



An Analysis of the Application of Symbolic Graphics in the Design of Public Welfare Posters

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Abstract. As one of the many design techniques, symbolic graphics in public service poster design can make the poster theme more three-dimensional and figurative to display to the audience to intuitively and systematically express the public service poster's promotional theme. Through the in-depth understanding and analysis of the design concept and classification of symbol graphics, we combine the theoretical meaning of symbol graphics with three different categories of public welfare poster design from the perspective of design practice so as to express the theme of the work and stimulate the viewer's thinking.

Keywords: Symbolic graphics; Public service posters; Human and nature

1 The conceptualization of symbolic graphic design techniques

"A symbol is an image that has an allegory." Symbolic design techniques refer to the designer who can imagine or already has some image graphics to express or convey some unseen thought connotation. It is not something created by human beings; it is formed through people's many mental activities, such as association, imagination, and suggestion, as well as abstract logic and creative thinking. It is presented in people's inner activities through the deposition of the years and gradually forms a collective image¹

Since the birth of the design concept, posters have been one of the most frequently used and discussed forms of graphic design. They are not only used to convey information, but also a place for graphic designers to express and experiment in art². Images are an essential component of poster visual art that cannot be lacking, and the creative expression of images in graphic design often represents the inner spirit of graphics. The symbolic nature of graphics means that graphics can make the viewer produce associations with tendencies. Designers will be familiar with the representative of things in an abstract graphic; this graphic can lead people to associate the graphic with accurately representing specific things. Such a graphic is what we call symbolic graphics. It can express the inner world of design simply. Designers with creative ideas and novel forms create unique artistic images to attract attention and make a deep impression, to produce emotional connection and thinking; a successful graphic design can provide information for human beings.

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Pierce stated in (Chandler 2001:16) that sign more specifically the form of words, images, sounds, odors, flavors, acts or objects. A verbal sign is a text which may in form of word, phrase, and sentence, that represents what people think, feel or represents their emotions³ In artistic works, expressing graphics through symbols is one of the basic means of art. Regarding the way of expression, that is, designers can use the external characteristics of a real thing to endow and add a certain ideological and emotional aspect to the designer themselves; Designers use the characteristics of specific things to transform their inner emotions and creative ideas into symbolic graphics with deep meanings. The ontological meaning and symbolic meaning of symbolic meaning, although they do not have any direct relationship in essence, rely on the designer's focus on depicting the characteristics of specific representative objects, which will stimulate a series of thinking and imagination for the admirer, and thus more deeply experience the specific meaning that the designer wants to convey.

2 On the symbolism of figures

2.1 Traditional graphics

Culture is a heritage that is transmitted from generation to generation, produced by human communities in the historical process. It is divided into a visible culture and invisible culture. In the visible culture appears everything that is physically done by human beings, on the other hand in invisible culture appears social beliefs, religions and mental norms⁴. Traditional graphic symbols, as an important part of visible culture, have a long historical background, and contain a wide range of subjects and contents, which have gradually emerged with humankind's continuous progress and development and have a deep emotional cognition in people's hearts. Whether they were used in ancient times to indicate status or hierarchy, most traditional symbols symbolize praying for peace and good luck or driving away misfortune. Traditional graphics are rich and varied, for example, in various architectural patterns, clothing decoration, garden art, calligraphy and painting, etc. Traditional graphic symbols have gone through the baptism of history and are gradually retained and evolved in society's continuous change and development. In conventional graphics, the "phoenix" symbolizes peace and luxury; it is the people's heart of an auspicious bird; it also means happiness and good luck, symbolizing beauty, harmony, and love. In ancient times, the phoenix represented power in various vessels and royal buildings. For example, we are most familiar with the "plum, orchids, bamboo and chrysanthemums," representing the gentleman and elegant scholar; the plum is represented by one of the high quality of the jade bone and ice muscle as proud because it is in the late winter season, proud of the snow blossoms. In the late winter, when the climate is harsh, all the flowers are dormant, but only the jade bone and ice muscle but the biting wind and snow proudly blossomed on the receiving branch. In the eyes of the people at that time, the Jade Bone represents the spirit of defying difficulties and dangers and is a noble aspirant. The quality of the orchid is its quietness. Orchids generally grow in the deep mountains and valleys, representing a lonely, fragrant, and elegant spirit that is the world's wise. Bamboo represents the quality of firmness. Bamboo is a perennial evergreen plant; its

