded as a form of creativity. According to Beuys, this capacity for environmental transformation was not merely a survival mechanism but an artistic act in itself, demonstrating an inherent connection

to the natural world. He viewed rabbits as transcendent beings, imbued with a divine quality that places them beyond human understanding. In Beuys's perspective, rabbits share a unique, symbiotic relationship with the earth and nature, embodying a closer, more harmonious connection to the land than humans, who have become increasingly alienated from their natural surroundings. This reverence for rabbits reflected Beuys's broader artistic and philosophical vision, where nature and its creatures were seen as essential, spiritual entities that could inspire a deeper understanding of life and creativity.

#### **4.1.4 Beuys as a Shaman and Spiritual Ritual**

Beuys can be understood as a modern-day shaman, using art as a vehicle for performing enigmatic rituals that transcend the material world. In this performance, he appeared to be possessed by ancient, primal forces, engaging in a profound communion with the spirits of the earth. The ritualistic nature of his actions suggested a spiritual dialogue that surpassed the physical realm, evoking a sense of mysticism and transcendence. Throughout the performance, Beuys seemed to enter into a metaphysical state, one in which he and the dead rabbit became symbols of an ancient connection between humanity and nature, communicating beyond the limitations of language and rational thought. At the conclusion of the piece, the serene stillness that enveloped Beuys, now masked, and the lifeless rabbit, created a moment of spiritual equilibrium, one that surpassed the boundaries of species and connected the human and the animal in a profound metaphysical unity.

This performance defies conventional artistic frameworks, distancing itself from established aesthetic norms. Rather than conforming to traditional notions of beauty, it seems to evoke a deeper, more intuitive form of expression. Beuys's work calls upon an emotional and sensory engagement that resonates on a subconscious level, prompting the viewer to experience the performance not as a mere spectacle, but as a visceral, existential encounter. The performance shifts the focus from visual beauty or intellectual analysis to a more delicate and primal intuition, where the essence of life and communication flows beyond the confines of human-created artistic concepts. It challenges the viewer to perceive art not through the lens of tradition, but as an immersive experience that connects with something far more elemental and ancient.

#### 4.1.5 Beuys's Artistic and Ecological Philosophy

Regarding how to interpret this performance art, Beuys once said in an interview:

When I faced a dead rabbit, to some extent, this behavior was placed in the context of ecological damage caused by humans, because humans will kill rabbits, humans will also destroy forests, destroy nature, and ultimately destroy all life. This is the current way humans live and develop. In fact, rabbits and any other life in nature are human organs. Without these organs, humans cannot survive. Humans need forests as lungs to provide us with oxygen; they need grains as food nutrition; they also need a variety of animals and the continuous reproduction of the land. When we know that human progress depends on these lives, we find that we are killing them, then we no longer have a loving relationship with them (Joseph Beuys Club 2, 1983).

Beuys's remarks responded to his identity as a supporter of the German Green Party and an environmentalist, and his last performance art "Seven Thousand Oaks" before his death continued his spirit of ecologicalism.

As Beuys cradled the lifeless rabbit and engaged in his one-sided communication with it, the audience was left unaware of the inner dialogue that unfolded within him. However, it is evident that throughout the performance, Beuys repeatedly spoke to himself, saying, "Even dead animals have stronger intuitive abilities than humans who hold stubborn ideas and concepts". This remark serves as a pointed critique of human reliance on rigid rationality, particularly that which is grounded in mathematical logic. Through this statement, Beuys subtly condemned the overemphasis on intellectual reasoning and the tendency to dismiss alternative, non-logical modes of understanding the world. The phrase underscores his belief that human beings, in their pursuit of certainty and control, have become increasingly disconnected from the deeper, more intuitive aspects of existence, which he believed animals—whether living or dead—still possess in abundance.

This statement not only reflects Beuys's philosophical stance but also embodies his

broader artistic ideology. His critique of human rationality highlights the limitations of a worldview that prioritizes calculation and objectivity over instinct and intuition. In Beuys's view, art should serve as a means of reconnecting with the intuitive, spiritual, and creative dimensions of human experience, which have been overshadowed by the dominance of logical thought. The performance, in this sense, becomes a vehicle for challenging conventional modes of perception, urging the audience to rethink the relationship between intellect, intuition, and the natural world. Through his interaction with the dead rabbit, Beuys subtly invites the viewer to embrace a more holistic understanding of existence—one that transcends rigid concepts and embraces the wisdom inherent in all forms of life, human and non-human alike.

#### **4.1.6 Beuys's View on Art and Human Sensory Perception**

Beuys once announced a statement on a TV program:

Humans can talk to animals, plants, soil, angels... and higher beings. Everything in the universe and the supernatural world is part of human beings. Only when humans are freed from objectification, alienation and possessiveness can they present a different relationship with the world. When I explained the pictures to 'my own organ' (that is, the rabbit), I also explained that art should be understood and felt in a brand-new way. This way should be sharper, richer and more powerful. This way should exist as a driving force for innovation at the sensory level. We should improve our thinking mode through intuition, inspiration and imagination to reach this inner creativity. This is the task of art. Art is to develop more feelings, more emotions and more will. Creativity lives in our bodies (Joseph Beuys Club 2, 1983).

In Beuys's perspective, if the theoretical framework underlying a work of art were considered the true essence of the artwork, then there would be no need for the artist to produce a tangible creation that engages the viewer's sensory faculties. The artist could merely articulate the concept with a few logical statements. However, Beuys firmly believed that art cannot be fully comprehended through causality and rational analysis alone. Instead, art must be experienced through

a sensory immersion that deeply penetrates the viewer's consciousness. For Beuys, art is not an intellectual exercise to be deciphered through detached observation; it is a visceral experience meant to be felt and internalized.

He argued that a work of art should have the capacity to physically enter the viewer's body, where it becomes part of their lived experience. In this view, the viewer is not merely an external observer or passive recipient but an active participant in the creation and reception of the artwork. The boundaries between the viewer and the artwork blur, as the viewer's body becomes an integral part of the artistic encounter. When an individual truly engages with a piece of art—whether through performance, installation, or other forms—they step into the work itself, allowing it to enter their own body, thoughts, and emotions. This interaction transforms the viewer from a distant spectator into an embodied experienter, thereby redefining the role of the audience in the artistic process.

In this sense, Beuys's vision of art challenges the conventional understanding of aesthetic experience. It insists on the importance of sensory engagement and the idea that art is a living, dynamic process that involves both the artist and the viewer in a shared, transformative act. By positioning the viewer as a participant rather than an observer, Beuys sought to democratize art, making it a collective experience that transcends traditional hierarchies between creator and audience.

#### **4.1.7 Beuys's Exploration of Human Creativity and Sensory Expansion**

For Beuys, the human senses—vision, hearing, touch, balance, proportion, and many others—were of paramount importance. He believed that art exists not merely as a form of aesthetic expression but as a means to engage and preserve these sensory faculties, thus deepening the human experience. In his view, art should extend and explore the vast potential of the human senses, pushing beyond conventional limits to stimulate and develop the creative capacities inherent in every individual. Through this exploration, Beuys aimed to foster a more profound connection to the world, one that engages both the body and the mind in equal measure.

When Beuys engaged in the act of explaining paintings to the dead rabbit, he did not attempt to impose a rigid, intellectual interpretation upon it. Rather, his communication was an open, intuitive exchange, allowing for a deeper, unspoken connection between himself and the animal. The true meaning of each sentence Beuys uttered during those three hours remains elusive, and it is unlikely

that every phrase conveyed a singular, easily definable concept. Yet, the power of the performance lies in its indeterminate nature and in the profound, ongoing resonance of Beuys's act. His interaction with the dead rabbit continues to be a subject of contemplation, with its enigmatic qualities prompting discussions about the boundaries of art, communication, and existence.

As the central figure in this performance, Beuys appeared to embody the role of a tireless psychic, channeling unseen forces through his actions until he reached a state of physical exhaustion. His performance transcended mere physical exertion; it became an act of spiritual engagement, where his body and spirit were in constant dialogue with the unseen realms. Perhaps, in Beuys's view, the very essence of human existence lies in the continuous transmission of an eternal spirit through behavior—a spirit that seeks unity, empathy, and equality beyond the limitations of societal prejudices. In this light, Beuys's performance was not simply an artistic statement but a call for a new form of human consciousness—one that transcends traditional boundaries and embraces a more holistic, inclusive, and intuitive understanding of life.

