

# A Brief Analysis of the Design Aesthetics of MUJI

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## Abstract:

Muji is a daily grocery brand in Japan. Its product style is simple and simple. With the continuous growth of its sales range, it has gradually formed a unique design aesthetic concept. Muji's design is not just a simplified treatment on the surface of the product, but its design concept of "design without design" directly points to the essence of things, and also opens up new aesthetic perspectives for consumers.

## Keywords:

MUJI, Cultural Connotation, Analysis of Design Aesthetics, Aesthetic Connotation

## 1. Overview of MUJI

As a local company in Japan, Muji's products cover all aspects of people's daily life "clothing, food, housing and transportation", providing consumers with a more complete and comfortable life proposal. The emergence of the MUJI brand is inseparable from the promotion of social changes. In the 1980s, the world economy was suffering from a financial crisis, Japan was also experiencing the most serious energy crisis, and the consumer market also experienced a phenomenon of oversupply. People's demand for products pays more attention to high quality and low price, and MUJI has been established in accordance with the times and people's needs. Things that are too perfect can make people feel cold and impersonal, and some small flaws that do not affect the overall appearance will bring people and things closer and increase intimacy [1]. It not only promotes enterprises to produce simple, elegant and reasonably priced products, but also satisfies people's consumption concept of "plain and easy to use".

## 2. Cultural Implications of MUJI Design Aesthetics

### 2.1. Zen Aesthetics

Zen Buddhism first originated in the East and was introduced to Japan from the Tang Dynasty in China. The meaning of Zen is quiet contemplation, which is the meaning of resting one mind, thinking and meditating. Zen Buddhism in Japan

adheres to the idea of “one is more, more is one” and “no thought is the sect” [2]. Zen Buddhism pays attention to spiritual cultivation, pays attention to advocating nature and human nature, and Zen Buddhism also guides designers to think at the spiritual level. Reducing the types of colors, reducing the use of words, and increasing the blank space in the product design has inspired the public’s spiritual “heart-to-heart” message transmission, and guided consumers to purchase suitable supplies from a rational and reasonable perspective [3]. Every product designed by MUJI has achieved a reasonable combination of human, machine and environment, and has given the ultimate consideration to the relationship between products, product users and the use environment, and conforms to the essential relationship between people and things, also in line with Japanese Zen aesthetics.

## **2.2. *Wabi-sabi Aesthetics***

Wabi-sabi aesthetics is an important part of traditional Japanese aesthetics. The concept of wabi-sabi aesthetics is the love of incomplete nature, the attachment to old things, and the discovery of its unusual beauty from the most common objects [4]. The aesthetic concept of MUJI benefits to a large extent from the aesthetic influence of wabi-sabi aesthetics. The wabi-sabi aesthetics of MUJI is manifested in the rough natural texture and untreated natural original characteristics of the product surface. Nowadays, people are used to seeing colorful appearances or odd-shaped commodities, as if every commodity has to compete for beauty, and their products are really not beautiful. Under the rough exterior, MUJI inspires the most primitive and exciting memories in people's hearts, and evokes a love for the original beauty.

## **2.3. *Tea ceremony culture***

Important part of Japanese traditional culture , the content and form of Japanese tea ceremony have been systematically regulated. The Japanese tea ceremony has a long history of development. The master of the tea ceremony inherited and developed the spirit of the past dynasties , established the authentic Japanese tea ceremony, and put forward the concept of “harmony and quietness”. The development of Japanese tea ceremony is inseparable from the promotion of “daily tea and rice matters”. By integrating religion, philosophy, ethics and aesthetics, it not only plays a role in edifying sentiment, but also cultivates people's morality and aesthetics. MUJI’s products all reflect the inheritance of the Japanese tea ceremony culture spirit in the design concept [5]. Under the influence of the connotation of “harmony and serenity”, Muji's aesthetic style not only has the support of desirable design inspiration, but also is willing to be subject to the binding force of this noble and respectful spirit. This dual-track parallel makes Muji’s development prospects continue to grow.

# **3. Analysis of Design Aesthetics of MUJI**

## **3.1. *The Beauty of Minimalist Form***

MUJI uses simple craftsmanship to avoid excessive decoration, giving people a new visual aesthetic. MUJI’s design philosophy is “less is more”, not a simple “minus”, but in the era of pursuing individuality and luxury, it forms a sharp contrast and forms a unique style, and advocates every designer. Back to nature. Although it is based on traditional design, MUJI does not completely replicate the traditional Japanese culture, but adopts a modern design method, which is elegant in simplicity, and reflects the attitude of life in prudence [6].

