

A strategic study on empowering local cultural tourism innovation and development through higher art education——Take Tianmei Art District as an example

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Abstract Driven by the dual forces of promoting urban consumption and the deep integration of "culture + tourism," higher art education is shifting from a "campus-based cycle" to a "large-scale urban cycle." This article, using the "Tianmei Art District," co-developed by the Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts and Tianjin's Hebei District, as a case study, reviews the development and current status of higher art education both domestically and internationally. It also examines the integration of university art resources with cultural tourism, and outlines a four-tiered empowerment pathway: "education-creation-industry-consumption." This approach offers a replicable and scalable model for leveraging art education to stimulate cultural tourism consumption across the country.

Index Terms higher art education, integration of culture and tourism, Tianmei Art District, urban renewal

I. Introduction

Art education in universities is a crucial component of my country's art education system. With the recent surge in interest in cultural tourism across various regions, driven by efforts to strengthen domestic circulation and stimulate consumption, there is a trend of deep integration across various fields, including sports and culture. How can university art education adapt to this trend and accelerate its integration, effectively aligning talent development with societal needs, while fostering the vigorous development of local cultural tourism industries while producing high-quality individuals with both creative theoretical and practical skills? This has become a key focus for art colleges.

II. The current situation and bottlenecks of the integration of higher art education and industry at home and abroad

II. A. Exploration of the integration of higher art education and industry abroad

Foreign art education started participating in local industrial integration and promoting the transformation of educational content relatively early. In 2002, Richard Florida proposed the concept of "Creative Class" in his book, emphasizing the key role of art education in cultivating creative talents and promoting the cultural tourism economy [1]. In 2008, Kate Oakley et al. introduced the case of the University of the Arts London (UAL) and the East London Cultural and Creative District establishing a "Creative Industries College" and cooperating with the local government to develop Shoreditch, transforming abandoned industrial areas into art districts to attract tourists and cultural and creative enterprises [2]. In 2013, Ann Markusen et al. explored how art schools can activate local cultural and tourism resources through curriculum settings (such as public art and cultural planning) [3]. Many developed countries, including the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Australia, etc., have also formed innovative practices for art education to support and serve local cultural and tourism industries, and have effectively promoted the development of the creative industry.

II. B. My country's higher art education is at a critical stage of integration of industry and education

With the development of the construction of "new liberal arts" in China, the Ministry of Education has started to implement the "Double 10,000 Plan". The Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Ministry of Education have jointly issued a series of measures such as the "Guiding Opinions on Promoting the High-quality Development of Vocational Education in Culture and Arts". It has put forward the requirements of incorporating art education into the urban cultural industry system, introducing academic research and cutting-edge scientific and technological development results into the curriculum, and

cultivating students' comprehensive ability to solve complex problems and advanced thinking. [4] It has put forward the construction goal of making vocational education in culture and arts more compatible with the requirements of cultural undertakings, high-quality development of cultural industries and the integration of culture and tourism by 2025. [5] Fine arts colleges are no longer just about cultivating talents, but need to transform to the comprehensive output of "talent + content + IP" as soon as possible. This often means that relevant colleges need to comprehensively upgrade their professional course settings, training programs, and practical content, step out of the "ivory tower", and embrace new scenarios to meet the needs of transformation. As higher art colleges expand their practical coverage of education and reach a wider audience on the popularization side, while cultivating more professionals with innovative thinking and application capabilities, they can also add new content to the development of urban cultural industries, inject new vitality, and expand new audience groups, thereby promoting cultural innovation and iteration in neighborhoods and scenic spots, and achieving a win-win situation of aesthetic education infiltration in the whole society and regional economic development.

II. C. Bottlenecks in current domestic higher art education

(1) There is a gap between the supply of cultural products and the people's aspirations

China government emphasized at the 2014 Symposium on Literature and Art that "Socialist literature and art, in essence, is the literature and art of the people" [6]. To thoroughly study and implement Xi Jinping's cultural thought, we must firmly stand on the people's side, respect the people's dominant position, and safeguard the people's cultural rights and interests. Art creation in colleges and universities must adhere to this center, place social benefits in an important position, create cultural works that meet the people's cultural needs and enhance the people's spiritual strength, and enhance the people's sense of cultural gain and happiness.

(2) Insufficient utilization of campus resources and low conversion rate of academic achievements

On the one hand, campus academic resources, including research findings and patented technologies, often face a gap in matching with social resources, making it difficult to effectively connect and channel them into the market to realize their commercial value. On the other hand, due to the lack of effective transformation mechanisms, many promising academic achievements remain shelved, failing to contribute to socioeconomic development. This situation not only prevents the full development and utilization of valuable academic resources within universities, but also restricts the dissemination and social influence of academic achievements.

