

The Integration of Contemporary Art and Ethnic Culture: Taking the Creation of Ethnic Fiber Art as An Example

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to analyse the development trend of ethnic culture from the perspective of contemporary art, focusing on the art form of the expression of contemporary ethnic fibre art on ethnic culture. Through the research methods of questionnaire survey and case analysis of works, it is found that ethnic culture can show its artistic charm through diversified fibre art forms. Contemporary ethnic fibre art will be the innovative carrier of the integration of contemporary art and ethnic culture. In the case analysis of works, it is found that contemporary art and ethnic culture can be integrated into contemporary art creation through traditional handicraft innovation, pattern recombination and deconstruction, colour reference, national spirit, and other aspects. Therefore, this research proves that the integration of ethnic culture and fibre art is full of contemporary artistic interest, which not only enhances the social influence of ethnic culture, but also helps to enrich the form and content of contemporary fibre art, which is of great significance to promote the development of traditional ethnic craft.

Keywords: contemporary art, ethnic culture, integration, ethnic fibre art



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1 INTRODUCTION

Contemporary art follows the footsteps of modernism, which is a new form of art emerging in various art categories after the mid-20th century. However, from the perspective of ideology or form of expression, contemporary art can be understood as a variety of artistic experiments with "contemporary consciousness" or the transmission of contemporary artists' concepts or emotions on society and life with the help of "modern technology". Contemporary art follows the pace of social development. It not only expresses beautiful things or life ideals, but also reflects the philosophical thinking of artists on contemporary society. It is the "image expression" of the real world. For example, pop art, earth art, conceptual art, Arte Povera, Street art, etc., are international, culturally diverse, social, and inclusive, attracting wide attention from the public. "The distinctions between different terminologies reflect the understanding of artists, scholars, academics, researchers, and the public." (Syafri&Nurul,2023) Contemporary art is pluralistic. From the perspective of social understanding and emotional expression, we can regard it as a kind of "multilingual" art.

The development of contemporary art can be divided into three stages. "The first stage began in 1945, at the end of the Second World War, which is a relatively recognized concept in Europe and America so far". (Zhao, 2022) The very representative experimental art pioneer artist Marcel Duchamp appeared in this period, so did Dadaism, Surrealism and other artistic phenomena. The second stage, according to the time division, should be in the 1960s and 1970s of the 20th century, "During this period, the practice of performance art, minimalism and conceptual art appeared in Europe and the United States, as well as the reaction and promotion of the art system to these artistic practices" (Zhao, 2022). Art works in this stage began to present political themes, reflecting the close relationship between

politics and art. For example, Nancy Spero, a female pioneer artist who is enthusiastic about politics, uses symbolism to discuss the topic of women in society and highlights the value of women through collage and hand-painted works. As she explains in her work *The Record of Women in Time*, "Women have been greatly diminished throughout history, both politically and artistically. So, I set out to draw and represent powerful, athletic women who move through and beyond these quotes "(Obrist, 2020). In the 1980s, with the beginning of the global political era, the third stage of contemporary art also began. At this stage, contemporary art began to be influenced by diversified culture and the impact of market economy, and the works of art more often presented the artists' personal opinions or anti-aesthetic concepts. For example, the *Intellectual Depression* by British performance art pioneers Gilbert & George, the work can not only give people a good emotional experience, but also make people have a sense of anxiety and tension of crisis. This is exactly the aesthetic concept of fear of life that they wanted to express at that time, and the artists heralded the coming age of fear.

It can be seen that social changes and the circulation of regional culture have been exerting a non-negligible influence on the development of contemporary art. Today is the era of global information. With the integration of new media and information technology, artists try to use a variety of new materials and technical means to create, providing more possibilities for innovative expression of contemporary art forms.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 Questionnaire survey method

Ethnic culture is the historical witness of the progress of human civilization. It is the ethnic wealth covering spiritual culture and material culture. Ethnic cultures such as clothing, food, accommodation, travel, religion, art, customs, and philosophy are all regional and historical. Ethnic culture reflects political and economic ideology. Carrying forward ethnic culture and continuing the essence of ethnic culture is conducive to political stability and social and economic development. "In the social environment of industrialization, ethnic culture is also the capital of commercial investment and an important economic source for ethnic groups" (Liu, 2022). Therefore, the transmission mode of ethnic culture can involve different fields. Ethnic arts and crafts are a part of ethnic culture. However, due to the conservative production technology and the gap between design and contemporary art aesthetics, the development of ethnic arts and crafts is slowly in the context of the internationalization of art aesthetics.

