

Symphony of Silk Road Paintings: Construction of a Teaching System for Sino-Persian Artistic Mutual Learning (13th–16th Centuries)

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Abstract: This study systematically completes the pedagogical transformation of scattered Sino-Persian artistic interaction cases, integrating them into the regular teaching framework of A History of Design under the Belt and Road Initiative. Centered on the core teaching concept of "cross-cultural design translation", it breaks through superficial stylistic comparison-oriented instruction, and constructs an interconnected five-level teaching model covering material circulation, technological dissemination, pictorial translation, aesthetic fusion, and institutional safeguards. By sorting out long-term relevant academic achievements, this study traces the transformation of core design elements during their transmission from China to Persia, incorporating the thrice-tested, well-received teaching case of the Houghton Shahnameh. It links first-hand historical cases with current design academia discussions, guiding students to recognize that civilizational mutual learning refers to creative transformation rooted in local cultural traditions, rather than direct copying of external achievements. It converts professional art history debates into teachable modules, class activities and practical tasks, fully aligning with the course's three-dimensional objectives of knowledge transmission, competency cultivation and value formation, and providing historical reference for contemporary cross-cultural design practice under the Belt and Road Initiative context.

Keywords: Teaching of A History of Design Under the Belt and Road Initiative; Cross-Cultural Design Translation; Persian Miniature Painting; Chinese Artistic Elements; Teaching Case Design.

1. Introduction

This study selects Sino-Persian artistic

exchanges from the 13th to 16th centuries as the core teaching case for constructing the curriculum system of A History of Design under the Belt and Road Initiative, after systematic review of dozens of relevant textbooks and teaching research materials. This case is chosen for its uniquely irreplaceable demonstration value unmatched by other teaching contents. During this historical period, the vast political and commercial networks forged by the Mongol Empire, which were later inherited and promoted by the Timurid and Safavid dynasties, pushed Silk Road cultural exchanges to an unprecedented level of intensity and depth. As the most delicate and intuitive carriers of culture, art and design fully preserve the most vivid traces of civilizational dialogue in that era. From the perspective of frontline teaching practice, this case presents four unparalleled advantages:

Sufficient completeness: It directly covers the full research chain of design history, ranging from material media (silk, porcelain, paper), technical concepts (Chinese ink-wash brushwork), pictorial motifs (dragons, phoenixes, cloud scrolls), visual mechanisms (spatial rendering) to production institutions (imperial painting academies). It provides students with a complete analytical template containing all influencing factors, eliminating the need to piece together fragmented content from separate cases to fill in missing details.

Satisfying depth: The artistic exchanges in this period go far beyond superficial stylistic imitation, representing deep integration and reconstruction at the level of aesthetic concepts and visual grammars. Comparative presentation of original works embodying the "poetic resonance of brush and ink" of Chinese ink painting and works representing the Persian "black brush" aesthetic enables students to immediately recognize that formal similarity does not equate to substantive influence, as the entire underlying aesthetic logic has been transformed. The spatial logic of Chinese

landscape painting was further reshaped to adapt to Persia's Islamic "veiled vision" viewing mode. Such in-depth content effectively trains students' advanced formal analysis capabilities and cultural interpretation competencies, rather than delivering superficial knowledge that is quickly forgotten after class.

Controversial and cutting-Edge: Academic discussions concerning the transmission routes, influence scope and nature of "Chinese stylistic influence" date back to the early stage of relevant disciplinary development. The analytical framework has evolved from early diffusionism to the currently prevailing network theory and cultural subjectivity perspective. This complete evolutionary trajectory of academic scholarship serves as ideal material for in-class discussions, which is perfectly suited to cultivate students' critical thinking and prevents them from treating disciplinary knowledge as fixed, unquestionable standard answers [1].

Excellent practical relevance: This case vividly illustrates the core connotations of "mutual learning among civilizations" and "creative transformation". The indigenization and reconstruction of foreign motifs carried out by Persian artists constitutes a direct historical prototype for design innovation in the context of contemporary globalization. Extending from this content naturally aligns with the ideological and political objectives of the course, guiding students to explore the form of innovative creation rooted in full respect for indigenous cultural roots.

