

Feasibility Study of Introducing Images of Divine Beasts from the Classic of Mountains and Seas into the Teaching of University Illustration Courses

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Abstract: Shan Hai Jing (The Classic of Mountains and Seas) is one of the most widely circulated books in ancient China, which is a collection of mythological novels with the theme of "Zhi Wei", the author of which is no longer known. The content mainly records the mountains and rivers, birds and animals, grass, trees, insects and fish, as well as local customs in the ancient times. It is not only the first work of our ancient novels, but also an important source of our ancestors' imagination. Therefore, it is of great significance to introduce the images of sacred beasts in Shanhaijing into the teaching of university illustration courses, so that students can understand the images of sacred beasts in Shanhaijing in more aspects, and improve their aesthetic ability while learning traditional culture.

Keywords: Classic of Mountains and Seas; Illustration Course; Images of Sacred Animals.

1. Research Background

In today's social development, digital media technology has become the main driving force of social development, and the public's aesthetic demand for the art of illustration has become higher and higher, but at present, the education of illustration art in China cannot meet the needs of society. Traditional culture is very important for students to educate and inherit, and excellent traditional culture is also an important part of modern art design.

The Classic of Mountains and Seas has always been a valuable subject in ancient Chinese literature, and it has had a profound influence on later generations. And in real life, there are many scholars and artists who are creating works using the images of sacred animals in Shanhaijing. This kind of illustration work attracts the public's attention with its unique style, while traditional culture injects fresh blood into contemporary illustration art. Therefore, combining traditional culture with modern art has become a new way to develop illustration art in the context of the new era, which can be said to be a brand-new angle for the development of illustration art. However, for the images of divine beasts described in the Classic of Mountains and Seas, we only know their names but not their shapes, or we only know their shapes but not their meanings, or we only know the images of the divine beasts but not their specific characteristics, we need to explore this in depth so that we can better carry out the teaching and practice. This is both the inheritance of traditional culture and the development of illustration art.

2. Purpose and Significance of the Study

Promote traditional culture and enrich the art classroom. Introducing the image of the sacred beasts of the Classic of Mountains and Seas in university illustration courses not only allows students to understand traditional Chinese culture and feel the charm of Chinese art, but also broadens their horizons and lays a good foundation for their future professional studies. In the teaching process, students can not only use

what they have learnt to express the content of their works, but also apply the images of the sacred beasts depicted in the Classic of Mountains and Seas to their own paintings. By drawing their favourite and meaningful illustration works, they can not only exercise their ability in drawing sketches and figures; but also stimulate their creative thinking and imagination, and enhance students' knowledge of traditional Chinese cultural art works and creative techniques.

Tapping local elements to strengthen design awareness. The mythical characters, animals and plants depicted in the Classic of Mountains and Seas have strong local characteristics and distinctive local customs. These are all modern design needs to be conveyed to the audience to feel and can be resonated. At the same time, in the process of inheriting and promoting the local traditional culture, modern design concepts and technical means are added to supplement and expand. This is also an important way and method to help students improve their design consciousness and form basic skills.

Enhance aesthetic ability and increase aesthetic interest. The Classic of Mountains and Seas is famous for its heavenly and whimsical ideas. Students can make themselves interested in traditional Chinese culture by observing the images of sacred animals depicted in the Classic of Mountains and Seas. The Classic of Mountains and Seas is one of the oldest books in China, covering mountains, rivers, geography, history, ethnicity, medicine, etc. It is the source of our ancestors' imagination. These myths are all-encompassing and complex, and there are many myths about beasts, gods and monsters, as well as some historical figures. Therefore, students can not only enrich their own knowledge base but also enhance their interest in and knowledge of traditional culture and historical figures through understanding the images of gods and animals, and create their own personal illustrations with traditional cultural characteristics through observation and accumulation of materials.

