

# Take Layout Design as an Example: Analysis of the Influence of Dadaism on Visual Communication Design

Mingcheng Wang

School of Wuhan Textile University, Wuhan, China

---

**Abstract:** In the development process of historical society, the relationship between art and design has been mutual influence and common development. Contemporary art, with its avant-garde artistic status, plays a very important role in the development of visual communication design, among which Dada, Cubism and surfaactionism provide nourishment and reference for visual communication design in form. On the whole, it plays an important role in promoting visual communication. This influence makes the visual communication design carry the charm of many contemporary arts, and also makes the visual communication design develop in a more diversified direction. This article mainly discusses the influence of design layout in Dada in contemporary art trend of thought on visual communication design.

**Keywords:** Dada; Visual Communication Design; Layout Design.

---

## 1. Visual Communication Design

### 1.1. Definition of Visual Communication Design

Visual communication design is the active act of communicating a specific thing through visual form. It relies mainly or partly on vision and is presented in the form of two-dimensional images, such as signage, typography, painting, graphic design, illustration, color, and electronic equipment. To put it simply, visual communication design is a design that is conveyed to the audience through media expression. It mainly conveys various information to people through vision. The designer is the sender of information, and the object of communication is the receiver of information. Visual communication includes two basic concepts: "visual symbol" and "conveying". The so-called "visual symbol", as the name suggests, refers to the human visual organs, that is, the symbols that can be seen by the eyes to express certain nature of things, such as photography, television, movies, buildings, plastic arts, all kinds of design products, urban architecture and all kinds of science, writing and so on. The so-called "transmission" refers to the process of the information sender using symbols to convey information to the recipient, which can be a communication in the body or between individuals, such as the information transmission between all living things, man and nature, man and the environment and the human body.

### 1.2. Elements of Visual Communication Design

The basic elements of visual communication design are: text and font, graphics, layout (also known as the shape and direction of space), color, point, line, surface, texture, etc. These basic elements of visual communication design constitute the design language of visual communication design through the combination of the designer's processing and some order. Layout is the place where designers begin to design and also the area for design. Traditional layout is limited to two-dimensional space (plane space with only length and width). But in visual communication design, typography should also include three-dimensional space (a solid space with length, width and depth), realistic space (a

real space filled with a solid design), and four-dimensional space (a space with length, width, depth and practical factors). No matter what kind of space, it is necessary to integrate all the elements of visual communication design in the layout, including the means from the traditional sense of beauty, fixed laws and scientific forms, of course, including the designer's intuition.

In addition to the basic elements, the layout should also take into account the size, size, form, color and structure. The beauty of the layout ultimately depends on the comprehensive consideration of aesthetics and technology, as well as the coordination and consistency between various elements.

### 1.3. Characteristics of Visual Communication Design

Visual communication design is a design that is represented and communicated to the audience through visual media. Visual communication integrates complex and difficult information, and packages it into beautiful images, which can make people better understand the things in the world. This reflects the characteristics of The Times and rich connotation of design. Its field is expanding with the progress of science and technology, the emergence of new energy and the development and application of product materials, and intersects with other fields, and gradually forms a new field of design associated with other visual media and mutual cooperation. Visual communication design is mainly based on the graphic design of printed materials as the media, also known as decoration design. From the perspective of development, visual communication design is a scientific and rigorous concept name, which contains the trend of future design. On the analysis of the current Design situation, the main content of visual communication design is still Graphic Design, and the general professionals are used to calling it "graphic design". Visual communication design is the art of modern business service, mainly including logo design, advertising design, packaging design, store interior and exterior environment design, corporate image design and so on. Because these designs are communicated to consumers through visual images, it is called "visual communication design". It plays the role of a bridge to communicate enterprises -- commodities -- consumers.

