

Han Meilin's style path of creating ancient Chinese character art—Taking “TianShu” as an example

Tianzi Sheng*

School of Gemology, China University of Geosciences, Beijing, China

Abstract. Han Meilin pursued the "beauty of lines, composition, and form" in the genes of ancient Chinese characters through modern "prioritization operation, flexible combination, and two-dimensional and three-dimensional cross-border". He created a series of works in both Chinese and modern "Tianshu" style, and held an art exhibition in the main building of the Meridian Gate of the Forbidden City. It can be seen that Han Meilin's style of ancient Chinese characters conforms to the modern aesthetic of Chinese style in the context of contemporary art and design. The article establishes a connection between the formation path of artist style and personality power from the perspective of subjective anthropology, extracts the method of Han Meilin's transformation of ancient Chinese characters genes, and provides a style path that can be referenced for the development of national art resources in modernity.

1 Introduction

In the long evolution of history, many ancient Chinese characters have been left on oracle bones, stone carvings, rock paintings, ancient pottery, brick inscriptions, and wooden slips. They are cold and obscure, unpopular, and even fail to discern justice. However, for contemporary artists and designers, the "beauty of lines, composition, and form" in the genes of ancient Chinese characters are artistic parts that contain the aesthetic culture and visual power of the Chinese nation, and can play a role in identity recognition in cross-cultural artistic communication. At the beginning of 2022, Han Meilin studied the art of ancient Chinese characters for nearly half a century - the "Tianshu" series of works was exhibited in the exhibition hall of the Meridian Gate Main Building of the Palace Museum. In this exhibition, we can see that "Tianshu", as a modern style symbol system, applies the genes of ancient Chinese characters to various fields of art design and creation, such as ink, ceramics, purple sand, printing and dyeing, iron art, sculpture, etc, it gives people a sense of cultural confidence, national essence, and modern fashion 'beauty', and has sparked strong resonance and widespread discussion in various sectors of society. The author starts from the question and ponders the unique aesthetic value of the style of "Tianshu", that is, why does Han Meilin's style of ancient writing image conform to the modern Chinese aesthetic in the context of contemporary art and design?

* Corresponding author: 460293944@qq.com

2 Nature power: the written thinking of creating ancient Chinese character art

Based on subjective anthropology, "natural power" is the artist's innate desire and demand for aesthetic knowledge, which usually occurs in childhood. The artist will be unconsciously interested in some artistic image in the process of exploring the world.

2.1 The behavior of nature power

Han Meilin has shown a strong interest in ancient Chinese characters since childhood, shifting from several collections of ancient Chinese characters to copying, collecting, and researching various types of Chinese character images such as oracle bone inscriptions, Chinese slips, and inscriptions on gold. He likes to use writing to outline images. Moreover, once this type of knowledge is satisfied, it will lurk in the artist's future creations and become a means of shaping the style of "Tianshu".

2.1.1 Copying ancient Chinese characters

At the age of five, Han Meilin accidentally found books such as "Four Body Thousand Characters", "Six Books Classification" and "Ancient Chinese Calligraphy" in the Tudi Temple in his hometown in Jinan. The ancient Chinese characters like "pictures" in them are full of attraction to Han Meilin. Those friends as old as him usually like to play games such as playing marbles and kicking shuttlecock, but he is familiar with the ancient Chinese characters at first sight, I like to play with these natural and vivid Chinese characters. Driven by this aesthetic nature, he was "entangled" with ancient culture since childhood, and spent most of his day running to the Tudi Temple to copy these ancient Chinese characters on the spot.

2.1.2 Collect ancient Chinese characters

Later, Han Meilin's beloved ancient characters were integrated into his "lifelong companion". Through learning and copying, he accumulated more and more Chinese characters from these "precious books". At the end of the 1940s, Han Meilin joined the army and worked as a correspondent in the relief group. The calligrapher Chen Shuliang saw that he had written a table full of seal characters. Although it was not calligraphy, the older generation was full of praise for it. This not only made Han Meilin a treasure, but also strengthened his artistic ambition, and began to collect all kinds of ancient Chinese characters that appeared in life, such as oracle bone inscriptions on traditional Chinese medicine keels, rock paintings on Helan Mountain, gold inscriptions on bronzes, and so on. [1]

2.1.3 Study ancient Chinese characters

Han Meilin not only collected these ancient Chinese characters, but also was interested in the beauty of the form it brought. Since he could not understand the relationship between Chinese characters and calligraphy when he was young, he naturally associated these images in the direction of "pictures", and inadvertently went to an alternative way of writing Chinese characters. On the one hand, he would carry a notebook with him to record and sort out the ancient Chinese characters scattered around China. Mr. Qigong was very excited after reading this "little book" and encouraged Han Meilin to write these ancient

Chinese characters; On the other hand, he will try to integrate the ancient Chinese characters into the creation of batik, iron art and ceramic carving, and add a "old beauty" to his works through design. Mr. Huang Yongyu also expressed his approval and encouragement after receiving the "seal script pottery" sent by Han Meilin.

