Highlights in Art and Design
ISSN: 2957-8787 | Vol. 4, No. 1, 2023

The Cultural Context and Artistic Characteristics of Dunhuang Lotus Element on Packaging Design

Yanmei Ruan

School of Language and Culture, Graduate University of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar, 11000, Mongolia

Abstract: The lotus element in Dunhuang culture is an important part of Chinese culture and art treasury, through the historical traceability of the Dunhuang lotus element, we extract the characteristics of its form, colour and cultural context, and compare and analyze it with modern packaging design, from which we can get the inspiration for packaging design. Packaging design Under the current background of China's strong advocacy of cultural confidence and the revival of traditional culture, there are many places to learn from China's traditional culture and modern packaging design. In this paper, we start from Dunhuang lotus elements, explore its artistic characteristics and cultural context, and combine with modern packaging design to explore its development path.

Keywords: Dunhuang; Lotus; Cultural Context; Artistic Characteristics; Packaging Design.

1. Introduction

Dunhuang Grottoes is famous for its "sculptures, murals and coloured figures", and it is the only grotto in the world cultural heritage that focuses on religious content. With the introduction of Buddhism, Dunhuang formed its own unique local religion - Buddhism. Since the Northern Wei Dynasty, Dunhuang grottoes murals, sculpture will show a flourishing trend. Mural paintings were dominated by Buddhist stories, from a single form in the early period to a variety of features in the later period. In this process Dunhuang art has also been unprecedented development and prosperity. Dunhuang art has a large number of works that express the theme of "flowers". These flowers are not only beautiful and colourful; they also contain rich and profound cultural connotations and meanings, especially the Dunhuang lotus element plays an important role.

2. The History of Dunhuang Lotus Elements

Dunhuang has a long history and has gone through many dynasties, with strong cultural characteristics. As one of the most representative elements of Dunhuang culture, the lotus flower can be seen everywhere in the murals of the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang. As the first of the four symbols of Buddhism, the lotus flower symbolises holiness, wisdom and love. Lotus culture and Buddhist culture are closely linked. With the development of history, Buddhist culture is gradually integrated into Dunhuang culture, which provides rich themes and connotations for Dunhuang art, and therefore a large number of murals and sculptures related to Buddhism have appeared in Dunhuang caves. Among the many Buddhist elements, the lotus element is one of the most representative elements.

3. The Form and Colour of the Dunhuang Lotus Element

The beauty of the form and colour of the Dunhuang lotus element is one of its important features and an important part of Dunhuang culture, which has a unique artistic value and also a high historical value. Dunhuang lotus elements refer to the various forms and colours shown in Dunhuang murals, which are mainly embodied in four aspects: firstly, the beauty of the form of the lotus elements; secondly, the beauty of the colours of the lotus elements; thirdly, the beauty of the culture of the lotus elements; and fourthly, the beauty of the art formed by matching the lotus elements with other decorative motifs. In terms of colour, white and red are used as the main colours, giving people a warm, cheerful and bright feeling. From the point of view of the "Flying" pattern, the combination of "Flying" and the lotus element in the design expresses the beauty of freedom, exuberance and enthusiasm. The origin of "Flying Sky" is from the distant India, and it is said that "God of Fragrant Sound" and "God of Heavenly Song" are the prototypes of the image of Flying Sky, "God of Fragrant Sound" and "God of Heavenly Song". The "God of Fragrant Sound" and the "God of Heavenly Song" are said to be the prototypes of the image of the flying sky, and the "God of Fragrant Sound" and the "God of Heavenly Song" are good at musical instruments and dances. The Dharma Flower Sutra - Metaphors, "said the heavenly kabuki, millions of gods in the void, a time all rise, rain all the heavenly flowers," it can be seen that the flying sky refers to the kabuki gathered into a group of images for the Buddha to spread the flowers of the worship of the "celestial beings," the collective name. [1] Dunhuang murals use a variety of colours for decoration and collocation, forming a unique Dunhuang art style.

4. Dunhuang Lotus Elements of Cultural Meaning

"Lotus" is a sacred thing in Buddhism, Buddhism believes that the lotus and the Buddha are one and the same, and there are also a lot of records about the lotus in the Buddhist classics. According to Buddhism, the lotus flower is the symbol of the Buddha's kingdom. Therefore, Buddhism regards the lotus flower as a sacred thing and combines it with Buddha. Wen Tingjun, a famous poet of the Tang Dynasty, once wrote a poem entitled "Lotus Flower": "The green pond shakes and ripples to receive the starry jin, and the rolling orchid coppice enters the white apples. It should be the socks on the waves of the God of Luo, and there is fragrant dust on the lotus

stamen to this day." Huang Tingjian, a poet of the Song Dynasty, also wrote the poem "Donglin Temple - White Lotus Planted on the Mountain, Pure and Dustless": "White Lotus Planted on the Mountain, Pure and Dustless, the people of the community of the ancient style. Who is bound by the laws of Zen, and who sees the truth of heaven when he crosses the stream and sells wine." Appreciation of the poem: The white lotus planted in Donglin Mountain is elegant and pure, reminding people of those lofty and elegant people in the White Lotus Society. If one can see through the external appearance, one must be able to know whose heart is not bound. Tao Yuanming, who often crossed Tiger Creek to drink wine, was so honest and natural in his heart. All these verses express the praise and love for the lotus flower, and also reflect the influence of Buddhist culture on lotus culture. Buddhism believes that the lotus is a sacred plant with clean, holy, noble qualities and noble character, symbolising the beautiful pursuit of life, love and friendship.

