



Design and Innovation of Traditional Dragon Pattern

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Abstract. As an ethereal form, the dragon has lasted for more than 10000 years in Chinese civilization. Although no one has seen it, it objectively exists in Chinese history and people's ideas. He also played a mysterious, dignified and noble role. Dragon is a symbol of Chinese national culture and a traditional pattern with strong spiritual and cultural connotation. This paper discusses the symbolic significance and visual characteristics of dragon patterns by summarizing the evolution of dragon patterns in the past dynasties. By analyzing the design status of modern dragon pattern, we can learn design experience. Reinterpret the meaning of the dragon pattern decoration, extract the element symbols from the "twelve heraldries" of the ancient imperial clothes through the modern aesthetic guidance, and use the deconstruction, abstraction and other artistic techniques to design the dragon pattern, so as to make it more contemporary.

Keywords: dragon pattern decoration · Decorative pattern · twelve heraldries

1 Introduction

With the progress of the times, people's aesthetic is more tolerant and open, the image of the dragon is no longer confined to traditional norms, and the artistic expression forms are more diversified. Not limited by the imperial power, the dragon pattern can be used by the general public, so the application of the dragon pattern can be more extensive. I hope that through my design works, I can play the role of throwing bricks and attracting jade, so that more designers can design better design works with the symbol elements in traditional culture as the main body of design.

2 Evolution Process of Dragon Pattern

In the Shang and Zhou dynasties, witchcraft prevailed. In order to highlight its religious color, the rulers embellished the mysterious and simple dragon pattern on the bronze and ritual vessels that communicate with the world. At this time, the dragon was a four legged reptile, similar to a snake. In the spring and Autumn period and the Warring States period, the majestic and ferocious dragon pattern image of the Shang and Zhou dynasties gradually disappeared, and was replaced by the auspicious embodiment for

peace. At this time, the Dragon gradually tended to be animal shaped, and the tiger foot was added to the body, which became a powerful image, and also laid a foreshadowing for the transformation of the dragon shape in later generations. At the time of Qin and Han Dynasties, Taoism had a strong idea of becoming an immortal. The dragon shape was changed into a long horn, sharp ears, animal feet, and snake body, showing the shape of a scaleless animal, forming a magnificent and exciting atmosphere. In the Sui and Tang Dynasties, the country was prosperous and the people were strong, the thought was open, and the Chinese culture was eclectic. The dragon pattern changed from the elegant and graceful posture of the Wei and Jin Dynasties to the pattern of the full body between the snake and the beast, and changed from the animal shape to the coiled shape. In the Song Dynasty, the use of dragon patterns became more common. The Song Dynasty dragon is slender, free and vigorous, with the beauty of connotation, tranquility and elegance. In the Ming and Qing Dynasties, capitalist economy rose and commercialization flourished. In this period, the use of dragon pattern has produced a strict hierarchy. The dragon pattern can be used to “distinguish between nobility and inferiority”. Developed a complete set of patterns in composition and posture. The Ming and Qing Dynasties were the peak of autocratic imperial power, especially in the Qing Dynasty. In order to reflect the authority of the feudal monarch, the dragon is self-evident. The dragon appears in clothing, furniture and utensils. It can be seen that the dragon has become the carrier and symbol of the imperial power.

3 Meaning of Dragon

In ancient times, the Dragon existed as a god of heaven, and also represented imperial power and auspiciousness. It was endowed with a lofty image and eternal vitality by people. The image of the dragon was permeated into all levels of society, because the majestic and noble image of the Dragon embodies people’s ideals and spirit.

The meaning of the dragon is multifaceted, mainly the rain god, the God connecting heaven and earth, the totem representative of the clan, the symbol of imperial power, and the embodiment of the great spirit of the Chinese nation. Our ancestors revered the unknown natural phenomena. They believe that the dragon is the God of water and can control rain and communicate with heaven and earth. In order to have a good weather and a bumper harvest this year, our ancestors worshipped the Dragon God. Later, with the enhancement of human’s ability to conquer nature and the collapse of the patriarchal system, the dragon became a mascot for people to avoid evil and seek happiness [1]. In the folk, the dragon is the embodiment of simplicity and kindness, and is endowed with good morality. They regard the dragon as the God of happiness and auspiciousness, as well as the spiritual symbol of perseverance and determination. Dragon King temples are all over China, and many places are named after dragons. Many ancient buildings can be seen everywhere with beautiful allegorical patterns such as “dragon and Phoenix presenting good luck”, “double dragons playing with pearls”, “carp leaping over the dragon’s gate”. Dragon lanterns, dragon dances, dragon boats and other activities can be seen in festival celebrations, sacrifices and blessings. These folk forms have the meaning of “happiness” and “auspiciousness”. Therefore, the dragon is a God, a symbol of imperial power, and a manifestation of happiness and auspiciousness.

