

# Research on Portrayal of Figures in Murals of Fahai Temple

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**Abstract:** The murals of Fahai Temple, as an outstanding representative of the court art of the Ming Dynasty, have extremely high artistic research value in terms of character portrayal. This article, through the methods of literature review and image analysis, systematically sorts out the shaping techniques and artistic features of the figures in the murals of Fahai Temple, with a focus on analyzing their line drawing techniques, color application, composition layout and modeling characteristics. Meanwhile, this article explores the application prospects and development paths of these traditional art elements in contemporary fields such as digital protection, art education, cultural and creative design, and international communication. Research shows that the figures in the murals of Fahai Temple not only reflect the exquisite craftsmanship of traditional Chinese painting, but also have significant contemporary transformation value. Through innovative application and dissemination, this cultural heritage can provide rich resources and inspiration for modern artistic creation and the development of the cultural industry.

**Keywords:** The Murals of Fahai Temple, The Figures, The Shaping Techniques, Contemporary Applications, and Cultural Heritage.

## 1. Introduction

The Ming Dynasty murals in Fahai Temple, Beijing, represent the peak achievements of court mural art in the 15th century of China. They are renowned worldwide for their unparalleled exquisite craftsmanship, grand and magnificent composition, and rich and elegant colors. As an important cultural heritage with a royal background, the art of shaping the figures in its murals epitomizes the highest level of painting skills during this period. These images not only carry profound cultural implications, but also ingeniously integrate the solemn sense of ceremony, the exquisite aesthetic taste of the court and the vivid humanistic atmosphere, constituting their unique artistic charm. At present, research on these precious artistic heritages is expanding from traditional art history analysis to broader interdisciplinary application fields. This study aims to systematically sort out and summarize the technical features, aesthetic styles and cultural connotations of the Fahai Temple murals in terms of character image creation, and focuses on exploring their potential value and transformation paths in the context of contemporary digital art, design innovation and cultural dissemination, with the aim of providing a new academic perspective for the living inheritance and international development of this traditional art.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Research on Iconography and Style Analysis

The foundation of the research on the murals of Fahai Temple lies in the in-depth analysis of their intrinsic art, that is, the analysis of their images and styles. Research in this direction provides a solid academic foundation for the recognition of character images and the determination of their artistic value.

Liu Shaohui (2021) conducted an in-depth analysis of the

images of the twenty celestial beings in the "Buddha Worship Painting of Indra Brahma" on the North Wall, pointing out that the character designs inherited the elegant style of Song and Yuan paintings[2], with smooth and expressive lines, and incorporated the characteristics of Ming Dynasty court art that emphasized realism and narrative. Wang Jiquan (2017) took "Water Moon Guanyin" as the core case and incisively analyzed the artistic characteristics of "rigorous, exquisite, free and serene" displayed by her female image[5]. Xiao Jing emphasized the prominent "secularization" feature of the murals in Fahai Temple[6], believing that the painters drew on both imperial and folk images when creating characters, and in the application of colors, they took into account both the realism of "coloring according to the category" and the decorative effect of "five-color display". Zhang Boyan's (2024) research on male images in temple murals of the Ming Dynasty provides a valuable reference framework for the comparative analysis of male images in the murals of Fahai Temple[7]. These studies jointly constructed a traditional cognitive system for the figure modeling, lines, colors and composition of the murals in Fahai Temple.

### 2.2. Research on Contemporary Applications and Innovative Practices

The new research trend focuses on exploring the innovative application and practice of the figures in the murals of Fahai Temple in contemporary art and design, with an emphasis on the "regeneration" and "transformation" of traditional culture.

Liu Siwei (2023) explored the feasibility and value of integrating the character elements from the murals of Fahai Temple into computer graphics art (CG)[3], arguing that this fusion represents a cultural "blending" and innovation. Zhao Tangyu (2023) verified through specific creative projects the feasibility of applying visual languages such as lines and colors from murals to modern thematic digital illustrations[9]. Gao Yijun and Cui Qing (2020) proposed a creative concept of extracting the patterns and expression techniques from the

headwear and clothing of the figures in the Fahai Temple murals and transforming them into modern logo designs[1]. Zhang Ziye (2022) attempted to reflect on the murals of Fahai Temple from the disciplinary perspective of modern public art[8], exploring the reference value of its artistic style and spatial creation methods for modern public art creation. Song Ziqi's (2025) research on the cross-media display of murals provides a reference idea for the diversified display of the figures in the murals of Fahai Temple[4].

