

Research on the Aesthetic Connotation of Beijing Opera Mask Culture and Innovation of Modern Design

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Received: 25 August 2022; Accepted: 15 September 2022; Published: 16 October 2022

Abstract:

As a distinct symbol in Chinese opera, Peking Opera masks developed gradually with the formation of Peking Opera in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, forming a traditional art with the most styles of masks and the most complete system of masks on the stage of Chinese opera so far. Based on contemporary society, this paper analyzes the aesthetic connotation of traditional Peking Opera mask culture from an aesthetic point of view, integrates and sorts out the innovative design of Peking Opera mask culture, and explores new ideas and possibilities for innovation in Peking Opera mask design.

Keywords:

Peking Opera Masks, Aesthetic Connotation, Cultural Innovation, Innovative Design

1. Overview of Peking Opera Masks

As an important branch of the mask culture, Peking Opera Masks have developed together with Peking Opera culture for more than 200 years. In the Qing Dynasty, the four Anhui troupes successively entered Beijing and cooperated with Han tune artists in Hubei. At the same time, they also accepted some repertoires, tunes and performance methods of Kunqu Opera and Qin Opera, absorbed local folk tunes, and achieved the crystallization of continuous exchanges and integration. At the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, after the formation of Peking Opera, the Peking Opera mask gradually formed. Peking Opera Masks are a branch of the traditional Chinese mask family, and they have both the generality of masks and their own characteristics. Peking Opera masks draw on the experiences of Hui, Han, Kun, Qin and other operas, and have been relatively complete and systematic from the very beginning.

Entering the contemporary society, people's dismantling, deformation and reorganization of the elements of Peking Opera masks have injected new vitality into Peking Opera masks, but at the same time, we should also see the unreasonable existence of cultural and creative products: The semantic confusion caused by the rote copying of face mask elements; too much emphasis on form leads to lack of

functionality; low-tech and small production of products makes it difficult for Peking Opera masks to occupy the right to speak in the global cultural context. Therefore, it is urgent to explore new ideas for the innovation of Peking Opera mask culture. Inheritance and innovation will definitely be the core requirements for the development of Peking Opera mask culture.

2. The Aesthetic Characteristics of Peking Opera Masks

The exaggerated and grotesque shape and symbolic spectrum of Peking Opera masks have been loved by the masses, and have also been criticized in different historical periods. Peking Opera masks have their own established format and unique aesthetic characteristics in terms of notation, pattern and color. Peking Opera masks are the most complete mask system on the opera stage so far. There are hundreds of types of masks, forming a splendid and colorful mask art, which has become a treasure of traditional Chinese culture.

2.1. The Origin and Classification of Peking Opera Masks

Peking Opera masks can be classified according to musical styles, patterns, and colors, and each category has its own established format (i.e., Figure 1).



Figure 1. Different Peking Opera masks.

According to the way of depicting Peking Opera masks, Peking Opera masks can be divided into four basic types: hooking, rubbing, wiping, and breaking. Hooking the face is to use a brush dipped in color to outline the eyebrows and facial lines, fill in the color of the face, and form a colorful pattern. Rubbing the face is to use the fingers to take the color and rub it all over the face, and then emphasize the eyebrows and facial texture outline, which is characterized by stacking large blocks of color. Wiping the face is to use a brush to dip in white powder to paint all or part of the face white, indicating that this type of person does not show his true face, it is also known as powder face. The broken face refers to facial makeup that is asymmetrical from left to right, usually in a derogatory sense.

According to the pattern arrangement of the masks, there are three kinds of Beijing Opera masks: whole face, three tile face, and fragmentary face. The whole face is the most primitive form of facial makeup, which uses the eyebrows to divide the face into two parts: the forehead and the face. On the basis of the whole face, the three tile faces use the nose and mouth to divide the face into left and right masks. Using black or other dark colors to exaggerately express the eye sockets and nose sockets, this spectrum has a wide range of uses, and can be used by both positive and negative

characters. The broken face is a variant of the three-tile face, with chaotic and intricate shapes on the border, which destroy the original outline. [8]