In order to investigate the development status of ethnic arts and crafts and the influence of ethnic arts and crafts integration on ethnic cultural exchanges, the researcher sent 200 questionnaires to the arts and crafts artists in Nanning, Guangxi Province, China, and recovered 138 of them with a recovery rate of 69%. According to the calculation of Raosoft system, the recovery rate of the questionnaires reached the standard (Table 1)

The survey results show that most of the surveyed arts and crafts artists believe that the main reason for the slow development of ethnic arts and crafts is the gap between the design concept and the contemporary art aesthetic. They believe that only by innovating the design concept and expanding the application field can the development bottleneck of the traditional ethnic arts and crafts be broken through. (Figures 1 and 2) It can be seen that, with the help of the creation concept of contemporary art and the integration of ethnic culture and artistic creation, the traditional ethnic craft can find a new way out.

Table 1 Statistics of questionnaire survey results

	Options	Subtotal	Craft Artists	Statistics
1. Your occupation	A. An art teacher at a university B. arts and crafts artists C. Interior designer or indoor soft decorations seller	138	100%	
2. Do you think traditional national arts and crafts are worth inheriting?	A. Yes B. No	137 1	99.28% 0.72%	**** *
3. What problems do you think the development of traditional arts and crafts is facing? (Multiple choice)	A. Conservative production technology leads to low creation efficiency B. Design tends to traditional aesthetic concepts, which forms a certain gap with contemporary art aesthetics C. Single application function D. Narrow promotion channels	95 106 76 108	68.84% 76.64% 54.74% 78.1%	** **** * ***
4. What do you think are the ways of innovation and development of traditional arts and crafts? (Multiple choice)	A. Improved process B. Innovative design concept C. Expand application areas D. Innovate forms with the help of modern digital technology	86 122 103 101	62.04% 88.32% 74.45% 72.99%	* **** ** ***
5. Traditional arts and crafts are in urgent need of development. In what fields can we seek breakthroughs? (Multiple choice)	A. The field of curriculum development for college fine arts or design majors B. Interior art and design C. Public space design D. Brand packaging design field	122 93 105 106	88.32% 67.15% 75.91% 76.64%	**** * ** ***
Valid number of applicants		138	100%	

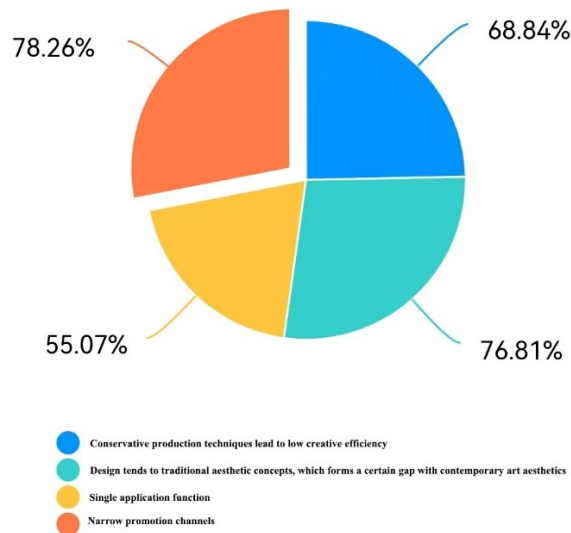


Figure 1 Problems faced by the development of ethnic arts and crafts

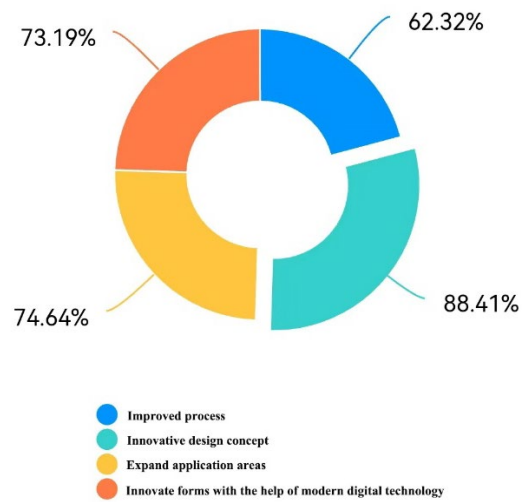







Figure 2 Innovative development approaches of ethnic arts and crafts

2.2 Case analysis method

Through the analysis and comparison of five different types of fibre art works, the researcher tries to prove that traditional handicraft can present modern fashion taste on the basis of innovation and development. It can also convey ethnic cultural connotation.

