

# Integrating Traditional Culture with Cultural Creative Industries: The Application and IP Creation of Lihouhu Artistic Elements

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**Abstract:** Shanxi Lihouhu is a traditional Chinese intangible cultural heritage handicraft with rich cultural connotations and artistic value. However, with the development of society and the economy, today's Lihouhu has gradually lost its competitiveness in the market economy. In the era of the internet and with the support of emerging technologies, the cultural and creative industries are gradually increasing. As 2022 is the Year of the Tiger in the Chinese zodiac, various tiger-related applications and scenarios have emerged. Based on this, this study explores the artistic elements and characteristics of Lihouhu, collecting instances of the application of Lihouhu's artistic elements in entertainment and creative situations in 2022. This research uses the case study method to illustrate the popularity of the method of creating cultural IP in various contexts and the necessity of applying it to Shanxi Lihouhu.

**Keywords:** Lihouhu, Artistic Elements, Cultural IP, Intangible Cultural Heritage

## 1. Introduction

As Shanxi Lihouhu is not only listed in China's national intangible cultural heritage directory but also an important part of Shanxi Province's cultural identity. Lihouhu is full of artistic and humanistic value which makes it an important source of inspiration for Chinese cultural design[1]. Contemporary Chinese society, with the influence of globalization, has experienced a tremendous impact from diverse cultures. Chinese society is influenced by different cultures and ideologies which put traditional culture in a dilemma. Traditional culture is facing competition and friction from various cultural resources[2]. The weak competitiveness and difficult inheritance of intangible cultural heritage have become major problems. Thus, combing the content of intangible cultural heritage with cultural creative industries is an efficient way, not only can satisfy the mass requirement of aesthetic and functional needs but also can realize the artistic content and humanistic charm of Lihouhu in the market economy.

The Shanxi Lihouhu, as a representative intangible cultural heritage of Shanxi Province, not only does it have a long history, but also has great humanistic value. The Lihouhu modeling has been used as a stamp and was exhibited as a representative folk handicraft product at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. As 2022 is the Year of the Tiger in the Chinese zodiac, there are various tiger-themed contents. Seizing this opportunity, this study conducts a case analysis from the perspective of the research status of Lihouhu, the artistic characteristic of Lihouhu, and the application of Lihouhu's artistic elements in different situations. In terms of application in different situations, the analysis is divided into three dimensions, including entertainment situation, cultural and creative application, and cultural IP image application.

## 2. Literature Review

Shanxi Lihouhu is a traditional folk art form that has been designated as a representative intangible cultural heritage of Shanxi Province, reflecting its rich cultural significance[3]. Chinese scholars have reached a consensus on the artistic characteristics of Lihouhu, which mainly focus on its shape, color, and pattern.

In recent years, scholars have conducted research on Lihouhu's artistic elements and their applications. In the field of graphic design, Ren Gongzheng and Guan Xuesong(2022) proposed integrating Lihouhu, a traditional folk art form, into interior design, Zhao Shengnan and Zhang Meng (2020) suggested to better promote Lihouhu, the packaging design can be made more cartoon-ish to attract children's

attraction, or an animated short film can be produced to promote Shanxi's intangible cultural heritage to children (p.131). In the field of product design, Lei Xia(2018) proposed using material substitution, form decomposition, partial exaggeration, and color recombination to bring Lihouhu derivative products back to people's lives in a new form (p.133). Yuan Ling(2017) proposed enhancing the external packaging of Lihohu and increasing the types of peripheral designs, such as themed postcards, themed greeting cards, and themed bookmarks, to make peripheral promotion more systematic and integrated (p.96). To promote Lihohu, Li Tong(2019) proposed integrating online sales, WeChat promotion, and establishing a professional intangible cultural heritage promotion platform to inject new vitality into the Lihouhu brand (pp.36-37). In ceramic art, Ma Ziting(2020) suggested interpreting the image of Lihouhu in the new era with modern ceramic design and decoration language, breaking through the limitation of traditional fabric materials[4].

