

Development and Dissemination of the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance in the Cultural and Tourism Industry from the Perspective of Contemporary Art Aesthetics

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Abstract: As one of the traditional Chinese folk art forms, Shangcheng Umbrella Dance has a long history and unique aesthetic value. It reflects the profound cultural heritage of China and the distinctive cultural landscape of Shangcheng. In the contemporary society, the collision and integration exist among the various cultural forms, so does the mutual influence between Shangcheng Umbrella Dance and the contemporary artistic aesthetic concepts. In order to delve into the innovative development and dissemination of local cultural tourism industries, it is anticipated that this exploration will uncover the potential value of innovative protection and inheritance of China's traditional cultural heritage within the context of modern economic development in the cultural and tourism sectors.

Key words: Shangcheng Umbrella Dance; Contemporary Art; Aesthetic Concept; Cultural Tourism Industries

1. Introduction

Known as the hometown of singing and dancing, the number of singing and dancing in Shangcheng area is not only vast, but also has its own artistic characteristics. Among these dances, the c represents the style of Dabieshan folk dances, which integrates the ancient rural customs, primitive cosmology and aesthetic concepts. It embodies the unique aesthetic characteristics in Chinese traditional culture. However, under the background of globalization and cultural pluralism, it becomes a subject worthy of in-depth study to comb through the collision and integration of Shangcheng Umbrella Dance with contemporary artistic aesthetic concepts, to unearth its cultural and economic value within the cultural tourism industry, thereby achieving innovative inheritance of traditional culture and the

prosperous development of the local cultural tourism industry. This paper, with literature review, field investigation, and logical reasoning, systematically analyzes how the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance integrates and collides with contemporary artistic aesthetic concepts and how it combines with the local cultural tourism industry, thus promoting sustainable development of the local cultural tourism industry while realizing its innovative development and inheritance.

2. Analysis and Discussion

2.1 History and Artistic Characteristics of Shangcheng Umbrella Dance

2.1.1 Historical Evolution of Shangcheng Umbrella Dance

The origin of the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance can be traced back to the early Song Dynasty. When the merchants returned to Shangcheng county, Xinyang city along the Huaihe River from Jiangsu and Zhejiang province, they brought back the umbrellas made in the south of the Yangtze River. The merchants often opened the umbrellas, showing off their financial resources. At that time, there was also the saying that only the rich could possess an umbrella. Later, umbrellas were used as props in song and dance performances. The Shangcheng Umbrella Dance used to be called "Sister Liuerjie's Hurrying to Temple Fair "Keeping a flower umbrella in her hand, Sister Liuerjie went a spring outing with her housekeeper. She met a Xianggong (a young fellow) who was a handsome young man on the way. They fell in love at first sight. Although the housekeeper, an old woman, obstructed in every possible way, the clever Sister skillfully expressed her tender affection to the young man by singing and dancing with various movements of the umbrella. Sister Liu wore a colourful umbrella, and the

ugly woman and clown accompanied her closely. [1] Her dance was similar to the Flower Picking Dance, another local popular dancing style.

As time passing by, the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance gradually became popular in southern China and developed into a popular dance form bit by bit. During the Qing Dynasty, the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance reached its peak and became a popular performance in and out of the palace. As a matter of fact, the dance forms and even the umbrellas were quite different, and the contents became more diversified, which increased the depth and connotation of stage performances.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance became a mass dance activity, which was flourished in both urban and rural areas. Girls, daughters-in-law and even elderly women participated in the performances by shaking off the shackles of stereotypes and bad habits. For a long time, the situation of men dressing up as women had changed, and the Umbrella Dance had also been put on the stage from the square performance, showing a gratifying scene to some extent. In the 1980s, some Shangcheng County folk performance groups, such as the Yingshanhong Art Troupe and the August Osmanthus Flower Art Troupe, made the Umbrella Dance into a classic brand, and had performed in rural areas, communities and scenic spots, with a total of 160 performances. In addition, the Flower Umbrella Dance was fortunately adapted by the Central Song and Dance Troupe and the Provincial Song and Dance Troupe and transformed into a classic Chinese folk dance by borrowing the characteristics of ballet. In 1959, it participated in the performance of the 7th World Festival of Youth and Students in Vienna and won a silver medal. [2]

