

Multiple Value and Practical Exploration on Rural Art Synthesis

Making Discussion on “Bishan Plan”

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Abstract—This thesis, aiming at the current development situations of rural culture, and initiating from the existing policy advocacy of constructing full-bodied rural culture, as well as on the basis of the artistic practice project “Bishan plan” comes up with the concept of rural art synthesis on the purpose of promoting rural culture to realize healthy sustainable development in modern society by abundant artistic creativity. Rural art synthesis stands up for facilitating the living protection of rural traditional culture and development of rural tourism and economy with its core of integration and renaissance of modern art and rural cultural resources. Among them, the construction imagination, implementation step and significance of rural art synthesis are mainly discussed and analyzed by the thesis.

Keywords—*rural art synthesis; Bishan Plan*

I. WHAT DOES RURAL ART SYNTHESIS REFER TO?

Our country, at present in its key period of economic and social transformation is facing the challenges of not only realizing the transformation from economic extensive growth to quality development, but formulating the situations of coordinated and mutual growth between economy, culture and society as well as factors for the leaping development of various soft powers. Despite of the increasingly funding of our nation in rural cultural construction, it still lags far behind the step of rural economic development. Decision on Comprehensively Promote Construction of Beautiful Countryside, issued by Anhui provincial Party committee Anhui province people’s government on September 2012, has raised claims for selecting relatively big natural villages with advantageous locational conditions, strong economic foundation, and prominent driving functions relatively concentrated population or famous historical and cultural villages surrounded by special industrial villages as the experimental site of beautiful rural construction. It requires us on the basis of inheriting and exploring the rural characters, styles and features and folk customs, to combine the artistic idea thinking to motivate the local excellent cultural conditions, inherited customs and folk culture so as to creatively display the refined classical achievement melting

contemporary art and rural culture.

However, urban life style and aesthetic pursuit has been strengthened in rural areas resulting in the rapid advancement of urbanization. Meanwhile, urban has further casted its attractions on a variety of rural talents especially technical talents, which caused that villagers possessing the old precious process and technique skills gradually leave their homeland and earn a living in a urban city by other types of work. Merely low level of rural culture and art activities attaching to wedding celebrations or sowing and reaping ceremonies are left to repeat. The development trend of current rural culture is gradual elimination of rural culture, cultural development strategy assimilated by urban and extensive growth pattern for cultural production by batches. All of these will give rise to increasing preciousness of traditional labor and rural life, and People’s desires for reviewing and expecting the past agricultural production and labor way will be aroused by the crowd city and noisy life environment. Therefore, to avoid the situation, the independence, completeness and stabilities of regional rural culture in those distinctive traditional rural settlements should be maintained.

Under such urban and rural development background, a kind of rural culture protection and development idea is born in response to the proper tie and conditions –carrying out rural art synthesis in villages with rich culture and long history. Rural art synthesis is under the current policy advocacy of construction beautiful rural culture, and in line with cultural features of different regions, as well as driving rural art to comprehensively develop by diversified forms with art imaginations and creativities so as to reach the goals of inheriting rural folk culture and improving the rural tourism economy. The scope of rural art synthesis includes: construction of rural public presentation space, collection and research on folk cultural work, creative design of traditional handicrafts and all varieties of composite creations that combining the exertion of sculpture, drawings, device, images and dance, etc. embodying the rural elements. Such a project like that requires more intelligences and artists to pour their enthusiasm and strength into rural culture protection,

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furthermore needs conscious interaction and participation of villagers.

II. THE VALUE OF RURAL ART SYNTHESIS LYING IN CULTURE

On the purpose of promoting the living protection of traditional rural culture and developing rural tourism economy, rural art synthesis is based on its core of melting rural cultural resources with modern art and renaissance. With the new form, it has not only popularized traditional culture resources remained in rural areas, but expanded the border of modern art and by which some current problems on the center village construction are able to be solved in some degree.

First of all, the occurrence of rural art synthesis can deal with the dilemma of reducing in the quality and quantity of rural cultural art activities. In view of life environment, children's education and household economy incomes, etc., overwhelming majority of villagers begin to leave the village for settling down at cities and earning a living, among whom there is no lack of able persons possessing traditional techniques and skills. These serial events eventually result in so severe shortage in rural talents that the vulgar cultural phenomenon occurring in rural cultural markets becomes more serious and damaging and also leads to continuous reduction of forms and quantity of such activities.

