Research on the Practical Model of Integrating Intangible Cultural Heritage of Xiaochang, Hubei into the Innovative Literacy and Aesthetic Education of Art Design Students

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Abstract. Based on the "15th Five-Year Plan" goal of "stimulating the cultural innovation and creativity of all 'intangible cultural heritage (ICH) practitioners'", this study takes the inheritance status of Xiaochang Paper Cutting in Hubei Province (with provincial inheritor Zhang Yuyi as the core case) as the entry point, focusing on the bridging role of art colleges and universities in the living inheritance of ICH. By constructing a three-dimensional system of "concept integration - method innovation - platform linkage" and a four-party collaborative mechanism of "colleges and universities - local government - communities - inheritors", the paper explores the path of integrating ICH into the innovative literacy and aesthetic education of art design students. Through forming a practice team to lead the whole-process practice of ICH research, craftsmanship inheritance, and promotion in pilot communities in Wuhan, the two-way empowerment of the living inheritance of ICH and the improvement of students' abilities is realized. This research provides theoretical references for promoting the living inheritance of ICH, local cultural development, and the training of art design talents.

Keywords: Xiaochang Intangible Cultural Heritage; Art Design; Innovative Literacy; Aesthetic Education; Collaborative Mechanism.

1. Introduction

As a provincial-level ICH project in Hubei Province, Xiaochang Carved Paper Cutting has been meticulously developed by its provincial inheritor Zhang Yuyi for more than 40 years. He has not only formed the unique technique of "Yinke (negative carving) emphasizing lines and Yanke (positive carving) emphasizing forms" but also innovatively integrated the filial piety culture of Xiaochang into his creations, launching works such as the "Meng Zong's Story" series, which endows traditional paper cutting with contemporary and regional cultural connotations. As a link connecting inheritors, the government, and society, colleges and universities play a crucial role in addressing the disconnect in ICH inheritance and the shortcomings in talent training through the inheritance and training systems they establish. Taking the Art Design major of Wuhan Textile University Foreign Economic and Trade College as the main practice subject, this study carries out practices centered on Zhang Yuyi's paper cutting, exploring the path of in-depth integration of ICH inheritance and student training based on the three-dimensional system and four-party collaborative mechanism.

2. Current Status of Xiaochang Paper Cutting Inheritance and the Value of University Intervention

The inheritance of Zhang Yuyi's paper cutting in Xiaochang has formed a model of "family inheritance as the mainstay and workshop teaching as a supplement". His works feature distinct characteristics; for example, the "Twelve Filial Piety Stories of Xiaochang" series vividly presents the filial piety culture of Xiaochang with exquisite brushwork. However, the integration of his workshop and residence limits teaching space, and the audience is mainly middle-aged and elderly, resulting in a narrow scope for the dissemination and inheritance of his distinctive works. Additionally, most works are two-dimensional paper cuttings, which are difficult to adapt to new scenarios such as cultural and creative products and digital media, leading to limited market acceptance. Therefore, the inheritance of this ICH faces the dual dilemmas of "difficulty in passing

down craftsmanship" and "difficulty in continuing culture": first, young people have low willingness to learn traditional paper cutting, and the creation of paper cuttings themed on red culture and filial piety requires profound historical and cultural accumulation, making it even harder for young learners to master; second, core techniques (such as "multi-layer nested cutting" and "interplay of emptiness and solidity") and the ability to interpret cultural connotations are at risk of being lost. [1]

The intervention of art colleges and universities has become a key solution. On the one hand, colleges and universities can systemize and standardize Zhang Yuyi's paper cutting techniques and the connotations of red and filial piety cultures through curriculum systems, avoiding the limitations of oral teaching and apprenticeship. On the other hand, the design resources of colleges and universities can facilitate the modern transformation of characteristic paper cuttings, such as integrating elements from the "Red Memories" series into cultural and creative designs and converting the "Twelve Filial Piety Stories of Xiaochang" into digital illustrations. Meanwhile, college students, as young inheritors, can become dual communicators of paper cutting techniques and cultural connotations through practice, alleviating the aging of inheritors and the problem of cultural discontinuity.

3. Theoretical Construction: Three-Dimensional System and Four-Party Collaborative Mechanism

3.1 Three-Dimensional Practice System of "Concept Integration - Method Innovation - Platform Linkage"

At the level of concept integration, the orientation of "craftsmanship inheritance - cultural understanding - innovation empowerment" is established. Based on Zhang Yuyi's paper cutting techniques, students are guided to deeply understand the revolutionary spirit of red culture and the moral connotations of filial piety culture, and then realize the creative transformation of ICH through modern design thinking, simultaneously cultivating students' cultural confidence and aesthetic taste. [2] At the level of method innovation, a dual-track model of "master-apprentice mentoring + project-driven learning" is adopted. A practice team is formed to conduct regular studies in Xiaochang; ICH inheritors from Xiaochang not only teach core techniques such as "Yinke and Yanke" and "multi-layer nested cutting" but also explain the creative background of the "Red Memories" series. Meanwhile, the practice team sets up a promotion group on campus with the project "Development of Red Paper Cutting Cultural and Creative Products", encouraging students to transform techniques and culture into tangible outcomes. At the level of platform linkage, three types of carriers—"on-campus - inheritors - communities"—are integrated. The on-campus practice team conducts regular small-class workshops, inheritors' studios in Xiaochang provide field research opportunities, and communities in Wuhan serve as communication platforms, offering scenario support for the promotion of paper cutting and forming a closed loop of "learning - practice - promotion".

