

# The Value and Strategy Research on the Integration of Contemporary Art into High School Art Appreciation Courses

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**Abstract:** This paper focuses on the integration of contemporary art into high school art appreciation courses. It elaborates on the value and significance of integrating contemporary art from three dimensions: "construction of core literacy in fine arts discipline", "response to curriculum standards requirements", and "adaptation to students' physical and mental development". It clarifies its position as a key carrier for optimizing the curriculum system, and analyzes the core problems in current teaching, such as "solidified content lacking contemporary elements" and "teachers' insufficient competence". Through case analysis, this paper studies the "construction of material system" and puts forward targeted strategies, and proposes feasible prospects for future teaching content, methods, and guarantee mechanisms, providing a path reference for the in-depth integration of contemporary art and high school art appreciation courses.

**Keywords:** Contemporary Art; High School Fine Arts; Appreciation Course; Value and Strategy

## 1. The Value and Significance of Integrating Contemporary Art into High School Art Appreciation Courses

The importance of integrating contemporary art into high school art appreciation courses has gradually attracted attention from the education circle. Its value and significance are not only reflected in the optimization of the fine arts curriculum system, but also in the in-depth alignment with curriculum standards requirements and students' development needs, making it a key path to implement the goal of "nurturing people with aesthetics and cultivating people with culture".

### 1.1 A Key Support for Constructing a Core Literacy-Oriented Curriculum System

The integration of contemporary art into high school art appreciation courses is of great value and practical significance for constructing a core literacy-oriented fine arts curriculum system (Zhang, 2021)[1]. Traditional high school art appreciation courses mainly focus on classic works, with teaching content centered on "artistic style identification" and "creation background memory", which is difficult to support the achievement of core literacy such as "image interpretation", "artistic expression" and "cultural understanding". However, contemporary art, covering diverse forms such as installation art, new media art and performance art, can provide rich carriers for core literacy cultivation. For example, the teaching methods based on "problem-based learning" and "constructivism theory" proposed by Diao (2016)[2], such as "appreciation-discussion-perception" and "description-analysis-interpretation-value judgment", all rely on the diverse expressions of contemporary art to realize in-depth learning of teaching content, so as to train students' abilities of "image interpretation" and "aesthetic judgment", and further deepen the literacy of "cultural understanding" and "creative practice". This "literacy-oriented" teaching value is irreplaceable by traditional teaching content and is a necessary supplement to improve the fine arts curriculum system.

### 1.2 Alignment with Curriculum Standards and Contemporary Educational Needs

From the perspective of curriculum standards, the General High School Fine Arts Curriculum Standards clearly states in the "textbook compilation suggestions" that "art works used for art appreciation should be representative and diverse, and an appropriate proportion should be maintained between ancient and modern, Chinese and foreign art works (the proportion of Chinese art should be

slightly higher)", and it is required to "strengthen cultural confidence and have an international perspective". This requirement provides a clear basis for the integration of contemporary art. On the one hand, selecting Chinese contemporary art works with the core characteristic of "integration of tradition and modernity" into the appreciation content can supplement the "contemporary dimension" in "Chinese art" and balance the proportion of "ancient and modern" works; on the other hand, the introduction of international contemporary art can broaden students' international perspective and form "comparative appreciation" with local contemporary art, helping to achieve the curriculum standard goal of "valuing both cultural confidence and international perspective".

At the same time, the characteristics of contemporary art such as visibility, expressiveness, criticality, creativity and cultural nature are highly consistent with the needs of fine arts education in the contemporary context, the requirements of the new curriculum standards and the physical and mental development characteristics of middle school students (Zhang, 2021)[3]. For example, its "criticality" can respond to the contemporary demand for "cultivating students' independent thinking", and its "creativity" can align with the curriculum standard requirement of "stimulating innovative awareness". This multi-dimensional consistency makes contemporary art an important link connecting fine arts education goals and contemporary needs.

### ***1.3 Adaptation to Students' Physical and Mental Development and Cultivation of Innovative Thinking***

From the perspective of students' development, high school students are in a stage of rapid development of abstract thinking and gradually strengthening self-awareness. They are more interested in learning content with "no fixed answers" and "participatory interaction", and the characteristics of contemporary art are just suitable for this physical and mental development feature. Its "visibility" can attract students' attention through bright colors and three-dimensional forms, reducing the threshold of art appreciation; its "expressiveness" allows students to interpret works combined with their own emotions and experiences, meeting their psychological needs for "self-expression"; its "interactivity" can transform students from "passive viewing" to "active participation", conforming to high school students' learning preference of "disliking one-way indoctrination".