4.1. The Influence of Buddhist Culture

Dunhuang murals in order to image the performance of the living, in the lotus bud or just open the lotus flower painted some or sitting or standing children, people called the living children, in the lotus flower has been opened to paint some or sitting or standing Bodhisattva, people call this the living Bodhisattva. Transformation is a term commonly used in Buddhism. Buddhism proclaims that there are four births: "The first is foetal birth, the second is oviparous birth, the third is wet birth, and the fourth is rebirth." The term "rebirth" refers to the emergence of a person who has nothing to rely on and who appears through karma. Buddhism refers to the birth is born from the lotus. "Chemical" and "flower" is synonymous, "chemical birth" is the meaning of "peanut". In the Buddhist Pure Land Sutras, it is proclaimed that if a person hears the sutras and dharma, recites Amitabha with his mouth, and thinks of the Western Pure Land with his heart, at the end of his life, Amitabha and the eight Bodhisattvas will guide him to the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss in the Western Paradise. After being nurtured in the Seven Treasures Pond and Eight Virtues Water of the Western Pure Land, he will be reborn from the lotus flower, but the time of his rebirth is determined by the karma of his previous life, and he is divided into "three generations and nine grades", i.e., "three levels and nine grades". The frescoes express people's love and pursuit of life. Therefore, the image of the lotus flower in Dunhuang murals has a pure, beautiful, noble and sacred symbolism.

4.2. Embodiment of the Cultural Connotation of the Lotus Flower

Dunhuang murals in the lotus pattern is very rich, and a variety of forms of expression. A typical representative is the Mogao Caves "Nirvana", this mural depicts the Buddha Shakyamuni from birth to the process of nirvana. The content is rich and the composition is full. The content of this mural is closely related to the Buddhist idea of "Nirvana", which expresses the Buddhist desire to pursue eternal happiness and a better world. The description of the lotus pattern in Dunhuang frescoes has a strong symbolic meaning and cultural connotation, which can reflect the traditional Chinese culture of "writing God in shape" and "the intention of the pen first" and other aesthetic ideas.

5. Comparative Analysis of Modern Packaging Design and Dunhuang Lotus Elements

5.1. The Main Features of Modern Packaging Design

Modern packaging design is mainly based on the product's name, trademark, product name, specifications, use, producer and other information, using graphics or text in the form of a combination. From the point of view of the characteristics of modern packaging design, both in terms of shape and colour reflect the characteristics of simplicity and generosity. The most important thing in packaging design is its functionality, so modern packaging design emphasizes simplicity and generosity in styling, and focuses on black and white as the main colour in colour, which better reflects the functionality of the product and meets the aesthetic needs of consumers.

5.2. Comparative Analysis of Modern Packaging Design and Dunhuang Lotus Elements

Dunhuang lotus element and modern packaging design in the form of a great difference. Dunhuang lotus element form is more exaggerated, the lotus and other plants, animals and other natural forms are cleverly fused, thus forming a unique art form. Visually, most modern packaging designs use geometric shapes or a combination of text and graphics, which is a relatively common approach. In Dunhuang culture, the lotus element has a rich variety of forms, all of which can reflect its unique artistic beauty.



Fig 1. Goodshop mooncake packaging design



Fig 2. Nine-Coloured Deer

The Dunhuang lotus element is rich in colour, usually in black and white, but also in red and blue and other colour schemes. In modern packaging design, white is often used as the main colour for the colour scheme, which is purer and simpler. Dunhuang culture has a mysterious and sacred feeling, which has a great relationship with Buddhist culture. Dunhuang culture involves many religious tales and stories, which have a strong attraction to people. Therefore, in modern packaging design, we can draw on this sense of mystery and sacredness in packaging design. For example, in the mid-autumn mooncake packaging (Figure 1) jointly launched by Liangpinpu and Dunhuang Museum, the designer took the

theme of Chang'e's moonrise during the mid-autumn festival, and extracted representative motifs from Dunhuang culture: the phoenix, the three-eared rabbit, the winged horse, the nine-coloured deer, and the flying sky, etc., and reconstructed them in a combination. The packaging design also adopts the story of the nine-coloured deer from Dunhuang frescoes (Figure 2), incorporating the image of the nine-coloured deer from the frescoes into modern aesthetics, but still retaining the physical characteristics of the head and chest. Compositionally, the four elements, centred on the moon, are layered to represent completeness.

