

Aesthetic Effects of Guan Yu Culture in Design

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Abstract: Guan Yu is one of the most representative classic symbolic characters in traditional Chinese culture, and his image has been changing over the centuries as we can see from the historical materials. In the beginning, he was just a real general in the history of Shu Han, because of his loyalty and righteousness as the principle of the world, brave and courageous heroism, as well as the benevolence of the heart of the people and adhere to the bottom line of the concept of justice. And slowly became a folk legend, and in later generations of people worship and respect formed a stable folk beliefs. Nowadays, a lot of designers like to use Guan Gong cultural elements to design, whether it is clothing design or the development of cultural and creative derivatives can be seen in the relevant visual symbols. From the perspective of long-term development of the industry, the integration of Guan Gong culture and modern art and design will continue to expand the dimensions, and in the future will give rise to richer forms of creative expression, and continue to provide strong support for the modern expression of excellent traditional Chinese culture, inheritance and innovation.

Keywords: Guan Gong; Guan Yu; Guan Gong Culture; Aesthetic Effect; Aesthetic Connotation

1. Introduction

In the long course of history, culture carries the spiritual core of a nation. Guan Yu, the well-known general of the Three Kingdoms, with his personality traits of loyalty, righteousness, benevolence and courage, has broken through the limitations of time and geography, and evolved into a highly recognizable classic symbol in the traditional Chinese cultural system. The culture of Guan Gong has precipitated a thick historical foundation, complete traditional ethical norms and diversified artistic creation values, and its radiation power has long jumped out of the

limitations of the historical figure itself, penetrated into all aspects of daily social life, and formed a unique aesthetic expression effect in the field of modern design art. With the deepening of global cultural integration and the parallel development of diversified artistic trends, how to transform the local traditional culture into the visual language of design and highlight the unique national cultural characteristics has become a core proposition that industry practitioners continue to study. Guan Gong culture carries a unique spiritual appeal, which can provide a huge amount of visual materials and deep cultural base for all kinds of design creations, so that the finished design can touch the emotional resonance of the audience and carry heavier spiritual and cultural connotations while completing the transmission of basic information.

2. Aesthetic Characteristics of Guan Yu Culture

2.1 Historical Evolution of Guan Yu's Image

The formation of the Guan Yu cultural system did not happen overnight, but was gradually accumulated and perfected in the course of history. The figure of Guan Yu is the core support of the whole set of cultural system, and in the long years, it has completed the multi-layered transformation from a historical real person to a cultural symbol and a folk sacrificial deity, and the spiritual connotation carried by the figure will also be expanded and extended in accordance with the value demands of the society at different stages.

In the Three Kingdoms period recorded in the official history text, Guan Yu was a real martial arts general who followed Liu Bei around for many years, showing outstanding combat skills and character integrity in the chaotic situation of division. Early historical records, most of the content around its battlefield achievements and loyalty to the king and his ministers to develop, at this time Guan Yu only as an objective historical figure to remain, the image is not attached to the narrative color related to religious

divinity [1]. To the seventeenth of the Wei, Jin, North and South Dynasties, perennial war, the public urgently need heroes as a spiritual support, Guan Yu's personality traits of the heart, to go to the righteousness of the body is constantly enlarged, the evaluation dimension is no longer limited to the objective historical facts. During the same period, Buddhism and Taoism spread in the folk, Guan Yu's character image gradually and folk ritual system, evolved into a symbol of the gods with the symbol of blessing and protection, the construction of Xiezhou Guandi Temple is the worship of Guan Gong heated up. To the Song and Yuan dynasties, Guan Yu image of the deification process accelerated. Influenced by the cultural atmosphere of the times and the needs of governance in the imperial court, the ruling class hoped to rely on historical figures with distinctive qualities of loyalty and righteousness to regulate the ethical order of the civil society, and Guan Yu was therefore granted a number of titles from the official government. The title from the marquis gradually promoted to the king, and eventually added the emperor, social hierarchy and cultural status climbed [2]. The Ming and Qing dynasties is the key period of Guan Gong culture towards maturity, "Romance of the Three Kingdoms" widespread circulation and popularity, so that originally existed only in the history of the characters in the text, into the cognitive field of vision of ordinary people, further consolidate Guan Gong in the hearts of the masses of the sacred image. During the Yongzheng period of the Qing Dynasty, Guan Yu was directly honored as a martial arts saint, and the culture of Guan Gong reached its historical peak. After entering the contemporary society, the image of Guan Gong faded from the narrative framework of religious rituals, the image comes with a core of values such as loyalty, trustworthiness and responsibility, which are still suitable for the needs of the current society. Throughout the complete evolution from historical generals to cultural symbols, and then to the carrier of the national spirit, the trajectory of Guan Yu's image changes, essentially mapping the iterative process of the mainstream value system of the Chinese nation, but also for the current various types of design and creation of living Guan Gong culture, reserves a sufficient diversity of cultural materials.

