

Research on Calendar Design Philosophy of Zheng Mantuo

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Abstract—Zheng Mantuo is a calendar design master in modern times of Shanghai. He uses the technique of water color painting by brush rubbing to improve imported calendar from western countries, forming the local design adapting to the market of Shanghai and complying with the current historical background and technological level. This paper analyzes Zheng Mantuo calendar from four levels: painting skills, painting content, color and constitution, and summaries the four features of Zheng Mantuo's design philosophy: western method used in China, beauty of following the fashion, integration of business and art, and remembering the country-based concept in order to better understand formation, development and maturation process of Zheng Mantuo's design philosophy.

Keywords—Zheng Mantuo; calendar; design philosophy

I. INTRODUCTION

In the first half of the 20th century, calendar painting is mainly created for commercial advertisement and it "appears with economic invasion of big powers of imperialism and development of China's commercial economy" [1]. After the Opium War, in order to attract customers, foreign businessmen mainly use western representative famous paintings in design of calendar. But Chinese people living in seclusion from the outside world for a long time are very unfamiliar with it and it receives a bad response from China's commercial market. Quickly, foreign businessmen realize that it is an unfavorable way, thinking that they should provide things Chinese consumers like. Thus, traditional painting replaces western painting and material selection forms are more diversified all over cities and the countryside. It gradually gets popular. However, the single pursuit of tradition brings about people's aesthetic fatigue at that time. Then, Zheng Mantuo's calendar design breaks through the current situation and pushes calendar design to a new phase.

In the process of exploring the artistic style and philosophy of Zheng Mantuo's calendar design, we find that formation and development of his artistic style and philosophy are closely related to the current certain historical conditions and the influence of western culture. Zheng Mantuo's calendar design not only leads the fashion trend of commercial poster techniques of that time, but also contributes to the transformation from traditional New Year pictures to the technique of water color painting by brush rubbing, unfolding a brand new era for the current Shanghai calendar design. The

essence of Zheng Mantuo's calendar design philosophy lies in western method used in China, beauty of following the fashion, integration of business and art and the patriotism of remembering the country-based concept. Under the major premise of carrying forward our nation's design, he combines Chinese traditional painting techniques, western painting techniques and photographing techniques in a proper way, follows the trend of the times and uses the technique of water color painting by brush rubbing which is created by himself to perfectly integrate commerce with art. This kind of design philosophy connotation has a far-reaching impact on current artistic design field.

II. ZHENG MANTUO AND HIS CALENDAR COMMERCIAL PAINTING

A. Resume of Zheng Mantuo

Zheng Mantuo (1888~1961) has a former name of Da with a courtesy name as Juru and a pen name as Mantuo. "Fig. 1" He is the founder of the technique of advertisement painting by brush rubbing in modern China and the most outstanding poster renovator in Republic of China. [2] Zheng Mantuo is born in Hangzhou in 1888. He has eye disease from childhood, but he likes painting. At the age of 14 (1902), he can do portrait. In his early years, he moves to Hangzhou together with his parents and studies English in Hangchow Presbyterian College, which creates extremely favorable conditions for his learning of western painting and western techniques. Soon, he learns Chinese traditional personage painting from Qian Shenfu. Besides, he learns "lead painting", namely carbon powder photographing-type portrait by brush rubbing. [3] Since Zheng Mantuo is diligent and studious, his painting skills become exquisite and excellent gradually. Later on, after his parents' early death, his family is in straitened circumstances. Zheng Mantuo cannot continue to study in school. He sets up a studio in "Erwoxuan" photo studio of Hangzhou and makes a living on carbon powder portrait by brush rubbing.



Fig. 1. Zheng Mantuo.

(Source:
<http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=FaTaJL7SJ8h8XN3yyCYsioRaoGn62LldfC6P0Wb862lk8cpPiHkmoJJM51MxhZXKzrefKCGJIs5FYfk9VWq>)

In about 1912 (at the age of 24), Zheng Mantuo decides to leave Hangzhou and go to Shanghai to do his own career and put his talent to good use. His painting technique is fine and smooth and his modeling is accurate with strong third dimension. Upon using fancy light, his painting appears to be extremely lucid, lively and elegant, suiting both refined and popular tastes. His is good at traditional elaborate-style painting. He learns western water color painting techniques, grasps charcoal rubbing photographing technique, combines strong points of various painting techniques and takes the initiative to create the technique of water color painting by brush rubbing.[4] In 1914 (at the age of 26), Zheng Mantuo draws four traditional Chinese paintings of beautiful women with the technique of water color painting by brush rubbing which is created by himself and hangs them in Zhang's courtyard on the Fourth Nanjing Road in Shanghai to wait for the talent scout. The current business tycoon, Huang Chujiu, spots the excellent paintings and buys them to print the calendar poster for his great eastern dispensary. For a short while, Zheng Mantuo gets popular and enterprises in business circles subscribe his paintings one after another. In the same year, recommended by Pan Dawei, a person of the superstratum of Southeast Asia Brothers Tobacco Co., Ltd, Zheng Mantuo has the chance to meet Gao Jianfu, a famous painter of Lingnan school. Gao Jianfu likes Zheng Mantuo's calendar a lot and provides preface and postscript for his Evening Makeup Painting calendar which is printed and published in Japan. Since then, Zheng Mantuo's calendar painting gets popular in the whole Shanghai Bund.