6. Dunhuang Lotus Society's Inspiration for Modern Packaging Design

Nowadays, China advocates the revival of traditional culture, and many designers have begun to pay attention to traditional Chinese culture. Under the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, the cultural exchanges between China and the West have become closer, and more Chinese brands have started to go global, and the traditional culture represented by Dunhuang culture has been welcomed globally. The Dunhuang lotus element, as a very representative Chinese element, is well known to people all over the world. Lotus pattern is one of the traditional Chinese auspicious motifs. With the rise of Buddhism, it is centred on the lotus flower, with the blossoming petals arranged in a radial pattern, which is a fusion of the advantages and characteristics of many kinds of floral motifs at that time, and is formed after artistic treatment. The Tang Dynasty paid attention not only to the external beauty of the decorations, but also to the beautiful connotations contained within the decorations. The packaging design of "Dunhuang Lotus" series is based on the theme of "Flying Sky", integrating the image of "Flying Sky" into the packaging design, applying its shape and colour with modern methods, and making the product more attractive by combining it with traditional Chinese art forms. By combining with traditional Chinese art forms, the product packaging has artistic beauty and historical value, and is a Chinese design with Chinese characteristics, national spirit and global significance. Packaging form determines the style of packaging design, and packaging form can bring the initial visual and tactile feelings of the audience when they contact the goods, so the structural characteristics of modern packaging design become an important factor in determining the overall quality of packaging.

6.1. "Dunhuang Lotus" as Inspiration, to Create "Dunhuang Lotus" Series of Packaging

The "Dunhuang Lotus" series of packaging design is based on the theme of "Flying Sky" and recreated on its basis. The inspiration for the "Dunhuang Lotus" series of packaging design comes from Dunhuang murals, incorporating the form, colour and structure of the "Dunhuang Lotus" into the packaging design, and perfectly integrating its artistic and cultural values. Through the analysis of the "Dunhuang Lotus" shape structure and colour, with modern design techniques, its form and colour to be applied, so that the formation of both cultural value and aesthetic value of the product packaging. For example, in the "Dunhuang Lotus" series of packaging design, the front of the package is expressed in traditional painting style, and its lines, shapes and colours can be regarded as the "Dunhuang Lotus" elements in the packaging, making the product visually more attractive.

6.2. Combine Traditional Art Forms with Modern Design Techniques to Create Packaging with Chinese Characteristics

Traditional Chinese art forms are an important part of China's traditional culture, is a valuable treasure of the Chinese nation, has strong national characteristics and cultural value. The use of modern design techniques will be "flying" image applied to the packaging, so that the packaging has both the flavour of traditional Chinese art forms and the aesthetics of modern design. At the same time, we can also draw on the Dunhuang lotus elements, adding Chinese elements to modern packaging. In the process of combining tradition and modernity, not only can ensure the safety, functionality and practicality of product packaging, but also integrate traditional Chinese culture into modern packaging design, so that it has deep cultural connotations and strong artistic infectivity. Taking cultural elements as the entry point, we develop and design tourism cultural and creative products based on Dunhuang culture. Through the study of Dunhuang culture, we can find out the most regional cultural elements, study and analyse these elements, and build a material library of Dunhuang cultural elements, so as to increase the added value of the products, and realize the serialisation and branding of the products.

7. Conclusion

From the above analysis, we can see that the lotus element in Dunhuang culture is an important part of Chinese culture and art treasury, in the context of China's traditional cultural revival, the lotus element in Dunhuang culture is integrated into the modern packaging design, which can not only inject new vitality into the modern packaging design, but also allow us to feel the profundity of Chinese traditional culture. At the same time, as a designer, we should also dig out the artistic essence contained therein, transform it into our own design language, and apply it to the design. Under the background of economic globalisation, it is both an opportunity and a challenge for packaging design. On the one hand, packaging design can be localised through the introduction of advanced technology and concepts from abroad; on the other hand, packaging design should have a certain international vision and international competitiveness. We should take the essence and remove the dross in packaging design, not blindly imitating, copying and reproducing, but have our own characteristics and advantages, and truly achieve "China creates".

References

[1] Zeng Siyi. Research on the Artistic Beauty of Dunhuang Feitian Image and its Performance in Packaging Design[J]. Design, 2021,34(07):46-49.

[2] Wang Chen. Research on Packaging Innovation of Old Firms under the Perspective of National Tide Culture[D]. Guangdong University of Technology,2020.

[3] Ma Mengna. Research on the graphic design of Tang Dynasty Baoxiang flower pattern[D]. Xi'an University of Technology, 2020.

[4] Wang Yuanyue, Application of Guochao cultural symbols in packaging design[J]. Light Industry Science and Technology, 2020, 36(02):95-96+146.

[5] Guo Wenli. Research on tourism cultural and creative product design based on Dunhuang culture[D]. Xi'an engineering university,2018.