

# The Creation of Ceramic Object Design in Traditional Aesthetics\*

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**Abstract**—From ancient times to now, ceramic art has the dual attributes of life and art. From the perspective of history and aesthetics, this paper combines the traditional aesthetics of China to expound the creative expansion of ceramic objects in modern life in design concepts and creative techniques. Meanwhile, this paper also explains the aesthetic significance of ceramic objects to people's emotional purification and moral appeal.

**Keywords**—traditional aesthetics; ceramic objects; creation

## I. INTRODUCTION

In traditional philosophy, the most basic norm of aesthetic activities is to respect nature and treat all things well. It is necessary to take care of the whole nature and society with an aesthetic height, and constantly explore the rich and colorful aesthetics of human beings in the life practice close to nature. China's long history of culture has nurtured extensive and profound philosophical thinking. The principles of all things are among the three things of "heaven, earth and people". The traditional Chinese aesthetic view originated from the traditional philosophical thought. "Through the understanding and feelings of the beauty between heaven and earth, people can understand the law of the evolution of the universe" and "People become speechless in the face of beautiful natural scenery" [1] are the important aesthetic thoughts in Chinese traditional philosophy. The traditional aesthetic view of China advocates the aesthetic conception in the nature of natural objects, the pursuit of natural enlightenment, and the feeling of natural beauty with a pure state of mind. This traditional aesthetic reveals the harmonious relationship between man and nature.

China's earliest traditional aesthetics came from the "Book of Changes" 3000 years ago, which reflects China's unique broad mind and great wisdom. The book records the ancient people's observational research and thinking on astronomy, geography and humanities, and understands the harmonious symbiosis among heaven, earth and people from the natural state. In the traditional aesthetic view, life comes from nature and coexists with nature. The interaction between the two is a whole of integration and

communication, and it is also a whole of symbiotic development that is continuous and interactive. There is no fixed subject and object in the "Book of Changes". Just as you enjoy the beautiful scenery in the mountains, you don't know that you are one of the scenery in the mountain. Beauty is constantly changing, not just for humans, but for all of the nature. In the "Book of Changes", the harmony between man and heaven and earth, the harmony between man and sun and moon, and so on, convey a fusion of aesthetics, and promote integration of man and nature. In general, the "Book of Changes" is the earliest source of traditional aesthetics. The aesthetic view it conveys is mainly "integration", and the later traditional aesthetic concept develops these ideas.

## II. CREATION AND CONSTRUCTION OF CERAMIC OBJECT DESIGN IN TRADITIONAL AESTHETICS

China has a wealth of aesthetic concepts, such as "Wu Wo Liang Wang" ("物我两忘"; it refers to forget yourself and the outside world to achieve a state of integration with nature), "the heavens and the earth coexist with me" as well as "the Tao way follows nature". [2]. The thinness of Taoism, the benevolence of Confucianism, etc. all contain great wisdom, which makes people surpass the spirit of self-washing, let the soul return to nature, and make life more harmonious. How does traditional Chinese aesthetics guide the design of ceramic objects? Traditional aesthetics has increasingly influenced the creation of ceramic objects in modern society. Chinese people are paying more and more attention to the return and perception of the real world. With this kind of aesthetics, ceramic art researchers use simple outlook on life, values and aesthetics to design and create ceramic objects in modern times, so that ceramic object design has a broader space for development. This is an extension of a design under the influence of traditional aesthetics.

The traditional aesthetics has been reflected in the painted pottery patterns and patterns of Yangshao culture. Aesthetics is a perception of spirit and beauty. This perception can be tangible or intangible, abstract or figurative and conscious or modal. As mentioned above, Chinese philosophical thoughts influence traditional aesthetics, so philosophy includes literature, aesthetics, and

\*Fund: National Social Science Fund (Project No.: 17BZX118)

art, and they are unified in philosophy. The design of "ceramic objects" combines the art of philosophy and science. It reflects the consciousness and form of the times. The traditional aesthetics has a very important guiding role to it.

