"Chinese Elements" Help the Development of Digital Media Art

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Abstract. With the development of globalization, the deepening of international exchanges and the continuous improvement of China's soft power, "Chinese elements" have attracted more and more attention, and are widely used in graphic design, industrial design, packaging design, construction, clothing design, automotive design, advertising creativity, experimental image, photography, animation, film, dance and other fields. This article combines the development of digital media art from the overall concept, discusses application problems of "Chinese elements", opportunities and challenges that need to be faced for the development of digital media art.

1 Introduction

Digital media art refers to a new art form that combines human rational thinking with artistic perceptual thinking based on digital technology and modern media technology. Nowadays, modern people's lives are inseparable from high-tech products such as computers, networks, mobile phones, digital entertainment, digital home appliances, etc. Digital media art has become the most vital and potential in the field of art design because of its application technology and performance means. Digital media art has begun to infiltrate into a variety of media and information services industries, including digital photography, video, animation, film, television, books, newspapers and Internet. Information service industry and entertainment industry involved include painting, advertising, exhibitions, consulting, tourism, etc[1].

The “Chinese elements” are design elements with typical Chinese national characteristics. In the era of economic globalization and cultural pluralism, the "Chinese elements" not only reflect the uniqueness of national art, but also meet the aesthetic requirements of modern people. They not only show the artistic charm of oriental traditional culture, but also follow the international fashion trend, with value of research and analysis. The profound Chinese culture of the Chinese nation provides us with a continuous source of creativity. In particular, the gorgeous opening ceremony of the 2008 Olympic Games and the 2010 Shanghai World Expo have enabled the world to witness the infinite charm of the “Chinese elements”.

From 2004, Gao Jun, the founder of Meikao, first proposed the concept of “Chinese elements” in a party of the advertising industry and it has become popular all over the world. Most of the researches focus on the combination of "Chinese elements" and some specific design fields and industries, such as graphic design, industrial design, packaging design, construction, clothing design, automotive design, advertising creativity, experimental image, photography, animation, film, dance and other fields. These researches mainly analyze the application value and performance techniques of “Chinese elements” through case analysis, but there are few related combing and research on the application of digital media art.

In the 1960s, the world digital media art (which should be called digital art in a strict sense) was enlightened. It experienced the exploration and development of the 1970s, and entered the popularization and booming period in the 1980s. In the 21st century, it entered an in-depth development period. However, China really began to know digital media art in the 1980s. Professor Zhang Jun of Communication University of China first introduced digital media art to Chinese people. Since then, the Chinese digital media art community has increased its influence on the public through the establishment and development of exhibitions, competitions, seminars and related disciplines, and has also stimulated public interest and enthusiasm, through involvement in
design, painting, exhibition, advertising, packaging, film and television, online games and other industries, with growth and popularity. Through more than 20 years of development, it has gradually matured and achieved certain results, but there are still many problems in realizing the comprehensive development of China's digital media art.

2 Problems

In the important fields of digital media art, such as digital animation and digital games, international competition is becoming more and more fierce. Governments are continually investing in human and material resources to develop in these areas. If China wants to become a big and strong country in digital media art, it should pay attention to the absorption of "Chinese elements". The prevalence of “Chinese elements” has provided an opportunity for the rapid development of digital media art in China. How to use the "Chinese elements" to promote the progress of China's digital media art has become an important topic that we need to study. Combined with the application of "Chinese elements" and the development of digital media art in recent years, the following problems exist:

2.1 The "abuse" problem of "Chinese elements"

Taking the opening ceremony of the highly anticipated Beijing Olympic Games as an example, it is true that it has sparked heated debates and concerns about the “Chinese elements” in the world, but it also reflects the limitations of people's treatment of Chinese traditional culture and understanding in a sense. The opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games uses "Chinese elements" such as "China Red", "Beijing Opera", "Book Scroll", "Scroll Painting" and "Bamboo Slip", and relies on high-tech such as sound, light and electricity to show extraordinary visual effects. From the perspective of art design and cultural publicity, it should be said that it is a successful example. It has created a delicious visual feast for hundreds of millions of viewers, and also reported to the world a menu of traditional Chinese culture. To a certain extent, it has inspired the national self-esteem of the Chinese people who are in the self-identification expectation, but from a cultural point of view, the evening party is not very full of cultural information that can truly demonstrate the national spirit.