## **2. The Impact of Layout Design in Dadaism on Visual Communication Design**

### **2.1. Overview of Dada**

Dada is a literary and artistic movement that arose in 1916 in Zurich, Switzerland and spread to the fields of visual art, literature, drama and art design. The name dada comes from the fact that during the First World War, some literary youths living in exile in Zurich randomly named the word "Dada" in a Franco-German dictionary at an event. In French, the word "Dada" means wooden horse. It takes on the original pronunciation of the baby's name, denoting a purely physiological response to its surroundings as it learns to babble. The Dadaists claimed that the literary and artistic creation of the writer should, like that of the infant, eliminate the interference of thought and express only the impressions which can be felt by the senses. Although there are many theories as to the origin of the name, the name Dada mainly symbolizes a sense of cynicism. It also indicates the arbitrariness of the art movement, which was an anarchist movement.

With regard to Dadaism, its main characteristics are: the pursuit of sober irrationality, the rejection of conventional artistic standards, disillusionment, cynicism, the pursuit of the realm of unintentional, accidental and spontaneous. Seeking to discover true reality by abolishing traditional cultural and aesthetic forms, Dada was led by a group of young artists and anti-war activists who expressed their despair of bourgeois values and the First World War through anti-aesthetic works and protests.

### **2.2. Cultural Thought Characteristics of Dada**

As an anarchist cultural and artistic movement, Dada has been filled with the whole movement from beginning to end with the irrational state, the criticism of the original social order and concept, the interweaving of nothingness and contradiction, the resistance to tradition and the opposition to the mainstream culture. The birth of Dada originates from people's dissatisfaction with the world disorder caused by the First World War, which reflects the emptiness and insufficiency of young people's ideology and culture. The "Dada" believed that the First World War was caused by the dissatisfaction of the social middle class with the existing social economic and cultural development, and the war was caused by the rational capitalist social logic. At the same time, the social, economic and cultural development of various countries was extremely unbalanced, and the conflict between the old and the new colonialism and the rigid division of order further promoted the war to the inevitable development road. Dadaist movement has a strong anti-war sentiment. Dadaists believe in Bakunin philosophy and pursue absolute freedom. They believe that there are no rules to follow in the world, and the only ones that can be followed are chance and contingency.

### **2.3. Manifestation Characteristics of Dadaism**

The cultural and artistic expression of Dada is quite different from that of other movements. Dada is not an artistic style, not the interpretation and expression of beauty, but a cultural attitude, an attitude that overturns everything. Dada rejects traditional forms of artistic expression. Artists create works in random combinations, banter, absurdities and random combinations, and pursue artistic expression in the

form of visual communication, breaking through the bondage of original forms of artistic expression and showing strong resistance and impact. Chara, an advocate of Dada, defined Dada in his manifesto: "It is the unbearable cry of pain, the interweaving of various constraints, contradictions, absurdities and divergent logic. This is life." The expression of Dada is the concrete expression of nihilism in literature. At the same time, the temporary popularity of Dada reflects the depressed psychology and empty mental state of western youth during the First World War, which is the irrational emotional vent under the extreme destruction of the war.

## **3. Conclusion**

### **3.1. Overview of Layout Design**

Layout design is an important part of modern design art. It is not only an art design skill, but also a highly unified art and technology. It is one of the basic skills that all designers need to have.

As an art knowledge based on arrangement, graphic design combines and arranges the specific text, lines, legends, photos, color blocks and other contents in printed matter to highlight the design theme of artistic works. It is a visual communication method with personal artistic style, which creates orderly layout design effect, and is recognized as the public language of visual communication in the world. A variety of visual communication graphics, not only pay attention to the design technology of the work, but also pay attention to the emotional transmission between people, through improving the designer's design level, so that it can break through personal cognitive limitations, so that visual communication can be accepted by the audience.

