

BREAKTHROUGH INNOVATION RESEARCH ON TEXTURE LANGUAGE AND CARRIER SUBSTRATES IN CONTEMPORARY LACQUER PAINTING

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Abstract: To address the bottlenecks of formulaic texture expression and singular carrier substrates in traditional lacquer painting, break free from the constraints of traditional creative paradigms on contemporary lacquer painting innovation, and adapt to the aesthetic demands of contemporary public art spaces, diversified creative concepts, and cross-media integration trends, this study employs literature research, comparative research, case analysis, and experimental verification methods. Taking the iteration of contemporary lacquer painting texture language and the expansion of carrier substrates as dual core entry points, the study systematically investigates the transformation pathways of texture language from formulaic decoration to conceptualized tactility and from flat single-layer to three-dimensional composite structures, as well as the breakthrough pathways of carriers from traditional natural substrates to industrial composite, flexible ecological, and digitally prefabricated substrates. Empirical analysis is conducted in conjunction with outstanding cases from mainstream domestic lacquer painting exhibitions and experimental results from university lacquer art programs. The findings reveal that traditional lacquer painting textures are confined to classic formulas such as eggshell inlay and conventional varied coating techniques, while carriers are fixed in the form of solid wood panels with fabric mounting, resulting in shortcomings such as insufficient visual tension and poor weather resistance. Contemporary lacquer painting has constructed a diverse composite texture system through refined translation of traditional textures, cross-disciplinary texture integration, and digital texture empowerment, while forming a full-scenario adaptive carrier application system through innovations including traditional substrate improvement and the introduction of industrial carriers. Among these, 3D-printed prefabricated texture bodies can reduce manual forming errors by more than 60%, and the stability of improved wood substrates has more than doubled. The study confirms that the synergistic innovation of texture and carrier is the core pathway for contemporary lacquer painting to transcend boundaries and reshape its artistic character, and that upholding the intrinsic properties of natural lacquer is the fundamental prerequisite for innovation. It is recommended to establish industry standards for lacquer painting material applications, strengthen material ethics and sustainable creation orientations, promote the deep integration of texture techniques, carrier applications, and thematic expression, improve the living inheritance mechanisms of intangible cultural heritage, and provide theoretical support and practical paradigms for the quality enhancement of contemporary lacquer painting creation and its implementation in public spaces.

Keywords: contemporary lacquer painting, texture language, creative carrier, material innovation, cross-media lacquer art

1. INTRODUCTION

Natural lacquer is a core artistic material with distinctive Oriental character, encompassing both natural-ecological and cultural-historical attributes. Through the layered textures formed by lacquer application, accumulation, polishing, and inlay techniques—combined with compatible substrate materials—it constitutes the fundamental structural core of lacquer painting as an art form, and serves as the defining characteristic that distinguishes lacquer painting from other painting genres (Chen, 2022). Against the backdrop of the creative transformation and innovative development of China’s outstanding traditional culture, lacquer painting has transcended its former subordinate role as a decorative craft attached to traditional lacquerware, evolving into an independent and mature modern visual art category. It has secured a prominent position within the core creative sequence of national comprehensive fine arts exhibitions and is widely applied across diverse contexts, including urban public space art education, cultural tourism venue installations, and thematic exhibitions in contemporary art museums (Wu, 2023). Looking back at the development of lacquer painting, classical and modern lacquer painting has consistently adhered to a closed-loop traditional creative system, in which texture creation served the needs of object decoration and surface embellishment. Substrates were limited to the single form of solid wood panels with fabric mounting, suited only to basic applications such as small desktop display pieces and simple interior furnishings, with fixed formal conventions and narrow creative boundaries (Li, 2023). As contemporary art entered a phase of pluralistic coexistence, emerging forms such as minimalist art, mixed-media art, and digital art rose rapidly, and public aesthetic preferences shifted toward individuality, contextual specificity, and immersive experience. The creative limitations of traditional lacquer painting became increasingly apparent: the visual tension of flat textures proved insufficient for large-scale public art wall installations; solid wood substrates were prone to moisture-induced

warping and lacked weather resistance, making them unsuitable for long-term outdoor display; and the formulaic texture vocabulary suffered from severe homogeneity, rendering it inadequate for conveying artists' individual emotional expression and contemporary humanistic reflection (Zhou & Li, 2023). On this basis, reconstructing the textural language system of lacquer painting and breaking through the boundaries of traditional substrate application have become central research topics shared by contemporary lacquer artists and researchers alike (Lai & Kou, 2024). Grounded in three dimensions—technical practice, material experimentation, and aesthetic inquiry—this study conducts an in-depth analysis of the logic underlying innovative texture techniques and the value of cross-disciplinary substrate applications, balancing the inheritance of traditional lacquer art heritage with the practical realization of contemporary creative work, and contributing to the sustained, high-quality development of lacquer painting as an art form (Feng, 2026).