4 Modern Design of Traditional Dragon Pattern

Looking at the excellent dragon pattern design at home and abroad, usually, designers will re interpret the meaning of the traditional dragon pattern and analyze its cultural connotation. Through the design method of decomposition and reconstruction, the dragon pattern is recreated. The use of extraction, simplification, abstraction and other artistic techniques makes the pattern more contemporary, so as to achieve the purpose of innovating the expression form of dragon pattern [2].

4.1 Dragon Pattern Design Case Analysis

Dragon Logo of Huaxia Bank

The main object of the graphic logo of Huaxia bank comes from the image of the jade dragon, which is known as the first dragon in ancient China in Hongshan culture, to express the meaning of the Dragon fighting the world and rising upward, and also the spiritual symbol of the soul of the nation. Huaxia bank takes the jade dragon as the circle structure and contains the square chip shape, implying that the sky is round and the place is square, showing the rich cultural heritage of Huaxia Bank. It is more Chinese style by borrowing the brush strokes. The logo is patterned to make it more concise and distinct. The whole shape reflects that Huaxia Bank is rooted in the spiritual connotation of 5000 years of Chinese culture, and combines modern banking electronic technology to visually integrate “Huaxia” and “bank”, “culture” and “modern”. It shows the business philosophy of “prospering the industry through science and technology”.

Dragon Pattern Design in Jewelry

The mysterious, noble and auspicious image of the dragon has attracted the attention of many jewelry designers. Taking the dragon as the design theme, it is also loved by many internationally famous luxury brands, such as Cartier, Montblanc, van Cleef and Yabao. However, because foreign designers do not have a thorough understanding of the history and culture of the dragon, they basically follow the rigid image of the swollen nosed dragon in the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty, which makes the design works simply show fierce characteristics, lack of sense of design and innovation, no sense of beauty (Fig. 1). On the other hand, domestic designers can better reflect the profound cultural connotation behind them.

In the development of the dragon in the past dynasties, his image has been constantly changing by absorbing the cultures of different races, which shows that the dragon has an inclusive spirit. In addition, most of the dragons take on the posture of flying through the clouds and crossing the sea, which is a manifestation of vigor, courage and indomitability. Therefore, the dragon is enterprising. The dragon can swim between the heaven and the earth, beyond things. And the various cultures related to the dragon are also unique. It can be said that the dragon has an independent spirit. Due to the understanding of the dragon culture, Chinese people can grasp the profound meaning of “dragon” jewelry and make unique design works (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Dragon jewelry designed by international famous brands. Image source: Internet.



Fig. 2. Dragon jewelry designed by Chinese people. Image source: Internet.

In addition, the Chinese people are more proficient in the application of materials. Compared with the gold, silver, jewelry, agate, jade and other materials used by international famous brands, jade can better reflect the cool and cold temperament of the dragon. On the contrary, the dragon shaped jewelry inlaid with pearls and jewels has an unbearable look. In addition, the Chinese are better at using metaphors, so that users can know the whole picture at a glance. Therefore, it has more reference significance for the design of Chinese jewelry. Therefore, the design of Chinese jewelry has more reference significance.

4.2 Design Status

Due to the improvement of international status, Chinese traditional culture has attracted the attention of many foreign designers. Design products with Chinese traditional elements are more and more displayed in front of the public, but there are also good and bad phenomena.

First, there is a lack of innovative design in modeling. The shape of the dragon has formed a fixed pattern. It basically follows the pattern of the Qing Dynasty, his eyes are wide open, beard and hair are flying, posture is agile, limbs are strong. His claws are sharp as wheels, and the Dragon scales are arranged in a fine and orderly manner. Today's design works will not make too many changes, and some even directly copy the dragon pattern of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, lacking innovative spirit.

In addition, there is a phenomenon that the combination of dragon pattern and products is not high. For example, a well-known food packaging once used the image of the dragon, but there was no intersection between its product concept and the dragon culture,

which caused the group ridicule of netizens. Because the designer failed to excavate the connotation of dragon culture, it also led to the phenomenon that the combination of traditional decoration and modern design was not harmonious.

5 Design and Innovation of Chinese Traditional Dragon Pattern

The dragon has existed for thousands of years and has a relatively complete aesthetic expression and decorative form. In order to avoid the similarity of shapes, contemporary designers need to have creative and innovative thinking to re-analyze the connotation of traditional dragon patterns. Understand and analyze the dragon pattern decoration, and extract the shape on the basis of modern aesthetics. Using deconstruction to extract and simplify the basic shape of the dragon pattern, and stripping complex element symbols from the structure to make them more patterned, so as to innovate the expression form of the dragon pattern.

In the whole process, designers need to take oriental aesthetics as the guiding ideology and reinterpret its decorative significance. In addition to the shape, we also need to pay attention to the connotation of the dragon pattern and the application of “meaning”. The traditional dragon pattern art has a long history. In the design process, we can integrate its legend into the contemporary design, so that the unique charm of the dragon can be reproduced in the public view.

