

Exploring the Functions of Calligraphy in Contemporary Cultural Perspective



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Abstract: As one of the core elements of Chinese culture, the art of calligraphy carries a rich history and tradition. In the contemporary cultural perspective, this paper discusses the artistic function and innovative development path of calligraphy. As an art form, calligraphy demonstrates high aesthetic value, expressing different emotions and artistic styles through various styles of writing and ink. In cultural inheritance, calligraphy, as a form of cultural expression, conveys China's profound history, culture, and philosophical thought. In international exchanges, calligraphy, as a unique cultural symbol, promotes understanding and respect among different cultures and enhances global awareness of Chinese culture. Attempts to modernize calligraphy, such as its integration with digital technology, have not only injected new vitality into traditional art but also adapted the art of calligraphy to the aesthetic and technological needs of modern society. Together, these artistic functions reflect the unique value and contemporary significance of the art of calligraphy.

Keywords: calligraphy art; cultural confidence, artistic function; integration of art categories; cultural heritage

Introduction

In the contemporary era of rapid development of information technology, many traditional art forms are declining. As an important part of China's traditional culture, the art of calligraphy, and its practicality is also gradually weakened in modern society. However, as a form of artistic expression, the artistic function of calligraphy is becoming more and more prominent. Therefore, it is particularly important to explore the artistic function of calligraphy and to inherit and promote its cultural value. From the perspective of artistic function, exploring how calligraphy maintains its unique position in contemporary culture and adapts to the needs of modern society through innovation and development not only helps to promote the modern transformation of traditional Chinese culture but also has great significance in the promotion and dissemination of national culture. Through this study, we aim to provide new perspectives and ideas for the future development of the art of calligraphy.

1. Weakening of the Practicality of Calligraphy in the New Era

Calligraphy is an extremely unique branch of Chinese culture, which is a traditional art that combines practicality and art and mainly shows its profound cultural flavor and artistic beauty by writing Chinese characters with brushes or hard pens. In ancient China, calligraphy was regarded as one of the "six arts", and was the core content of Confucian education, along with ritual, music, archery, imperialism, and mathematics, and was an important way for the literati to assess and express their taste and cultivation. Historically, the art of calligraphy has evolved from oracle bone script and gold script to clerical script, cursive script, regular script, etc. Each style of calligraphy reflects the social characteristics and aesthetic tendencies of different historical periods and embodies the wisdom and creativity of the working people for thousands of years. In contemporary society, writing is still a basic skill in daily life, but the weakening of the practicality of the art of calligraphy is an irreversible trend, with various reasons and complex processes. With the rapid development of digital technology and

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informationization, traditional writing tools and methods have been gradually replaced by computer keyboards and touch screens. Modern society's demand for speed and efficiency of information transmission far exceeds the appreciation of the aesthetics and skills of the writing tool itself, leading to the transformation of calligraphy from a practical tool of daily life to a symbol of art and culture (Qing, 2022). In school and social education, calligraphy is treated more as an aesthetic activity and a way of cultural inheritance, and calligraphy education has shifted from practical skills training to education of artistic aesthetics and cultural inheritance. The public's demand for calligraphy has also changed, from practical demand to the pursuit of artistry and cultural value of calligraphy. The role of calligraphy in modern society has changed from a tool for daily life to a means of demonstrating personal cultivation and artistic feeling. Although this transformation has diminished the practicality of calligraphy, it has increased its artistic value and symbolic significance as a cultural heritage, making it occupy an irreplaceable position in contemporary culture. This process reflects modern society's reinterpretation and value reconstruction of traditional culture, and the future development of the art of calligraphy will focus more on its function as a cultural symbol and artistic expression.