2. Design of Core Teaching Modules

2.1 Module 1: Scholarly Cartography – the Evolution of Research Paradigms

This module sets a clear core objective: to enable students to systematically master the complete academic lineage, key scholars, and paradigm iteration logic of cross-cultural research on Persian miniature painting. Upon completing this module, students are expected to clearly articulate the stepwise advancement of academic inquiry, understand how emerging ideological trends, newly unearthed materials, and updated research perspectives gradually reshape the corresponding research framework, and establish a macroscopic cognitive foundation for the entire research field. This study adopts the 1980s as a clear dividing line, splitting the entire academic evolution process

into two distinct phases with fundamentally different methodologies and interpretive logic, which significantly reduces the cognitive load and improves the accessibility of the content for student learning

2.1.1 Foundational stylistic comparative phase (mid-20th century–1980s)

This phase constitutes the foundation-laying period of the entire discipline, during which research focused on stylistic juxtaposition and chronological contextualization, generating numerous classic research frameworks and academic consensuses that remain widely adopted to the present day. Among pioneering scholars in this field, Ernst Grube completed the most rigorous foundational work. After finishing the systematic cataloging of all miniature collections housed in the Topkapı Palace Museum, he explicitly proposed the conclusion that Mongol artistic influence served as a critical turning point in the stylistic evolution of Persian miniatures, which has remained a fundamental academic consensus in the field to date. Subsequent scholars including Oktay Aslanapa and Bernard O'Kane further advanced this research direction, and refined the stylistic genealogy of early miniature paintings through rigorous cross-verification of textual and visual materials.

Methodologically, formal analysis represented the mainstream approach in this phase: researchers conducted direct visual comparisons of pictorial elements, categorized and summarized stylistic traits, and constructed a unidirectional transmission framework for Sino-Western artistic exchange, marking this as a highly representative stage of traditional art history research. The core seminar topic of this module centers on this paradigm, guiding students to discuss both the strengths of the stylistic comparison methodology and its inherent limitations. This study designs corresponding teaching links to lead students to debate whether this approach tends to simplify, or even completely obscure, the pluralism and complexity of cross-cultural interactions, so as to help students gradually develop critical academic literacy.

2.1.2. Deepened contextual turn phase (1980s–present)

Post-1980, scholarship has comprehensively broken free from the singular dimension of stylistic comparison, achieving a multi-layered paradigm shift: from formal analysis to

contextual study, from macroscopic overview to micro-scale thick description, and from isolated art history research to material culture studies, which has vastly expanded the analytical dimensions and theoretical depth of the entire field.

Patronage and institutional research: Scholars no longer focus solely on individual artworks, but instead explore the mechanisms underlying artistic production. Mu Hongyan's dedicated research on the Persian imperial kitabkhāna (royal painting libraries) clearly outlined the organizational structure and operational rules of court artistic manufacture [2]. David Roxburgh, meanwhile, elaborated on how the monarchical aesthetic taste of rulers dictated the prevailing artistic styles and design paradigms of the era. By integrating these two sets of research findings, an interconnected analytical framework linking design production with power dynamics and court institutions is established, enabling students to understand the political and institutional logic hidden behind artistic styles after studying this section.

Iconography and micro-historical research: Research has become increasingly granular, with its interpretive depth significantly enhanced. This study deliberately incorporates several representative "thick description" cases into the curriculum preparation: Wang Jingling's analysis of the "twin cats" pictorial symbol in miniatures [3], Xia Nanxi's cross-civilizational comparison of the paintings of Gong Kai and Persian miniatures, and Wu Ge's archival excavation of the multilayered historical contexts for "black brush" works. These contents are specifically designed to train students' core competencies in micro-iconographic exegesis and contextual tracing.

Intermedia and material culture research: The boundaries of the discipline are continuously expanding. Usmanjan Yakupov traced the transmission routes of Chinese silk patterns all the way, confirming that these patterns indeed served as foundational prototypes for Persian design creation. Yang Jing's research further systematically uncovered the circulation and transformation mechanisms of design sketches across different craft mediums including miniature painting [4], carpet weaving, and silk tapestry, directly expanding the previously narrow painting-centric scholarship into a comprehensive study of multi-medium material culture and consumption

networks.

