

## Research on Art Intervention in Rural Cultural Construction

Lijuan Jiao<sup>1</sup>, Jihui Qu<sup>2</sup>, Xiuli Ge<sup>1,3,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Southampton International College, Dalian Polytechnic University, Dalian, China

<sup>2</sup>School of Art and Design, Dalian Polytechnic University, Dalian, China

<sup>3</sup>Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, UK

\*corresponding author

**Keywords:** Art intervention; Rural cultural construction; Sustainable development

**Abstract:** The involvement of art in the construction of rural culture has now become an effective measure to beautify the rural landscape, reshape the rural value, and promote sustainable rural development. Due to the complicated nature of involving artistic methods in rural cultural construction, this article starts with the summary of the experience of art intervention in rural culture construction in China and other countries, and analyses the specific strategies of art intervention in rural cultural construction. It is suggested that typical rural folk arts and creative artistic design of rural residential space can be deeply explored. In addition, this article analyses the key strategies to combine artistic creation with rural agricultural product sales and regional tourism to further promote the sustainable development of rural economy and the environment. This article also points out that art intervention in rural cultural construction should be closely integrated with local economic development, cultural inheritance, and environmental improvement. It is believed that those art intervention methods that are deeply rooted in local culture can greatly push forward the sustainable economic, cultural and environmental development in the rural areas.

### 1. Introduction

In accordance to the requirements of rural cultural construction and development, the intervention of art in rural cultural construction has become an essential part in today's rural construction. Now there are many practical cases of art intervention in rural construction through various artistic methods in different countries. The literature review shows that the art intervention in rural construction is concerned with the following steps, including recognition of the problems, reflection and discussion, relevant case analysis and experience summaries. Art intervention in rural construction activities usually focuses on the improvement of rural landscape; however, some artists just carried out some creative artistic practices, which can not solve the problems existing in rural cultural construction since they have not investigated the real situations in the village thoroughly.

This article explores the art intervention in the construction of rural culture from various dimensions and levels, including the political, economic, social, cultural and ecological aspects. The harmonious relationship between nature, civilization and humans can change the farmers' ideology, spiritual outlook, moral concepts and value system so as to retain the physical and spiritual shape of the countryside in shaping the style and appearance, keep the cultural heritage, make it suitable for people's living and working, attract more villagers to come back to their hometown, and build a new model of rural cultural construction. This is not only conducive to improving the cultural image of the rural areas and enhancing cultural self-confidence in the countryside, but also conducive to protecting and making good use of precious cultural resources, and is also beneficial to attract more people to pay close attention to the local culture. This research has great theoretical and practical values for the implementation of the rural cultural construction and the practical strategies of rural revitalization.

### 2. Previous Research on Rural Cultural Construction Based on Art Intervention

In the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, President Xi Jinping advocated the Implementation of Rural Revitalization Strategy and pointed out the general requirements for the promotion of rural cultural revitalization. For the overall revitalization of the rural areas, it is necessary to integrate art with rural construction to improve the natural scenery and enhance the living and working environment of the countryside. Rural areas usually have a long cultural history, rich cultural resources, and very distinctive regional characteristics. People need to recognize, protect, inherit, and carry forward these cultural heritages. However, in recent years, due to the excessive emphasis on the economic development and profits, the cultivation of spiritual culture and conservation of typical local culture have been greatly neglected. In addition, the younger generation in the rural areas has chosen to work and pursue their careers in the cities. This phenomenon has also caused the aging problem in the villages, the slow development of rural cultural industries, and the lack of protection and inheritance of farming culture.

Literature research shows that there have been many studies on improving rural culture construction through art intervention. Yan Yangchu was a pioneer of rural construction in China and he was called the Father of Civilian Education in the 1930s. He once proposed that the level of rural human settlements should be improved through artistic intervention. Liang Shuming advocated the creation of a new culture and saving the old countryside to stimulate the potential of rural culture. These educators led the rural construction movement in China. They hope to create a new culture with the village as the starting point, thereby changing the rural landscape. Their exploration of rural construction has laid the theoretical foundation and accumulated practical experience for future generations. After the implementation of Reform and Opening-up Policy in China, the means for art intervention in rural construction gradually increased, and related art activities also became livelier. Since the 21st century, rural construction has gradually entered a stage of diversification and multi-dimensional development. The effective combination of various art forms with the construction of rural culture has become a popular trend and attracted more attention. The potential development forms and potentials are deeply explored and it is good for the establishment of a harmonious relationship between villagers, architecture and art with the goal of inheriting folk customs and successfully created a new cultural form and regeneration mechanism.