Secondly, the construction of rural art synthesis can treat the malady that the current artists tend to grab only a small part of rural art resources. Notwithstanding artists in the domain of drawing, photographing, artistic designing, architecture, stage arts and so on obtain art creation materials by penetrating into countryside more and more frequently; these art activities are still resting in the same form that seeking from rural culture, while only rarely systemization and advertisement of some culture heritages has been provided in return. It is even less independent contribution on politics or economy being made. On the contrary, rural art synthesis has to mobilize artists from all places to visit specific rural area for conducting the experiment of living together and attempting the social practice of mutual assistance and self-governing. Meanwhile, they proceed on general survey and interview on the historical sites, vernacular architecture, settlement culture, folk opera and handcraft of that region, on the basis of which inviting local handcrafters to cooperate with them under aesthetic concept of modern design, so as to reactivate and renew the traditional handcrafts and transform the work achievements to local productive forces finally contributing to bringing opportunities of culture revival and economy development for rural areas. In addition, artists and intelligences should consciously conduct rural value practice to provide assistance for farmers to understand and construct the value of rural culture and entire society.

Thirdly, practice of rural art synthesis would be likely to change enterprises' operation way of seizing rural cultural tourism resources by draining the pond to get all fish. Since enterprises have their same essence of questing for profits, most tourism management enterprises who develop rural scenic spots' resources adopt low level of operational mode that riding on a horse to enclose and waiting for admission

ticket charges, and such short chain operational mode is inevitable to force enterprises to seek short-term visiting quantity but ignore making more efforts on formulating a longer industrial chain to achieve a high value-added. Besides, without participating in the construction, management and obtaining earnings of scenic spots, local villagers are more likely to be indifferent or gain petty advantages and even some disputes may result from it. Such impression has been left to the author according to the recent survey in Ping Shan of Mount Huang, Hong Village and Jade Valley, etc. However, rural art synthesis enables artists to feel the origin of rural cultural heritage through long-term investigation in the rural area on the field trips, so that they are capable of generating new art creative inspiration which will form the special rural culture and tourism resources with a steady flow of vitality by this grafting culture proliferating mode.

Finally, the rural art synthesis can further generate a completed culture market management mechanism of government. At present, the local government still focuses on pursuing GDP increasing by the inertial effect of management. While the new-built government institutes adjusts and formulates the government with the longest name in the history and such administrative management departments as Department of Culture, Radio, Film, TV, Press and Publication and Tourism, etc. They are still hanging on the margin. At the same time, those art groups in Beijing 798 Art District, Songzhuang, Shanghai M50 Creative Park spontaneously established by artists at first, once were under the pressure of forced removal. On the contrary, the occurrence of rural art synthesis can naturally encourage the government to never cease steps to improve and complete the management mechanism with more flexibility on rural handcraft market, tourism market and auxiliary product market of agricultural product.

III. PURPOSE OF "BISHAN PLAN"

A. "Bishan Plan" and Bishan Harvestival

"Bishan Plan", rising in response to the concerns towards the gradual elimination of traditional agriculture and on the basis of the devotion to rural handcrafts and critique of rural urbanization, is an experimental project on returning hometown from cities of intelligences and rebuilding rural new cultural construction. Ou Ning, holding concurrently positions of curator, chief editor of literary magazine, director of documentary together with Zuo Jing holding concurrently the positions of curator and chief editor of magazine jointly founded the project and chose to practice it in historic village—Bishan Village, Huang Mount in Anhui who processes profound humanistic background. As an excellent example for city back seeding countryside in culture and art industry, the project requires intelligences come back to countryside for reflecting on the existing problems during rural culture construction and providing wise advices and strength for the development of rural economy and construction, further to harmoniously live with villagers and construct a better sustainable countryside capable of carrying on traditional civilization and integrating with the modern society.