#### **4.2. Analysis of *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974)**

##### **4.2.1 Overview of the Performance: *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me***

From May 21 to May 25, 1974, Joseph Beuys engaged in a remarkable performance art piece titled *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me* at the René Block Gallery in New York (Greenberger, 2021). During this five-day performance, Beuys lived in isolation with a coyote in a specially designated space within the gallery. Upon his arrival in the United States from Düsseldorf, Germany, Beuys was deliberately wrapped in felt—a material often associated with his earlier works—and was immediately placed in a wheelchair, transported to the gallery via an ambulance. Notably, he had not set foot on American soil until reaching the gallery. At the time, the United States was embroiled in the Vietnam War (1955–1975), a conflict that Beuys vehemently opposed.



Figure 2: *Coyote: I like America and America likes me* performed by Joseph Beuys

(Cited from <https://www.kidsofdada.com/blogs/magazine/35963521-joseph-beuys-i-like-america-and-america-likes-me>)

In a direct act of political dissent, Beuys chose to isolate himself from the surrounding American context, stating that he wished to focus solely on the coyote and not engage with any other aspect of American life. He adorned himself in a felt tent, an unusual garment which he wore throughout the performance, and held a walking stick as his only means of protection. This performance was significantly more bold, direct, and politically charged than his previous work, *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*.

The coyote, in this context, functions as a powerful symbol. It is often associated with the concept of the “scapegoat” in biblical tradition, representing malice, resentment, and a broader sense of vilification by external forces. Historically, white colonizers viewed the coyote as a malicious creature, paralleling how Native Americans were demonized and scapegoated by colonial powers. In Beuys's performance, the coyote thus becomes a metaphor for these marginalized groups, and Beuys's refusal to engage with anyone other than the animal reflects his rejection of mainstream American society and its colonialist history. The performance, through this singular communication with the coyote, articulates a complex critique of cultural violence and the oppression of indigenous populations.

#### **4.2.2 Symbolism of the Coyote**

The coyote serves as a powerful symbol of the untamed wildness and mystical qualities inherent in the indigenous cultures of the American continent. Among Native American tribes, the coyote was revered as a sacred figure, often regarded as an incarnation of the trickster or magician, a creature possessing both wisdom and transformative power. In contrast, white colonists perceived the coyote as a malevolent beast, associating it with evil and a threat to their settler society. This stark dichotomy reflects the broader cultural and ideological conflict between indigenous and colonial worldviews.

Thus, the coyote, as both an animal and a totemic figure, embodies not only the primal energy of the American continent but also the enduring spiritual trauma inflicted upon it through centuries of colonization. The symbolic presence of the coyote transcends its role as a mere creature of nature; it becomes a vessel for the spiritual scars left by the violent conquest and dispossession of indigenous peoples. This dual significance of the coyote—both as a figure of indigenous reverence and as an object of colonial disdain—captures the profound cultural and emotional divide that has persisted throughout American history, echoing the unresolved legacies of colonization, displacement, and cultural erasure (Rosenbaum, 2013).

#### **4.2.3 Themes and Techniques in the Performance**

The symbols, connotations, and artistic techniques embedded within this performance art are vast, multifaceted, and rich in interpretive potential. Beuys's *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me* is not merely a spectacle but a profound exploration of human nature, cultural history, and the

power of symbolic exchange. The performance intricately weaves physical acts with intellectual and emotional dimensions, making it a complex and layered experience.

The interaction between Beuys and the coyote evokes a series of physical and emotional adventures that transcend typical human-animal encounters. In the space of the gallery, the coyote becomes both an object of fear and a potential source of communion. The dynamics of this interaction are not simply those of dominance or submission but rather a more nuanced form of dialogue—one that transcends language and communicates through presence, gesture, and shared space. This relationship between man and animal evokes a deep reflection on the boundaries between humanity and nature, civilization and wilderness, and the concept of the “other”.

#### **4.2.4 Human and Animal Interaction**

There is no doubt that being in the same space as a coyote—an animal symbolizing untamed wildness and primal energy—poses a significant risk to one’s physical safety and well-being. The proximity between the coyote’s body and Beuys’s body creates a charged, tense narrative space, filled with the potential for danger and vulnerability. This dynamic interaction between human and animal unfolds in a rhythm that oscillates between tension and release, fear and trust, encapsulating the raw immediacy of life and survival in their most elemental forms.

The body, as both a physical and symbolic entity, serves as the most authentic and honest representation of one’s existence. It is through the body that the mind is made manifest, and it is the body that allows for connection and communication between individuals, regardless of species. This truth applies not only to humans but to animals as well, each body containing within it a reservoir of instinct, emotion, and communication. In the case of the coyote, its body, initially tense and defensive, gradually begins to relax as it becomes familiar with Beuys’s presence. The wolf’s body signals this transition—its initial wariness giving way to a softer, more open posture, emitting subtle signals of trust and non-threat.

This physical interaction between Beuys and the coyote, therefore, represents more than just a visceral encounter; it becomes a profound moment of shared understanding and connection. The lowering of the coyote’s guard and its physical responses to Beuys’s actions symbolize a deeper, unspoken dialogue between human and animal. Through their mutual engagement, a silent bond forms,

transcending the boundaries of species, and offering a glimpse into an inner connection that goes beyond words or rational thought. In this sense, the performance becomes a testament to the power of bodily presence as a conduit for emotional and spiritual exchange, where the most primal instincts of both human and animal merge into a singular, harmonious experience.

#### 4.2.5 Body Philosophy and Beuys's Performance

As a significant philosophical paradigm emerging in the 20th century, body philosophy reconceptualizes the body not as a mere physical object but as a subjective entity imbued with rich perceptual intentionality. It emphasizes the embodied nature of human experience, suggesting that the body is not simply a vessel for the mind but an active participant in the creation of meaning. This philosophy asserts that the body's lived experiences—its sensations, movements, and interactions with the world—are integral to our understanding of self, others, and the world around us. By focusing on the body's situational and experiential qualities, body philosophy challenges traditional Cartesian dualism, advocating instead for a more holistic approach that integrates body and mind.

In this light, Beuys's performance art piece, *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me*, can be viewed as a compelling artistic manifestation of body philosophy. Through his interaction with the coyote, Beuys emphasizes the significance of the body as a site of knowledge and emotional exchange. The performance is deeply rooted in embodied experience, as it underscores the physical presence of both the artist and the animal as they engage in a shared, sensory experience. The coyote, a symbol of untamed nature and spiritual mystery, becomes a catalyst for Beuys to explore the ways in which the body, in its most primal form, can facilitate communication beyond verbal language.

Throughout the performance, Beuys's bodily movements—his gestures, his positioning within the gallery, his interaction with the coyote—serve as expressions of the body's capacity to transcend intellectual abstraction and access a more intuitive, visceral form of understanding. His use of felt and other tactile materials also underscores the importance of physicality in his art, inviting viewers to experience the work through their own senses and bodies. By engaging directly with the coyote, Beuys positions his body as an active participant in a profound exchange that transcends species boundaries, highlighting the interconnectedness of all living beings. This interaction becomes a

testament to the idea that the body, in its embodied state, is not merely a passive receptor of external stimuli but an active, conscious agent in the creation of meaning, connection, and understanding.

Thus, Beuys's performance embodies the principles of body philosophy by affirming the centrality of the body in the process of knowledge, communication, and artistic expression. It challenges conventional ideas of subjectivity and invites a deeper engagement with the lived, embodied experience of the world.

#### **4.2.6 Art as Emotional Release and Healing**

Art, in its truest form, serves as a powerful release of emotions and a means of self-redemption. It provides a conduit for the expression of the deepest human struggles and desires, offering an opportunity for personal and collective healing. In Beuys's *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me*, the eventual harmonious coexistence between Beuys and the coyote can be interpreted as a profound metaphor for reconciliation. The coyote, symbolizing a wounded and exploited America—scarred by colonization, violence, and historical trauma—finds a form of reconciliation with modern America through this deeply symbolic interaction. This moment of harmony signifies not only a personal healing for Beuys but also an invitation for the nation to acknowledge and come to terms with its past, seeking a path toward collective reconciliation and healing.

Beuys himself, as a complex figure with a multifaceted identity, carries a history deeply intertwined with trauma and redemption. A white man who had served as a German pilot in World War II, Beuys bore the weight of a tumultuous past, one marked by his experiences as a survivor of the war and an individual who had been complicit in actions that could be considered morally questionable. The guilt and trauma stemming from these experiences were integral to his sense of self, and through his art, Beuys sought to confront and transform this inner turmoil. By choosing the coyote, a figure of spiritual and cultural significance, as his companion in this performance, Beuys symbolically confronted the lingering effects of his own past. The coyote, a creature that embodies both resilience and transformation, becomes a mirror for Beuys's own journey of healing and reinvention.

