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The Environment and Countermeasures Faced by the Development of Photography Education in the Era of Intelligent Media

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Abstract: *This paper analyzes the new opportunities and challenges of photography education in the era of intelligent media, and relying on the general trend of the development of industry technology, combined with the exploration and practice of the corresponding education reform in the academic circles, puts forward some suggestions on the reform of photography education and teaching around the reconstruction of the curriculum system, the integration of technology use, the strengthening of the integration of production and education, and the emphasis on ethical education. Under the background of the integration of photography technology and art, the reform of photography education and teaching is carried out with the principle of technical literacy + artistic thinking + humanistic heritage. In this way, we can cultivate a new generation of creative talents who can use the lens language to think, express humanistic feelings with the help of image vision and lead the technology to be good.*

Keywords: *The Era of Intelligent Media; Photography Education; Technical Literacy; Artistic Thinking*

1. Introduction

New technologies such as AI generation, virtual production, and multi-modal interaction are changing the way of photography teaching. AI software such as MidJourney, Stable Diffusion, and Sora OpenAI can quickly produce professional-grade images or videos ; virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence generated content (AIGC) replace traditional image shooting ; the recommendation mechanism of the algorithm changes the propagation path of the image ; new technological achievements have provided new tools for the creation of photography, spawned a new production process, and subverted our understanding of the original photography.

2. Environmental change: multidimensional challenges to photography education

2.1 Policy orientation: serving the national economic development

In recent years, China's higher education has gradually entered a new era of heavy structural transformation and heavy frontier construction from heavy scale expansion, and the choice and merger of disciplines and specialties in colleges and universities has become the norm. According to the official website of the Ministry of Education, in 2024, a total of 1839 new professional points were added to colleges and universities across the country, 2220 professional points were suspended, and 1428 professional points were revoked. In 2023, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the National Health Commission, and the General Administration of Market Supervision jointly issued the *Reform Plan for the Adjustment and Optimization of Discipline and Specialty Settings in General Higher Education.* It is mentioned that by 2025, colleges and universities should adjust the distribution of about 20 % of disciplines and specialties, set up a new number of disciplines and specialties that adapt to the development of new technologies, new industries, new formats and new models, and eliminate specialties that do not meet the needs of economic and social development [1]. As an applied discipline, photography is facing a greater degree of pressure to ban or merge based on technological changes and technological development trends and the changing situation of industry development. In 2024, the photography major of Shandong Normal University, Sichuan University and other universities was revoked; in 2025, Beijing Film Academy and Communication University of China and other universities will carry out integrated transformation of the original photography major. Looking around the world, the abolition, merger and

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addition of photography specialty is not an isolated event in China, but a global problem of new quality productivity of education service. Columbia College in the United States abolished the master 's degree in photography in 2024; the Rhode Island School of Design adjusted the original photography major into an art and computer major. London University of the Arts has transformed commercial photography into a photography and creative industry, integrating photography with the cultural industry; the University of Slow Chester has opened a new Culture, Creativity and Media Industry course to replace the old photography course in the original teaching point, focusing on digital content production courses.

2.2 Technological fission: disruptive technology reshapes the creative process

When we review four articles published in the journal of *Chinese Photography* by Liu Canguo, an image educator who has spanned 10 years : *Luminescent Images* (2013), *Flat Environment* (2019), *Instant Space* (2020) and *AI Photography and GPT Images* (2023), it is not difficult to find the impact of new quality technology on photography education : Luminescence (technical invasion form) -Flatness (alienated visual language) -Instant (reconstruction of creative process) -AI (subversion of ontological value) corresponding point of view. Technology has led to changes in the form of photography, changes in practice and changes in society. Specifically, digital technology has eliminated the material foundation of photography, virtual images have replaced material images, and photography has shifted from silver salts and photo paper media to virtualization and programmability. The perfect reality optimized by the algorithm eliminates the light and shadow levels and contingency of traditional photography; the image generated by AIGC is separated from the optical capture logic, and the physical, chemical, and photoelectric properties of photography are replaced by the data training set. The AIGC image and the GPT image make the practice subject undergo a fundamental transfer-the creator inputs the instruction and the algorithm performs the creation. Technology has changed from an auxiliary tool to a creative subject. Photographers have become participants in the technical assembly line from the controller of the decisive moment. Image works have become the result of human-machine negotiation. The popularity of digital intelligence technology has also broken professional barriers. Photography has moved from elite groups to popularization, and image production has become within reach. However, the meaning of images has also accelerated in the flow competition, and even become a tool for attention economy. However, the most concern is that AI-generated images have impacted the historical value of photography as testimony due to its inability to trace the physical reality, triggering a crisis of photography ethics-the ambiguity of ownership and the problem of original definition brought by training data. Photography education breaks through the framework of optical realism, and needs to seek its own position in the complex interaction of algorithmic logic, human intention and ethical norms.