Bishan Harvestival is a main part of “Bishan Plan”, in which lots of artists, architects, writers, directors, designers, musicians and local scholars studying on culture, handcrafters of traditional process and Chinese opera artists are invited for participation “Fig. 1”, “Fig. 2”. A series of theme activities, including artistic video exhibition of Huizhou’s architectures, furniture, handcraft and other related themes, are launched in ancestral temple of Bishan Village, Yi County and granary which are symbolic places of traditional agriculture civilization. In addition, professional sessions are held for rural construction technicians, scholars and architects to discuss on the ancient residential buildings. What’s more, such activities as the memorial ceremony for harvest, manufacturing of contemporary rural documentary and literary activities like poetry classes, etc. are carried out. The organizers adopt the ritual of Chinese traditional farming society – “Harvest Festival” and give it new intension and extension meanings of the time, which adds campfire party about harvest after rites and traditional harvest performance which has been prevailed in agricultural civilization, besides of the ancient rites that worship ancestors and gods and pray for good harvest of next year. Bishan Harvestival is an experiment of modern and ancient synchronization melting with both elements. The experiment now has become a significant special art project with its powerful influences on contemporary art; meanwhile, Bishan Village also became a lively exhibition of modern art activities.



Fig. 1. The joint work of the artist Qiu Anxiong and local bamboo weavers



Fig. 2. Exhibition scene of Bishan Plan

B. Further Reflection on “Bishan Plan”

Bishan Harvestival will become the carnival and grand meeting of Bishan villagers and a fresh resource and advantage of local tourism culture if being held once a year. Since Bishan Harvestival attaches attention to the inheritance and protection of local intangible heritage, Bishan has conducted many activities, such as series of theme exhibition for advocating mutual assistance and inheritance, temple fair travels of handicraft fair, investigation and research project on hundreds of hands of Yi County, and joint performance of traditional Chinese opera in Huizhou City, etc. Such activities as “Bishan Plan”, taken the leading by artists to participate in rural construction and make an attempt to cooperate with local villagers, so as to conduct rural cultural reconstruction and explanation, further to provide new ideas for the development of rural cultural construction – rural art synthesis.

Recent 20 years has witnessed the appearance in swarms of various arts districts on the theme of industrial sites around the world, such as the ancient Toronto winery district has become an integration of art, culture, entertainment and relaxation which gathered gallery, design company, creative shop, café artist studio and theater, etc into a whole. Austerlitz railway station of Paris, streets of Tolbiac library and flourmill district in Marcilla in Paris Left Bank all are industrial arts districts promoted relying on their respective characteristic development. In recent years, besides of 798, Shenzhen Baoan arts district, Hangzhou West Bank international arts district, Shanghai Hongfang arts district, Xi’an Banpo international arts district and Wuhan garden arts living district have risen in China. They have enabled the harmony and symbiosis of industrial civilization in the last half century and modern arts, which not only represented a new visual feast but motivated economic recovery. However, at present those arts districts also face up with the problem of homogenization and declination in art character and constantly develop towards commercial culture.

Agriculture civilization has shaped the features of Chinese culture, and influenced the thinking mode and value orientation of Chinese people from the deep degree. Therefore, comparing with industry, agriculture has more attractiveness and is on the ground for the receivers of arts, which, for artists, is more consistent with the philosophical spirits of Chinese arts. Till now, there has been a few artists having absorbed nutrients and inspiration from agriculture civilization and applied it to their creation, for example, Lin Huaimin, the founder of Taiwan “Cloud Gate”, in his work “Songs of the Wanderers”, scattered three and half tons of golden rice on the stage, which inspired emotions deep in the heart of Chinese people and impressed audiences a lot. Audiences cannot help to be moved and fascinated by his dance. Nevertheless, art experimental areas themed by agriculture civilization or those art districts established for assisting rural cultural construction are rarely seen. The phenomenon that city back seeding countryside whose generation is closely related to the current stage of economic development level, is a basic development mode of international economy. The No. 1 document about “issues of agriculture, farmer and rural area” issued by the

national central government in 2010 is deemed as a sign of China's first step into the road of city back seeding countryside by experts. The Grassland in Beijing, Songzhuang, Painter village of the Old Summer Palace were firstly generated since many artists freely gathered in some village to conduct art creation, so which should neither belong to the scope of city back seeding countryside in its true sense nor an art district born to fail supporting rural cultural industry.

Rural art synthesis has explored more possibilities for the regeneration of traditional rural culture. Besides of the creative transformation and regeneration mode of Beijing 798, it has opened a wider new channel for cultural living protection taking countryside as the main body and developed a new-born mode of rural culture combining with the economic development of creative tourism.