Throughout the duration of the performance, the connection between Beuys and the coyote can be understood as an exchange of energy and healing, wherein the artist is not merely a passive observer but an active participant in this mutual process of renewal. The coyote, in its role as a

spiritual animal, helps guide Beuys through a process of introspection and redemption, offering him the opportunity to reconcile his personal history and emerge from it with a renewed sense of purpose and clarity. This mutual healing, between both the artist and the land that has been historically scarred, evokes a broader vision of redemption—a call for humanity to recognize its shared responsibility in addressing past injustices and to seek healing through empathy, understanding, and creative expression.

Thus, Beuys's interaction with the coyote is not only a personal ritual of healing and self-reconciliation but also a larger metaphor for the healing of a society torn by conflict, colonization, and violence. By embracing the coyote, Beuys presents a vision of art that transcends the individual, offering a means of collective redemption and a pathway toward understanding and healing in the face of profound historical wounds.

#### **4.2.7 The Significance of the Title: *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me***

Beuys's choice of the title *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me* was deliberate and rich with significance. The term “America” itself carries layers of ambiguity and controversy, which Beuys likely intended to invoke as part of his larger critique of the sociopolitical landscape. The term “America”, as it is commonly used, refers to the United States—often abbreviated as U.S.A., the U.S., or simply the States. However, “America” originally denoted the entire landmass of the Americas, encompassing North America, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean islands. Over time, due to the expanding economic and political power of the United States, the term began to refer specifically to the nation, overshadowing the broader geographical meaning. Consequently, to differentiate between the various regions of the American continents, terms such as “North America” or “South America” were introduced, further entrenching the U.S.'s dominant usage of the term.

The shift in the meaning of “America” from a continent to a nation can be seen as symbolic of cultural and geopolitical hegemony. The United States, in asserting its identity as “America”, has exerted significant influence over global discourse and culture, reinforcing its position as the dominant power in the Western Hemisphere. By using the term “America” in the title of his performance, Beuys subtly highlights this transformation of the term from a collective, continental identity to one representing a single nation-state. His choice is not incidental; it reflects his critique of the cultural imperialism and colonial hegemony imposed by the United States, particularly on

indigenous peoples. The term "America" itself has become a symbol of a broader cultural and ideological dominance, which Beuys deliberately challenges in his work.

By invoking the word "America", Beuys positions himself against the historical exploitation and genocide of Native Americans by European colonizers, who, in their conquest of the land, imposed their own language, values, and power structures upon the indigenous population. The use of "America" in the title also serves as a critique of the pervasive cultural and ideological hegemony maintained by the United States. Beuys was acutely aware of the historical context in which this word was situated, and by choosing it, he emphasized his opposition not only to the physical domination of indigenous peoples but also to the ongoing intellectual and cultural colonization. The title, therefore, becomes a symbol of Beuys's rejection of the sanitized narrative of American exceptionalism and his refusal to accept the language and discourse shaped by those in power.

In essence, Beuys's use of "America" is a deliberate subversion, a means of calling attention to the historical and ongoing systems of oppression, both physical and intellectual, that have shaped the nation's identity. His performance becomes a vehicle for interrogating the power dynamics embedded in language and culture, urging viewers to critically examine the ways in which language shapes our understanding of history and identity. By appropriating the term "America" in his art, Beuys not only critiques the colonial past but also challenges the cultural narratives that continue to perpetuate inequality and exclusion. Through this performative act, he underscores the necessity of confronting these hegemonic structures, advocating for a more inclusive and just discourse.

#### **4.2.8 Irony and Self-Mockery in the Title**

*I Like America and America Likes Me* is obviously an irony and self-mockery. Because of Beuys's opposition to the Vietnam War, he was once banned from entering the United States. Although he successfully entered the United States this time and performed this performance art, since Beuys did not want to see anything else about America except the coyote, it is clear that he did not love America and America did not love him either.

Therefore, Beuys's performance highlights the duality and irony inherent in language and cultural symbols. The use of the coyote—simultaneously a revered totem and a demonized creature—underscores the tension between the indigenous and colonial narratives that have shaped

American history. Beuys's refusal to engage with anyone other than the coyote accentuates the irony embedded in the term "America", which, for Beuys, symbolizes not just the United States but the entire history of cultural hegemony, violence, and exploitation. Through this, Beuys challenges the audience to confront the contradictions embedded in their own understanding of history, identity, and national consciousness.

The performance also serves as an intervention in the ideological space, questioning the prevailing narratives of power, war, and colonization. Beuys's resistance to the Vietnam War, coupled with his isolated, ritualistic interaction with the coyote, disrupts conventional modes of engagement with political and social issues. The work becomes a space for ideological subversion, as Beuys questions the very structures that define political and cultural identity. Through his art, Beuys reimagines the potential for healing and reconciliation, both on an individual level and within the broader socio-political context.

#### **4.2.9 The Role of the Media and Subversion of Culture**

During the brief period in which Beuys coexisted with the coyote, he made a peculiar request to the gallery staff: he asked that they deliver a copy of The New York Times to him each day. However, rather than using the newspaper to stay informed, as one might expect, Beuys instructed that it be used to cover the coyote's daily excrement. This seemingly trivial action, at first glance, can be interpreted as a deliberate and pointed critique of the media. In the context of Beuys's broader artistic and political commentary, the act of using The New York Times—a symbol of mainstream, often sanitized, and commercialized information—as a tool to cover waste becomes a subversive gesture that mocks the role of the media in shaping public consciousness.

Beuys's decision to involve the media in such a mundane and somewhat degrading task reflects his deep dissatisfaction with the ways in which the media serves the agendas of power, rather than engaging with the complex realities of the world. In choosing to defile the newspaper by covering the coyote's excrement, Beuys subverts the traditional function of the press as an authoritative source of information, instead using it as a tool for cleansing, shielding, or even concealing. This symbolic act critiques the superficiality and the often-distorted nature of media narratives, suggesting that, rather

than serving to enlighten or elevate society, mainstream media is complicit in masking inconvenient truths and perpetuating a sanitized version of reality.

The act also embodies Beuys's broader ideological stance against cultural norms and the commodification of knowledge. By placing the media in such an ignoble role, Beuys transforms the very nature of cultural products, challenging the boundaries between high and low art, and offering a pointed commentary on the devaluation of information in contemporary society. This subversion of the media underscores Beuys's belief in the potential of art to provoke critical reflection on the systems of power that influence the production and dissemination of knowledge.

In this context, Beuys's performance with the coyote becomes not only an exploration of human-animal relationships and spirituality but also a direct confrontation with the ideological forces that govern cultural and intellectual life. The irony of using *The New York Times*—a paper that has historically shaped public opinion—as a means of covering waste serves as a powerful metaphor for the way in which media, in its pursuit of spectacle and control, can obscure deeper truths and reinforce a narrow worldview. Through this gesture, Beuys effectively critiques the role of the media in shaping collective consciousness and positions his art as an alternative form of communication that seeks to expose and confront these cultural manipulations.

#### **4.2.10 Todorov's Rhetorical Trichotomy Applied to Beuys's Performance**

French-Bulgarian literary theorist Tzvetan Todorov (March 1st, 1939 – February 7th, 2017) proposed a theoretical framework for understanding rhetoric, categorizing it into three distinct types from the perspective of duality research. If we approach Joseph Beuys's performance art as a text and apply Todorov's rhetorical model, we can indeed interpret this unique performance through the lens of his rhetorical trichotomy.

Firstly, Beuys's performance is undeniably unconventional and transgressive, deviating sharply from normative artistic practices. This characteristic aligns with Todorov's classification of "non-realistic expression". Beuys's interaction with the coyote, which involves a symbolic, almost ritualistic relationship, creates a reality that is at once unsettling and beyond conventional experience. The very act of communing with an animal, particularly a creature often associated with danger and mysticism, defies the traditional boundaries of performance art and challenges the viewer's

understanding of reality. This “non-realistic” expression moves beyond mere spectacle to provoke a deeper, more visceral engagement with the audience, forcing them to reconsider their perceptions of human-animal relationships and the boundaries of art itself.

