

# Research on the Inheritance and Creative Regeneration of Ash Sculpture Art

Lijun Wang

Guangdong Communications Vocational and Technical College, Guangzhou, 510386, China

**Abstract:** This research aims to delve into the contemporary inheritance and creative regeneration of ash sculpture, a traditional craft. Through an in-depth analysis of the historical origins, technical characteristics, and cultural value of ash sculpture, we endeavor to understand how to integrate this rich traditional craft with modern creativity to promote its inheritance and innovative development. The research results will not only contribute to the preservation and inheritance of this precious cultural heritage but also offer a fresh perspective to the field of creative design, exploring the possibilities of blending traditional craftsmanship with modern innovation. This study contributes to the future of traditional craftsmanship and provides profound insights into the integration of cultural heritage and the creative industry.

**Keywords:** Ash sculpture, traditional craft inheritance, creative regeneration, cultural heritage preservation

## 1. Introduction

Traditional craftsmanship has always been a precious carrier of cultural heritage and artistic creation, and ash sculpture, as one of the crafts with a long history, carries the creativity and artistic expression specific to certain cultures and social contexts. What sets ash sculpture apart is that it is not merely a technique but a form of expression that carries emotions, stories, and cultural memories. Through exquisite craftsmanship, this craft shapes clay or pottery into lifelike figures, conveying the spirit and wisdom of an era. However, with the continuous evolution of modern society, ash sculpture faces the dual challenges of inheritance and development. The central question of this study is how to achieve the inheritance of ash sculpture in contemporary society while imbuing it with creative regeneration. The posing of this question stems from a profound recognition of the importance of ash sculpture as cultural heritage and its potential in the fields of modern design and art. Ash sculpture is not only a part of cultural heritage but also a window connecting tradition and modernity, providing artists and designers with opportunities for exploration, innovation, and expression. Therefore, the motivation for this research lies in a deep investigation of the inheritance process of ash sculpture and how to integrate it into modern creativity, aiming to provide valuable insights for the preservation and development of this traditional craft and inspire more possibilities in the field of creative design.

## 2. History and Technical Features of Ash Sculpture Craft

### 2.1 Origin and Evolution of Ash Sculpture Craft

#### 2.1.1 Origin of Ash Sculpture Craft

Ash sculpture, commonly known as "Hui Pi" in southern China, is a traditional architectural decorative craft. According to records in the "Biographies of Eminent Monks of the Song Dynasty," the ash sculpture craft dates back to the fourth year of the Xianhe era during the reign of Emperor Xizong of the Tang Dynasty (884 AD) and reached its peak during the Qing Dynasty. In 2008, ash sculpture was successfully included in the national list of intangible cultural heritage items.<sup>[1]</sup>

#### 2.1.2 Variations in Ash Sculpture Craft Across Different Regions

Different regions have shaped diverse styles of ash sculpture due to their unique cultural and traditional influences. Each region's craft features and styles are distinctive, reflecting the local culture and history. For example, Chinese ash sculpture has a long-standing tradition in history, while European ash sculpture has been influenced by ancient Greek and Roman cultures, resulting in its own

distinct style.

## **2.2 Tools and Materials**

### **2.2.1 Tools**

The process of creating folk ash sculptures lacks a unified standard, and a variety of tools and materials are used. These tools include ash spatulas, line spatulas, brushes, pottery jars, mixers, knives, and wooden rulers.<sup>[2]</sup>

**Ash Spatula (Ash Knife):** The ash spatula, also known as the "ash knife," is one of the fundamental tools in ash sculpture craftsmanship. It has a tongue-shaped blade at the front and a wooden handle at the back, forming a 90-degree angle between the two.

**Line Spatula:** The line spatula is the primary tool for shaping lines and patterns in ash sculpture. It features a wooden handle and a steel concave-convex head with the concave-convex groove oriented parallel to the handle.

