

Conversion of Handicraft's Return in Modern Design

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Abstract—This paper analyzes many problems generated in the process of industrialization with the value of handicraft in modern society as the starting point under the background of handicraft's return. Based on this, the construction scheme of traditional handicraft in modern design is proposed, to inherit the traditional handicraft, promote the organic combination of modern design and traditional handicraft, and integrate traditional handicraft into modern life.

Keywords—*handicraft; modern design; inheritance; innovation*

I. INTRODUCTION

Handicraft Bears the Civilization of Human. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the French enlightenment thinker, says in *Emile* that “among all the occupations that human can make a living, the one that makes people closest to the natural state is hand labor.” Kaogong Ji, Dongguan, Rites of Zhou, records that “study and observe the curve and circumstances carefully to decorate the materials and recognize appliances.” By “labor”, it refers to the craftsmen and handicraft labors. In the process of human civilization, handicraft is the important carrier of human from ignorance to civilization. No matter the past history or the current life, all the things are the presentation of “materialization”.

With the rapid development of economic and material civilization, China, as the “world factory”, shows the industrialized great setup, and the modern design is of more halo effect. Actually, tradition and modern are the important topics in the design field, while the integration of traditional handicraft and modern design is a kind of beneficial path. But how to introduce traditional handicraft practice in modern design is a particularly urgent demand.

II. BACKGROUND OF HANDICRAFT'S RETURN

The informatization and industrialization promote economic development on the one hand, yet they also bring about certain regret. As for the latter, many problems started to emerge since the 21st century, becoming the serious problem influencing China's social development, which mainly reflects in the following aspects:

The first is the ecological destruction under industrial civilization. China is one of the countries with most serious pollution in the world. In recent years, Beijing, the capital, northern China and even the whole north region are covered by haze, and PM2.5 becomes the high-frequency word of the mass media. The daily life is stiff and mechanized. Just as

what Charlie Chaplin describes in *Modern Times*: “buildings and mansions, machines roaring, going to work and getting off work, going to bed and getting up, in order for survival, everyone looks like the clock with tight spring operating in their own given track”. People's daily life is increasingly simple, rigid, and ordinary, losing the traditional tender feelings and vigorous energy.

The second is dislocation of product function and form. Multi-economy expands, substance accumulation is unprecedentedly abundant, and product homogeneity is increasingly deepened, arousing design reflection. For instance, on festive occasions, there will be a great variety of beautiful things in the supermarket, what attracts the consumers is not the practical articles, but the exquisite and luxury packaging of the product. Such products actually cause waste of resources, pollution of environment, distort the looks that modern design should have, which goes against the ethical morality of design.

The third is reflection of indifferent mechanization. People are changed to work in division and cooperation from overall operation due to machinery production, so workers are not familiar with industrial products' nature. Facing the new technology, new industry and new product design, the knowledge update speed and knowledge level of the social public cannot keep pace with such change. People are increasingly opposing the frozen industrial products, and start to think of the temperature and tender feelings with handicraft flavor.

As a developing country, it is better late than never for China. However, we shall face up to the disadvantages of industrialization to make up the regret. In the opinion of the author, to rejuvenate handicraft and carry out handicraft campaign, make handicraft to walk into society and people's life, and make the late industrial times with Chinese characteristics to arrive at an early date, are the effective measures to support it, and this is the core problem discussed in this paper.

III. VALUE OF HANDICRAFT

A. Culture Inheritance Value

Traditional handicraft is the carrier for Chinese culture to materialize. Since our primitive ancestors learned how to use chipped stone implements, it was a mark of the birth of human handicraft. As the behavior of human creation, traditional handicraft is of function, form, material and technology and so on. Until today, it still relates closely to our life. Handicraft has created people's food, clothing, accommodation and

transportation, made China's bright technological civilization and material civilization. Ceramics, bronze, painted wood, embroidery, furniture and other large amount of handicraft remains. All of them verify a handicraft & fine arts history, namely the material civilization development history and handicraft skill culture history.

B. Public Spirit Value

With the arrival of network era and big data, large-scale industry gradually reveals its disadvantage, and the corresponding design standard is also widely doubted. Industrial production leads to similar design style, dull and insipid products; overcapacity stimulates the deep contradiction of supplying and demand, triggering excessive consumption of resources, environment pollution and other ecological problems. The standpoints of "few are many" and "oppose decoration" are rejected. People start to be weary with industrial products all in the same pattern without vitality. As a result, modern design affirms the design style once again, advocating the all-inclusive multiple concept, reflecting the transformation of design attitude and aesthetic standard, while the humanity feelings, diversification and artistry are reflected in traditional handicraft.

