



The Application and Design Research of Chinese Painting Elements in Cultural and Creative Products

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Abstract: Chinese painting is a treasured art form of the Chinese nation, serving as an important cultural medium for disseminating its humanistic spirit. In current times, while Chinese painting continues to explore and inherit traditional painting techniques, it also engages in cross-border integration and innovation with other art forms. It is imperative to fully excavate the expressive mode, elements, and humanistic values of Chinese painting, selecting, analyzing, and refining the most distinctive cultural elements and applying them to the design of creative products. This paper conducts a study on the successes and challenges in the design and development of cultural and creative products based on Chinese painting through multiple case studies, with the goal of guiding it towards a path of combining protection, inheritance, and development, and to create a series of creative design works that convey the aesthetic essence of traditional Chinese painting. This research inspires innovative and practical ideas for integrating traditional culture and contemporary design research, including how Chinese painting can maximize its cultural value and aesthetic characteristics in the design of creative products, as well as the application and design methods of Chinese painting elements in the cultural and creative industry.

Keywords: Chinese painting elements, cultural and creative products, design, aesthetic connotation, cultural dissemination

Introduction

In the current era of economic globalization and cultural diversity, products are expected to possess cultural, spiritual, and artistic characteristics beyond mere functionality. As a result, the cultural and creative industry has become a significant emerging industry worldwide. In this context, the integration of traditional art and modern design has become an essential topic. Chinese painting, with its long-standing history and rich connotations, has high cultural and aesthetic values. This study focuses on cultural and creative products incorporating Chinese painting elements. By employing a combination of cultural and creative design theories and conducting a case analysis of successful Chinese painting element cultural and creative products in China, this research aims to explore the development value, design language, and design methods associated with Chinese painting elements in cultural and creative products. The study asserts that contemporary cultural and creative product design has the potential to assimilate the essence of traditional Chinese painting and delve into its humanistic spirit and distinctive cultural elements. This, in turn, can stimulate innovation in the content and direction of cultural and creative product design, as well as enhance overall design quality.

Literature Review

Chinese painting is an art form that has been practiced for thousands of years, and has a rich history and cultural significance in China. In recent years, there has been an increased interest in the study and appreciation of Chinese painting, both within China and around the world. This literature review examines several key themes in the study of Chinese painting, including its historical development, techniques and styles, and its influence on contemporary art and culture.

Historical Development

The history of Chinese painting can be traced back to the Neolithic period, with examples of rock paintings and pottery decorated with painted designs. However, it was during the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE) that Chinese painting began to take on its distinctive style and techniques, with the use of brush and ink on paper becoming the dominant medium^[1].

During the Song dynasty (960-1279 CE), landscape painting emerged as a dominant genre, with artists such as Fan Kuan and Guo Xi developing the "Northern School" and "Southern School" styles, respectively^[2]. The Yuan dynasty (1279-1368 CE) saw the development of the "blue and green landscape" style, characterized by the use of blue-green colors and expressive brushwork^[3].

Techniques and Styles

The techniques and styles of Chinese painting have been developed and refined over centuries, and are characterized by the use of brush and ink on paper, as well as the incorporation of calligraphy and poetry into the artwork^[4].

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One of the most distinctive features of Chinese painting is the use of "ink-wash" or "shui mo" techniques, which involve using varying shades of ink to create a sense of depth and atmosphere. Another key technique is "xieyi," which translates as "writing ideas," and involves using quick, expressive brushstrokes to convey a sense of movement and energy in the artwork [5].

In addition to landscape painting, other popular genres of Chinese painting include figure painting, bird-and-flower painting, and calligraphy. Each of these genres has its own unique style and techniques, and has been influenced by historical, cultural, and regional factors.

Contemporary Influence

Chinese painting continues to have a significant influence on contemporary art and culture, both within China and around the world. One area of particular interest is the integration of traditional Chinese painting techniques and styles with contemporary art forms and technologies, such as digital media (8).