More importantly, contemporary art has unique advantages in promoting students' creative thinking and innovative awareness. Duan (2011) believes that an individual's innovative thinking should not only be regarded as a natural psychological endowment or a natural exertion of cognitive ability, but also the interaction and communication between different fields and cultures are necessary components to promote the formation of creative thinking.[4] In traditional appreciation courses, students mostly passively accept the established conclusions of work style statements, while contemporary art can break students' thinking stereotypes through "cross-media expression" and "cross-cultural dialogue", and stimulate students' innovative thinking in the "interaction between different fields and cultures".

## **2. Analysis of the Current Situation of High School Art Appreciation Courses**

### ***2.1 Teaching Content: Dominated by Solidified Classics, Seriously Lack of Contemporary Elements***

The content system of current high school art appreciation courses has an obvious "temporal gap", mainly focusing on classic works of historical periods such as the Renaissance and classicism, such as Da Vinci's The Last Supper and Michelangelo's David. The teaching focus is on established knowledge such as "artistic style, creation background and expression techniques". Students are repeatedly exposed to similar materials, and their thinking is confined to a fixed appreciation framework.

As an important carrier "reflecting the spirit of the times", contemporary art has long been absent from the curriculum. Taking new media art as an example, its new expression form integrating digital technology and video language can intuitively show the integration trend of art and technology, but it rarely has the opportunity to enter the classroom; even if a small number of contemporary works are involved, they are mostly at the level of "simple introduction", without in-depth exploration of their connection with traditional culture and social reality. This leads to students being unable to access the cutting-edge trends of art development, which not only makes it difficult to stimulate their interest in fine arts learning, but also prevents them from understanding the "connection between art and current life" through contemporary art, which is not conducive to the cultivation of international perspective and innovative thinking.

## **2.2 Uneven Knowledge Reserve of Teachers and Weak Material Support System**

As the core of teaching implementation, teachers have two major shortcomings in their contemporary art teaching ability. First, the unbalanced knowledge reserve caused by age differentiation: young teachers have grown up in the era of information diversification, and can access contemporary art through exhibitions, the Internet and other channels, with a deeper understanding of its concepts and forms; while some older teachers are constrained by traditional knowledge systems and teaching concepts, have a low acceptance of contemporary art, and even regard it as "unorthodox art". They cannot accurately interpret the connotation of works in teaching, leading to students' superficial understanding of contemporary art.

Second, the lack of a systematic contemporary art teaching support system. At present, there is a serious shortage of contemporary art case material libraries and textbooks suitable for high school teaching. Teachers can only collect materials scattered when preparing lessons—for example, if they want to find cases of "integration of local contemporary art and tradition", they need to spend a lot of time screening works and organizing background information, and the quality of materials is uneven, making it difficult to form "graded and systematic" teaching content. This situation of "difficulty in obtaining materials and imperfect system" directly restricts teachers' teaching initiative. Even if they have the willingness to improve their contemporary art teaching ability, it is difficult to implement due to the lack of resource support.

## **3. Discussion on the Integration Strategies of Contemporary Art**

### **3.1 Focusing on Local Contemporary Art as the Core, Anchoring the Cultivation of Cultural Confidence**

In the selection of materials, priority should be given to local contemporary art with "integration of tradition and modernity", forming a graded case library of "craft innovation—folk custom transformation—spiritual expression". Gao and Zhou (2025) confirmed through CiteSpace analysis that the return of Chinese contemporary art to local cultural context and cultural resources is a current academic research hotspot, and a feasible path for the coordinated development of traditional culture and contemporary art has been formed[5]. For example, Li Hongbo's Sea of Flowers creates an immersive installation based on the paper gourd craft, which is suitable for analyzing the "modern transformation of folk custom symbols". It allows students to recall folk paper-cutting and paper-mache art, and establish an emotional connection between tradition and contemporary. Cai Guoqiang's gunpowder explosion art shows the international expression of Chinese culture through "traditional technology + grand narrative", enhancing students' cultural pride.

Hierarchical guidance should be paid attention to in teaching: first, let students identify the traditional elements in the works, then analyze the innovative forms, and finally explore the cultural spirit, ensuring that each case can serve the training goal of "cultural confidence" and avoiding the material selection being limited to "novel forms".