IV. PRACTICAL EXPLORATION ON ESTABLISHING AND CONSTRUCTING RURAL ART SYNTHESIS

The idea that constructing rural art synthesis has not only been conducive to the economic development of rural tourism and strengthened the competitiveness of tourism resources to become a special cultural brand, but contributed to the living protection and inheritance of cultural heritage. Then these questions that how to cooperate with local government to exert the developing ability of countryside itself, based on the actual demands of rural development, to conduct structural cohesion with the existing rural society and politic structure for designing reasonable rural art synthesis mode suitable for the development path of new rural cultural construction.

A. *Putting Forth Efforts to Shape the "One Stem and Three Leaf" Structure of Rural Art Synthesis*

To sustain, develop and promote the ideas of "Bishan Plan" requires accurate positioning. Not only intellectuals are required to conduct collection and transmission of cultural heritage, but the plan is necessary to melt with modern society and in an art intervention way, motivate traditional culture and execute experiments on new-born ideas, further to bring in new rural culture renaissance.

The main body (stem) of rural art synthesis is the artistic creation of artists, and with a strict attitude to treat the design, implementation and records of later period of every artistic creation. In addition, there are three factors (three leaf) for supporting its development, including: Firstly, government policy fostering, including the stable and long-term supporting policies on land, capital, transport, law, etc. as well as understanding and encouragement to artists' creation; urban-rural interaction project is the plan on folk technique inheritance launched by government. Secondly, universities and colleges are necessary to conduct relevant talent cultivation so as to provide intelligence and creation supports for rural cultural construction; Thirdly, it is supposed to consider the market demands and consumption trends to enable the interaction and integration of commerce and art.

B. *Construction Process*

1) *Collection and exploration of the materials about rural folk culture:* Rural folk culture has a long history. However, with the increasingly development of urbanization, a large number of excellent rural culture folk began to disappear. Local customs not only represent on the trail of social, historic and cultural development of countryside, but are able to provide originality resources for artistic creation. Local cultural institutions should regularly push forward relevant topics to collect and attract the interests of major students and researchers, further to carry on the material collection, summarization and exploration, research and promotion of folk culture.

2) *Elaborately selecting the design suitable for rural cultural products:* The demand for conducting character and digitization records on craftsmanship which is intangible cultural heritage becomes direly urgent at present. Measures should be immediately taken to reserve traditional culture which gradually disappears as the changes of life styles constantly take place with the development of time, such as special earthenware, bandhnu, wax printing, embroidery, persimmon dye and manufacturing skills of Chinese ancient writing materials, wood carving, root carving, tile carving and atone carving, etc.

But the most important thing is adopting new design to promote the regeneration of traditional technique or absorbing the features of traditional craftsmanship for current use. Rural daily necessities can be transformed into creative artistic products, such as rattan plaited articles, wickerwork, appliance weaved with corn bran and various plant decoration like salix matsudana .f. tortousa, deadwood and dry grain, etc. Till now, these handiworks have become the main industry to promote local economic development in some villages, but only a few economic profits can be obtained through hand labor since there is lack of recreation, large degree of homogeneity and imitation and specialty shortage, low art additional value. Therefore, local government can organize bidding invitation on exhibition and theme design to nationwide artists taking regional handicrafts as the theme. By that way, it can not only motivate the generation of artistic works combined artistic value as well as rural interest and charm but produce benefits of advertisement for local craftsmanship industry. Artists and designers go to the countryside to conduct design and beauty-appreciation guidance on rural handiworks, so as to increase their art additional value and further to promote the growth of economic benefits.

3) *Creative development and talent cultivation of craftsmanship conducted by universities and colleges:* The instruction of talents on rural cultural construction has been the ignored in the past. Universities and colleges set folk craft inheritance and creative development center; meanwhile, they also establish practice and internship base for students in rural regions. In addition, universities and colleges conduct cultural and artistic appreciation trainings to relevant folk art talents and arrange relevant professional teachers to study and communicate with folk craftsmen. Furthermore, they will give assistance to raise the cultural quality, creative design ability

and theory level of rural craftsmen, which can also enhance teachers' practice and operational ability.

4) *Modern large-scale art creation combining with rural culture, to promote the healthy and sustainable development of rural tourism and culture industry*: Rural art synthesis covers the activities such as planning large-scale modern art creation themed with rural culture, through the effective combination of video art, literature art, installation art, performance art, painting, decoration, sculpture, and dance, etc. to generate strong attractiveness to villagers and tourists. At the same time, the continuous updating and creation of such artistic activities can constantly promote the health development of contemporary art and rural tourism cultural industry.