Zheng Mantuo's design philosophy is fashionable and modern, totally different from the current popular beauty paintings and Zhou Muqiao's beauty painting calendar which takes plank New Year pictures as the model. As the calendar design master of the old Shanghai, Zheng Mantuo thinks that the success lies in drawing "new types of paintings". The painting should base on Chinese traditional beauty painting, absorb western design thoughts, develop towards realism and

pay attention to the overall harmony. Zheng Mantuo's calendar painting is very fine and smooth. The beauty in fashionable dress in his painting is lifelike and her "eyes can move with people". [5] He cooperates with Xu Yongqing, a water color painter, in later period, and takes Xu Yongqing's water color scenery painting as a foil, making the painting more vivid. Zheng Mantuo's success in calendar commercial painting design influences a great batch of people in the same period. Zhou Baiguang, Ni Gengye, Ding Yunye and so on adopt brush rubbing painting technique after Zheng Mantuo, forming the basic technique pattern of popular works of art.

III. ZHENG MANTUO'S CALENDAR DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

A. Western Method Used in China

Zheng Mantuo adopts "western method used in China" during the design process of calendar poster and renovates in using brush rubbing water color painting technique created by himself, which is inseparable from his learning of English and "lead painting" in Hangchow Presbyterian College in early years. Under the influence of western realistic ideas, especially techniques and painting styles of Angle, a French painter, he combines western realistic techniques with Chinese traditional New Year painting techniques. The calendar painting created by him has a light and shade, and concave-convex third dimension without extra emphasis on contrast of black and white. The figure's face is more gentle, conforming to Chinese's aesthetic habit.[6] Before Zheng Mantuo, New Year painting type and Chinese antique painting technique are popular in the market, which is thought to fail to satisfy the current people's aesthetic needs for a long time by Zheng Mantuo. In Commercial Art History of the Republic of China, Lin Jiazhi writes: It is exactly at this moment that some foreign new painting forms are introduced to China properly. In 1911, "beauty painting" of Japanese "Ukiyoe" is introduced to Shanghai and is loved by the public.[7] Zheng Mantuo keenly perceives the current aesthetic trend of commercial painting market, adopts western methods in China and creates various fashionable new female calendar paintings which win much praise. It can be said that Zheng Mantuo's design philosophy of western method used in China lays the foundation for the success of Zheng style calendar to a large extent. At the same time of absorbing traditional Chinese painting essence, Zheng Mantuo combines with merits in western painting, thus his painting has unique oriental taste and the beauty of western realism. Zheng Mantuo lives in a era of foreign culture impact and changing aesthetic concept. After the baptism of the New Culture Movement and the May 4th Movement, western aesthetic value stimulates Chinese society and western cultural thoughts surge up in Chinese society like spring water. With the integration of western culture and Chinese traditional culture, people's concept has great changes. The popularity of Zheng Mantuo's calendar is a typical example of integration of Chinese and western aesthetic values in this era.

B. Beauty of Following the Fashion

Before Zheng Mantuo, Zhou Muqiao's ancient beauty painting calendar takes the lead. But the painting is too ancient and plain without a strong connection with the times. Flame of