In conclusion, although there is limited research on the art of Lihouhu, scholars have proposed various suggestions for combining Lihouhu's artistic elements with different fields, such as exhibition design, graphic design, and new media. Further studies are needed to explore the artistic elements of Lihouhu and their applications in different contexts.

### 3. The Artistic Characteristic of Lihohu

The studies on the artistic characteristics of Lihouhu in the academic field focus on the exploration and analysis of its modeling, color, pattern, and meaning. Li Ke et al.(2019), pointed out that the streamlined design of Lihouhu's modeling makes it more dynamic, and the use of complementary colors, such as warm and cool tones, and high-purity colors enhances its rhythmic sense and vitality. Li Ke et al. also pointed out that due to the worship of tiger totems, Lihouhu is believed to be able to carry people's expectations of eliminating evil and seeking good fortune[5]. Lei Xia(2018) believed that Lihouhu's modeling is likely inspired by the proportion of children and presented through simplification and exaggeration (p.132). Lihouhu's pattern and colors are based on traditional Chinese worship, with patterns based on the Yin-Yang theory and colors based on the Five Elements theory(white, blue, black, red, and yellow)[6].

As shown in Figure 1, the modeling of Lihouhu is easily recognizable. Compared to a real tiger, Lihouhu has wider ears and a color scheme that combines both inherent and decorative colors. The eyes are multi-layered and the eyebrows have established patterns both inside and outside. The nose of Lihouhu is inspired by the shape of leaves and its color breaks away from the inherent color of a real tiger nose. The mouth of Lihouhu is exaggerated and its color combines decorative colors with specific patterns. Overall, the modeling of Lihouhu is not only unique but also has strong artistic expression.

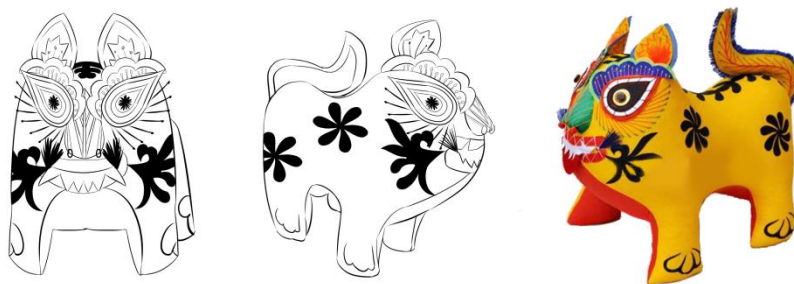


Figure 1: Lihouhu sculpting outline, from the Author.

### 4. The Application of Lihouhu Artistic Elements in Situations

#### 4.1. The Application of Lihouhu Elements in Entertainments Situation

In the Chinese Year of the Tiger 2022, Shenzhen Happy Valley launched the New Year Comedy Festival with the theme of New Year with Tiger, Happy with Fortune. Two special New Year's trendy

and food markets, The New Year Fun Market and The Tiger Roar Market, are particularly noteworthy. A series of Tiger zodiac commemorative products have been specially launched for all visitors. In addition, Shenzhen Happy Valley has designed its own cartoon tiger cultural IP image to celebrate the Year of The Tiger, as shown in Figure 2. This image is not only lovable but also has rich emotional expression. This case indirectly shows that creating IP and promoting cute IP images are a trend in the entertainment industry.

At the souvenir sales area of the Tiger Roar Market, various advertisements and commemorative products with typical Lihouhu artistic characteristics, as shown in Figure 3. The Tiger Roar Market case at Shenzhen Happy Valley is summarized in the dimension range of entertainment situation. On the one hand, it is clear that Shanxi Lihouhu has a certain influence as an artistic element and has an independent display area in the Tiger Roar Market of Shenzhen Happy Valley. This sufficiently reflects the influences of Shanxi Lihouhu as a famous traditional cultural representation. At the same time, this also indirectly shows that although the image of Shanxi Lihouhu exists independently in the Tiger Roar Market of Shenzhen Happy Valley, its influence and scope are limited.