C. Market Economic Value

At present, handicraft production, individual customization have returned to the vision of the public, with DIY (do it yourself), the originally created handwork brand and other brands prevailing. Ceramics bar and bread workshop become the fashion; various customization services are favored by many people; DIY has expanded in many fields, for instance, IKEA provides many house furnishings with components of different colors and styles for customers to match and assembly freely; T-shirt customization can print the pattern and words provided by consumers on the clothes; in DIY candle shop, people can select material and moulds according to the color, fragrance and shape they like to make candles personally. Such type of "make and design by yourself" reflects the market's demand for handicraft, the pursuit of self-value and advocating of individuality, and it also coincides with the origin of handicraft "do for yourself".

The return of traditional handicraft into modern people's life meets China's development idea of "innovation, coordination, green, opening, sharing", which is also the renaissance and recurrence of China's "craftsman spirit". Traditional handicraft is not ordinary creation activity, but the reflection of material culture and spiritual culture in the form of materialization. In the current society, people are recovering and rebuilding the simple, optimistic, healthy, positive living style brought by traditional handicraft, which has created conditions for the return of traditional handicraft and proposed new requirements.

IV. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES OF HANDICRAFT AND MODERN DESIGN

Handicraft art and modern design have the same purpose, namely to serve people's livelihood, characterized by the unity of practice and aesthetics, combination of technology and art.

In the field of art, both handicraft art and modern design belong to the category of art, namely the so-called "multi-function art", which is a contrast with the pure art, namely "single function art", such as painting, sculpture and other art forms; from the sense of culture, both handicraft art and modern design belong to the artistic culture; from the sense of industry, both of them are a kind of industrial form and pattern, featured by the artistry in terms of technology, which is contrast with ordinary non-art industrial form and pattern. No matter in the aspect of production or art, both of the two serve people's livelihood, relating to each other closely and depending on each other mutually. In the transformation from handicraft to modern design, the primary and secondary positions of handicraft art and modern design are changed in the aspects of value and function toward people's real life. That is to say the production of handicraft is in secondary position, while the modern design of large machine industrial production is in the primary position. Such change is not the change in service object and essence, but the structural change in the scope of handicraft & fine arts.

Viewing from the development of contemporary China, modern design has gradually taken the position of main part, while traditional handicraft art obviously is in the secondary position. In other words, the craft in crafts & arts has gone up to first position, while arts & crafts exist in the second. Of course, the inharmonious contradiction will inevitably appear in the process of handicraft developing to modern design and inheriting of it, but such contradiction is the contradiction within structure, which will disappear along with the normal positioning of the relationship between the two.

In the process of modern design creation, people experience the ideal materialized joyfulness, but the experience of the two has essential difference. Craft and modern design have satisfied the demand of survival in their own way (relationship between human and nature). However, after the combination of modern design and commercialism, the abundant material sacrifices the "quality" and "grade" of implements instantly. Therefore, in addition to meeting the lowest demand of survival, more attention should be paid to more contents for design, to deal with the human relations. However, "human" acts as the whole subject in the creation process of handicraft labor. With the intervention of individual "human" to choose the whole process, the feeling of creation is the profound, indignant, stimulating and activating experience. The construction and pursuit of handicraft is a kind of enjoyment, giving people pleasant sensation. In addition, it can also enable the labor to experience and verify his existence and strength in the individual experience process. It is proved that in the informatization society, traditional handicraft manifests the profound and lasting history with given style, and it cannot integrate into the environment of industrialized society and gain regeneration without recombination with modern elements.

V. CONSTRUCTION OF HANDICRAFT IN MODERN DESIGN

Recently, modern hand make workshop, hand fabricating workshop, and handwork design room are gradually increased. Micro and small handwork enterprises will become the important supplement of production mode. The rejuvenation of

modern handicraft needs the intervention of modern handwork design to be completed gradually. Improve and change modern design and originality mode through traditional handicraft to make handicraft products conform to the requirements of contemporary and future life style and have the quality of modern life aesthetics, thus to meet the demand of market value.

The rejuvenation of handicraft will pour more energy into the development of modern design. Although handicraft differs from modern design in development background, production mode, and environmental elements, the ideological concept and design philosophy contained in handicraft provide enlightenment for modern design and its future development. Against the aftereffect of modernism design and healthy development of modern design, the author believes that there shall be the following emphasis:

A. To Establish the Design System of Modern Handicraft

Promote modern handwork design, establish handicraft from professional perspective, and improve it as modern handwork design science, to be a discipline system. On the basis of that, make it combine with industry and integrate with people's livelihood, so as to put forward modern handicraft industry. Various folk handwork production systems, handwork workshops, handwork design workshop, medium-sized and small enterprises are one of those important paths for handicraft industry rejuvenation and transformation as well as upgrading of traditional industry.