Secondly, Beuys’s performance embodies what Todorov describes as “double expression”—a rhetorical device wherein an object or subject simultaneously carries two conflicting meanings or characteristics (Berg & Zbinden, 2020). In this context, the two primary subjects of the performance, Beuys himself and the coyote, perfectly illustrate this duality. On the one hand, humans are depicted as both barbaric and destructive, as seen in their historical treatment of indigenous cultures and the environment, while simultaneously capable of civilization and compassion. On the other hand, the coyote is portrayed as both a symbol of fierceness and danger, yet also as a creature that embodies docility and peace in its interactions with Beuys. These dualities not only reflect the complexity of both the human condition and the animal nature but also underscore Beuys’s broader exploration of the contradictions inherent in contemporary society. By positioning these two figures within a single performance, Beuys invites the audience to engage with the tensions between civilization and wilderness, domination and harmony, revealing the inherent complexity of both.

Thirdly, Todorov’s concept of “contrasting expressions”, which he defines as the juxtaposition of two elements or behaviors that embody opposite qualities (Berg & Zbinden, 2020), is particularly pertinent in this performance. The human and the coyote—traditionally seen as opposites in both cultural and natural contexts—are placed together in a space of coexistence and mutual interaction. The coyote, often viewed as a symbol of wilderness, rebellion, and danger, contrasts sharply with Beuys, a highly educated, civilized, and political figure. Common sense would expect the relationship between these two subjects to be one of conflict or even danger, but Beuys actively mediates this opposition, fostering a subtle harmony. Through his performance, he seeks to dissipate the duality between the human and the animal, ultimately creating a space where this seemingly insurmountable dichotomy can be transcended. This resolution of duality is at the core of Beuys’s artistic vision, suggesting that the boundaries between civilization and nature, human and animal, can be bridged through understanding, empathy, and art.

In conclusion, approaching Beuys's performance through the lens of Todorov's rhetorical trichotomy provides a valuable framework for understanding the complex symbolic and philosophical underpinnings of the work. By analyzing this performance as a "text" in the linguistic sense, we can see how Beuys uses rhetorical devices such as non-realistic expression, double expression, and contrasting expressions to engage with profound themes of human identity, societal values, and the natural world. This method of "dissecting" Beuys's performance highlights the depth of its rhetorical and symbolic content, revealing the layers of meaning embedded within the artwork. Through this approach, the rich and multifaceted nature of Beuys's performance art becomes even more apparent, emphasizing its importance not only as an artistic gesture but also as a philosophical exploration of human existence and our relationship with the world around us.

#### **4.3. The critical thinking on *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* and *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me***

Both of the performance pieces, *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* and *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me*, place the relationship between humans and animals at the core of Joseph Beuys's artistic practice. These works present animals—both dead and living—as partners in Beuys's artistic expression, elevating them to an equal, if not superior, status in relation to humans. Through these performances, Beuys seeks to highlight the inherent value of animals, subverting the anthropocentric viewpoint that positions humans as superior to all other species. This aspiration is reflective of Beuys's broader worldview, values, and artistic philosophy, wherein he attempts to break down hierarchical boundaries and challenge the conventions of both art and society.

However, a critical examination of these performances reveals certain deficiencies in terms of ethical expression and strategic execution. Specifically, from the standpoint of contemporary ethical frameworks, such as Peter Singer's utilitarianism, Donna Haraway's multispecies ethics, and Cary Wolfe's post-humanist critique, Beuys's works present challenges and potential contradictions in the treatment of animals and their role in art.

#### **4.3.1 *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare: Ethical Concerns***

In *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, the use of a dead hare as an integral part of the performance brings forth several pressing ethical questions. Animal rights advocates, particularly those influenced by Singer's utilitarianism, may question the morality of using an animal corpse as a prop in an art performance. According to Singer's utilitarian ethics, actions are morally right if they promote the greatest happiness and minimize suffering. In this context, the dead hare's use—without any clear indication of its ethical sourcing or how it met its demise—could be viewed as a form of exploitation, as the animal's suffering, and the process of its acquisition, is entirely unknown. From a utilitarian perspective, one might argue that the potential harm caused to the animal by whatever means it was obtained, as well as the subsequent objectification of its body, could outweigh any artistic or symbolic merit.

Additionally, from a multispecies ethical perspective, as articulated by Haraway, the performance's treatment of the dead hare raises concerns regarding the human-centered framing of animal existence. Haraway calls for a shift away from viewing animals as mere objects for human use and towards a more respectful and reciprocal relationship between humans and animals. By using the dead hare as a passive object in his art, Beuys risks reinforcing the very hierarchical structures that marginalize animals as commodities for human consumption, rather than engaging in a deeper exploration of what it means to coexist with other species in a truly ethical and mutual relationship.

#### **4.3.2 *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me: The Illusion of Wildness***

In contrast, *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me* presents a different set of ethical concerns, particularly regarding the dynamics of power, control, and the depiction of nature. At first glance, this performance may appear to offer a more direct engagement with the theme of wildness and the intrinsic value of animals, as Beuys attempts to live alongside a coyote in a shared space. However, upon closer scrutiny, it becomes apparent that this performance is fraught with contradictions and risks that undermine its purported message of harmony between humans and nature.

From a post-humanist critique, as developed by Wolfe, the performance's premise of human-animal interaction is problematic because it overlooks the inherent asymmetry in power between humans and animals. While Beuys may intend to create an egalitarian space for dialogue with the coyote,

the situation is inherently shaped by human authority and control. The coyote, though symbolizing wildness, nature, and Indigenous culture, is placed in a controlled environment under constant supervision, with its survival contingent upon the actions of human staff. The coyote's participation in the performance is not voluntary; it is a passive participant in an experiment that has been carefully managed to avoid dangerous outcomes. The real danger in this performance lies not in the risk to Beuys's safety, but in the coyote's vulnerability, as it is continually monitored and its fate is contingent on human intervention. If the coyote were to display aggression or become a threat to Beuys, it is likely that the animal would face immediate destruction at the hands of the staff—an outcome that starkly highlights the power imbalance inherent in this interaction.

The performance, therefore, presents a false spectacle: while Beuys's art suggests a dialogue between human and animal, this dialogue is ultimately mediated by the structures of human dominance. As Wolfe argues in his post-humanist critique, the performance fails to fully deconstruct the anthropocentric worldview that continues to dominate human interactions with animals. The coyote, though portrayed as a symbol of nature's purity, is ultimately rendered powerless by human control, suggesting that even in this bold artistic gesture, the basic dynamic of human supremacy remains intact.

#### **4.3.3 Beuys's Good Intentions and the Ethical Paradox**

Despite these criticisms, it is important to recognize that Beuys's intentions were, in many ways, well-meaning. He approached both performances with courage, a spirit of exploration, and a desire to transcend human-animal boundaries. In *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me*, Beuys sought to embody a deeper, more symbiotic connection with the natural world and its inhabitants, attempting to live with the coyote as a symbol of both cultural and ecological reconciliation. His willingness to place his life in the hands of an unpredictable creature reflects a certain heroism, underscoring his belief in the transformative power of art and its potential to heal societal divisions. However, as critics such as Singer, Haraway, and Wolfe have pointed out, even the noblest intentions can inadvertently perpetuate harm or reinforce existing systems of inequality.

The coyote, in its passive role, is subject to the very forces of domination and control that Beuys aims to critique. The paradox lies in the fact that while Beuys sought to elevate the coyote's status as an equal partner in his artistic exploration, the coyote's existence in the performance is dictated

by the constraints of human civilization. As a creature monitored, controlled, and surveilled by humans, the coyote's agency is limited, and its position in the performance reflects the ongoing, systemic imbalance of power between humans and the animal kingdom.

## 5. Conclusion

Joseph Beuys's performances *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965) and *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974) interrogate humanity's fractured relationship with nature through ritualistic actions and symbolic animal encounters. In *Dead Hare*, Beuys—his face smeared with honey and gold—whispers to a lifeless hare, critiquing rationalism while paradoxically reducing a symbol of fertility to a passive artistic prop. The work champions ecological consciousness yet raises ethical questions about using animal remains as spectacle.

*Coyote* amplifies these tensions. Isolating himself with a wild coyote for five days, Beuys wrapped in felt (symbolizing healing) performs an interspecies dialogue that rejects American imperialism and colonial violence against Native communities. The coyote, simultaneously a trickster archetype and victim of oppression, becomes a medium for confronting historical trauma. However, the animal's captivity and the gallery's contingency plans (including potential lethal intervention) expose the limits of Beuys's idealism, revealing how even anti-colonial gestures remain entangled with human dominance.