2.2 The method of nature power: written thinking

For Han Meilin, who began to write Chinese characters from an early age, sketching the image in writing is his special task for training hands in the morning. He not only grasped the special aesthetic feature of "writing" and developed profound calligraphy skills, but also transformed the outline of the image into a "smooth gliding" movement, consciously exploring the various changes of the handwriting in the unconscious, and seeking the modern ink style. Therefore, Han Meilin formed a kind of written thinking. On the one hand, he paid attention to the cultural choice of brush and ink, and made use of its changeable characteristics to make the subtle difference between the thickness of each stroke, as well as the wonderful balance in each frame structure, impossible to imitate; On the other hand, he pays attention to the sense of experience of life. In the process of writing, this irreversible, one-time experience, and temporal state is full of life meaning, because it is as unrepeatable as human life. The spatial nature of points and lines is the "extension" and "extension" of the temporal passage of life, and constructs the visual representation of the creator's spiritual order. (Fig. 1)



Fig. 1. The written thinking of Han Meilin's Chinese character art.

3 Willpower: the module thinking of creating ancient Chinese character art

Based on subjective anthropology, "willpower" is an artist's conscious and active determination of the creative purpose and control of his artistic behavior. It is a necessary spiritual force for every artist who explores a unique style.

3.1 The behavior of willpower

Han Meilin has never stopped using manuscript books to record his artistic acts of inspiration. According to statistics, as of now, he has drawn 130 copies, each with 400 pages. As a result, he continuously pondered and organized ancient Chinese characters, transformed and created them, and honed his ability to transform one into ten through hard work, providing a language library for the style of ancient Chinese characters in the "Tianshu".

3.1.1 Continuously sinking and organizing

In the past 40 years, Han Meilin has visited famous mountains and ancient temples, searched the yellow scroll of ancient books, and searched the bronze and Han pottery of the Qin Dynasty. He has traveled all over the world, searching for ancient Chinese characters that are no longer used in China's history, waiting for examination, unknown origin, not deciphered, and homeless after the unification of the characters on oracle bones, stone carvings, rock paintings, ancient pottery, brick inscriptions, and wooden slips. He has not only recorded them in one manuscript after another, In addition, he also turned over a large number of "ancient Chinese character compilation" books to collate as data assistance. In this process, he made cross-examination, recording and comparison through his own collection, so that in the next artistic creation, he could find rich national cultural symbols from these manuscripts.

3.1.2 Continuously Transforming and Creating

Because tradition cannot be repeated and copied, Han Meilin has strict requirements on himself when recording, requiring him to fill almost all the blanks on each page of the manuscript without violating the structural rules of ancient Chinese characters, so that all forms and figures can form, fill and form each other, and no matter how large or small the space can be "filled" by adjusting the single form, And ensure the integrity of the individual without any sense of rashness. It can be seen that he trained his deformation ability of "creating danger" and "breaking danger" in the modeling experiment, and accumulated rich experience in ancient Chinese character modeling in a large number of practices, so that he could create artistic works of ancient Chinese characters in any limited space, and the modeling would never be duplicate. [2]



Fig. 2. The module thinking of Han Meilin's Chinese character art.

3.2 The method of willpower: module thinking

Han Meilin drew a large number of regular components of ancient Chinese characters, and then quickly combined and assembled them through "regeneration, change, transformation" and other ways to create a large number of works of the "Tianshu" series, which is a modular thinking in line with the development of social modernization, and the Han's symbol system constructed by it also has practical value in the modern aesthetic context,

which can provide "beauty" reference for people in the art and design industry, It has multiple meanings of calligraphy, art and history of writing. [3] Therefore, in 2007 and 2021, Han Meilin published two collections of ancient Chinese characters in "Tianshu", which showed nearly 10000 pieces of ancient Chinese characters created by himself. [4] If you look at "useful", each "character" in this collection is an independent basic unit, which can be combined to form a larger unit, forming an excellent logo design, artistic symbol, artistic creation, etc. (Fig. 2)

4 Value power: the pan sculpture thinking of creating ancient Chinese character art

Based on subjective anthropology, "value power" is the artist's higher level needs and desires, which is a power that yearns for the full development of its own social value and to achieve a higher level of artistic achievement.