2.2 Aesthetic Connotations of Guan Yu

Culture

After thousands of years of accumulation and dissemination, Guan Gong culture has built up a set of aesthetic value system with complete hierarchy and self-consistent logic, and the spiritual kernel of loyalty, righteousness and trustworthiness has always been the most central mark of this system [3]. Throughout the trajectory of Guan Yu's life, he has followed Liu Bei from the beginning, even in the treacherous political game, has never wavered in the inner firm and position. Whether it's the written records of history or the artistic reconstruction of later literary works, the creators will focus on highlighting his personality traits of keeping promises and abiding by morality and righteousness. Over the years, Guan Gong has slowly evolved into a classic cultural symbol representing integrity and commitment, and the public often takes this spiritual character as a benchmark of personality and promotes it when perceiving and analyzing related cultural works. The character trait of courage and bravery also occupies a key position in the dissemination of Guan Gong culture. Looking at the national paintings, stone statues, opera and other types of art carriers, we can find that Guan Gong's external shape uniformly comes with a solemn and strong temperament [4]. Green Dragon Crescent Sword, Red Hare Horse, and the iconic red face, all of these together become the most familiar visual symbols of Guan Gong. Such visual symbols can not only quickly enhance the recognition of the character's image, but also from the visual level to accentuate the sense of thick and majestic power. The spirit of love and goodness is also a key dimension that cannot be ignored in interpreting the culture of Guan Gong. Stories of Guan Yu's compassionate treatment of his colleagues and kindness to the grassroots have long been circulating in the folklore, which makes him stand out from the character positioning of a simple general and become the spiritual embodiment of justice and righteousness in the world. When the general public is exposed to Guan Yu-related cultural content, they will not only gain the majestic aura that comes with the heroic figure, but will also recognize and long for the values of fairness and justice. Art practitioners in the complete retention of visual symbols and spiritual qualities on the basis of the combination of the current society for the image of Guan Gong to fill a new era of connotation, so as to adapt to different stages of the public's

differentiated aesthetic demands [5]. Relying on rounds and rounds of communication practice and innovation, Guan Gong culture has completed the two-way integration of spiritual culture core and visual art expression, and has logically become an important and indispensable part of Chinese excellent culture.

3. Application of Guan Yu Culture in Design

3.1 Application of Guan Gong Culture in Clothing Design

In the current trend of national trend design, folk symbols have slowly become the core material of clothing creation, Guan Gong culture itself has a high degree of national cultural color, behind it carries a complete spirit of loyalty and righteousness vein, which can provide sufficient creative material for modern clothing design and fashion creation [6]. Clothing practitioners to carry out the creative practice, can not only stay in the level of reproduction of the appearance of the characters. More efforts should be made to dig deeper into the spiritual core behind the symbols. In this way, it is possible to complete the deep integration of the cultural lineage with the pattern and aesthetic expression of contemporary fashion.

Yuncheng, Shanxi has a local Guansheng clothing brand. Their Guansheng national style ready-to-wear series is already a real case of mature landing. The brand is rooted in the cultural resources of Guan Gong's hometown, and systematically integrates the visual elements related to Guan Gong into the daily fashion and ceremonial clothing system. The pattern design of the whole series absorbs the decorative structure of the opera flag and cloud shoulder, and also introduces the modern three-dimensional tailoring process to transform the division line of the body, so that the finished product has the elegant charm of the opera costume, but also takes into account the comfort of the modern people's daily activities. The designers deconstructed and reorganized the patterns. Relying on the process of body segmentation and partial splicing, they naturally embedded the pattern into the silhouette of the garment. In this way, the visual level of the whole garment is much richer. And the color system of the whole set of series takes emerald green and gilt as the main visual hues. The emerald green is taken from the classic robe color scheme of Guan Gong of the Opera, which

