



# Brief Analysis of the Influence of Visual Culture Research on Design Art

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## Abstract

The design art discipline has gradually developed into a cross-network. The research on design art should not be limited to the research of art design itself, but should include sociology, anthropology, psychology, communication and other disciplines into the development of contemporary design art. This paper studies visual culture in the context of design art, and discusses the social phenomenon in contemporary design art through theory, method, perspective, etc., that is, analyzing the construction factors of landscape society and the forming conditions of consumer culture. And explore the important nodes formed in the design art research and visual culture research under the context of design art. Using the image symbols formed in the Neolithic Age to illustrate the study of ancient Chinese artifacts and culture, and to compare the method of visual culture research with traditional research methods, this paper expounds the function of visual culture research in the design art discipline from multiple perspectives.

## Keywords

Design art, Vision, Culture

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## 1. Research status of visual culture and design art

### 1.1 The context of visual culture research

Visual culture is a new cultural form, which takes visual communication as a way of life. It includes the individual's visual planning of their own life, as well as the visual decoding ability of objects, people and relationships in daily life. Visual communication is divided into two kinds of understanding in broad sense and narrow sense. In broad sense, it refers to a kind of social and cultural communication phenomenon formed by audio-visual media or media, rather than simply disseminating information through paper words and visual media. In a narrow sense, it refers to a social and cultural communication phenomenon that focuses on pure visual media communication. Writing for a sensational series of debates in the *Arts Letter*, W. J. T. Mitchell identified visual culture as "an interdisciplinary discipline". (Mitchell) Therefore, visual culture research is a dialogue place where sociology, anthropology, psychology, communication and other disciplines cross boundaries and blend with each other. The main way of visual culture communication is image intervention, because most of human information needs to be collected by vision, such as reading, observation and other ways to receive information. This is why the research context of visual culture needs to be placed in the social living environment. Especially under the influence of post-modernism, human society is gradually symbolized, which also elevates human civilization to another level. The study of visual culture is more inclined to the study of "culture", which not only marks the formation of a cultural form, but also means a transformation of human thinking paradigm. The communication of culture is usually socialized and sustainable.

## 1.2 The research context, development and trend of design art

The research content of design art is mainly the research of design art works or design art activities. Mr. Li Yanzu's research has shown that design is a science that studies the creation system, and in the division of art, plastic art is the overlapping part of visual art and design art (Yanzu Li, 2003). Therefore, the influence of visual culture on the study of design art exists in the guidance and development of design practice.

Design art is a science about design art. The discipline itself is open, and its professional disciplines, as basic disciplines, have a tendency to cross and integrate. There are also problems of intersection and synthesis within the design art system, which also affects the overall development of the design art discipline and inevitably forms a network. At the same time, the more mature the design art discipline, the more complete the discipline system, and the deeper the relationship with other disciplines. The popular trend of design art disciplines is gradually expanding to peripheral related disciplines, such as design psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, statistics, etc. These disciplines and design art disciplines have different levels and strengths. For the researchers of the design art discipline, the development of the discipline has a broader understanding and grasp of the coordinates of the design art in the rich human disciplines and the inspiration of the design art in the humanities.

## 2. Visual culture studies and design studies

Visual culture research mainly explores a series of phenomena related to vision from the perspective of anthropology, and the art of design is one of the phenomena that is the only way for the development of human civilization. Humans create through design or artistic activities, and transmit ideas through visual means. An artist or designer is connecting with others through visual means, thereby replacing language as another means of communication.

### 2.1 The impact of visual culture research on design research

The study of visual culture has two meanings for design works. First, it can interpret the readability of design works of art in the public; second, the actual value of design works of art in the social field, that is, the consumption value. Contemporary life is a symbolic process, and contemporary art and design works are also being spread as a symbol. It is also under the premise of this symbolic communication that the design has been influenced by the consumer society and has produced a hotbed of visual culture. That is, art is being consumed as a product representing spiritual beliefs. British scholar Featherstone believes that consumer culture, especially visual culture, has three functions for society. The first is the flattening function of culture, the second is the democratic function of culture, and the third is the unique economic function, and these three functions make the relationship between consumer society and visual culture multi-level and interactive, and there is no single model (Jian Meng, 2001). This is also the intersection of contemporary design research and visual culture research: the consumer society.

The research from two perspectives is influenced by the consumer society, and the influence on design research is embodied in the design works. Marx put forward the theory of "cultural consumption" very early, and the researcher of his theory, the British sociologist Rush, proposed that "the objects of contemporary social production are not limited to pure material products, and more and more products are produced that are no longer are material objects, but symbols". For example, artistic commodities with aesthetic content, precisely because people pay more and more attention to items that do not have actual survival needs. Cultural consumption is also gradually changing for the demanders. Art and design works are no longer regarded by artists or designers as simple self-expression, but as a symbol with high recognition, with cultural connotations in the works to define the cultural identity of consumers. Li Yanzu believes that design and designers create the cultural identity of consumers and become the intellectual authority and arbiter of related professions (Yanzu Li, 2007). The clothing design works are the most obvious. The core of the culture is injected into the shell of the design, and the consumers can use clothing to prove their value and aesthetics by means of consumer goods. All of this is the designer's design work and judging criteria. Similarly, for the cultural and creative works of the museum, the design is spreading among the public with the appearance of traditional culture as a symbol. This kind of cultural consumption also has advantages and disadvantages for the culture itself. British scholar Strinetti believes that people's demand for consumption has become more important than production. Mass media, along with consumerism, gave rise to postmodern features. It is on this basis that the relationship between consumer society and image-dominant culture is revealed. The inner connection between image and commodity makes the consumer society inevitably tend towards visual culture. This makes some of the design works gradually reduce practical colors for visual display, and focus more on the visual expression, so that the design becomes a representative of identity in order to cater to the tendency of society, which is what leads people to "label"

phenomenon exists. This kind of "symbolization" and "labeling" does not have effective communication for its own traditional cultural core.