Australian scholar Julia Anwar McHenry put forward the viewpoint of enhancing public participation and creativity in decision-making, thereby strengthening the construction of rural communities [1]. Alan Kay believed that art could play a role in a wider area of rural community development [2]. Grodach C put forward a proposal for developing an art-based rural community development plan, and studied how to construct an artistic development plan for rural communities [3]. From the perspective of involving artistic practices in rural construction, countries have also had more practical experience and successful cases. One Japanese artist Kitagawa Fulang talks about the aging problem in the rural area, low agricultural production efficiency, economic backwardness, and increasing number of vacant houses and abandoned schools faced by some villages. Some artists also organize some art festivals and make artistic creation, which has injected unlimited vitality into this small village in Japan and brought considerable popularity. This is a successful practice of art's involvement in rural cultural construction, and it is also a great attempt by the contemporary art market to break through the restrictions of places and from art museums and galleries to the countryside and the public. In South Korea, Gamcheon Cultural Village, known as Busan Gamcheon Culture Village, was once a slum area. Later, under the promotion of Busan's Hutong Art Project, cultural and artistic intervention was conducted through particular art projects. During this process, the artists preserved the prototype of the exotic stepped village and created various watercolor paintings, murals, graffiti, and colorful paintings on the walls of the houses, turning Busan Gamcheon Cultural Village from a slum into "the most artistic village in Asia". In Poland, in the 1990s, in order to promote the integration of rural tourism and ecological agriculture, the Polish government identified rural areas engaged in ecological agriculture as ecological agricultural tourism areas. Some villages in Poland used artistic intervention to revitalize the countryside, explore the local value of the countryside, strengthen the cultural identity of the local residents, and actively participate in the cause of artistic intervention in rural cultural construction.

This article explores the construction of a new model of rural cultural construction, enhances the cultural image of the rural areas, and improves the cultural self-confidence of the rural areas. It is also conducive to protecting and making good use of precious cultural resources, attracting more people to pay attention to local culture, and attracting rural lost population. The return allows the elderly to gain spiritual sustenance, the left-behind children to learn traditional culture, and the village to regain spiritual motivation. This topic has important theoretical and practical value for the implementation of the rural cultural construction and rural revitalization strategies.

### **3. Major Issues Arising with Rural Cultural Construction**

There are some issues that need to be addressed during the rural cultural construction. Firstly, it is necessary to establish a networked and symbiotic promotion system for the popularization of art by the whole people, form a diversified pattern of symbiosis and sharing, and realize the improvement of the villagers' overall artistic aesthetic quality and the improvement of the ecological morality level. It is also necessary to give full play to the main status and role of the villagers, who are the major force of local culture and art, and ensure the localization and normalization of rural art activities in order to explore, inherit and develop cultural art with local characteristics. About the integration of policy explanation, value identification, development orientation, and new development models and approaches into art creation, villagers can learn new knowledge, gain new ideas, understand new policies, and clarify new directions in art popularization activities. To build a sustainable development model of rural culture, attention should be paid to innovation in content, form, methods and means. The integration of ecological civilization, breaking through the limitations of time and space, building a network digital art popularization platform, and forming the "Internet + art" style are the key issues that need to be solved [4-5].

In addition, it needs to avoid the homogeneity of the rural cultural industry. It is necessary to explore characteristic cultural resources and natural resources and pursue characteristic development. The development of characteristic rural cultural industry involves the multiple dimensions of politics, economy, society, culture and ecology and advocates a "rural culture" with competitive advantages. Villagers need to understand new policies and clarify new directions in art activities, shape rural brands and increase the added value of agricultural products brands, thereby promoting the efficiency of rural agricultural products industry and tourism, and driving the development of related industries, and fostering regional festivals or cultural projects. It is also helpful to create an atmosphere for the popularization of rural art, to ensure the normalization and localization of rural art activities, to form an ecosystem that integrates natural ecology and human ecology, to demonstrate the charm of art in the cultivation of ecological and moral concepts, and to build a new rural humanity. The artistic environment enriches the cultural and artistic life of the villagers, improves the happiness index of the villagers, and ensures the prosperity and stability of the rural society.

