

# Exploring the Artistic Value Orientation of Digital Virtual Images from Traditional Photography: Post-Print

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## Abstract

Digital virtual imaging represents a product of the technological era, having shattered traditional image forms and delivered an entirely novel visual experience. This influence is inherently dialectical—namely, whether it exerts a negative or positive effect on the development of traditional image art. As every advantage carries its corresponding disadvantage, we endeavor to explore its artistic value orientation in pursuit of an ideal objective.

## Full Text

### 1.1 The Dilemma of Digital Imagery

For the field of documentary photography, particularly digital darkroom imaging technology, the technique of “creating something from nothing, making the fake appear real” can effortlessly transform a British queen into a black indigenous woman. This kind of “reversing black and white” recreation is undesirable. The manifestation of digital imagery is not direct but mediated through screens. That is to say, to view digital image content, one must rely on electronic devices. With the popularization of electronic equipment, people increasingly store image materials on digital storage media, such that once separated from these devices, the image materials completely disappear and cease to exist. Traditional image materials fare much better in this regard, as they retain physical negatives; today we can still view photographic content from a century ago.

This “visible but intangible” nature of digital imagery causes us to lose a sense of weight, rendering emotions hollow. In the traditional sense, image materials exist as physical matter with volume and weight that can be directly touched. They undergo temporal changes, showing age and wear, and it is precisely this sense of authenticity that allows people to project their emotions onto the physical object. While the image itself is important, it is only one component and

cannot replace everything. In a sense, “vision” detached from materiality can only be considered illusion.

The convenience of digital virtual technology leads to the degradation of photographic technique and culture. People no longer need to expend effort and time learning skills such as light metering and focusing, nor do they require basic training in photographic techniques—all of which have been considerably simplified by digital cameras. Additionally, the use of computer modification techniques can easily reduce photography to a mere accumulation and collage of beautification techniques, resulting in the proliferation of generic, personality-devoid digital technology.

## 1.2 The Responsibility of Digital Imagery

Digital darkroom technology can actively improve imperfections in image materials to a certain extent, but it also poses unprecedented challenges to their credibility. The original purpose of imagery was to replicate and reproduce real scenes as they occurred—an objective record that was one-time and unalterable. Initially, image materials were regarded as on-site eyewitness evidence with undeniable authority. However, the emergence of digital darkroom technology has subverted this concept, making image fabrication virtually costless.

Of course, in the realm of artistic creation, modifications and recreations of images are welcomed, provided that such alterations do not cause cognitive ambiguity. However, for documentary photography, this “reversing black and white” recreation is undesirable. Furthermore, digital virtual imagery primarily relies on modern digital media, network media, and various digital smart devices. Through television, film, animation, video, and other forms, it presents relevant cultural information resources, thereby achieving the sharing and dissemination of data information and cultural resources. It possesses certain characteristics of interactivity, inheritance, and sharing. Leveraging the advantages of digital imagery and using it as a platform facilitates the digital reproduction of culture and art, expanding the scope of artistic value dissemination.

Conducting fragmented online promotion and dissemination enables timely digital transmission of aesthetic art. Employing multimedia and internet thinking establishes a multi-media linkage dissemination mechanism to achieve the digital, informational, and networked dissemination of cultural artworks. Additionally, based on the actual development of digital virtual imagery, it can expand the social influence of excellent cultural products, deepen people’s understanding and cognition of the aesthetic value of culture and art, foster a favorable aesthetic environment, and promote the further development of excellent culture.

## 2.1 The Artistic Value Embodied by Digital Virtual Imagery

Aesthetic value is the result of human aesthetic activity itself. Virtual imagery becomes the object of human aesthetic activity through the application of certain aesthetic standards and scales for measurement and judgment. As a material image, virtual imagery not only develops alongside the development of imaging art but also evolves with the advancement of digital imaging technology. Digital applications have permeated our lives today—digital cameras, computer terminals, digital television, digital DVDs, etc.—immersing us in a modern digital wave that brings different visual aesthetic effects. Although it is a virtual sensory experience, we can still perceive beauty. In summary, as a visual aesthetic object, digital virtual imagery has brought us entirely new aesthetic methods.

Moreover, digital virtual imagery mainly utilizes modern digital media, network media, and various digital smart devices to present relevant cultural information resources through television, film, animation, video, and other forms, thereby achieving the sharing and dissemination of data information and cultural resources, with certain interactivity, inheritance, and sharing characteristics. Leveraging the advantages of digital imagery and using it as a platform helps achieve the digital reproduction of culture and art, expanding the scope of artistic value dissemination. Conducting fragmented online promotion and dissemination enables timely digital transmission of aesthetic art. Employing multimedia and internet thinking establishes a multi-media linkage dissemination mechanism to achieve the digital, informational, and networked dissemination of cultural artworks. Additionally, based on the actual development of digital virtual imagery, it can expand the social influence of excellent cultural products, deepen people's understanding and cognition of the aesthetic value of culture and art, foster a favorable aesthetic environment, and promote the further development of excellent culture.