Following these research veins, this module also incorporates content on cutting-edge theoretical progress, focusing on creative cross-cultural artistic transformation and visual grammatical reconstruction. Drawing on the core arguments of Pan Sanrou, the curriculum unpacks the formative influence of Chinese ink-wash art on the development of Persian aesthetics for students, clarifying that this influence is by no means simplistic stylistic copying, but instead inspired Persian art to establish its own independent aesthetic core centered on the brush. Simultaneously, Zhou Yong's "veiled vision" theory is introduced to construct a visual logic framework capable of explaining indigenous Persian spatial expression [5]. In class, students are guided to compare the viewing modes and spatial aesthetics of traditional Eastern and Western art side by side, enabling them to gradually develop cross-civilizational visual theory literacy.

The core classroom activity in this part is a themed debate: each student group sorts out different competing explanations for the origins of the "black brush" style — some viewpoints hold that it is the product of Chan painting influence, some argue that it is the spontaneous artistic experiment of court painters, and others believe it originates from Sufi spiritual expression [6]. Students are required to find their own evidence and engage in debate. Through this process, students can genuinely grasp the pluralism of historical interpretation and the open-ended nature of academic research.

2.2 Module 2: Cross-Cultural Translation of Design Elements – Core Case Analysis

The teaching objective of this module is to dissect the complete mechanism of cross-cultural translation through canonical design element dissemination cases, enabling students to systematically master five core translational logics: appropriation, selection, semantic shift, recombination, and indigenization. After learning this module, students must be able to understand the complete full lifecycle: after foreign design motifs are transmitted into a completely alien cultural context, how they are modified, reconstructed, and finally crystallized into indigenous aesthetic paradigms, connecting theoretical comprehension with concrete case application. This study structures the entire teaching content into four core analytical

dimensions: brushwork concepts, ornamental symbols, spatial narration, and modular design.

2.2.1. Brushwork, materials, and concepts: translation from ink-wash poetics to black brush aesthetics

This part focuses on the conceptual cross-cultural absorption of technical practices, investigating the transformation pathways and aesthetic reconstruction logic through which China's ink-brush system evolved into the Persian black brush idiom. The curriculum deliberately constructs a cross-civilizational comparative framework that pairs the Chan ink paintings by Song Dynasty masters Liang Kai and Muqi with the black brush album leaves held at the Topkapı Palace Museum. A progressive guiding question chain is designed to push students deeper into critical inquiry: first, unpacking the triple core essence of Chinese ink brushwork — pictorial expressivity, calligraphic artistry, and spiritual introspection; second, tracing the indigenous connotations of the Islamic qalam (pen/brush) and unpacking its sacredness, calligraphic order, and religious spiritual dimensions; finally, analyzing the aesthetic innovations emerging from cultural collision, and explaining how the Persian black brush style leveraged Chinese ink techniques to voluntarily upgrade its indigenous aesthetics and emancipate artistic expression [7]. After explaining the historical content, the curriculum specially extends it to contemporary design and links this historical logic to current design practice: students are guided to analyze how foreign design technologies such as parametric design go through cultural screening, absorption, reconstruction, and re-aestheticization within the indigenous design context, enabling them to understand the unified translational logic connecting ancient and modern practices.

2.2.2. Ornamental patterns, power, and symbols: the transcultural journey of Dragon and phoenix motifs

This part takes dragon and phoenix iconography as the core case, and specifically investigates the contextual resetting and semantic inversion of pictorial symbols after they enter a foreign cultural context, making clear the underlying laws governing symbolic mobility and localized translation. In traditional Chinese culture, dragon and phoenix motifs are quintessential emblems of imperial legitimacy and auspiciousness, widely deployed across silk, porcelain, painting and other craft media, with very stable and

mature semiotic connotations. However, after being transmitted to the Persian cultural sphere, their meanings were completely reconstructed: the dragon completely shed the auspicious connotations it carried in Chinese culture, and reemerged as a demonic antagonist in Persian epic narratives, appearing prominently in scenes of heroes slaying dragons. The phoenix meanwhile divested itself of its original imperial symbolism, becoming a central decorative motif in Persian courts that signified splendor and nobility [8].

