

# Multidimensional Analysis and Cognitive Survey of the Artistic Features of Mianzhu New Year Paintings, an Intangible Cultural Heritage

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## Abstract:

As one of the four major New Year paintings in China, Mianzhu New Year paintings have profound historical, cultural connotations and unique artistic charm. This paper explores the artistic features of Mianzhu New Year paintings from various aspects, including craftsmanship, color use, composition and modeling. It also analyzes the strong rural flavor and the spectacular charm of traditional folk art that these paintings convey. Through questionnaires and on-site surveys, we have discovered that Mianzhu New Year paintings currently is facing several issues. For example, their overall popularity is low. The public's understanding of them is limited. There is a gap between people's willingness to participate and their actual actions. To solve these problems, we make some proposals, such as increasing its publicity, making innovation and expanding product varieties, and so on. These suggestions aim to increase the public awareness and participation in the practice of Mianzhu New Year paintings. By doing so, we can enrich the practice of Intangible Cultural Heritage protection and promote better inheritance and development of Mianzhu New Year paintings.

## Keywords:

Mianzhu New Year Paintings, Intangible Cultural Heritage Arts, Multi-Dimensional Deconstruction, Cognition

## 1. Introduction

Mianzhu New Year paintings have been passed down and evolved through successive dynasties. They are deeply embedded in the folk culture of the Bashu region. Whether it's ancient myths, legends, folk tales, or the ordinary details of people's daily lives, each Mianzhu New Year painting vividly depicts these elements.

Artistically, Mianzhu New Year paintings have a distinctive production process that combines woodblock overprinting with hand-painted coloring. The lines are robust, smooth, and detailed. The color schemes are vibrant and rich in symbolic meaning.

The compositions are full, harmonious, and highly structured, while the figures and objects are modeled in an exaggerated yet vivid way, full of life. These unique artistic features set Mianzhu New Year paintings apart from other folk art forms. They are a significant and representative part of China's intangible cultural heritage, embodying the special allure and remarkable creativity of traditional Chinese art.

However, in the era of rapid globalization and modernization, Mianzhu New Year paintings face numerous serious challenges. As the pace of social life quickens, people's lifestyles and aesthetic preferences have changed dramatically. The traditional folk-culture ambiance has weakened to some degree. Folk arts like Mianzhu New Year paintings, which are steeped in rural charm and traditional values, have gradually lost their central place in people's daily lives. Their original consumer base and audience are shrinking steadily.

Meanwhile, modern culture, with its diversity, convenience, and trendy appeal, has swiftly captured the public's attention through powerful communication channels such as the Internet and new media. This has put Mianzhu New Year paintings at a disadvantage in the cultural communication landscape. The younger generation has limited knowledge and a weak sense of connection to these paintings. Besides, there is a shortage of successors. All these factors pose a serious threat to the sustainable development of Mianzhu New Year paintings, making their inheritance and development more difficult than ever.

Under such circumstances, it is of utmost importance to thoroughly and accurately understand how the public perceives Mianzhu New Year paintings. The public plays a crucial role in cultural inheritance and development. Their understanding of these paintings, their interests, their willingness to get involved, and their expectations for the future all directly impact the long-term vitality and social influence of Mianzhu New Year paintings. Only by fully grasping this information can we develop practical protection and inheritance strategies. We can then find ways to integrate Mianzhu New Year paintings into modern social life, enabling them to thrive in the new era. This integration of traditional and modern cultures will lay a solid foundation for the inheritance, innovation, and wide-scale dissemination of Mianzhu New Year paintings.

## **2. Multidimensional Analysis of the Artistic Features of Mianzhu New Year Paintings**

### **2.1. Production Process**

Scholars at home and abroad have conducted multi-angle and comprehensive analyses of the artistic features of Mianzhu New Year paintings. In terms of the production process, Mianzhu New Year paintings adopt a unique method of combining woodblock overprinting and hand-painted coloring. The block-carving process is meticulous. The lines are both rigid and flexible. The overprinting is accurate, and the color layers are rich. The hand-painted part adds vividness and delicacy to the picture, making it different from New Year paintings in other regions. For example, in Liu Chuanjun's "Review on the Artistic Features of Mianzhu New Year Paintings", the unique features of the production process of Mianzhu New Year paintings are introduced in detail, including the exquisite techniques of block-carving, printing, coloring and other links, emphasizing its unique position in folk art [1].