## 2.2 The function of visual culture research in design art research

In the context of design art, looking at visual culture from the perspective of design researchers is what Heidegger said, "We are entering an era of world images." That is, we know the world more dependent on images, while most designs rely on the comparison and transformation of images, which makes the receiver of design art mainly rely on visual methods. Visual culture is the accumulation of long-term visual activities to form a culture with social attributes. Meng Jian believes that the visual in the artistic vision culture is a process of active discovery, not a process of passive reception. For design research, it is also a process of active observation and active screening, looking at design issues in a speculative way, and appropriately combining the perspective of visual culture research to study design issues. For the goal-oriented problem in design research, we can look at the whole process of design research in combination with the production objects of visual culture communication. Considering the acceptance of image symbols and visual habits of target groups in design, we can learn from visual culture research to find the answer. Visual culture research is more based on social visual activities, which is the flattening function of culture, which makes culture more grassroots, flattening the threshold of culture, and making design research more targeted and authentic.

## 3. The difference and correlation between visual culture and traditional art

Research on visual culture tends to analyze things from multiple perspectives and the influence and development of works of art in society. Traditional art research focuses on the discussion of the humanistic spirit of works of art.

The research method of traditional art is mainly through the understanding and comparison of documentary materials and image materials, the research on the creation of traditional Chinese arts and crafts, and the reflection of traditional Chinese culture. Taking the study of traditional Chinese artifacts as an example, ancient artifacts usually start from the perspective of archaeology and history, and design art research usually analyzes the spiritual civilization of traditional Chinese culture in artifacts from the perspective of arts and crafts. Most of the research on pottery by Chinese design art researchers began in the Neolithic period. At first, the decorative patterns of pottery were geometric patterns, animal patterns, etc., and later had more advanced firing technology and has appeared more abundant decorative patterns and firing technology. It was not until the Ru, Guan and Ge kilns in the Song Dynasty that the unique art of enamel opening appeared, which conformed to the aesthetic tendency of emphasizing quality and ignoring text in terms of craftsmanship. The opening art of Song porcelain vaguely reveals the aesthetic connotation of "Bai Bi". The texture formed by this opening is abstract, and the shape is simple, clean, and natural. In this way, the moderate beauty and ontology beauty of craft creations are achieved, the artificial spirit of creation is hidden, the mysterious natural power is revealed, and the spirit of heaven, time and earth is gathered in it. This utensil also confirms what Laozi said about "Jian Su BaoPu", handing over the previous painted glaze paintings to the hands of nature, fully showing the simple, elegant and subtle artistic charm of the Song Dynasty.

Expounding ancient artifacts from the perspective of visual culture research, Li Yanzu explained from the perspective of history that "almost all designs and their works in history, such as painted pottery, bronze, jade, porcelain, lacquer, are all common national cultures and its historical experience acts on the designer and the product of the creator. On the contrary, these designs and designed objects reveal the truth and identity of historical culture" (Jian-Meng, 2001). Similarly, objects are used to symbolize the authenticity of history and the continuation of culture. The study of Stone Age artifacts is even more remarkable.

Taking the study of the pig-shaped pottery pot in GaoyouLongqiuzhuang as an example, according to the article *Analysis of the Population Situation of Prehistoric Tombs in Longqiuzhuang, Gaoyou, Jiangsu*: "The proportion of the population of the excavated tombs is about 1.5 times that of women. In addition, many articles such as *Longqiuzhuang - Excavation Report of Neolithic Sites in Eastern Jianghuai* and *An Attempt to Statistical Analysis of Tombs at Longqiuzhuang Site* mentioned that "Longqiuzhuang society is considered to be a matriarchal clan." The lower presence of women in clan tribes means that the population of this tribe is less developed. At this time, the matrilineal clan prayed for the reproductive ability of pigs to make pig-shaped utensils. In addition, *The Correlation Between Prehistoric Domestic Pig Feeding and Agricultural Development from the Case of Longqiuzhuang Site* mentioned that the development of rice in this area is relatively rapid, and the overall trend is on the rise, while the situation of domestic pig breeding has dropped significantly. It is speculated that the development of the fishing and

hunting industry under natural conditions has been sufficient to ensure the survival of human beings, so that the breeding of domestic pigs cannot be developed. At this time, domestic pig feeding is not a necessity for survival, but humans have not given up feeding. At this time, it is clear that the image of pigs has a different symbolic meaning from other species in the new era. In the long river of human artistic civilization, the "symbolization" at this time has existed, and this reflects the belief and spiritual world of human beings (Na Wang, 2022).

The difference between visual culture research and traditional art research lies in the different perspectives on historical issues. For visual culture research, it is easier to take anthropological and sociological factors into account, that is, as long as there are people, there are these problems. Art itself is the behavior created by people, thus there is the birth of culture (Zhi Zhan, 2020).

#### **4. Conclusion**

Culture is a kind of social activity formed by human beings in a period of time, and the behaviors or works of art created in a visual way during this period are the foundation of visual culture for the study of design art. The influence of visual culture research on the design art discipline mainly exists in two aspects. The first is to broaden the boundaries of design art, so that the study of design art is no longer limited to the pursuit of formal beauty, and the function of its design art works gradually from simple material practicality to socialization practicality; On the other hand, the study of visual culture supplements the gap of traditional design art research and makes the study of design art more abundant.

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