5.1 Design Inspiration

This design is based on the “twelve heraldries” in the ancient imperial clothes, and the innovative design of the dragon pattern decorative pattern is carried out through the design techniques of symbol extraction, abstraction and deconstruction [3]. Each chapter represents a different meaning, hoping that the emperor can have excellent qualities or virtues. Therefore, it can also be used to this day. To awaken the world, we need to have the qualities of steadiness, boldness, discernment of right and wrong, and openness [4].

5.2 Design Method

This design takes twelve heraldries as the design theme, from which the elements and symbols such as sun, moon, star, dragon, rice, fire and algae are extracted and evenly distributed in the rectangular frame on the inner side of the screen, representing integrity and aboveboard. Draw the figure by mirroring. The size is 210 * 297 mm (Fig. 3).

This design is a radial structure extending from the center to the outside layer by layer. The design of the pattern center is the Tuan Shou pattern, which is symbolized and patterned with the word “壽” to make it uniform and symmetrical and highly decorative. At the same time, it also reflects people’s desire for eternal life. The four groups of cloud patterns surround the “壽” character pattern, taking the meaning of “everlasting life”. The upper and lower bat rings are relatively surrounded, forming the shape pattern of double bats holding longevity. In Chinese traditional culture, bats are symbols of good luck and good fortune. “蝙蝠” is a homonym for “遍福”, which symbolizes the endless happiness. Because of people’s expectation and desire for beautiful things, they use



Fig. 3. Inspiration and design sketch. Image source: Drawn by myself.

rich imagination and bold deformation of empathy to transform bats into spirits with auspicious meanings and integrate them into people's lives. They can be seen on brick carvings, stone carvings, paper cuts and window grilles. And the auspicious meaning of bats will be passed down from generation to generation with the passage of time.

Two peony flowers are blooming at the left and right ends of the bat, and their roots are connected with the bat, which means that the bat not only brings good fortune but also brings wealth. Peony is a symbol of national beauty, natural beauty and prosperity, giving people a sense of nobility and dignity. Under the bat, the sun, moon and stars are shining, which shows that its light can shine on everything. The use of geometric elements makes it more patterned and more consistent with the whole. The four corners of the pattern draw the shape of the cloud piercing dragon. Through the design of a large number of dragon walking postures, we can select the shape that best conforms to the dynamic and rhythmic beauty. The overall shape of the dragon is simplified, the faucet and the dragon body are preserved, and other parts are patterned. It makes it more abstract and conforms to the characteristics of modern aesthetics. The tongue of fire from the dragon's mouth surrounds the sun, moon and stars, making the picture more colorful.

There are several groups of rectangles with unequal sizes on the outside, and the middle is mixed with a circular structure. The whole is a process from complex to simple, which is very rhythmic and can make the visual center fall in the innermost rectangular frame.

In this design, pink, blue, green, purple, white and gradient colors are respectively used as theme colors, and corresponding colors are used as embellishments to form the following effect (Fig. 4). This figure is applicable to hanging pictures, silk scarves, canvas bags, T-shirts and other products (Fig. 5). The target audience is people over 15 years old who love Chinese traditional culture. It is hoped that this design work can convey good wishes to the viewers and users.



Fig. 4. Design chart. Image source: Drawn by myself.

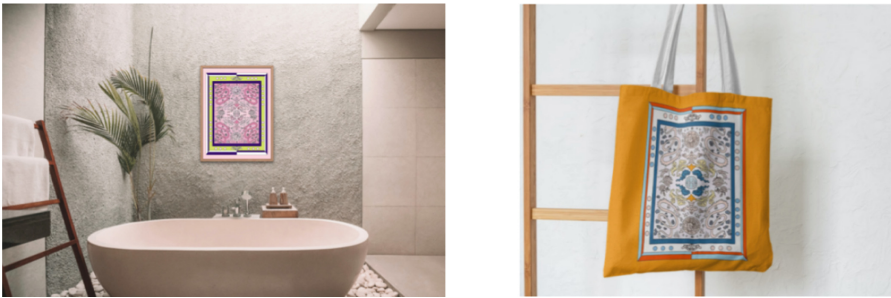


Fig. 5. Effect display. Image source: Drawn by myself.

6 Conclusion

The traditional culture related to the dragon can be said to be the epitome of Chinese culture. The elegant, natural and dignified unique form of the Dragon contains the most brilliant and splendid culture of Chinese civilization, and also highlights the most secret and tortuous essence of Chinese culture [5]. No matter whether the awareness of “descendants of the dragon” is correct or not, the shape of the Dragon alone is enough to show the unique footprint of a national culture in the development of thousands of years. The dragon can not only subdue demons and call rain, but also is a symbol of heroic and authoritative imperial power.

The modern dragon pattern design inherits and develops the ancient dragon pattern. When designing and applying the traditional dragon pattern, we can appreciate the dragon pattern from the perspective of today's aesthetics, and then extract, reconstruct and redesign the form, so as to organically combine the traditional theme with modern aesthetics, give it a more distinctive flavor of the times, and make the dragon pattern more widely used in modern design. Through this study, we can provide some references for the designers today and play a role of throwing bricks and attracting jade.

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