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study focuses on the innovation of textural language in contemporary lacquer painting and the expansion of substrate applications. The research subjects include representative works of classical lacquer painting texture as well as innovative contemporary lacquer painting practices. Classical lacquer painting samples were drawn from works created on solid wood substrates spanning the Warring States period through the Ming and Qing dynasties, with a focus on representative examples of eggshell inlay and conventional variation-coating techniques (China Artists Association Lacquer Painting Committee, 2024). Contemporary lacquer painting samples were selected from outstanding easel works, lacquer art installations, and public lacquer painting projects featured in the National Lacquer Painting Exhibition and the International Lacquer Painting Biennial, with an emphasis on texture innovation and cross-disciplinary substrate use, including experimental lacquer art works produced by university programs (Qiao, 2018). Four core research methods were employed: the literature review method, through which classical texts such as *An Introduction to Chinese Lacquer Painting Art* and *Xiushi Lu*, along with core journal articles and industry development reports on lacquer art innovation published within the past five years, were systematically reviewed to establish a solid theoretical foundation (Pan, 2021); the comparative research method, through which differences between traditional and contemporary lacquer painting in terms of texture techniques, substrate types, and application contexts were examined to identify key points of innovation and breakthrough (Xue, 2023); the case analysis method, through which outstanding works from mainstream domestic lacquer painting exhibitions and experimental university lacquer art cases were selected to analyze the logic of texture innovation and the value of substrate applications (Chen, 2022); and the experimental verification method, through which small-scale experiments—including refined translation of traditional textures and compatibility testing of new substrates—were conducted to verify the feasibility and practicality of innovative techniques, thereby ensuring the scientific rigor and operational applicability of the research findings.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS ON TEXTURE AND CARRIER INNOVATION IN CONTEMPORARY LACQUER PAINTING

Breakthrough innovative achievements in textural language

Contemporary lacquer painting texture innovation upholds the core properties of natural lacquer while achieving a transformation from traditional formulaic decoration to contemporary diversified expression, forming three major innovative pathways with significant results (Li, 2023). Traditional classic textures have undergone refined translational upgrades: classic techniques such as eggshell inlay, mother-of-pearl inlay, and wrinkled lacquer have abandoned their rough applications and been revitalized through precise process control. Eggshell inlay, through graded crack density and layered overlapping collage, creates a stratified texture combining granular and aged qualities; mother-of-pearl inlay employs ultra-thin colored shell layered embedding to present dynamic gradient pearlescent effects; and wrinkled lacquer achieves manually controllable textural forms through precise temperature and humidity regulation. Cross-disciplinary hybrid textures have become the mainstream of innovation, with natural ecological material embedded textures and fluid improvisational textures widely applied—natural sand, plant coarse fibers, and similar materials are embedded into lacquer layers to create strong tactile contrasts, while poured and dripped lacquer combined with manual shaping balances natural randomness with creative controllability; meanwhile, techniques such as hemp cloth rubbing and rice paper imprinting have become widespread, lowering the threshold for innovation (Lai & Kou, 2024). Digitally empowered textures effectively accommodate large-scale creation: laser engraving can rapidly generate regular geometric and abstract pattern textures, while 3D-printed prefabricated texture substrates can precisely reproduce design schemes, avoiding the cracking and insufficient precision associated with manually applied thick lacquer paste, thereby improving creative efficiency and work consistency (Feng, 2026).

Achievements in the diversified expansion of carrier substrates

Contemporary lacquer painting substrate innovation upholds the core baseline of compatibility with natural lacquer application and environmental durability, breaking through the limitations of traditional solid wood substrates and forming four diversified expansion pathways (China Artists Association Lacquer Painting Committee, 2024). Traditional wood-based materials have been scientifically improved by selecting carbonized moisture-resistant solid wood multilayer composite boards and high-density anti-insect spliced boards, which undergo high-temperature carbonization and anti-insect and anti-corrosion pretreatment, paired with high-tenacity ramie fabric mounting and refined primer coatings, improving stability by more than double and making them suitable for indoor fine lacquer paintings and museum collection works (Qiao, 2018). Modern industrial rigid composite substrates have achieved large-scale application, with aerospace-grade aluminum alloy panels and rust-resistant copper panels adapted for outdoor display after pretreatment, while flame-retardant fiberglass and carbon fiber composite panels weigh only one-third of solid wood boards, allowing customized oversized and irregular shapes that overcome the scale limitations of traditional substrates (Pan, 2021). Flexible eco-friendly lightweight substrates adapt to mobile scenarios, as natural ramie soft cloth and eco-friendly non-woven fabric, after anti-seepage treatment, enable lightweight and foldable lacquer painting creation, significantly reducing touring exhibition logistics costs, with biodegradable base materials that align with green creative concepts (Xue, 2023). Three-dimensional irregular integrated substrates drive the transformation of lacquer painting toward installation art, enabling customized three-dimensional forms through resin casting and fiberglass splicing and shaping, achieving a breakthrough from two-dimensional flat surfaces to three-dimensional immersive spatial art (Chen, 2022).