**Brush or Watercolor Pen:** Brushes or watercolor pens are used for coloring and adding hues to ash sculptures.

**Pottery Jar:** Pottery jars are used for mixing the lime paste and facilitating the fermentation process.

**Mixer:** Mixers are used to blend raw materials and lime water to prepare the lime paste.

**Knife or Tile Knife:** Knives or tile knives are tools for "shaving" the base layer of the wall.

**Wooden Ruler:** Wooden rulers, typically made from thin wooden boards, are used for aligning and smoothing decorative borders in ash sculpture. They are usually around one meter in length.

### **2.2.2 Materials**

The materials required for ash sculpture include lime, straw, jade button paper, and three types of lime paste: straw root lime, paper tendon lime, and colored lime.

**Production of Straw Root Lime:** Dry straw is mixed with lime paste, sealed, and left to ferment. Red sugar is then added and mixed, resulting in straw root lime.

**Production of Paper Tendon Lime:** Jade button paper is soaked in lime oil, followed by the addition of red sugar and glutinous rice flour. The mixture is sealed and allowed to ferment. Finally, pigment is mixed into the paper tendon lime to create "colored lime."<sup>[3]</sup> Ash sculpture is a creative and flexible folk craft, and the diversity of its tools and materials reflects the diversity of this traditional art form. The skillful use of these tools and materials allows ash sculptors to create unique artworks and keep the traditional craft vibrant.

## **3. Inheritance Process of Ash Sculpture**

### **3.1 Modes of Inheritance**

The modes of inheritance in the ash sculpture craft are central to the preservation of this traditional art form. Inheritance modes encompass the following two crucial aspects:

#### **3.1.1 Traditional Artisan Apprenticeship**

The inheritance of ash sculpture craftsmanship begins with the mentorship between master craftsmen (mentors) and the younger generation (apprentices). Seasoned artisans pass down their skills to the apprentices through oral transmission and hands-on demonstrations, gradually imparting the essence of the craft.<sup>[4]</sup> This traditional mode of transmission ensures the generational continuity of the craft's knowledge and techniques. However, this mode also faces challenges as younger generations in modern society may be less willing or able to undergo the lengthy and time-consuming traditional apprenticeship system.

#### **3.1.2 Artisan Community Inheritance**

Artisan community inheritance is a widely practiced mode of transmission that extends beyond the traditional mentor-apprentice relationship. Multiple experienced artisans actively engage in sharing their experiences and skills with community members, including the younger generation and

enthusiasts. This open mode of inheritance emphasizes collaborative teamwork and knowledge sharing, fostering the widespread dissemination of traditional craftsmanship.<sup>[5]</sup> Artisan community inheritance can also be realized through workshops, training programs, and community activities, providing more opportunities for involvement, strengthening community cohesion, and cultural preservation. Furthermore, it encourages artisans from diverse backgrounds and experiences to explore innovative approaches, driving the development of the craft and playing a pivotal role in the inheritance and innovation of ash sculpture.

### ***3.2 Methods for Preserving Ash Sculpture Cultural Heritage***

Various methods have been employed to preserve the precious cultural heritage of ash sculpture:

#### ***3.2.1 Digital Documentation***

Digital documentation is a significant means of capturing and preserving information and works related to ash sculpture craftsmanship. Through high-resolution photography and 3D scanning technology, digital archives can be created to preserve the details and intricacies of the craft. This aids in documenting traditional techniques for future research and inheritance.<sup>[6]</sup>

#### ***3.2.2 Museum Collections***

Museums serve as ideal venues for preserving and showcasing ash sculpture works. Museum collections help preserve precious pieces while showcasing the beauty and history of the craft to the public. Museums can also organize relevant exhibitions and educational activities, increasing public awareness and interest in ash sculpture craftsmanship. Traditional apprenticeship and artisan community inheritance are both critical modes of inheritance, but they also need to adapt to the demands and challenges of modern society. Meanwhile, digital documentation and museum collections are important means to protect the cultural heritage of ash sculpture, facilitating its transmission to future generations and enabling more people to appreciate its beauty.