## 2.2 The Transformation of Aesthetic Modes from “Normal” to “Pluralistic”

If traditional imaging art belongs to the “normal” artistic form, then digital virtual imaging art is gradually losing its “normal” attributes, transforming into a pluralistic artistic form oriented toward leisure. The audience's acceptance of artworks has consequently shifted from concentrated contemplation to diversified forms of leisure consumption. The difference between the two lies in that in the normal state, the viewer's perspective exists within the rational visual category of a self-contained realm outside the work, whereas in the pluralistic state, the viewer exists within the emotional category of a selfless realm inside the work.

Digital virtual imagery breaks through limitations in dissemination platforms and geographical locations, enhancing aesthetic effects. For example, design-

ing cultural artworks as smartphone ringtones and screen wallpapers promptly transmits dynamic videos and tangible photos to mobile clients for information dissemination and delivery. Through intelligent digital device clients, classifying and disseminating image information according to aesthetic needs, conducting networked promotion, and enabling keyword searches to deliver relevant information to corresponding clients, thereby satisfying people's personalized aesthetic needs.

### 2.3 Virtual Imagery Broadens Human Aesthetic Domains

Aesthetic activity is a process that uses specific media to express beauty. Aesthetic taste possesses both aesthetic ideality and aesthetic interest, which are established on the basis of material images. The virtualization of images by digital virtual imagery allows exaggeration and imagination to be fully expressed and realized in people's aesthetic processes toward these virtual objects, enabling people's aesthetic tastes to be more fully satisfied in terms of ideality and interest. With the development of modern digital technology, virtual imaging technology allows people to appreciate images that are difficult to realize, meeting special needs for artistic expression. For instance, the giant gorilla and shocking scene images in the movie *King Kong* were accomplished through digital virtual technology. It is precisely through the application of digital technology that people are presented with stunning illusions and exquisite splendor. This represents a refresh of traditional aesthetic concepts and a new aesthetic form derived from digital virtual imagery itself. It provides broad visual aesthetic space and categories for different groups.

Virtual imaging technology can provide people with a sense of personal experience. In a visualized aesthetic space, the recipient can obtain a sense of aesthetic freedom. In this virtual image space, freed from the constraints and limitations of fixed material images in real life, people's visual aesthetic space becomes broader. Moreover, with the arrival of the information society, modern computer technology and network technology occupy an important position in people's actual lives and play an irreplaceable role. The internet platform can serve as a promotion platform for digital virtual imagery, capable of promptly transmitting dynamic videos to audiences and expanding the scope of aesthetic element dissemination. With the aid of digital imaging internet platforms, it helps achieve cross-platform transmission of cultural artworks, breaking through limitations in dissemination platforms and geographical locations, enhancing aesthetic effects.

## 3. The Elitism and Mass Character of Virtual Imagery Aesthetics

Traditional art often gives the impression of being sacred, a privilege exclusive to a minority who can appreciate and possess it, and is therefore also referred to as elite culture. However, virtual imagery art created with digital technology

differs from traditional art—it is rooted in the masses and represents a popular aesthetic culture. The aesthetic attributes of virtual imagery constrain the orientation of mass aesthetic values, imbuing visual consumption with a certain spirituality and elevating vulgar culture. It is precisely under the influence of this aesthetic popularization that imaging art has been rapidly and widely integrated into life, becoming a new visual culture that intervenes in our lives.

More importantly, the aesthetic value of virtual imagery deconstructs the constraints of rationality on humanity in an extremely sensualized form, particularly during the digital wave era, playing an important role in dismantling the elitist form of traditional aesthetics. In summary, as the modernity of sensual aesthetics in the digital era, mass aestheticization not only constitutes modernity but also fosters the aesthetic effect of sensual alienation. This mass-oriented trend not only reflects the historical transformation of “aesthetic life-ization” and “life aesthetic-ization” but also demonstrates the ideological shift in aesthetics evolving from “elitism” to “mass character.” The alignment and sublimation of this aesthetic “massification” phenomenon with modernity have further elevated aesthetic consciousness.

Digital virtual technology has undeniably entered our real life and influences our understanding of visual art images in the traditional sense. It possesses enormous potential in the development of imaging art, can create artistic effects unattainable in reality, and will have an extremely profound artistic influence on future imaging development.

## References

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