In the case of the Kung Fu Panda series, the films are full of "Chinese elements" and used by Hollywood as a business strategy to cater to the Chinese audience. They have hit a high box office in China, but the films reveal the obvious source of western thought and spiritual proposition. The performance advocates the American spirit of striving and individuality, and does not truly show the ideological connotation of China. The Mulan in the film "Mulan" is neither the spirit of homeland safeguard or loyalty when the country encounters with foreign enemy invasion, nor the traditional Chinese Confucian tradition of "filial piety" who can't bear the ill health of his father and join his army, but a brave and wise hero. These are all “re-encoded” Chinese traditional stories and cultures, but wrapped in “Chinese elements” [2].

2.2 The "misunderstanding" and "misreading" of Chinese culture

In today's increasingly connected world, the exchange of cultures between countries has brought about the openness and diversity of culture. In the process of cultural exchanges and collisions, the problems of communication barriers and difficulties in understanding due to cultural differences are commonplace. Of course, as the exchanges and integration of countries deepen, mutual understanding is slowly increasing. However, in the process of exporting "Chinese elements", there are indeed misunderstandings or misleading interpretations of Chinese culture and traditions. For example, the film " The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor " has improper use of "Chinese elements" and misunderstanding of Chinese culture [3] [4]. Also, film "The Treatment" (or called Gua Sha) reflects the conflicts caused by the lack of understanding of Chinese traditional skills [5].

2.3 The development of digital media art is still in the stage of “imitation”

As an emerging art form, digital media art gives people a new sense of enjoyment, and its vitality
lies in innovation. However, with the rapid development of China's economy, the “fast food culture” is prevalent. While adapting to the needs of people's fast-paced life, it also has many negative effects. The reproducibility of digital media art has enriched the fast food culture, which in turn has put forward a demand for digital media art. China’s digital media art is an "imported product", and it is still in the stage of continuous learning and absorption from countries such as Europe, America, Japan, etc. Under this "pressure", the works are mixed with similar elements to varying degrees. Some even directly copy foreign works, lacking the "Chinese elements" that can present the characteristics of Chinese culture and national art, which seriously affects the development of Chinese digital media art.

3 Solutions

By exploring the relationship between "Chinese elements" and the development of digital media art, and discovering the way for China's digital media art to achieve breakthrough from the perspective of "Chinese elements", it is necessary to study the following aspects and solve related problems so as to make suggestions for the progress and sound development of Chinese digital media art.

3.1 Prevent from generalization, superficialization and “westernization”

In view of the application status of “Chinese elements”, the application of digital media art should be prevented from generalization, superficialization and “westernization”.

3.1.1 Correctly position the concept of "Chinese elements"

The "Chinese elements" should be identified as images, symbols or custom that are recognized by most Chinese and reflect Chinese cognition and essence, condense traditional Chinese culture, and reveal national dignity and spirit.

China has a long history, a vast territory, and abundant resources. Today China is developing at a rapid pace. World civilization cannot be separated from China. China has created new "myths". The "Chinese elements" not only contain China's profound traditional culture, but also comprise the rich age culture of modern China.

The "Chinese elements" not only contain explicit symbols but also contain the cultural soul and national spirit of the recessive China. What is important about the "Chinese elements" is not its "blood flesh", but its soul and "skeleton", which is the connotation of the charm, not a few simple graphics additions and subtractions.

3.1.2 Enhance the discourse power and influence of Chinese culture

Deeply analyze the audience's psychology and cultural background in international cultural communication, carry out equal dialogue and in-depth exchanges, Overcome the blind external expansion pursuit of geographical spread and audience coverage, and truly enhance the recognition of foreign audiences for Chinese culture.

Base on Chinese local culture, combine modern global context, refine the cultural discourse system, reduce the loss and distortion in communication, endow more distinct and unique attributes, and truly enhance the influence of Chinese culture.

Therefore, the real application of the "Chinese elements" should not be just the piling and concentration of traditional Chinese symbols, not nostalgic and simple description of the tradition without abandonment, not visual interpretation of the western-style discourse, not catering to western aesthetics and values, but reflection of the Chinese national spirit, the Chinese way of thinking and the accumulation of Chinese culture.

