

Research on Teaching of Decorative Sculpture and Material Application

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Abstract—From the perspective of function and effect, decorative sculpture is a sub-concept of sculpture. Material is the primary condition for sculpture and also for decorative sculpture. The relationship between decorative sculpture and material in traditional sense is relatively simple. However in the contemporary era, the relationship has changed because of the reform in artistic design concept. At the same time, the scope of decorative sculpture is expanded after the redefinition of material due to the improvement of processing technology and conditions and the expansion of application fields of decorative sculpture. Those new problems have caused the changes in teaching of the application of decorative sculpture and material: in the teaching process, it is not only needed to pay attention to the relationship between the body and materials of decorative sculpture, but also needed to focus on the relationship between decorative sculpture and the application space field; and those two aspects should also be constantly expanded and deepened along with the changes in artistic design concepts and the change in breadth and depth of relevant research content. The aspects and forms that this kind of expansion and deepening is reflected in are the important contents to be accurately grasped in the teaching process.

Keywords—decorative sculpture; material; application; teaching research

I. INTRODUCTION

In terms of the function and effect, decorative sculpture is one category of sculpture. Decorative sculpture and material have a natural dependence relationship. In traditional way, the relationship is relatively simple, and relevant materials are not specifically studied. Contemporary definition and scope of decorative sculpture have become blurred and enlarged. At the same time, because of the new problems arising from the relationship between decorative sculpture and material, namely, the relation between "ways" and "devices", the teaching content, method and purpose of the application of decorative sculpture and material appear new changes.

II. THE CONCEPT OF AND RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DECORATIVE SCULPTURE AND MATERIALS AND THE APPLICATION IN TEACHING

Sculpture is one of the oldest categories of formative arts. Under the current classification criteria for sculptures, almost

all ancient sculptures or the so-called classical sculptures can be classified into the type of decorative sculpture. This is because, before the appearance of modern sculpture exhibition, there was almost no the so-called "pure sculpture on pedestal" that only vents the exhibition, museums and artists' personal feelings. Since the appearance of modern art exhibition, researchers have put forward the concepts of "decorative sculpture" and "sculpture on pedestal" in order to distinguish the type of sculptures for the purpose of exhibition, or to meet the needs of sculpture teaching and research. No matter it is the earliest sculptures of birth goddesses, primitive bones or the rock-lined animals, the sculptures of religious buildings, tombs or decorative objects in ancient Egypt, Greece, Mexico, Africa, and China are all used to serve the primitive religion and witchcraft, namely are all functional sculptures used for decorating the altars, places of worship, and sacrificial utensils. After entering the contemporary context, sculptures are subdivided from the functional point of view, and include the functions of bearing, propaganda, probation, commemoration, decoration, marking, etc.; meanwhile, decorative sculpture is classified into a category of sculpture to meet the need of research and distinguishing its functions. "According to the note explanation on dictionary, the so-called 'decoration' is the things attached on the surface of body or substance to make it having a good appearance." "Decoration" has the connotation of modification and dressing up. Decorative sculpture in the traditional sense mainly refers to the decorative round sculptures, relief sculptures or openwork sculptures attached to buildings, furniture or objects. The four sets of high relief sculptures themed "Expedition", "Victory", "Peace" and "Resistance" on the walls of the two sides of the Arch of Triumph in France became the most intuitive way to commemorate the war. The Chinese Qing Dynasty furniture has distinct characteristics, and its rich, gorgeous and delicate decorative relief sculpture and openwork sculpture become one of its important features different from that of Ming Dynasty furniture. Luxury and prosperity become the aesthetic and value orientation of Qing Dynasty furniture. The beautiful relief sculpture images and stories on the Tang Dynasty Wumaxianhuan silver pot unearthed from Hejiacun Village in the southern suburbs of Xi'an, Shaanxi in 1970 recreated the real scenes of the flourishing period of Tang Dynasty in China. Those traditional decorative sculptures have the function of decorating and landscaping buildings, furniture, and objects.

The use of materials depends on the main body and is for the purpose of decoration. Making clear the concept is the premise of making relevant teaching research. The teaching research on decorative sculpture and material application is conducted on the basis of the concept and characteristics of decorative sculpture. Its characteristics are manifested in two aspects: first, it is a relatively independent sculpture with decorative style or characteristics and relies on the space; second, it is not an independent style, it is traditionally attached to architecture, furniture and utensils or handicrafts, and its applications in the contemporary era has been extended to landscapes, design, film and television and exhibition activities and other fields.