2.1.2 Artistic Characteristics of the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance

The choreography of the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance is rich in the changes of dance steps, which includes cross steps, cushion steps, rubbing steps, broken steps, miss/wrong steps, etc. Each step shows not only the brisk atmosphere, but also the grand and magnificent sense of the scene as well as the unique beauty of delicacy. The dance actions include carrying umbrellas, turning umbrellas, shaking and

pinning handkerchiefs, holding flowers, swinging willows, looking at the moon, patting shoulders, shaking fans and so on. Each has its own unique stories and connotations, touches the heartstrings of the audience and brings pleasure and enjoyment, whether it is dancing or rotating. The props of the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance are made of local tarpaulin umbrella skeletons, wrapped around with colored lines or glazed beads, and decorated with colorful butterflies, bees and flowers as well. There are also colorful spikelets woven with thread at the edge of the umbrella. The whole patterns and colors of the umbrella perfectly match the dancers' movements, forming a unique visual effect. [2]

The accompaniment music of the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance is "Caibaban" (Stepping on the Eight Plates) and the singing is selected from the local folk tunes of the "Ten Fans", "Yumeilang", "Bai Mudan", "Chuijinshan", etc. It is accompanied by musical instruments such as silk and bamboo plucking, with which the cheerful and bright rhythm will always lead people to a happy state subconsciously. The perfect combination of music and dance creates a relaxed and lively performance atmosphere and leaves a deep impression on the audience. The costumes worn by the performers are unique, often incorporating local textile processing and pattern designs, together with various elements such as flowers, birds, insects and fish. These gorgeous costumes show awe of nature and yearning for a better life, and integrate the beauty of nature with the elegance of humanity. On the whole, the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance is not only a beautiful dance form, but also an important carrier of the local culture and history.

2.2 Evolution of Aesthetic Concept of Contemporary Art

The evolution of aesthetic concept of contemporary art is a complex and multidimensional process, which reflects not only the changes of social culture, but also the deepening of human understanding and pursuit of beauty. In the past decades, artistic aesthetics has undergone significant changes, with the acceleration of globalization, the development of information technology and the blending of multiculturalism.

Before the middle of the 20th century, the Western classical aesthetics had been dominating, emphasizing harmony, proportion and balance of forms. However, with the rise of

modernism, art began to abandon the traditional aesthetic standards and pursue more abstract and personal expressions. The artists began to explore new materials and technologies, and tried to break the boundaries between art and daily life, making works of art more conceptual and subjective of the audiences' experiences. The post-modernism pays more attention to cultural differences and individual expressions. The rise of Conceptual Art signified a significant shift in aesthetic concepts of art. These artists believed that the value of art lies in the conveyance of ideas and concepts, rather than in the physical forms. Art objects themselves can only be sought from a certain state of mind or related activities [3]. The popularity of this notion shifted the criteria for evaluating art from technical skill and aesthetics to the depth of creativity and thoughts. Art can take any form, with the key being the message it conveys and the thoughts it provokes. However, with the increasing awareness of environmental protection, sustainable development had also become an important topic in contemporary artistic aesthetics. Later on, artists expressed concern for the ecological crisis through the medium of art, utilizing various forms of media to convey ecological consciousness and concepts. This has led to the creation of a wide range of ecological artworks, including ecological poetry, ecological novels, ecological paintings, ecological music, ecological architecture, ecological dance, and ecological photography [4]. Eco Art emerged, focusing on the relationship between the natural environment and human activities, advocating for the harmonious coexistence of artistic creation with the natural environment. This form of art not only provided a new aesthetic perspective on nature but also promoted public concern and action on environmental issues. The modern aesthetics places greater emphasis on the creativity and connotations of a work, [5]tended to be diversified and personalized, emphasizing innovation and self-expression. With the deepening of globalization, the artistic forms and aesthetic standards of different cultures permeated each other, forming a cross-cultural integration. The aesthetic function and social function of art began to interweave together. In the digital age, the evolution of artistic aesthetic concept has also been deeply influenced by science and technology. It makes artistic aesthetics more immersive and interactive [6].