Table 2 Comparison and analysis of 5 works of fibre art

Works of art	Name	Technique	Theme	Characteristic	Similarity
	Earth Clothes	Crochet technique	Natural environment protection	Use traditional handicraft to express contemporary ideas	I. Using the traditional handicrafts II. Using the fibre material
	The lotus is fragrant	Leather carving and wool needling techniques	Minority culture	Using traditional handicraft to express ethnic culture	
	Ben	Fabric sewing and filling techniques	Chinese traditional culture	Using traditional cloth, handicraft to express patriotic thoughts	
	Great Joy	Crochet technique	Chinese traditional culture	Use traditional handicraft to express traditional culture	
	The Flower of the Nation	Derivative paper technique	Chinese traditional culture	Use traditional handicraft to express traditional culture	

Through analysis and comparison, it is found that fibre art can be created with the help of traditional handicraft or even traditional materials. In order to express the design theme of artists, traditional crafts can be simplified and innovated, or traditional patterns, patterns and even colours can be used for reference, reorganization and structure. Finally, the fibre art works with artistic interest are formed.

3. DISCOVERY AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Ethnic fibre art is a new form of integration of contemporary art and ethnic culture

Because the social inclusiveness of contemporary art can accept the spiritual culture of different nationalities, artists can convey the hidden spiritual connotation of ethnic culture through the diversified expression of contemporary art. Based on the influence of art aesthetics, the cultivation of ethnic culture can not only build up ethnic confidence psychology, but also improve personal quality, develop independent ethnic character and advanced aesthetic taste. Contemporary art rich in national cultural connotations not only gives the audience sensory stimulation, but also triggers artistic empathy and deepens the audience's cognition and understanding of ethnic culture. For example, "the text information is expressed in data, and the audience can get the real and useful information more directly and clearly through the visual presentation of 'visualization'. The same or even better results can be

achieved by reducing the time spent processing information in the human brain. The highly integration of ethnic culture and visualization technology, the transformation of abstract and difficult cultural ontology into three-dimensional image technology easier for people to understand, will make the transmission of ethnic culture more efficient" (He &Fu, 2022). For example, *Earth Clothes*, is made using the traditional crochet process. Although this work is presented in the shape of a robe with Chinese cultural characteristics, it expresses the ecological environment of the earth, suggesting the artist's strong concept of environmental protection. (Plate 1) This kind of "visual" cultural communication is an art form that expresses national culture with the help of contemporary art forms and keeps pace with The Times.



Plate 1 Earth Clothes, LiuJun (2014), 8th From Lausanne to Beijing International Fiber Art

3.2 The Innovation of Traditional Craft Is Beneficial to Enrich the Expression Form of Ethnic Fibre Art

Contemporary fibre art is an art form that covers the characteristics of contemporary art and embodies the ideas and connotations of artists. "Fiber art is fundamentally different from traditional arts and crafts, not only in the fibre materials used, but also in the production techniques and expressions. In other words, the expression of fibre art has a certain artistic and ornamental, non-functional form of fibre material woven works of art, whose works contain the conceptual nature of the artist" (Wang, 2022). Contemporary fibre art is a discipline that speaks to materials and expresses artists' ideas in different artistic contexts. However, people pay more attention to materials and modern technology than to the expression of traditional national cultural connotations. The cultural connotation of contemporary fibre art will be more abundant if the ethnic culture is expressed by philosophical thoughts in contemporary fibre art. "The combination of tradition and modernity is a topic that has been discussed in the development of contemporary art. Traditional culture has the true nature of worship of gods and reverence for nature. If the patterns reflecting this true nature are transformed and integrated into the new form of fibre art, there will be a special charm. On the other hand, as a category in the new era, fibre art is also inevitably influenced by contemporary art. Traditional weaving technology has been inherited as a technology, with little change in the form and content of the picture. Into the contemporary era, the concept of The Times as the support point of art, technology and techniques have become the means to realize the concept... The progress of science and technology has brought new materials and technologies, and the means to express fibre art are becoming more and more rich, and the styles are becoming more and more novel. No matter what, new technology and new materials are to express the idea of the creator, and modern fibre art should be ideal-first and based on the basis of nationalization" (Meng, 2016).