V. ATTENTIONS IN PRACTICE

A. *Design of Best Use and Achieving the Organic Integration of Sites, Spirits and Arts*

Making the best use of everything- loving objects, knowing objects and cherishing objects, as traditional Chinese object utilizing philosophy, refers to taking full advantage of resources, which is the way of survival during the material want times. Though the used old objects have lost the original use functions, they carry about history and time, and bear people's emotions and memories. Therefore, in case old objects are redesigned and recycled, there will be no more waste, and this method can also relieve the anxiousness caused by the accumulation of obsolete objects. Meanwhile, the trails of time can be reserved, which gives a new value to old objects. Time will bring materials special texture and mechanism which cannot be matched by any new material. This characteristic has attracted interests of many international famous designers, such as Japanese designer Issey Miyake, Swiss designer Yunus and so on. It must reek with extremely special glory if we combine old beams, stone cisterns, door planks, lattice windows, embroiders, amphora and traditional farm tools even more ordinary rural old objects with modern design to create their harmony.

B. *Positively Reflect on the Specialty and Distinctions of Different Villages during Inheritance and Protection to Create Diversified Styles*

From the view of tourism resources, Anhui rural areas can be divided into four types: natural resources, cultural resources, mixed type and non-resources. From the point of geography and culture and taking Yangtze River basin as the boundary, it can be divided into south villages and north villages. Both of them have not only the differences in geography but the same points in respective localism and folk culture. In addition, features vary from village to village.

When selecting the establishing region of rural art synthesis, it requires distinguishing the specialty of different areas and avoiding homogenization. At the same time, aiming at the characteristics that scattered distribution and small scale of villages, it is necessary to conduct cultural integration. We should explore the specialty of countryside adjusting measures to local conditions and avoid sameness, so as to

create distinct and diversified styles. Besides that, villages with distinct characteristics can be found for designing their art orientation and theme.

C. *Standing on the Involvement of Local Villagers and the Acceptance of Potential Audiences, to Avoid the Casual and Strained Scenes Designed by Artists and Indulging in Self-admiration*

In the process of "798" art district transforming from factory to art region then to tourism region, the former social and economic status of workers are gradually replaced by new-coming multi-populations and they have a prominent marginalization feature. While paying attention to the advantages brought by the rural art synthesis such as economic profits and promotion in rural development, decision maker of government and artist groups also ought to properly focus on these "silent majority". If only few can achieve development and the majority must sacrifice their profits as prices, it does not abide by the equality principle of sustainable development and is very likely to end early and even bury a seed of social conflict. Therefore, local villagers need to find cultural identity and self-value, which is able to promote the development of rural cultural construction in a real sense.

D. *Considering of the Double-edged Sword Functions of Market, to Promote the Formulation of Eucyclic Mechanism of Art, Commerce and Culture*

Rural art synthesis is a way to protect and develop art and culture under the big environment of market commercialization which may provide fund supports for art creation and culture protection. However, over-commercialization, instead, will bring irreversible disastrous effects to art creation, local culture even rural environment and the life style of local people. Therefore, we should work on the coordinated development of art, commerce and culture with the help of funds and development platforms provided by market for art and culture creation. It will cause destructive results from being eager to gain market returns to blindly pursue the fast development and big scale of rural art synthesis, thus the principle "small but refined" should be followed to ensure its steady and healthy growth.

Rural art synthesis is, under the modern history, to continue the folk conventions of rural culture, at the same time to creatively form a new rural cultural style and feature in the era. For establishing rural art synthesis, it is necessary to select and integrate villages, further to design personalized construction plan for it according to diversified rural characters. In addition, by combining various types of art with rural culture, such new-style countries with characteristic theme, artistic tourism, cultural and artistic industry, creative rural handcraft industry, environment and history protection, etc. During the implementation process, it requires cooperating with folk handcrafters, rural opera actors, folk and customs cultural scholars, artists, architecture and litterateurs to formulate and extend the program on rural cultural construction. Besides that, commerce, art and culture can truly be developed jointly under the assistance and support of government, colleges and universities and enterprises.

On the basis of this, we can motivate those villagers who have been neglecting the rural art resources gradually value and cherish their own historic culture and art customs and enable them to participate in there, so that eventually a virtuous circle can be shaped in the located rural art synthesis.

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