If we want to explore the origin of modern layout design, then we can find a foothold in modern art. It can be said that it is the influence of Dada, constructivism, photographic synthesis technology and the use of collage on layout design that makes the visual communication function get attention and improve. From 1930s to 1940s, the style school and Bauhaus' exploration and practice of rational form made the layout design move towards science and rationalization, and further improved the function of layout. By the 1960s, the magazine layout design in the United States had a leap forward, and its influence spread to Europe and Japan, as well as Hong Kong and Taiwan. Today's visual communication design takes layout creation to a new level, creating a wonderful and indescribable underlying structural tension that attracts and influences people's attention.

Strictly speaking, layout design should be an architectural concept, but it is also a basic problem that graphic design, display design and so on must face and deal with. The recognized components of visual layout must be displayed with the help of layout to achieve the priority, primary and secondary relationship between them. Arrangement serves as this layout.

A successful poster, in addition to considering the beauty of the picture, the arrangement of the information content to be conveyed cannot be ignored. Because the pace of modern life is very fast, people's visual communication works are mostly passed in a blink. Therefore, how to convey the most important text information to the audience in this short visual stay, so that the audience can quickly grasp the main content of the information, so as to arouse the interest in reading, which has a great relationship with the arrangement or layout. We can say that the key to the design of the pursuit of visual

effect lies in the layout.

The use of Dadaist collage, and later the emergence and wide application of printing and phototypesetting machines, have a direct impact on layout design, making layout design a more creative field. Especially the text layout of arbitrary amplification or reduction, widening or lengthening, tilt and distortion, designers from the previous typesetting shackles liberated, the use of a variety of symmetrical, balanced, straight-line composition, free to play their imagination.

### 3.2. The Influence of Dadaism on Visual Communication Design

From the moment of its birth in Zurich, Dada has always carried a casual, cynical emotional color. Whether it was from the moment when a group of eager young artists stuck their knives into a German-French dictionary at the cafe Cabaye Voltaire and pointed to "DaDa", thus giving it its name for the meaning of a toy horse, or later when its bicycle wheels and urinals, which many critics criticized as objects scavenged from rubbish dumps, became controversial works, In fact, it has achieved its goal of making an impact on the world, subverting people's traditional ideas of how to understand art.

In the fierce competition between criticism and praise, Dadaism and even other schools of modern art, although fleeting, have left a profound impact on world art history. Visual communication design, as a subject that attaches great importance to visual attraction, certainly can draw lessons from Dada. For example, in the advertisement poster of Absolut Vodka, the well-known image of a boy urinating in Brussels is replaced by a vodka bottle. It is not difficult to see the shadow of Marcel Duchamp, the representative figure of Dada.

In 1913, Duchamp completed the first ready-made art "Bicycle Wheel", which is a bicycle nailed upside down on a wooden bench. This showed a disdain for the emphasis on structure in traditional works, and suggested that the most important factor in artistic creation was the idea rather than the craft.

In 1919, Duchamp added a beard and a goatee to Da Vinci's Mona Lisa in pencil and named it L.H.O.O.Q. In 1965, he bought another print of the Mona Lisa in New York. This time, instead of a mustache, he labeled it with a new title: "L.H.O.O.Q. 's moustache and goatee shaved." And so, another masterpiece, titled "Mona Lisa with a Shaved Beard," was born. This was Duchamp's "Mona Lisa Trilogy."

The most important contribution Duchamp made was "readymade" art, which directly contributed to the popularity of conceptual art in modern society. His behavior of taking "ready-made" or "adding ready-made crystals" as works of art is not only a subversion of the traditional concept of art, but also a challenge to the "principle of free will" and "the essence of art" with his witty irony. In fact, "artists use their own ideas and gestures as artistic expression, and this artistic attitude runs through the axis of the development of art in the whole 20th century." This ready-made concept has been widely accepted and applied in contemporary visual communication design works.

