

Slow Design Under the Influence of Oriental Aesthetics and the Concept of Slow Life*

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Abstract—Rich material life is rapidly changing people's concepts and behavioral habits, and many of the problems arising therefrom are also thought-provoking. Expansion of material desire caused by consumerism, lack of spirit caused by fast culture, and anxiety caused by fast-paced life, etc., make the whole society spread a bad mood. Faced with this kind of imbalance and irrationality, it is necessary for people to slow down and think about the meaning of life. The concept of slow life and oriental aesthetics provide another direction for people blindly pursuing speed and efficiency.

Keywords—slow life; slow design; oriental aesthetics; sustainability; emotional experience

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the emergence of industrial civilization, science and technology as the first productive force has greatly enriched people's material life, and the corresponding spiritual life has also shown a pluralistic state. While the fast-paced life and work greatly enrich the material wealth of society, they have not really improved the quality of people's spiritual life. People's way of life is being eroded by the fast food culture caused by consumerism. The waste of resources and environmental pollution caused by the rapid flow of information and material are eroding people's hearts. In the aspect of design, it is manifested in vicious circle of many problems brought about by catering to the market and stimulating the consumption. Under the influence of the concept of slow life and oriental aesthetics, slow design has made a new exploration and attempt on some current situations and problems faced by today's society, trying to remind people to start from their own life experience and rethink the meaning of life from a new perspective.

II. THE ORIGIN AND FORM OF SLOW LIFE

A. Worldwide Slow Movement

At the end of the twentieth century, a "Slow Food Movement" emerged in Italy, which became popular throughout Europe and turned into a worldwide "Slow Food Movement". Slow organization and club have been set up all over the world, such as "Slow Food Organization" and "Quitter Club" in Italy, "Slow Time Association" in Europe,

and "Sloth Club" in Japan and so on. Following "Slow Food Movement", "Slow City" began to emerge around the world. "Slow City" is defined as a city, village or community with a population of less than 50,000, supporting urban greening, opposing pollution and noise, eliminating fast food areas and supermarkets, encouraging traditional manual work, and slowing down the pace of life. Unlike the fast-paced lifestyle, "slow city" is a new urban model. Here, a large area of walking space, communication square, and leisure green space are added for people's leisure and entertainment. People's entertainment methods are more convenient and abundant than that in the past. In addition, under the advocacy of "slow city", unaesthetic billboards and city wires were removed; car horns were banned; car speed was restricted; and neighborhood exchanges were encouraged. More time was spent to educate children and accompany family members. Slow food can rise and spread in the world, indicating that people in the busy and tense fast-paced life hope to use slow way to perceive life, find a balance point, and improve the sense of happiness.

B. The Manifestation of Slow Life

Slow life is developed from slow food, which reminds people to slow down properly in life, to comply with their inner feelings, to pay attention to the environment and tradition, and to relax their work and life. [5] Slow life has the following manifestations:

Slow movement refers to slow-speed movement. In a relaxed and slow state, it can achieve the effect of movement, and feel the tranquility of the mind in the movement.

Slow design involves deep thinking and deliberation, efficiency or product, tender and attention.

Slow food. The understanding of food can reflect a person's attitude towards life. Slow food means not only to taste slowly, but to master their own taste and rhythm of life through the feeling of food, so that the world will be richer.

Slow writing. In the era of information explosion, we should quietly read a book, write the feeling, and pick up the lost humanistic spirit. The soul of the text needs people to study and understand.

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Slow love. People should slow down first, and know how to appreciate the people and things, so as to have true and pure love.

Slow travel. Modern people have fast life rhythm and great pressure. Leisure holiday-style slow travel routes become the first choice for most urban people. People will slow down everywhere, chat slowly, eat slowly, and enjoy the fun of slow travel.

III. THE CONCEPT OF SLOW DESIGN

A. Alastair Fuad-Luke's Study on the Slow Design

Slow design concept developed from "slow life". This concept was first put forward in *Anything Goes, But Slow* by Swiss designer Atelier Peter Zumthor. In the slow design principles written by Alastair Fuad-Luke, the initiator, builder and theorist, the concept of slow design was deeply studied, and the thinking mode and practice of slow design were elaborated. He proposed that design should not be limited to serving economic development or to the interference of economic factors, but should take into account the balance among individual needs, economic interests, and the overall interests of the social, cultural and ecological environment. Rapid development of society has caused a series of ecological environment problems, and also has brought some changes to people's inner world. Slow design will rationally grasp the relationship between human and nature, explore the real inner needs of human beings, and create a harmonious coexistence of human and nature.