According to the coloring method, the red face symbolizes loyalty, honesty, and blood. For example, Guan Yu in “Three Kingdoms Opera” (with a red face) and Wu Han in “Zhanjingtang”. It also have ironic meaning in a few occasions, indicating a fake good person. The black face shows a serious personality, unsmiling, neutral, and represents fierce wisdom, such as Bao Zheng in “Bao Gong Opera”; it also symbolizes mighty, powerful, rude and forthright, such as Zhang Fei in “Three Kingdoms”, Li Kui in “Water Margin”, Jiao Zan in “Yang Paifeng”. The white face is treacherous and suspicious, with a derogatory connotation, representing guile, such as Cao Cao in “Three Kingdoms”, Yan Song and Qin Hui in “Fighting Yan Song”. The yellow face represents bravery and irritability, such as Dian Wei in “Zhanwancheng”, Pang Juan in “Maling Road”, and Lian Po in “Nanyangtian”. The blue face expresses an upright and unruly personality, such as Ma Wu in “Shangtiantai” and Dou Erdun in “Lianhuantao”. The purple face is solemn, steady and full of sense of justice, such as Xu Yanzhao in “Erjingong”, Zhuan Zhu in “The Sword of the Fish Intestine”, and a few times it means that the complexion is bad and ugly. The golden face symbolizes majesty and solemnity, and represents the role of immortals. The silver face represents treacherous and suspicious or majestic and solemn, and it represents the role of ghosts or immortals. The green face expresses bravery, recklessness and impulsiveness. Brown and pink represent upright older people. [1]

2.2. The Symbolism and Exaggeration of Peking Opera Masks

Peking Opera masks are symbolic. Through the shape, color and pattern of face masks, it tells audience the character and moral characteristics of the character. Such a division makes the characters on the stage clear, and the stylized patterns make audience no longer have to guess, reason, and judge. From the perspective of theatrical creation and performance, the symbolism of face masks is also conducive to recording and depicting. [2]

The exaggeration and deformation of Peking Opera mask facial features, making them visually impactful and appealing. Mask exaggeration also elongate the distance between the characters in the drama and the real audience, making the stage drama performance “distanced” and stretch the psychological distance between the drama and the audience. Sometimes coupled with “roaring” through rough voice, it forms a strong artistic stimulation, which can excites the audience.

2.3. The Meaning of “Circle” in Chinese Classical Aesthetics

A circle is not just a simple shape, it has philosophical implications in both the East and the West. In ancient Chinese aesthetics, circle is an important aesthetic category, which represents the circulation of life, which is repeated and cyclical, representing the general law of the endless birth and death of all things, and contains all things in the universe. Peking Opera masks not only show the overall shape of an ellipse, but also use circles and curves in their depiction, and almost no straight lines can be seen. The wholeness of the mask embodied in the circle reveals the beauty of neutrality in traditional Chinese aesthetics.

Traditional Chinese aesthetics believe that “calligraphy and painting have the same origin”, and the facial makeup of Peking Opera coincides with the characteristics of calligraphy. Peking Opera masks also absorb some of the characteristics of traditional

Chinese painting. Chinese painting focuses on expressing connotations, using the density of lines and the shades of pigments. Masks can be said to be a condensed version of traditional painting to a certain extent. Through outline and color expression, people can feel the symbolic connotation. Li Zehou mentioned in “The Journey of Beauty”: “This is a highly refined and sweet essence”. Peking Opera masks have achieved the perfect unity of form and spirit, form and connotation. [3]

3. Cultural Innovation of Peking Opera Masks

Peking Opera masks are various in types, rich in forms, and contain a large number of symbolic elements. Their magnificent forms, bold colors and meticulous outlines reveal the profound cultural accumulation of Chinese culture. Graphic design can realize the combination of art and design by splitting, deforming and recombining the traditional patterns of face masks.

3.1. The Application of Peking Opera Masks in Visual Communication

The advertisement design of “Pubai” by Wuliangye is a successful case of flexible use of mask elements (i.e., Figure 2). “Pubai” liquor is based on the high-quality liquor of Wuliangye Co., Ltd., with traditional facial makeup culture, historical figures and fashion elements as the main cultural line. [4] It is a mid-to-high-end cultural brand liquor integrating culture, ingenuity and art. The usual mask makeup images are mostly frontal and circular, while the white pattern is the outline of the side face of Peking Opera facial makeup. This deformation is eye-catching, and it is also quite innovative and modern. Combined with the impact of high-saturated facial makeup colors for filling, and the image of the background Peking Opera actors, the colors are mainly red, showing the strong cultural accumulation and folk spirit of our country.



Figure 2. The advertisement design of “Pubai”.

3.2. The Application of Peking Opera Masks in Product Design

The “Face mask” helmet (i.e., Figure 3) for the Rio Olympic track cycling race was designed by the Guangzhou Incolor studio team and the main creator is Zhang Dongliang. The helmet took two months to make. The helmet design draws on the images of two heroines in Peking Opera masks: Mu Guiying and Hua Mulan, and a hero image: Zhang Fei, Wearing by cyclists Gong Jinjie, Zhong Tianshi and Xu Chao. After the design draft is determined, the staff has to go through the process of drafting, depainting, coloring, and color fixing before the finished product can be released. The helmet uses Kask Bambino, a pneumatic helmet specializing in track and time races. The images of Beijing Opera masks are located on the top of the helmets. In this way, when the cyclists are leaning down and riding with their heads down, the mask will just show a state of looking up or slightly rising, as if the cyclist turned into a hero on

the mask and looked up at the audience. The design of the mask helmet appeared in the Olympic Games, which promoted the spread of Chinese culture in the world. [5]



Figure 3. The "Face mask" helmet.