center is empty, the branches and trunks are straight, slender, and have a robust vitality; frost and rain remain firm. Lotus, peony, lion and tiger, flowing water pattern, Xiangyun, magpie, mandarin duck battle-axe, these traditional image patterns not only carry the general sentiment of the masses of people but also reflect the colorful local folk culture and reflect the charm of folk art and a specific spiritual need of people. Traditional graphics, with their flourishing foliage and deep roots, are a significant source of inspiration for designers and a design expression that inspires people to think about the past and the future.

2.2 Natural graphics

Natural graphics originate from nature, ranging from macro to micro. These types of graphics are not artificially created, but rather exist in nature itself. Designers can use the unique external styles and characteristics of natural graphics to symbolize and express similar concepts⁵. In the design process of nature in the mountains, rivers, plants or animals, and other specific things, the appearance of its characteristics of graphic depiction, element extraction, and other techniques to express its meaning. For example, pine and cypress symbolize longevity, resilience, and strong vitality; lions symbolize power and dominance.

Take Japanese designer Kenya Hara's poster design work "Life" as an example (see Figure 2); the whole picture is made up of a tree stump and hanging glasses; the tree trunk has no branches and leaves, the texture is deep, the designer uses the old, dry stump to express the old age of people, the stripes on the tree trunk symbolize the baptism of the years, and the hanging of a piece of eyeglasses illustrates that one is forced to use presbyopia glasses with the increase in age. The combination of natural graphics and mirrors is used in the entire poster design to make the viewer feel the passing of years and the shortness of life.

2.3 Abstract Graphics

Most abstract shapes originate from nature; after it is summarized and refined, there are standardized and irregular shapes. Non-figurative shapes mainly refer to some abstract geometric shapes. Because of their unique style, geometric shapes will make people produce different visual and psychological experiences and produce special symbolic meanings. For example, a rectangle can represent completeness; a circle can represent unity and reunion; a triangle can represent sharpness and danger or stability; and irregular geometric shapes can represent fluctuation and imbalance.

3 The application practice of symbolic graphics in public welfare poster design

3.1 Nature graphics in the "harmony between man and nature" theme poster design practice

Public service posters have a variety of themes. The first theme design, chose the "harmony between man and nature" design, human beings in the process of continuous economic development, often on the protection of the living space of the animals have a certain degree of negligence, human beings for the occupation of the natural environment, human factories, cities, the continuous spread of construction, resulting in the shrinking of the living space of animals. Therefore, human beings need to pay attention to the live environment of animals while developing and constructing themselves, and "Harmony between human beings and nature" has also become a topic of great concern to the whole world. This design effectively spreads the beautiful expectation of harmonious coexistence between human beings and nature through the warning of the survival space of animals.

In the process of selecting design symbols, not only should they have openness and recognition, but also designers themselves need to have a deep understanding of semiotics theory to further assist in the expression of design works⁶. Regarding design concepts, both designs adopt the symbols of natural and abstract graphics (see Figures 1 and 2). The " Homeless " poster design comprises geometrical and abstract downpipes and fish forms. The fish also represent the whole group of marine creatures that are forced to survive in the downpipes as a result of the encroachment of humans on nature, the pollution of the sea, and the problem of global warming—staying in the drainpipe, adopting an exaggerated approach to warn of human behavior and the survival of marine life. The color is mainly black and grey, which also expresses the grey state of the living environment of marine life and gives people a pale and lonely visual feeling, which echoes the meaning of the theme of "Homelessness." Survival in the Cracks" takes the famous quote as its theme; to leave a deep memory for the viewers, it geometrically handles the building in the poster through the depiction of the appearance of the features of the east object and the combination of the building and the tall building, and in the performance of the animals it chooses to use the image of some rare wild animals, which are wandering in the cracks of the tall building, and the species, which are in the scarce condition, are also facing the problem of the reduction of the original living environment. Problems: the picture also adopts an exaggerated expression. However, the survival of the current wildlife environment has not yet reached such a situation, but it also makes people pay attention to it. Concern, warning people in their own development at the same time to protect the natural world, wildlife, and their homes, and truly realize the "harmony between man and nature."