Under such a background, it becomes a challenge in how to adapt the traditional art form represented by the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance to the new artistic aesthetics.

2.3 Development and Dissemination of the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance in the Cultural and Tourism Industry from the Perspective of Contemporary Artistic Aesthetics

The Shangcheng Umbrella Dance, an intangible cultural heritage in Henan Province, collides with the aesthetic concept of contemporary art with its unique artistic form and the profound cultural connotation. This collision is not only the embodiment of cultural inheritance and innovation, but also the result of dialogue between tradition and modernity. Against the backdrop of the current integration of culture and tourism, crafting the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance into a tourism IP (Intellectual Property) from the perspective of contemporary aesthetics not only enhances the appeal of cultural tourism but also paves the way for new ideas in the transmission and dissemination of traditional culture.

2.3.1 Keeping the traditional foundation with the exploration of the cross-border integration as well

In the aesthetics of contemporary art, individuation, pluralism and cross-border integration are emphasized. The traditional aesthetic characteristics of the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance, such as symmetrical dance, harmonious color matching and rhythmic movements, are in sharp contrast with the free expressions and form breakthrough pursued by modern aesthetics. However, it is this difference that provides rich creative inspiration and exploration space for contemporary artists. In the process of collision, we should deeply explore and inherit the origins, development history, and other cultural connotations of the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance, as well as the essence of its artistic expressions, including dance movements and the styles of accompanying music. The traditional elements of the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance can be reinterpreted and recreated, such as contemporary music, stage lighting, and costume design, to make the dance more visually appealing to modern audiences. At the same time, attempts can be made to combine the dance with modern multimedia technologies. Furthermore, the elements of Umbrella Dance

can be integrated into modern dance, drama and even installation art to create cross-border art works. These works not only retain the traditional charm of umbrella dance, but also show the aesthetic characteristics of modern art. [7]"Umbrella Love Story --- Flower Border Design of Flower Umbrella Dance Based on Sensory Interaction", for example, won the Silver Prize in the College Students Flower Border Design Competition of "China Construction Seventh Bureau Cup" in Henan Province in 2022, providing a very good idea for cross-border integration product development. The application of the elements of the umbrella dance in urban art landscape design can integrate urban art IP, flower umbrella dance and flower landscape design, and then build it into an urban art landmark of the mall, increase the attractiveness and recognition of the city, enhance the image of the city, and thus promote the development of urban cultural tourism industry.

2.3.2 Developing sustainable Umbrella Dance Eco Art by integrating natural elements

German eco-artist Lei Pantuo believes that "eco art is the art of expressing one's homeland." [8] Eco art strengthens the interrelationship between art, culture, and sustainability by promoting a change in human consciousness. While preserving its traditions, the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance can integrate natural themes into its choreography, expressing the relationship between humans and nature through dance movements and narrative. Dancers can mimic the behaviors of animals and plants in nature, or showcase the beauty and changes of natural landscapes, allowing the audience to feel the rhythm and vitality of nature while enjoying. Outdoor performances can be held in locations that combine natural landscapes, such as parks, forests, lakeside, or fields, using natural elements like sunlight, vegetation, and bodies of water as the stage backdrop to create a performance art that coexists harmoniously with nature. Additionally, ecological elements can be incorporated into stage design, such as using renewable materials to construct stages or planting flowers and plants around the stage, turning the performance venue itself into an ecological artwork. In the design of costumes and props for the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance, environmentally friendly materials and natural elements can also be used. Sustainable materials like organic cotton and bamboo fiber, for

