

# Digital Inheritance of the Art of Folk New Year Pictures

Juan Huangfu

Sias International University  
Xinzheng, Henan, China 4751150

**Abstract**—The woodcut New Year picture of folk primitive art form is the treasure of traditional Chinese culture and art, but it gradually loses vitality in digital age. At present, although the development of digital art and folk art in our country has different situation, both of them have many problems. The combination of them is a kind of opportunity for both of them, especially has more profound significance on folk art that is in trouble. The cooperation between woodcut New Year pictures and digital industries such as cartoon, games and interaction in way of display and business application surely will achieve new redesign on the basis that the original nature is protected and inherited, realize the contemporary activation of traditional art and further promote the development of creative cultural industry in Central Plains.

**Keywords**—art of New Year pictures; digital art; observation styles; digital industry; redesign of activation

## I. INTRODUCTION

As one of the countries with ancient civilization in the world, China has massive and colorful traditional cultural essence. The original art has evolved various art directions in China. The one that has the most lasting and profound impact is the subsequent folk fine arts. Woodcut New Year picture is an important treasure of folk art in Central China. Its pictures have bright color, bold lines and highlight simple and straightforward painting style and have extremely precious reference values for the creation of modern art. While in current new digital age, the inheritance of this folk art is faced with many difficulties. At the same time, it also meets new development space and opportunities.

## II. DILEMMA OF THE ART OF TRADITIONAL WOODCUT NEW YEAR PICTURES

In the tide of high speed development of global economy, the rapid development and popularization of digital technology continuously change our life. At this moment, traditional folk culture has fierce conflicts with modern digital culture. The survival soil of many traditional arts is damaged and faces with the situation of failing to be handed down from generation to generation and extinction.

The Zhuxian Town woodcut New Year pictures derive from Tang Dynasty and have more than eight hundred years of history. In the society of agricultural economy, it is an important factor that meets people's aesthetic demands,

enriches artistic life, soothes the spirit and manifests its use and economic value. With the development of society, new value and modern aesthetic purport invade, so woodcut New Year pictures suffer from destructive blow in today's social life forms and gradually fade out people's field of vision. It is an art that is produced in the way of manual operation and depends on traditional Spring Festival customs. In the early 1980s, the government in Henan province established Associations of Zhuxian Town Woodcut New Year Pictures; later it regained workshops of New Year picture such as Tiancheng Shop, and successively sorted out more than one thousand pieces of woodcuts. In 2006, Zhuxian Town woodcut New Year picture was listed in the first batch of intangible cultural heritage.

## III. THE CHANGE OF DIGITAL AGE

When the art of traditional New Year picture declines, the digital media that bases on electronic information technology gradually becomes an important way to express and spread culture and art. The popularization and promotion of digital art began in the end of last century. It is multidimensional, photorealistic, portable and easy to spread and penetrates into all aspects such as society, culture and recreation in an irresistible influence, seriously changes people's understanding and lifestyle and produces industries such as games, film and television, animation, digital painting and interactive design, etc.

In digital age, the observation styles and aesthetic demands of human visual culture continuously change. Usually we can only purposefully see things that we want to see, which is selective. While aesthetic demand is to meet the desire to watch and complete through body senses. In new media age, people's visual desires continuously increase and the development of digital technology also makes people's observation styles and cultural aesthetics have profound changes. Digital media has become the extension of people's perceptive mode such as eyes and ears and can bring more pleasant sensation. For example, as the representative of new media, digital image art integrates digital technology with artistic appreciation, spreads general information of multiple senses such as sound, light and electricity and completes the narrative and spiritual expression. Compared with static viewing of traditional image, it increases the amount of information, expands the potential of artistic expression and corresponds with the demands of people to release visual

desires. The carrier of traditional woodcut New Year picture is papery form of two-dimensional image. In modern requirements and observation styles, the signal value and meaning of this kind of static form will be covered by its timeworn carrier or pattern of manifestation and lose the ability to spread and the vitality. Modern audiences, especially young people who have been accustomed to enjoying the quickness and convenience brought by digital platform are easier to be attracted by multimedia display of "immersion" type. In EXPO 2010, the dynamic version of "Riverside Scene at Qingming Festival" made use of the multidimensional, vivid and interactive features of digital image, broke through display form of traditional painting and people's way of viewing and shocked the world. This work uses means such as multimedia technology and three-dimensional animation to anew show the bustling life in Bianliang city in Northern Song dynasty that appears in more than eight hundred years ago. Viewers as if were personally on the scene. The appreciation of classical painting no longer rests on static paper, but turns to dynamic screen with more interactivity, which shortens the aesthetic distance and achieves amazing display and communicating effect.