3. Definition and Classification of the Image of Divine Beasts in the Classic of Mountains and Seas

The Classic of Mountains and Seas records a variety of divine beasts and leaves many legends and stories about them. Most of the divine beasts do not exist in the real world, and all kinds of animals or some special objects appearing in the Shanhaijing carry certain mysterious colours. For the record of Jiran, see "Classic of Mountains and Seas: "The canine fiefdom is called the Canine Rong country, and its shape is like that of a dog. There is a woman, square kneeling into the cup food. There is a text horse, onyx body Zhu iguana, eyes like gold, the name is Ji amount, multiplied by the life of a thousand years." [1] such as the "Mountains and Seas Classic - West Mountain scripture" in "there is a bird, its shape like Zhai and five picks of the text, the name is luan bird, see the world peace" [2] of the luan bird, hosted by the ancestors of the desire for a stable life. The creation of some gods and monsters was given a sinister meaning, such as "see the blackmail and fire in its euphony" [2] of the Bi Fang. The emergence of such fantastic and treacherous images of gods and monsters indicates the ancestral people's worship and reverence for nature. Therefore, we can define and classify the images of gods and beasts according to these legends and stories, as well as novels and paintings.

According to the records of Shanhaijing, according to the social customs and folk beliefs at that time, the sacred animals are divided into the common sacred animals in mythological stories, such as Tengu eats the sun, Kuafu chases the sun, and Jingwei reclaims the sea. Its "Kuafu chasing the sun" recorded, especially the male python. [3] There are also classifications based on the appearance, looks and habits of divine animals, such as: flying sheep, flying fish and flying dragons; classified according to the shape of the divine animals, such as: Lin, Feng, Turtle and Snake. There are also classifications according to whether the beasts have eyes and teeth, such as: the beast of the water is a one-eyed monster with three teeth like a frog; Taotie is a Taotie monster with three or four eyes, etc. But in reality, none of these beasts are real. But in fact, these beasts have never really existed, but are only imagined as the mysterious colours in the Classic of Mountains and Seas.

3.1. According to the Appearance and Life Habits of the Divine Beasts

According to the appearance and habits of the divine beasts, they can be divided into three categories: the flying goat, the flying fish and the flying dragon. The flying goat is a kind of small-sized animal, whose characteristic is that it can stand and walk like ordinary animals. In the Classic of Mountains and Seas, there is a record that there is a kind of goddess called "Queen Mother of the West", who rides a car with nine sheep, which are not ordinary sheep, but foreign beasts with horns. These nine sheep were not ordinary sheep, but beasts with horns. The flying sheep could fly, walk and talk. In the Classic of Mountains and Seas, the name of this goddess is Xiwangmu (Queen Mother of the West). Flying sheep rarely appear in real life, according to the "Classic of Mountains and Seas": "There is the country of the Queen Mother of the West towards the south," indicating that this country is in the east to the south.

Flying Fish: "There are many flying fish among them, whose shape is like a dolphin but red in text." [4] The flying

fish is a fish-like creature that lives in the ocean. Its body is slender and elongated like a human with a head and tail; it not only speaks but also has human-like emotions and thought patterns. And it can also walk and run like a human; flying fish can not only fly but also swim.

Flying dragon is a kind of flying creature with a snake-like body and animal-like brain but without a snake's tail. Legend has it that the Flying Dragon can walk and fly like a man and can breathe fire and has spirituality; it also has a snake-like body, a bird-like brain and a tail that can walk and swim.

3.2. Whether or Not the Mythical Beasts have Eyes and Teeth

Most of the sacred beasts recorded in the Classic of Mountains and Seas are animals with one eye and teeth, for example, the Beast of Pai Shui is a one-eyed monster with three eyes; Taotie is a fierce beast with four eyes, three heads and four arms. In addition, there are other animals that have only one image in the Shanhaijing, but it is not certain whether it has ever really existed, such as the Bird in the Cloud and the Dragon. These beasts have no specific image in the Shanhaijing, just an abstract concept, just as the social production, life, myths and legends and other elements of the time and exist. Therefore, these beasts can't be found in reality, but they can still reflect some worship psychology and national culture psychology of people for ancient beasts at that time.

Whether the beasts in the Classic of Mountains and Seas have eyes and teeth can be divided into: one-eyed (the first category); two-eyed (the second category); and three-eyed (the third category), etc. But in fact, these beasts never really existed. But in fact, these are not really existed, just as the social production, life, national culture and other elements existed at that time.

