



“Cold” Thinking on the “Hot” of Digital Media Art Education

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been a phenomenon that the employment rate of digital media art specialty is high, the enrollment is hot, and the popularity of digital media art education has swept the country. With the increasing number of colleges and universities offering digital media art specialty, some problems in digital media art education have been gradually exposed. By analyzing the development status and main problems of digital media art specialty, this paper seeks the causes of the problems, and explores the specific measures and methods to solve the problems, in order to prevent the rapid and overheated development of digital media art specialty, making it develop orderly and healthily, and then provide more digital media art talents in line with the needs of social development for China’s creative industry.

Subject Areas

Higher Education

Keywords

Digital Media Art, Art Education, Education Problems

1. Introduction

With the development of the economy and the improvement of people’s living standards, people’s spiritual needs are increasing day by day, and their artistic pursuit and aesthetic appeal are also improving. The traditional single art category (such as oil painting, sculpture, printmaking, music, film, etc.) has been unable to meet people’s diversified aesthetic needs. People began to pursue comprehensive and all-around artistic enjoyment such as hearing, taste, smell and touch [1]. With the development and improvement of computer technology

and communication technology, digital media art has emerged. It subverts the passive acceptance of traditional artworks, meets people's artistic needs, and allows viewers to change from passive to active and participate actively. Digital media art provides an unprecedented possibility: The audience can not only be a passive recipient of artistic activities, but also an active participant and active creator. At the same time, their experience can be recorded as a part of the work, which greatly mobilizes the enthusiasm and initiative of participants and meets people's spiritual needs. In order to meet the diverse needs of society for art and cultivate more digital media art professionals, digital media art came into being [2].

2. The Development of Digital Media Art Specialty

Digital media art is a new art form based on digital technology and modern media technology, which integrates people's rational thinking and artistic perceptual thinking. It is a new interdisciplinary subject based on art, computer science and communication. It is also a new direction for the expansion of information science to the field of culture and art [3]. With the expansion of the field of digital media, digital media art has penetrated into all aspects of life. The market value of industries related to digital media art continues to expand. The lack of digital media talents has become a bottleneck restricting the rapid development of China's creative industry. Digital media art has attracted extensive attention from China's academic and educational circles [4]. In 2002, the Ministry of Education first approved Beijing Broadcasting Institute (now Communication University of China) to set up the specialty of "digital media art", which opened a precedent for the digital media art specialty in China. Then in 2003, Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications opened this major. In 2004, Dalian Institute of Light Industry (now Dalian University of Technology), Zhejiang Institute of Media, Fuzhou University, Sun Yat-sen University successively set up the majors of digital media art. After that, digital media art majors have sprung up everywhere. By December 2019, 361 undergraduate colleges and universities in China have set up the specialty of digital media art (see **Figure 1** below for specific data). According to statistics, in only 15 years, the number of undergraduate colleges and universities offering digital media art has increased from 6 between 2002 and 2004 to 361 in 2019 [5]. There are four obvious growth peaks, namely 14 in 2005, 45 in 2012, 37 and 42 in 2015 and 2017. Art universities, comprehensive universities, normal universities, colleges of technology and even independent colleges have opened this major one after another, moving towards the fast lane of the development of digital media art specialty. According to the report on employment of Chinese college students released by Mycos Research Institute, digital media art was a green card major¹ in employment in 2018, 2019 and 2020. However, we should treat the development of digital media art with coldness. If colleges and universities do not think seriously, plan ahead, take the

¹It refers to the major with continuously high employment rate and low unemployment.

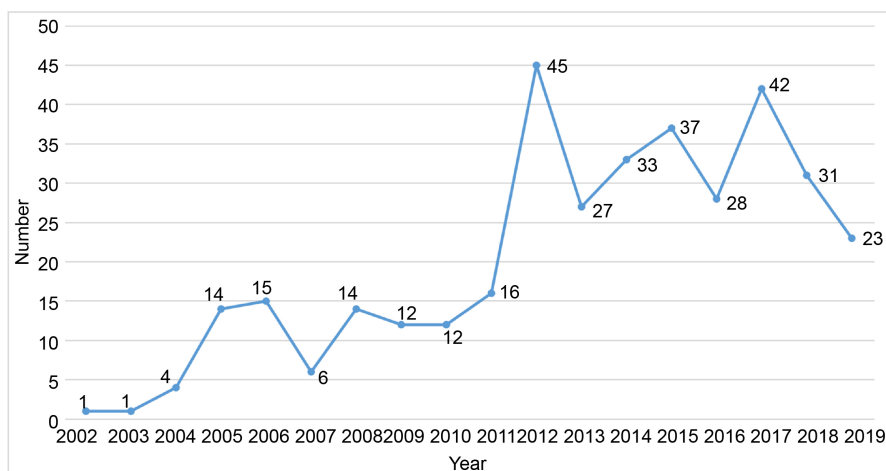


Figure 1. The number of undergraduate institutions setting up the major of digital media art (Data source: Higher Education Department of the Ministry of Education).

