



Implications of Cizhou Kiln for Product Design

Peng Wang^(✉) and Jixiao Zhang

Beijing Forestry University, Beijing, China

WP18333603034@163.com

Abstract. Cizhou kiln, an important folk kiln system in ancient China, enjoys a long history and reflects a strong flavor of life and the wisdom and interests of creation. It holds an important place in the history of Chinese ceramics and craftsmanship. Thanks to the Cizhou kiln, it is possible to interpret the aesthetic conception of traditional Chinese culture and combine it with modern product design, which brings new approaches and impetus to China's innovation of product design and injects new vitality into a traditional culture.

Keywords: Product Design · Aesthetic Conception · Cizhou Kiln · Traditional Culture

1 Introduction

In today's world with a great wealth of material production, when it comes to design, equal attention should not only be paid to the development and application of technology but to the true meaning of humanization, the interpretation and inheritance of culture, which allows users to extract emotional comfort and satisfaction from products. The pursuit of aesthetic conception has long been part of the cultural genes of the Chinese nation, thus creating its unique features. Representative of folk kilns, the Cizhou kiln plays an important role in the history and culture of Chinese ceramics. When the Cizhou kiln is created, makers can express their state of mind through images, which meet the emotional needs of contemporary product design.

2 Aesthetic Conception of Porcelains

Porcelains, an aesthetic expression of Chinese spiritual thought, help keep the thought alive, while folk kilns better reflect the beauty of Chinese art ideas. Representative of folk kilns, the Cizhou kilns feature simplicity and elegance, which fits traditional Chinese aesthetic concepts and spirits, thus mirroring a strong flavor of life and aesthetic conception through decorations. Aesthetic conception, in some cases, symbolizes cultural accumulation and provides spiritual inspiration that integrates humanization, offering spiritual enlightenment for the contemporary design of products.

2.1 The Pursuit of Aesthetic Conception

The fact that the Chinese people have searched for aesthetic conception for a long time is influenced by its traditional culture and philosophical ideas, which reflects the characteristics of the nation and the spiritual as well as aesthetic pursuit of the Chinese people. During the Wei Jin period (220–589), Gu Kaizhi, a Chinese painter, deemed that inspirational creation must be based on association in thinking and a painter must capture the spirit beyond form, which sets the tone for evocative painting; Xie He, another Chinese painter, formulating six rules of painting, took dynamic style as the most important one; Zong Bing, a Chinese artist, proposed spiritual emptiness in his *Preface of the Landscape Painting*, which has exerted a profound influence on the entire aesthetic judgment and aesthetic thought of China.

The pursuit of aesthetic conception is manifested in the creation of traditional Chinese painting and calligraphy art, but its appreciation and pursuit are by no means limited to a certain field, for it has become a cultural philosophy rooted in the aesthetic concept and way of thinking of the Chinese people. “Aesthetic conception,” mirroring emotions, spirits, and attitudes, is an aesthetic idea derived from the summary and sublimation of traditional culture. It conveys poetically moving aesthetic conception, striking a chord with viewers and meeting modern aesthetic and emotional needs.

2.2 Inheritance of the Cizhou Kiln

Cizhou kiln, a treasure of traditional Chinese porcelain making, represents the largest folk kiln system in the north of ancient China and a famous folk porcelain kiln; hence the saying “There is Jingde in the south and Pengcheng in the north.” Its rich shapes, diverse patterns, and traditional folk characteristics make it important in the history of ceramics in China and beyond.

2.2.1 History of the Cizhou Kiln

The Cizhou kiln is the largest folk kiln system in the north of ancient China. The long history of Cizhou pottery firing began 7,000 years ago in the stone age, called the “Magnetic Mountain Culture.” With a long history, the Cizhou kiln in the Song Dynasty (960–1279) entered its heyday, becoming the largest folk kiln system in China, and it continued to prosper in Jin (1115–1234), Yuan (1271–1368), and Ming Dynasties (1368–1644), displaying great vitality.

The Cizhou kiln has developed over the millennia, reflecting a unique aesthetic style in the history of Chinese ceramics [1]. It not only draws on the excellent traditional techniques of Chinese ceramics but also integrates aesthetic creations of literary calligraphy and paintings, thus making outstanding contributions to enriching ceramic decorative art. Therefore, it pumps fresh vitality into the long history of traditional Chinese ceramic art. Drawing inspiration from folk life and displaying great vitality, it reflects the richest life experience and the strongest national emotion, [2] thus exerting a huge and far-reaching influence on the development of Chinese ceramics and beyond.