2. The Artistic Function of Calligraphy and Its Importance in Contemporary Cultural Perspective

2.1. Aesthetic Value of Calligraphy as an Art Form

In the contemporary cultural perspective, the aesthetic value of calligraphy as an art form has been newly interpreted and emphasized. Calligraphy is not only the art of writing words but also a profound cultural expression and personality display. Each stroke contains the emotion and aesthetic pursuit of the writer, reflecting the unique artistic style and atmosphere of the times through different styles, ink colors, and layouts. In the Jin Dynasty, the Sage of Calligraphy, Wang Xizhi, pushed the art of calligraphy to the peak of prosperity, and his work

“Lanting Collection Preface” demonstrated excellent skills and embodied the artistic pursuit of “elegance” and “purpose”, which was in line with the then advocated “neutralization and residence” and “beauty of lightness”. It also embodies the artistic pursuit of “elegance” and “variety”, which complemented the “beauty of neutrality and lightness” advocated at the time. The circulation of these works made calligraphy more widely recognized as an aesthetic value that transcends the function of words, and became a bridge between tradition and modernity, demonstrating its extraordinary artistic value. Such calligraphic works can cross the boundaries of language and attract viewers with their unique formal beauty, allowing people to feel the rhythmic beauty of lines and the dynamic beauty of space in their appreciation. Therefore, calligraphy has become an important cultural bridge connecting the past and the modern, the East and the West in contemporary culture, and its artistic value is of great use in the process of internationalization and modernization.

2.2. The importance of calligraphy in the transmission of culture, education, and spirituality

As a profound cultural heritage and educational tool, calligraphy also plays an important role in the spiritual dimension. Take Fu Shan, an enlightened thinker, and calligrapher of the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, for example, whose calligraphic creations were deeply influenced by his attitude of “eating and learning”, which emphasized openness and tolerance, and advocated the practice of integrating various styles of calligraphy. Fu Shan not only blended seal, official, running, and regular scripts to create a unique style of cursive writing, but also demonstrated his extensive knowledge and broad cultural vision in his works (Dou, 2019). This unique artistic expression not only reflects the individual's artistic cultivation but also conveys deep cultural values and historical deposits. Through the example of Fu Shan, it can be seen that the application of calligraphy in education is not only limited to improving writing skills but also to cultivating students' understanding of and respect for

history and culture through the form of art. Calligraphy teaching can be used as an effective tool to help students explore China's rich cultural heritage in depth, and at the same time cultivate their mindfulness in the process of writing to achieve a state of mindfulness that is quiet and peaceful, thus finding inner peace and perseverance in the fast-paced modern life. Therefore, calligraphy is not only an art but also a way of spiritual cultivation and cultural inheritance, which has a far-reaching influence on both individuals and society.

2.3. Calligraphy enhances national cultural confidence and cultural soft power

The role of the art of calligraphy in contemporary culture goes far beyond mere artistic appreciation, and it plays a crucial role in enhancing national cultural confidence and cultural soft power. As one of the symbols of Chinese culture, calligraphy not only preserves and inherits the art of writing Chinese characters for thousands of years but also demonstrates the deep heritage and unique charm of Chinese culture through its unique form of expression. The international dissemination of this art form, such as calligraphy exhibitions and cultural exchange activities, effectively introduces Chinese culture to the world and enhances the international community's knowledge of and respect for Chinese culture, thus improving China's cultural influence and national image. Modern innovations in the art of calligraphy, such as attempts to combine traditional calligraphy with modern art and technology, have not only injected new vitality into the art of calligraphy itself but have also made calligraphy more in line with modern aesthetics and trends in cultural consumption. This combination of innovation and inheritance effectively promotes the attractiveness and influence of national culture in the context of globalization. In this way, the art of calligraphy not only serves as a bridge of cultural inheritance but also becomes an important carrier of cultural confidence and soft power.

3. Innovative Development Path of Contemporary Calligraphy Art Functions

3.1. Calligraphy Education and Talent Cultivation

Calligraphy education and talent cultivation occupy an extremely crucial position in the innovative development path of contemporary calligraphy art. Calligraphy has been widely introduced as a compulsory course in the basic education stage so that students are exposed to and understand the basic skills and cultural values of calligraphy at an early age. This not only helps to cultivate students' sense of aesthetics and aesthetic ability but also deepens their knowledge of and respect for traditional culture. In terms of curriculum, brush calligraphy can be incorporated into the curriculum system to further optimize the structure of the curriculum and ensure that students can comprehensively learn and master the essence of traditional calligraphy so that they can reach a higher level in both technique and cultural understanding. In terms of higher education, colleges and universities such as the China Academy of Art and the Central Academy of Fine Arts offer calligraphy majors, focusing on cultivating students' literary and historical skills and their basic ability to create and study calligraphy. The universities attach importance to the teaching and training of students' practical abilities and emphasize the cultivation of the spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship. The curriculum includes courses on the history of calligraphy, the study of the techniques of different styles of calligraphy, and the innovation of modern calligraphy. Such an educational model not only provides opportunities for in-depth academic study but also encourages students to create and apply calligraphy and its related fields. Through a systematic education system, students are trained to develop a sense of creativity and practical ability, enabling them to make artistic innovations based on respect for tradition (Li & Zhang, 2023). Scholarships and research grants should be provided to those who are interested in in-depth study of the art of calligraphy, to encourage them to carry out more in-depth research and creation. Through these measures, a group of talents with profound calligraphic skills and innovative abilities can be systematically cultivated,

