

Exploration of the Aesthetic Problems in Chinese Design Education

Talking About the Interactive History of Design and Art

Gongjian Tang

College of Art and Design

Chongqing University of Arts and Sciences

Chongqing, China

Abstract—This paper begins with the development history of the adhesive interaction between the emergence of modern design and traditional art, discusses that design one the one hand draws nutrients from traditional art and gradually grows, and on the other hand breeds and exhales many creative artistic thinking due to its inseparable relation with modern industrial civilization, and in turn promotes the growth of art. Today's art workers should pay attention to the meaning of this composite attribute of art in the development of their own identity and professional ability, and get some inspiration from the interactive history of design and art.

Keywords—*design; art; symbiosis; aesthetics*

I. INTRODUCTION

Modern design (hereinafter referred to as "design") as a truly independent art discipline has existed for not too long a time. Counting from the British arts and crafts movement in the mid-19th century (also known as "handicraft movement"), it only has less than 200 years of history so far. As a new discipline, the design both inherits the traditional art categories, such as architecture, book binding, painting, classical gardens, arts and crafts, and other art categories with long history, and also constructs its unique innovative taste in use of materials, appearance forms, creation of media and materials and the use and communication channels to declare the establishment of it as a new discipline. In general, the rise of design also has its internal and external opportunities: internally, the recovery of human thought since the Renaissance re-constructed the important position of man in the universe; the Enlightenment in the 18th century further spread the "man's natural right" and the like democratic thoughts, which laid the overall tone of design such as "the art defeating the aristocrats' exclusive art" and "creating civilian art". Therefore in concept, it tends to be mass-production and reproducible industrial construction, so that most people can enjoy it. Externally, the revolutionary industrial structure change brought about by the industrial revolution made mass production possible, which ensured the smooth implementation of the theory from technical perspective.

In such a large category of literary and art studies, the art categories must be mutually connected and exchanged and form a torsion of benign development and change. Design is

no exception. Throughout the history of design in the past 200 years, the relationship between design and art, especially painting, can be described as intertwined, mutually inspiring, and independent, with absolutely different special standing points. The focus of this paper is to analyze the relationship between design and painting at several key nodes in the development course of European and American design, and based on which develop some thoughts on the current situation of design education and design in Chinese universities.

II. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EARLY DESIGN AND PAINTING: FROM DRAWING NUTRIENTS TO ADHESIVE SYMBIOSIS

The period from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century is the origin period of the European and American design movement. The design movement in this period mainly formed a tension between the artistic aesthetic taste and the industrialized mass production. For some famous design movements including the arts and crafts movement, the Art Nouveau movement and the Art Deco movement as initiated by countries with artistic origins such as Britain and France, they all sought the footholds on the basis of beauty although they have different aims due to their respective times; for instance, the arts and crafts movement aims to solve the problem of shoddy products and quality shortcomings in industrial production; the Art Nouveau movement is a continuation of the former and strengthens the symbolic, flat, decorative and naturalistic natures and the like factors of oriental aesthetics; as for the Art Deco movement, it is another collective nostalgia in the pessimism of the literary and art circles on the bankruptcy of industrial civilization after the "World War I". Therefore, the new design art has obvious tendency to draw inspiration and shot point from mature painting art.

The social background and artistic environment at the beginning of the design also influenced the aesthetic tendency of design: the negative effects brought about by the industrial mass production, such as the bottomless pursuit of profit, the labor's non-dignity, non-creative work processes caused by the segmentation of production links, as well as the damage to consumers' aesthetic tastes due to poor product quality. This all requires industrial design to work

towards the orientation of cultural sense and aesthetics, while the literary and art circles are just popular with aestheticism. Therefore, when the modern design theory pioneer John Ruskin (1819-1900) put forward the idea of "products with aesthetic value", the basic trend of design to seek possibility from traditional art in this period was laid.

From this point of view, in the very young design world at that time, his characteristics of seeking nutrients from painting were very clear: William Morris, the practitioner of Ruskin theory, was not only a successful business designer, but also a member of the painting group "Pre-Raphaelite". Although his oil painting creation was not as mature and influential as that of other members such as Millais and Rossetti, his deep and solid skill was considerable. The woodcut work of the British Art Nouveau illustrator Aubrey Beardsley can also be separately regarded as a painting and its limelight can even overshadow the pure painter of the same period and became the most typical representative of British aesthetic art. In France which was the birthplace of the "Art Nouveau Movement", the intentional or unintentional participation of artists in the movement also deeply reflected the interaction between design and traditional painting. The talented post-impressionist painter Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec created a series of pictorial posters for the Moulin Rouge. Although he adhered to his consistent artistic style and did not make style adjustments based on its commerciality and publicity, he still left a heavy stroke in the history of design... In the "Separatists" in Vienna, the relationship between painting and design was reversed, and the artists began to follow the popular design trend and rewritten the realistic reasonable and classical oil paintings into those full of decorative and flat-color factors. Therefore, the "separationist" painters enjoyed an independent position in the history of painting, and in the history of design, they also exist as a branch of the Art Nouveau movement. Nevertheless, the concept of social function controlled by designer was also a bright and positive trend in the literary and art circles that were filled with the nostalgic thoughts at the end of the century and the whole immersion in the pessimistic end of the world. The color of its sunrise industry was spurting out. At this point, as the new and old art categories, the adhesive relation between design and painting has become the norm and even continues to this day. Under the leading of the same artistic trend, it has been impossible to clearly identify who influenced who, although the painting always likes to emphasize its position of actor as a big brother. Design of course should have the foundation for its existence.