#### *A. The Pursuit of "Mastery of Natural Law" in Ceramic Object Design*

The central category of the Taoist-centered aesthetic system established by Lao Zi is the three interconnected categories of "Tao", "Qi" ("气") and "Xiang" ("象"). Lao Zi once said, "Out of Tao, one is born; out of one, two; out of two, three; out of three, the created universe. The created universe carries the yin at its back and the yang in front; through the union of the pervading principles it reaches harmony." "Tao" produces chaotic "Qi" (one), chaotic "Qi" is divided into yin and yang (two), yin and yang are intermingled to form a harmonious state (three), and everything is produced from the intercommunication and integration of yin and yang. [3]. The life and the noumenon of all things is "Qi", that is, "Tao". "Tao" is the central category and the highest category. "Qi", "Xiang" and "Tao" are closely linked. The relationship among them is about the relationship among aesthetic objects, aesthetic outlook, and art forms. "Xiang" must embody "Tao" and "Qi" to become an aesthetic object. The aesthetics must go from the observation of the "Xiang" to the observation of the "Tao". Zong Bing<sup>1</sup> spoke of "Cheng Huai Wei Xiang" ("澄怀味象"; it refers to "the aesthetic appreciation of the aesthetic image of natural landscapes with a vague and empty mind"), and the essence of "Wei Xiang" is the observation of Tao. That is to say, the essence of aesthetics is not to grasp the form beauty of the object image, but to grasp the life and noumenon of the thing, that is, the Tao. This classical aesthetic tells people that the artist must express the ontology and life of the universe in his own works. Only in this way, the artistic works themselves will have vitality.

There is a homogenous idea in classical aesthetics, that is, "Tao", which is the beginning of all things. The symbiosis of this source affects human life, emotions, and cultural thoughts through the "Tao". This will also affect the way people live and exist as well as the art forms of human beings. Taking the ceramics design as an example, some of the objects design modeling is harmonious, the lines are smooth, the colors are simple, while some are rich in color, and the shapes are exaggerated. In the design of ceramic objects, the creation method of the works is quite rich: it can be a direct portrayal of natural life, and the abstraction design of general objects, which can be expressed in an artistic language that conforms to the characteristics of the times. But no matter what the method is, in the end, it must refine the true nature of natural life. To obtain these refinements, it is necessary to fundamentally think about the roots of the development of all things, express them in the form of art, and adapt to modern social life in the meantime. Such ceramic objects are designed to be alive.

<sup>1</sup> Zong Bing, styled Shaowen, Song Dynasty painter, art theorist. 375 to 443 AD.

The "Tao" of nature is reflected in the design of ceramic objects by injecting static clay materials with dynamic life elements and embodying the rhythm of life in different art forms. The truth of nature is rich and colorful, and the natural form directly expressed in the design of ceramic objects can convey rich perception. For example, the design of the object with high and low drop can give an intuitive rhythm or level, and the uniform and symmetrical design can give people a peaceful mind or stability, and the ceramic decoration design of the pattern can give people a visual sense of closeness and a good environment decoration effect. A good ceramic object design is not only reflected in the natural expression of the design form, but also in the function use of the design. Because human beings are part of nature, only to meet these two points is really a good ceramic design.

First of all, the natural expression of the ceramic object design form, that is, through the changing design elements and shapes to express a state of natural existence. The design of ceramic objects should be consistent with the breath of life and feeling of use that the work hopes to convey, so as to realize the unification of the design form and the function of the work. There are many ways to realize the natural expression of design forms. It is needed to use contrast, exaggeration and other methods to create ceramic-related design works. For example, using decorative techniques to achieve the final result is suggested; auxiliary techniques such as color decoration, glaze decoration, and mechanism decoration are effective ways to enhance ceramic design. Second, the functional mission of ceramic object design: design is to serve the life; the function of ceramic object design is accompanied by human life, and its development is included in human and natural development. Therefore, the function of using ceramic objects is different in different natural stages, and the form in which the functions are attached is also different. Letting the user feel that they exist in nature through the use of ceramic objects is the best unify of form and function in the design of ceramic objects. At present, the design of ceramic objects is constantly innovating and developing on the premise of this concept.