Both works exemplify Beuys's shamanistic approach: art as a transformative act bridging spiritual, ecological, and political realms. Yet they also embody contradictions. While advocating for animal agency, *Dead Hare* objectifies its subject; while critiquing control, *Coyote* relies on it. These paradoxes reflect broader tensions in activist art—can critique escape the systems it opposes?

Beuys's legacy lies in this unresolved dialectic. His performances remain touchstones for debates on art's role in ecological ethics, posthumanism, and decolonization. They challenge viewers to confront uncomfortable questions about representation, power, and whether art can truly enact the liberation it envisions. For contemporary artists, Beuys's works serve as both inspiration and cautionary tales—models of radical empathy that nonetheless risk replicating the hierarchies they seek to dismantle.

## 6. Academic Contributions

Different from other scholars' related research which focuses on the motivation and significance of Beuys's two performances, this study points out their shortcomings and defects, and reminds future artists to face up to the controversial points of these two performances, and encourages them to open up a more ideal and perfect path. In addition, the author introduced text analysis at the level of rhetoric study and body philosophy into the interpretation of these two performance art works, creating new academic excitement, extending the scope of application of the theory, and enriching the research perspective.

In conclusion, the study acknowledges the lack of direct animal agency in Beuys's work, using Wolfe's Zoontologies to critique the paradox of "giving voice" to animals while maintaining human authorship. By linking Beuys's ecological themes to current discourses (e.g., the Anthropocene), the research positions his work as a precursor to eco-art activism, yet problematizes its romanticized view of nature.

The methodological pluralism ensures a nuanced critique of Beuys's legacy, revealing how his performances both challenge and inadvertently replicate the hierarchies they seek to dismantle. The synthesis of embodied practice, symbolic systems, and ethical philosophy offers a roadmap for reevaluating human-animal conflicts in performance art beyond Beuys's oeuvre.

## 7. Research Limitations

Since I was unable to obtain the complete videos of *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* and *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me* and could only find some fragmentary clips, I was unable to conduct a more in-depth and detailed analysis of these two performance arts. In addition, at this stage, I'm not able to know the contact information of the relevant staff who worked with Beuys to prepare these two performance art works and are still alive. If they could be interviewed, I believe that more detailed information would be obtained.

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## Under the Threshold of AIGC: The Influence of Qinling Traditional National Costume Culture on Children's Aesthetic Education

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### Abstract

With the development of science and technology, art classroom teaching has moved from the traditional classroom blackboard demonstration to a new era of intelligence. In the children's teaching environment, the selection of students' art image samples has changed from the traditional pattern style of learning in books to the dynamic image display under the influence of AIGC science and technology. Through animations, micro-lessons, dynamic comments, and graphic story plot deduction, students' perspective can be enhanced to develop students' perception and understanding of culture, foster students' love for traditional Chinese national costume culture, enhance national self-confidence and pride, and further promote the inheritance and innovation of traditional Chinese costume culture. Therefore, under the influence of AIGC science and technology, this paper takes Qinling traditional national dress culture as the research point to study and discuss the influence of children's aesthetic education.

**Keywords:** AIGC; Qinling Traditional Ethnic Costumes; The Hui Nationality; Qiang Ethnic Minority; Aesthetic Education

### 1. Introduction

In the contemporary era of rapid development of intelligence and technology, educational teaching and students' aesthetic education are closely integrated with the development of science and technology. This research takes students from grades four to six in primary school as the main body, and takes classroom teaching practice as the approach. It takes the traditional ethnic clothing

culture of the Qinling Mountains combined with AIGC technology as the object of study (AIGC, short for Artificial Intelligence Generated Content, refers to the use of artificial intelligence technology to generate content. It refers to the automatic generation of various contents, including text, images, audio and video, through artificial intelligence technology.). It explores how to extract the beauty of color, lines, patterns, culture, and history from the artistic language of clothing, patterns, colors, and lines in the classroom practice teaching. By combining AIGC technology with teaching, it attempts to stimulate students' love for the traditional ethnic clothing culture of their hometown and enhance their sense of national pride and unity. Through the characteristics of traditional clothing of the Qiang and Hui ethnic groups in the Qinling region, students learn the beauty of clothing design, painting lines, and shapes, as well as the ethnic myths and stories behind the patterns, to stimulate their artistic creativity and enhance their love for the local culture, national confidence, and awareness of national unity. Through the collection and integration of various resources such as books, historical materials, information, and resources synthesized by AIGC technology, students can continue to learn independently outside the classroom and increase their love and interest in the traditional ethnic clothing culture of the Qinling Mountains.

## **2. Literature Review**

This paper is based in the birthplace of the traditional clothing culture of the Qinling Mountains - Shaanxi Province. It takes the students from grades four to six in a primary school in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province as the target for cultivating aesthetic goals. Through teacher micro-lessons, AIGC animation teaching, AIGC game-based interactive classrooms, video story interpretation of the traditional ethnic clothing patterns of the Qinling Mountains, and the combination of the colors, composition, lines, and patterns of traditional ethnic clothing in the Qinling Mountains, it conducts research on the comparison between traditional aesthetic education and AIGC aesthetic education, and the awareness of the aesthetic education of the national community. It also stimulates students' awe and love for nature through the worship of nature,

animals, and plants in the patterns of traditional ethnic clothing of the Qinling Mountains. From the perspective of teaching, it aims to stimulate students' interest in the traditional ethnic clothing culture of Shaanxi, China - the traditional ethnic clothing culture of the Qinling Mountains, enhance their creativity in art, and achieve the aesthetic education goal of loving traditional Chinese excellent clothing culture and national unity.

### **3. Research Methods**

#### **3.1 Literature Research Method**

By referring to published literature and books, and combining with personal thinking and research, it explores the application of the traditional ethnic clothing culture of the Qinling Mountains in teaching from the perspective of AIGC, to achieve the goal of cultivating children's aesthetic education. For example, Peng Guochao's "Reconstructing the Educational Landscape: AIGC Facilitating Educational Reform and Thinking Innovation" deeply analyzes the revolutionary impact of AIGC technology on the field of education through a large number of domestic and foreign cutting-edge cases; Liu Wenyong's "AIGC Reshaping Education: AI Large Model-driven Educational Reform and Practice" comprehensively guides teachers, parents, and students to systematically understand the profound impact of AIGC technology represented by ChatGPT on education and learning and quickly understand and master the application of mainstream AIGC tools in different educational and learning scenarios; Matt Miller's "AI for Educators" interprets AI from the perspective of teachers, provides practical ideas that can be immediately used in the classroom, introduces effective methods to simplify teaching and save time, and also depicts the future picture that students will face. Salman Khan's "Brave New Words: How AI Will Revolutionize Education (and Why That's a Good Thing)" explores how AI and GPT technology will transform learning methods and provides a roadmap for teachers, parents, and students to navigate this challenging and promising new world. In the study of traditional ethnic clothing culture in the Qinling Mountains, Tao Hong, Bai Jie, and Ren Weina's research on Hui ethnic clothing culture analyzes the characteristics of Hui culture from the perspectives of patterns,

regional culture, and customs; Meng Yan's "Kang Ethnic Clothing Culture Atlas" reveals the development origin of Kang ethnic clothing culture through on-site investigation and collection; Xiao Jun's "Hui Ethnic Group in Xi'an" discusses the mutual influence between the Hui ethnic group and the regional culture of Xi'an from aspects such as cultural inheritance and regional characteristics. By using the method of literature research, this paper summarizes and integrates the current research status of the Hui and Kang ethnic groups by previous scholars in literature and books, and collects relevant materials in the practical application of AIGC-related functions. Combined with the theoretical basis of aesthetics and art education, it deeply studies the impact of AIGC technology on children's art education in the traditional ethnic clothing culture of the Qinling Mountains.

### 3.2 Comparative Research Method

The application of the comparative research method in this paper mainly involves comparing traditional classroom teaching with AIGC teaching. Traditional classroom teaching is mainly characterized by the teacher teaching and the students learning, with a fixed thinking and expression mode such as blackboard writing or books and paper pictures. AIGC stands for Artificial Intelligence Generated Content, which refers to content generated by artificial intelligence. Under AIGC teaching, several new teaching models such as micro-lectures, animation teaching, AI game interaction classrooms, and video learning have emerged, which utilize network information technology to enhance students' understanding and acceptance of the traditional ethnic clothing culture of the Qinling Mountains. By analyzing the two teaching approaches, this paper explores the influence and effects of traditional teaching and AIGC teaching on the historical origin, pattern styles, composition of points, lines, and surfaces, and color expression of the traditional ethnic clothing culture represented by the Hui and Kang ethnic groups. It also investigates the impact of traditional teaching and the integration of AIGC technology on the education practice of students regarding the traditional ethnic clothing culture of the Qinling Mountains, as well as the effect of cultivating children's artistic talents through the beauty of Qinling clothing.