### ***3.2 The beauty of pastel colors***

On the premise of maintaining the basic functionality of the product, MUJI has simplified the design style, integrated the concept of simplification and restraint into the design of the product, and used soft colors such as white, brown, and gray as the products of MUJI. surface. First, such color use makes the product more unified and brand recognition is high; second, this low-saturation, soft and pure color brings a peaceful visual effect and psychological feeling to the audience. The pressure of the audience is also a good relief outlet, and it is a benign guide to the audience's consumption concept and purchase desire [7].

### ***3.3 The Beauty of Green Material***

The aesthetics of MUJI is inseparable from the material carrier. The material is the essence of the product. The "essence" concept of MUJI is reflected in the choice of materials. The primary consideration is environmental protection. Environmental protection has almost become the subtitle of MUJI. And the Muji audience will associate it with environmental protection, and it is this material choice that makes more modern people support it. MUJI is loyal to nature and mainly uses natural materials in material selection. Even if it is not a pure natural material, it also chooses environmentally friendly materials that can be decomposed to prevent the products from harming the environment. This also requires that the design of Muji not only maintains the original natural properties of the material, but also has strong functionality. Muji can stick to its original intention, and would rather spend a higher price to keep using original natural materials as product materials, which is really valuable, as shown in the picture.

### ***3.4 Unique Beauty of Simplicity***

The beauty of simplicity of MUJI is mainly manifested in the simplification of form, the streamlining and improvement of production processes, and the attention and investment in details. In the book "Design in Design", Hara said: "The simplification of MUJI is by no means cheap, it leads to the specific expression of aesthetics". The reason why the simplicity of MUJI is not cheap is because of this simplicity. The intention is to simplify and purify, to delete unnecessary parts, to retain and deepen meaningful parts. To be precise, it is a kind of overall planning and adjustment, rather than simply doing subtraction [8].

## **4. The Design Aesthetic Connotation of MUJI**

### ***4.1 The Beauty of Plain Nature***

Inspiration for beauty from nature is one of the design principles of MUJI. The natural beauty of MUJI is in line with the Chinese spirit of "harmony between man and nature". The pursuit of nature, simplicity, and return can arouse people's deep desire for nature and primitiveness. This design concept is different from popular design. Natural, rustic things are timeless [9]. The natural beauty of MUJI is mainly reflected in two aspects. The first is to use natural and environmentally friendly materials, save resources as much as possible, and pursue simplicity and natural beauty; It does not cover up the original appearance of the material, the plain face is facing the sky, and the beauty is natural and generous [10].

### ***4.2. Incomplete and sad beauty***

Things that are too perfect can make people feel cold and impersonal, and some small flaws that do not affect the overall appearance will bring people and things closer and increase intimacy. Things that are too perfect can make people feel cold and impersonal, and some small flaws that do not affect the overall appearance will bring people and things closer and increase intimacy. Incompleteness and sadness is a kind of imperfect beauty, but also the beauty of truth and simplicity. In order to avoid misunderstandings in quality, modern products rarely pursue a pure sense of incompleteness, but the intimacy and heaviness brought by imperfect textures such as incompleteness, antiquity, roughness, and sadness will still be reflected in product design. Sometimes it can also be the source of some clever ideas.

#### **4.3. The Moderate Beauty of “No Thought is the Master”**

The concept of moderation that MUJI adheres to is a concept with philosophical significance, which is the simplicity of the metaphysical form and the spiritual enrichment sublimated to the metaphysical, with the simplicity of the material to set off the prosperity of the spirit. Muji’s “no brand” means “nothing”, “nothing” means “empty”, and “empty” means “infinity”, which is the concentrated expression of the Zen thought of “no thought is the sect”, it contains all the infinite space of existence, It can accommodate all the ideas of using MUJI. MUJI does not stand as a famous brand, it maximizes the simplification and restraint concept of traditional oriental philosophy, conforms to the concept of moderate aesthetics, and empties the design. “Empty” is the ultimate spiritual export of Muji design, and Muji design is the material form carrier of “empty”. Taking “emptiness” as the unchanging principle to apply all the ever-changing forms of design products is the aesthetic style of Muji [11].

## **5. Conclusions**

The essence of design is the product of culture, and MUJI reflects the characteristics of Japanese design through the reference of Japanese local culture and growth environment. MUJI’s products affect people's lives with simple colors, environmentally friendly materials and product practicability, showing just the right kind of gentle care, so that users can be deeply satisfied emotionally, and their needs can be complemented. Chinese design can learn from the design aesthetics of MUJI, tend products to local culture, actively listen to the emotional demands of the audience in the design, deeply explore the emotional needs and deficiencies of the audience, and present them perfectly in the product. Give back to the audience, enhance the cultural and value level connotation while satisfying the product function, restore the essence of people's life and promote the development of Chinese local cultural design.

## **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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