4. Status and Analysis of Illustration Course Teaching

4.1. Illustration Art Education

Illustration art education mainly refers to a new type of course that aims to cultivate students' artistic design thinking and vocational skills, and uses a variety of painting techniques to create works. The basic feature of this course is to cultivate students' imagination through the combination of painting and graphic design, and to complete the creation of different styles of works through a variety of painting techniques and mastery of colour. In recent years, illustration art has been developing rapidly in China, and all kinds of art and design colleges and art institutions have begun to offer this course, and illustration art education has gradually become an indispensable part of art professional education. Since 2009, the illustration design profession has been formally established in China, and there have been many researches on the development status and development trend of this profession. Since 2011, the number of illustration courses in China's higher vocational colleges and universities has been increasing, and many higher vocational colleges and universities have opened related majors. This shows that illustration art education is more and more valued and loved by people, and illustration is the most perfect form of combining modern information technology and visual communication.

The life consciousness of the images of gods and monsters in Shanhaijing is also embodied in the consciousness of national origin contained in the images of gods and monsters.

Nation is a group concept, Stalin said, "A nation is a stable community of people formed in history with a common language, a common territory, a common economic life, and common psychological qualities expressed in a common culture." [5] Therefore, The Classic of Mountains and Seas is one of the very good materials as the creation of college illustration courses.

4.2. The Status Quo of University Illustration Course Teaching

At present, there are some problems in China's illustration art education, such as insufficient teachers, students in the study of illustration art lack of systematic training, and these problems directly affect the development of illustration art teaching. At present, the teaching of illustration class in our country is mostly based on the traditional copying style, which lacks innovation and diversification. In the current art and design professions are generally used in the traditional copying method for creation, which will lead to the students for the western modern design elements and modern design concepts cannot be correctly absorbed and draw on, making the works show the phenomenon of uniformity.

In view of the above problems, the author believes that traditional culture should be combined with the art of illustration for teaching. China is a big country with a long history and culture, and the colourful and profound Chinese culture created by the Chinese people has made great contributions to the world civilization. In contemporary art design, there are a lot of illustration works with Chinese elements in front of the public. However, as time goes by, people pay more and more attention to traditional culture, and college students also pay more and more attention to traditional culture, so we can try to introduce traditional culture into university illustration teaching.

In this paper, we will take the image of beasts in Shanhaijing as an example to study and analyse the feasibility of applying traditional illustration in the teaching of modern illustration class and the teaching method, hoping to provide reference for the teaching of university illustration courses in the future.

4.3. Feasibility Analysis of Illustration Course Teaching based on the Image of Divine Beasts in the Classic of Mountains and Seas

Shanhaijing (Classic of Mountains and Seas) is a classic work that records ancient myths and legends, which contains many images of divine beasts in the ancient period. Many images of gods and beasts in Shanhaijing are presented through Shanhaijing, whose basic characteristics are: overall rectangular shape, having various creatures such as birds, beasts, fish, and various strange natural phenomena, and are mostly related to the ancient myths and legends in China. By analysing the images of the gods and beasts recorded in the Classic of Mountains and Seas, it is found that they have the following characteristics: firstly, there are many kinds of gods and beasts with different postures; secondly, different gods and beasts have different attributes; and thirdly, each of the gods and beasts has its own unique colours. These characteristics undoubtedly provide a rich source of material and inspiration for illustration. In addition, illustration is a form of art that can express the emotions and ideas that creators want to express through colour and shape. Colour is

one of the important factors in the creation of illustration, which can help creators to convey their thoughts and feelings more accurately; while shape reflects the creators' motivation and imagination. Therefore, in the process of illustration creation, the reasonable use of colour and shape can better express the theme of the picture.

4.4. Improve Teachers' Own Design Theory Level

Teachers of art majors in colleges and universities are the organisers and implementers of course teaching, and their teaching level has a significant impact on the teaching effect of the classroom. However, some teachers only passively accept knowledge in the classroom, their own design theory level is not high, and they cannot effectively guide the students to carry out independent learning and co-operative learning, which leads to a disconnect between the theoretical knowledge learnt by the students and the practice. The theoretical knowledge used by teachers in designing comes from their own previous knowledge, and they do not have a deep understanding of the related fields. Under the environment of rapid development, information explosion and fierce competition in modern society, teachers need to constantly update their professional theoretical knowledge to meet the requirements of the times. Therefore, teachers need to strengthen their professional training and constantly improve their theoretical level and artistic cultivation. At the same time, teachers of art majors should also strengthen the study and research on the theoretical knowledge related to the images of sacred animals in the Classic of Mountains and Seas, and seriously study how to better combine traditional culture with modern technology in illustration teaching in the new period.