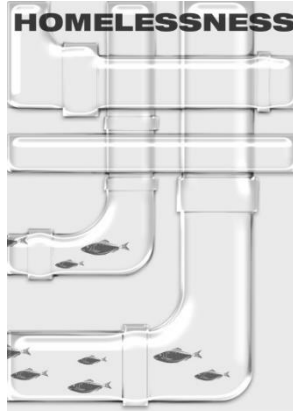


Fig. 1. Homelessness

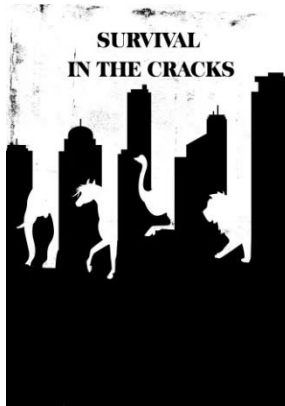


Fig. 2. Survival in the cracks

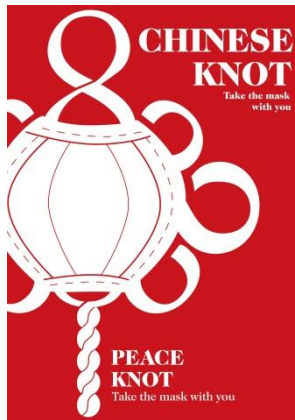


Fig. 3. Chinese Knot Peace Knot
(Photo credit: author's design)

3.2 Traditional Graphic Symbolism in the "Epidemic" Theme Poster Design Practice

In 2020, people's peaceful life was disrupted by the sudden onset of the new coronary pneumonia; the epidemic is a primary focus of today's society. Significant magazines, media, and artists have been on the new coronary pneumonia epidemic through different angles and methods of interpretation and expression, and at the same time, also become an accurate record of the crisis. In this design practice, also from the perspective of the "epidemic", the theme of creation, as public service poster design, publicity, and education trigger the resonance of the critical design prerequisites, but also to cohesion of the community, unity against the epidemic, scientific prevention, to inspire people to work together to fight the epidemic has an important role.

The traditional graphic Chinese knot symbolizes auspiciousness and peace in the design practice of the "Chinese Knot Peaceful Knot" (see Figure 3). The Chinese knot and mask are combined in the same way graphically. The style of the picture is shown in the form of a flattened abstraction; the cover is an indispensable item for everyone during the epidemic, and the combination of the front and the Chinese knot implies that wearing a good show in daily life is a way of keeping oneself safe and also a way of keeping everyone safe; the Chinese knot is a traditional Chinese symbol of auspiciousness, and it also implies that the epidemic will be overcome eventually, and the color is mainly red, which expresses the expectation for the future. The Chinese knot is a traditional Chinese symbol of good luck, which also means that the epidemic will be overcome; the color of the knot is mainly red, which expresses excellent expectations for the future. In the design, the symbolism of traditional graphics is fully considered, combined with the new symbolic elements in the context of the times, to add new meaning so that the expression of the picture is more thematic and promotional.

4 Conclusion

The symbolic meaning of concrete things is often tremendous; the expression comes from the phenomenon but beyond the phenomenon through presenting the internal attributes of things or far beyond the inner qualities to express the corresponding imagination. The symbolic design has long been a fashionable style with the times, widely used in graphic design, in the public service posters "homeless," "survival in the cracks," "Chinese knot peace knot," and "save every grain of food" design practice, are used in the design of symbolic graphic design techniques. In public service posters, the pattern design makes the poster image more vivid and lively so that the viewer has a more substantial visual impact; in the use of symbolic design techniques more able to make the public service posters, the whole design effect can be expressed, so that the public service posters of the theme of the public service posters have a more excellent publicity and promotional product, in the life of the cultural value can be expressed in a more comprehensive and more specific.

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