injecting new vitality into the inheritance and development of the art of calligraphy, so that calligraphy is not only protected as a traditional art but also takes on a new vitality in modern culture.

3.2. Cross-border Integration of Calligraphy and Other Art Categories

The cross-border integration of calligraphy and other art categories is one of the important paths for the innovative development of contemporary calligraphy. This fusion can not only broaden the expression and aesthetic boundaries of calligraphy but also enrich its cultural connotation and artistic value, to better adapt to the cultural needs of modern society (Zhang, 2023). Calligraphy can be fused with abstract or modern paintings to create visual impact and artistic depth, or embed calligraphy elements in sculpture works to increase the cultural flavor and artistic level of the works. By combining with photography, calligraphy works can be placed in different environments and backgrounds, exploring the interaction between calligraphy and space, light and shadow. The cross-border integration of calligraphy and film art provides a new dimension for visual expression, making the art of calligraphy more vivid and expressive. Take the movie "Shadow" as an example, the design of the word "Shadow" used in the title of the movie adopts the change of strokes from real to imaginary, and this unique calligraphy style not only enhances the visual effect but also deeply integrates with the theme and atmosphere of the movie. The visual dynamics created by this brushwork seem to make the calligraphic characters become a dynamic part of the movie, increasing the artistic level and cultural depth of the movie. In the film and television drama, *Twelve Hours of Chang'an*, the calligraphy design of the title is compact and full of tension, echoing the time-critical plot of the drama. Such a design is not only a visual decoration, but also a transmission of emotion and atmosphere, allowing the audience to feel the tension and urgency of the plot at the beginning of the viewing. Cross-border integration opens up a new path for the modernization and transformation of traditional arts. By analogy, the

fusion of calligraphy with performing arts, such as dance and theater, is also a direction for exploration. The strokes and line movements of calligraphy can be combined with dance movements to create dance works that express the aesthetics of calligraphy, or the elements of calligraphy can be used in theater stage design to add unique visual and cultural layers to performances. The combination of calligraphy and digital art is also an important innovation path. With the development of digital technology, the art of calligraphy can be created and displayed through digital media, such as digital animation and interactive art. This can not only make the calligraphy works present a new visual effect and experience but also widely spread through the network platform, attracting the attention of more young audiences (Wu, 2020). Through these diversified cross-border integration practices, the art of calligraphy will continue to refresh its modern significance and artistic boundaries, better integrate into contemporary cultural life, and show its unique artistic charm and cultural value.

3.3. Application of modern technology in the creation and display of calligraphy

The application of modern technology in the creation and display of calligraphy is one of the key paths for the innovation and development of contemporary calligraphy art, which can greatly expand the expression of calligraphy and the interactive experience of the audience. Digital tools and software can be used for calligraphy creation, enabling calligraphic artists to freely experiment with different writing styles, pen and ink effects, and layout designs in the virtual space (Meng, 2020). This not only provides artists with more creative freedom but also allows for quick revisions and diverse displays, greatly improving the efficiency of creation and the diversity of artistic expression. In the field of combining modern technology and the art of calligraphy, the application of digital tools has brought unprecedented innovation to calligraphy. Take Baidu Input Method's "Create Characters on Paper" function as an example, this technology is a perfect combination of traditional calligraphy and