## **4. Creative Reconstruction of Ash Sculpture**

### ***4.1 Modernization Transformation of Ash Sculpture***

Ash sculpture craftsmanship, as a traditional handicraft, is undergoing a process of modernization. Craftsmen are gradually adopting more efficient production methods and tools to meet the demands of modern society. This transformation includes the application of digital design and manufacturing technologies, making ash sculpture craftsmanship more precise and controllable.<sup>[7]</sup>

### ***4.2 Application of Innovative Technologies in Ash Sculpture Craftsmanship***

With advancements in technology, new innovative technologies such as 3D printing and computer-aided design are being integrated into ash sculpture craftsmanship. These technologies not only enhance the efficiency of the craft but also provide artisans with more creative possibilities. Additionally, digital technologies assist in recording and preserving the essence of the craft.

### ***4.3 Fusion of Ash Sculpture with Contemporary Art***

Ash sculpture craftsmanship is merging with contemporary art, resulting in unique artworks. Modern artists use ash sculpture as a medium to express contemporary societal concepts and emotions. This fusion not only enriches the forms of ash sculpture craftsmanship but also propels its development in the field of contemporary art.

### ***4.4 Commercialization and Market Expansion of Ash Sculpture Works***

Ash sculpture works are gradually entering the commercial market, becoming treasures for collectors and art enthusiasts. Craftsmen are beginning to consider the commercial aspects of their works, exploring market promotion and sales channels. This trend provides artisans with more professional development opportunities and promotes the inheritance of ash sculpture craftsmanship.

#### ***4.5 Ash Sculpture Craftsmanship in the Cultural and Creative Industries***

As a part of the cultural and creative industries, ash sculpture craftsmanship injects new vitality into local cultural traditions. Craftsmen collaborate with designers, integrating ash sculpture craftsmanship with various cultural products, creating competitive market-oriented works. This contributes to the sustainable development of traditional craftsmanship within the cultural and creative industries.

### **5. Challenges and Opportunities in Creative Reconstruction**

#### ***5.1 Balancing Tradition and Modernity***

In the process of creative reconstruction of ash sculpture craftsmanship, striking a balance between tradition and modernity becomes a significant challenge. Traditional craftsmanship boasts a profound history and cultural background, yet it also needs to adapt to modern market demands and aesthetic trends. Craftsmen must carefully preserve traditional techniques and aesthetic characteristics while continuously exploring innovative methods and the integration of modern elements. Maintaining this balance will ensure that ash sculpture craftsmanship retains its uniqueness and appeal in creative reconstruction.

#### ***5.2 Protecting Intellectual Property and Creative Assets***

With the creative reconstruction of ash sculpture craftsmanship, the protection of artisans' intellectual property and creative achievements becomes crucial. Artisans invest substantial time and effort in creating unique pieces, which are often susceptible to piracy or imitation. Therefore, establishing effective intellectual property protection mechanisms is essential. This may include legal measures such as patents, trademarks, copyrights, and more to ensure the legitimate protection of artisans' creativity and encourage further innovation.

#### ***5.3 Cultural Inheritance and Artisan Training***

The successful creative reconstruction relies heavily on the inheritance and training of artisans. Traditional craft techniques need to be passed down through generations, but the changes in modern society and lifestyle can potentially impact this tradition. Hence, nurturing a new generation of artisans to inherit craft skills is crucial. This may involve establishing apprenticeship systems, offering artisan training programs, and promoting cooperation and knowledge transfer among artisans.

#### ***5.4 Market Competition and Brand Building***

Creative reconstruction of ash sculpture craftsmanship requires competing in the market, which necessitates brand building and market promotion. Craftsmen need to establish their own brands to attract more clients and audiences. This may include designing professional logos, promotional materials, online showcases, and social media marketing. Additionally, understanding market trends, researching competitors, and formulating market strategies will help artisans better address market challenges.