In addition, there has been a growing interest in the study and appreciation of Chinese painting among Western audiences, with exhibitions and collections of Chinese painting becoming increasingly popular in museums and galleries worldwide [6].

Research Methods:

The research employed the following methods:

Literature analysis method: To provide a theoretical foundation for subsequent research, this study conducts a comprehensive review of relevant literature. It examines the historical development of Chinese painting, the characteristics of its elements, and the design principles applicable to cultural and creative products. Moreover, this research aligns with the guidelines and policies outlined in China's *Fourteenth Five-Year Plan for the Development of Cultural Industries*.

Case analysis method: Representative examples of Chinese painting elements used in cultural and creative products were selected and analyzed for their design features, application functions, and practical effects to extract successful experiences and provide references for design.

Practical design method: Chinese painting elements were applied to cultural and creative products for practice to verify the effectiveness of theories and design methods, continuously optimize design solutions, and summarize and evaluate research results. The research process was also reflected on to identify problems and deficiencies, and to provide support for the thesis as a case study.

Data Analysis Method: Based on the 2021 data, China's cultural and creative industries reached a total scale of 119,064 billion yuan. The value of cultural and creative design products accounted for over 4.5% of the GDP, and there were approximately 36,000 enterprises associated with the cultural and creative industries, with rapid annual growth. This multi-source data enables an analysis of the development trends and market structure within China's cultural and creative industries. Furthermore, it provides valuable data to support the exploration of the application of painting and calligraphy in the cultural and creative sectors, which holds significant potential.

I. The Development Value of Chinese Painting Elements in Cultural and Creative Products

In contemporary times, consumers demand products to possess cultural, spiritual, and artistic communicative qualities, in addition to functional use. National and local governments have been actively supporting the cultural and creative industry. In this context, effective research and development of cultural and creative product designs can have significant positive implications for the design-driven development of cultural and creative industries, as well as the tourism economy. Various cultural and creative products have emerged in recent years due to the increasing demand for such products. While traditional Chinese painting art has been researching the inheritance methods, it has also been exploring innovative fields and engaging in cross-disciplinary integration with various art categories. The cross-disciplinary integration of Chinese painting elements in the cultural and creative design field has been flourishing in recent years. Designers achieve this by deeply exploring the forms, artistic conception, modeling, and composition of Chinese painting, redesigning them to create cultural and creative works that possess artistic and practical value. This has enabled Chinese calligraphy and painting elements to flourish in cultural and creative designs. The following three points summarize the main ideas of this chapter:

1.1 To enhance Chinese painting with artistic conception.

To enhance artistic aesthetics, cultural and creative designers favor Chinese painting elements, as they refine natural forms into figurative depictions imbued with artistic conception. This conception is conveyed through graphic composition, freehand spirit, and symbolic techniques, and is deeply rooted in Chinese life themes, cultural genes, and aesthetic foundations, resulting in far-reaching cultural impacts. At the core of Chinese painting's modeling is the "freehand spirit," which cultural and creative designers emphasize in their work. This spirit embodies concepts such as "the coexistence of reality and emptiness," "the emergence of something out of nothing," and "using white to represent black." When applied to cultural and creative design, these concepts can imbue products with characteristics of antiquity, simplicity, and elegance, achieving visual aesthetic effects of "less is more" and "simplifying complexity."

As an illustration, the Palace Museum's "Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains Brooch" drew inspiration from the long scroll painting "Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains," and utilized the main colors of Shiqing and Shilv (Figure 1). The outer contours of the two highest peaks were then extracted to create linear triangles with staggering heights and front-back contrasts. The base was made of gold and cloisonné enameling was used to depict Shiqing and Shilv colors, resulting in an exquisite piece of jewelry. Besides this, there are numerous cultural and creative products inspired by "Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains," reflecting its profound cultural heritage. By using these products, consumers can easily appreciate the cultural and creative connotations, and pass on the traditional Chinese aesthetics and ethical culture^[7].