road of differentiated development, and develop their own characteristics and influence, it is likely that, like the majors of law, English and animation in the past, there are too many students and serious homogenization. As a result, students cannot find a job and enterprises cannot recruit usable talents. In the end, students, schools and enterprises have been adversely affected.

3. Main Problems in the Development of Digital Media Art Specialty

3.1. Discipline Classification and Professional Positioning

At the beginning of the establishment of digital media art specialty, there was a problem of unclear discipline classification and professional positioning, and its discipline classification has been controversial. Some colleges and universities grant engineering degrees, some colleges and universities grant literature degrees, and very few colleges and universities can grant both engineering and literature degrees. For example, in 2002, Beijing Broadcasting Institute applied for the major of digital media art and was awarded a literature degree. In 2003, when Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications applied for the major of digital media art, it was awarded an engineering degree but changed to a literature degree the next year. In 2004, the major of digital media art was added to the professional catalogue issued by the Ministry of Education, which belongs to the “electrical information” discipline under the engineering category. The professional code is 080623w. Graduates can be awarded an engineering degree or a literature degree [6]. In 2004, four universities offered digital media art majors, among which Sun Yat-sen University and Dalian Institute of Light Industry awarded literature degrees, while Zhejiang Media College and Fuzhou University awarded engineering degrees. In 2005, the digital media art major of Century College of Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications applied for an engineering degree. By 2006, the degree-granting category was adjusted from engineering to engineering or literature [7]. Since then, colleges with strong science

and engineering background mostly awarded engineering degrees, and other colleges and universities mostly awarded literature degrees. The continuous adjustment of discipline classification reflects the confusion of society and universities on the professional understanding of digital media art. Digital media art was not uniformly awarded the degree of art until the new discipline of art was added in 2012. Nevertheless, there is still no consensus on its discipline positioning. Some colleges and universities position digital media art design in computer application disciplines, and some colleges and universities position digital media art design in art design. The inconsistency of positioning reflects the inconsistency of professional understanding. Colleges and universities positioned in the computer application discipline emphasize technology, pay attention to programming, focus on the learning of software knowledge and skills, and ignore the learning of art and design knowledge, which stifles the diversity and originality of artistic creation. The result is that the trained students have the strong practical ability, but the artistic creativity is insufficient, rigid and stylized. What they produce is technical products rather than works of art, which is difficult to meet the market demand for digital media art creation professionals [8]. Some colleges and universities that locate themselves in art, due to their own disadvantages in technology application, excessively exaggerate the role of art in digital media art, exclude the role of computer science and technology in digital media art, focus on the cultivation of students' artistic quality, ignore the dependence of digital media art on technology, split the relationship between art and technology, and set them against each other, The result is a certain artistic creation ability, but due to the backward creative technology, it cannot meet the social requirements for digital media art talents.

3.2. Homogenization and Standardization of Talent Training

Many domestic colleges and universities copy the training program and curriculum system of digital media art major of Communication University of China and Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications. They did not scientifically formulate the training plans and reasonably set the curriculum according to their own discipline advantages and professional characteristics. This way can not reflect the style and school running characteristics of various colleges and universities, highlight their own brand, and meet the development needs of the local economy and cultural and creative industries. In addition, due to the limitations of their own teachers, they are suspected of imitating others. The courses of digital media art major in most colleges and universities have set up basic art design, computer and information technology-related courses and communication-related courses. Many teaching courses are very similar. They do not have their own unique directional courses, do not reflect their own characteristics, and do not reflect the diversity of talent training, resulting in serious talent homogenization. Some colleges and universities rely too much on computer technology, which virtually weakens the value and content of art itself. In fact, com-

puter technology is only an auxiliary means to serve art, not an end. Without the root of art, it becomes passive water and a tree without roots. If we only pay attention to the application of technology and ignore innovation, it is easy to have homogeneous and low-quality artistic creation, and it is difficult to cultivate talents with their own professional characteristics. As a result, most of the students trained are “instrumental” talents of digital media technology, with poor artistic literacy and lack creativity [9].