at a glance can make the public's cultural memory of the image of the Sage of Wushu, and strengthen the cultural recognition of the work. Pattern extraction link is extracted from the portrait of Guan Gong, green dragon crescent sword, red rabbit colt such iconic cultural symbols, the designer did not directly copy the original ancient paintings, but with minimalist flattening, line generalization of the modern design approach to reconstructing the graphics, presenting a sharp and simple lines, the visual perception of the pattern more in line with the aesthetic of the public at the present time, to further strengthen the aesthetic qualities of the modernization of ready-to-wear clothing [7]. In terms of fabric selection, priority is given to native fabrics such as mulberry silk and natural cotton and linen. The material itself is soft and comfortable to wear, and fits the aesthetic pursuit of natural simplicity in Chinese style. This set of Guan Gong theme clothing series has landed mature, on the one hand, broaden the visual expression path of national fashion, on the other hand, also gives the folk culture through the clothing to do youthful dissemination, provides a model for reference.

3.2 Application of Guan Yu Culture in Cultural and Creative Product Design

Cultural and creative products are practical carriers for culture to enter daily life, and they are also important channels for the long-term dissemination of cultural spirit. Nowadays, the demand for mass cultural consumption is high, and cultural and creative products with regional background and full of spiritual connotations are more and more likely to be favored by consumers. Guan Gong culture, as an important part of the Chinese spirit, has sufficient potential in the field of cultural tourism and creative design [8].

Loyalty, righteousness and trustworthiness are the core spiritual kernels of Guan Gong's image, and this value orientation is highly compatible with the moral standards that have been respected by Chinese people for generations. Incorporating the visual symbol of Guan Gong into cultural creations can not only enrich the cultural attributes of commodities, but also slowly deepen the public's recognition of local culture. In modern society, people's cultural self-confidence is gradually increasing, and this kind of cultural creation can just be the public's feelings, seeking spiritual resonance of the consumer psychology. Hunan Children's and

Teenagers' Publishing House has launched a set of paper-cut folk picture books called "Guan Yu Collects Zhou Cang", which is one of the more representative Guan Gong-themed creative readings. This set of picture books adopts the visual language of Chinese paper-cutting, combining historical narratives with drawings, and transforming heavy historical content into intuitive and soft drawings. The creative team has weakened the overpowering aura of Guan Yu's characterization in favor of a friendly and mellow drawing style, shortening the distance between readers and history. The content of the book is based on the classic stories of the Peach Garden, the Thousand Mile Ride, and Guan Yu's collection of Zhou Cang, which are well known to the public, and utilizes the simple form of illustrations and text, so as to make it easier for the readers to understand the historical stories. In addition to the picture book, Shanxi Xiezhou Guan Di Temple scenic area to create the "Guan Gong Relics" series of physical creations also have reference value, Q version of the Guan Gong pendant, valor plaque refrigerator stickers and wind and rain bamboo theme bookmarks, are relying on modern design techniques to reconstruct the symbols. All kinds of Guan Gong themed cultural creations are the practice of creative transformation of cultural resources. Designers combine contemporary aesthetics to deconstruct and reconstruct visual elements related to the God of Guan, so that the culture of loyalty and righteousness can be brought into the public's view in a form that is easy and close to life.

3.3 Application of Guan Gong Culture in the Design of Exhibition Space

Display space is the core carrier of culture dissemination to the outside world, taking into account the multiple functions of information display, culture and tourism display and public aesthetic education. Integrating Guan Gong culture into the space design can not only present the thick historical lineage, but also rely on immersive scenes to deepen visitors' understanding and recognition of folklore. Nowadays, the depth of global culture, local culture urgently needs to find a revitalization path suitable for contemporary context. Theme display design, it becomes a key landing. The advantages of Guan Gong culture itself and the broad mass base can provide sufficient material support for the creation of the pavilion. Shanxi

Xiezhou Guan Gong Culture Digital Experience Pavilion is a real project that has been completed in this direction. The site of the pavilion is directly placed in the birthplace of Guan Gong culture, relying on the local historical heritage to enhance the authenticity of the exhibition, but also allowing cultural resources and spatial design to form a mutually empowering linkage. The designers extracted the architectural features of Guan Di Temple and the pattern of Guan Gong's armor, and simplified and reconstructed them into the internal and external space of the exhibition hall. The whole venue is divided into different functional blocks according to the browsing line, the entrance area undertakes the guided tour and popularization of science, helping visitors to quickly establish cultural cognition; the central exhibition hall is for physical display; the rear experience area is equipped with VR and other digital equipment to strengthen interactive participation.