3.2 "Break" cultural differences and eliminate "misunderstandings" about Chinese culture

Digital media art has the characteristics of easy communication and spread. However, in today's information globalization, when digital media art is gradually integrated with the world, “misunderstanding” and “misreading” promote the digital media art of China to the world by using “Chinese elements”. It has caused some resistance, so we must gradually solve the world's understanding of Chinese tradition and Chinese culture.
3.2.1 Oppose "cultural stereotype" and ethnocentrism

Cultural stereotype refers to the intuitive and simplistic understanding and opinions of a group or member of a nation or country on groups and members of other nations or countries. This kind of view often has certain preconceived characteristics, which will form a strong self-centered theory, leading to a closed concept of culture, lack of awareness of other cultures and partiality, weakening of cultural absorption and even causing communication errors and conflicts [6] [7].

Ethnocentrism means belief in the intrinsic superiority of the nation, culture, or group to which one belongs, often accompanied by feelings of dislike for other groups. It’s the belief that one's ethnic group is superior to another. Ethnocentric individuals believe they’re better than other individuals for reasons based solely on their heritage, resulting in isolation between the national culture and other cultures and creating misunderstanding for other cultures.

3.2.2 Enhance cultural self-confidence and use cultural projects such as the “Belt and Road” for cultural communication.

Cultural self-confidence is a nation, a country and a political party's full affirmation and active practice of their own cultural values and a firm belief in the vitality of their culture. The Chinese government has repeatedly emphasized the fundamental role of cultural self-confidence and highlighted the importance of cultural communication. The “Belt and Road” is a major construction and development strategy proposed by China under the new situation. It is an important part of China’s “go global” strategy. We must use projects and activities such as Belt and Road, Boao Forum for Asia (BFA), Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit (SCO Summit), Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), China International Import Expo (CIIE), Nishan Forum on World Civilizations to fully demonstrate the essence of Chinese culture and give the world a more comprehensive understanding of China's institutions, social culture and even China's values.

3.3 Analyze the artistic theoretical basis supporting the application of "Chinese elements" in digital media art

The abstract art of the Dutch artist Piet Cornelies Mondrian, the Dada art of the French artist Marcel Duchamp, the kinetic art and the optical art give birth to the world digital media art. These theories and the spiritual connotation of "Chinese elements" are either suitable or complementary, providing a basis and theoretical guidance for the application of "Chinese elements" in digital media art.

Abstract art is a kind of art trend and genre that has risen in Europe and the United States since the 20th century. It negates the depiction of concrete objects and advocates abstract expressions. Abstract art has absorbed nutrients from primitive art, medieval religious art, African and Oceanic art, oriental scripts, and calligraphy. It also choses the concept of adapting to western philosophy and people's psychological state in the 20th century from philosophy of Lao-Tzu and Chuang-Tzu, and Buddhist Zen which are important components of Chinese culture [8] [9].

Dada art advocates "overthrowing art" and "destroying tradition." Traditional works of art usually convey some necessary, suggestive and potential information, while the creation of Dadaists pursues a state of “meaninglessness”. This poses a challenge to the "Chinese elements" focusing on the characteristics of national traditions. However, "life is art" of Dada art and “come from life and apply to life” of "Chinese elements" have some fits.

Kinetic art creates effects by means of geometric figures, images and tension of lines. Optical art uses the artificial or natural power of light, electricity, machinery, etc. to create. These two works of art bring more impacts to the people, while the "Chinese elements" often reflect "peace" and "roundness". These characteristics can effectively make up for the stiffness and "inhumanity" of the two art theories bring to the digital media art.
3.4 "Chinese elements" provide opportunities and challenges for the exploration and development of digital media art.

3.4.1 Opportunities

Digital media art has performance elements such as digital sound effect, digital motion, digital stunt, digital texture, and digital color. "Chinese elements" include both tangible material symbols and intangible spiritual contents, such as ideology, morality, value system, folklore, living habits, religious beliefs, architecture, art, science and technology, law, ethics, etc. It includes both traditional historical culture and modern emerging culture. These "Chinese elements" provide plentiful materials for the expression of digital media art, and richer artistic resources for the development of digital media art from multiple perspectives.

"Chinese elements" are the source of digital media art innovation.

