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APPLICATION OF TAOIST THOUGHT IN POSTER DESIGN

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Nowadays, the philosophical concepts of Taoist aesthetics and its distinctive aesthetic values are attracting increasing attention. Its unique worldview continues to enlighten modern society millennia later, offering profound inspiration to humanity. In artistic design, the characteristic humanistic concerns, naturalistic principles, and pursuit of artistic conception – along with its aspiration for inner tranquility within the spiritual realm – can inspire individuals to create thought-provoking and emotionally resonant works of art across various dimensions. These creations not only reflect profound philosophical depth but also demonstrate enduring relevance in contemporary artistic practice.

Key words: artistic design, graphic design, poster design, Taoist aesthetics

INTRODUCTION

Daoism, one of China's seminal philosophical traditions founded by Laozi, advocates the principles of "Dao models itself after nature" and "governance through non-action". Rooted in reverence for natural order and the pursuit of harmonious unity, Daoist philosophy prioritizes aesthetic values characterized by simplicity, etherealness, and the harmonious interplay of yin and yang, all directed toward achieving spiritual serenity. With its profound aesthetic significance, this paper explores the aesthetic inspirations derived from Daoist philosophy and their practical applications in creative domains

PURPOSE

This study conducts a comprehensive investigation into the application of Daoist philosophy in poster design, examining the intellectual impact of traditional aesthetics on contemporary societal thought. By systematically analyzing the defining characteristics and aesthetic sensibilities of Chinese traditional aesthetics, the research establishes a methodological framework for innovating upon traditional foundations. The ultimate objective is to create visually distinctive artistic works that are immediately recognizable as culturally Chinese, thereby achieving a synthesis of heritage-conscious innovation and cross-temporal cultural resonance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Daoism, a seminal philosophical school among the Hundred Schools of Thought during China's Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, establishes an intrinsic connection between Daoist aesthetics and its core philosophy. Within



Daoist philosophy, the concept of “Dao” occupies a paramount position, serving as the ontological foundation of both Daoist metaphysics and aesthetics. The Dao represents a state of ultimate spiritual freedom, while “beauty” and “Dao” share an essential unity in their ontological essence. Daoism upholds a primordial cosmology of human-nature harmony, and a dialectical worldview rooted in simplicity. Laozi’s axiom “Humans follow earth, earth follows heaven, heaven follows Dao, and Dao follows nature” profoundly elucidates the developmental laws of existence, while Zhuangzi’s philosophy advocates transcending worldly constraints through spiritual emancipation. These principles continue to exert profound influence on contemporary artists’ creative paradigms and aesthetic sensibilities.

Poster design, as a visual medium for information communication, finds renewed relevance through Daoist principles in an era dominated by informational overload and excessive visual complexity. The Daoist doctrine of “governance through non-action” inspires designs to return to essentialism, conveying core messages with distilled clarity. This approach enables audiences to swiftly grasp conceptual essence while experiencing aesthetic purity. Calligraphy and ink-wash painting, quintessential Chinese art forms, are increasingly reinterpreted by designers through contemporary lenses. Their formal beauty and artistic conception now manifest with distinctive temporal characteristics. The following analysis of two posters by design master Kan Tai-Keung will demonstrate the embodiment and interpretation of Daoist philosophy.

“Artistic conception” and “artistic blankness” constitute fundamental principles in Chinese landscape painting. When skillfully integrated with contextual elements, purposeful blank spaces provoke profound contemplation, foster empathetic resonance, and catalyze imaginative associations, thereby enabling viewers to apprehend the work’s metaphysical dimensions.

Figure 1 exemplifies Kan Tai-Keung’s experimental integration of ink-wash aesthetics with diverse design elements during the 1970s to 1980s, later evolving toward a realist style predominantly inspired by Chinese landscape traditions. Kan’s works synthesize the functional pragmatism of typography with artistic expression, incorporating structural principles of cursive calligraphy, cloud-mountain, and flowing-water motifs. This fusion of design discipline and artistic spontaneity manifests as monumental cursive script when viewed from afar, while revealing intricately layered landscapes upon closer inspection. Through meticulously orchestrated compositions and unconstrained brushwork, Kan materializes his creative vision within the conceptual framework of “painting characters from the heart”. His posters demonstrate a unified momentum of brush-and-ink dynamics, articulating layered narratives through nuanced gradations of monochromatic tones. This approach reinterprets Eastern aesthetics for contemporary audiences while preserving its philosophical essence.