Slow design is the penetration of "slow life" in the field of design. In Alastair Fuad-Luke's slow design theory, the concept of slow design includes the following ten design principles:

- To meet people's actual needs, rather than to meet the economic needs of the market or follow the changing fashion.
- By reducing the ecological damage caused by the use of accessories and products, environmental pollution and unnecessary resource loss can be reduced.
- Renewable resources such as wind, tide, biological energy and solar energy can be better utilized.
- After ending the product life cycle, the components of the product can be separated. People can reuse, recycle, and remanufacture them.
- Avoiding the products that are toxic and harmful to other life or human beings throughout their life cycle.
- To maximize user satisfaction in terms of comfort and happiness.
- Encouraging modularization, purchasing suitable products for subsequent design, repairing and reusing, and improving the use function of products.
- Products should be of the greatest benefit to the cultural and social communities.

- Encouraging the user and customer with the concept of sustainability through pictures and text.
- Advocating the concept of slow design in the public sphere, especially in public welfare.

Slow design is a reflection on the current fast design mode. The blind pursuit of economic benefits greatly reduces the life cycle of products. Therefore, slow design reminds users and designers that they can recognize this drawback, pay more attention to the humanistic environment outside of our surroundings, and get more profound spiritual experience. Good design concepts enable users to appreciate the essence of slowness and enhance aesthetic taste. As the designers, they should first return to the essence of design, have a high sense of social responsibility, establish a good emotional communication between products and consumers, and act as an educator. And then, they can gradually implement the concept of slow design.

Slow design puts forward the above design principles from the perspectives of users, designers, manufacturers, and various production links. Through the sustainable design methods, we should encourage people to respect the traditional craft, care the humanistic spirit, slow down and appreciate the things around them, listen to their hearts, and let things interact and stay in people's hearts.

B. Slow Design and Sustainable Development

Driven by the consumerism, people pursue the products with fast replacement. They think that these values represent the modern fashion, but the products designed under the guidance of this value tend to have short life and fast elimination. This "popular" design ethics has long been criticized by German designers. Nowadays, people gradually abandon the aesthetic concept of stimulating purchasing power. The production of products for the purpose of rapid consumption and consumption will inevitably lead to the problem of resource scarcity over time. The accumulation of harmful substances in the production process will have an irreversible impact on the environment.

The concept of sustainable development is defined as: facing the future, considering the basic needs of people and the basic functions of products, considering the survival needs of future generations, and solving the problem of renewable energy and materials. Sustainable development no longer pursues uncontrolled and high-speed development quantity and production, but transforms into building a durable economy, improving quality, and changing the traditional concept of economic development.

The design of sustainable development [6] mainly includes the following aspects:

- Designing durable products;
- Designing industrial ecological park;
- Establishing a permanent lifestyle;
- Establishing new durable engineering techniques;
- Developing sustainable energy;

The design of sustainable development is the deeper development and promotion of ecological concept in the field of ideology in slow design. Slow design concept guides people not to blindly pursue quantity but ignore the quality of life, reduce endless material pursuit, and focus on sustainable present and future.

IV. THE CONCEPT OF SLOW DESIGN IN ORIENTAL AESTHETICS

A. *Embodiment of Taoism in Slow Design Concept*

Slow design is the penetrating experience of the concept of slow life in the field of design. Slow design products refuse to attract flashy images and pursue the original color, plain material and simple appearance. Taoist aesthetics regards "Tao" as its ideological core and formally hopes to achieve this aesthetic philosophical realm of "nature as beauty". This design concept has a deeper understanding of life, and obtains this understanding through breaking the narrow time structure. There are many agreements with Chinese traditional Taoist "inaction" ideological pursuit.