### **2.2. Color Application**

Mianzhu New Year paintings are characterized by bright, intense, and highly contrasting color combinations. The extensive use of primary colors such as red, yellow, and green creates a festive and enthusiastic visual effect. At the same time, each color contains specific folk meanings. For example, red symbolizes good luck and auspiciousness, and yellow implies prosperity and wealth. This color language not only reflects the folk aesthetic taste but also conveys people's longing for a better life. In relevant research such as Liu Xiangyuan's "On the Enlightenment of the Aesthetic Characteristics of Mianzhu New Year Paintings to Graphic Design", the simplicity and unique color matching of Mianzhu New Year paintings are deeply explored [2]. The national characteristics and psychological characteristics reflected by their colors, as well as their inspiration for logo design, are analyzed, expounding on the aesthetic value and cultural connotations of Mianzhu New Year paintings from the perspective of color.

### ***2.3. Design Composition***

Mianzhu New Year paintings mostly follow the principle of fullness and balance. The main body of the picture is prominent. Elements such as figures and scenery echo each other, with proper density. The method of scattered-point perspective is often used to create rich spatial levels, making the entire picture full of storytelling and rhythm as well as demonstrating the superb composition wisdom of folk artists. "On the Humanistic Spirit of Mianzhu Woodblock New Year Paintings" also mentions the cultural connotations and aesthetic values reflected in the composition of Mianzhu New Year paintings from the perspective of humanistic spirit as well as its close connection with folk culture [3].

### ***2.4. Modeling Art***

The modeling of Mianzhu New Year paintings is often exaggerated yet vivid. The figures are full and round, with delicate and lifelike expressions. The animal models are agile and full of vitality. Through the artistic processing of real-life prototypes, the works are endowed with a strong flavor of life and folk customs, and have high artistic value. Works such as "Cai Tong" and "Li Chui Men Shen" created by Chen Xingcai fully embody these artistic features and show unique charm in modeling [4]. Relevant researches also interpret the modeling art when analyzing his works.

## **3. Audience Cognition Research on Mianzhu New Year Paintings**

### ***3.1. Questionnaire Design and Distribution***

This research uses the questionnaire survey method to obtain the public's cognitive and experiential information. With the help of the convenient and efficient online platform of Wenjuanxing, questionnaires were widely distributed to all sectors of society. To ensure that the sample can comprehensively cover diverse population characteristics such as different ages, genders, regions, and cultural backgrounds, during the questionnaire distribution process, various channels were used for publicity and promotion, such as social media groups and schools, etc., striving to maximize the coverage and representativeness of the questionnaire. After the careful organization and collection, 110 valid questionnaires were finally successfully recovered. Subsequently, the SPSS analysis function in the Wenjuanxing applet was used to conduct an in-depth analysis of the questionnaire data, aiming to comprehensively measure the quality and effectiveness of the questionnaire.

### ***3.2. Analysis of the Characteristics of the Surveyed Sample***

In terms of reliability analysis, the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient was used as the main indicator. The analysis results show that when the sample size is 110, the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of the questionnaire is 0.804. According to the conventional standards, a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient between 0.70 and 0.90 usually indicates that the questionnaire has a good reliability level. The result of this questionnaire not only exceeds the lower limit of 0.70 but also is close to 0.80. It fully indicates that the questionnaire has good internal consistency and has high reliability in measuring the constructs studied. It can provide a solid foundation for subsequent empirical analysis. In terms of validity analysis, this research used factor analysis to evaluate the validity of the Mianzhu New Year paintings questionnaire to explore its potential item structure. The results show that the factor structure of the questionnaire is reasonable and can effectively reflect the respondents' cognitive attitudes towards Mianzhu New Year paintings.

#### ***3.2.1. Age Group Distribution***

The statistical results show that participants in the 18-22-year-old age group account for as high as 71.82% of the sample, becoming the main group in this survey. The proportions of participants in the 23-27-year-old and 28-32-year-old age groups are relatively low, only 3.64% and 6.36% respectively. The participants aged 33 and above account for 18.18%. The dominant position of the young group in the survey not only reflects that Mianzhu New Year paintings have a certain appeal to young audiences but also indicates that subsequent research needs to further expand the age coverage of the survey to ensure that the research results are more universal and representative.

#### ***3.2.2. Gender Ratio***

The gender distribution of the participants shows obvious differences. Females account for 76.36% and males account for 23.64%. This gender imbalance indicates that females have a relatively higher participation rate among the surveyed audience. It is suggested that when analyzing the survey data and formulating subsequent publicity and promotion strategies, it is necessary to fully consider the interest preferences and behavioral characteristics of different genders of the audience and implement differential communication and promotion plans.