#### *B. The Storage of "Benevolence" in Ceramic Object Design*

Exploring the role of aesthetics and art in social life is the starting point and center of Confucius aesthetics. In Ye Lang's "Aesthetic Syllabus", it mentioned that, "Confucius believes that aesthetics and art can play a special role in the subjective cultivation of people to achieve the spiritual realm of 'benevolence'. He believes that there is an important internal connection between aesthetics, art as well as social and political customs. In order for art to play a positive role in social life, art must be regulated. Art must conform to the requirements of 'benevolence' and must contain moral symbols [4]". Confucius said: "If I want to reach benevolence, then benevolence will be arrived". "The practice of benevolence is entirely up to oneself rather than others [5]". Therefore, the influence of aesthetics and art on the human spirit is particularly powerful, so aesthetics and art can play a special role in the subjective cultivation of people to achieve the spiritual realm of "benevolence". As a

kind of aesthetics, "benevolence" has a wide range of expressions in art, including not only the "ritual" of social politics but also the "kindheartedness" of social life.

First of all, in the traditional aesthetics, it fully reflects the consideration and attention to social stability and internal order, that is, "self-denial and returning to benevolence [6]." This kind of aesthetics is reflected in the design of ceramic objects, mainly in the aspects of modeling, decoration, color and function. This feature that ceramic objects are closely related to human life makes this "ritual" more directly related to it. Since ancient times, the humanistic significance of ceramic objects has been very strong. It is expressed in the design of concrete ceramic objects, which is the design concept with symbols and meanings. For example, the use of styling, patterns, functions, and glaze colors to symbolize people's mind and life. Different mass design gives people different feelings. The full and round mass design makes people feel that the world is beautiful and life is perfect. For another example: the pattern decoration in ceramic objects, the combined patterns of phoenix, white crane and swallow, symbolize the five ethical relationships between the monarch and his subjects, the father and the son, the brothers, the husband and wife, and the friends in the traditional Chinese etiquette culture.<sup>2</sup> In modern times, people don't have a hierarchy of institutional distinctions, but the ethics of respecting the old and loving the young, the harmony between brothers, the harmony between husband and wife, etc., maintaining social stability and social development have not changed. Therefore, the design of ceramic objects requires the sublimation of "ritual" to promote the development of the ideology of the human community.

Secondly, the "benevolence" thought is an important thought of Chinese traditional aesthetics. It focuses on the dual needs of human material and spirit. For example, Designers should guide a broad sense of aesthetics in the design of ceramic objects through the thinking of the source of life. In the design of ceramic objects, the emotional function of the works should be deepened at the same time, and the healthy and positive emotions of the users should be guided through the works, and the bad emotions should be abandoned to achieve an aesthetic enjoyment and promote the harmony of human life. The design and creation of ceramic objects and the culture of the times have caused the material and emotional resonance of the viewers through the use of different concrete objects, and through this material and emotional resonance to strengthen people's sense of harmonious society. Artists and viewers promote emotional communication between people through the emotional exchange of works. It is suggested that while designing the artistic expressions with the characteristics of the times through thinking about life, nature, society and history, the intimate relationship and sense of responsibility between people and people as well as people and society should be strengthened. Letting people clearly recognize their social attributes has a very positive effect on building a beautiful human society.