Finally, it is of significance to address the problems caused by the shortage of rural cultural talents. Young college graduates should be attracted to return to their hometowns for rural development. What's more, artistic means can be used to attract talents who are interested in rural cultural construction to the countryside to display their ambitions. Meanwhile, young labourers also need to return to the countryside and build high-quality rural cultural construction teams, who can help to inherit folk culture, regional culture, farming culture, protect and optimize local ecosystems and natural scenery.

### **4. Major Strategies of Combining Art with Rural Cultural Construction**

Artists, art practitioners and students in colleges and universities intervene extensively to cast their artistic creation horizons into the vast countryside, and settle in the countryside in the form of renting or buying houses in the countryside to create artistic creation spaces and exhibition venues with personal characteristics. This combines regional cultural characteristics, creates and displays

excellent works of art. At the same time, the art intervention in rural cultural construction can also grasp the relationship between individual creation and collective viewing, build a spiritual interaction bridge with the rural public, enable villagers to improve their artistic appreciation ability through communication with artists. The sense of accomplishment and ownership can effectively encourage the villagers to participate in the artistic reconstruction of the village through artistic creation, create a cultural atmosphere, promote the inheritance of local culture, and change the villagers' aesthetic concepts and values.

In addition, the art intervention can adopt the following ways including the organization of art festivals and art exhibitions, the integration of various local elements, and the use of art to help the villagers broaden their artistic horizons, cultivate their spirits, and nourish their morality. These activities can further improve the villagers' quality of life, improve their humanistic qualities, and build a regional humanistic brand. At the same time, the social media can be effectively used to enable more people to understand and feel the local cultural characteristics and increase the degree of local cultural transmission.

Next, the involvement of art in rural construction can help to beautify the rural environment, promote the construction of beautiful rural areas, and renovate many places in the rural areas such as schools, residential buildings, warehouses, ancient buildings and other places. The concept of "green water and green mountains are golden mountains and silver mountains" is passed on to the villagers. Another example is to combine cultural and artistic elements with rural natural resources to combine modern characteristics with traditional ones and integrate natural scenery with humanistic elements. Art can be used as the carrier to promote the revival of the village, reconstruct the rural culture, and pass on the tradition and essence. Some villagers can receive professional help and guidance to enhance their sense of mission, participate in the regeneration of their hometown, preserve village memories and folk customs, protect and inherit intangible cultural heritage and traditional handicrafts, and rebuild the local culture.

The transformation of rural industries can be achieved through artistic means. This can increase the added value of agricultural products by shaping the brand of rural agricultural products, building a rural creative industry park, and developing an eco-tourism industry by providing accommodation and recreation facilities. For example, boutique homestays, scenic tours, landscape art, orchard/vegetable garden industry, farming experience, folk workshops, pastoral theatre, art festivals, and cultural tourism development are all the creative use of local geographic, historic and cultural resources.

The significance of art intervention of rural cultural construction can be explained through political, economic, cultural, ecological and social aspects. Firstly, from the political perspective, it is necessary to explain the country's "Beautiful China", "Rural Revitalization" and policies on "Three Rural" issues in the process of art intervention activities. The implementation of the spirit of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the guidance of values, development orientation, and new development models and approaches need to be integrated into one whole systematic rule, so that villagers can understand new policies and find out new directions in these artistic activities. In addition, the economic aspect of this activity is also demonstrated through various artistic means. These artistic activities can enhance local popularity, recognition and influence, shape rural brands and increase the added value of agricultural products brands, enhance the efficiency of rural agricultural products industry and tourism, promote the development of related industries, stimulate economic vitality, and promote the development of local economy and culture. What's more, artistic means are used to sort out cultural and artistic characteristics in the countryside, promote the inheritance and development of regional historical context, cultivate regional characteristic festival cultural projects, create an atmosphere for the popularization of rural art, and ensure the normalization and localization of rural art activities. Furthermore, through the systematic placement of artistic activities, a new regional ecosystem that integrates natural ecology and human ecology is formed. This can help to protect the mountains and waters in the countryside and demonstrate the charm of art in the cultivation and promotion of ecological and moral concepts. Finally, it is vital to build a new humanistic and artistic environment in the countryside, inherit local

customs, enrich the cultural and artistic life of villagers, preserve the vitality of villagers, improve the quality of life of villagers, and ensure the prosperity and stability of rural society [6-7].

## **5. Major Strategies of Combining Art with Rural Cultural Construction**

The purpose of this research is to use art as a means and focus on the popularization of rural art to improve the aesthetic literacy and artistic appreciation of rural people, and to improve their ecological ethics, so as to build a sustainable development model of rural culture.