### ***3.3. Analysis of the Survey Results***

#### ***3.3.1. Understanding of Mianzhu New Year Paintings***

The data shows that 49.09% of the respondents said they had heard of Mianzhu New Year paintings, while the remaining 50.91% said they had never heard of them. This result reflects that although Mianzhu New Year paintings have a certain range of awareness, their overall popularity still needs to be further improved. It is necessary to increase publicity and promotion efforts, broaden communication channels, and innovate communication methods to enable more people to understand this traditional art treasure.

In terms of the specific understanding of Mianzhu New Year paintings, the cognitive level of most respondents is relatively low. The proportion of those who chose "not very understanding" is as high as 64.55%, and only 11.91% of people said

they had a certain understanding. Especially in terms of the historical knowledge of Mianzhu New Year paintings, the total proportion of respondents who “know very well” and “know something” is only 17.28%. This highlights the urgency of strengthening the popularization of Mianzhu New Year paintings knowledge. It is necessary to adopt diverse educational channels, such as school education, community lectures, and online science popularization, and produce rich and professional promotional materials to deeply enhance the public’s understanding of Mianzhu New Year paintings.

In the survey of the awareness of the main themes of Mianzhu New Year paintings, it was found that the awareness rates of traditional themes such as landscape paintings (63.64%), flower-and-bird paintings (62.73%), genre paintings (60.91%), and figure paintings (59.09%) are relatively high, while the understanding of “other” themes is relatively limited. This suggests that in subsequent publicity and promotion activities, in addition to continuing to consolidate and strengthen the display and dissemination of traditional themes, it is also necessary to focus on excavating and promoting relatively niche or uncommon themes. This can be achieved through forms such as holding special exhibitions, carrying out themed lectures, and online work exhibitions to comprehensively enrich the public’s understanding of the theme diversity of Mianzhu New Year paintings.

### ***3.3.2. Information Acquisition Channels***

The survey results show that social media (45.45%) is the primary channel for respondents to learn about Mianzhu New Year paintings. Introductions by family and friends (38.18%), school education (33.64%), and travel experiences (28.18%) also account for a certain proportion. In contrast, traditional media channels such as books, magazines, and TV programs have relatively less influence. This means that in future communication work, on the one hand, it is necessary to give full play to the advantages of social media, such as fast communication speed, wide coverage, and strong interactivity, so as to continuously optimize content creation, add interactive links, and improve user stickiness. On the other hand, it is also necessary to actively expand the depth of cooperation in school education, enrich travel experience projects, and at the same time attach importance to the authority and professionalism of traditional media, integrate multiple channel resources, and build an all-round and multi-level communication network to effectively improve the communication effect of Mianzhu New Year paintings. This also involves research on the integration of intangible cultural heritage communication channels.

### ***3.3.3. Interest Points and Participation Willingness***

The participants’ interest points in Mianzhu New Year paintings mainly focus on traditional art features such as colors and patterns (61.82%), production techniques (60.91%), and historical backgrounds and cultural connotations (56.36%), while the attention to modern innovative applications (47.27%) is relatively low. This situation indicates that on the basis of inheriting and promoting the traditional artistic charm of Mianzhu New Year paintings, it is also necessary to increase the publicity and promotion of their modern innovative applications. For example, we can develop more cultural and creative products that integrate contemporary life elements and meet the aesthetic needs of young consumers, and hold modern innovative application theme exhibitions or experience activities to stimulate the interest of the public, especially the young group, in Mianzhu New Year paintings.

It is gratifying that a large proportion of people are willing to further understand and learn about Mianzhu New Year paintings. The proportion of those who chose “relatively willing” is the highest, reaching 42.73%, and the proportion of “very willing” also reaches 27.27%. For audiences with different degrees of willingness, hierarchical, diverse, and targeted learning and experience activities can be designed, such as basic introductory courses for beginners, advanced study workshops for those with a certain foundation, and parent-child interactive experience activities, etc., to fully mobilize the public’s enthusiasm for participating in the inheritance and development of Mianzhu New Year paintings.