Figure 2, an entry from the Taiwan Impression Poster Invitational Exhibition: Chinese Characters series, epitomizes Kan’s mastery in visualizing cosmic harmony. “The Mountain” poster translates topographical grandeur into minimalist abstraction, where every element pulses with the yin-yang rhythm of heaven-



human-earth unity. Kan's philosophy – “Ink and color possess no inherent meanings; their significance lies in the creator's intentionality and the messages they transmit” – informs his alchemical transformation of traditional mediums. As both a cultural custodian deeply rooted in Chinese heritage and a designer attuned to pan-Asian aesthetics, Kan orchestrates brushstrokes charged with emotive resonance. This dual consciousness enables him to construct unparalleled artistic realms where ink transcends materiality to embody cultural memory.

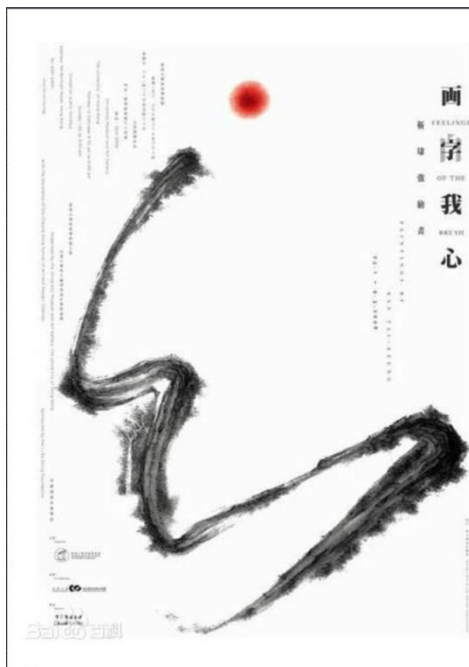


Fig.1. Kan Tai-Keung. Cover of Painting My Heart, University Museum and Art Gallery of the University of Hong Kong, 2008



Fig.2. Kan Tai-Keung, The Mountain. From Taiwan Impression Poster Invitational Exhibition “Chinese Characters”

CONCLUSIONS

In modern poster design, in addition to conveying necessary information, it is also necessary to meet people's aesthetic and spiritual needs, paying more attention to “humanization” and “emotionalization”, where emotional and spiritual connotations are the most important aspects. Creating a landscape like artistic conception in modern posters, making the artistic conception the soul of design,



and feeling the spirit in it, can generate interaction and communication. In the process of designing posters, unique concepts can be integrated into the theme concept, using contrasting and interdependent elements, combined with unique symbols, to convey the concept of the integration of traditional culture and modern creativity. The technique of leaving white space can be used to avoid overly complex images, but it is also important to highlight the intended theme in a concise design, allowing the poster to present a dynamic and natural beauty. Innovation is a part of Taoist thought, and design is also a form of innovation. Art is the use of innovative techniques to awaken the most authentic thoughts in people's subconscious, and understanding Taoist thought from different perspectives will provide new experiences.

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ЗАСТОСУВАННЯ ДАОСЬКОЇ ДУМКИ В ДИЗАЙНІ ПЛАКАТІВ

У наш час все більшу увагу привертають філософські концепції даоської естетики та її самобутні естетичні цінності. Цей унікальний світогляд продовжує просвітлювати сучасне суспільство через тисячоліття, пропонуючи глибоке натхнення людству. У художньому дизайні характерні гуманістичні погляди, натуралістичні принципи та прагнення до художньої концепції – разом із прагненням до внутрішнього спокою в духовному царстві – можуть надихнути людей створювати провокаційні та емоційно резонансні твори мистецтва в різних вимірах. Ці твори не лише відображають глибоку філософську глибину, але й демонструють незмінну актуальність у сучасній художній практиці.

Ключові слова: художнє оформлення, графічний дизайн, дизайн плакату, даоська естетика.