It can be said that today's Peking Opera mask art has been combined with product design to a certain extent. In the innovative design of modern stationery, the classic five colors of Peking Opera masks: blue, white, red, yellow, and black, and unique shapes are used in the design of notebooks, bookmarks, pen holders, and signature pens, or are broken up and reconstructed, or It is cartoonized or retains the expression of heavy brush and ink, like the face mask itself, different colors and shapes bring people different visual impressions, which are both practical and beautiful, reflecting the functionality, elementality and inheritance of traditional dramatic visual art. Those three elements make traditional culture closer to modern life, realize the transmission of national spirit, conform to the trend of Chinese fad, and also meet people's growing spiritual and cultural needs. In the same way, we can also find Peking Opera masks be used in jewelry design, handicraft design, tableware design. Those products innovated based on culture are not only very individual, but also contains deep traditional cultural connotations. There is no denying that its innovation prospects are bound to be bright.

4. The Dilemma of Peking Opera Mask Culture Innovation and New Ideas for Development

4.1. Rigid Copying of Mask Elements Results in Confusion of Element Semantics

The cultural and creative products of Peking Opera and facial makeup are full of unthoughtful and abstract deformations. They are purely based on the doctrine of borrowing and imitation, regardless of the cultural connotation of the elements of Peking Opera mask makeup, and even put together two unrelated cultures. The main reason is that product designers do not understand traditional culture, or know very little about Peking Opera mask culture, and at the same time do not pay enough attention to the cultural value of products. This kind of rigid and poor imitation is not only detrimental to the work itself, but to the audience who appreciate it, the cultural ambiguity obscures its meaning as a cultural creative product, resulting in confusion of the semantics of elements, which could have been used to distinguish characters. [6]

In order to solve this problem, it is bound to put forward new requirements for designers. First of all, designers should create products on the basis of a full understanding of Peking Opera mask culture. When splitting, deforming, and reorganizing Peking Opera mask elements, they should fully respect traditional cultural connotations and base on the symbolism and exaggeration means of Peking Opera mask culture, combine with modern and avant-garde design concepts to meet the psychological demands of consumers.[7]

4.2. Low Costs and Small Productions Make Cultural and Creative Products of Face Mask Uncompetitive

At this stage, most of the cultural and creative products of Peking Opera masks are still at the level of low cost, small production, decorative, and low degree of integration with emerging technologies. Among the export products, the cultural and creative products of Peking Opera masks are mostly sold abroad in the form of ornaments, pendants, jewelry, entertainment masks, and tourist souvenirs. This is far from enough to strengthen the spread of Chinese culture in the world and strengthen the competitiveness of Chinese design in the international market.

The “Jinghua” shield machine designed and successfully developed in China uses the visual elements of Peking Opera masks to decorate the cutter head. It integrates cutting-edge technologies such as machinery, electricity, information, hydraulics, sensing, and optics. It is a perfect combination of technology and art. The future cultural and creative design should be interdisciplinary and multi-field design. It should combine new technologies and new concepts, and integrate technology with the long-standing cultural accumulation of the Chinese nation. This will be more conducive to national cultural export and increase technological confidence and national cultural confidence.

5. Conclusions

Peking Opera mask is not only a symbol of Chinese opera, but a crucial part of traditional Peking Opera stage art. In the current development of “cultural craze”, Peking Opera masks have also spawned many cultural and creative products. The cultural creation of Peking Opera masks at home and abroad not only involves stationery, decorations, ornaments and other less practical, low-tech products with low technological content, but also products that perfectly combine technology and art. In addition, in the field of social ideology As an artistic symbol that symbolizes Chinese culture, Peking Opera masks also have a subtle influence on people from different countries. The elements of Peking Opera masks are also becoming more and more diverse due to the cultural confidence of Chinese people, and these creations have also contributed to the spread of Chinese culture in the world.

There is no doubt that the development of Peking Opera mask culture has a strong momentum, but as the world's largest exporter and the world's second largest economy, our eyes should not only focus on the export of low-cost, small production and labor products, the future development should be the combination of culture and science and technology, culture and education, culture and economy. By combining our country's technological prowess with Peking Opera culture, our country's science and technology strength will be valued by the world.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

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