2.2.2 The Aesthetic Conception of the Cizhou Kiln

Cizhou kiln art features themes and expressions of life that the public is delighted to see by portraying the poems and scenes favored by ordinary people at that time. It pursues elegant and beautiful aesthetic interest instead of flashy design, illustrating a strong flavor of life and folk features, as shown in Figs. 1 and 2. Its rich and diverse patterns portray unique national and local features based on the Chinese forefathers' life experiences, conveying artistic and aesthetic conception with a deep national culture after continuous development and inheritance.

The auspicious concept conveyed by traditional patterns featuring traditional Chinese cultural elements is in line with the modern design full of emotion, affection, and cultural experience, reflecting the aesthetic conception of cultural heritage. The use of traditional elements brings people a cultural mood exuding Chinese charm, which is favored by many people.

Peony patterns are frequently seen in the Cizhou kiln because peonies were praised as a national flower by Wu Zetian since the Tang Dynasty (618–907), thus being regarded as a symbol of happiness and beauty. Peonies are believed to denote wealth because of their elegant and luxuriant beauty, thus occupying an important place in ceramic products. Therefore, dainty ceramics featuring peonies are favored by famous kilns, which is shown in the following figures. The patterns of the kiln not only show the literati's preference for peonies but also cater to the people's yearning for good luck, thus making the peony patterns filled with vitality and auspiciousness the most widely used ones in the kilns. When applied in the Cizhou kiln, the peony patterns are meticulously created with full composition and elegant lines. From Figs. 3 and 4, as the aesthetic tension and unique



Fig. 1. Cizhou kiln porcelain pillow (The picture was taken by the author in Cizhou kiln Museum)



Fig. 2. Cizhou kiln porcelain pillow (The picture was taken by the author in Cizhou kiln Museum)



Fig. 3. Cizhou kiln porcelain bottle (The picture was taken by the author in Cizhou kiln Museum)

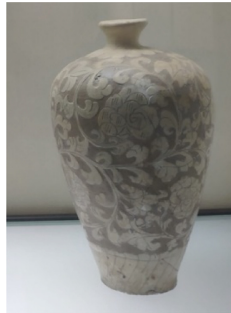


Fig. 4. Cizhou kiln porcelain bottle (The picture was taken by the author in Cizhou kiln Museum)

aesthetic mood are interpreted by peony patterns with simple techniques, the distinctive characteristics of ethnic groups are reflected through aesthetic techniques.

3 The Combination of Aesthetic Conception and Products

With the development of globalization and intelligent manufacturing, thanks to the ideas of aesthetic conception, traditional Chinese culture is integrated into modern design, which is conducive to modern design innovation and the inheritance and development of national culture. The Cizhou kiln featuring traditional Chinese folk culture provides a source of endless wisdom and creativity and reveals an appreciation of life and pursuit of aesthetic conception, which offers inspiration for contemporary creations.

3.1 Conditions for Interpreting Aesthetic Conception

As all products are designed to meet certain functional requirements, the beauty of the aesthetic conception shown by the product must be demonstrated after the functions are met. In addition, the pursuit of emotion and culture is based on basic functions. Therefore, forms are designed to realize functions – the basic principle of modern design, which means a design can be successful only when social development is considered. If forms

are created for their own sake, they will only be rejected by users. Product design, an important component of modern industrial design, also needs to meet the functions first.

The pursuit of aesthetic conception is important to traditional Chinese culture and shows deep philosophical thinking, so designers need to have a deep appreciation of cultural heritage to further grasp the cultural connotation and should experience the charm of life and culture. Only in this way can he understand and appreciate the surrounding history and natural environment while integrating his emotions into the design of the product and allowing the product to reflect the culture and provide spiritual inspiration. The same is true of the aesthetic conception of the Cizhou kiln, which was also created and passed on thanks to forefathers' perceptions and deep understanding of life and culture. An excellent Chinese designer should fully appreciate the charm of great Chinese culture, using innovative thinking to blend the aesthetic conception with modern design and modern fashion. Additionally, he should explore new cultural values in his design, and make excellent products featuring national characteristics and unique cultural connotations, thus resonating with consumers.

