

Research design and application of traditional Chinese flower and bird paintings

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Abstract

This study aims to study the history and artistic characteristics of flower and bird paintings, derive its characteristics and cleverly apply them in modern product design. The painting style is fresh and elegant in color and simple and realistic, and is loved by the public. Explore the application and actual effect of flower and bird painting elements in product design. This study collects relevant knowledge and understanding of the application methods of traditional flower and bird painting aesthetic elements, and summarizes its application effects through case analysis, realizes innovative pattern design in product design, promotes the application exploration process of flower and bird paintings in modern product design, and enhances the cultural connotation and artistic value of products. The research results of this study are summarized as follows:

- (1) Traditional Chinese flower and bird paintings have high artistic value, contain rich cultural connotations, and also have certain collection value and aesthetic value.
- (2) In modern design, choosing suitable products to carry out innovative design of flower and bird paintings can resonate with consumers and play a role in cultural inheritance and development.

Keywords: flower and bird painting, product design, cultural connotation

1. Introduction

Traditional Chinese flower and bird paintings originated in the Stone Age, matured in the Tang Dynasty, and reached their peak in the Song Dynasty. With the development of the economy and the attention paid to national culture, many brands have begun to launch products that integrate traditional culture. Traditional pattern design is shifting from imitating European style to incorporating traditional Chinese elements, but it faces the problems of insufficient depth and being out of touch with the trend. Although there are rich studies on traditional patterns, there are fewer studies on modern design applications, and the meaning of patterns is often ignored, which is inconsistent with innovation and traditional characteristics. Therefore, traditional cultural products with rich meanings will be more popular. Through product design with flower and bird paintings as the theme, consumers can deeply experience the cultural connotation and national spirit, thereby enhancing the status of flower and bird paintings in traditional Chinese culture.

Research Objectives

1. Explore the history, culture and aesthetic characteristics of flower and bird paintings, their application in modern design and pattern design techniques.
2. Analyze consumers' demand and evaluation of traditional flower and bird painting silk scarf elements through case studies and questionnaires.

3. Summarize the effects and evaluation of flower and bird painting elements in product design, emphasizing their display of traditional culture and aesthetics.

2. Methodology

This study was conducted through literature review and case analysis. The literature review involved consulting relevant books and papers to explore the causes, background and significance of flower and bird paintings in the Song Dynasty, providing theoretical support for design applications. The case analysis focused on existing products in the market and refined the application characteristics and techniques of flower and bird paintings in modern design. In addition, a questionnaire survey was conducted among 201 consumers to understand their acceptance and aesthetic preferences for flower and bird painting-themed products.

3. Result

Definition of bird-and-flower painting

Flower-and-bird painting is a type of Chinese painting that mainly depicts common creatures such as flowers, birds, fish, and insects. It is divided into two styles: gongbi (picture 1) and freehand brushwork (picture 2): gongbi painting pays attention to details and realism, while freehand brushwork emphasizes personality and emotional expression. Meticulous painting of flowers and birds is also called outline of flowers and birds. Outline is to draw the outline with lines and then color it, which is to add color to the white drawing. (Li Dongjun, "Into Song Painting" [M], Beijing Times Chinese Bookstore, 2002) Freehand flower and bird paintings are famous for their free and unrestrained brushwork and strong emotions. These styles reflect the painter's spiritual world and have high lyrical value.

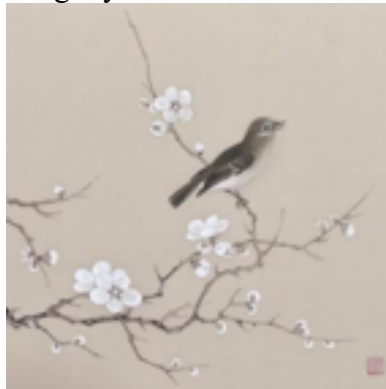


Figure 1, Plum Blossom Embroidered Eyes, Zhao Ji, Image source: Beijing Palace Museum



Figure 2, Four Seasons Flowers by Chen Daofu, source: Baidu

History of Flower and Bird Painting

Flower and bird paintings originated in China and were first seen in the Neolithic site of Hemudu in Yuyao, Zhejiang about 7,000 years ago. At that time, flower and bird paintings appeared on pottery in the form of patterns (Figure 3). The patterns reflected the witchcraft beliefs of primitive people, such as depicting birds catching fish, which reflected the yearning for a prosperous life. Later, this pattern was used in art forms such as lacquerware and murals.



Figure 3: Painted pottery jar with stork, fish and stone axe, Neolithic Age, source: National Museum

Flower and bird paintings gradually took shape during the Warring States Period, and were usually used as a foil in figure paintings. (Figure 4) In this painting from the Warring States Period, snakes and cranes appear, which implies the hope that the souls of the deceased can ascend to heaven after death. This pattern also began to be used in architectural decoration, with exaggerated and deformed animal forms, and bright colors, which served as embellishment and decoration.