### 2.3. Summary of Literature Review

To sum up, the existing research has formed two main threads: the study of images and styles of traditional art itself, and the exploration of applications and innovations for the future.

However, existing research shows a certain degree of separation. Traditional research has sufficient depth but has not been fully extended to contemporary value discussions. Applied research, on the other hand, is mostly scattered case practices and lacks a systematic integrated framework. Specifically, the academic circle still lacks a comprehensive review study that can systematically connect the complete chain of "traditional techniques - aesthetic features - cultural expression - contemporary transformation".

Therefore, the research gap of this article lies in: bridging the gap between traditional art history analysis and contemporary innovative practice, and conducting a systematic review of the character image creation in the Fahai Temple murals that Bridges the past and the future. This research will not only summarize his artistic achievements, but also focus on exploring how to transform these classical essences into dynamic and international contemporary cultural languages, providing clear directions and path references for future academic and creative practices.

## 3. Shaping Techniques and Artistic Features of Figures in Murals of Fahai Temple

The murals in Fahai Temple represent the highest achievement of painting art in the Ming Dynasty. The creation of its character images employs a variety of exquisite techniques. These techniques together constitute the unique artistic language of murals. This chapter will conduct an analysis from four aspects: lines, colors, composition and modeling.

### 3.1. Line Drawing Technique

The use of lines is the most distinctive artistic feature of the murals in Fahai Temple. The painter uses a variety of line drawing techniques to depict the figures. Wire drawing is used to outline the contours of figures and the main lines of clothing. This kind of line is uniform and powerful, demonstrating the ability to control height. The blue leaf stroke is used to depict the soft texture and dynamic state of clothing. The variations in the thickness of the lines are natural and smooth, full of rhythm. The hairline drawing is even more meticulous and is used to depict facial expressions and hand details. These lines not only shape the form but also convey the character's demeanor and temperament. The organization of the lines is well-balanced in density and sparseness, maintaining the overall unity while enriching the layering of the picture.

### 3.2. Rich and Brilliant Color Expression

The use of colors reflects the magnificent style of court art in the Ming Dynasty. The mural uses a large amount of mineral pigments and plant pigments. Cinnabar, lapis lazuli, lapis lazuli and other colors are bright and long-lasting. The extensive use of gold is another important feature. The gilding process with powder coating makes the golden pattern protrude from the picture. This technique enhances the three-dimensional effect and visual impact of the image. The color matching follows traditional aesthetic principles. The main color tones are unified and harmonious, while the details are rich in variation. Colour not only has a decorative function but also carries symbolic meaning. Different colors represent different identities and statuses. The overall color effect is both solemn and elegant, as well as sumptuous and magnificent.

### 3.3. Rigorous and Harmonious Composition and Layout

The composition design embodies the balance concept of traditional aesthetics. The character arrangement follows a strict hierarchical order. The main character is located at the center of the picture. The secondary characters are arranged in order of importance. This layout embodies traditional etiquette norms. At the same time, the composition emphasizes the overall harmony and unity. The characters are connected through their postures and eyes. The background elements and characters form an organic whole. The spatial treatment adopts the traditional scattered perspective method. This method breaks the limitation of a single perspective. The picture can not only present grand scenes but also display fine details. The composition maintains a sense of solemnity while not losing its vividness.

### 3.4. Image Creation with Realism and Idealism

The character design integrates realistic and idealized features. Facial profiling emphasizes the expression of individuality. People of different ages and genders have their own characteristics. The elders have kind faces, while the young are full of vigor. Women are dignified and elegant, while men are majestic and solemn. The clothing presentation is extremely exquisite and magnificent. The treatment of the clothing texture not only conforms to the anatomical structure but also has decorative beauty. The fabric patterns are depicted with meticulous detail. The depictions of ornaments and weapons are equally precise and meticulous. The posture design is dramatic and narrative. Each character is at a specific moment of action. These movements are both natural and vivid, as well as symbolic. The relationships among characters are reflected through their postures and interactions.