#### ***5.5 Sustainable Development and Environmental Conservation***

Creative reconstruction not only requires a focus on the craft itself but also consideration of sustainability and environmental protection. Craftsmen can adopt green techniques and sustainable materials to reduce dependence on natural resources and minimize environmental impact during the production process. Furthermore, artisans can engage in ecological conservation projects, actively promoting environmental awareness. This will help ensure that the creative reconstruction of ash sculpture craftsmanship is in harmony with environmental sustainability.

## **6. Contemporary Applications of Ash Sculpture Craftsmanship**

### ***6.1 Ash Sculpture Craftsmanship in Contemporary Art***

In the field of contemporary art, ash sculpture craftsmanship is experiencing a resurgence of creative vitality. Artists actively explore and cleverly incorporate this traditional craft, creating works rich in creativity and aesthetic value. The application of ash sculpture craftsmanship in contemporary art goes beyond mere technique; it becomes a mode of expression. Modern artists often view ash sculpture as a creative tool to convey ideas, emotions, and creativity, breaking boundaries in the traditional art world and producing uniquely captivating works. Through this craft, artists can freely express their viewpoints and emotions, convey abstract concepts, and communicate emotions through variations in form, texture, and quality. Some outstanding contemporary art pieces fully demonstrate the diversity and innovation of ash sculpture craftsmanship, ranging from abstract sculptures to cross-media experiments, providing audiences with new artistic experiences. The contemporary art market's interest in ash sculpture craftsmanship continues to grow, with collectors and galleries showcasing and collecting such works, driving the modern development of this craft. Art exhibitions and galleries specifically dedicated to contemporary ash sculpture craftsmanship provide more exhibition and interaction opportunities for artists. In summary, the application of ash sculpture craftsmanship in contemporary art exhibits a new vitality in this ancient craft, injecting fresh vigor and creativity into the art field.

### ***6.2 Ash Sculpture Craftsmanship in Architectural Design***

The field of architectural design increasingly values the application of ash sculpture craftsmanship as a unique design element. Ash sculpture craftsmanship can add artistic charm to buildings, making them stand out in urban landscapes. The applications of ash sculpture craftsmanship are diverse, ranging from exterior facades' decoration to sculptures and installation art. Some impressive architectural projects showcase innovation and design concepts through ash sculpture craftsmanship. For instance, modern public buildings may use ash sculpture craftsmanship to embellish their exteriors, enhancing visual appeal and enriching the urban environment. Interior installation art may also incorporate ash sculpture craftsmanship to create specific atmospheres or narratives, providing a richer spatial experience. The application of ash sculpture craftsmanship in architectural design contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage. Some historical building restoration projects use ash sculpture craftsmanship to restore the artistic details and decorations of the original structure, preserving cultural heritage. In conclusion, the application of ash sculpture craftsmanship in architectural design brings new design paradigms and creative possibilities to the architecture industry, enriching urban landscapes and the preservation of cultural heritage.

### ***6.3 Ash Sculpture Craftsmanship in Public Art***

Public art, as an essential medium for interacting with the public, provides a unique platform for showcasing ash sculpture craftsmanship. Urban sculptures, municipal artworks, and landscape decorations often employ ash sculpture craftsmanship to enrich the urban environment, creating artistic experiences for citizens. This application not only beautifies cities but also reinforces the expression of urban culture.

The application of ash sculpture craftsmanship in urban sculptures injects artistic elements into urban spaces. Sculptures are usually presented in abstract or representational forms, prompting audiences to contemplate and discuss art. These sculptural works can be customized based on different themes and occasions, harmonizing with the urban environment and highlighting the city's uniqueness.

Municipal artworks often use ash sculpture craftsmanship to convey cultural and historical information. These artworks may be commemorative, honoring significant events or historical figures, or educational, imparting knowledge and values to the public. Through ash sculpture craftsmanship, these artworks can communicate information in an intuitive and attention-grabbing manner.