#### ***3.3.4. The Attraction of Mianzhu New Year Paintings and Suitable Occasions***

The survey data shows that the auspicious implications (30%), unique artistic styles (27.27%), and bright colors (21.82%) of Mianzhu New Year paintings are the main factors that attract respondents. Based on this, in subsequent publicity and promotion, product development, and cultural dissemination work, it is necessary to fully highlight these highlights, deeply excavate and vividly display the cultural connotations behind them, and enhance the audience’s sense of identity, love, and cultural belonging to Mianzhu New Year paintings.

Respondents believe that Mianzhu New Year paintings are more suitable for display and use on occasions such as festivals and celebrations (67.27%), cultural exchanges (65.45%), home decorations (56.36%), and travel souvenirs (60%). For these common applicable scenarios, relevant institutions and practitioners can further develop targeted Mianzhu New Year painting product series, strengthen cooperation with travel agencies, cultural event organizers, home decoration enterprises, etc., and through customized design, joint promotion, and other methods, fully enhance the application value and cultural dissemination effect of Mianzhu New Year paintings on different occasions.

#### ***3.3.5. Willingness to Participate in Production Experience Activities***

Overall, the willingness to participate in Mianzhu New Year painting production experience activities is relatively high. Respondents who chose “very willing” and “relatively willing” accounted for a total of 68.18%. To further increase the participation rate, the organization and promotion of activities can be optimized from multiple aspects. For example, we can increase publicity efforts, widely publicize the cultural value, fun, and unique experiences of the experience activities through multiple channels such as social media, community activities, and offline promotional posters; increase the diversity of experience activities, design experience projects covering different difficulty levels, suitable for different age groups and skill levels to meet diverse needs; provide preferential or reward mechanisms, such as providing small gifts, coupons, activity commemorative badges, etc. for participants to enhance the attractiveness of participation; at the same time, actively collect feedback and continuously optimize the activity content, form, and organization process according to the suggestions of participants to continuously improve the activity quality.

#### ***3.3.6. Existing Problems of Mianzhu New Year Paintings and Expected Improvement Directions***

Respondents generally believe that Mianzhu New Year paintings currently face problems such as insufficient publicity (82.73%), lack of innovation (57.27%), and single product types (48.18%). Although the problem of high prices has also received

some attention, its proportion (32.73%) is relatively low and is not the most prominent problem at present.

Therefore, from the perspective of public expectations, they mainly focus on design innovation (65.45%), enriching product types (66.36%), and strengthening publicity and promotion (68.18%). There is also a certain demand for price adjustment (43.64%). This provides a clear direction for the subsequent development of Mianzhu New Year paintings. It is necessary to formulate targeted improvement strategies, such as organizing professional design competitions, inviting well-known artists and designers to participate in cooperation, developing diverse peripheral cultural and creative products, expanding online and offline publicity and promotion channels, and optimizing the product price system.

#### **4. Conclusions**

In recent years, many studies have carried out on the integrated practices in various forms based on the multi-cultural artistic features of Mianzhu New Year paintings. In terms of innovative design, designers have tried to apply modern design concepts with the traditional elements of Mianzhu New Year paintings. They reinterpret its patterns, colors, and modeling, and create works that not only retain the traditional charm but also meet the modern aesthetic needs. For example, the application of Mianzhu New Year painting elements in modern packaging design, fashion design, interior decoration, and other fields has achieved good market responses.

In the integration with digital technology, by means of virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), new approaches have been brought to the display, dissemination, and practice of Mianzhu New Year paintings. Through digital scanning and modeling, the permanent preservation and online display of Mianzhu New Year paintings have been realized. Meanwhile, immersive experience scenes have been created, allowing the audience to seem to be in the artistic world of New Year paintings, and enhancing the fun and interactivity of cultural dissemination. In addition, the integration of Mianzhu New Year paintings and the cultural and educational field has also developed increasingly in-depth. More and more schools have incorporated Mianzhu New Year paintings into school-based courses. By carrying out teaching activities such as handicraft production and art appreciation, students' interests in traditional culture and practical ability have been cultivated, and more potential talent teams have been cultivated for the inheritance of Mianzhu New Year paintings. Accordingly, relevant educational practice research has also emerged continuously. Some schools' research on the development and implementation of school-based courses for Mianzhu New Year paintings records the experiences and achievements in the teaching process.

This paper hopes that through the multifaceted analysis of the artistic characteristics of Mianzhu New Year paintings and the cognitive research of the target groups, the innovative inheritance and development strategies proposed can offer references for further practical research of Mianzhu New Year paintings, as an artistic treasure of the Chinese nation, and help promote its promotion and dissemination.

#### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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