(3) Disconnect between talent cultivation theory and practice

Higher art education has the dual mission of inheriting the Chinese cultural heritage and cultivating new people of the era [7]. Its purpose is to cultivate talents with innovative thinking and artistic practice ability, so that they can continue to explore and innovate in the field of art, transform what they have learned into the ability to solve practical problems, and contribute unique artistic value to society. However, the current problems faced by higher art education are generally that the existing curriculum training system is out of touch with practical education, students lack research and understanding of social needs, lack real work experience, and their artistic creation does not match market desires.

(4) The cultural gap in cities urgently needs support from universities

current consumption growth in the cultural tourism-related industries has become a powerful engine to boost consumption [8]. Urban cultural spaces often lack content and traffic, while universities lack carriers and markets. Cooperation between the two is particularly important. Through in-depth cooperation, urban cultural spaces can introduce rich cultural resources from universities, such as public welfare academic lectures, art exhibitions, etc. to enrich their content and attract visitors. Universities can also use the platform of urban cultural spaces to bring their academic research results, artistic creations, etc. to the market and get out of the application dilemma. Tianmei Art District was born in the context of solving the above pain points.

III. Typical practices of Tianmei Art District in achieving cultural and tourism integration

Domestic higher art education is currently facing a new landscape of content reform, innovative teaching models, and a challenging employment situation. The Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts and the Hebei District of Tianjin have jointly explored a model whereby the "campus is the scenic area, the classroom is the exhibition space, the works are the merchandise, and the residents are the customer base." This has led to the creation of the Tianmei Art District, a fusion of scenic area, campus, neighborhood, and community. This provides a vivid example of how higher art education can participate in urban cultural tourism renewal.

III. A. Space sharing breaks down resource barriers

The Tianmei Art Block, with the Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts as its inspiration, features over 20 public art works within the block. Through the use of "embedded" art installations, "curated cultural living rooms," and "art ecological communities," visitors can upgrade their experience from visiting scenic spots to viewing exhibitions. A number of engaging workshops, including pottery, woodcarving, printmaking, and tie-dyeing, hosted by faculty and students from the school, allow citizens

to experience artistic creation firsthand. Teaching venues such as sculptures, murals, and experimental art studios within the block are open to public visits and oversight in real time, providing a platform for teachers and students to showcase their work and exchange ideas. This approach, through open blocks, eliminates the barriers of campus walls and represents a proactive attempt to share space and resources.

III. B. Achieve scenario-based talent training through curriculum co-construction

The school and the neighborhood operator jointly developed the "Weekend Advanced Research Class" and "Night School Art+" courses. Adhering to the concept of "open sharing and serving society," they are committed to creating a flexible, high-quality lifelong learning platform to meet the diverse needs of professionals, entrepreneurs, and social groups. The university leverages its faculty and teaching resources to integrate talent development into diverse scenarios.

For example, in the evening school course "The Art of Rubbing" opened in July 2025, teachers led students to make rubbings on stone tablets, bronze inscriptions and other physical objects, and to carve them by hand on plaster boards of different hardness in a game-like manner, experiencing the difference between pen and knife techniques, and finally making their own plaster board rubbings, allowing students to deeply perceive the wonderful charm of rubbing art from different dimensions.

Another example is the evening school course "Sewing Art Life – From Old Things to New Beauty" which will be launched in August 2025. It is aimed at students of all ages who use basic sewing techniques to design and produce practical and beautiful home handicrafts, so that they can experience the beauty of life while mastering sewing skills.

III. C. Enhance the city's cultural identity through IP co-creation

The school and the district government worked together to hold the Tianmei graduation exhibition, the young teachers' biennial and the street opening ceremony simultaneously, creating the first "Haihe Youth Art Season" IP in 2025. It has four major sections: urban art exhibition, city and art dialogue, urban aesthetic education workshop, and urban youth art market, covering all scenes such as professional art appreciation, academic dialogue, popularization of aesthetic education, and mass consumption, to build an immersive urban art carnival [9].

III. D. Increase influence through diverse communication methods

During the 2025 Tianmei Graduation Season, campus media outlets took the lead: Tianmei's official website, official WeChat public account, and video account published numerous reports focusing on exhibition openings, exhibition hall scenes, student works, graduation ceremonies, and interviews with graduates. Subsequently, mainstream media outlets, through their professional perspectives, elevated the Tianmei Art District and graduation season to public cultural and artistic hotspots. Authoritative media outlets such as Guangming Daily and Tianjin Daily highlighted the Tianmei Graduation Exhibition and the opening of the Tianmei Art District, exploring the social service role of art schools. Furthermore, the school and the district collaborated with Xiaohongshu and Douyin to establish online promotional and display platforms, allowing art education and the cultural tourism industry to break through barriers and showcase the new landscape of Tianjin's cultural and tourism industry upgrades.