3.2 Four-Party Collaborative Mechanism of "Colleges and Universities - Local Government - Communities - Inheritors"

Colleges and universities play a leading role in education, responsible for curriculum design, practice organization, and talent training. The Bureau of Culture and Tourism of Xiaochang County provides policy support and resource coordination to assist in research projects. Communities such as Zhiyuan Community in Wuhan offer communication scenarios, building an interactive bridge between ICH and the public. One provincial/municipal-level ICH inheritor (provincial inheritor Zhang Yuyi) serves as an off-campus supervisor, responsible for teaching craftsmanship and interpreting cultural connotations. The four parties achieve efficient collaboration through a resource-sharing platform, forming an educational ecosystem characterized by "inheritable carriers, clear training paths, and effective promotion channels".

4. Practical Path: From ICH Research to Community Promotion

4.1 Paper Cutting Research and Resource Sorting

An "Artistic Vanguard Service Team" composed of teachers and students majoring in art design was established to conduct multiple surveys on Xiaochang ICH from 2023 to 2025. In-depth interviews were conducted with inheritor Zhang Yuyi, and the operational standards of core techniques such as "multi-layer nested cutting" and "interplay of emptiness and solidity" were systematically recorded. The creative ideas, cultural connotations, and artistic characteristics of works such as the "Meng Zong's Story" series were sorted out, one technical teaching video was filmed, and one record book was compiled. The dynamic composition of Xiaochang Carved Paper Cutting was decomposed into transferable basic design elements, laying a solid foundation for curriculum integration.

4.2 Curriculum Integration and Craftsmanship Training

A three-stage curriculum chain of "foundation - advancement - innovation" was constructed: In the first year's "Fundamentals of Design", students copy paper cutting works to master line application and composition logic, and understand the connotations of traditional aesthetics; in the second year's "Visual Communication Design", themed on red culture and filial piety culture, students carry out cultural and creative product design, developing paper cutting-themed bookmarks, notebooks, canvas bags, and other works; in the third year's "Product Structure Design", the "Twelve Filial Piety Stories of Xiaochang" are transformed into cultural and creative works, and paper cutting elements are designed as AR interactive images, realizing the integrated innovation of traditional craftsmanship and modern technology.

4.3 Promotion and Cultural Communication in Wuhan Communities

The "Artistic Vanguard Service Team" collaborated with Zhiyuan Community in Wuhan to carry out multi-dimensional promotion activities, including themed paper cutting workshops titled "ICH · Red Inheritance". Party member students guided community residents to experience basic paper cutting techniques, covering more than 1,000 residents and effectively expanding the dissemination scope of Xiaochang Paper Cutting. The team's practical achievements have been recognized by multiple high-level projects, including the 2025 Youth Green Long March Scientific Expedition Practice Activity (national level) under the "Beautiful China · Youth Action" initiative and the National College Students' Summer "Three Goes to the Countryside" Social Practice Special Activity "Youth Practice for Financial Service to the Motherland" (national level), fully demonstrating the scientificity and effectiveness of the practical model.

5. Practical Effects: Manifestations of Two-Way Empowerment

5.1 Significant Improvement in the Inheritance Vitality of Xiaochang Paper Cutting

Through the four-party collaborative mechanism and university practice empowerment, the inheritance pattern of Zhang Yuyi's paper cutting has been optimized: the "Artistic Vanguard Service Team" has cultivated several young inheritors who regularly participate in technical practice and inheritance activities at Zhang Yuyi's workshop, alleviating the problem of young inheritor shortage; cultural and creative products and digital communication works designed by students have promoted paper cutting art from traditional festival scenarios to diverse fields such as modern life and community education; the digital resource library has provided detailed data for the systematic protection of Xiaochang Paper Cutting, facilitating its living inheritance.

5.2 Comprehensive Improvement of Students' Innovative Literacy and Aesthetic Education Level

The integration of ICH into teaching has effectively addressed the shortcomings in the training of art design students. Through practice, students have enhanced their innovative thinking and practical abilities, deeply understood the traditional aesthetics and cultural connotations in paper cutting, and continuously improved their aesthetic appreciation and creation capabilities. Meanwhile, Party members taking the lead in practice have further strengthened their sense of social responsibility and cultural inheritance awareness, realizing the coordinated development of professional skills and humanistic literacy.[3]

5.3 Prominent Role of the Collaborative Mechanism and Party Member Vanguard

The four-party collaborative mechanism of "colleges and universities - local government - communities - inheritors" has achieved optimal resource allocation and efficient connection, forming a win-win situation for all parties; the vanguard role of Party members in the "Artistic Vanguard Service Team" has ensured the organizational capacity and execution of practical activities, becoming the core force promoting the in-depth integration of ICH inheritance and student training.[4]

6. Conclusion and Prospects

The three-dimensional system of "concept integration - method innovation - platform linkage" and the four-party collaborative mechanism of "colleges and universities - local government - communities - inheritors" constructed in this study have effectively realized the two-way empowerment of Xiaochang Paper Cutting inheritance and the cultivation of art design students' innovative literacy and aesthetic education. Practice has proven that ICH, as a natural aesthetic education textbook and source of innovation, can inject a profound cultural core into art design education; while students' innovative practices provide young power and contemporary vitality for ICH inheritance, forming a positive interaction between the two.

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