4.1 The behavior of value power

With the opening of the door of the country in the new era, a large number of design needs have emerged at the national level. In 1989, Han Meilin established the "Han Meilin Studio", which applies the style of "Tianshu" to the design of image signs, city sculptures, purple clay teapots and other aspects, and promotes the combination of art and life through decorative styles, so as to widely realize the value ideal of beautifying life. [5]

4.1.1 Applied to logo design

In the design of the airline emblem of China International Airlines, Han Meilin skillfully used the style of "Tianshu" to summarize and innovate the form of the Phoenix, and linked the ancient Chinese character "Phoenix" with the object "Phoenix" it refers to in the structure, and designed a vigorous and highly simplified fire Phoenix shape, so that the logo design can naturally cross the boundary between text communication and graphic representation, [6] Clearly achieve "convey feelings and ideas". Therefore, we can regard the Air China emblem as a new "character" growing out of today's life. The core competitiveness of its design is that it can not only effectively convey the cultural value behind the logo, but also make the logo become the decoration on the fuselage of Air China, so that the concept is easy to accept and the form is easy to spread.

4.1.2 Applied to urban sculpture design

In the design of the urban sculpture "Five Clouds and Nine Elephants", Han Meilin expressed the auspicious birds through the style of "Tianshu", constructed the three-dimensional decorative relationship of ancient Chinese characters, transformed the linear change of dots and lines from two-dimensional plane to three-dimensional space expression, highlighting the decoration and uniqueness of space. It can be seen that this is not a sculpture based on stereoscopic effect, but a shape made of steel bars. The space is decorated with extremely strong lines, making the animal image both transparent and three-dimensional. Therefore, this work will make the sculpture romantic and freehand, flexible and lyric, and will produce the dot line visual effect of light and shadow under the light, which will blur the boundary between reality and emptiness. It is a typical oriental art language. [7]

4.1.3 Applied to purple clay teapot design

In the design of purple clay pot, Han Meilin applied the style of "Tianshu" to the shape of the handle, handle, mouth, lid and body of the purple clay pot, so that the beauty of the structure of the ancient Chinese characters and the beauty of the shape of the purple clay pot show an echoing contrast. The charm of the lines is reflected in the treatment of the elongated handle and handle, which complement and reflect each other. [8] On the whole, the atmospheric, simple, modern and open modeling is not only consistent with the modern aesthetic concept, but also highly decorative. Through the three-dimensional structure, deconstructed reality, improves the artistic feeling of the surrounding environment associated with the work, and allows users to feel the beautification of the living space in the emotional exchange with the purple clay pot.



Fig. 3. The pan sculpture thinking of Han Meilin's Chinese character art.

4.2 The method of value power: pan sculpture thinking

Han Meilin broke away from the original mode of thinking and studied the needs of people's lives, and put forward a space consciousness of "pan sculpture", which means that if the city is regarded as an exhibition hall, then architecture is "sculpture"; If home is regarded as an exhibition hall, then furniture is "sculpture"; If the body is regarded as an exhibition hall, then jewelry is "sculpture". Therefore, sculpture is not only sculpture, but

also clothing, food, shelter, transportation and use in people's daily life space. This is the essence of "pan sculpture", which creates space in an artistic way. Therefore, in the process of the development of the times, he naturally became a decoration designer, making the "Tianshu" no longer a kind of art work, but a modern decoration method of Han Meilin's exploration and establishment of style language, which became a common element of his many art categories and consciously applied it in his work creation, not only completing the two-dimensional plane operation to the utmost, but also making great efforts to create the Chinese style of three-dimensional space, Make the ancient characters in the space as beautiful as possible. (Fig. 3)

5 Conclusion

The style of "Tianshu" is an effective way for ancient Chinese characters to integrate into modern style, and it is also a cultural product that artists integrate with real life through personal creation. In Han Meilin, the creative behavior driven by nature power, willpower, and value power transformed the genes of ancient Chinese characters, enabling him to create a style of "Tianshu" that conforms to the modern aesthetic of Chinese style, and opened the way to fashion trends. He has collaborated with trendy brands such as Bear@brick, POPMart and Marsper, which integrate the image of a nation that has been around for thousands of years with contemporary art forms. Therefore, the style path of Han Meilin's "Tianshu" has certain inspiration value for the development of national art resources in modernity, and has certain public, empirical, and aesthetic value.

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