



An Application and Study of Chinese Traditional Culture in Modern Art

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Abstract

Art design is a kind of culture which is formed and developed on the basis of the material production practice of human beings. It is the combination of the physical and mental culture of a race in a relative period, and can be inherited and shared. The splendid Chinese racial culture and cultural spirit was formed in the longstanding history. The racial cultures haven't disappeared in the modernization and globalization, but have been reappraised and further affirmed. The practice had proved that only learning from the traditional culture and basing on one's own racial culture can make the art designs have high values and status in the world.

Keywords: Art design, Racial style, Traditional Culture, Inherit

In this Information Age, the racial cultures in developing countries are enduring the most furious crashes and challenges. Nowadays, the existence and development of racial cultures in not only the problem developing countries must face, but also a revolution in the field of human's arts and cultures.

A nation, in order to be independent from other nations all over the world, should be equipped with strong comprehensive national power. Besides, it has to preserve and develop its unique racial culture. In the trend of globalization, a racial culture's "root" and "spirit" will be destroyed if losing its own characteristics and features. So it is a very important task to inherit and develop the excellent traditional cultures and aesthetic senses. As we all know, the Chinese traditional culture is longstanding, splendid, unique and publicly admired. Opening to the outside makes our comprehensive national power more stronger, so to develop our racial culture is inevitable.

1. The common sense of traditional Chinese designs.

The traditional design has its own creative concepts creation psychologies, visual modes and molding rules. It puts emphasis on creative concepts, figures and forms independently. The western theories stress on the forms on the basis of forms or the so-called scientific visual rules. The traditional Chinese designs represent the unique Chinese molding rules and artistic conception.

The core theory of "image creation" gives the basic character that the traditional arts put more emphasis on the creation of psychological images. There is a theory in traditional Chinese art design that to form an image to fully express the creative concepts, that is to say, to establish a general connection between symbols and meanings through metaphor, symbolic, association, etc. this method makes people's visual and aesthetic experiences to a rational level but not a conceptual level. This kind of idea puts stress on the creative concepts, makes images the core concepts of the creation, and determines the aesthetic judgment declined to the ethic and social aesthetic standards. Thing such as the bronze wares of Shang and Zhou Dynasty (right: bronze wine glass with four goats), the clothes and ornaments in the ancient history, the colors, designs on utensils and different material represent different social status, and the features of natural materials are also used to present people's morals, sentiments, and styles. In ancient times, the utensils became the representatives of social status and social estate, and had been the symbols of the universe. People made utensils of different forms and colors to express "the different understanding to the nature, earth and universe". They were the symbols and carriers of the world views.

"Human should be harmonious with the surroundings", this is an important idea in ancient Chinese philosophy. Ancient Chinese also believed that time and space was connected and uniform in the universe. These theories had deep influences on ancient designs and creative concepts. The "heaven—human—material" mainly focused on the relationship between human beings and physical changes in the nature. The harmony in this relation was the ultimate pursuit in the traditional culture. This was also the basic way of thinking. The ancient people had realized that the nature had close connections with the activities and ways of existence of human beings.

2. The follow of the traditional culture in modern art designs

Art designs must depend on the concrete cultural environment. The development of it must be based on the follow and sifting of the tradition. If there is no inheritance in the culture, the art designs will be weak and powerless. The traditional culture and aesthetic philosophy of a nation influence deeply the aesthetic features of art design traditions. In Chinese aesthetic sense, symmetry, full and round are admired. So in the designs, strict symmetry and the structure of full and round are often paid more attention to.

The follow of tradition is necessary and inevitable. Now we are in a society which is highly modernized and informationalized, new thoughts, concepts and various ideological trends abroad had brought unprecedented crash to our traditional Chinese culture. In this circumstance, it is not desirable to completely deviate the traditional culture. Simply misappropriate or indiscriminately copy from western cultures will make our designs lose our national features, dispositions and spirits, which are broad, profound and splendid. The vitality of the art must be based on a nation's own culture.

The sign of Bank of China contained the traditional Chinese philosophy—"the heaven is round and the earth is square"—the ancient Chinese world view. The sign was designed as round outside and square inside, and combined perfectly the Chinese character "中" with the ancient Chinese coin, worked in concert with the ancient Chinese world view. This design was succinct and fluent and worked as a whole, the round part and square part were in a proper percentage. And it was easy to be recognized. It was a modern design but also contained abundant traditional Chinese elements.

3. The mergence of traditional culture and modern designs

Every designer should try their best to inherit and develop the traditional designs in order to make their own works have both the advantages of traditional Chinese racial style and modern features. Design is a kind of culture, modern Chinese art designers should get the spirits of Chinese culture, only by that they may get a chance to have a position in the world.

The racial style is the presentation of the cultural tradition, aesthetic psychology, and aesthetic habits of a nation. All the designs have the traces of a certain racial culture or tradition which is unique of that race or nation. If a designer departs from its own traditional culture, his works will just be freaks.

The spirits of racial culture have broad connotations, unique aesthetic senses and abundant forms of presentations. All of these bring new crashes to the art designs. Designers get clues from different cultures, and they seek for inspirations from the styles, patterns, colors, fashions and materials of different countries and races. A kind of art design style often involves psychology, optics, philosophy, etc.. It is the presentation of the designer's character. The style of the design is the unity of generality and personality, it has something unique, but also something universal. In a word, design is the quintessence of different cultural spirits.

The sign of 2008 Olympic Games didn't use traditional Chinese pattern directly. It used the unique Chinese painting technique—freehand brushwork—to express the "Chinese knot" and the "player" in this design. This design not only presented the unique Chinese distinguished feature, but also was approved by other countries.

Besides the argument on design and geographical location, BTG Fragrant Hill Hotel—designed by famous Chinese-American architect I.M. Pei—was a touchstone of racial features. It was said that this design was the experiment of Chinese racial architecture. It simplified the traditional Chinese architectural features of Suzhou Landscaping into precise architectural languages, and merged them into modern architectures, formed the typical Pei's style. And the modern design in Ming Dynasty furniture was another famous example.

Their designs expressed the designers' deep comprehension to our traditional art and culture, and their unique feelings to our painting techniques and materials. Because of their precise understandings of wash painting and calligraphy, the designers formed their own oriental art styles, and combined perfectly the racial culture into modern designs. In costume designs, more and more oriental elements were used by the western designers.

To sum up, the traditional culture of a race must have carried the racial spirits and features of that race, and must have reflected various traits of a relative period of that race, such as political features, art and culture connotations, religions, moral standards, folk customs, etc.. All the needs for the mental requirements have something that passed on from generations to generations, and will also get new contents and forms in the course of development. Then the new culture will come out inevitably.

The art practice had proved that we should never totally deny our tradition while absorbing the quintessence of other countries or races. We should absorb the excellences of other races in an open mind, use them on the basis of our own culture, and merge all of them in modern art designs. By doing so, we can fully present our advantages, inherit and develop our longstanding civilization.

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Figure 1.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.



Figure 4.