Figure 1, the Palace Museum's "Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains Brooch"

1.2 Promoting Integrated Innovative Design

The traditional form of Chinese painting is mainly focused on two-dimensional visual representation, but modern design breaks the conventional way of presentation and dissemination, making it three-dimensional and lively. Through cross-disciplinary integration and dynamic technology, the audience can more intuitively feel the artistic conception of Chinese painting. For example, the dynamic "Qingming Shanghe Tu" exhibited at the Shanghai World Expo was made into a three-dimensional and movable audio-visual effect, combined with modern technologies such as sound, light, and electricity, making people feel as if they were in the bustling streets of the Song Dynasty (Figure 2). It can be seen that Chinese painting is gradually transforming into a popular form of expression, and the concept of making cultural relics "move" has become a trend in cultural and creative design. The addition of new media enables Chinese painting to achieve spatial interactivity, allowing people to truly feel the artistic conception and atmosphere of traditional Chinese painting. With the arrival of the 5G era, using AR technology to develop virtual reality experience forms, "cloud exhibitions" and "cloud viewing" are gradually becoming popular, allowing audiences to immerse themselves in the beauty of Chinese painting^[8].



Figure 2, "Qingming Shanghe Tu" exhibited at the Shanghai World Expo

1.3 Creating Unique Cultural Symbols and Building Era IP

Chinese painting can well depict cultural symbols with ethnic characteristics. Taking the "Palace Museum Cat" theme design launched by the Beijing Palace Museum as an example: it is a combination of royal portraits from various dynasties and stray cats, and this image is used as cultural and creative content, making it into daily products such as figurines, pillows, and dolls, creating the "Palace Museum Cat" IP image (Figure 3). This is an attempt to combine the solemn emperor portrait with popular elements, which is lively, interesting, and highlights love for small animals. It breaks through the two-dimensional plane image of Chinese painting and greatly enhances its dissemination strength. The cultural and creative design of the Beijing Palace Museum takes this as an opportunity to gradually promote the research and development of cultural and creative products that integrate traditional culture and modern design. Later, the Beijing Palace Museum created several popular IPs with Chinese painting elements and promoted them to the world, leading the trend of cultural and creative products in domestic museums^[9].



Figure 3, the "Palace Museum Cat" designed by the Beijing Palace Museum

II. Integration of Chinese Painting Elements and Cultural and Creative Design

2.1 Design Language of Chinese Painting Elements in Cultural and Creative Products

Throughout China's long history of social and economic development, a rich variety of cultures and arts have emerged in different regions and ethnic groups, each with their own distinctive decorative elements. Chinese painting, with its strong decorative properties, has been a particularly influential art form. However, it is not simply decorative painting; rather, its decorative nature comes from its centuries-old technical foundation that uses brush strokes of hooking, rubbing, dotting, dyeing, and

wrinkling on rice paper, combined with the ink technique of "dividing ink into five colors," to create visual effects such as vigor, transparency, flow, and strength. The expressive and summarizing power of its brushstrokes is also unique in the world of painting. By combining the expressive form of Chinese painting with design language, the artistic conception and transcendent artistic influence within Chinese painting can elevate cultural and creative products from a material level to an inner world and spiritual level.

To apply Chinese painting elements in cultural and creative design, a deep exploration of the symbolic, linear, formal, and color elements of Chinese painting is necessary to present the aesthetic essence and humanistic connotation of Chinese painting through innovative forms. This allows for the formation of an independent cultural symbol of Chinese painting, which can be refined, disassembled, deformed, and recombined to conform to the design principles of cultural and creative products, ultimately forming a unique and nationally distinctive design language. Only by possessing aesthetic, national, and innovative characteristics can cultural and creative products be accepted, convinced, used, and disseminated by the public. Traditional Chinese aesthetic thought can be incorporated into the application of cultural and creative design, thereby enabling creative ideas to be continuously expanded.