example, can be used to make dancers' costumes, or natural patterns such as flowers, leaves, and animals can be added to the costumes to show respect and admiration for nature. At the same time, the production of umbrellas can also use eco-friendly materials, such as degradable paper or fabric, and depict natural landscapes on the umbrella surface, making the umbrella a medium for conveying ecological concepts. In summary, by integrating natural elements into the Umbrella Dance, it enhances people's understanding and perception of the life states of all things in the world, promoting the formation of ecological civilization concepts. At the same time, through the development of eco-artworks, a sustainable development path for the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance is explored, which covers intangible cultural heritage content and is formed through artistic design, market packaging, and operational techniques. Applying the ecological art pieces of the Umbrella Dance to the cultural tourism industry in Shangcheng County, it can be transformed into an immersive cultural tourism performance project [9]. Visitors can explore within the context and feel the experience as they go, with each spatial transition offering a new scene, making every view a stage and every person a protagonist. By enhancing the sense of experience and interactivity in tourism, it extends the length of stay for visitors in Shangcheng County, leading to aggregated effects in dining, transportation, accommodation, and shopping. This, in turn, drives the economic revenue of the entire Shangcheng area's cultural tourism industry and promotes its development.

2.3.3 Innovating the transmission to boost development of Culture Traveling Industry

Contemporary art aesthetics emphasizes audience's participation and experience. Under the influence of this concept, the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance should try more interactive performances, such as letting the audience participate in the creation and the performance of the dance, or building a simulated three-dimensional scene with the help of virtual reality technology to reproduce the performance and inheritance environment of the umbrella dance. Such innovations are expected to bring the close contact with the audience, letting the audience experience the charm of the Umbrella Dance in the virtual space. The enhancement of this interaction not only narrows the distance between art and audience, but also makes

traditional culture glow with new vitality in contemporary society. It has been widely spread through various media platforms. The interaction between the dancers and the audiences can be enhanced through WeChat official account and live broadcast platform, so as to expand the cultural and artistic influence of the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance and improve the public's understanding and appreciation of its artistic value.[10] Incorporating the elements of the Umbrella Dance into urban art landscape design can integrate the city's artistic IP, the Umbrella Dance, and floral environment design, thereby creating it as a city's artistic landmark. This enhances the city's attractiveness and recognizability, elevates the city's image, and thus stimulates the development of the urban cultural tourism industry.

2.3.4 Strengthening communication between different cultures and promoting cultural prosperity

Under the tide of contemporary globalization, the spread and exchange of culture is becoming more frequent and close. The Shangcheng Umbrella Dance is also facing the challenge of cultural exchange and integration. As a part of Chinese traditional culture, the Umbrella Dance should strengthen the dialogue and communication with different cultures, actively participate in international art festivals, cultural exchange activities, and other events to introduce the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance to audiences around the world. By regularly conducting Umbrella Dance training, hosting dance festivals, and organizing cultural performances, we can fully showcase the vibrant scene of "the most dazzling Chinese style." Continuously innovating external communication models and combining them with intangible cultural heritage displays, using the "Umbrella Dance Plus" model, the art form of the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance serves as a carrier to highlight the rich connotations of Chinese culture from multiple perspectives. In the process of exporting, it needs to adapt to different cultures actively and constantly absorb and learn from their excellent elements to promote the innovative development of dance. But in order to maintain the uniqueness of its culture and art, the dance should be avoided being simply alienated or assimilated. In this way, the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance can not only absorb the essence of foreign culture, but also show the charm of Chinese traditional

culture to the world. The whole world can have a better understanding of our national characteristics and humanistic spirit, bring the promotion of its prosperity and promote the sustainable development of tourism.

3. Conclusion

As an intangible cultural heritage of traditional folk art, the collision and integration between the Shangcheng Flower Umbrella Dance and the aesthetic concept of contemporary art can not only enrich the expression forms of traditional art, but also provide new possibilities for the inheritance and development of traditional culture. Through constant exploration and innovation, incorporating the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance as a theme and combining it with the local urban IP and cultural tourism in Shangcheng can promote the prosperous development of new tourism formats and enhance the cultural connotations of local tourism. In summary, exploring the development and dissemination of the Shangcheng Umbrella Dance in the cultural tourism industry from the perspective of contemporary artistic aesthetics plays a significant role and holds importance for promoting the integration and innovative development of "Intangible Cultural Heritage + Tourism" in the Shangcheng area, facilitating the format upgrade of "Intangible Cultural Heritage + Tourism," enriching the supply of high-quality local cultural tourism products, and achieving high-quality development in the cultural tourism industry.

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