This part is delivered in the form of an ornamental semantic translation workshop for practical teaching: tasks are assigned to students in groups, asking them to practice with classic Chinese patterns such as taotie masks, and discuss together what kind of divergent interpretations and adaptive modifications traditional motifs will undergo in different regional and cultural contexts, so that they can concretely grasp the mechanism of cross-cultural symbolic translation, rather than merely memorizing scattered knowledge points.

2.2.3. Space, narration, and visual mechanisms: reconstructing Chinese three-distant landscape theory into veiled visual fields

This part specifically explores the divergent dialogues between Eastern and Western visual grammars and spatial philosophies, unpacking the logic through which China's traditional landscape spatial system is reconstructed in Persian art. Chinese Shanshui (mountain-water) painting employs the compositional method of "three distances" to construct a continuous, spiritually immersive landscape that integrates humanity and nature, serving the spiritual needs of literati who seek refuge in nature and pursue natural aesthetic contemplation. However, Persian miniature painting did not directly copy this system. Instead, it completed indigenization transformation through the native "veiled vision" visual logic: it flattened and patterned the originally volumetric, continuous, freehand Chinese landscape, compartmentalizing it within framed boundaries, severing the original inherent spatial continuity. This transformation was done specifically to meet the core compositional demand of miniatures: juxtapose multiple narrative threads from different time and space within the same frame, prioritizing decorative harmony and the expressive needs of epic storytelling [5].

In the in-class visual analysis practical exercise,

scenes that integrate Chinese landscape elements from the Houghton Shahnameh are specifically selected, and students are asked to manually draw and dissect the embedded Chinese spatial components, enabling them to intuitively see how these elements are fragmented, partitioned and reassembled, making the rules through which the Persian indigenous narrative logic reshapes foreign spatial motifs completely clear [9].

2.2.4. Narration, modularity, and appropriation: the invisible presence of eighteen songs of a nomad flute

This part focuses on the advanced level of cross-cultural appropriation and contextual reconstruction of design modules, elaborating on the subtle design strategy of "decontextualization and recontextualization". Drawing on Pan Sanrou's research, the curriculum systematically analyzes the marginal nomadic scene illustrations in Sultan Ahmad's Divan, whose compositional prototypes are actually derived from the Chinese narrative painting Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute [10]. This batch of works is a typical case: they directly extract, appropriate and reconstruct classical Chinese pictorial modules, completely cut off their original historical connotations and spiritual meanings, and adapt to the decorative and narrative needs of the Persian court [11].

After explaining this canonical case, the curriculum also distills a universal design methodology, guiding students to connect historical patterns with contemporary design phenomena: students are encouraged to analyze the creative logic behind retro style and exotic design — stripping foreign or historical design elements of their original native context and infusing them with new modern semantics, so that students can not only understand the historical design laws, but also reflect on their current creative practice.

2.3 Module 3: Institutional Networks and Intermedia Practice – Ecosystems of Design Production

This module intentionally breaks away from the isolated analysis of individual artworks and elements, guiding students to dig deeper into the underlying generative logic of artistic styles and design paradigms. After learning this module, students will understand that the formation, evolution and final canonization of a classic visual style relies on the support of an integrated

imperial production institution, transregional trade economic network and sociocultural structure, so as to gradually develop a systematic ecological cognition of design production.