the Revolution of 1911 lasts for more than 20 years. The whole society is in a great turmoil revolutionary period. Great changes take place in the nation's system and people's life style and thinking pattern and western culture pours into China like tide water.[8] Previous traditional New Year painting calendar can't satisfy Chinese customers' appreciation need any more. Zheng Mantuo uses brush rubbing water color painting technique to design a series of new type calendar with distinguished features of the times, catering to market demand. He learns widely from others' strong points and he is good at innovation. He takes lady portraits as the basis and inherits traditional oriental coloring concept in color. Female images mostly adopt Chinese traditional long and thin phoenix eyes, most of which are single-fold eyelids. But he is not firmly entrenched in tradition. Instead, he combines with aesthetic trend of the times and renovates calendar. Before Zheng Mantuo, female in calendar has small feet. With Zheng Mantuo's painting as the beginning, female image turns to women with big feet, demonstrating emancipation of mind of the times. He also westernizes the scene and figures' dressing to make the painting fashionable, fresh and vivid. His painting also uses multiple innovative fashionable elements, following the trend of fashionable beauty and feminist movement. Take Zheng Mantuo's first calendar beauty painting Evening Makeup Painting "Fig. 2" in 1914 (at the age of 26) as an example. Although the hair is still in old-fashioned coiled hair style, costume, scene and stage property walk at forefront of the times. The new female image like this increases commercial painting's aesthetic value and wins much praise. Apart from transformation of image, Zheng Mantuo calendar follows up foreign newly sprouted things, like A Woman Reading Theory of Natural Selection, a work in later period. The scene is like this: A woman is contemplating with her hands holding the cheek before the window. Outside the window is the wide ocean. We can't help but guessing that whether the woman is sitting on a cruise. The female may just finish reading the Theory of Natural Selection. There is a pile of books beside her, emphasizing the female's knowledge. Theory of Natural Selection can be regarded as a newly sprouted thing as well as The Female Playing Tennis. Tennis is also imported from western countries at that time. The public learn about and absorb many fashionable things and thoughts at that time through Zheng Mantuo's calendar design, conveying features of the times excellently and completely.



Fig. 2. Evening Makeup Painting.

(Source: http://www.360doc.com/content/14/0816/07/5975523_402283573.shtml)

Development of Zheng Mantuo's calendar design of different periods is as follows "Table I". From the table, we can know that with the rising of New Culture Movement and the high tide of the May 4th Movement, female image in Zheng Mantuo's calendar painting transforms from traditional Chinese beauty in fashionable dress into new females and female students of the May 4th Movement. As shown in "Fig. 3", the female student image shows freshness, vigor and progress. Zheng Mantuo is an advertisement master following the trend of the times closely with innovative spirit. He adopts the beauty of following the trend and gets rid of the stale and brings forth the fresh.



Fig. 3. School Uniform.

(Source: <http://tv.cntv.cn/video/C18962/56d5e829b80b4969823ae246985d1023>)

TABLE I. ZHENG MANTUO CALENDAR FIGURE IMAGE ANALYSIS TABLE

Period	Figure image	Typical work
Early period	Traditional theme and figure in ancient costume	<i>The Flowers' Funeral by Daiyu</i>
Middle period	Traditional Chinese beauty in fashionable costume in rich and relaxed life in the boudoir	<i>Autumn Window and Shadow Painting, Double-beauty and Lotus Pond Shadow Painting</i> etc.
Later period	Works reflecting social changes and females pursuing science and knowledge	<i>A Woman Reading the Theory of Natural Selection, Riding the Train, Dancing Party and The Female Playing Tennis</i> etc.

C. Integration of Business and Art

Art is a very wide concept and it refers to the vividness and typicalness of artistic image, the rigor and completeness of artistic structure, multiplicity and creativeness of artistic technique and national character and uniqueness of artistic style.[9]The main purpose of commercial advertisement is to promote products and publicize widely. Before the appearance of calendar commercial painting, it is very difficult to integrate commerce and art. Commercial painting either emphasizes conveying of commercial message and neglects artistic presentation with excessive rigid and precise design, resulting in being boring, or is extremely similar to traditional New Year painting and traditional Chinese painting. Although it has

strong artistry, it fails to convey commodity information properly and fails to achieve the sales promotion purpose. Zheng Mantuo thinks that a successful commercial poster should pay more attention to the commercial value it conveys at the same time of emphasizing artistry. Design of calendar commercial painting not only conforms to the current public's aesthetic appreciation, but also contains its artistry. Thus, people will hang the calendar as an artistic painting in the house for a long time, contributing more to promotion of products. He thinks that art serves the business in terms of commercial painting. From "Fig. 4", we can clearly see his practical thought of integration of business and art. It is a calendar advertisement drawn by Zheng Mantuo for Xianshi cosmetics at that time. Zheng Mantuo combines the publicized product content with fashionable beauty in an innovative way. As shown in the picture, the female in the painting is checking whether her makeup is proper and the publicized product is placed on the left side of the female's sight. The female is looking at her dress and makeup and the calendar advertisement is made for cosmetics. Thus, the publicized product and the plot of the painting combine properly, resulting in the perfect integration of artistry and commercial need. The product in the scene is not abrupt at all. It owns artistry and the plot increases people's aesthetic taste, making people know more about the product from advertisement and leaving a deeper impression on people. Thus, commercial painting walks into thousands of households and becomes fashionable home furnishing for people and commodities get best promotion as well.