III. E. Industrial symbiosis: joint incubation between schools and enterprises

Among the 19 brand merchants signed by Tianmei Art Block, 4 are the first stores in Tianjin. New business formats such as "curated retail" and "art derivatives market" have appeared one after another. "By building an 'art ecological community', the block can achieve 'see and buy' and effectively activate consumption potential. After the overall operation of the project, it will aggregate more than 130 commercial brands, with an annual consumption amount expected to reach 300 million to 400 million yuan and an annual passenger flow of more than 3 million people [10]. At the same time, the block has also cooperated with Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts to establish an "art creation practice base", providing students with a platform to display their works and incubate entrepreneurship, further promoting the deep integration of art and business.

IV. Paths for Higher Art Education to Empower Cultural Tourism Consumption

By closely uniting high-caliber art schools, local governments, and key industrial enterprises, we can not only promote reform and innovation in university art education, but also foster in-depth collaboration between academia and industry, accelerating the implementation of innovative technologies and creativity. This collaborative model is expected to foster new cultural productivity, promote industrial upgrading, and ultimately achieve sustainable economic development.

IV. A. Educational Activation: Transforming Artistic Literacy into Consumption Motivation

Strengthen interaction and exchange between higher art education and society. Through public lectures, workshops, night schools, and other activities, create opportunities for the public to understand and learn about general art, enhance their

aesthetic abilities and artistic cultivation, and drive the upgrading and transformation of the cultural tourism industry from the source. By raising the public's aesthetic threshold, art education can transform "watching the excitement" into "buying the experience."

IV. B. Creative Activation: Opening up New Channels for Cultural Consumption

Promote innovation in higher art education and local cultural heritage. Integrate local cultural resources to carry out art creation and theoretical research, tap into the unique charm of local culture, and provide a continuous source of spiritual motivation and cultural support for cultural tourism consumption. The Tianmei Art District focuses on the dual drivers of "intangible cultural heritage +" and "digital + art." The southern section of the district introduces projects such as "Brick Liu" to create an innovative model for cultural heritage protection and industrial collaboration; the northern section focuses on cutting-edge fields such as virtual reality and digital collections.

IV. C. Industry Activation: Teachers and Students Co-create Brands

Leveraging art education to promote the development of the cultural and creative industries. Art colleges and universities can leverage their own artistic resources and talent to actively participate in the design and development of cultural and creative products, promote the integrated development of the cultural and creative industries with the tourism industry, and inject new vitality into cultural and tourism consumption. Tianmei's graduate student team collaborated with Liubai Tea to create a "Tea + Illustration" theme store. Teachers and students oversaw illustration updates and pop-up exhibitions, while the brand managed the supply chain and distribution channels, providing a template for "art micro-entrepreneurship."

IV. D. Scenario Activation: Urban Events Create Traffic Peaks

Planning and organizing art activities with distinct themes, such as graduation exhibitions, academic seasons, and art markets, through multi-faceted publicity through integrated media channels, can not only inspire the innovative creativity of teachers and students, expand their international horizons, and enhance the social influence of colleges and universities, but also help local cultural tourism attract public attention, provide tourists with rich cultural experiences, and enhance regional cultural influence. Entering the Tianmei Art District, the boundaries of traditional commerce are completely broken. In the core business district of 7,600 square meters, new business formats such as "curated retail", "art derivative market", and "digital interactive space" are eye-catching. At present, the district has signed contracts with 20 brand merchants, of which 4 are top brands entering Tianjin for the first time. The business formats cover life aesthetics, trendy catering, and immersive entertainment, with a signing rate of 86%. Since the opening of the exhibition area at the end of 2023, the district's passenger flow has increased by 128% year-on-year, and the "multiplier effect" of art premium is significant [11].

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

The successful creation of Tianmei Art Block is the result of close collaboration between the local government and universities, leveraging their respective strengths, revitalizing existing resources, providing precise services to the people, and promoting the upgrading and iteration of university curriculum systems, realizing a successful practice of integrating industry and education, with high promotion and application value.

V. A. Policy

This article suggests incorporating the "University Art Innovation Belt" into the city's land and space planning, granting rent reductions, curatorial subsidies, and tax incentives to encourage art institutions and artists to set up studios and exhibition halls here, and providing a mechanism to guarantee the long-term development and operation of the block; at the same time, strengthen cooperation with more domestic universities, share art education resources, enrich the existing product chain, and continuously enrich the content of cultural and artistic services to provide the people with cultural products with better content and richer categories.

V. B. Institutional side

This article recommends accelerating the construction and reform of "new arts and disciplines". Colleges and universities should actively respond to the needs of the times and deepen education and teaching reforms. On the one hand, it is necessary to optimize the curriculum, introduce more interdisciplinary content and practical courses, include participating tutors in scientific research performance management, and include participating students in credit management, to form a long-term and effective talent investment mechanism. Promote the integration of art with multiple fields such as technology and humanities, and broaden students' knowledge horizons and thinking boundaries. On the other hand, it is necessary to strengthen practical teaching links, introduce more extensive social resources, and through school-enterprise cooperation, project-driven and other forms, let students exercise problem-solving and teamwork abilities in real situations, thereby

improving their comprehensive quality and social adaptability.

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