Landscape decoration is an essential part of urban beautification and is also one of the application areas of ash sculpture craftsmanship. Public squares, gardens, and streets often use ash sculpture craftsmanship to create unique landscape features. These decorations can take the form of sculptures, reliefs, murals, and more, infusing cultural ambiance and artistic flair into the city.

## **7. Interaction between Cultural Heritage and Creative Design**

This chapter delves into the close interaction between cultural heritage and creative design, aiming to gain a detailed understanding of how traditional craftsmanship influences modern creative design and how creative design promotes the preservation of traditional craftsmanship. This interaction is not only crucial for safeguarding and inheriting ash sculpture craftsmanship but also provides new insights and opportunities for its future development.

### ***7.1 Profound Impact of Traditional Craftsmanship on Creative Design***

**Inspiration from a Wellspring:** Traditional craftsmanship such as ash sculpture nurtures rich creative inspiration. Its historical heritage and cultural background provide a continuous source of creative ideas for modern artists and designers. Elements extracted from ash sculpture, including textures, shapes, and craft techniques, become valuable resources in creative design, imparting depth and uniqueness to works. **Preserving Cultural Memory and Values:** Traditional craftsmanship carries the cultural memory and values passed down through generations. By incorporating these elements, creative design can serve as a medium for cultural heritage, transmitting the essence of traditional craftsmanship to new generations. This helps integrate traditional craftsmanship into modern society and revitalizes it during the inheritance process.

### ***7.2 Positive Impetus of Creative Design on Traditional Craftsmanship***

**Technological Innovation and Craft Enhancement:** Modern creative design employs advanced technology and tools that can be applied to traditional craftsmanship, enhancing production efficiency and product quality. For example, the introduction of digital design and 3D printing technologies has brought new methods and possibilities to ash sculpture craftsmanship. **Market Expansion and Business Opportunities:** Creative design helps traditional craftsmanship explore new markets and audiences. Integrating ash sculpture craftsmanship into modern products and decor can attract a broader customer base, providing artisans with business opportunities.

### ***7.3 Synergistic Collaboration between Cultural Heritage and Creative Design***

The collaborative interaction between cultural heritage and creative design is pivotal for the future of ash sculpture craftsmanship. This collaboration can achieve the following objectives: **Sustainable Inheritance of Traditional Craftsmanship:** The protection and inheritance of traditional craftsmanship as cultural heritage are reinforced, while creative design injects new vitality, enabling it to adapt to modern demands. **Enriched Exchange of Cultural Heritage:** The interaction between cultural heritage and creative design enriches the intersection of cultural heritage and the creative industry, creating more opportunities for innovation and collaboration.

By delving into the interaction between cultural heritage and creative design, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of their complex relationship, providing profound insights for the sustainable inheritance of ash sculpture craftsmanship and the exchange of cultural heritage. This collaboration not only aids in preserving and promoting the vitality of ash sculpture craftsmanship but also opens up new possibilities for collaboration and interaction between traditional craftsmanship and modern design fields.

## **8. Conclusion**

This study extensively explored the inheritance and innovation of ash sculpture craftsmanship, focusing on its history, technical characteristics, inheritance models, and creative reconstruction. The research revealed that the uniqueness of ash sculpture craftsmanship lies in its materials, techniques, tools, and artistic expression. Regarding inheritance, emphasis was placed on the mentor-apprentice relationship and artisanal inheritance, with digital documentation and museums playing significant roles. Concerning creative reconstruction, modern technologies like digital design and 3D printing provide new creative opportunities, merging traditional craftsmanship with contemporary art and driving market competition and cultural creative industries. Most importantly, this study underscored the interaction between cultural heritage and creative design, offering profound insights into the value and potential of ash sculpture craftsmanship and providing critical guidance for its future development.

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