III. TWO LEVELS OF MEANING OF DECORATIVE SCULPTURE AND MATERIAL "APPLICATION"

In the teaching of decorative sculpture and material application, the "application" contains two levels of contents: the first level is the application of the relationship between decorative sculpture and material. Since there is a natural dependence relationship between sculpture and material, "material" must be another content to be further researched in addition to the theme of sculpture. The word "material" comes from the Latin word "materiale". In sculpture, material is the material carrier of artist's expression of ideas and emotions. Artist uses different materials to create and express his own personality; and also because of sculptors' personal experiences and different ways of material application in addition to his different personal qualifications and experiences, the world of sculpture has become a world of rich materials to some extent. "Sculpture materials include soil (ceramics), wood (timbers), gold (metal), stone (dimension stone) and other traditional materials. With the discovery and application of different new materials, the use of sculpture materials is constantly enriched, and many new materials are applied in sculpture. In the teaching process, it is not only needed to study the processing techniques of various sculpture materials, but more importantly, to consider the relationship between the themes, content, form and material application of the decorative sculpture. The second level is the function, effect or application of decorative sculpture. In terms of the characteristics attaching to space, decorative sculpture can become a symbol and cultural symbol of a country, a city, and a region, for example, the Statue of Liberty in New York, USA, the mermaid sculpture in Copenhagen, Denmark, and the Yulian sculpture in Brussels, Belgium. Over times, those sculptures' culture significance has gone beyond its significance to decorate the space. With the increasing commercial needs, decorative sculpture has been widely used in commercial space display. It also becomes a unique visual symbol of a commercial brand while enriching and enhancing the atmosphere of commercial environment. Sculpture is a formative art in three-dimensional space. For space decoration, it has the advantages, visual effects and psychological feelings that cannot be achieved by other art forms. In order to create an appropriate and creative commercial space, decorative sculpture has far-reaching research significance in theory of the expression form and material application, and has a broad space for development

in practice. With the improvement of people's material life and the requirements for living space, decorative sculpture has also become an important decorative means for home space. MOOOI is a modern design brand in the Netherlands and its founder Marcel Wanders is a well-known contemporary product designer. The classic products of the MOOOI brand are: Animal Lamp — Horse Lamp, Pig Table, Rabbit Lamp, etc. These products have both practical function and decorative function. Decorative sculpture is also widely used in culture theme parks. The colorful themed decorative sculptures in the world-famous Disneyland realize the fairy tale dream of every player. The Tang Dynasty Furong Garden in Xi'an, China is a Tang Dynasty culture themed park. Every visitor in the park can feel a rich atmosphere of the royal gardens of the Tang Dynasty. The decorative sculptures of different themes highlight the grace and grandeur of the Tang Dynasty gardens. The theoretical research and practice of the relationship between decorative sculpture and material is centered on the sculpture body, while the research on the relationship between decorative sculpture and its application field is actually aimed at its practical functions and effects. The two factors constitute the main content of the research on teaching of decorative sculpture and material application.

IV. NEW FEATURES OF DECORATIVE SCULPTURE AND MATERIAL APPLICATION

The relationship between sculpture and material is one of the problems always concerned by sculptors and designers. The creation of sculptures and the use of materials have also experienced new changes and trends. The problems of the relationship between decorative sculpture and material are different from the problem of exploring the "form" of traditional sculpture that has been lasted for a considerable long time. The change in the breadth and depth of material application in decorative sculptures has attracted the attention and discussion of contemporary sculpture theory circles. The new features of decorative sculpture and material application are mainly manifested in three aspects: first, the unity between materials and concepts: The elements that make up the concept contain forms and materials, and are the important means to achieve the concept of decorative sculpture. Since China's reform and opening up, the concept of sculpture has been mainly shown in "form". In sculpture teaching in 1980s, the views on the form of sculpture language seemed to be more consistent. College sculpture teachers were more willing to promote the form to the status of sculpture body, and get the past scattered understandings about the beauty of sculpture in form collected together and form a system and theory. They influenced a large number of students and had high prestige among students. They played an important role in helping students to understand sculpture from a new starting point. The understanding of the relationship between materials and concept in the sculpture circles has its development process. The unity between materials and concepts in sculpture creation has the significance of ideological emancipation and conceptual breakthrough in contemporary Chinese sculpture. Contemporary Chinese sculptors pay more attention to the relationship between materials and concepts than at any other

time in history. They regard the application of materials as the concept itself and pay attention to the adaptability of different materials used in expressing different concepts. They also pay attention to exploring the traits and aesthetics of the material itself; second, the ultimate performance of the sculpture materials: The ultimate performance of material is the concept itself. The research on the various possibilities of material presentation becomes the expression content of sculpture creation. The problems of content and form in artistic creation are transformed into specific problems such as research or discovery of the expressive power of traditional sculpture materials. With respect to traditional sculpture materials such as stone and metal materials, sculptors' creativity is mainly reflected in further expanding and exploring its expressive power, such as the flow of stone, various textures, stainless steel mirror effects and the expression of other concepts of time and space. The sculpture "Cloud Gate" designed by Anish Kapoor and positioned in Millennium Park in Chicago, USA, is a huge seamless stainless steel mirror sculpture inspired by liquid mercury. The three-quarters of this decorative sculpture reflect the sky, and its name symbolizes the concept that the sculpture connects the sky to tourists. This sculpture fully exerts the effect of stainless steel mirror, the most common metal material for outdoor decorative sculpture, and the concept of "time and space". For this reason, American Welding Society also granted the "Extraordinary Welding Award" to the sculpture processing enterprise. Third, the use of non-traditional materials: In addition to the in-depth study of sculpture materials, there are also studies in the scope of sculpture materials. This scope is represented by non-traditional sculpture materials in substance and non-traditional fabrication techniques in means of processing. Decorative sculptures have made outstanding advances in non-traditional materials, such as the use of wool, silk, pulp, hemp, fabric and other materials in fibrous materials. Modern new materials and production methods are introduced into the field of sculpture, which expands the scope of sculptures. This positive effort plays a driving role in changing the fixed thinking trend of fixing sculpture on pedestal, breaking the closed state, broadening the horizon, and seeking for sculpture development space in a broader field.