2.3 Industry restructuring: structural transformation of talent demand

As technology becomes the main body of photography creation, it leads to the change of photography industry and professional ecology. The demand for talents is no longer the simple technology + art compound talents in the past, but the compound ability matrix talents unique to the interdisciplinary field (as shown in Table 1). In the past, photography majors set different professional positions by different shooting objects. For example, commercial photographers are responsible for product advertising photography, news photographers are responsible for documentary propaganda shooting, and portrait photographers are responsible for portrait shooting. The development of professional positions in the era of digital intelligence is more diversified. There is a technology fusion type-requires to master technologies and knowledge such as Stable Diffusion and Control Net, needs to understand the deep learning visual model, and can provide visual optimization for AI ; media integration-establishing an imaging scene in virtual space that conforms to the laws of physical optics, using AI software to adjust the virtual machine bit angle and light logic deduction, and the multimedia composite image formed by the juxtaposition of character capture and space-time projection ; data-driven-photographic practitioners reverse the image communication strategy through user behavior data, and require knowledge of Python data analysis + communication psychology + visual aesthetics. Nowadays, the training goal of photography major is biased towards the traditional ' artistic ' photographer, but most enterprises and market entities need talents with ' commercial execution '. This year, Tencent launched the Fantasy Core digital art platform. Recruiting NFT image curators needs to be familiar with blockchain technology principles, digital copyright management, virtual space design and community operation business. With the advent of the era of intelligent media, the boundaries of the photography industry have become increasingly blurred; the integration of media cross-media narrative, AI data visualization is a new trend in the industry, and the cultivation of solid photography talents needs to be based on skills to value creation.

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Table 1 The industry's demand for photography talents

Traditional ability	New demand in the era of intelligent media	Representative positions
light and shadow control, composition skills	AI image generation and optimization technology	AIGC visual designer
room technology, PS finishing	multimodal content algorithm adaptation	cross-platform image algorithm engineer
static video creation	VR / AR interactive narrative design	immersive content director
single project execution	data visualization and image database management	visual Data Analyst

2.4 Educational dilemma: the disconnection of traditional teaching mode

The photography education is still sliding along the inertia of the traditional teaching mode. The curriculum update cycle can not keep up with the speed of technical iteration. The technical iteration cycle of the digital industry is generally less than or equal to 6 months, while the update cycle of the curriculum outline of most colleges and universities is greater than or equal to 3 years (as shown in table 2). At present, the core courses of photography majors in many colleges and universities are still designed around digital photography, post-technology, and artistic composition. The syllabus and curriculum settings of courses such as AI image generation, interaction design, algorithm aesthetics, and virtual reality photography are still in the exploratory stage. Teachers lead classroom teaching and practice too much, and the online curriculum resources provided by MOOC platform, MasterClass and film and television industry network are not fully utilized by students. Due to the shortage of VR shooting equipment and high-performance graphics workstations in some colleges and universities, practical courses have become demonstration courses. The assessment of students ' class-ending works still focuses on the dimensions of picture quality accuracy and picture beauty, ignoring the comprehensive literacy of cross-media narrative of works. The evaluation of academic performance emphasizes technology rather than thinking, and the dynamic abilities of project collaboration and innovative thinking shown by students ' curriculum learning process are rarely included in the evaluation. Some colleges and universities try to combine teaching with enterprise tutors, so that students ' classroom learning can be tested by the market and the mechanism of industry feedback can be established. However, this kind of cooperation is often loose. The project-based teaching of school-enterprise cooperation mostly stays at the lecture level, and the integration of production and education is often a formality. The core challenge of photography education is how to find a balance between the traditional education mode and the exponential technological change, and how to integrate the disciplines of technology, art and humanities to build a curriculum system that can dynamically respond to industrial changes. Only in this way can we cultivate a new generation of image creators who can truly master intelligent media technology.