To this end, we need to base on the "modernist" point of view, under the collision of materials and techniques to express fibre art and think about the basic problems of philosophy. The main purpose of contemporary art is not only the presentation of formal beauty, but also the expression of ideas, especially the philosophical ideas of artists. Therefore, the creation of fibre art with national cultural connotation from the perspective of contemporary art is actually a philosophical artistic creation about national spirit.

The biggest difference between contemporary fibre art and other art categories in the application of techniques lies in its "irregularity". Contemporary fibre art must break out of the constraints of traditional techniques and freely express the artist's thoughts and diversified themes. Based on this characteristic, national fibre art is to transform and innovate the traditional craft and form new techniques on the basis of preserving the essence of national culture. This technique applies to the expression of the theme of the work. The main creative technique of fibre art originates from linear weaving, and the material gradually develops from natural linear fibre and artificial soft material to block surface or non-fixed fibre material. Weaving techniques also vary with the nature of the material, such as the use of winding, tying, filling, sewing and other techniques to express artistic themes. Take traditional weaving technology as an example. Traditional weaving emphasizes the regular interweaving of warp and weft threads to form textiles, while contemporary national fibre art will simplify certain techniques or integrate various techniques according to the author's creative intention. For example, the lotus is fragrant is the use of needling techniques and wool fibres to create the shape of lotus leaves, and the large area of the shape of the material is cowhide, the use of carving techniques to show the beautiful image of Chinese minority girls and exquisite national costume culture.



Plate 2 The lotus is fragrant (LiangXian, 2021)

Although traditional techniques are the starting point of contemporary national fibre art techniques, the creation around the design idea is inseparable from flexibility. The innovative change of traditional techniques is more conducive to the unique artistic charm of the works. "Fiber art constantly enriches and expands its own field. The unique structure, changeable form, spatial framework, and application of flexible ready-made products of fibre material make it present unique creativity and huge development potential in contemporary art creation, and also form an important force in contemporary art creation" (Shi& Huang, 2013).

3.3 The Recombination and Deconstruction of Ethnic Patterns Are Conducive to The Transmission of Ethnic Culture in The Works

Traditional pattern or designs is a part of national culture, generally from the ethnic religious belief, customs, and aesthetic habits. To integrate traditional patterns or designs into contemporary art creation, it is necessary to restructure and deconstruct the patterns or designs, and even to "symbolize" these ethnic elements. Deconstructivism from the questioning of traditional philosophical thoughts, emphasizes breaking rules and order, and advocates the use of unstable forms of expression such as

reversal, rotation and crossover, which has become a contemporary philosophy of art. "Deconstructivism is an anti-traditional system, which mainly advocates breaking through traditional bondage, breaking existing rules and creating new rules" (Zhang & Hou, 2021).

Therefore, "recombination" and "deconstruction" do work, becoming a new idea of artistic creation that breaks traditional forms and solidified thinking. To deal with patterns or patterns of different nationalities with the attitude of artistic creation can be understood as expressing the connotation of traditional craft with the abstract beauty of art in a certain level. "When designing patterns of different traditional handicrafts, firstly, it is necessary to pay attention to the process characteristics, analyse the pattern formation mode and rule, extract the essential characteristics of patterns formed by different handicrafts, and then design patterns" (Qin & Ji, 2020). However, in order to make the "symbol" in ethnic fibre art with ethnic character, the creator needs to have deep feelings for ethnic culture and history, and rich life experience, in order to grasp the formal beauty of the work. Because "abstract beauty is the core of formal beauty, people's love for formal beauty and abstract beauty is instinctive" (Wu, 2020)

Perhaps in general art creation, patterns can be used as part of works to improve artistic beauty and become the most intuitive artistic language in works. However, for ethnic fibre art, patterns are no longer directly presented in flat style, or patterns in national fibre art works have become some symbols. It will show the ethnic connotation of the work or the artist's understanding of the ethnic culture from a multi-dimensional perspective. For example, the work *Ben* uses the red floral cloth with the characteristics of traditional Chinese culture and uses the techniques of filling and sewing to create a "plant" that takes root in the ethnic soil and is booming. In this work, the audience can feel the strong charm of traditional Chinese culture, as well as the artist's national feelings.