2.2 Design Methods for Cultural and Creative Products using Chinese Painting Elements

2.2.1 Screenshot-style design:

Screenshot-style design is particularly suited for classical works of Chinese painting history that have high visibility and artistic value, and have stood the test of time while still emitting a strong artistic charm. Classic Chinese paintings are content-rich and voluminous, thus the screenshot-style design method can be used to develop a series of cultural and creative products, forming a theme for a collection. For instance, a series of cultural and creative products like handkerchiefs, silk scarves, folders, ties, magnets, and more could be designed. When using this design approach, careful consideration must be given to selecting Chinese painting elements that are appropriate for the cultural and creative product's type and material, which should cater to the aesthetic and lifestyle needs of contemporary individuals^[10].

2.2.2 Interpreting Aesthetic Concepts

Interpreting Aesthetic Concepts in Design involves paying special attention to the expression of the subject's aesthetic concept in Chinese painting, whether it is landscape painting, flower-and-bird painting, or figure painting. The aesthetic concept is conveyed through the depiction of an objective scene by Chinese painters, and the projection of personal feelings and aesthetics into the brushwork to express the harmonious unity of natural beauty, life beauty, and artistic beauty, thereby reflecting the aesthetic idea of "the unity of man and nature." Chinese calligraphy and painting works are sophisticated works of art that can cultivate sentiment, increase interest, enhance accomplishment, and adjust the spirit. They also integrate poetry, calligraphy, painting, and seals, emphasizing the comprehensive artistic form of cultural connotation. Cultural and creative products that employ Chinese painting elements must convey the cultural connotation of Chinese painting from aspects such as color, line, material, and shape, and combine modern design concepts to showcase the aesthetic concept and characteristics of ancient Chinese calligraphy and painting.

2.2.3 Designing Based on Subject Matter Representation

The subject matter of Chinese painting contains conventional symbolism. For example, plum blossoms, orchids, bamboo, and chrysanthemums are the most common subjects in literati paintings, symbolizing upright, noble, tenacious, and humble qualities, which are rooted in the pursuit and yearning of literati for personality realm. For example, pomegranates symbolize a wish for many children and good fortune, pine trees represent a spirit of independence and fearlessness in the face of adversity, lotus flowers grow pure and unsullied in muddy water, reflecting a spirit of nobility, and so on. Extracting these rich themes and elements as the design language of cultural and creative products and directly printing them on products through printing, engraving, stamping, gold stamping, and other methods can meet people's psychological needs for a better life, as well as add cultural connotation and elegance to the products^[11].

The "Crane Sleepwear" series launched by the Palace Museum in Beijing, where the designer printed the "Auspicious Cranes" painting by Emperor Song Huizong on daily life products such as sleepwear and bookmarks, not only endows cultural and creative products with good meaning, but also satisfies the practicality of products, and perfectly applies traditional Chinese painting elements to modern daily necessities, bridging the gap between people and history^[12].



Figure 4, The "Crane Sleepwear" series launched by the Palace Museum in Beijing

2.2.4 Digital Cultural and Creative Design

Digital cultural and creative products, also known as new media cultural and creative products, combine Chinese painting elements with modern technology and new media technology, breaking through the limitations of situations and places, and being more conducive to cultural dissemination. In modern cultural and creative design, in order to achieve an atmosphere of "blending of situations" and "the unity of man and nature," the stacking of light and shadow elements is usually used to show a layered and three-dimensional light and shadow effect on patterns, which can give people a sense of mystery and dreamlike immersion. Combined with artistic forms such as animation, film, and music, using sound, light, and electricity to create the artistic conception and aesthetic concept that Chinese painting cannot express on paper, cultural and creative products are transformed from physical objects to diverse and varied products.

2.3 Design Principles of Chinese Painting Elements in Cultural and Creative Products

2.3.1 Principle of Practicality:

As cultural and creative products are intended for practical use, designers must prioritize practicality when developing them. These products should cater to the material and spiritual needs of consumers. Therefore, during the design process, designers must focus on the product's practical function, whether incorporating Chinese painting elements or any other art form. They must consider consumer needs and pay attention to the market positioning of cultural and

creative products. By designing practical cultural and creative products, designers can cater to the practical needs of consumers.