Table 2 Comparison between traditional teaching mode and the demand of intelligent media era

Dimensional	Traditional teaching mode	The needs of the era of intelligent media	Disconnection performance
Course content	film technology, static composition, equipment operation	AI generation, algorithm aesthetics, interactive narrative	The technology lags 3-5 years.
Mode of teaching	teachers one-way teaching, group demonstration	project-based practical combat, AI-assisted personalized learning	Practical resources are short or single, and the integration of industry and education is weak.
Technology utilization	PPT courseware, basic software teaching	VR virtual shooting, multi-modal AI creation	Insufficient investment in equipment, virtual teaching and research room is not universal.
Evaluation criterion	works aesthetic, attendance, final exams	ethical speculation, data thinking, market feedback	Neglect of process and interdisciplinary ability.
Production-education integration	enterprise lectures, short-term internships	school-enterprise co-construction, commercial project implantation	Students lack of practical experience.

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3. Innovative countermeasures: the reconstruction of photography education system

Artificial intelligence (AI), big data, cloud computing and other technologies have changed the production, dissemination and acceptance of images, changed the cognitive paradigm of images, raised the technical threshold, and blurred the ethical boundaries. At present, China 's photography education community has actively explored these changes [2] (as shown in Table 3). This paper attempts to put forward countermeasures and suggestions from the perspectives of concept renewal, curriculum system reconstruction, cross-disciplinary integration, resource sharing and ethical education, so as to help the value return and technology empowerment of photography education in the intelligent era.

Table 3 Main points of the Symposium on the Construction of Photography and Imaging Disciplines sponsored by the Chinese Academy of Arts on June 27, 2025 [2]

Serial number	Lecturer	Representative unit	The main viewpoints
one	Jianguo Feng	Academy of Arts & Design, Tsinghua University	Since 2023, it has been divided into two major training directions: academic and professional. Academic focuses on theoretical research; professional emphasizes creation and practice.
two	Jianjiao Lin	Image Art College, luxun academy of fine arts	She advocates the construction of photography and imaging system under the framework of media language.
three	Xijin Xu	FJNU college of fine arts	Implement the 1 + X (photography + cross-domain special) curriculum system.
four	Chunhong Ji	*Paper. kepuing*	AI technology is driving its systematic transformation from traditional shooting to omnimedia product production.
five	Hui Zhang	Xi'an University of Technology	Construct a talent training mode combining art and science integration, era demand orientation, project practice and science and technology.
six	Tingjin Cao	Beijing Film Academy	It is proposed that the development of image education should be based on the four dimensions of interdisciplinary integration, technology and art dual-track drive, humanistic value foundation, and industrial practice orientation.
seven	Dong Dong	Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology	Reshape the curriculum system around technology, creativity and materials.
eight	Zongwei Zhang	Communication University of China	At present, we are actively building new professional directions such as intelligent image art. The course is based on the integration of technology, art and humanities.
Nine	Shuai Wang	Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts	It is proposed that photography education should cultivate students ' interdisciplinary compound ability and logical thinking of media.
ten	Wenhuan Shao	China Academy of Art	To cultivate students critical thinking and media literacy; cultivate a new type of visual creator with people as the main body.
eleven	Yang liu	Sichuan Fine Arts Institute	The development of photography education should construct a curriculum system with foundation, strong theory and multi-skills.
twelve	Duffy	Shanghai Normal University	It is emphasized that the construction of photography discipline should clearly serve the national strategic objectives, take the economy as the core orientation, and actively integrate into the economic and cultural construction.
thirteen	Fang Jia	Nanjing University of the Arts	Through the integration of photography technology and the three dimensions of digital image engineering, image communication, art and humanities, an interdisciplinary integrated curriculum system and talent training program are established.
fourteen	Xiaoyang Hu	Communication University of Zhejiang	One is to integrate photography, cross-media art, science and technology art and other majors under the category of art. Second, under the category of interdisciplinary, it integrates relevant disciplines in disciplines such as law, history, literature, engineering, and art.
fifteen	Minfeng Shi	Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication	First, photography education in colleges and universities should break through changes and enter emerging fields such as digital media. Second, reactivating traditional image production technology can bring new visual experience.
sixteen	Guoxing Ao	Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts	The knowledge focus of photography education has shifted from technical proficiency to creativity cultivation. Cultivating human-machine collaborative innovation ability