Plate 3 Ben, Lingyan Ma, (2014) 8th From Lausanne to Beijing International Fiber Art

3.4 Ethnic Colour Is Conducive to The Atmosphere of Fibre Art Works

Colour comes from nature, and people's feelings of colour are mostly derived from life experience, which makes the psychological suggestion of colour to people. However, ethnic decorative colours mainly originate from ethnic religious beliefs, living environment and aesthetic habits. For example, the Mongolians in China like blue, white, and yellow. They believe that blue represents the blue sky, which symbolizes auspiciousness, and white symbolizes the pure snow mountain, so they use white silk to make Hada for their beloved ones, and yellow is sacred, which is used to make prayer flags to show respect to the gods. For another example, the Dong people in China like to wear dark blue Dong cloth because the plant SAP dyed by their clothes is mostly blue and cyan. The brocade made by the Dong people is mainly blue and white, which is embellished with colour, so the colour collocation of the Dong people is relatively simple and elegant. However, the application of colour in fibre art is no longer simply decorative works, but more in order to set off the theme and help the audience feel the idea that the creator wants to express. Therefore, more consideration will be given to the theme performance effect of the works when colour matching. For example, one of the *Great Joy* series of fibre art works,

what the author presents is a traditional Chinese toy "Trojan horse". In the application of colour, this work draws on the traditional form of ethnic colour matching, with the collision of high purity red, yellow, and green, which not only shows the ethnic interest of China but also produces the fashionable and advanced artistic effect.



Plate 4 Great Joy, Lingyan Ma, (2014) 8th From Lausanne to Beijing International Fiber Art

3.5 The Ethnic Spirit Reflected in The Work Can Make the Audience Have Empathy

Ethnic culture" has specific connotation, basic spirit, and national value orientation. It affects a ethnic's behaviour and life style, can regulate and constrain people's social behaviour, and reflects the cohesion of a ethnic's self-identity "(Yang, 2017) It can be seen that the ethnic spirit contained in ethnic culture is the wind vane of ethnic development. Only by following the lead of the ethnic spirit can we comprehend the essence of ethnic culture.

Ethnic fibre art is the carrier of ethnic culture transmission, and ethnic spirit plays a guiding role in artistic creation. Ethnic fibre art is based on contemporary artistic creation ideas, using all kinds of fibre materials and free expression techniques. The expression form of ethnic fibre art works is not as exquisite as that of traditional national handicrafts, and the image is intuitive. Moreover, the purpose of traditional handicraft production is mainly auspicious meaning or decoration and beautification of the environment. Contemporary ethnic fibre art is the use of raw or plain fibre materials or strong visual contrast to form abstract and concise modelling, reflecting the unique ethnic spirit. This spirit is the connotation of the works of art. It is implicit and deep. When the viewer feels it with his heart, it touches his heart and generates artistic empathy. This is the unique charm of ethnic fibre art, and also the expression of the ideal life pursued by artists. For example, the beautiful image of Chinese minority girls is expressed in the work *The Flower of the Nation*. This work uses techniques such as paper rolls, presses, and folds for pasting, and the patterns on the complicated and gorgeous headdress and clothes are contrasted with the simple peony shape in the background. In the aspect of colour processing, the work draws on the high-brightness contrast technique of national colours and produces gorgeous but not tacky decorative effects through the contrast and harmonization of red and blue series. Viewers can taste the beauty of the works and feel the strong ethnic cultural interest. This is the refraction technique of ethnic fibre art to ethnic spirit.



Plate 5 *The Flower of the Nation* (Feiling Xing, LiangXian, Shaomei Shao, 2021)

4.SUMMARY

This is a multimedia era with developed information. Contemporary art comes into being in this era. Its language is rich and contemporary. The integration of ethnic culture and contemporary art, with the help of the expression form of ethnic fibre art, promotes the cultural exchange between ethnic groups and enhances people's cultural confidence and cultural accomplishment. As an indispensable part of ethnic culture, the traditional arts and crafts have found an art carrier adapted to The Times, jumped out of the conservative aesthetic vision, and presented to the world in a new and fashionable art form. This form not only retains the essence of ethnic culture, inherits unique spiritual connotation, but also gradually integrates into contemporary life.

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This research has a positive effect on the innovation and development of traditional ethnic arts and crafts. The research can not only provide reference for people engaged in the creation of national arts and crafts or fibre art, but also promote the spread of national culture.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interests.

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