III. THE GENERATION OF DESIGN EDUCATION FORM UNDER THE OVERALL CONSTRUCTION OF MODERN FORMAL AESTHETICS

Studying Western art history, you may find a phenomenon that is very different from the study of Chinese art history. That is, Western art history used to use style and artistic thought to divide the whole paragraph, such as Gothic, mannerism, Baroque, Romantic, impressionism, and so on; architecture, painting, sculpture, and even music and literature can all be discussed under the same artistic style. But Chinese art history is often divided by dynasties, and the

styles of style studies are rarely used. This of course has a lot to do with the special complexity of Chinese art history. Like literati painting and folk art, they have completely different visual experience and creation techniques as well as evolution history. It is difficult to review it under the same artistic trend. This interesting phenomenon is still the same in modern and contemporary times. Even if there are many different art categories, Western art can still see its consistency in a relatively uniform art style. However in China, the complexity remains. Even if much Western rhetoric is invoked in Chinese art, the focus of the problem is coven into Chinese and Western issues, old and new issues due to cultural differences.

After understanding this truth, many problems can be seen at a glance of the interaction between modern design history and painting history. Since the late impressionism, the history of Western art has entered modern stage. The trend of thought happened frequently, and many genres emerged. Although the time for the replacement of old and new arts was shortened, it still failed to escape the command of style. At the end of the 19th century, British aesthetician Clive Bell proposed a "meaningful form", abandoned classical realistic art, emphasized that points, lines, faces, and colors have independent aesthetic status. Since then, estheticians such as Susanne K.Langer and Arnheim have made improvement so that the authority of modern form aesthetics is constantly enhanced. In 1919, the world's first design school, Bauhaus-Universitaet Weimar, was established in Germany. The revolutionary influence brought about by this legendary college in the design circle has long been known to all; here, this section still talks about the interdependence of art and design. From the perspective of the faculty of the design school, the abstract painting masters such as Kandinsky and Klee are impressively listed, and the three-component basic design curriculums are obviously the direct products under the influence of formal aesthetics. Even for today's design courses in China, the basic curriculum is still set within the scope of structural sketches, colors, and three major components, and it is difficult to escape from the basic system established in the design school. Looking at the art genres at that time, in addition to the "Der Blaue Reiter" of Kandinsky and others popular at a time, the Dutch "style genre" and the Russian "constructivism" are directly related to design. Like Mondrian's paintings, the style is too marked so that few successors dare to continue their style in painting; but in the field of design, the same visual effect can be duplicated and converted in architectural appearance design, fashion design, jewelry design, industrial design and other aspects to create more interesting and rich creative changes due to its unique and unquestioned "take-in" design ideas.

IV. THE UNIFICATION OF ARTISTS' IDENTITIES

Today, the industry segmentation makes Chinese art education more and more versed in the cultivation of professional abilities; the more professionals are, the less generalists will be. According to the evolution of design history, it can be concluded that designers and artists end up with a broader title, artist. Examining the relationship between painting and design from this perspective may have

greater meaning of enlightenment for today's design education and industry in China. The mentioned multiple identities of Morris and others can be proved in more examples. Needless to say, in classical times, design hadn't formed into an independent system; artists undertook various visual creation work. The great artists like Da Vinci and Michelangelo were also involved in architecture, sculpture, painting, book binding and fashion design.

After entering the modern era, the situation has improved, but the identity of artist has not been weakened. In addition to the above examples, other seemingly relatively free artists are also closely related to design. Picasso, who constantly changed his style throughout his life, once engaged in stage design. In his later years, he also established a ceramics studio. Dali's industrial styling and architectural design both continued his "surrealistic" style, with very distinct personality characteristics; later, this style was simply extended into film art. In China, the deceased painter Chen Yifei also proposed the concept of "big art". He personally practiced and involved in multiple art fields such as fashion design and film. Among them, the American "Pop" artist Andy Warhol has the most achievements and the widest influence. The artist had illustrator background and has ingeniously transformed the principles of design, got the duplicable and mass-production concept which was originally widely used in design transplanted into the art of painting; he also combined with the social reality of America dominated by the middle class and created new possibilities for art. The word "pop" means "popularity" and is also one of the design principles established at the beginning of modern design.

V. CONCLUSION

In the 1980s, design gradually became popular in China's major art schools and comprehensive colleges. So far, it has become an art category in universities that has higher proportion of teachers and students. However, what accompanied with the rapid development in quantity of design education is the constantly accumulated problems which are collectively reflected in the attention paid more to quantity than quality of students' quality cultivation. Reaffirming the relationship between art and the history of modern design, and positioning in the emphasis on the identity of artists is nothing more than hoping to correct some problems in the design education of Chinese universities today. The problems can be summarized as follows: first, the lack of suspension between professional segmentation and courses leads to students' lack of aesthetic ability; second, the weakening of reading and professional theories leads to the weakened copywriting ability and language proficiency; third, too many computer software courses lead to students' lack of freehand sketching ability and further directly affect their creativity.

REFERENCES

- [1] Wang Shouzhi. *A History of Modern Design Worldwide*. New Century Publishing House, 2001. (in Chinese)
- [2] (English) Clive Bell. *Art*. Jiangsu Education Press, 2005.

- [3] (US) Rudolf Arnheim. *Art and Visual Perception (New)*. Hunan: Hunan Fine Arts Publishing House, 2008.
- [4] (US) H H Arnason. *History of Modern Art*. People's Fine Arts Publishing House, 1994.
- [5] (Russia) Kandinsky. *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. Chongqing University Press, 2011.