3.3. The Level of Teachers

The level of teachers is an important index to measure the quality of talent training in a school. “The vitality of a school lies in a stable and high-quality teacher team, which can never be established in a day or two.” [10]. Digital media art requires teachers not only to have skilled computer operation technology but also to have solid artistic literacy and strong artistic creativity [11]. According to relevant data, many domestic colleges and universities offering digital media art have the problem of lack of teachers, which has become one of the important factors restricting the cultivation of digital media professionals [12]. Due to the lack of talents, it is impossible to fill the vacancy of teachers. Many colleges and universities have to allocate teachers from other majors such as computer, graphic design, photography, computer-aided design, film and other related majors to reinforce digital media art teaching. Many of these teachers have not been engaged in digital media art production and research. They hurriedly undertook important teaching tasks after a short period of professional training. Such teachers often can only teach relatively shallow technical knowledge of software operation. Most of them have no experience in operating actual projects and can only explain the subject according to the book and talk on paper in class. They do not have the ability to plan core courses and help guide students to develop and complete creativity, which is not helpful to the development of students’ comprehensive ability [10]. In order to enable the specialty to continue, some colleges and universities “set up courses according to what teacher they have”. For example, teachers of computer specialty set up courses related to computer operation technology directly, and teachers of art specialty undertake art courses. In this way, the digital media art specialty has become a patchwork of art department and computer department [11]. Teachers with different majors and different ways of thinking will have great differences in their professional understanding. In addition, there is a lack of communication and cooperation between teachers. Teaching is separate and not integrated has become the main problem.

3.4. The Source of Students

In recent years, the employment situation of graduates majoring in digital media art is very good, and the enrollment is very popular. However, careful study shows that there are still many problems behind the good source of students.

First, the major of digital media art belongs to the large range of art, but the requirements for the candidate's art level are lower than those of traditional art major, and the score requirements of cultural courses are usually lower than those of other non-art candidates, resulting in the candidates with unsatisfactory cultural performance and ordinary artistic performance applying for the major of digital media art [13]. As Mr. Li Dujin, director of the Admissions Office of the Chinese Academy of fine arts, said: "In many people's view, students who have poor cultural courses and fail to pass the examination of a good university apply for art colleges." [14]. The reason is that in the college entrance examination, candidates majoring in art generally have low scores in cultural subjects. In order to go to a more ideal university, students temporarily adjust their direction, study art and engage in surprise and intensive training. They lack artistic literacy, creative ability, and clear professional learning objectives and motivation [13]. Due to the wrong understanding and blind speculation of candidates, many art students admitted not only to have weak basic skills and low artistic quality, but also lack professional quality, and have a serious tendency to mix diplomas. Second, there are defects in the art entrance examination itself. The subjects of the entrance examination are too mechanized and stylized. Almost all art candidates take the same subjects, such as sketch and color, which limits the candidates to small ability fields and increases the candidates' speculation and blindness, resulting in narrow knowledge, lack of creativity and weak comprehensive ability. As a result, many students who lack artistic literacy and interest joined the ranks of art candidates, inundating many candidates with real talents and learning [15].

4. Measures and Methods

4.1. Improving Enrollment Channels and Controlling the Number of Students

In terms of talent selection, digital media art majors should pay attention to the quality of students, appropriately adjust the traditional enrollment system of admission according to scores, change the traditional enrollment management system and mode of colleges and universities, lock the talent selection goal on the students with innovation and potential. The overall quality of students should be taken into account in enrollment. Students' artistic and technical abilities should be comprehensively evaluated, not just according to the examination scores. The selection mechanism of digital media art professionals should be transformed into a new mechanism that meets the development needs of the times and the needs of the industry, and talents should be selected and trained according to the professional discipline development objectives of talent training. In a word, talents should be selected by using multiple ways [16]. The School of Animation and Digital Art of the Communication University of China has changed the enrollment mode in the enrollment process of digital media art specialty, increased the autonomy of the school, increased the interview link in the enroll-

ment, emphasized the candidates' comprehensive quality, comprehensive ability and creativity, and made those talents suitable for learning digital media art specialty stand out. The "Trinity" enrollment method is adopted in the enrollment of digital media art major of China Academy of Fine Arts. After the comprehensive scores are formed in a certain proportion based on the academic level test scores, college entrance examination scores and school comprehensive test scores, the admission form of selecting the best candidates, emphasizes the integration of art courses and cultural courses, eliminates the speculation of candidates and improves the quality of students [14]. Besides, because the high school students do not know much about the specialty, the universities should make full use of the advantages of modern media in developing the enrollment platform, strengthen the construction of new media such as QQ, WeChat official account and micro-blog, and change passive propaganda into active publicity, so that the candidates can understand more about digital media art and enhance their understanding of digital media art. We can also further develop the source of students majoring in digital media, cancel the restrictions on secondary vocational colleges, and meet the requirements of students with talent and potential. In terms of enrollment scale, for those colleges and universities whose students are not ideal, the social response effect is not good, and the software and hardware conditions are unqualified, we should strictly control the enrollment indicators, and adopt the methods of reducing the enrollment indicators or stopping enrollment to promote the colleges and universities to improve the school running conditions.