From the functional level of decorative sculpture and material application, the field of decorative sculpture application has also experienced new changes such as integration, diversification and popularization. The integration is a combination of decorative sculpture and other art design media. In traditional sense, decorative sculptures are attached to space or architecture, furniture, utensils, etc., and usually not involve any other art design media. Decorative sculpture has undergone new changes in contemporary era. It can be the main body of the overall presentation, or can not be the main body but a part of the body, or even a part of the overall presentation. For example, the combination of plane and 3D, the combination of digital media and decorative sculpture, etc.: the diversification is reflected in the changes in the space or architecture, furniture, utensils, etc. of the sculpture, and the new changes in decorative sculpture. For example, the dynamics of

decorative sculpture: the dynamics break through the limitations and fixed type of the static features of decorative sculpture; the popularization is reflected in the new changes in the application fields and application methods brought by the combination of decorative sculptures and popular culture. In traditional sense, decorative sculptures are generally designed with permanent and iconic features, while popular culture brings fresh visual effect and short-lived psychological experience to decorative sculpture and frequent change is the value of its existence. The decorative sculpture in commercial space is an example of such.

V. COUNTERMEASURES FOR TEACHING THE DECORATIVE SCULPTURE AND MATERIAL APPLICATION

In contemporary era, the relationship between sculpture and materials and that between decorative sculpture and application have undergone new changes; meanwhile, the teaching of decorative sculpture and material application also appears new problems. Therefore, it is necessary to accordingly adjust and reform the teaching content, methods and objectives of the curriculum. The improvement in teaching content mainly focus on the following four aspects: first, the previous teaching paid more attention to the relationship between the theme and the formative sense of sculpture, especially the creation and expression method proposing for mutual coordination between the theme and form of a sculpture. Over an adjustment, material is regarded as one of the key elements of sculpture creation and the material itself is a part of the creation concept. Second, the application of traditional materials is transformed into making deep exploration of the performance language of traditional materials. Traditional material itself becomes the research subject. The previous teaching process usually continues the expression way of traditional materials or changes the expression way of traditional materials within a limited range. After adjustment, the traditional materials themselves become the research subjects of decorative sculpture. Third, while deeply exploring the performance language of traditional materials, students are guided to find the integration and application of non-traditional materials and creation concept. In teaching, exploring the relationship between non-traditional materials and creation design concept has become an important part of teaching content of the curriculum. Fourth, the application of decorative sculpture materials and the application field of decorative sculptures are combined. On the one hand, the previous teaching content only pays attention to the constituent elements of the sculpture itself, such as the theme, form and material of the decorative sculpture, and ignores the analysis, expansion and practice of in application field of decorative sculpture. On the other hand, the previous teaching content as the teaching goal of the curriculum becomes a part of the whole teaching process; that is, the final application result is not surely a three-dimensional material sculpture entity, and the final presentation can be plane or other artistic presentation form or be dynamic. To sum up, it is needed to get the main purpose of the curriculum summarized as "concept", "material", "integration", focus on both contents of the two levels of the curriculum, and seek for unification between concept and materials.

In terms of teaching methods, it is needed to realize the transformation of abstract concepts related to artistic creation, namely to get the relationship between concept and materials in the curriculum transformed into the relationship between vision, psychology and materials. This way of transforming abstract concept into an intuitive, visual and easy to understand form, on the one hand, facilitates students' understanding and use, on the other hand, combines rationality and sensibility and proposes a way of thinking in the course teaching: namely, the performance of concept and material contains a part of emotional association and imagination, and also contains the content of logical reasoning. The teaching objectives of decorative sculpture and material application should first be embodied in concept. It should break the barrier of art category, look for possibilities in the field of decorative sculpture and material application and the application field of decorative sculpture; secondly, in the teaching process, it is needed to combine the course with true propositions in non-sculpture category and seek the application point, namely the combination point, to improve students' creation experience and methods. Finally, teaching result should not only reflect the application and research of the relationship between decorative sculpture and materials, but also reflect the practical application of decorative sculpture and material application course, to truly realize the course concept of "concept", "material" and "integration".

VI. CONCLUSION

Above all, in face of the new characteristics and emerging situations of contemporary theories and practices related to decorative sculpture, material, and their application and other related aspects, it is needed to attempt to apply or transform the research result into the teaching content, method and objective and other teaching parts and finally make an overall evaluation on the teaching effect, while trying to make theoretical conclusion and research on them.

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