Throughout the cultural symbols that influence the whole world, whether it is a Hollywood blockbuster or a Japanese animated film, its creation is based on its own culture, to meet the cultural needs of the local people, to adapt to the local aesthetic taste and inclination. After the success of the work in the region, it has attracted the attention and love of people from other countries and regions, thus radiating cultural influence to the world. This shows that the foundation of innovation is our own culture and accumulation.

Art comes from life and cannot be separated from the history and characteristics of the nation. Chinese culture has unique ideas, wisdoms, temperaments and charms. The "Chinese elements" are a high-quality fertile soil for digital media art innovation. Only by making full use of the "Chinese elements", can China's digital media art get rid of the shackles of "imitation" and "copy" and achieve substantial development.

Take the traditional Chinese shadow puppet as an example, it provides innovative ideas and infuses vitality for digital media art in digital animation, digital music, digital images, etc.

The character shape of the shadow puppet has flatness, exaggeration and simplicity. The design adopts the combination of abstraction and realism, which meets the requirements of digital animation design. The figure design with the shadow figure as a template has distinctive personality and outstanding features. It has a strong Chinese national custom and gives people an intuitive and simple beauty.

The rhythm control based on the "connection point" in the shadow puppet action, and the change of the rhythm in the performance, provide a reference for the motion design in the animation.

The shadow puppet vocal and the instrument played have formed a variety of styles according to different regions, adding a different flavor to digital music than modern music.

The connotation of the shadow figure, the symbolic meaning of the color and the characteristics of the physical symbolization, make the digital media image design more beautiful, meaningful and ethnic.

We should excavate and sublimate the essence of the "Chinese elements", combine modern aesthetic concepts with China's unique national spirit and culture, form features, and make use of it to make China's digital media art more innovative, contemporary and national.

3.4.2 Challenges

(1) In order to realize the display effect of these resources, the advancement of the technology required for digital media art has also been challenged.

The existing techniques for supporting the creation of digital media art-related works are still unable to perfectly display and affect the exquisiteness and grandeur of the "Chinese elements". Techniques such as “non-photorealistic rendering”, “force feedback”, and “perceptual-based graphics generation” can simulate the artistic style of some traditional Chinese calligraphy, painting and other works of art, but it is needed to further research on accurate presentation of the changes in the brushstrokes of art, the beauty of the combination of ink and color, and the artistic effects of the virtual reality which Chinese traditional art has. Human animation, skeletal animation, character animation and other techniques can achieve high-realistic character action design, but Chinese traditional art emphasizes the freehand movement of the action, the action of the character tends to
be elegant and not realistic, and the existing animation technology is more suitable for realistic action instead of the production of freehand movements. Many traditional Chinese crafts have the characteristics of complex decoration, such as painted pottery, batik, ancient weapons, bronzes, tripods, etc. Most of the details are rich and the texture is complex. Existing geometric modeling, texture mapping and other techniques in the three-dimensional reconstruction of such items often have problems such as low reconstruction accuracy of the model details, time-consuming and labor-intensive texture image acquisition and pasting. In addition, the current computer-aided design and simulation technology has been widely used in many fields, but the software systems in various fields are relatively independent with Poor versatility and compatibility, and many software operations are complex and professional with high requirements for users. The problems restrict the display and spread of digital media works. Therefore, we must further explore and realize the appealing to both cultured and popular tastes of digital media art in order to achieve the professional requirements of the "Chinese elements"[10] [11].

(2) Professional qualities of digital media art practitioners

The application of “Chinese elements” puts forward certain requirements for the professional quality of digital media art practitioners. Practitioners need to have a strong sense of national pride, learn the passion of Chinese traditional culture and original spirit, and have certain professional attainments in the fields of style design, character design and scene design.

(3) The “Chinese elements” require the application of digital media art to have the spirit of the times.

The spirit of the times here has two meanings. First, digital media art should not simply and stiffly use Chinese elements, but should be endowed with the spiritual identity of the times. It should not put form over content, but design a good theme, and refine and sublimate Chinese elements. Second, the "Chinese elements" are not stopped in any era. The application of digital media art should advance with the times and use modern ideas to promote the perfect integration of the two.

4 Conclusion

In summary, the long-term development of digital media art is inseparable from the "Chinese elements." With the rapid development of globalization and the improvement of China's soft power, digital media art should use multi-perspective and revolutionary creative thinking, integrate into the dynamic development concept of the times, and continue to launch original works with novel ideas, excellent production and diversified themes.

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623