## 4. Research Result

### 4.1 The Impact of AIGC Technology on Children's Art Education

#### 4.1.1 Micro-lessons for Teachers

A micro-lesson refers to a video-based teaching activity that records the entire process of teaching and learning around a specific knowledge point, such as key points, difficult points, or teaching links, both inside and outside the classroom. It features short teaching duration, concise content, small resource size, diverse teaching forms, and prompt feedback. The drawing and evolution process of traditional ethnic costumes in the Qinling Mountains can be taught through micro-lessons, which offer convenience. First, the teaching duration is short. In traditional model drawing teaching, if teachers explain the patterns of costume types to students, they have to demonstrate on the blackboard or on-site on sketchbooks or sketch papers. Due to the limited space or the positions of students and teachers, there may be blind spots, restricting students' learning scope. Moreover, due to various constraints such as the venue and environment, the creation process often cannot be efficient and timely. Slow teacher demonstrations may not allow all students to observe clearly. However, with micro-lessons for demonstrating traditional Qinling costume patterns, students can learn under a high-definition view. The video is edited and processed with software to meet the required duration, allowing teachers to focus on explaining a specific issue, which aligns with students' attention span. Moreover, the traditional Qinling costume patterns are preserved in the form of micro-lesson videos, enabling students to review and study them multiple times. Second, the content is concise. In the demonstration of traditional Qinling costume patterns, the preparation and setting up of materials and teaching scenarios in traditional model drawing teaching are excluded. The essence is directly presented, allowing students to learn the characteristics of the patterns and their artistic expression methods or the historical stories and cultural scripts they embody. The theme is clear, and the content is concise, avoiding the complexity and lengthiness of traditional classroom teaching. Third, the resource size is small. In the design of micro-lesson scenarios, various teaching methods such as lecture, question-and-answer, inspiration, and discussion can be adopted, combined with elements like

animations, pictures, and audio to enhance the interest and appeal of teaching. Fourth, the teaching forms are diverse. Various teaching methods such as lecture, question-and-answer, inspiration, and discussion can be adopted, combined with elements like animations, pictures, and audio to enhance the interest and appeal of teaching. Fifth, feedback is prompt. After students watch the micro-lessons on traditional Qinling costume patterns, they can directly provide learning feedback to the classroom, allowing teachers to promptly understand students' learning dynamics and knowledge mastery, and provide timely answers and guidance, improving teaching effectiveness. Thus, in the learning process of primary school students, they have a more intuitive understanding of the ethnic costumes in the Qinling Mountains, and their artistic creation has made significant progress. For example, in the creation of patterns for Qiang ethnic costumes, students have increased their creation time and can think about the rules of two-dimensional or four-dimensional continuity based on the pattern styles, highlighting the value of formal beauty.



Figure 1: Students have increased their creation  
(Photo by the author)



Figure 2: Animation teaching method

(Photo by the author)

#### 4.1.2 Animation Teaching

In PPT teaching courses, animation teaching can be inserted. Animation teaching is a method that uses animation technology to assist teaching. By presenting teaching content in a vivid and visual animation form, it enhances teaching effectiveness and students' interest in learning. It has the characteristics of being intuitive and visual, highly interesting, and having good interactivity. In the course of learning traditional clothing of the Qinling Mountains, animation teaching can be introduced in the initial situational introduction stage or when interspersing relevant content of art history. This simplifies complex issues and makes abstract concepts more intuitive, facilitating students' understanding of the deeper meaning of the class, as well as the techniques of patterns, lines, colors, and the symbolic meanings of the patterns. In terms of the interactivity of animation teaching, interesting storylines and AI character and scene designs can arouse students' enthusiasm and curiosity for exploring the culture of traditional clothing. Students can use their imagination and enter the next pre-set stage of the animation based on its progress, achieving the purpose of interaction. Meanwhile, with the continuous development of AI technology, some animation teaching software can support interaction between students and

the animation content through touch screens or audio input, such as clicking on elements in the animation to obtain explanations of related knowledge, enhancing the sense of participation in learning. During the learning process, students' interest is enhanced. The figures of ethnic groups in the Qinling Mountains, such as the Qiang people in Hanzhong and the Hui people in Xi'an, are presented in cartoon forms that are more acceptable to students. Students resonate with the videos and may even start designing clothing directly while enjoying and learning. At the same time, animation teaching provides a direct visual representation of the Qiang embroidery technique in ethnic clothing, increasing students' interest.

#### 4.1.3 Interactive Classroom Incorporating Traditional Ethnic Costumes of the Qinling Mountains Through Games

In the teaching process of traditional costumes of the Qinling Mountains, small game dressing-up sessions are inserted. Through the design of technological network technology, the representative costumes of the Hui and Qiang ethnic groups, among others, are placed on electronic screens. The various parts of the costumes are disassembled, and students are asked to connect and combine them. Or, a scene with an electronic character, either male or female, is set up, and students are asked to dress the character in traditional costumes of the Hui and Qiang ethnic groups, among others, to make the class more interesting and enhance students' familiarity and understanding of the traditional costumes of the Qinling Mountains. Or, based on the learning in the early stage of the course, the patterns are placed on the electronic screen, and students are asked to find the patterns of the traditional costumes of the Hui and Qiang ethnic groups, among others, through "connecting" or "finding", to test their mastery of the course content and consolidate the learning through interactive electronic games. The interactive classroom incorporating traditional ethnic costumes of the Qinling Mountains is mainly designed through the Xibo system of classroom media equipment, and students are highly interactive. However, there are limitations in software development, and it has not been implemented and experienced yet.

#### 4.1.4 Video Interpretation of the Iconography of Traditional Ethnic Costumes in

## the Qinling Mountains

Video learning refers to a learning method that uses video resources to acquire knowledge, develop skills, and enhance cognition. In terms of learning resources, videos are used as the carrier, covering various types of content such as teaching courses, lectures, demonstration videos, documentaries, etc. These videos are usually produced by professional teachers, experts, or experienced individuals, and are systematic and authoritative. In terms of learning methods for the traditional ethnic costumes of the Qinling Mountains, students receive the content of the traditional costumes of the Qinling Mountains through watching videos, including images, sounds, and text, to achieve the learning goal. This method can combine visual and auditory stimuli to enhance the effectiveness and interest of learning. In the knowledge introduction stage of teaching the traditional costumes of the Qinling Mountains, it is difficult for teachers to form an intuitive and visual thinking understanding model for students through personal oral historical narratives or events. At this time, video interpretation of the background, reasons, and patterns of the traditional costumes of the Qinling Mountains, as well as the reasons for color and main tone selection, becomes intuitive and clear. By combining audio and video, it is presented to students through video, and they can learn about the traditional costumes of the Qinling Mountains. From a dynamic film perspective, it leaves a deep impression on students' senses and thinking. During the learning process of students, the class time is limited, so the video content needs to be condensed and refined. Some students have reported that they can also learn through the Internet in their spare time. By searching on websites or apps such as Baidu, Bilibili, 360, and Xiaohongshu, they can learn about related topics and increase their understanding of the traditional ethnic costumes of the Qinling Mountains. Video learning can also be achieved through online museum previews, allowing students to learn more about ethnic costumes through the perspective of lens records.

### **4.2 Under the AIGC Perspective: Traditional Ethnic Clothing Culture in Classroom Teaching in the Qinling Mountains**

#### **4.2.1 Under the AIGC Perspective: Historical Tracing of Traditional Clothing**

## Culture in the Qinling Mountains

By using the new AIGC technology, the historical tracing of traditional ethnic clothing cultures represented by the Hui and Qiang ethnic groups in the Qinling Mountains is integrated. Museum images, related Qinling ethnic clothing pottery figurines, murals, stone carvings, and brick carvings from various dynasties, as well as ancient literature records, are all incorporated. This enables teachers to clearly guide students through the traditional ethnic clothing culture of their hometown, Shaanxi, both past and present, enhancing their overall understanding and clarity of thought regarding the Qinling ethnic clothing culture. At the same time, it facilitates teachers in organizing and integrating the entire knowledge system of Qinling ethnic clothing culture during the lesson preparation stage, choosing more appropriate and clear methods to impart knowledge to students, increasing their understanding of the traditional ethnic clothing culture of their hometown, Shaanxi, and thereby enhancing their love and pride for their local culture.