2.3.1. Core innovative functions of imperial painting libraries

The Safavid-era royal kitabkhāna was the absolute core engine of Persian art and design innovation, undertaking the functions of royal design coordination, creative production and craft integration. In essence, it was an exclusive royal design research institute that served the royal family alone. It gathered the most preeminent painters, calligraphers, bookbinders and master craftsmen of the entire country at that time, and the standardized collaborative teams were able to complete systematic refinement to produce top-level artistic innovation. Within this complete production ecosystem, design sketches are universal master files that can circulate across all mediums, with extremely high versatility and full cross-process applicability. According to Yang Jing's research, a single original sketch suite that depicts hunting scenes, dragon-phoenix motifs and mountain-water landscapes can be used in completely different scenarios and crafts: miniature painting series, large hunting carpets such as the Boston Hunting Carpet, and luxury royal silk textiles can all directly reuse and adjust these sketches, having already formed a mature cross-media production system that shares common design prototypes [9].

2.3.2 Interdisciplinary theoretical linkages and practical collation

The content of this module is tightly locked to the core theoretical framework of A History of Design under the Belt and Road Initiative, perfectly corresponding to the textbook chapters including cross-border luxury trade, artistic patronage and stylistic evolution, and intermedia design systems, so that case practice and theoretical architecture can mutually corroborate each other, and students will not feel that theory and cases are two unrelated separate parts. The systematic practical assignment arranged for students in this study is to let them manually draw the complete full industrial chain map of Safavid court art, from raw material import to finished product circulation. Students will draw the visual network diagram of court artistic production and consumption on their own, sorting out the full process: the cross-border inflow of foreign raw materials such as Chinese silk and mineral pigments, the secondary

creative design refinement within the royal painting library, and the final distribution of finished works as royal diplomatic gifts or internal court furnishings. After completing this exercise, students can intuitively understand how the integrated ecosystem of ancient cross-cultural design production, trade and dissemination operates.

2.4 Module 4: Construction of Teaching Case Libraries – Centered on the Houghton Shahnameh

This comprehensive applied module takes the Houghton Shahnameh as its flagship teaching case, and ties together all the knowledge points taught in previous modules: academic research paradigms, cross-cultural translation mechanisms and production institutional networks. By conducting complete multi-layered dissection of canonical artworks, students can translate theoretical knowledge into practice, form systematic cognition, and gain a deeper understanding of the core connotations of civilizational mutual learning.

2.4.1. Fundamental artwork background

This work was commissioned and compiled under the supervision of Prince Baysunghur, the son of Shah Rukh, and represents the pinnacle of Timurid epic manuscript painting. It features extremely high stylistic execution perfection, a complete narrative framework and highly typical cross-cultural fusion traits, making it the absolute optimal teaching case for studying how Chinese stylistic elements are transmitted and then indigenized in Persian miniature painting. This study has been validated through multiple course implementations, with students consistently showing the highest participation level when using this case.

2.4.2. Tiered group case analysis assignments

This study adopts a structured, tiered group research model rather than allowing free grouping, guiding students to conduct specialized analysis from four distinct dimensions:

Pattern and power research group: Systematically identify all canonical Chinese ornamental motifs hidden in the illustrations of the manuscript — dragons, phoenixes, qilin, cloud scrolls, Chinese floral patterns, record their usage scenarios and material carriers, and interpret the newly generated symbolic connotations and power references of these elements after being placed in the Persian epic

context [12].

Space and narrative research group: Select several representative multi-figure epic scenes to dissect the pictorial spatial organization logic, isolate the residual Chinese mountain-water spatial elements, analyze their formal deployment methods and function adaptive adjustments, and study how the Persian spatial rendering logic meets the Shahnameh's requirement of juxtaposing multiple narrative scenes and different timelines [13].

Intermedia connection research group: Conduct visual comparative analysis on the Persian court carpets, royal silk textiles and decorative artifacts from the same period, identify the common compositional paradigms, pictorial motifs and design logics across different mediums, and verify the core theory of "circulation, reuse and reconstruction of sketches across different mediums" with solid evidence.

Synthetic interpretation research group: Integrate the research findings of the previous three groups, systematically sort out the full lifecycle of Chinese stylistic elements within the Houghton Shahnameh — from initial introduction, adaptive modification, structural recombination to complete Persian indigenization. This complete process demonstrates how cross-cultural artistic fusion catalyzes the maturation of Persian indigenous national artistic styles and eventually helps them become widely recognized canonized classics [9].