2.3.2 Principle of Aesthetics:

Cultural and creative products, particularly those incorporating Chinese painting elements, should possess aesthetic qualities alongside practicality. Such products must have a humanistic attribute and contain the profound traditional aesthetic consciousness of the Chinese nation. Designers must aim to attract consumers through the product's beautiful appearance and enable them to appreciate its beauty. Cultural and creative products must lead consumers to appreciate and feel the aesthetic conception of Chinese painting. Aesthetics are achieved through skillful design that unifies product style and culture, and fully displays the principle of aesthetics.

2.3.3 Principle of Fun:

Chinese painting has always emphasized the importance of "interest" and "artistic conception" in a picture. In designing cultural and creative products, traditional cultural elements should be fully absorbed and conveyed through modern innovative design to make the products more interesting. Through easy and amusing forms of design, such products can stimulate consumers' desire to purchase and optimize their purchasing experience.

2.3.4 Principle of Cultural Inheritance:

Cultural inheritance is vital for Chinese civilization, and excellent Chinese culture plays a pivotal role in its inheritance. Cultural and creative products should inherit and reflect this cultural heritage. Designers should apply the aesthetic essence and cultural connotation of Chinese painting in cultural and creative products through innovative ways, reflecting the principle of cultural inheritance. The combination of traditional culture and modern life is also the biggest difference between cultural and creative products and general creative products. Therefore, designers must ensure that cultural and creative products shoulder the mission of cultural inheritance and reflect the vitality of Chinese culture.

III. Problems and Enhancements in the Application of Chinese Painting Cultural and Creative Design

3.1 Lack of Creativity in Cultural and Creative Products

"Cultural and creative" consists of two aspects: culture and innovation. Culture is the soul of cultural and creative industries, while innovation is its life. With the prevalence of modern "fast-consumption culture," product development and sales in the cultural and creative industry have become a standardized process, resulting in issues such as excessive replication of core cultural elements, rigid adherence to tradition, and severe plagiarism in different series of cultural and creative products.

Creativity should be the priority in cultural and creative design. Designers should explore various artistic forms and implement cross-disciplinary integration to achieve a range of categories. China has different regional and ethnic cultures and a rich traditional cultural heritage. Designers should carefully select and refine cultural elements that have typical regional characteristics and unique features. They should not rely on a simple "copy and paste" approach. When developing cultural and creative products based on classical Chinese painting elements, designers should respect the original work while fully utilizing their imagination and creativity to revitalize traditional art in modern design.

3.2 Lack of Intellectual Property Awareness in Cultural and Creative Design

Originality is the foundation for the survival and development of cultural and creative industries. It is the driving force for knowledge innovation and the biggest characteristic that distinguishes traditional industries, which can be copied and produced on a large scale. The fundamental nature of originality is to endow cultural products with new life. Only by fully unleashing the originality of cultural and creative design, protecting the intellectual property of cultural and creative products, and valuing cultural value, can the diversified development of cultural and creative products be realized. This will also help to develop a broader market for creative ideas. Relevant government agencies should also provide strong support to companies and enterprises that specialize in original cultural and creative design. They should ensure that originality in design and intellectual property are protected by law, making originality and creative design a top priority in modern cultural industries and product development.

3.3 In coherence between the Design and the Demand

Chinese painting emphasizes "brush and ink following the times." Traditional Chinese painting has a history of hundreds of years. People's living backgrounds, living conditions, and spiritual outlooks have undergone enormous changes. With the development of cultural and creative industries, they have gradually become a way of life for the public. The main purpose of cultural and creative product design is to meet the needs of consumers. Therefore, while exploring traditional elements, cultural and creative design should make designs that meet modern-day demands. Designers need to conduct practical research to understand the preferences and actual needs of consumers. They should position their products well and cleverly integrate traditional Chinese cultural elements into practical functions. Only in this way can cultural and creative design reflect profound cultural connotations and ensure that cultural and creative products have practical value.