### 4.2.2 Under the AIGC Perspective: Pattern Styles of Traditional Clothing Culture in the Qinling Mountains

Pattern styles are the characteristics of a nation's clothing. Different ethnic clothing, due to differences in beliefs, local cultures, and the content of local myths, have different influences on patterns. Therefore, patterns are the language of a nation's clothing culture. Through patterns, one can further deepen their understanding of traditional ethnic clothing. In the classroom teaching of traditional ethnic clothing culture in the Qinling Mountains, the application of AIGC technology can intelligently restore some blurred or incomplete pattern samples in traditional Qinling clothing patterns based on multiple data sources such as cultural relics images, ancient books, and folk art materials, making it convenient for teachers to use in teaching. It can also analyze the pattern data of different periods and regions to sort out the evolution of patterns and their cultural connotations, providing historical theoretical support for the patterns of traditional Qinling clothing. Combining text and images can enhance students' understanding and in-depth learning of clothing culture. For example, there is a type of Qiang ethnic women's shoes with buckwheat flower patterns. The buckwheat flower pattern originates from the Qiang ethnic folk

mythological stories (Liu Wen & Jin Fengjie, 2020, p. 119). By using AI technology, the mythological story of the Qiang ethnic buckwheat flower pattern can be described to students in the form of dynamic videos. The pattern design of the buckwheat flower can also be processed with AIGC technology to show the drawing process and the details of the pattern. Therefore, by using technical methods, teachers can make a systematic design of the pattern characteristics of traditional Qinling clothing represented by the Hui and Qiang ethnic groups in the teaching process, thereby enhancing the richness and completeness of students' learning of pattern styles.

#### 4.2.3 Under the AIGC Perspective: Point, Line, and Surface Combinations in Traditional Clothing Culture of the Qinling Mountains

Points, lines, and surfaces are the basic languages of art and play an important role in various fields of art such as painting and design. In the teaching of traditional ethnic clothing culture in the Qinling Mountains, analyzing the characteristics of clothing shapes from the perspective of points, lines, and surfaces is crucial for students' learning of clothing culture. By using AIGC and other image analysis technologies, the lines of traditional Qinling clothing shapes can be extracted and transformed into line drawings, mainly focusing on the Hui and Qiang ethnic groups. In the classroom, students can learn the characteristics of Qinling ethnic clothing culture through the relationships of density, thickness, and depth of points, lines, and surfaces. By comparing and analyzing, students can learn how to create more vivid and interesting character shapes in children's paintings. For example, in the design of the Qiang ethnic "cloud shoes," it starts from the "point" of threading the needle, and countless points form dense and smooth stitches on the sole, making it thick and tight. On the surface of the shoes, a single point leads the thread, and colorful cloud patterns combined with animal and plant patterns create the unique characteristics of Qiang ethnic patterns (Liu Wen & Jin Fengjie, 2020, p. 120). Due to the limitations of classroom time and conditions, AIGC technology can be used to intelligently synthesize the entire process of the embroidery step for students to learn and experience. This can be achieved through electronic learning methods such as games or challenges to achieve the purpose of understanding and learning traditional clothing culture.

At the same time, under the new image technology, by comparing and analyzing the characteristics of clothing patterns, such as the cloud and wave patterns of Qiang ethnic clothing, which are often used on the edges, cuffs, and collars of clothing, the lines are expressed in the overall clothing style, presenting a contrast of stillness and movement, density and sparsity. This line expression method can then be applied to children's own painting and creation practices.

#### 4.2.4 Color Representation of Qinling Traditional Clothing Culture from the Perspective of AIGC

Through intelligent color extraction and processing, image processing technology can bring the color characteristics of Qinling traditional ethnic clothing that cannot be directly accessed in the classroom to students' attention, allowing them to experience the charm and features of Qinling ethnic clothing in the classroom. For example, the Hui ethnic clothing mainly uses black, white, and green as the main colors, with a preference for white. Through AIGC technology analysis, the colors of the Hui ethnic clothing's headwear, clothing, shoes, and decorations can be presented in color blocks, analyzing the visual impact and aesthetic appeal of the Hui ethnic clothing colors. The Qiang ethnic clothing uses a variety of colors and often decorates with various colored agates, jade, and coral. The entire clothing color can also be analyzed through AIGC technology, and the clothing shape can be restored, presented in the form of AI two-dimensional characters, facilitating students' appreciation and learning in the classroom.

### **4.3 Comparative Analysis of Traditional Classroom Aesthetic Education Teaching and AIGC Technology-based Qinling Traditional Clothing Aesthetic Education Teaching**

#### 4.3.1 Comparison of the Aesthetic Education Function of Teaching Resources

In traditional classroom teaching, teachers mainly rely on their knowledge reserves and limited paper teaching aids and books to impart knowledge about Qinling traditional clothing culture to students. This is achieved through oral explanations, blackboard writing, paper materials, and books, aiming to convey the knowledge system to students. The presentation of teaching methods is also limited, and the ways for students to acquire knowledge about clothing aesthetics are also limited. If the knowledge system needs to be updated, teachers and students

have to independently obtain updated clothing culture characteristics and content through books and materials or on-site field research. However, in the knowledge system organization of new technologies such as AIGC platforms, with the help of artificial intelligence technology, more resources about Qinling traditional clothing culture can be obtained within the current searchable time range, including various types of materials such as text, images, and videos from both domestic and overseas. Moreover, first-hand valuable data resources such as pictures or historical records can be obtained, and the sources and origins of the obtained materials are precise. This enhances the authority and authenticity of the knowledge system for teachers when teaching students, and at the same time, students can obtain diverse learning styles of clothing culture through micro-videos, high-definition pictures, documentaries, etc., in the classroom, enhancing their understanding and interest in Qinling ethnic traditional clothing culture.

#### 4.3.2 Comparison of the Aesthetic Education Function of Teaching Methods

In traditional classroom teaching, the teacher is at the center, explaining knowledge on the podium, and students mainly passively accept knowledge through listening, synchronous painting learning, and classroom questioning. The interaction between teachers and students is relatively single, and within the limited time of classroom teaching, it is impossible to fully take into account the understanding and painting abilities of all students. Students with slightly weaker abilities may have difficulty in understanding and limited abilities in painting and expression during the learning process, limiting their participation. In contrast, AIGC teaching under new technologies emphasizes student-centeredness, providing personalized learning paths for students through intelligent educational platforms and tools. Not only in class but also in their spare time, students can learn about the traditional clothing culture of the Qinling Mountains. Teachers can upload relevant knowledge theories, pictures, and video materials to the class's online knowledge sharing platform, making it convenient for students to flexibly and independently study the related content of the traditional clothing of the Qinling Mountains, whether it is the content they are interested in or the knowledge points they need to review from class. At the same time, during the online intelligent learning process, students can choose the

theories or patterns of traditional ethnic clothing of the Qinling Mountains of different difficulty levels based on their own abilities, which meets the condition of students' autonomous selection of knowledge acceptance and further enhances their interest in traditional clothing culture. Meanwhile, teachers can also promote the interactive learning with students through online discussions and intelligent Q&A, and increase students' participation and interaction in the theme learning.

#### 4.3.3 Comparison of the Aesthetic Education Functions of Teaching Effect

##### Presentation

In traditional classroom teaching of art theory, assessment is usually conducted through paper tests, oral questions, and the display of painting works, with relatively single evaluation indicators, often focusing on students' memory and understanding of art knowledge, and being limited in inspiring students' artistic creation and design thinking. In AIGC new productivity teaching, learning analysis technology and intelligent assessment systems can be used to monitor and analyze students' learning processes comprehensively and in real time. By collecting various data during the learning process, such as learning time and participation, multi-dimensional comprehensive assessment can be conducted to accurately understand students' learning conditions and provide more targeted suggestions for teaching improvement. For example, in commonly used learning apps in recent years, real-time data monitoring can be conducted on the platform, and students can take notes on the learning content in a timely manner based on their own learning situations. Data analysis can repeatedly remind students of the art content they do not understand or repeatedly present it in knowledge reviews, enhancing students' memory of knowledge. The same is true for the learning of traditional ethnic clothing of the Qinling Mountains. In the online intelligent teaching environment, students can choose the points they are interested in based on their different art abilities to learn, and save and record the patterns of clothing or the theories of traditional ethnic clothing of the Qinling Mountains for later learning, thus achieving multiple learning and continuous mastery of knowledge.