3.1 Reshaping educational concept: from technical training to cross-border integration ability training

The application of AIGC generation technology has broken the principle that traditional photography relies on optical reality and promoted the transformation of the concept of image is reality to image reconstruction reality. On the one hand, AI and algorithm technology greatly expand the boundary of visual expression; on the other hand, photography practice itself needs to return to its humanistic care, social reality and creator's subjective exploration. The core of photography education still needs to be based on the ontology of art to ensure that the unique spiritual core of photography art expression is

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maintained in the torrent of technology. For example, the 2024 National Art Fund Training Project of Communication University of China, *Training of Documentary Photography Creative Talents in the Age of Intelligent Media*, requires the creation of works to be transformed from recording tools to thought carriers carrying in-depth thinking; he regards humanistic value as the soul of image works, and consciously shoulders the social responsibility and cultural mission of painting the times and preserving the history [3].The photography major of Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology participates in the project of *Liangma River Fashion Project* in Chaoyang District. It requires students to show the organic integration of image creation and social value through the image of retaining urban temperature, inheriting historical context and depicting the spirit of the times. Under the background of the rapid fission of technology and the deep reconstruction of the industry, the cultivation of photography talents should not be limited to the simple teaching of skills, but should be devoted to the cultivation of compound talents with both technical literacy, critical artistic thinking and profound humanistic heritage. The development of photography in the future will seek a breakthrough in the interweaving of multiple tensions such as virtual generation and material presence, global vision and in-situ expression.

3.2 Reconstruction of curriculum system: dynamic and interdisciplinary integration

With the innovation of the concept of photography education, the linear teaching mode of basic course → professional course → practical course will gradually replace the matrix teaching mode composed of core foundation + technical module + art topic + project practice . The core foundation module mainly strengthens the teaching force from the theory of photography history, visual principle and aesthetic ability. According to the development of the course content, the technical module adds the application knowledge of cutting-edge new technologies such as AIGC creation, algorithm image processing and interactive narrative mode in time. The relevant content is checked and updated every semester, so as to ensure that the technology is always in the latest state (Fig.1).

Fig.1 Space pictures and videos of the visible images after wearing Vision Pro

The art thematic module discusses the narrative strategies and artistic expression techniques of different image types, such as documentary images, conceptual images, and commercial images; the project practice module is based on the needs of the industry or society, and uses real cases to cultivate students ' comprehensive skills application and innovative creative ability. In order to further break the professional barriers between disciplines, we should continue to strengthen the construction of photography + interdisciplinary curriculum group. Specifically, relevant courses such as programming foundation, data visualization, algorithm principle can be added at the technical level to enhance students ' digital technology application ability. In terms of humanistic literacy, visual anthropology, image sociology and social and cultural research are introduced to help students understand the social and cultural implications behind the images. At the same time, through the creation of writing courses, students ' creative elaboration, work interpretation and critical writing ability are systematically trained. In addition, practical courses such as new media operation strategy, intellectual property laws and regulations, project planning and management should also be included to comprehensively improve students ' adaptability and competitiveness in the future market [4]. In the formulation of talent training programs, we should closely track technological updates and industry development trends, establish a dynamic curriculum adjustment mechanism, absorb the results of teaching reform in a timely manner, and update 10 % of the curriculum content every year. In this way, we can not only maintain the advanced and forward-looking nature of the curriculum system, but also connect with the development of technology, fit the industrial changes, quickly iterate the training of talents, and create photographic

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talents that meet the requirements of enterprises (as shown in Table 4).