2.4.3. In-class presentations and instructional synthesis

After each group completes their grouped case research, every team needs to make a class presentation, explaining the results of tiered analysis and the core evidence. Finally, the instructor will give an integrative comment, complementing the analytical dimensions that the students did not cover, systematizing the scattered observations, and weaving together the threads of ornamental translation, spatial reconstruction, intermedia circulation and institutional support. The entire discussion finally converges to the thematic synthesis of civilizational mutual learning and creative transformation, leaving students with a deep impression: cross-cultural design fusion is by no means mechanical copying of elements, but creative reconstruction rooted in indigenous cultural needs, which is the definitive artistic outcome of dialogue and mutual learning

between different civilizations.

3. Pedagogical Value and Contemporary Implications of the Course

This course does not only pass on the basic knowledge of ancient art and design history. The core teaching case centered on the cross-cultural translation of Persian miniatures also has profound contemporary significance that perfectly aligns with current design development and inter-civilizational exchange, which can bring solid theoretical guidance and value-oriented educational effects to students.

This series of cross-cultural design cases vividly and thoroughly explains the core essence of civilizational mutual learning. The complete historical trajectory through which Persian miniature painting absorbed Chinese artistic elements has solidly proven that virtuous cross-civilizational cultural exchange is never unidirectional cultural hegemony, cultural substitution, or mechanical duplication. Instead, it consists of equal dialogue, complementary enrichment and bidirectional mutual inspiration between different cultural systems. Persian indigenous artists firmly retained their own cultural subjectivity from start to finish, and screened, absorbed and reconstructed foreign artistic resources through their indigenous aesthetic traditions, visual logics and narrative demands, eventually fully integrating imported artistic motifs as organic components of their indigenous artistic systems. This historical paradigm provides solid historical evidence and academic backing for the Belt and Road Initiative's advocacy of equal, inclusive and pluralistic cross-cultural exchange [14].

At the same time, this case fully demonstrates the feasible practical pathways for the creative transformation and innovative development of artistic culture. Classical Chinese design elements—ink-wash brushwork, dragon-phoenix iconography and mountain-water spatial composition — underwent translational adaptation after being transmitted to Persia, and completely broke away from their original cultural contexts and semiotic meanings. Reimagined within the Persian artistic framework, these motifs achieved comprehensive innovation in symbolic semantics, visual grammar and spatial logic. Paradigmatic creative transformations such as the semantic inversion of dragon imagery, planar patterning of Chinese mountain landscapes, and

decontextualized reuse of pictorial modules are all excellent samples of adaptive creation rooted in indigenous cultural logic. These historical precedents bring very important inspiration to contemporary design students: when they come into contact with foreign design culture and visual languages in the future, they must abandon the idea of superficial mechanical imitation and copying, develop design thinking centered on active transformation and autonomous innovation, and achieve indigenization and elevation of external design resources rooted in indigenous cultural roots.

More importantly, this historical research paradigm can bridge historical experience and the practical needs of contemporary design. With the deepening of globalization and digitalization, the speed and breadth of cross-border and cross-cultural dissemination of design elements have far exceeded those in ancient times, making cross-cultural design translation a normalized creative practice. By digging deeper into the historical insights of this case, students can launch more advanced critical reflection in the modern design context, and face the core challenges of Chinese design's global outreach and international development. This study deliberately arranges related discussions in class: how contemporary Chinese design can break out of the limitation of only superficially exporting visual symbols, effectively transmit its core cultural essence and design philosophy, while rationally absorbing excellent global design resources, and finally build a contemporary design system that combines international vision and firmly retains indigenous cultural subjectivity. The historical experience of Persian art absorbing, modifying and internalizing foreign design motifs provides a very important strategic reference and historical precedent for the international innovative development of contemporary Chinese design.

4. Recommendations for Teaching Assessment and Expansion Directions

This course has specially built a three-dimensional teaching assessment system that integrates formative evaluation and summative evaluation to comprehensively assess students' performance in classroom critical thinking, case research ability and academic writing level. At the same time, starting from the interdisciplinary perspective and cutting-edge research methodologies, this study has designed multiple

multidimensional teaching expansion pathways to enable deep integration of theoretical learning, historical research and design practice.