Figure 2: Shenzhen Happy Valley cartoon cultural IP image, from the Author.



Figure 3: Souvenir sales area of the Tiger Roar Market, from the Author.

#### 4.2. The Application of Lihohu Artistic Elements in Cultural Creative Products

Combining cultural and creative industries is a common pattern [7]. Such as the Palace Museum's cultural and creative products, Shaanxi History Museum's Tangniu, and so on. Shanxi Museum has launched a rich variety of cultural and creative products, including boutique high imitation series, home life series, clothing and accessories series, and stationery and toy series.

The 2022 stationery set of Tiger Roar Bring Fortune is the typical case in this study. There are four types of stationery, including notebooks, pens, bookmarks, and rulers, as shown in Figure 4. The cartoon

tiger image on the notebook has typical Lihouhu eye artistic characteristics, and the tiger's base color is a combination of red and yellow, which conforms to the color view of Lihouhu in Shanxi. The pattern on both sides of the mouth is similar to the pattern on the mouth of Lihohu, so it has the possibility of using Lihohu elements. The tiger image in the Tiger Roar Brings Fortune 2022 series of stationery sets launched by the Shanxi Museum is based on the ceramic tiger pillow exhibited in the Shanxi Museum. However, the eyebrows and eyes of this image do not have the characteristics of the ceramic tiger pillow, but they have similarities with the typical Lihouhu eyebrows and eye features. This case illustrates that some features of Lihouhu, as concrete symbols, are not only unique but also have a certain influence on design images related to the tiger image.



Figure 4: The 2022 stationery set of Tiger Roar Bring Fortune, from the Internet.

#### 4.3. The Application of Lihouhu Artistic Elements in cultural IP

On January 14, 2022, the Shanxi Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism officially launched the cultural and tourism IP image Jinhu for the Year of the Tiger at the beginning of the Spring Festival, as shown in Figure 5. The image integrates traditional and fashionable content. The inspiration for the Jinhu image comes from the stroke structure of the Chinese Character 晋 and the art elements of Shanxi's representative intangible cultural heritage, Lihouhu. By combining the stroke structure of the character 晋 with the artistic characteristics of Lihouhu and through artistic processing, the facial features of Jinhu, including eyebrows, eyes, nose, mouth, and ears, are harmoniously unified with the content of the Chinese character 晋, forming a distinctive and eye-catching image that is unique to Shanxi. The Jinhu IP image has both the recognition of the brand name Jin and the expression characteristics of Shanxi Lihouhu culture. The launch of the Jinhu cultural IP image not only illustrates that combining cultural and creative IP images with traditional culture is a popular method for promoting and publicizing industries but also reflects that although Lihouhu is a well-known cultural icon in Shanxi, it lacks a cultural business card that is in line with current trends and new vitality.



Figure 5: Cultural and Tourism IP image Jinhu, from the Internet.

## 5. Conclusions

Lihouhu is not only the symbol of Shanxi's intangible cultural heritage but also an important part of Chinese traditional culture. However, Lihouhu currently lacks effective dissemination and transformation. Finding a differentiated brand path and obtaining a sense of identity is an urgent problem to be solved.

Through the case collection and analysis in this study, it can be seen that in the application of different scenarios (entertainment, cultural and creative products, cultural IP image), Lihohu appears more as a secondary or primary design element. Therefore, it is concluded that Lihohu may appear more in the form of a design element at present, lacking an independent and complete brand image. Consequently, it is necessary to create a cultural IP exclusively for Lihohu. This study suggests promoting the dissemination of Shanxi Lihohu among young people through IP image design, creating a cultural business card for intangible cultural heritage, and helping to differentiate the brand path. Enhancing the sense of identity of young audiences, it can help the dynamic inheritance of intangible cultural heritage projects.

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