Although from a secular point of view, it is absurd to put ready-made industrial products or other objects in art exhibitions, in fact, it changes human's whole view of art and even the world, and people begin to question the necessity of traditional values and modes of artistic creation. At least in Western postmodern art, the influence of "ready-made" is everywhere, and it enlightens people from the following

aspects: (1) Form and beauty are not important. Since ancient times, the artist's vocation seems to be to create beauty. But Duchamp believed that beauty did not exist, that there was nothing special about art and the people who created it, and that everyone could be an artist. His artistic behavior is to tell people that there is no difference between ordinary objects and works of art, that art is beautiful, and ordinary objects are also beautiful. If ordinary objects are not beautiful, art is no better, and the so-called aesthetic value of art is just people's prejudice. For example, he sent "Spring" to the exhibition, which played a great role in breaking down this stereotype.

(2) The environment and time are more important than the work, and the deciding factors for turning the finished product into a work of art are the environment and time. It has nothing to do with the work itself. It shows, under certain conditions. Anything, even an act, can be art. But equally, when conditions change, anything and even an act can be anything but art. Because circumstances and time are always fluid and changing, the Renaissance classic Mona Lisa could be painted with a moustache and become a joke in the 20th century. (3) To guide art back to its spontaneous and natural state, to make people realize that there is no difference between artists and non-artists. The first artistic activities of man were spontaneous and natural, and required no special training. But then came the division of labor, and art became a specialized work, and therefore a specialized standard of art. "Ready-made art" completely ignores the existing artistic standards and even cultural standards. It mocks the conformism of human beings in the cultural field with a seemingly funny but actually quite profound thought, calling for a new era full of free and innovative spirit. Duchamp tells people here that the value of art lies in thought. With thought, any material product can become a work of art. This equating of art with ideas objectively eliminates the discipline of art in the traditional sense and implies a theoretical judgment that art and art history are coming to an end. "Duchamp alone created a movement, a truly modern one, in which everything is implied and every artist can draw inspiration from him," commented the American painter De Kooning. The "ready-made product" that seems to have been picked up at will, which easily reversed the direction of Western art development, is the image of a pioneer that Duchamp left to posterity. After Duchamp, it became the consensus of western art circles to oppose all established art modes and criteria and take the spirit of free innovation without hindrance as the goal of artistic creation.

John Saffie, Ph.D., said: "The essence of creation is to see one thing and associate it with another, to establish unexpected connections between things, and to create the possibility of breaking through the norm." In giving credit to Duchamp, we acknowledge the unique significance of using readily available objects and materials. The emergence of Dada, its achievement is not the work of art itself, but to bring many new ideas and new concepts. Some people think that Dada's style is boring and destructive, but no matter what, its re-questions and explores the definition of art, the concept of beauty and ugliness, and expands the ideological trend and expression method of art, which is beyond doubt. The significance of Dada is gradually revealed in the history of art development. Its artistic concept undoubtedly inspired the later postmodern trend of thought and deeply influenced contemporary design.

From the above discussion, we can see that the Western modern art movement in Europe has influenced the visual

communication design from many aspects such as materials, techniques and concepts, and has played an important role in promoting the development of modern graphic art. Although art and design belong to different fields, they both satisfy people's aesthetic pursuit of the spiritual world through visual charm and spiritual manifestation. As contemporary designers, we should be good at drawing lessons from other art fields and absorbing the essence, and strive to create more and better contemporary works.

## References

- [1] Yan Shuxian. On the extension of Dadaism in graphic design language[J]. Art Market,2022(10):92-93.
- [2] SHI Zheyu, WANG Ying. Discussion on the application of random concepts in modern art design [J]. Fine Arts Literature, 2021 (02): 118-119.
- [3] Hushaoya. Reflections on art and domestic art education by Dadaism[J]. Fine Arts Literature,2020(01):26-27.
- [4] Richard Hussenbeck, Tang Xiaolin. Avant-garde Dada: History of Dadaism[J].New Art,2019,40(10):7-25+4.
- [5] WU Wentao. Analysis of the inner spirit of Dadaism[J]. Popular Literature and Art,2016(18):83.