3.2 Application of Aesthetic Conception in Product Design

Aesthetic conception fuses wisdom and the traditional cultural spirit of creation, which fits the heterogeneous isomorphism of modern product design. Therefore, the beauty of aesthetic conception in product design can be reflected in many aspects, including physical decorations and cultural communication.

3.2.1 Aesthetic Conception of Using White as Black

The aesthetic conception in product design provides a harmonious atmosphere of the culture and emotions attached to the product. It can be beautiful or warm to touch users or strike a chord. As aesthetic conception can be reflected in product design, showing the features of products, it mirrors an inner spiritual commonality without fixed formal specification. The aesthetic conception focuses on leaving blank, which means to re-create the object after full understanding and careful creation and to epitomize and highlight the emotional form to show it in a more moving form instead of regarding ink as if it were gold. This coincides with the simplicity and environmental friendliness that modern design pursues. In the design of the Cizhou kiln, the picture or image is simplified and left blank, and the practice of using white as black brings a simple image with rich implications rather than mere simplicity [3]. This means conveying more information with fewer elements and expressing the idea with the elements enjoyed by many people.

At the same time, to present the culture of the aesthetic conception is to allow the product to achieve the aesthetic effect of "less is more." This enables users to not only experience the functional and visual comfort, most importantly, the cultural resonance inspired by emotional touch. As shown in Fig. 5, in the incense table "High Mountain and Flowing Water" created by designer Jia Wei, the image of the mountain is simplified without losing its essence, and the aesthetic conception of the mountain is integrated into the black and white "mountains," while the incense smoke trickles down the mountain and makes it deep and vast. The incense table allows users to have an emotional experience, integrating the user experience into product design.



Fig. 5. Mountain and Flowing Water (The designer is Jia Wei)

3.2.2 Aesthetic Conception of Decorations and Its Cultural Charm

The essence of incorporating the theory of traditional aesthetic conception into modern product design is not to completely copy traditional art design concepts and methods, but to use modern art techniques to present the aesthetic nature and cultural connotation of traditional aesthetics, to add traditional beauty to product design, and combines both traditional beauty and modern beauty. The decorative techniques and themes on porcelain embody the aesthetic art and the level of making porcelain of an era [4], reflecting the spiritual aspiration and inheritance of traditional Chinese culture. The yearning and wish for a better life reflect people's aesthetic feelings and cultural identity. Traditional cultural elements, the epitome of China's long history and culture, symbolizes China's cultural heritage, embody people's spiritual pursuit, beliefs, and ideals and highlight the deep feelings of China.

3.2.3 The Cultural Aesthetic Conception Inherited by the Nation

Nowadays, diversified material products meet the users' needs for physical function. With the improvement of quality of life, people tend to focus on high-level psychological, spiritual and cultural needs. Freehand spirit is the national essence of traditional Chinese culture, playing a very important role in the entire traditional Chinese cultural system. A combination of the charm of traditional culture with modern product design brings deep cultural and emotional experiences to users, which promote the inheritance and development of traditional culture. If the pursuit of aesthetic conception is integrated into the design, this will bring about unlimited creativity and vitality and breathe new life into the traditional culture. The best way to keep traditional culture alive is to make it popular again with innovations that meet the needs of the new era. Regardless of the era, excellent national traditions are what inspire artists and designers [5]. The pursuit of aesthetic conception is a treasure of Chinese culture, holding an important place in China's traditional cultural system. It embodies the core spiritual pursuit of traditional Chinese culture and acts as an important link to national heritage.

4 Conclusion

With a long history of several thousand years, the profound Chinese culture embodies endless wisdom and creativity, which provides valuable inspiration for people. The

practice of “drawing aesthetic inspiration from both within and without” reflects China’s traditional philosophical spirit of pursuing the unity of heaven and people, an epitome of the pursuit of aesthetic conception. When the concept and pursuit of aesthetic conception are combined with modern design, the design can inspire and appeal to people with cultural charm, injecting more vitality into a traditional culture. The unique value of aesthetic conception is linked to the essence of modern design, reflecting an art culture that users can appreciate in people-oriented works. The aesthetic conception breathes new life to the product, which is no longer a merely cold object. In the era of material wealth, as people’s mental health is influenced due to pressure from a fast-paced lifestyle, the emotional and spiritual solace brought to people by the beauty of aesthetic conception is particularly precious and important. Aesthetic conception inspires designers and allows the Chinese design to shine in the world with distinctive national features.

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