4. Analysis of the Aesthetic Effects of Guan Yu Culture in Design

4.1 Aesthetic Pleasure and Emotional Experience

The aesthetic effect is the core criterion for judging the comprehensive value of design, and integrating Guan Gong culture into all kinds of design creations can enhance the audience's viewing experience from many levels, and also bring them closer to the psychological distance between them and the works. Guan Gong culture, with its thick historical background and unique symbolic connotation, is a scarce creative material, which can not only broaden the visual expression path of design works, but also rely on the inner spiritual core to awaken the public's common emotional feelings.

There is a lot of space for artistic molding of Guan Gong's character image. Paintings, stone carvings, operas and folk handicrafts have been involved in the polishing of the character throughout the dynasties. Over time, a fixed system of visual symbols was formed, which became familiar to us today. Implanting these classic cultural symbols into modern design images can easily form a visual center of gravity that catches the eye and greatly enhances the viewing appeal of the work. In the design work, the creators often extract the iconic visual materials from the ancient architectural form of Guan Di Temple, folk worship practices, and the

statue of Guan Gong, and then disassemble, simplify and reorganize them with the help of contemporary design techniques to create a new visual graphic that takes into account the underlying color of the cultural lineage and matches the aesthetic preferences of the public today. In addition to the intuitive visual sense, the deep emotional resonance generated by the culture of Guan Gong will retain its infectious power for a longer period of time [9]. In the context of Chinese culture, Guan Yu is a typical carrier of loyalty and righteousness. After the design work presents this kind of spiritual kernel figuratively, it is easy to touch the audience's heart and generate a high degree of emotional identity.

Guan Gong culture also assumes the function of public spiritual support, the folk belief system passed down for a long time has given Guan Gong the symbolism of blessing peace and upholding justice, and the cultural cultivation over the years has made this kind of value cognition become the consensus generally recognized by the public. The visual image of Guan Gong is used in the relevant design process, which can create a strong humanistic atmosphere and convey a positive psychological guidance to the users in the process. It is easy to see that the intervention of Guan Gong culture not only expands the cultural thickness carried by the design works, but also makes the whole set of design have more full and delicate emotional value.

4.2 Cultural Identity and Aesthetic Education

In addition to carrying the basic functions of information communication and function supply, design creation also has the deeper role of cultural diffusion and value leading. The implantation of Guan Gong culture into various design works can assist the public to deeply interpret the cultural lineage and consolidate the public's inner sense of cultural belonging.

After thousands of years of inheritance and evolution, Guan Gong culture has been rooted in the excellent Chinese cultural system, which contains the concepts of loyalty and righteousness and responsibility, which are highly compatible with the value framework of the Chinese nation deposited for generations. The design and creation of visual symbols related to Guan Gong can not only highlight the artistic qualities of the local civilization, but also strengthen the national cultural identity of the

public. When ordinary people come across this kind of design products in their daily life, they will deepen their knowledge of the historical lineage without realizing it, and they will complete the cultivation of aesthetic education silently in the process of viewing and using the objects in their daily life. When Guan Yu culture is circulated around the world, it also gives rise to differentiated regional styles [10]. Shanxi, as the hometown of Guan Yu, has retained a considerable amount of Guan Gong cultural materials in local ancient buildings, folk customs, local operas and handicrafts. Cultural symbols with local imprints can be reconstructed and transformed by design language, which can shape a unique regional cultural IP and increase the communication potential of local cultural brands. From the perspective of local cultural construction, this kind of design means revitalizes the dormant historical and cultural resources, and further awakens the public's acceptance and recognition of local culture in their hometowns.