Figure 4: Silk Painting of Phoenix and Koi Figures, Warring States Period, Image source: Baidu

Flower and bird paintings were popular among the upper class in the Tang Dynasty. Due to the rise of court culture in the Tang Dynasty, flower and bird paintings of this period mainly depicted the lives of people in the upper class. At that time, painters regarded the depiction of realism and vividness as the highest criterion. For example, the painting historian evaluated the painter Liu Xiaoshi, saying that his "birds and sparrows are strange and very similar" (Jin Weino, *The Development of Early Flower and Bird Painting*, [J], *Art Research*, 1983 (1)). "Watching Birds and Catching Cicadas" (Figure 5) is a work from this period, with brilliant colors and vivid figures.



Figure 5: Bird watching and cicada catching, Tang Dynasty, Image source: Shaanxi History Museum

The culture of the Chinese nation has evolved for thousands of years and reached its peak in the Song Dynasty. (Hou Hongtang, Anhui Normal University College of Literature Academic Library Volume 3 Chinese Thought Essays [M], Anhui Normal University Press, 2018.05) Due to the vigorous promotion of Emperor Huizong of the Song Dynasty, highly skilled flower and bird painting artists emerged. Painters not only pursued the portrayal of images, but also gave the characteristics and meanings of birds and plants. For example, Zhao Chang's "Sketch of Butterflies" (Figure 6) and Lin Chun's "Picture of Loquat Mountain Birds" (Figure 7). These works depict a lively pastoral scene, depicting flowers and birds very realistically, reflecting people's yearning for a better life and beginning to pursue the beauty of nature.



Figure 6: Sketch of a butterfly, Song Dynasty, Image source: Beijing Palace Museum



Figure 7: Loquat Mountain Bird Painting, Song Dynasty, Image source: Beijing Palace Museum

Painting techniques of flower and bird paintings

The main carrier of flower and bird paintings is silk, which is a mixture of silk and is as thin as a cicada's wing. The meticulous flower and bird paintings of the Song Dynasty pay attention to the coordination of ink and color. It is necessary to achieve "color does not interfere with ink, and ink does not leave color", retain the changes in ink color, and dye the color thinly multiple times to achieve the desired effect. (Figure 10)



Figure 10: Fine-brush flower and bird painting techniques Image source: Baidu

The techniques of bird-and-flower painting in the Song Dynasty include shading and coloring (Figure 11). Shading is used for the background to set off the object with light colors; coloring is used to depict the object to make it more delicate. Because silk and mineral pigments are used, pigments need to be superimposed many times. This technique and coloring method give bird-and-flower painting light colors and rigorous and elegant forms, which is different from traditional ink painting.



Figure 11: Baking and dyeing Image source: Baidu

The Prospects of Flower and Bird Painting Art

Chinese bird-and-flower paintings have undergone continuous innovation and development. To further promote this art form, key measures include: (1) Incorporating modern technology and design techniques while retaining its traditional characteristics and significance to broaden its dissemination channels. (2) Selecting products that are popular with modern people, economical, practical, and beautiful for integrated design to increase the visibility of bird-and-flower paintings among the public.

Analysis on the application of modern flower and bird painting product design

In modern product design, the aesthetic elements of flower-and-bird paintings are integrated into the product design, and the four aspects of traditional elements, colors, patterns and craftsmanship are applied to product design. It is necessary to extract the essence and remove the dross, combine it with modern aesthetics, and extract representative traditional elements (Zhou Pei, Application of traditional cultural elements in interior textile design, [J] Popular Literature and Art 2018 (7): 66). Understand cultural connotation and combine with modern design. Using traditional Chinese elements, designers create products that meet modern needs and aesthetic standards. Flower and bird painting elements are often used for decoration due to their elegance. When designers use traditional elements, they should perform artistic processing to ensure that the product is beautiful, practical, economical, and meets the visual and behavioral needs of consumers.

In clothing design, flower and bird paintings are used as decorative patterns and have remarkable effects. For example, the UEEO brand's 2021 autumn and winter series (Figure 13) uses plum blossom patterns, combined with digital printing gradient technology, to decorate ink plum blossoms on clothing, conveying the lonely and cold image of plum blossoms.



Figure 13: UEEO 2021 Autumn and Winter Image source: Baidu

In the design of furniture textiles (Figure 14), the image of flowers in flower and bird paintings is used, and various flowers are combined and designed and painted. The colors are the more popular light green and lavender. Printed jacquard is used in modern art to highlight the form of the painting. The traditional flower and bird painting elements are used in home textile design to present the vibrant, hazy and fresh beauty of nature.