First of all, it is necessary to implement supply-side reforms to comprehensively improve the basic functions and service efficiency of rural cultural centres; establish a symbiotic promotion system for the popularization of national art, so that culture and art can help to form a diversified pattern of symbiosis and sharing between art popularization activities and local community activities. The local cultural authorities, private artist groups, and social volunteers can actively participate in these activities and play important roles. The long-term cooperation mechanism truly achieves the popularization and sharing of arts among the people in the countryside, and realizes the improvement of the overall artistic aesthetic quality and the ecological morality.

Secondly, it is necessary to shift from previous “sending cultural activities to the countryside” to creating and forming real local cultural activities. Some cultural and artistic brands need to be transformed to focus on creating local culture, giving full play to the dominant position and role of villages, communities and their villagers, forming the main part of local culture and art, and ensuring the localization and normalization of rural art activities.

Thirdly, effective strategies can be implemented according to the characteristics of different rural cultural and artistic foundations, levels and styles. We must deeply understand the needs of those who live in rural areas, understand the interests of the villagers, and actively explore the local characteristic art forms that the villagers love to see. Through the popularization of rural art forms, it is necessary to combine them with the villagers’ daily life and integrate new forms and styles with the art creation so that the villagers can learn new knowledge, gain new ideas, understand new policies, and clarify new directions in art popularization activities.

Finally, we must focus on the innovation in content, form and means. In terms of content, it is necessary to integrate the ecological concepts such as green consumption and development, environmental protection, harmonious human-nature relations, and harmonious society, so that people can enjoy the natural, social and spiritual ecology while appreciating the beauty of various art forms. The understanding and perception of the ethics and aesthetics will bring fun and arouse more audiences’ interests. At the same time, the inheritance of traditional culture calls for the innovative strategies. Therefore, a network digital art popularization platform can be built to create a communication platform for art researchers and art enthusiasts, form an “Internet+ art” mode, and promote the popularization and innovation of art in rural areas.

## **6. Conclusion**

This article analyses the relationship between art and rural society, explores the flexible intervention of artistic means, discusses the popularization of art, and carries out many aspects of the construction of rural culture in China from political, economic, social, cultural, and ecological aspects. The systematic intervention of art in rural cultural construction aims to rebuild the relationship between people, nature, and the countryside and restore a better rural life and ecosystems. A virtuous circle is formed between nature, civilization and human beings, so as to achieve the effect of cultural revitalization, social and economic development, and revitalization in the rural areas. It is believed that the rural construction needs to be carried out through artistic works and artistic practices, aiming to beautify and reshape the rural environment, and promote the development of diversified forms through the power of the art industry. It is also useful to rebuild the villagers’ confidence based on local cultures, attract more talents to come back to the rural areas, and alleviate the problems of left-behind children and the elderly in rural areas. More suggestions and measures will be developed to lead the revitalization of rural culture with art intervention.

## **Acknowledgements**

This article is sponsored by Dalian Social Science Association: On the Strategies to Art Intervention in Village Culture Construction in Dalian (Project No.: 2020dlskzd211) and the Educational Department of Liaoning Province: On the Establishment of a Framework to Assess the Sustainability of Urban Regeneration --- A Case Study of Liaoning Province (Project No.: J202076)

## **References**

- [1] Mcherry J. A. A Place for the Arts in Rural Revitalization and the Social Wellbeing of Australian Rural Communities. *Rural Society*, 2009, 19 (1): 60-70.
- [2] Kay A. Art and Community Development: The role the arts have in regenerating communities. *Community Development Journal*, 2000.
- [3] Grodach C. Art Spaces in Community and Economic Development: Connections to Neighborhoods, Artists, and the Cultural Economy. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 2011, 31(1): 74-85.
- [4] Tan R. Discussion on the Possibility of Art Promoting Rural Construction. *Art and Design (Theory)*, 2018, 2(08): 56-57.
- [5] Sun X. Theoretical Reflection on Contemporary Chinese Rural Art Activities. *Literary Theory and Criticism*, 2013, 6: 115-118.
- [6] Fang L. On the Involvement of Art in the Construction of Beautiful Rural Areas: From the Perspective of Artistic Anthropology. *National Art*, 2018, 1: 17-28.
- [7] Li L. Public Art and the Reconstruction of Confidence in Local Culture. *Journal of Guizhou University: Art Edition*, 2018, 32(1): 81-85.