4. DISCUSSION

The innovation in contemporary lacquer painting texture language and supporting substrates is essentially a modern translation of traditional lacquer art adapting to contemporary artistic contexts and diverse scenario demands, with the core logic of “upholding the essence while expanding dimensions”—preserving the intrinsic properties of natural lacquer and the cultural roots of lacquer art while breaking through the inherent boundaries of traditional techniques and substrates (Wu, 2023). The findings of this study indicate that the synergistic innovation of texture and substrate not only addresses the shortcomings of visual homogeneity and poor scenario adaptability in traditional lacquer painting, but also activates the potential for individualized expression and public application value in lacquer painting, aligning closely with the development trends of contemporary mixed-media art and public art (Li, 2023).

It is necessary to rationally acknowledge the practical issues arising in the innovation process: some creators excessively pile on new materials and digital technologies while neglecting the compatibility between texture, substrate, and creative themes, resulting in works with disorganized materials and fragmented artistic conception; a minority of new industrial substrates are insufficiently eco-friendly, posing minor pollution risks with long-term use; and the overuse of digital textures weakens the inherent handcrafted warmth of lacquer painting (Zhou & Li, 2023). The root cause of these issues lies in an insufficient grasp of the principle of “lacquer nature as the foundation, innovation as the application,” with excessive pursuit of formal innovation at the expense of humanistic and cultural expression (Lai & Kou, 2024).

Drawing on the research findings, innovation in texture and substrate must uphold three core principles: first, maintaining the primacy of natural lacquer, whereby all innovation is premised on accommodating its film-forming properties and preserving its warm, lustrous quality (Feng, 2026); second, upholding the foundation of cultural continuity, ensuring that innovative techniques serve the expression of humanistic themes and align with the aesthetic essence of Eastern sensibility (China Artists Association Lacquer Painting Committee, 2024); third, adhering to the principle of contextual suitability, whereby the selection of texture and substrate must correspond to the display environment and communication requirements of the work (Qiao, 2018). At the industry level, it is necessary to establish standards for material application; universities should strengthen material experimentation and aesthetic education; and practitioners should balance technical innovation with humanistic expression, so as to achieve the integrated and coordinated development of craft, material, and artistic conception (Pan, 2021).

5. CONCLUSION

The refinement, hybridization, and conceptualization of textural language in contemporary lacquer painting, together with the expansion of substrates toward lighter, more rigid, more flexible, and three-dimensional forms, have collectively broken through the creative, spatial, and aesthetic boundaries of traditional lacquer painting in a bidirectional manner, representing the core pathway for the breakthrough development of contemporary lacquer art (Chen, 2022). Innovation in texture has revitalized the artistic expressiveness and spiritual capacity of lacquer painting, enabling traditional lacquer techniques to meet the demands of contemporary humanistic inquiry and aesthetic sensibility (Wu, 2023); innovation in substrate has broadened the field of application for lacquer painting,

propelling a millennium-old craft from interior settings into modern public spaces, and achieving an organic integration of the living transmission of intangible cultural heritage with contemporary innovation (Li, 2023). The research confirms that upholding the intrinsic properties of natural lacquer and grounding innovation in the cultural lineage of lacquer art constitute the fundamental prerequisites for advancing texture and substrate innovation; balancing the warmth of handcraft with modern technology, and formal innovation with thematic expression, is key to the high-quality development of contemporary lacquer painting (Zhou & Li, 2023). Looking ahead, it is necessary to continue deepening material experimentation with natural lacquer, refining composite texture techniques, developing new eco-friendly substrates, and improving industry standards and systems of transmission, so as to drive the creative transformation and innovative development of lacquer painting (Lai & Kou, 2024)—allowing this ancient Eastern art form to radiate new vitality within the context of contemporary art, and propelling Chinese lacquer painting onto both national and international artistic stages (Xue, 2023).

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