modern technology. Through this technology, users can transform their handwriting into personalized digital fonts that retain the writer's style, including characteristics such as brush strokes, writing speed, and strength, making each font unique. The introduction of this technology greatly reduces the threshold of personalized font generation, making it easy for ordinary users to create their calligraphy fonts. In addition, this typeface has a wide range of applications and can be used for personal documents, social media publishing, artistic creation, and other occasions, making the art of calligraphy more living and popularized. More importantly, the application of this technology has also rekindled the public's interest and enthusiasm in the art of calligraphy, prompting more people to participate in the study and creation of calligraphy. Through this technology, traditional calligraphy is no longer limited to the physical form of paper and ink but transformed into a digital form that can be displayed and shared anywhere and anytime. This not only opens up new possibilities for the inheritance and development of the art of calligraphy but also provides strong technical support for the innovation of modern calligraphy art, allowing calligraphy to continue to maintain its unique artistic value and cultural significance in contemporary culture.

The popularity of the Internet and social media has also provided a broad platform for the dissemination and display of the art of calligraphy. Artists can share their works through online galleries, social media, and websites to attract a global audience. Live webcasting of the calligraphy creation process not only showcases the artist's creative skills in real time but also allows for interaction with online viewers and the collection of feedback, further enhancing the impact of the work. Modern printing technologies such as 3D printing can also be combined with the art of calligraphy. Artists can transform calligraphic works into three-dimensional works of art, which are materialized through 3D printing technology so that calligraphic art is presented in the form of sculpture and other forms, which opens up a new dimension for the display and

application of calligraphic art (Lei & Wu, 2024). In these ways, the application of modern technology not only enhances the creative flexibility and display effect of the art of calligraphy but also expands its audience base, ensuring the survival and development of the art of calligraphy in modern society.

3.4. Strengthening international exchange and cooperation

Through international exchanges, the art of calligraphy can cross borders and enhance understanding and respect among different cultures. On April 19th, the "Lanting—Elegant Gathering" Chinese Calligraphy Theme Event and the first lecture of the 2024 "China Story" series were successfully held at the Chinese Cultural Center in Bangkok, Thailand. The event brought together leaders of cultural exchange and cooperation centers, representatives of higher education institutions, and calligraphy enthusiasts from China and Thailand to discuss the charm of Chinese calligraphy and its cultural value. Through lectures, interactive brush strokes, and calligraphy exhibitions, the event not only enabled participants to gain an in-depth understanding of Wang Xizhi's Lanting Preface and its calligraphic art but also allowed them to experience and feel the subtlety and flavor of Chinese calligraphy through on-site calligraphic performances. This form of exchange activity effectively stimulates the interest and love of the young generation of China and Thailand in traditional culture, and at the same time strengthens cultural inheritance and innovation. Through such international exchange activities, the art of calligraphy is not only able to display its unique artistic style on the international stage but also promotes mutual understanding and respect among audiences of different cultural backgrounds. Such cross-cultural artistic exchanges pave the way for the global dissemination and innovative development of the art of calligraphy, and at the same time provide new ideas and directions for the internationalization of the art of calligraphy (Zhang, 2022). By organizing such activities regularly, the international

influence and recognition of the art of calligraphy will be further enhanced, contributing to the diversity and richness of world culture and art.

Summary

As an important part of traditional Chinese culture, the art of calligraphy plays a crucial role in contemporary culture. It is not only appreciated and learned as an art form but also an important manifestation of cultural self-confidence and cultural soft power, which manifests the “essence, vitality and spirit” of Chinese people in the new era. Through the art of writing Chinese characters, which has been passed down for thousands of years, calligraphy demonstrates the profound heritage and unique charm of Chinese culture and also serves as a bridge between the past and the future. With the deepening of globalization, the art of calligraphy has continued to broaden its influence and audience base through international exchanges and the application of modern technology, enhancing global awareness of and respect for Chinese culture. Modern attempts at innovation in calligraphy, such as fusion with modern art and technology, have not only revitalized the art of calligraphy but also made it more relevant to contemporary aesthetic needs and cultural consumption trends. These innovative activities and educational promotions ensure the continued heritage and development of the art of calligraphy, while also promoting cultural pluralism and communion. Overall, the art of calligraphy is not only an inheritance of traditional Chinese culture, but also an important platform for global cultural exchanges and mutual appreciation of civilizations, demonstrating the unique aesthetics and far-reaching influence of Chinese culture.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that she has no conflicts of interest to this work.

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