Handwork design brings about opportunity for quality enhancement and industrial transformation. Not all the Made in Germany and Made in Italian in the world are of high science and technology, for instance, the leather shoes made in Italy represent the quality of Made in Italy, the level of Italian design and Italian handwork, symbolize the craftsman spirit of Italy and the value created by Italian modern handicraft industry.

Make more people live, produce and market relying on it through the construction of handicraft system. Thus a new industrial model will be established, and set up the belief of modern life aesthetics as well as art and design system through modern handwork design. We have pursuits and beliefs towards beauty. We interact with each object, a chair, or a table with our life's temperature and time, and a kind of "affection" relationship is formed gradually. Such relation changes the rigid relation between human and object, and also changes the current life style using large amount of disposable articles and quick consumption goods. Therefore, we shall carry forward the connotation of the beauty of traditional handicraft, to establish modern handicraft design system through the modern conversion of design, so as to construct the value orientation of oriental design aesthetics.

B. Modern Design Takes into Account both Quantity and Quality

The current era witnesses a rapid development of economy, but there is no great change in economic structure. Industrial production basically takes "processing type" as the main mode. Product made by China can be seen in many countries in the

world. Although the export favorable balance gains a lot of foreign exchanges for China and makes China the largest foreign exchange reserving country, what we earn is "money of blood and sweat", is exchanged by "sacrificing" environment and ecology. If we produce relying on other's design and technology, then we will have meager profits and be controlled by other countries; China's manufacturing production will be influenced by a sign of disturbance or trouble in international economy. Modern design products follow the same pattern, and a lot of products cannot be guaranteed effectively in terms of quality when they are produced in large quantity. The uneven quantity and quality results in that the masses cannot acquire the emotional experience brought by the products.

The original creation design value of traditional handicraft in the inheritance process stresses the "practice, usefulness, paying more attention to experience accumulation, practice and self-examination." Handicraft is not only the certain external skills and forms, but it also contains internal spirit, mastering the basic spirit of nation, such as harmony, delicacy, restraint and connotation, and paying attention to emotion world and the spirit of survival development. Traditional handicraft often presents in the form of single-piece manufacturing, which can be said as "customization" in the words at this day and age, and this is often conducted according to the requirements of the customer. Setting aside the influence of imperial family, nobility, scholar's interests, if we apply its concept to modern design, the value added of the products will be enhanced by a large margin, which can offer consumption for more masses, but not merely used by the minorities. We should expand the consumption basis to make it the beneficial supplement of modern design form. In addition to the single-piece manufacturing mode, traditional handicraft also has batch production, such as Spring Festival pictures, lanterns, kites, wood engraving and so on. The characteristics of such handicraft include "acting according to circumstances", "obtaining raw material locally", pursuing not precious material but usability, which can be referred as "economical & material benefit". Such traditional concept used in batch production can be referred by modern design. Traditional handicraft shall combine with modern design concept, to raise the potential of traditional handwork to a higher level. Products' quantization is the new posture of China's modern design development.

C. To Pay Equal Attention to Inheritance of Localization and Sense of the Time

Viewing the development of China's traditional handicraft, each dynasty has its own glory: the simple and plain painted-pottery culture of the New Stone Age, the dignified bronze of the later period of Shang Dynasty, the magnificent painting art of Han Dynasty, the gorgeous silk fabrics of Tang Dynasty, the clear and charming porcelain of Song Dynasty, the simple furniture of Ming Dynasty as well as the folk exquisite handicraft in various dynasties have left valuable artistic treasure. The handicraft basis is not only the richness of resources, skill tradition, material and craft means, but also the profoundly accumulated mentality basis of national culture. In fact, as a kind of cultural design, modern design is based on

national culture design. As a result, cultural orientation, especially the national characterized orientation, becomes the key element for design success in contemporary China design.

The designs of France, Italy, Japan, northern Europe and other countries are all originated from their own national culture. For instance, although the modernization process of Japan is conducted in the "westernized" form, Japan is a country being good at combining foreign advanced experience with its own country's conditions, thus to develop its own unique system. Japan integrates the contents of traditional design and that of modern design, working out an appropriate localization design road, and its national style witnesses a rapid development in poster design, packaging design, costume design, electronic product design and other fields. Kenya Hara, the art director of MUJI, says that "The globalized design is not existed, not logical. The design of Japan is always the design of Japan. The items of MUJI are all designed by designers with local people's behavior pattern and living habit as a model. We do not want to be a part of globalization, and the prevention of excessive purified popularization is the direction we strive for." On the basis of that, for today's China design, the localization design process in Japan modern times undoubtedly provide beneficial thinking, reference and enlightenment for us.