Table 4 Comparison of photography curriculum system between traditional and intelligent media era

Curriculum type	Traditional curriculum system	Curriculum system in the era of intelligent media	Representative innovative courses
Basic course	photography foundation, darkroom technology	visual principle, image philosophy	image ethics, algorithm aesthetics
Technical course	traditional darkroom, Photoshop	multimodal AI creation, VR image	AIGC image creation
Art course	classification photography creation	cross-media narrative, interactive art	video installation art
Humanities courses	history of photography, introduction to art	visual anthropology, image sociology	image communication practice
Practical course	graduation creation, practice	practicing of project system, production-education integration	City image shooting

3.3 Deepening the integration of industry and education: building an education-industry collaborative ecology

As a practical subject, photography is inseparable from the real machine. Taking Beijing Institute of Clothing Technology as an example, our school uses geographical advantages to build image laboratories and industrial training bases with byte beating, Jingdong, Canon and other head enterprises. And the school continues to improve the enterprise mentor system, as the core link, on the one hand, the enterprise project is introduced into the teaching, on the other hand, teachers and students are organized to enter the enterprise to carry out AIGC training and project shooting, forming a classroom-enterprise two-way cycle coordination mechanism. This cooperation ensures the synchronization of teaching content and industrial frontier demand, and fully and effectively narrows the gap between the training of photography talents in colleges and universities and the market demand. On the other hand, it cooperates with the local government of the university and participates in the economic construction of the territory. Our school 's annual *school year work camp* practice course is involved in projects of territorial enterprises or government agencies. In 2024, it cooperated with Changping Cultural Tourism Group to shoot promotional films for the ' Thirteen Mausoleums ' and develop and design cultural tourism products; in 2025, in cooperation with the Tongzhou District Government, advertising films and short video shooting were conducted around the theme of Canal Bazaar (Fig. 2) In the real social practice, students face the complex and changeable creative environment, temper their creative skills, and improve their ability to find and solve problems. In practical teaching, many colleges and universities try to build an educational ecosystem in which colleges and universities, enterprises and local governments participate. For example, the Communication University of China organized teachers and students to go to Altay and Tacheng through the National Art Fund project to carry out field collecting; Wuhan Institute of Engineering and Technology jointly held the *Urban Image Creation* with the Yangtze River Daily, and actively explored the use of images to promote the inheritance and innovation of urban culture. The integration of production and education can also provide a good display platform for students 'learning and teachers ' teaching. In the graduation season of 2025, our school plans students ' graduation creation at the permanent site of International Design Week in Zhangjiawan, Beijing, which breaks through the traditional white box exhibition mode of graduation creation, and makes photography art go out of the ivory tower and into the public view. Such exhibitions broaden students ' professional horizons, review students ' academic level, and strengthen the connection between students 'learning and social industries.

Fig.2 Grand Canal Set

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3.4 Technology-enabled teaching: innovative education methods and resource platform

The spatial computing + artificial intelligence technology represented by OpenAI 's Sora and MidJourney 3D video generation model replaces the original visual content generation paradigm, so that image production uses text description to generate high-fidelity and interactive simulation images (Fig.3). Technological innovation promotes the continuous change of photography teaching content, and also provides a strong support for the innovation of teaching methods behind it. In the virtual laboratory based on spatial computing, we break the limitations of time and space, and dynamically integrate high-quality resources at different times and places. AI-assisted teaching system can realize the precise and personalized supply of teaching resources based on the drive of big data. While improving teaching efficiency, it also obtains massive data that the original human brain storage cannot reach. The online platform opens the channel for art colleges to obtain teaching resources from a new perspective, and realizes the teaching mode of cloud co-creation. For example, the Artificial Intelligence Action Plan system created by Communication University of China uses computer vision to analyze the composition logic and narrative structure of students ' works, and gives students timely diagnosis and optimization guidance; illumination simulation engines such as EU5 and IC-Light can be used for exposure training at different light levels. VR / AR creates virtual shooting scenes that enable students to imitate complex shooting situations in a controlled environment [5]. Reading Aesthetic Education Online integrates art, music, dance, drama, film and television, calligraphy and other categories, including hundreds of video courses, nearly 50,000 high-definition art works and AI creation tools. The O2O service platform of public art resources includes all the teaching resources of art, design, drama, film and television and other related disciplines. It can provide users with various documents, pictures, audio and video materials and offline exhibitions. The professional team of the eight major art academies has 24-hour voice and red pen correction and evaluation paintings. Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts led the establishment of the International Art Education Alliance Cloud Community. Art colleges can see the teaching results of the dynamic island in the Art Island virtual exhibition hall, exchange and visit teachers in the Global Resource Interchange class, and observe courses such as the Rhode Island School of Design and the Tokyo University of the Arts.