### **3.2 Combining Students' Interests and Contemporary Hotspots to Enhance Teaching Resonance**

In view of the cognitive characteristics and interest preferences of high school students, contemporary art materials that are youthful and life-oriented should be introduced. In the field of traditional craft innovation, the installation Flower of Infinity co-created by artist Chen Fenwan and Cartier Pasha de Cartier takes the traditional paper-cutting technique familiar to students as the core, but breaks through the traditional limitations of "flatness and small size", which perfectly conforms to the material logic of "integration of tradition and modernity". Inspired by Cartier's "boundless square and circle", Chen Fenwan uses "square paper with a circle" as the foundation, and repeats and stacks flat paper-cuts through the iconic "infinite structure", creating a three-dimensional "head flower shape" installation that breaks dimensions in the Power Station of Art Shanghai. The delicate hollowing of paper-cut totems retains the cultural core of traditional paper-cutting of "symmetrical patterns and auspicious meanings", while the form of "large-scale installation + light and shadow interaction" extends the traditional craft from "desktop decoration" to a spatial art that can be viewed around and perceived with light and shadow. It not only caters to high school students' interest in "interactive and situational art", but also guides the discussion on "how traditional culture can approach life aesthetics through contemporary forms".

Teachers can design in-depth exploration activities around this work in teaching. In teaching, teachers can design in-depth exploration activities around this work. First, they can guide students to draw on the

"Traditional Paper-Cutting Art" knowledge module from high school fine arts textbooks. Students can then compare the differences between the work *Flower of Infinity* and traditional window grilles across three dimensions: "material usage (ordinary red paper vs. specialized art paper), formal expression (flat and static vs. three-dimensional and dynamic), and viewing methods (single perspective vs. multi-dimensional viewing)." Through this comparison, students can analyze how Chen Fenwan breaks through the expressive boundaries of traditional paper-cutting by employing "layered structures" and "light and shadow design."

Furthermore, teachers should organize group discussions, asking students to connect their own practical experience with traditional paper-cutting (e.g., paper-cutting creations in craft classes) to reflect on: "If campus cultural symbols (such as school emblems, outlines of campus landmark buildings) are integrated into three-dimensional paper-cutting works in the style of *Flower of Infinity*, what methods can be used to achieve the integration of traditional crafts and campus life?" This not only deepens the understanding of "contemporary innovation of traditional crafts", but also connects art appreciation with high school students' campus life, enhancing learning participation.

At the same time, teachers should pay close attention to contemporary art hotspots and transform them into teaching materials. For example, Cai Guoqiang's implementation of *Rising Dragon* in the Himalayas can be used to design a debate topic on "art and ecology"; the aesthetic controversy caused by Qiao Xiaodao's *Wilderness Country* can guide students to discuss topics such as "reflection on the boundary of aesthetics" or "balance of public art". This keeps the materials timely and relevant to life, and enables students to learn to understand diverse aesthetics in differences and clearly express their own views in controversies, which is the most precious value of art appreciation courses.

### **3.3 Connecting with Existing Textbooks to Form Complementary Teaching Content**

Contemporary art should be used as an extension and supplement of textbooks to realize the teaching linkage of "tradition and contemporary". For example, taking Yang Yongliang's *Colored Landscape* series as an example, it can be connected with the chapter of "Chinese traditional landscape painting" in the high school fine arts textbook. Compared with traditional landscape painting, both focus on the creation of landscape artistic conception. Traditional landscape painting uses brush, ink and paper to paint natural landscapes, conveying the reclusive mood of literati; while Yang's works collate urban images with digital technology, reflecting on urbanization through the form of landscape, showing a conflict and integration between modern cities and natural landscapes, and its artistic conception is more a reflection on modern urbanization and industrialization. Through comparison, students can understand the different connotations carried by art works in different eras.

## **4. Conclusion and Outlook**

The core value of integrating contemporary art into high school art appreciation courses is mainly reflected in that it covers diverse forms such as installation art and new media art, provides rich carriers for the cultivation of core literacy in fine arts discipline, and effectively makes up for the weaknesses of traditional teaching in the cultivation of literacy such as "image interpretation" and "creative practice". At the same time, appropriate contemporary art materials can supplement the contemporary dimension of high school art appreciation courses and introduce international art resources, which accurately responds to the curriculum standard requirement of "valuing both ancient and modern, Chinese and foreign", and helps to cultivate students' cultural confidence and international perspective.

This paper puts forward the integration strategy with "local contemporary art as the core", "students' interests and contemporary hotspots as the link" and "connection with existing textbooks as the path". Through the case analysis of contemporary artists' works, it can be seen that this strategy has strong practical feasibility. Looking forward to the future, it is necessary to promote the deepening of practice from three aspects: first, educational institutions should rely on the reform of fine arts education in normal universities, add relevant curriculum modules for contemporary art teaching, and systematically improve teachers' professional literacy in contemporary art; second, compiling and management departments should add contemporary art teaching material libraries to the construction system of contemporary art textbooks to improve the teaching support system; third, teachers should explore the integration mode of "classroom appreciation + online and offline exhibition experience", strengthen the connection between art and life, and promote contemporary art to truly transform from a supplement to curriculum content to a key carrier for cultivating students' core literacy in fine arts.

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