New media arts such as image, virtual reality and interaction liberate people from traditional mode of viewing and transmission. However, shoddy duplicates are still the main way for us to appreciate and promote New Year pictures and lack innovative combination with modern technology and artistic spirit, so it is difficult to impress the audiences naturally. At present, although the situations between the inheritance of the art of Zhuxian Town New Year picture and the development of digital technology are different, the combination of them is a kind of opportunity for both of them, especially has more profound significance on folk art that is in dilemma. It is the key for us to discuss and research how to make use of scientific and technological means and digital media art to redesign the art of traditional New Year picture and achieve sustainable development.

#### IV. DIGITAL DISPLAY OF THE ART OF NEW YEAR PICTURE

Traditional platforms to display and protect New Year picture always bring material objects into the museum to store and display, which has passivity and limitations. In order to better vitalize precious cultural relics that are rare for us to see in museums and endangered folk arts, we must combine the protection of digital museum with dynamic display of image and network platform and finally realize visual activation.

We can integrate the display of 3D video and digital interaction into traditional museums to carry richer information, and add immersion, initiative and enjoyment of audiences in multidimensional virtuality and interaction to adapt to modern observation styles. Network is the effective supplement of traditional museum and can help people in different places to surpass the limitations of space and time to communicate. In 2006, the National Palace Museum launched the project of "the Forbidden City beyond Time and Space", which was cooperated with IBM Company, used 3D technology to build virtual Forbidden City and place

space and objects on the network platform to achieve digital display. This makes it possible that internet users around the world can visit any place of the Forbidden City by staying at home. Even the Taihe Palace that is seldom open in reality also can be seen; people can enjoy the sight of cultural relics with no dead corner. Some even surpass people's common viewing range with exquisite high quality detailed drawing; meanwhile, the sounds of explanation and background music better enrich feelings of audiences and have extremely high reference value. Our woodcut New Year picture also can use digital way to improve the amount of information, showing level and publicity of our museums; on the other hand, because there are fewer and fewer inheritors to inherit the art of traditional New Year picture, we can use images of multimedia to record and store the process of handicraft production; at the same time, use internet to spread and establish a more flexible and broader communication platform between folk fine arts and the masses.

#### V. EXTRACTION OF TRADITIONAL ELEMENTS AND DIGITAL INNOVATIVE DESIGN

In the past, the researches of traditional New Year picture are easy to be limited by words such as "tradition" and "heritage" and pursue the maintenance of our own history. In industrial practice, most people analyze and discuss from the perspective of technology production method, which is over-conservative. Under modern context, if we want to keep the vitality of traditional art, it is unfeasible to only depend on the static protection of museum. We need to base on its cultural foundation, break through historical art, deeply excavate the cultural and commercial value of traditional art, look for contemporary integrating point to renovate and redesign in the development of digital industry to form self-survival ability. In order to create new vitality, it is necessary to extract traditional symbols that are most valuable and representative in traditional forms and analyze their forms and characteristics, excavate humanistic connotation and absorb elements that can be inherited.

##### A. Excavate Deep-Seated Cultural Psychology

A folk fine art is not only a kind of art. It has basic cultural consciousness of people as well as basic cultural connotation. Traditional activities of folk fine arts are the art to meet the requirements of laborers. It integrates into people's social life, such as basic necessities of life, festival custom, life etiquette, beliefs and taboo and traditional opera performance, and has rich types, including various technical means such as folk painting, folk costume, civil construction, folk art and folk instruments and the category and forms of custom function. Because it has national, collective, regional, entertaining and inheritable characteristics and wide cultural values in art, philosophy, culture, religion, history, economy, more and more scholars explore the connotation and aim of traditional culture and art in the existing folk fine arts and absorb its quintessence.

The deep cultural psychology contained by artistic form of folk New Year picture can enlighten people. It embodies humanistic conceptions such as humanistic connotation, primitive religion, philosophy in the universe, life, value, life

custom, ethnic cultural psychology and forms cultural integration that has multiple values, which have significant intrinsic value for digital creative arts in contemporary China and the establishment of multiple attributes such as tradition and modernity, national character and global nature, materiality and spirituality. Modern digital art should truly pay attention to people's spiritual orientation, synthesize and promote in multiple aspects such as spiritual concern and harmony of human nature, and seek "sustainable development" in real sense. Chinese digital art is not to seek localization and nationalization, but on the basis of absorbing the quintessence of five thousand years of Chinese traditional culture to keep up with the pace of the time, connect Chinese and Western, go the way of diversified development, use the theory of national culture as the guidance, explore national style and form and characteristics of art and then let it become spiritual wealth of all people around the world.