Overall, the character portrayal in the murals of Fahai Temple has reached an extremely high artistic standard. The techniques are skillfully and freely applied, and the artistic expression is profound and touching. These features make it an important example for the study of Ming Dynasty paintings. It also provides a rich source of inspiration for contemporary art creation.

## 4. Implications and Future Application suggestions

The artistic value of the murals in Fahai Temple lies not only in their historical achievements but also in their

enlightening significance for contemporary art. This chapter will explore its application value and development direction in the modern context.

#### 4.1. Digital Protection and Display Innovation

Digital technology offers new approaches for the protection of cultural heritage. High-precision scanning can fully record the details of murals. These data provide important basis for research and restoration. Virtual reality technology creates immersive viewing experiences. The audience can enjoy the mural art up close. Augmented reality technology can superimpose mural elements onto real scenes. This display method is more vivid and interesting. Digital technology can also achieve dynamic display of cultural relics. Present the narrative content in the mural through animation. These innovative methods can attract a broader audience. Especially the younger generation of digital natives.

#### 4.2. Art Education and Practical Application

Mural art should be incorporated into the modern education system. Its techniques can serve as a model for traditional painting teaching. The application of lines and color matching are particularly worth learning. Specialized research courses can be offered by art majors in colleges and universities. Relevant content can also be introduced into art education in primary and secondary schools. Learn the essence of traditional painting through copying. There is a wide range of application space in the field of artistic creation. Mural elements can provide inspiration for contemporary painting. The character designs and composition methods are both worth learning from. The design field can also draw inspiration from it. The patterns and color combinations of clothing have modern value. These applications contribute to the contemporary inheritance of traditional art.

#### 4.3. Cultural and Creative Products and Brand Design

The cultural and creative industry is an important application field. Extract the visual elements from the mural and redesign them. Character images can be transformed into modern design language. Clothing patterns are suitable for textile design. Color combinations can be applied to the design of various products. Mural elements can be integrated into brand building. Corporate image design draws on traditional aesthetics. The packaging design employs classical pattern designs. These applications can enhance the cultural connotation of the products. The development of tourist souvenirs has a broad market. Replicas and derivatives meet the collection needs. Educational products help disseminate cultural knowledge. These products can promote the dissemination and promotion of culture.

#### 4.4. International Communication and Cultural Exchange

The murals in Fahai Temple represent the highest achievements of Chinese art. Its international dissemination is of great significance. Digital platforms provide global communication channels. Social media can be used to share exquisite images of murals. Online exhibitions break through geographical limitations. International cooperation promotes academic exchanges and research. Cooperate with foreign museums to hold exhibitions. Academic institutions carry out comparative research projects. The exchange and creation of artists can generate new sparks. The export of cultural

products spreads artistic value. The design works will participate in international exhibition activities. The publication promotes research results in multiple languages. These activities can enhance cultural soft power.

In conclusion, the artistic value of the murals in Fahai Temple requires contemporary interpretation and innovative application. Realize the modern transformation of traditional art through various channels. This not only benefits cultural inheritance but also enriches contemporary artistic creation. Ultimately, this precious heritage will be rejuvenated with new vitality.

## 5. Conclusion

This study systematically explores the shaping art of the figures in the murals of Fahai Temple and its contemporary value. The murals, through exquisite line drawing techniques, brilliant color expression, rigorous composition and layout, as well as the combination of realistic and idealistic image creation, demonstrate the high achievements of Ming Dynasty painting art. These artistic features not only have historical value but also provide a rich source of inspiration for contemporary art creation. Research shows that through multi-dimensional approaches such as digital technology, educational practice, cultural and creative development, and international communication, the artistic essence of the murals in Fahai Temple can gain new vitality in the modern context. Future research should further explore the ways in which traditional artistic elements are combined with modern aesthetic demands, promote the innovative development and global dissemination of this precious cultural heritage, and provide strong support for enhancing cultural confidence and promoting cultural exchanges.

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