Fig.3 AIGC text map

3.5 The integration and cultivation of digital literacy and humanistic spirit

The author believes that the digital literacy of photography specialty includes three aspects of ability. Technical application ability: technical ability to use AI tools, data analysis and multi-port propagation; the ability of critical thinking: identify the algorithm promotion mechanism, identify the production image, and clarify the power structure behind the technology; the ability of cross-media narrative: combining static images, dynamic videos, sounds, texts and other media means into a comprehensive narrative language. The humanistic spirit of folding specialty includes two dimensions: cultural root and real social intervention.

With the acceleration of the iterative upgrading of digital intelligent technology, photography education in this context also urgently calls for the recovery of the spirit of technology to be good, that is, to jump out of the color of instrumental rationality and return to the speculation of the essence of

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photography. Humanistic observation, ideological expression and cultural inheritance beyond algorithms and pixels are still the core values of photography education. In the face of the impact of AIGC generated images (Fig.4), it is necessary to guide students to understand that technology can replace skills, but cannot replace the unique artistic life experience; the algorithm can optimize the composition, but can not replace the profound humanistic thinking; virtual reality can simulate the scene, but can not copy the real emotional connection [6]. The direction of future photography education must be committed to creating a new educational model of technology to goodness. That is, from the aspects of curriculum reform, integration of production and education, and technology empowerment, we should focus on cultivating image creators with technology to goodness, and create visual narrators who recognize their own cultural responsibilities and social responsibilities by means of humanistic infiltration, ethical cultivation and social intervention. When technology is more and more deeply involved in human visual experience and aesthetic judgment, photography education has the responsibility to protect the authenticity, diversity and humanity of images. Only in this way can we build an image culture that embraces technological progress and highlights humanistic spirit in the era of technological change, so that photography art can shine new brilliance in mathematical civilization.

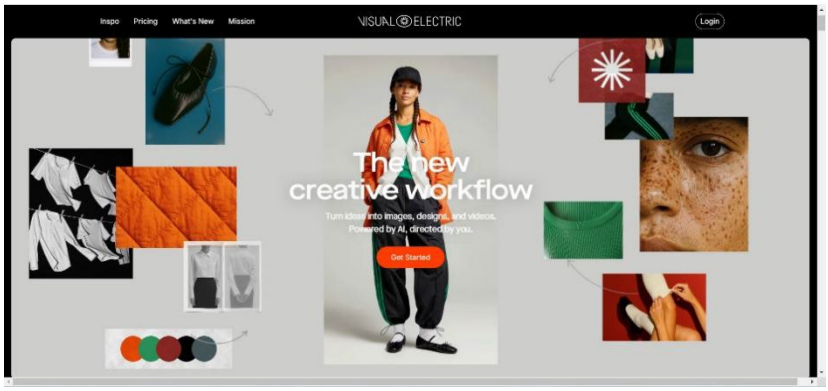

Fig.4 Visual electric shows a wealth of visual corpus

4. Conclusion

In the era of intelligent media, photography education must break the traditional framework, and cultivate new image talents who can not only master cutting-edge technology, but also have profound humanistic quality and artistic creativity through systematic, interdisciplinary and production-education integration reform. Only in this way can photography education maintain its artistic ontology and social value in the torrent of technology, and promote the sustainable development and innovation of image culture in the era of digital intelligence.

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