4.5. Enhance Students' Practical Ability in Painting

According to the relevant survey data, most of the art education students in China's colleges and universities are not solid enough in basic knowledge of illustration, lack of application skills and insufficient professional theoretical knowledge, which seriously affects the development of students' creative ability and professional knowledge of illustration. The lack of solid application of theoretical knowledge and practical ability in the actual illustration creation process also makes the design concepts cannot be effectively used in the actual design, which makes the works designed by the students are not really applied to social life. Therefore, introducing the image of beasts in Shanhaijing into the teaching process of college illustration can not only improve the comprehensive quality of students, but also make them feel the charm of traditional Chinese culture and cultivate a new generation of young talents with innovative consciousness and national spirit.

5. Research Methods and Experimental Design

This study adopts research methods such as literature method, interview method and observation method, and the main research contents include: (1) the historical origin of the images of sacred beasts in the Classic of Mountains and Seas; (2) the aesthetic characteristics of the images of sacred beasts in the Classic of Mountains and Seas; (3) the status quo and problems of college students' teaching of illustration courses;

and (4) feasibility analysis of introducing images of sacred beasts in the Classic of Mountains and Seas into the teaching of college illustration courses. At the same time, on the basis of theoretical analysis of the image of divine beasts in "Shanhaijing", students were researched through literature review method and observation method, and students were divided into experimental group and control group for experimental design. There are two series of experiments: the first series is for some art majors to create the theme of "ink illustration"; the second series is for illustrators and visual communication design students to create the theme of "original illustration". The second series is for illustrators and visual communication design students to create "original illustration" as the theme.

5.1. "Ink Illustration" Series

This series, the students of the experimental group took the images of sacred animals in the Classic of Mountains and Seas as the main objects of their creation, and used ink and watercolour to create their works. The style of the works is mainly simple and ethereal. From the viewpoint of the picture, they borrowed the brush and ink techniques of Chinese painting, and used the language of traditional Chinese painting to express the images of the divine beasts in the Classic of Mountains and Seas. At the same time, the modelling characteristics of Western painting were combined to reshape and portray the traditional image.

Through the expression of ink illustration, the experimental group of students demonstrated the unique aesthetic value and cultural charm of traditional Chinese culture. At the same time, this series of works can also be used as a supporting textbook for the illustration teaching course. The students in the control group mainly used the images of sacred animals recorded in the Classic of Mountains and Seas as their main creative objects. In this series of works, students are allowed to consider any form and style of innovation, and make bold and innovative creations based on maintaining the original image of the beasts and gods, so as to show the unique charm of traditional Chinese culture.

5.2. "Original Illustration" Series

Through the investigation and research on the current situation and problems of teaching illustration courses in colleges and universities, it is found that the aesthetic characteristics of the images of the sacred beasts of "Classic of Mountains and Seas" have distinctive regional characteristics, cultural characteristics and artistic style, especially its unique artistic charm that can be combined with the modern art design, and at the same time, the images of the

sacred beasts of "Classic of Mountains and Seas" have a unique sense of beauty and deep historical and cultural connotations, which is a good example for us to carry out "Original Illustration" series in the contemporary world. This provides sufficient and unique materials for teaching the course of "original illustration" in contemporary times. Therefore, the introduction of the images of the beasts of the Classic of Mountains and Seas in the teaching of illustration courses for college students can form an illustration course system that conforms to the contemporary aesthetic orientation and carries forward the excellent traditional culture. At the same time, we also found that at present, the teaching of illustration courses in domestic colleges and universities lacks the images of the sacred beasts of the Classic of Mountains and Seas in the classroom to show and apply the practice, which makes the students unfamiliar with it, and the introduction of the images of the sacred beasts of the Classic of Mountains and Seas into the teaching of illustration courses in universities can be a very good solution to this problem. Therefore, in our study, we introduced the images of sacred animals from the Classic of Mountains and Seas as the teaching theme of the "original illustration" series of courses for experimentation.

6. Conclusion

The increasingly developed science and technology, people's aesthetics and requirements for illustration are getting higher and higher. As a graphic form of art, illustration is, in a sense, a combination of literature, painting, music and other forms of art with the language of painting. Therefore, in the creation of illustration, in addition to ensuring the innovation of content and aesthetics, it is more important to explore the content from the perspective of culture.

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