#### 4.3.4 Comparison of the Aesthetic Education Functions of the Teaching Process

In traditional art classroom teaching, teachers are the transmitters of knowledge and the organizers of the class, undertaking tasks such as explaining knowledge, assigning homework, and grading homework, which are rather cumbersome and difficult to pay attention to the individualized needs of each student. For example, in the learning of traditional ethnic clothing culture of the Qinling Mountains, teachers teach students through books, paper illustrations, or blackboard drawing patterns. The learning content is relatively limited, and the learning methods are also restricted. However, in the art teaching combined with AIGC technology, teachers' roles transform into facilitators and promoters of learning. Teachers need to use AIGC tools to design more innovative and personalized teaching activities, such as designing AI intelligent little teachers who can explain different questions of students and communicate with students through game-like two-dimensional animation characters, avoiding the shyness of some students who are afraid to face teachers and ask questions repeatedly. At the same time, the art classroom of traditional ethnic clothing culture of the Qinling Mountains combined with science and technology can also be extended to after-class learning. Students can choose their own effective learning time to explore related clothing culture knowledge, unlock more mysteries of the traditional ethnic clothing culture of the Qinling Mountains based on their own interests, and improve their art appreciation and creativity, thus achieving the purpose of art education. The learning environment in traditional classroom teaching is relatively fixed, mainly taking place in the classroom with face-to-face instruction. Students' learning time and space are restricted to a certain extent. The teaching mode is mainly one-to-many and linear, guided by teachers and centered on students' learning. For the art learning of the traditional ethnic costumes of the Qinling Mountains, it is limited to the fixed pattern of "how much the teacher teaches, how much the students learn". This places a high demand on teachers' professional mastery and restricts their teaching methods. The new productivity of AIGC teaching breaks through the limitations of time and space. Students can access the learning platform through the network at any time and any place for learning. Meanwhile, the digital learning environment provided by the network offers students a richer and

more flexible learning experience. In the classroom, students learn the painting representation and historical inheritance stories of traditional ethnic costumes from the teacher. After class, they can also search for relevant videos, pictures, and texts based on their own learning situation to enhance their learning, cultivating their ability to shape and appreciate art.

#### 4.3.5 Comparison of Aesthetic Education Function of Learning Environment

The traditional classroom learning environment is relatively fixed, primarily involving face-to-face instruction in a classroom setting, with students learning time and space being somewhat restricted. The teaching model is teacher-led, focusing on one-to-many linear instruction, which is limited to the fixed paradigm of how much the teacher teaches and how much the students learn. This approach places a high emphasis on the teacher's professional expertise and limits their teaching methods. AIGC new productive forces in education break these time and space constraints, allowing students to access learning platforms anytime and anywhere via the internet. Additionally, the digital learning environment provided by the internet offers students a richer and more flexible learning experience. In class, students learn about the painting techniques and historical stories of traditional clothing culture from their teachers. Outside of class, they can also enhance their learning by searching for and watching relevant videos and reading related articles based on their own study situations, thereby developing their modeling skills and artistic appreciation.



Figure 3: AIGC interactive classroom student work display

(Photo by the author)

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1 The Impact of Traditional Ethnic Costumes of the Qinling Mountains on Children's Aesthetic Education Under the AIGC Technology

Aesthetic education, also known as aesthetic or beauty education, is an inevitable outcome of the development of human civilization and an important aspect of human self-construction. Its task is to improve and cultivate people's ability to appreciate and create the real world (including nature and social life) and the entire literature and art, to refine people's sentiments, to enhance people's life interests, and to make people more noble and positive, achieving healthy growth in thoughts and emotions. (Yang Xin, Gan Lin, 1996) Children's aesthetic education, or children's art education, aims to cultivate children's ability to recognize, experience, feel, appreciate, and create beauty, enabling them to have beautiful ideals, sentiments, characters, and qualities. Through the process of children recognizing, experiencing, and feeling beauty, their ability to appreciate and create beauty is further shaped. Children's art education is conducive to cultivating children's positive emotions, attitudes, and values, promoting the development of their imaginative

and innovative thinking, and fostering their subjective qualities and innovative spirit. Particularly, the emphasis on developing children's individuality and creative potential in art education is the most valuable contribution to human development. It is about cultivating children's ability to recognize and appreciate the true, the good, and the beautiful.

In an era of diverse art and culture, rapid development of information, artificial intelligence, and science and technology, it is necessary to keep up with the times, integrate art and culture with science and technology, inherit and carry forward Chinese culture, and appreciate and refine various ethnic cultures. It is about cultivating students' ability to experience, appreciate, and create beauty. The traditional ethnic costumes of the Qinling Mountains are the protection and inheritance of the culture of ethnic minorities in Shaanxi Province, the construction of students' aesthetic consciousness, and the enhancement of their experience and understanding of beauty. It involves learning the wisdom of predecessors in costume design and costume culture, and improving students' self-awareness and concepts of beauty. The continuous advancement of AIGC technology plays a crucial role in students' recognition and appreciation of beauty, understanding of the traditional culture of the Qinling ethnic groups, and learning, protection, inheritance, and promotion of the traditional ethnic costumes of the Qinling Mountains. Through various AI elements such as micro-lessons, videos, animations, and games, students can experience the beauty of traditional costume art in an immersive way in the classroom. Through the collection and integration of AIGC books, historical materials, information, and resources, students can continue to learn independently outside the classroom, increasing their love and interest in the traditional costumes of the Qinling ethnic groups. In the traditional ethnic clothing culture of the Qinling Mountains, there are numerous touching stories and legends, such as those of the Qiang people's buckwheat flower shoes and cloud shoes. These stories reflect the simplicity and kindness of the Chinese nation. The Qiang people regard the flowers, clouds, birds and beasts in their daily life as objects of nature worship, symbolizing auspiciousness and beauty, and endowing them with a sacred status. This also reflects the Qiang people's gratitude towards nature and their belief in the animism of all things. All these embody the aesthetic education purpose of cultivating

children's love for life and respect for nature. At the same time, it achieves the goal of inheriting and promoting China's excellent traditional clothing culture, enhancing national self-confidence and honor, and praising the great unity and prosperity of the Chinese nation.

## **5.2 Under the Perspective of AIGC: The Prospect of Qinling Traditional Ethnic Clothing Culture for Children's Aesthetic Education**

In the new era, children are surrounded by intelligent network information and diverse electronic information, making knowledge dissemination more convenient and rapid. Therefore, the dissemination of Chinese traditional culture should keep pace with the times and take advantage of the vigorous development of modern technology to make AIGC a channel for the spread of ethnic art and culture. This will enable children across China and even the world to appreciate the beauty of traditional Chinese ethnic clothing and the traditional clothing culture of the Qinling Mountains. AIGC should also be applied in actual teaching environments to integrate it with traditional ethnic clothing culture, promoting the improvement of students' technological and traditional Chinese clothing cultural awareness, as well as their artistic creation and design abilities and aesthetic education capabilities. Keeping up with the times, with the development of related entertainment apps on the Internet, children's attention is easily influenced by popular and secular culture or by unauthoritative ideas, which may affect their values. Due to distractions and other reasons, their cultural awareness may be weak. Sometimes, traditional teaching methods and relatively dry theoretical knowledge cannot better capture children's attention. However, AIGC technology can convey traditional clothing aesthetics through various methods such as videos, micro-lessons, and interactive games, making it easier for children to accept and generating more interest in learning. Currently, there are still limitations in the development of software related to the traditional ethnic clothing of the Qinling Mountains, such as game activities and animation video design and editing. In the future, it is necessary to work together with experts and technical talents in related fields to conduct in-depth research and discussions on the traditional ethnic clothing culture of the Qinling Mountains.

China is a culturally rich country where 56 ethnic groups are closely united, and its ethnic culture is prosperous and thriving. Therefore, Chinese culture should not only take root and blossom within China and be passed on to the next generation of young people but also be recognized by people of different skin colors and races in the international community as profound and long-standing. Under the educational concept of AIGC technology, the knowledge community and the interconnectivity of knowledge have broadened the horizons of teachers worldwide, allowing them to learn from each other about the artistic features and cultural charm of different countries. This is a great flourishing of knowledge and also a prosperous and beautiful scene of cultural exchange and communication among people around the world. For children in China, it is even more important to foster a sense of national cultural identity from a young age, inherit culture, and promote and innovate national culture, contributing to the great flourishing of world culture and the traditional clothing culture of the Chinese nation.

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