

Rural Revitalization Design Driven by Ecological Aesthetic Education and Art Healing

-- A Study on the Case of Da Yuan Community in Yong Zhou City, Hunan Province

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Abstract: In recent years, the policy of promoting rural revitalization has been deepening, and the rural economy has achieved certain development. However, cultural support is indispensable for the realization of high-quality rural development. The source of art is often buried in the land, and the vitality of the land cannot be separated from the nourishment of art. In this paper, we take the case of Da Yuan Community in Yong Zhou City, Hunan Province, as an example, and adopt the case study method to explain how to use the combination of art and natural environment to promote psychological health and emotional development of individuals as well as social harmony based on the ecological aesthetics education and art healing. Eco-beauty education and art healing can not only make the rural culture grow with vitality and richness but more importantly, art is deeply integrated with the countryside, which positively impacts the overall growth of left-behind children.

Keywords: Art; Rural Revitalization; Eco-beauty; Art Healing; Da Yuan Community.

1. Introduction

The global ecological crisis is a common problem for human survival, and the relationship between human beings and nature has always been an important proposition of the times. In China, the report of the 19th Party Congress established the strategic goal of "accelerating the reform of the ecological civilization system and building a beautiful China". The countryside is rich in natural resources, but with the development of urbanization, residents of the countryside have left the countryside in pursuit of better living conditions, leading to the hollowing out of the countryside, the aging of the population and the problem of left-behind children, and the gradual loss of native culture and traditions. China is vigorously promoting the construction and innovation of the "three systems" of the humanities and social sciences. While implementing the comprehensive revitalization plan for the countryside, it is also necessary to pay attention to the cultivation of villagers' cultural quality for the arts and humanities play an important role in the overall development of human beings.

Mr. Cai Yuanpei, as the main advocate of the theory of "aesthetic education", emphasized the worldview education, which can bridge the "phenomenal world" and the "physical world", thus bringing the super-anonymous political purpose and the "human self". "Human self", "interests" and "demands", so that people can "be fully established as the big self of the world of the body. Then, we can see the power of the "human self", "interests", and "demands". [1] So, how do the "phenomenal world" and the "physical world" communicate and connect? "Beauty", which is non-utilitarian, universal and transcendental, entered the vision of Cai Yuan Pei. Similarly, in today's era of prominent ecological problems, nature gives us "beauty", and we should also give back to nature with "beauty". Eco-beauty education can play a healing role through various art activities. Participants can recognize the relationship between humans and nature

through multi-sensory and highly creative artistic expression. Meanwhile, they can obtain psychological adjustment effects to relieve their anxiety and fatigue. China's ecological aesthetic education research emerged in the late 20th century in need of ecological civilization, which is the root of the sustainable socio-economic growth, promoting the discipline of aesthetics. [2] It happens that the ecological crisis highlights the new requirements of ecological civilization construction in terms of (on) the public ecological quality life, which not only requires the cultivation of ecological aesthetic ability but also encourages ecological aesthetic creativity. It is safe to say that the construction of ecological civilization is appealing to (has given a new sense of mission to) aesthetic education.

2. Conceptual Definitions

2.1. Ecological Aesthetics

Ecological Aesthetics refers to the beauty of nature and the human beauty extended from it, such as the return of human self-worth and the beauty of ecosystem relations. [3] Ecological aesthetic education is a means of ecological beauty. By benefiting from the intersection of multiple disciplines, ecological aesthetic education is also an organic combination of ecology, aesthetics, and pedagogy by focusing on ecological outlook, ecological aesthetics, and ecological survival. [4] It not only contains a variety of elements of artistic beauty, enhancing public aesthetic awareness, and driving people to be more creative, but also shapes the relationship between humans and nature before accelerating the sustainable development of society.

2.2. Art Therapy

The concept of "art therapy", which originated in the 1930s, was proposed by the American psychiatrist, Margaret Hamburg [5], who combines art and psychology to relieve people's inner conflicts. As a non-verbal form of expression,

art therapy can be presented in different media and art forms, which are closer to self-representation. In eco-beauty education, art healing enables participants to engage in deeper self-excitation and feedback on the ecological beauty they feel in nature. American philosopher, John Dewey, in his book entitled *Art of Experience*, emphasized that art is a form of experience that facilitates a deep understanding and insight of life. Dewey also argued that art activities can stimulate the emotional and cognitive responses of individuals and promote their psychological growth as well as self-realization through the experience of beauty, thus having a healing effect.