Modern design recognizes localization increasingly. To find out the intersection of handicraft and modern design while exploring the connotation of localization, we need to research, excavate and compromise traditional handicraft, strengthen our own ability of absorption and integration, extract the wisdom applicable to the contemporary era from traditional handicraft with multi-variant modern thinking mode, to absorb, digest and integrate by virtue of modern design elements and constituent method, and thus to bring forth the fruit of local culture and global inclusiveness on the tree of culture.

D. To Pay Attention to Humanity Design

German philosopher Ernst Cassirer says that "the outstanding characteristics and distinctive marker of human is labor." Chinese ancient creation ideology puts forward the concept of "paying attention to ourselves and using object as a servant to attain practical use of objects for human"; Mo Tzu says that "the matter of benevolence shall be sure to pursue benefits of world, eliminate the harmfulness of the world, which is the law of the world. And we shall do those can benefit human, stop those harmful to human." Handicraft takes "human" as the starting point and ending point, to endow objects with human nature. It is generated based on human's demand, and it works relying on people's hands, so as to serve people's life eventually. For instance, the design of furniture of Ming Dynasty has graceful modeling, appropriate proportion, scientific structure, and the handrail and back of chair are of bending deflection, which is suitable for human sitting gesture and figure. The bending of the back of the chair looks like a section of curve from people's buttocks to neck, presenting the appearance of "exquisite yet appropriate, elegant yet suitable", conforming to people's comfortableness. Such self-examination about "object-human relation" is conducive to the development of modern design.

Machine is designed by the personnel trained with technology, who pay more attention to machine over users. Mechanical logic is forced to the user, so conflicts in terms of structure and operation emerge. As a result, modern design shall take into account human's behavior mode, establish the structure suitable for human use, focus on humanity, research people's demand based on the reason of human, which is of function and aesthetics, practical level and psychological level, material and spirit, similarity and individuality.

Modern design shall take paying attention to humanity as a precondition. As for the industrial products follow the same pattern, modern design shall indicate the humane care in fine difference, pay attention to human's subtle difference, and create the design with multiple meaning. Just as what the Italian architecture designer Sottsass says "all the products centering on human are a kind of support for self-liberation. By liberation, it refers to find out the way to individual free development through product design."

E. Innovative Design of Multi-element & Multi-direction

Although China's economy has ranked to the second of the world, generally speaking, China's manufacturing is still at the middle-low end in the international division. We have few independently designed products, created process flow and originally created operation & service mode. To develop to design power from manufacturing power, China must enhance design ability and follow the road of taking initiative in innovation.

The handicraft innovation of multi-element and multi-orientation relates to the continuity and development of handicraft life. The inheritance of handicraft alone is insufficient in adapting to today's demand of new content and life. So the innovation of modern design shall have the innovation with subject activity and individual characteristics. Just as what Lu Xun says "the adoption of old forms must be accompanied by certain deletion and deletion must be accompanied by addition, so the result is the emergence of new forms, namely transformation." The innovative handwork design in the future will inevitably meet the creative purpose and relate to life closely. Recently, some costume designers apply traditional handicraft elements in design to make innovation, create national brand by virtue of national cultural essence, such as the design of embroidery, wax printing and buttonhole loop, and the dragon, phoenix, Kylin and other animal patterns frequently reflected in embroidery form the gorgeous and verified flowers and plants or the geometric pattern through innovative design. Westerners can also accept and consume such design. The abundant craft forms and unique style satisfy people's verified demands for costume aesthetics. It is the breakthrough of design innovation to obtain the essence value of handicraft by taking advantage of modeling and color and apply it to modern costume, as well as strengthen the national cultural characteristics and folk artistic interests of the designed products through handicraft product innovation.

The integration of handicraft into modern design innovation must be realized in the way of multi-element and multi-orientation, which is a kind of open concept. From the

macro perspective, inheritance and innovation are parallel. As for the designers, they shall make creative breakthrough in terms of inheritance, to absorb both inheritance and innovation.

VI. CONCLUSION

In the course of developing what is useful or healthy and discarding what is not, modern design strengthens the part that is easy to survive, and in the journey of seeking development, traditional handicraft is a beneficial and far-reaching supplement essentially or technologically. The integration of the essence of traditional handicraft into modern design will not only make the modern products present exterior beauty in terms of vision forms, but also enable people to feel its abundant serviceability while they are using the products. Such state originating from folks and favoring the masses is the true value that modern design acts on human.

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