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Artificial Intelligence-generated Animation Drives Innovative Transformation of Intangible Cultural Heritage: A Case Study of the Dynamic Narrative Design of Door God Paintings

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ABSTRACT

As an important intangible cultural heritage, door god paintings face multiple challenges, including a lack of successors, insufficient innovation, and the impact of digitalization. This study aims to explore how generative artificial intelligence (AI) can provide innovative pathways for the narrative expression and digital promotion of this type of cultural heritage. Through field research and experimental creation, combined with animation principles and semiotics, this study proposes and constructs a “Point-Line-Plane-Volume” (PLPV) four-dimensional spatial narrative model. This model gradually transforms the single visual symbol of door gods into narrative illustrations, dynamic image sequences, and ultimately integrates them into an interactive experience, realizing the creative transformation of cultural heritage from static images to dynamic narratives. The research shows that this human-computer collaborative design method not only effectively preserves the artistic authenticity and cultural core of door god paintings but also significantly enhances their appeal and emotional resonance through multi-dimensional and impromptu narrative expression. This study provides a design framework that combines theoretical guidance and practical operability for the sustainable innovation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage in the era of artificial intelligence.

Keywords: *AI-Generated Animation; Door God Paintings; Narrative Design; Digital Innovation; Intangible Cultural Heritage Promotion*

INTRODUCTION

The protection of intangible cultural heritage faces multiple challenges due to environmental change, the loss of inheritors, and technological innovation, with traditional handicrafts worldwide significantly impacted (Ivey, 2004). Existing research emphasizes that handicraft-based intangible cultural heritage should maintain its authenticity while actively adapting to modern society and achieving sustainable development through innovation. Current solutions often focus on macro-level strategies and pathways, such as encouraging inheritors to embrace technology or constructing a cultural ecosystem aimed at cultivating public cultural identity and consumer aesthetics (Fu, 2023).

However, many studies exploring technology empowerment lack in-depth fieldwork and interviews with inheritors, often simply connecting technology with cultural symbols without delving into the authentic connotations of folk art. This leads to problems such as a deviation from authenticity and an overemphasis on technological exclusivity in the application of technology and cultural innovation. The core controversy arising from this is: do “new art forms” reconstructed with digital technology conform to the logic of folk art inheritance? Can they truly achieve an organic integration of tradition and modernity? While existing research employs various methods, including qualitative and quantitative approaches, and focuses on inheritance pathways such as digital environmental protection or cultural tourism integration, specialized studies utilizing AI-generated animation for the promotion and innovative design of intangible cultural heritage remain relatively rare in the age of artificial intelligence.

This study aims to fill this gap by proposing a four-dimensional spatial narrative design method “point-line-plane-volume”(PLPV) to address the limitations of static presentation and dissemination of intangible cultural heritage folk art. Using door god paintings as a specific case study, this research conducts in-depth research (Yidan, 2021) into the current state of their techniques and the challenges of their inheritance through fieldwork (including semi-structured interviews and participatory observation). The creative practice follows a full-process experimental method: “image creation - dynamic AI generation - post-production compositing - interactive application”. The core research aims to explore: Can AI-generated animation be used for innovative design of intangible cultural heritage while preserving the authenticity of artistic visual symbols? If so, what is its specific design methodology?

Research Methods and Design Framework

This study proposes a PLPV narrative structure framework as its core solution. This framework views the innovative transformation of door god paintings as a spatialized narrative construction process:

“Point”(P) refers to core cultural symbols, such as the figures of the door gods and typical objects, serving as the starting point and character introduction of the narrative.

“Line”(L) refers to the narrative content constructed within a single image, developing core symbols into illustrations with storylines, achieving a macro-narrative expression of “telling through images”.

“Plane”(P) is a narrative unit composed of a set of rhythmic static original paintings (usually 4-6 images), much like a sequence of shots in a film, visually packaging and linking the storyline.

“Volume”(V) is based on the “plane”, integrating interactive experiences and immersive application design through technological media to form a complete dynamic narrative work.

The innovation of this method lies in its subversion of the traditional linear narrative logic of film and animation based on fixed scripts, instead adopting a non-linear, improvisational creation mode based on human-computer collaboration. Its advantages are reflected in two aspects: First, it takes cultural connotation as its core orientation, so that the participation of designers is no longer limited to personal aesthetic preferences, but focuses on the narrative transformation of authentic culture; Second, the “uncertainty” in the AI generation process is transformed into a positive factor in narrative innovation, providing fun and possibilities for human-machine collaborative thinking and improvisational story development.

The specific operational process is as follows:

1. Field Investigation: Through interviews and observations, record the craftsmanship and cultural connotations of door god paintings (such as the core concepts of “expressive eyes” and “hand-painted to show piety”), and complete hand-painted replicas to ensure the preservation of the original essence.
2. Illustration Creation and AI Assistance: Design narrative illustrations based on the field findings. AI tools can be used for text-to-image testing to stimulate creativity, but ultimately, the work returns to hand-painting to preserve traditional painting traces and folk art characteristics.
3. Dynamic Generation: Select key starting points in the illustration’s storyline and use AI tools to generate 3-5 dynamic video clips, laying the groundwork for subsequent non-linear narratives.
4. Post-Production Compositing and Interactive Application: Edit, add special effects, and synthesize sound effects using post-production software to create preliminary animation results. Further research (Cai Yuanyuan, 2023) can then be conducted using VR devices or mobile interactive devices to complete digital virtual interactive promotion.

The above steps constitute the closed-loop logic of the PLPV method. Through repeated iterations, a series of engaging human-computer collaborative animated videos can be produced. The current focus of this study is on the construction and verification of the methodology and process, while the in-depth development of interactive applications will be carried out in subsequent research stages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research indicates that, compared to simple static image design, AI-generated animation offers a more technically practical and research-valuable form for digital art innovation. On one hand, dynamic narratives can vividly convey dramatic emotions that are difficult to fully express statically, such as the “piercing gaze” of door gods, making the transmission of cultural connotations more lifelike. On the other hand, preliminary user feedback comparisons show that dynamic narratives are generally superior to static narratives in terms of entertainment value, intuitiveness, and emotional impact, making it easier to evoke audience resonance and promote their understanding of the cultural core. This demonstrates the practicality and effectiveness of AI-generated animation in promoting intangible cultural heritage, providing a positive path for the sustainable inheritance and innovative dissemination of folk art.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a concrete design path for the sustainable innovation of intangible cultural heritage. By constructing and validating a “point-line-plane-volume” design framework, this research successfully integrates the authenticity of traditional folk art with the innovation of modern digital technology, building a bridge connecting tradition and modernity. The results affirm the efficiency and creative potential of AI technology while emphasizing the importance of upholding regional cultural characteristics and the core values of traditional craftsmanship. Future research can extend this design framework to more categories of intangible cultural heritage, further deepen its interactive experience

dimension, and explore its application potential in broader cultural promotion and education scenarios.

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