3. The Appeal for Ecological Aesthetic Education and Art Healing

Rural left-behind children, or left-behind children for short, are minors under the age of 16, whose parents are working far away from their home and fail to take the responsibility of guardianship [6]. According to the data of the 2020 Chinese census, the proportion of left-behind children aged 0 ~ 17 in 2020 was 22.5%, corresponding to a scale of 66.93 million people. The proportion of left-behind children in cities, towns and villages was 16.9%, 20.7% and 62.4% respectively, corresponding to 11.33 million, 13.83 million and 41.77 million people. [7] Most left-behind children came from the countryside. Relevant studies also show that the life satisfaction [8] and happiness [9] of left-behind children are lower than those of non-left-behind children, and the loneliness and depression [10] of left-behind children are higher than those of non-left-behind children. Therefore, how to pay special attention to the spiritual condition of left-behind children has been a social issue.

The combination of eco-beauty education and art healing is supposed to make a positive difference to (we organize) left-behind children, who can be arranged to participate in local culture and environmental protection activities, which can improve their sense of identity with the local community, facilitate emotional regulation, and enhance their sense of self-worth. That's because eco-beauty education is aimed at refining people's emotions towards "eco-beauty art", "purify" people's emotions through art creation, effectively improving people's spiritual state, and promoting the all-around development of rural revitalization.

However, there are still some obstacles to the promotion and application of eco-beauty education and art healing in villages. Particularly the lack of talents and resources; secondly, the shortage of villagers' awareness and acceptance hinder deeper connotations. Take the Da Yuan Community Art Centre for an example, its in-depth exploration of the practice of ecological and aesthetic education in the countryside is inspiring and impressive.

4. Da Yuan Community -- Art Classroom Based on Ecological Aesthetic Education

4.1. Art Classroom in the Countryside

Da Yuan Community Art and Culture Exchange Center, located in Yongzhou, Hunan Province, is committed to using art as a way to respond to the countryside and children through company of art. It regards each child as an independent individual in artistic narration, hoping that they can draw inspiration from the environment of their own growth and complete self-cultivation and self-cultivation. In

2018, the "Village Arts Festival" has been held for six consecutive years in the Da Yuan Community, and all the planning and preparation of the programmes, as well as the layout of the performance site, are done by the children themselves. All the planning and preparation of the programmes, the layout of the performance site, and the design of costumes and props are all done by the children themselves. They use different art forms to show themselves and dialogue with the outside world. At that moment, the children's creativity and imagination had a carrier, and they all found their own value. [11].

With local left-behind children as the training object, the Da Yuan Community carries out public art courses relying on local natural resources customs and landforms, which are diversified in physical perception, natural materials, color expression and other courses. The design concept of these courses comes from the trinity of "ecological ontological aesthetics", "life-life aesthetics" and "ecological aesthetic education" constructed by Mr. Zeng Fanren. In addition, Da Yuan Community Community cooperates with Chinese Community of Art and other universities and institutions, taking "ecological aesthetic education" proposed by Mr. Zeng Fanren as the core guidance, based on the perspective of left-behind children, concretizing the form of aesthetic education and realizing the expansion of the form of ecological ontological aesthetic education.



Figure 1. shows the clay sculpture course "The Amazing Adventures of Corner Creatures" Photographed by China Academy of Art team

4.2. Public Environmental Awareness through Art

4.2.1. "Seed Germination" Rural Children's Art Festival: Opening the Window of Children's Mind



Figure 2. shows the "Seeds Sprouting" Village Art Festival: children wearing headdresses designed and made by themselves Photo by China Academy of Art team

The rural children's art festival held by Da Yuan Community takes "seed germination" as the theme, allowing children to achieve self-expression through the forest stage and display their creative works in the context of art and life. The children's art festival carries out characteristic aesthetic education courses developed around the concept of ecological aesthetic education, enabling children to have a dialogue with nature, art, and themselves.

4.2.2. Art course "Adventures of Corner Creatures"

regulating emotions in nature and shaping in creation the "Corner Creatures" course, which is a collaboration between Da Yuan Community and the China Community of Art, aims to bring art closer to natural life and allow children to achieve sustainable mental development of "beauty through love". It takes "corner creature" as the concept to alleviate the fear and doubt in children's hearts. Through the creation process of the corner creature device, the course transforms the "corner" in children's hearts into vivid and colorful creature images, thus achieving the effect of artistic healing. The corner creature course uses games and fairy tales as clues, allowing children to transform artistic creation into the source of creativity and vitality in their perception of materials, environment, and soul, becoming a corner for emotional repair and emotional telling, and ultimately achieving the effect of artistic healing.