#### B. Pay Attention to Conversion and Transmission of Traditional Symbols In CG and Animation Industry

In order to apply traditional factors to the industry of digital art such as animation, games and interaction, we need to expand new redesign on the basis that the original nature is protected and inherited. For example, a successful animation can become brand mark of regional culture if it has dual appeals of culture and economy.

Zhuxian Town New Year picture has symbolic features in aspects such as composition, color and theme. The composition of it is full and compact and basically will not leave blank and like to use full symmetrical layout to embody integrity and reunion. The images and modeling of characters are exaggerated, clear, handsome and not flattering. The lines are thick and powerful, which highlight the earthy and uncomplicated characteristics of the Central Plains and form graphic symbols. In color expression, it uses watermark tinted method and likes to use contrasting colors, such as the match of yellow and purple, red and green, which is unique with strong and harmonious effects, and it is the important supplement and foil of modeling. These traditional characteristics are perfect combination of bold and artful characteristics in aesthetic culture in Central Plains and will become important elements in the reconstitution of new works. We can shape animation images with local characteristics in combination of features of New Year pictures. When creating, we cannot directly copy and imitate characters or images in New Year pictures, but need to deconstruct and reconstruct symbolic elements according to needs of films. By doing this we can arouse people's sense of national identity. For example, the images of gods in Miyazaki Hayao's *Spirited Away* are very attractive. Although these images are weird and all from Japan's traditional supernatural records and each image has traditional design elements and specific cultural direction and implied meaning. In the early days, there were also many similar tries in Chinese animation. The images in the *Fishing Child* are vivid display of paper-cut characters in New Year pictures. The lotus, river, fish and scenery are full of local flavor and it is the early successful case. Under the trend of internationalization, the *Thru the Moebius Strip* that

cost vast sum in 2006 completely "westernize" in characters and theme and caused crushing defeat in ticket sales because it lacked the sense of national identity. When we ignore our local traditional culture, foreign animation films headed by America refer to Chinese traditional elements and themes for many times, such as *Mulan*, *Kung Fu Panda* are typical representatives. Similarly in Japan, the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is developed into many kinds of games and they have achieved huge market and economic benefits at home and abroad. In Zhuxian Town New Year picture, there are also many stories and themes that represent auspicious omen and happiness such as *Give Her Son a Lecture*, *Five Sons Contend for the First Prize*, and *Get Promotion Step by Step*, which have extremely high reference values. We can take it as the background to develop corresponding films, online games and mobile games and cartoon products, so that we can bring broader spaces for local folk arts to penetrate into our life.

The intended values of a piece of traditional New Year picture work and digital works with elements of New Year picture are different. But the important value of digital redesign lies in display instead of existing. This is also the reason why America, Japan and South Korea can use digital creative industry to successfully promote in the world. New Year pictures should find a best joint point between the tradition and the modern, add times elements in contents, and refer to modern means in product and marketing mode to integrate traditional art into modern society. For example, open courses related to folk custom in universities such as Henan University, Light Engineering Institutes of Zhengzhou and Henan Normal University to cultivate a group of college students. Meanwhile, strengthening the market planning between enterprises also can greatly improve the influences of woodcut New Year picture in Central Plains.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Just as other folk arts, Henan woodcut New Year pictures have popular art form, artistic aesthetics, cultural function and social function. It is an important part of folk life. With the changes of society, lifestyle and aesthetic consciousness, in digital time, the development of Wuqiang New Year pictures encounters crisis. The development of digital creative industry of traditional culture also gradually becomes an important symbol of scientific and technological strength and culture soft power of each country. It seems particularly urgent to use the interactive, visual and recreational modern digital art to renovate and redesign traditional New Year pictures like "genetic recombination", finish the realistic demand that changes from longitudinal intangible heritage and lateral material transmission. Through research, we hope that the art of Zhuxian Town woodcut New Year pictures can base on modern life and make it glow new vitality in cultural and economic aspects to further promote the development of cultural creative industry in Central Plains and the soft power of Central Plain Culture.

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