Guan Gong cultural empowerment design is not only to help establish group cultural identity. It has another layer of value. It is when this set of cultural elements into the visual creation, the function of aesthetic education and edification will follow. The calligraphy, painting, stone carvings, temple architecture, and theater stage art surrounding the birth of the God of Guan throughout the ages have deposited a great deal of aesthetic and folk creative wisdom that can be drawn upon. When this kind of design works are appreciated by the public, the tension of artistic expression can be felt directly. With deeper appreciation, people's ability to recognize the form, mood and atmosphere, humanistic core and other layers will gradually be formed. Positive guidance at the level of aesthetic education is also reflected in the level of personality and emotional cultivation. Guan Gong culture conveys the spirit of sincerity, fairness, responsibility and other qualities, will be designed through the carrier of subtle intervention in the audience's value judgment and aesthetic preferences. When the audience is immersed in the aesthetic activities and perceives the positive spiritual core contained in the works, it is easy to develop empathy, and continuously improve their own humanistic background and aesthetic appreciation level in the inculcation.

4.3 Aesthetic Innovation and Personalized

Expression

Public aesthetic preferences are constantly evolving with the times. As Guan Gong culture integrates with various forms of design, it has gradually broken free from a monolithic framework of expression and continues to expand in diverse and unique directions [11]. Creators employ innovative visual narrative techniques to reinterpret traditional symbols, allowing this ancient culture to gradually align with the aesthetic demands of contemporary audiences.

The creative process, in which old and new design philosophies intertwine, is the most tangible manifestation of aesthetic innovation. In earlier times, most depictions of Guan Gong were intended for ritual worship and folk blessings, and their stylistic conventions remained rigid and unchanging for a long time. Contemporary design, however, places greater emphasis on breaking through visual conventions. By simplifying lines to restructure forms or employing abstract transformations of imagery to reinterpret traditional visual symbols, designers preserve the original cultural identity while imbuing the figures with a wholly new artistic character. This creative approach breaks free from the rigid pattern of merely replicating ancient images, endowing the finished works with distinct contemporary characteristics and innovative value. The iterative upgrades in new materials and techniques have also opened up more creative space for aesthetic innovation. Today, digital technology and eco-friendly, innovative materials have become widespread, giving creators more avenues to express visual imagery related to Guan Gong. The adoption of technical methods such as digital modeling and molding, 3D-printed physical sculptures, and interactive multimedia installations not only optimizes the final presentation of the works but also establishes more diverse channels for disseminating traditional culture. Modern technology can showcase Guan Gong culture in various forms, making it easier for people from different circles to engage with and understand the cultural content. In design, since each designer possesses a unique creative approach, their perspectives on Guan Gong's cultural symbols also vary. Consequently, the interpretations they produce are each distinctive: some works focus on deeply exploring the character's virtues of loyalty and righteousness. Other works highlight the general's heroic and

commanding presence, while many designs focus on the cultural symbolism embodied by Guan Gong's symbols [12]. These diverse creative approaches broaden the boundaries of Guan Gong culture's visual expression and cater to the aesthetic preferences of audiences of all ages.

5. Conclusion

Guan Gong culture possesses both aesthetic appeal and development potential in modern design. In the future, it will integrate more closely with design creation, and its forms of expression will continue to diversify. As China's cultural confidence continues to rise and the public's sense of cultural belonging steadily strengthens, visual symbols related to Guan Gong will penetrate more deeply into various design fields. Industry creators will continue to delve deeply into the spiritual essence of the Guan Gong character. They will continuously generate new creative materials and refine design outcomes that balance creative expression with profound cultural heritage. In the context of global cultural exchange, Guan Gong culture also holds potential for international dissemination, capable of taking the stage on global design platforms to convey the unique spiritual essence of local traditional culture. Domestic creators can fuse Guan Gong's distinctive visual symbols with mainstream global design aesthetics to produce high-quality design works that gain international recognition and possess cross-cultural communicative capabilities. The analysis in this article fully demonstrates the significant value of integrating Guan Gong culture into art and design. At the same time, we must recognize that there remains vast creative potential within this cultural tradition that has yet to be tapped. This requires generation after generation of design professionals to engage in continuous exploration, constantly breaking through established creative paradigms, so that the symbols of Guan Gong culture can unleash even richer artistic value, thereby providing strong support for the contemporary dissemination and living inheritance of China's outstanding traditional culture.

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