Figure 3. the "Corner Creature" art installation, photographed by the China Academy of Art team.

4.2.3. Art course "Meet a Big Tree Friend": Understanding Nature through Games



Figure 4. the "Scarf for Tree Friends" art installation by the China Academy of Art team

The second art course jointly conducted by Da Yuan Community and China Community of Art aims to "perceive

nature" and carries out game-based interactive classes at Da Yuan Community. The game is designed based on the "Four Stages of Knell Nature Game", helping children establish a spiritual connection with trees and experience the joy of living with nature. Finally, children use local materials such as cotton sponges and foam pieces to make art installations for the big tree friend, and weave a warm scarf for the cold big tree friend. This course gets artistic inspiration from nature, and then "gives back" to nature through art, making nature glow with new vitality and vitality through art, and enabling rural children to get psychological healing through game courses and device making.

4.3. Rural Life under Cultural Infiltration

4.3.1. "Seed Germination" Art Festival: Healing the Soul and Inspiring Inspiration

In the preparation stage of the Children's Art Festival, children design and make their own "little monster" costumes in their imagination through the design and understanding of different characters and in the form of self-expression. During the art festival, characters such as "Pumpkin Monster", "Ink Man", "Skeleton Monster", and "Earth Spirit" were transformed into "levels" on the stage of the art festival, and children set up various challenges according to their interpretation of these characters.

Through this art festival, Da Yuan Community skillfully integrated art activities with village life, aiming to stimulate children's creativity and naturally integrate art into local culture. This approach not only promoted the joint participation of villagers and children, but also realized a "poetic residence" state, jointly building a community environment full of creativity and imagination.

4.3.2. Open Forum

At the symposium held in Da Yuan Society, Ms Zhou Yan, a representative of Da Yuan community teachers, and a representative of the China Academy of Art team shared their respective gains from the activities of aesthetic education for village children. They put forward their questions and suggestions on the aesthetic education of rural children.

During the exchanges and discussions, the team members deeply analyzed the current situation of the countryside and explored the value that can be mined from the countryside and the cohesion of human relationships. They thought about social issues from the perspective of education and gained new insights into eco-beauty education. They also explored the relationship between human beings and the environment, how to guide children to express and present themselves aesthetically, and how to explore the potential of rural conditions from an educational perspective. Members of the school also thought about the ways of practicing eco-beauty in family, group and institutional education. Through this seminar, we deepened our understanding of the aesthetic education of rural children and presented eco-beauty in education, aesthetics and life.

5. Strategies for Creating Ecological Aesthetic Education and Artistic Healing

5.1. Infrastructure Construction of Ecological Aesthetic Education

5.1.1. Optimizing the Rural Ecological Environment

Da Yuan Community invited experts from the School of

Architecture of Tsinghua University and the China Community of Art to lead villagers and children to participate in village reconstruction. Architects from Tsinghua University led the children in the village to survey and plan the village architecture, and transformed the structure according to the structure, activating five houses as public places such as canteen, theater, and dormitory.

Landscape designers from the China Community of Art relied on the tree species in Sanjiefeng, such as palm trees and banana trees, to help the children design the overall landscape pattern. The children also participated in the creation of wall paintings, integrating their own lives and community stories into the design. Through this construction mode with children and community participation as the main part, Da Yuan Community has realized the integration of architectural landscape and local culture, playing a role in the dissemination of ecological aesthetic education.

5.1.2. Raising Awareness of Ecological Environment

Da Yuan Community focuses on raising residents' awareness of environmental protection and stimulating villagers' internal motivation to create a better life. Daewonshe hopes to make farmers realise the importance of upgrading their living standards and actively participate in building happy and beautiful homes. The renovation started with the creation of a cultural and artistic environment. Through the construction of a Roman-style stage, a watchtower and other artistic scenes, Dayuan She made the villagers feel the beauty of art, aroused their pursuit of beauty, raised their self-confidence in rural culture, and thus stimulated their endogenous motivation to create a better life. Daewonshe has set an example of artistic demonstration, introduced the concept of beauty, turned the courtyard samples into the daily environment of the village, and infused the farmers' minds with the concept of ecological beauty.