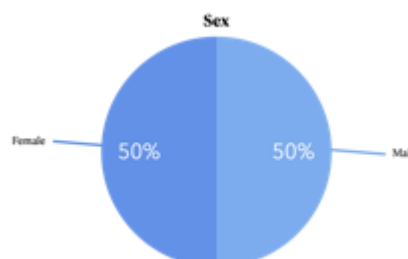


Figure 14: Flowers blooming in midsummer 2022 Ming yuan Cup International Furniture Textiles Creative Competition Image source: REDnote

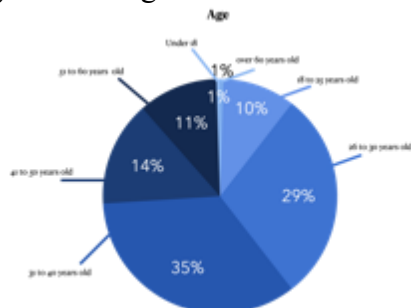
Through the analysis of the above product design cases, we can clearly recognize that the traditional art form of flower and bird painting still has great development potential in terms of application techniques and innovation paths. Traditional culture itself is a process of continuous evolution with the change of times. The integration of traditional patterns and modern designs is essentially a kind of communication and integration across the times. In order to enhance the artistic appeal of these traditional patterns in contemporary society, we must inject them with the vitality of the new era. Therefore, it is extremely critical to carry out appropriate innovation and change on the basis of maintaining its essential characteristics.

Quantitative analysis

The survey surveyed approximately 320,000 product consumers. Through random questionnaire surveys (using Questionnaire Star), a total of 201 valid questionnaires were collected.

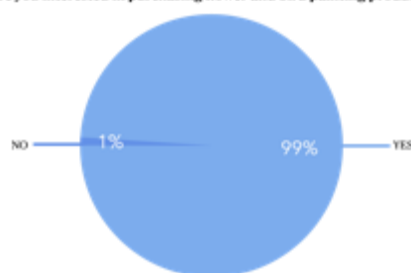


Analysis conclusion: According to the data table, there are 201 valid responses, of which 50% are male and 50% are female. It can be seen that in this questionnaire survey, male and female respondents present a relatively balanced gender distribution.



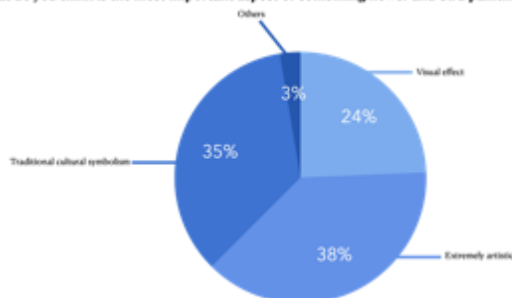
Analysis conclusion: The 31-40 age group accounted for the highest proportion, accounting for 34.33%, followed by the 26-30 age group, accounting for 29.35%. The 41-50 age group, 51-60 age group, 18-25 age group, under 18 years old and over 60 years old accounted for 14.43%, 10.95%, 9.95%, 0.5% and 0.5% respectively. The survey results show that the participants are mainly middle-aged people.

Are you interested in purchasing flower and bird painting products?



Analysis conclusion: According to the data table, participants have a high interest in traditional flower and bird painting products, which shows that it has high aesthetic value and traditional cultural propaganda value.

What do you think is the most important aspect of combining flower and bird paintings with products?



The analysis shows that among the 201 valid responses, 38% of consumers value the artistic sense of the product the most, 35% focus on the traditional cultural implications embodied in the product, 24% emphasize visual effects, and the remaining 3% focus on other aspects.

The above results show that consumers are interested in traditional Chinese culture, especially product designs with traditional flower and bird painting themes. They expect products to show artistry, cultural connotations and visual appeal.

4. Conclusion

As consumers' demand for traditional Chinese culture increases, products that combine traditional culture are becoming more and more popular. As a typical representative of Chinese

ink painting, flower and bird painting is loved by the public for its profound cultural heritage and artistic characteristics. Applying flower and bird painting elements to modern product design can not only promote this art form, but also enhance people's identification with traditional culture and improve personal taste. Integrating traditional culture into modern design can meet the market demand for cultural products and promote cultural inheritance and innovation. In design, the artistic characteristics of flower and bird painting should be deeply explored and naturally integrated into product design to adapt to modern aesthetics. In this way, the product becomes not only a part of life, but also a medium for spreading Chinese traditional culture, allowing more people to appreciate the charm of Chinese culture.

suggestion:

1. In future research, it is recommended to further explore the combination of flower and bird paintings and modern product design to promote the inheritance and development of traditional culture.
2. The research results were put forward at international seminars and forums.

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