4.2. Having a Clear Orientation of Talent Training, Exploiting the Existing Advantages and Forming More Characteristic Majors

With the rapid development of digital media art and the large scale of graduates, it is worth pondering how colleges and universities integrate with the market, highlight their school running characteristics and advantages and stand out. When setting up majors, colleges and universities must make full use of their existing advantages according to their own years of school running experience, combined with the professional characteristics and comprehensive ability of the school, and determine the focus according to the strength of teachers. They should not blindly follow the trend and follow the trend but should develop their strengths and avoid weaknesses and develop their own characteristics. Scientifically and reasonably formulate characteristic talent training methods that can meet the needs of the development of cultural and creative industries training objectives, and integrate their own advantages into the development of digital media art, so as to create the professional characteristics of digital media art in our school. For example, art colleges and universities should set the direction in design in combination with their own art advantages and creative expertise [17]. Comprehensive universities should combine their advantages of interdisciplinary and advantageous disciplines to determine the training direction. Polytechnic colleges should combine their own advantages in science and engineering to

make more articles in the fields of game design, video transportation and so on. Normal universities should combine the “technology” of educational technology with the “art” of digital media to highlight their professional advantages. Colleges and universities in minority areas can organically combine the professional art of digital media with national characteristics according to the local unique national characteristics, vigorously develop ethnology, and make the professional art of digital media have a strong local flavor [17]. In short, colleges and universities should carry out curriculum and teaching arrangements in combination with their own characteristics. They should make full use of their own advantageous resources and discipline characteristics, rather than copy others. As for Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, the digital media art specialty is based on the technological superiority of information technology, and takes “Internet + digital content” as its characteristic to cultivate the compound talents of “digital creativity × information technology”. The digital media art major of Jiangnan University takes the ability of digital art, animation and interactive design as an important direction for talent output and training according to its own discipline characteristics [18]. Northwest University has achieved good results in combining regional advantages, highlighting the cultivation of “mass entrepreneurship and innovation” ability, leveraging the advantages of Shaanxi cultural relics and Shaanxi higher education resources, combining digital media art with cultural and creative industries, and combining applied art design with the shaping of urban cultural business cards. The social demand for digital media art talents is diversified, and the cultivation of talents cannot be a model, but should develop in the direction of diversification. All colleges and universities offering digital media art specialty combine their own characteristics and discipline advantages to cultivate digital media art professionals with their own characteristics according to the local economic and cultural needs.

4.3. Strengthening the Construction of Teaching Staff

As an emerging specialty, most colleges and universities in China are short of teachers to varying degrees. Whether we can cultivate a group of digital media art talents with excellent professional quality and meet the market demand depends on whether there is a high-quality teacher team with excellent professional quality and whether it can support this specialty. Only high-level teachers can cultivate high-level talents. In view of the current situation of the shortage of teachers majoring in digital media art in colleges and universities, colleges and universities should use a variety of methods to open up channels and improve the strength of teachers [19]. First, for those young and potential teachers in the existing teaching team, send them to foreign famous schools and colleges with high professional level of digital media art for further study. The second is to send them to universities with better domestic conditions, such as Beijing Film Academy or Communication University of China, to study for a short time and improve the level of education and teaching. Qualified colleges and universities

should also actively undertake the task of training teachers. Another is to hire experts with practical experience in the digital media industry to enrich the teaching team, guide students' practical training and improve teachers' practical ability [13]. In view of the shortage of teachers in a single school, teachers in a region can be united, resources can be shared, and multi-school teachers can complement each other and teach together, so as to make up for the shortage of teachers and promote the common prosperity of digital media art education.

5. Conclusion

The major of digital media art has developed rapidly in recent years. In the specific development process, there may appear different problems. Colleges and universities should formulate training plans, determine curriculum systems, develop their own characteristics, take the road of combining technology and art, and cultivate more usable talents for society. In view of the current situation of the development of digital media art specialty, this paper points out and discusses the main problems existing in the development of digital media art specialty, and puts forward some corresponding solutions and methods for specific problems, but the effectiveness of these measures and methods can only be shown with the cooperation of relevant departments.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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