### *C. The "Harmony" in Ceramic Object Design*

The "harmony" in the traditional Chinese philosophical sense refers to the final understanding of human beings, the spontaneous changes and law of development. It is a kind of value and methodology for treating people and things. There are three main states of "harmony": first, "harmony in diversity", that is, mutual coexistence of different things seeking common points while reserving differences; second, social and political harmony, that is, a state of harmony in humanity; third, nature has nurtured human society, seeking harmonious coexistence between man and nature. "Harmony", reflected in the art, can expand a variety of different forms of content. For example, it pursues the balance of layout of people, objects and scenery in Chinese painting, and realizes the unity of "technology", "art" and "use" in ceramic objects. Therefore, from the ancient times to the present, the pursuit of art is a kind of beauty, a beauty derived from moral height, one of the most heart-felt beauty. Among the design of ceramic objects, the Chinese Kung Fu tea set is the one that best reflects the concept of "harmony". Tea sets have reached a high level in terms of raw materials, technology and innovation with the development of Chinese history. In order to meet the needs of modern life, the designers of tea sets have also created a variety of conceptual tea sets, which at the same time have excellent use functions, seeking great common points and reserving small differences, to meet the needs of the social groups. At the same time, the tea set in the ceramics design also creates a series of products such as the family series, which are used to meet the common needs of a family or a certain group. It perfectly unifies the functional mission and aesthetic conception in the beautiful design form and fine craftsmanship. The tea set in the ceramic objects design can be said to create the highest level of unifying of practicality, beauty and culture.

In the "The Commentary of Zuo·Xiang", it mentioned, "In the past eight years, the nine princes lived in harmony, just like a beautiful piece of music." It can be told that for thousands of years, the Chinese have been pursuing social harmony and political harmony. "The beauty of harmony" runs through the entire Chinese culture. Harmony in Chinese culture is reflected in the design of ceramic objects, which is characterized by the pursuit of functional, visual and emotional experience, as well as the harmony and unity between people's communication in the process of use. In order to achieve such a harmonious state, in the specific modeling of the ceramics design, each component must be unified and developed together. For example, the harmonious symbiosis of the components, such as the material, shape, glaze color, and pattern of the ceramic objects design. "Harmony" allows the design of ceramic objects to achieve the unity of technical beauty, form beauty and experience beauty in the process of use. The development of ceramics design is an extension of human life space and an extension of human life's taste. This kind of expansion should promote the harmony of human life and eliminate the internal contradictions of the work itself or human beings. Therefore, in the design of ceramic objects, designers must carefully consider whether the functional mission meets people's needs of life, whether the aesthetic

<sup>2</sup> The implied meaning of "Five Rituals Picture" origins from: "Mencius Teng Wengong".

mission is in line with human emotional needs, and thus promote the harmonious development of human life.

### III. CONCLUSION

In modern society, the rich and flowing life aesthetics and the art form, changefully and flowingly express the liberation of human spirit. At present, the philosophical thought put forward by China to build a "harmonious society" is more inclusive to the development of art. Adhering to the concept of "harmony", no one has any reason to blame the art and aesthetic behavior that is different from oneself. Modern people should have a more inclusive attitude to make art diversified and harmonious. Therefore, in the face of an active and open art, what people have to do is to guide and integrate.

Under the influence of Chinese culture, the design of ceramic objects is increasingly developing in the direction of "harmony". It embodies the precipitation of Chinese cultural history and advocates a harmonious aesthetic that conforms to the laws of all things. The earthy fragrance of ceramic objects, under the influence of traditional aesthetics and the return of human natural emotions, impacts people's mind and aesthetics. In modern society, human beings' return to nature and constant attention to traditional aesthetic culture have brought emotional desire for natural art. Ceramic objects design has ushered in new development opportunities. The close relationship between earthy breath of ceramics and human origin promotes its constant development with the history of mankind as well as the birth of various new concepts and new ideas on the road of development. Therefore, as a ceramic culture researcher, it is necessary to use a broad art mind, a rigorous research attitude, and an active creative attitude to care for the design of ceramic objects. People should use the pace of development to chase the dream that can never be abandoned. There is life, there is ceramic objects design.

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