5.1.3. Improving Rural Infrastructure

Da Yuan Community hopes to improve the development foundation of rural education by improving rural infrastructure, so it mobilized villagers to do infrastructure projects such as the renovation of dry toilets, the bamboo row drinking water project of mountain spring water, and the overall drainage renovation project of pipelines, promoting the construction of rural water, electricity, road, gas and other infrastructure, which plays an important role in improving rural production conditions. At the same time, these constructions pay attention to the protection of the environment and the essence and aesthetic feeling of materials, and are implemented with the participation of villagers, reflecting the ecological beauty and the concept of harmony between man and nature.



Figure 5. shows the Roman Coliseum-style stage and observation deck of Daewonshe.

5.2. Deep Integration of Art Healing Projects

5.2.1. Introducing more Art Healing Projects

With the support of the government, Da Yuan Community has designed an open-air theater, providing a public space for daily rural film screenings, guqin performances, drama performances, and art festival activities. The completion of this theater not only brings more cultural entertainment options to the villagers, but also improves the cultural level and sense of well-being of the residents through artistic means.

5.2.2. Conducting Rich Artistic and Cultural Activities

Da Yuan Community actively improves the quantity and quality of rural cultural services to meet the diversified cultural needs of the masses. By introducing artists, directors, designers, journalists and other external professional talents, Da Yuan Community actively offers daily courses in visual arts, music, drama and other fields, and regularly holds art festivals during winter and summer. This practice not only provides local residents with a rich and colorful cultural and artistic experience, but also promotes the effective interaction between local cultural and art societies and external professional forces, greatly enriching the artistic and cultural living environment of Da Yuan Village.

5.2.3. Realizing the Vision of Multi-party Forces Such as the Government, Artists and Villagers to Carry out Artistic Creation

Da Yuan Community mobilizes villagers, educated youth, the government and enterprises to jointly build an open-air educated youth forest theater, giving the elderly and children in the village a public space for activities, and encouraging more artists and educators to join the aesthetic education action of rural children through art. Driven by Da Yuan Community, more and more passionate teachers, village elders and other people from all walks of life have joined the initiative. In recent years, they have received support and help from 33 government departments, 108 volunteer teachers from universities, 27 local entrepreneurs and two foundations.

5.3. Activation and Utilization of Local Culture and Art

5.3.1. Fully Exploiting and Utilizing Rural Local Cultural Resources

Driven by Da Yuan Community, a number of entrepreneurs have returned to their hometowns to start businesses, and have successively established "Sanjiefeng Ten Thousand Mu of Oil Tea Base", "Golden Autumn Sugar Orange Industry Base", "Honeysuckle Industry Base", "Hongxin Cattle Raising Professional Cooperative" and other enterprises, basically forming an industrial scale of "ten thousand mu of citrus + ten thousand mu of oil tea + characteristic planting and breeding", eliminating more than 20,000 mu of barren hills, providing more than 1,000 jobs for surrounding villages, and increasing the per capita annual income by about 12,000 yuan.

5.3.2. Developing Excellent Traditional Cultural Industries in Accordance with Local Conditions

Da Yuan Community gives full play to the artistic characteristics of traditional bamboo weaving, guiding the elderly who know how to make bamboo shoes to make special bamboo shell shoes according to market demand. Da Yuan Community sells the bamboo products made by the elderly online, and invites the elderly to teach their skills in research courses, allowing the elderly to not only have economic benefits, but also realize their self-worth, and allowing art to infuse the lives of villagers.

5.3.3. Utilizing Culture and Art to Open up New Business Forms

Through activities such as natural art study tour, summer camp, Guqin study tour camp, and rural youth art festival, Da Yuan Community invites teachers and students, foundations, and media from big cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Hong Kong to participate in resident activities in Da Yuan Community, transforming ecological, environmental, and cultural advantages into development advantages, and enabling farmers to obtain tangible economic benefits.

6. Conclusion

To sum up, while optimizing the use of natural resources in the countryside, ecological and aesthetic education can also be used to revitalize the cultural space, improve the quality of villagers, and promote cultural innovation. This experience also makes us take insight into the characteristics of the local culture, and respecting the laws of nature under the premise of protecting nature by integrating aesthetics and tradition in the form of ecological aesthetic education to have sustainable development in the countryside.

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