

Brief Analysis of the Cutting Characteristics of Paper Cutting

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Abstract: As a traditional folk art form, paper cutting utilizes scissors and carving knives, employing techniques such as cutting, carving, and tearing on materials like paper to create hollowed-out and interconnected artistic effects. This article analyzes the characteristics and effects generated by cutting and carving in paper cutting. Additionally, it explores the differences between scissors and carving knives in terms of tools and techniques, expressive effects, and regional variations. Furthermore, the emotional expressions of different paper cutting artists endow their works with unique artistic charm. By studying the techniques of scissors and carving knives, we gain a better understanding of the diversity and richness of paper cutting art. Its overall simplicity, brightness, rustic elegance, and strong contrasts endow it with high artistic value.

Keywords: Traditional Folk Art; Paper Cutting; Scissors; Carving Knives; Scissors and Carving Knives; Cutting and Carving Techniques.

1. Introduction

As a traditional Chinese folk art, paper cutting has a long history and rich cultural significance. It serves not only as a form of artistic expression but also as a medium for cultural transmission. Using tools such as scissors and carving knives, combined with techniques like cutting, carving, and tearing, artists create a variety of works that often reflect the lifestyle, beliefs, and emotions of the people.

Existing research mainly focuses on the historical development, regional styles, and social and cultural significance of paper cutting. For instance, Northern paper cutting predominantly uses scissors, emphasizing overall form and block effects, while Southern paper cutting, using carving knives, features intricate details and flowing lines. These differences in technique and tools not only influence the artistic style of the works but also reflect regional cultural distinctions.

This paper aims to analyze the characteristics and effects of scissors and carving knives in paper cutting, exploring their differences in tools, techniques, and regional variations. Additionally, it examines how different artists' emotional expressions lend unique artistic charm to their works. By studying these techniques, we hope to better understand the diversity and richness of paper cutting art and its value in contemporary artistic creation.

The structure of this paper is as follows: first, we introduce the basic techniques and materials used in paper cutting; next, we analyze the specific applications and artistic expressions of scissors and carving knives in paper cutting; then, we explore the stylistic and technical differences across regions; finally, through specific examples, we demonstrate how paper cutting artists express emotions and cultural meanings through their works.

2. Cutting Features Generated by Scissors and Knives

Paper cutting is an art that uses materials such as paper,

gold and silver foil, and tools such as scissors or carving knives to create various images by cutting, carving, and tearing to create virtuality and reality through hollowing out.

In the process of cutting, the scissors and knives will produce two kinds of performance effects: one is hollowing out (or showing that the lines are disconnected), and the other is connecting (or showing that the lines are connected). Among them, lines are the most basic "language elements". Their disconnection, thickness, complexity, etc. are very particular, and long-term practical experience is needed to manage each picture well. The lines of Yin shearing are disconnected and unconnected, giving people a blocky and rough beauty. Northern paper-cutting is generally cut with scissors, and the scissors wander on the paper, mostly using large surfaces and thick and strong Yin lines.

2.1. Features of Scissors

Scissor-cut paper usually emphasizes the expression of blocks and negative lines. The works are simple and concise, and focus on the overall sense. For example, Li Fen's work "Magpie on Plum" (Figure 1) only takes the general shape of the magpie, organizes the picture with negative lines, and does not pay attention to the details. It is often simple, with clear black and white cutting, orderly rise and fall, and a rough, vigorous, low and smooth style, which makes people feel thick, naive and simple.



Figure 1. Magpies on plum trees, Jiaozhou, Li Fen

Colored paper-cuts are also mostly done in Yin-cut, while each line of Yang-cut must be connected to each other, and the connection must be tight, the response must be coherent,

natural and appropriate, and have a certain degree of integrity. For example, Wang Laoshang's opera paper-cuts in Wei County, Hebei Province (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Opera Characters Wang Laoshang, Hebei

2.2. Characteristics of Knife Carvings

Knife-carved paper-cutting is mainly positive carving, with strong realism and sense of strength, delicate and smooth lines and beautiful shapes. Southern paper-cutting is mainly carved, also called paper-cutting, which is mostly positive carving paper-cutting, which is more realistic. It has a certain sense of strength. The technique is relatively skilled, the shape is beautiful, and the lines are relatively smooth, such as the opera paper-cutting "The Heroine Avenges Her Husband" by Ma Ruilan of Chaozhou, Guangdong (Figure 3).



Figure 3. The heroic woman avenges her husband, Chaozhou Ma Ruilan

3. The Difference between Scissors and Knife Carving

3.1. Tools and Techniques

Scissors are mainly used for cutting large blocks and expressing negative lines. The technique emphasizes the overall black and white contrast and the roughness of the blocks. The carving knife is mostly used for positive carving. The lines are delicate and smooth, emphasizing the details and the sense of strength of the lines.

3.2. Performance Effect

Paper-cut works made with scissors are rustic and concise, with a rough and simple beauty; paper-cut works made with knives are more realistic, with smooth lines and beautiful shapes.

3.3. Regional Differences

Northern paper-cutting is mostly created with scissors, and the works focus on the overall sense and block effect; Southern paper-cutting is mostly created with carving knives, and the works are delicate and focus on the expression of lines.

4. Emotional Expression

Since different paper-cutting artists have different styles and incorporate emotional factors, they reflect the artist's creative mood at the time.

For example, when expressing the emotions of "joy" and

"happiness", long straight lines, arcs and other lines are all cut in one go, and the lines are even, smooth and lively; the lines of "anger" are straight and straight, requiring speed, being stiff, not smooth, crisp and neat, and the shape is rough and simple; when cutting the emotion of "sadness", the cutting is not smooth, and the lines are relatively slender and weak; the lines of "fear" are generally discontinuous, asymmetrical, and irregular, and are mostly trembling, and rarely cut in one go, appearing abrupt and sluggish.

5. Craftsmanship

The paper-cutting process is divided into two techniques: cutting and carving, as follows:

Scissor technique: Use scissors to create, by cutting paper, to create hollow and negative line effects. Scissor technique is suitable for works with a strong sense of overall expression, emphasizing black and white contrast and block effect.

Engraving technique: Use a carving knife to create, by carving the paper, forming delicate lines and relief effects. The carving technique is suitable for works with rich details, emphasizing the smoothness and strength of the lines.

Of course, there are many other characteristics of paper cutting, but overall, its characteristics are overall simplicity, bright and simple, orderly pauses, strong contrast, and high artistic value. Through the study of scissors and carving knife techniques, we can better understand the diversity and richness of paper cutting art.

6. Conclusion

Through the analysis of the characteristics and effects of scissors and carving knives in paper cutting art, we have gained an understanding of the diversity and richness of this traditional craft. Scissors are primarily used to create large block areas with rough, simple, and rustic beauty, while carving knives are used for detailed and realistic cuts with fine and flowing lines, emphasizing detail and strength. The use of different tools and techniques not only influences the artistic style of paper cutting works but also reflects regional cultural differences. Moreover, the emotional expressions of different paper cutting artists impart unique artistic charm to their works.

Future research directions could include a deeper exploration of the characteristics of paper cutting art in different regions, as well as how modern technology can be integrated with traditional paper cutting techniques to create new art forms. Through these studies, we hope to better understand and preserve this valuable folk art, allowing it to thrive and find new vitality in contemporary society.

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