4.1 Teaching Assessment Modalities

This course adopts a dual complementary assessment framework of formative evaluation and summative evaluation:

Formative assessment: The assessment is conducted throughout the entire teaching process. The composite score is derived from students' critical performance in themed class discussions, the tiered analytical reports for group canonical case studies, and the practical outputs of the ornamental cross-cultural translation workshop. The priority of the assessment lies in students' understanding and flexible application of core knowledge such as cross-cultural translation mechanisms, art-historical research paradigms, and design production institutions, and dynamically tracks students' growth in terms of teamwork, iconographic exegesis and critical problem-solving.

Summative assessment: Centered on the course research paper, the open-ended topics revolve around core debates in Silk Road design history and cross-cultural design research. Students can choose to systematically trace the stylistic evolution and morphological shifts of canonical circulating Silk Road motifs such as grape scrolls and pearl roundels across different Eurasian civilizations, and deeply dissect the internal logic of cross-cultural selection, semantic shift and indigenized reconstruction; or conduct cross-civilizational comparative research by juxtaposing the process of Persian miniature adapting Chinese stylistic elements against the process of Japanese ukiyo-e absorbing Dutch Western motifs, so as to distinguish the common traits and essential divergences of these two cross-cultural artistic translation pathways. This assessment can solidly refine students' competencies in academic collation, comparative analysis and theoretical exegesis.

4.2 Instructional Expansion Directions

Multiple multidimensional expansion pathways are designed to fully align with the needs of cutting-edge academic development and applied design practice:

Expand horizontal comparative vision: On the basis of the existing Persian cross-cultural design cases in this course, the curriculum plans

to introduce the modern European Chinoiserie artistic movement for comparative analysis, so that students can compare the reception mechanisms, adaptive logics and indigenization pathways of foreign art and design cultures across East Asian, West Asian and European civilizations together, identify the differences in cultural subjectivity and aesthetic preference amid inter-civilizational exchange, and expand the cognitive breadth of global design history.

Digital humanities research expansion: The curriculum plans to make full use of online digital resources such as digitized Persian miniature museum archives, so that students can master basic research methodologies such as digital icon retrieval, ornamental pattern matching, and data cataloging. Students will intuitively understand the applications of digital technology in art-historical textual verification, design genealogy tracing and pictorial sample analysis, and promote the integrative innovation that merges traditional design history with modern digital humanities methodologies.

Interdisciplinary practical extension: Relying on the applied disciplinary attributes of design, the curriculum plans to collaborate with related majors including visual communication design and textile design, and launch an innovative New Silk Road ornamental design practical project. Using the core theories of cross-cultural translation, symbolic reconstruction and contextual reimagination learned in the course as well as historical laws, students will create brand new ornamental works that integrate Silk Road cultural heritage and contemporary design aesthetics. This will truly translate historical theoretical research into tangible contemporary design practice, and fulfill the teaching objectives of inspiring creation through historical insight and translating knowledge into practical expertise.

5. Conclusion

To transform the research topic of "Sino-Persian artistic interactions between the 13th and 16th centuries" into the actual teaching content of A History of Design under the Belt and Road Initiative, the core is to distill massive art history materials into a methodological teaching system that can explain how design travels across cultural boundaries, undergoes adaptation, and finally achieves creative rebirth. After taking this course built on this teaching framework, what students gain is not just scattered factual

knowledge about black brush aesthetics, dragon-phoenix motifs, and the Houghton Shahnameh. What they acquire is a dynamic perspective that can be used to observe and interpret global design history, a set of analytical tools that can disassemble cultural hybridity, as well as an in-depth understanding of the essence of intercivilizational exchange and mutual learning. This is the core goal that an excellent design history course most wants to achieve: illuminating the present with historical insight, and nourishing contemporary creation with ancient wisdom. The symphonic resonance of Silk Road paintings has reverberated for thousands of years, and in the context of this curriculum, this timeless work is gaining brand new educational significance and producing new contemporary reverberations.

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