As the core of Taoist thought, "Tao" is an abstract philosophy of metaphysics that deals with the origin of the universe and the theory of life. Generally speaking, Taoist thought pays attention to "return". Lao Zi said, "Man models himself after the Earth; The Earth models itself after Heaven; The Heaven models itself after Tao; Tao models itself after nature." (Translated by Lin Yutang) Its aesthetics is based on the life structure, which implements aesthetics in the way of nature, emphasizes the harmony and unity between man and nature with the attitude of "being born", and advocates dealing with the relationship between man and nature through the perception of "Tao" and returning to the true nature of man. Taoism pursues spiritual freedom beyond reality. Slow life advocates "slowing down" life and enjoying the return of spiritual moments. The integration of the two concepts explains the meaning of "slowing down" to life.

Taoist realm refers to inaction, simplicity and purity, reaching Taoist realm, which is the highest expression of Taoist aesthetics. In Taoism's view, the highest beauty is the simple beauty. The simplicity of Tao embodies the beauty of innocence and originality. As Lao Zi said, "Less is more, more is confused." Slow design advocates the design concepts of "the fewer and better". Without flashy appearance, complexity, or following the trend, the designer's taste improvement and observation of daily life to explore the way of product design coincide with each other.

B. *Embodiment of the Golden Mean in Slow Design Concept*

The golden mean is the supreme spiritual pursuit of Confucianism. The Golden Mean opens with a clear and meaningful statement: "If you are not biased, it is not easy to be called the Mean; the Mean is the right way of the world; the Mean is the theorem of the world." Zhu Xi, a thinker of the South Song Dynasty, said, "The mean is not biased, and has the name of being inferior to others. The mean is

ordinary." Generally speaking, it is necessary to stand in the perspective of people's internal needs, and take it as the fundamental value orientation. In the external environment, people's internal requirements will get the most appropriate expression and realization. The same is true in design. It doesn't procrastinate, is not eager to achieve, doesn't blindly accommodate or drift with the current, and identifies their own position. There are many old Chinese sayings, such as "more haste less speed", "slow work yields fine products", and "slow work makes skillful craftsmen", which are all about speed and efficiency. The meaning of "slow life" is not to slow down simply, but to calm down and abandon some pursuit of desire. It should conscientiously and attentively follow your heart. Too fast rhythm is often at the expense of quality and in-depth thinking. It is a pity that it lacks repeated thinking, which often destroys the health and quality of our lives.

The golden mean pays attention to the formal sense of "being right" and "being fair", emphasizes the connotation of moderation in order to avoid the opposite. People interpret the implicit expression as "slow". In more cases, "slow" means more arduous efforts. It needs to be preconditioned by careful and comprehensive thinking. High-efficiency "fast" is full of craftsmanship and utilitarianism, deviating from the golden mean. Slow design can balance the shortcomings of fast, and achieve the moderation, so as to truly improve the quality of life.

C. *The Blending of Oriental Zen and Slow Design*

"Zen" is transliterated from the Indian Sanskrit "jhāna", which means "meditation", and "studying the scriptures". It can be understood as meditation. Through meditation training, it abandons external things and selfish misconceptions, concentrates its thoughts and thinks about the truth of life. Zen is a realm, which interprets the wisdom of life. As the essence of oriental culture, it can improve people's accomplishment and purify people's soul. In the field of art design, it pays more attention to the spiritual connotation of the work. Compared with the visual form, slow design products emphasize the meaning behind the form. It elaborates its design concept in a more concise formal language and enriches the connotation of the work. Through the promotion of design concept, the intrinsic value of design is increased, and the relationship between people and things is sublimated. Zen emphasizes self-cultivation and artistic conception. Only when people slow down and do not blindly follow the rhythm of daily affairs, people can forget secular existence and enter the aesthetic experience situation in calmness and intoxication.

V. CONCLUSION

Human emotions are so delicate and rich, and it is difficult to generalize them in simple forms. The reason why excellent design works can move people and be widely recognized is precisely due to their accurate grasp of emotional elements. The blending of Zen and design is a high degree of integration of form and spirit, which adds invisible vitality to the works and establishes mental and spiritual tranquility for users. Slow design pays more

attention to emotional experience besides satisfying function than functional design. It emphasizes the deep spiritual significance of products and helps people to enter their hearts and return to their authenticity. Slow life does not advocate grand momentum in form. Its idea is to guide people to reflect on their obsession with matter, listen to their inner voices, and experience a moment of peace beyond the secular world. Slow design concept has injected new wisdom into life with a higher mood.

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