3.4 Insufficient Interdisciplinary Design Talents

To effectively utilize Chinese painting elements in cultural and creative design, a thorough understanding and research of Chinese painting are necessary, as well as designers with high design literacy and strong design skills, which are presently lacking in China. The solution is to cultivate interdisciplinary designers, enhance their aesthetic literacy and comprehensive design ability, and explore and research the cultural connotations and aesthetic characteristics of different artistic fields^[13].

3.5 High Barriers to Cross-Domain Resource Sharing

The barriers between museums, art galleries, and cultural and creative development companies in China are high, impeding joint research and development of cultural and creative products to reach their optimal design state. Museums should break down these barriers, strengthen cooperation with cultural and creative development companies, and facilitate cross-domain resource sharing. This entails assisting product development and sales personnel to fully utilize museums' collections of cultural relics, developing characteristic cultural and creative products, and expanding the sales market. Integration of the upstream and downstream industries related to museum shop merchandise should form an industry linkage effect. This approach enables cultural and creative designs to fully leverage classical collections and exhibition resources from various museums, minimize design and development costs, and promote mutual development of the cultural and creative industry^[14].

3.6 Rough Production of Local Characteristic Cultural and Creative Products

In recent years, many tourist souvenirs and local specialty products have emerged in the domestic cultural and creative market. These products often feature "rough" designs and are mostly non-functional display goods. They are of poor quality, neglect consumers' subjective needs, and lack in-depth exploration of the cultural connotations of local characteristics. Moreover, they violate the aesthetic principles of cultural and creative design, turning cultural and creative products into low-priced, poor quality consumer goods. This not only leads to significant waste of existing production materials and sales resources, but also undermines consumer confidence in cultural and creative products featuring Chinese painting elements. Relevant departments and cultural and creative development enterprises should attach great importance to and deeply reflect on this issue.

Local cultural and creative products have distinct regional characteristics that enable emotional identification with consumers. Designers must create cultural and creative products that better meet the needs of the public and are more representative of local characteristics. This requires designers to conduct deep exploration of local cultural features, historical development, and the nuances of local people's lives.

Conclusion

Chinese painting embodies aesthetic ideas that are in line with mainstream Chinese culture, representing the aesthetic consciousness of the Chinese nation and reflecting Eastern values. Modern cultural and creative design promotes the dissemination and inclusiveness of Chinese painting in the new era, taking a crucial step in the inheritance and development of Chinese calligraphy and painting art. Cultural and creative products featuring Chinese painting elements can disseminate traditional Chinese culture in the most comprehensive and efficient way, bringing people closer to the art of Chinese painting and enabling the public to truly understand the artistic charm hidden in traditional Chinese painting. This provides sustainable power for the development of China's characteristic cultural and creative system. Integrating Chinese painting elements and modern design requires designers to continuously explore the aesthetic connotations of Chinese calligraphy and painting art, combine traditional culture with modern design concepts, and innovate product forms and enrich cultural connotations.

The integration of contemporary Chinese painting elements with modern design faces challenges such as a lack of creativity, scarcity of cross-border talents, insufficient resource sharing, inadequate production of cultural and creative products, and inadequate protection of intellectual property rights for originality. Addressing these challenges necessitates vigorous training of cross-border design talents, heightened emphasis on design originality, and proactive dismantling of cross-sector barriers to achieve synergy between culture, design, and industry. Additionally, relevant government departments should provide robust support to original cultural and creative companies and establish legal protections for the intellectual property rights of original designs. It is imperative to value culture in order to promote the diversification of cultural and creative products. Simultaneously, designers must continue to explore the aesthetic connotations of Chinese painting and calligraphy, enhancing their aesthetic qualities to enable ongoing innovation in product forms, enrich the cultural significance of their creations, and elevate design quality. Creative products incorporating Chinese painting elements represent the successful amalgamation of traditional culture and modern design concepts. This bold integration signifies a remarkable transformation within the contemporary cultural and creative design field.

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