Fig. 4. Advertisement of Xianshi Cosmetics Company.

(Source: http://www.weixinyidu.com/n_2061517)

In conclusion, Zheng Mantuo calendar design achieves the perfect integration of business and artistry. Zheng Mantuo will never sacrifice artistry for the sake of business. His every work has deep connotations, wins much praise from people, and achieves the effect of commercial promotion at the same time, giving consideration to the two things to the greatest extent. Zheng Mantuo bears a careful and precise attitude towards every work and finally forms his commercial artistic style with distinctive personality in calendar design.

D. Remembering the Country-Based Concept

In Zheng Mantuo's design philosophy, the most outstanding point is his patriotic idea of remembering the country-based concept. Zheng Mantuo makes calendar for many tobacco companies. Jian brothers' China Southeast Asia Tobacco Company's a series of calendar advertisement can

mostly reflects Zheng Mantuo's patriotic idea of remembering the country-based concept. As shown in "Fig. 5", this is a work of Zheng Mantuo in 1920s or 1930s. The female in the painting wears an improved black cheongsam with both Chinese and western features and its cuff and outskirts are embedded with white hairs. The flirtatious sense is shown in her gestures and expressions. Attracted by the beauty at first glance, then we notice the outstanding "Southeast Asia Brothers Tobacco Co., Ltd" in red at the top. On both sides, there is a couplet, saying "Tolerate Flow of National Wealth in Foreign Countries" and "Protect National Economic Rights Together with Heroes in Central Plains". At the bottom lies "Using national commodities means reducing flow of wealth into foreign countries. Please buy our patriotic tobacco". On the 10th edition of Shen Newspaper of October 31, 1925, there is also news saying that Zheng Mantuo attends the Patriotic Fund-raise Conference organized by Qian Huafo and so on and gives some explanations on the goal of fund-raise and the way to apply for painting and calligraphy through the Hui-Ning Association and tea party.[10] In conclusion, Zheng Mantuo is a patriotic advertisement master and his works reflect his design philosophy of patriotic spirit frequently.



Fig. 5. "Patriotic" Cigarette Advertisement Painting.

(Source: http://www.eastobacco.com/pub/web/ycwh/yh/yh201508/t20150824_379151.html)

IV. ZHENG MANTUO'S CONTRIBUTION TO CALENDAR DESIGN

A. Zheng Mantuo's Influence on Calendar Design in the Later Period

Although development of calendar design is not on a grand and spectacular scale as European New Art Movement, it witnesses the course of China's commercial advertisement design. Undoubtedly, Zheng Mantuo pushes development of the old Shanghai's commercial art painting to a high tide. Zheng Mantuo's design philosophy of the beauty of following the trend, western method used in China, integration of business and art and remembering the country-based concept deeply influences calendar painters in later period. He opens the era of brush rubbing water color painting school, contributes to the transformation of calendar from the outdated New Year painting style to the realistic style of brush rubbing water color painting and enlightens the new development route for commercial art painting, leading to the perfect integration of business and art. Calendar achieves its commercial value

mission and soars to a new artistic height. Art is no longer profound and advanced. It can originate from life, and be close to ordinary people's life and higher than life, enhancing and guiding the public's aesthetic appreciation. Under the leadership and influence of Zheng Mantuo, a great batch of commercial art creation teams undertaking brush rubbing water color painting presentation quickly grow up, like Ding Yunxian, Zhou Baisheng and so on. Zheng Mantuo plays a crucial role in establishment and development of calendar in later period.

B. Zheng Mantuo Calendar's Enlightenment on Modern Design

Rising and success of calendar design is inseparable with development of culture and the times and people's social psychology. In the previous special historical period, Chinese people boycott foreign goods. Such a market, political and economic situation provides the environment and cradle for Zheng Mantuo, a calendar design master in the old Shanghai. At that time, foreign countries hope to sell their products to Chinese people and occupy Chinese market, which is achieved by Zheng Mantuo's calendar design. He combines the brush rubbing beauty painting people like with the calendar people need and puts the promoted product in a small corner of the painting, thus completing the promotion task, increasing added value of calendar products and enhancing the commercial value of calendar greatly. Even in nowadays, Zheng Mantuo's calendar design philosophy can still guide the development of commercial advertisement painting: The advertisement should be able to win love from people; bold innovation and learning from western methods should be adopted; follow the trend of the times and adopt the beauty of following the trend of the times; advertisement is also a kind of commercial art and integration of business and art should be adopted. As Chinese, no matter we do which kind of job, we should love our country. Only when our country is prosperous and strong, can business be prosperous. Design philosophy and idea of Zheng Mantuo calendar has far-reaching guidance significance.

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