Employing Poetry Culture for Creative Design

With Six-standpoints

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Abstract

In recent years, countries from all over the world have been attempting to employ their “Culture” as features in increasing the value of “Creative Design” for developing an aesthetic economy. Chinese traditional poetry, full of expression created with poets’ fascinating words and still highly appreciated today, carries not only our predecessors’ wisdom but also principles which correspond to those for modern creative design. This study starts with the distinctive features of our classical poetry, lays its foundation on traditional theory of Chinese poetry, consults literature regarding the feasibility of employing poetry for cultural creative design, and furthers the trend for such application through investigating current case studies. Starting with analyzing relevant poetry-transfer theories, the operational process in transferring an abstract poetic concept into concrete poetic product design involves five implementation phases of conceptualizing the abstract, visualizing the concepts, concretizing the visuals, making the visuals 3-dimensional, and eventually utilizing the 3-D products so as to present a concrete step by step process for exploring how the internal meaning and external form in traditional poetry could be transferred and integrated into design. With further illustration of actual implemented cases, a model framework for employing poetry culture for creative design is thus completed.

Keywords

poetry; transform; culture creative; creative design

Introduction

With the global village approaching a new era of aesthetic economy powered by culture creative, every country is actively seeking inspirational resources for culturally creative design. (Lin, 2009, p.7) indicated that “culture” is a life style, “design” is a life taste, “creative” is a sympathy from a moving experience, while ‘industry’ is the medium, methods or means for realizing creative cultural design. Therefore, the key to achieving culture creativity in the design industry is the innovative performance delivered following the design concept of “initialized with culture, expressed in product and used in life”. The essence of culture creative design is extracting culture elements and converting culture symbols so as to endow new aesthetic significance into the design. Most existing Taiwanese culture creative design was inspired by visual culture resources such as natural scenery and life artifacts. Few designs originated from nonvisual culture resources. Therefore, this study takes inspiration from our traditional culture by applying ‘poetry’ culture and projecting its external forms and internal meanings into creative design. The purposes of this study are to integrate Western and Chinese theories of poetry, develop a model which manifests the process for extracting invisible cultural elements from poetry, convert them into design, and illustrate the actual implementation steps. Through
exploring how modern creative application of poetry culture could be achieved, this study would not only serve as an essential reference for multiplying the breadth and depth of culture creative design but also help with the conservation of our culture.

Huang (1976), the author of *Chinese Poetic: Design* and a series of related writings, adopted a modern aesthetics perspective to establish an objective aesthetic system for abstract poetry, and further integrated and applied numerous concepts to explain the cross-domain interoperability relationships between various fields of art, including art psychology and plastic arts. Thus, Huang’s concept was a key inspiration for the poetry culture and design practice research conducted in this study. Based on poetry culture, this study endeavors to explain the methods in which key implications can be extracted and interpreted using extensive knowledge of poetry backgrounds and themes, and to analyze the subsequent content. In addition, through the process of converting mental aesthetics into visual aesthetics, this study specifically developed a model design using poetry transformation to promote the design industry and enhance style diversity and cultural content.

**The Distinctive Features of Chinese Poetry Culture**

Hegel (1975, p. 626) claimed, “Poetry is the highest expression in art”. Li (1996, pp. 21-23) believed that the definition of culture is: “The results of the mutual activities created by man, this includes tools, social law regulations, art creations and the mental activities of the creating process”. Inheriting five thousand years of Chinese history, the culture of “Poetry” is doubtless the most significant part of our cultural heritage. The American philosopher Langer’s (1953, p. 40) concept, “Art is the creation of forms symbolic of human feeling”, has created a profound impact on modern aesthetic theory. “Poetry” culture itself is the artistic performance of how poets express their feelings through concrete language symbols. The German philosopher Worringer (1953, p. 16) indicated in the book *Abstraction and Empathy* that humans can acquire happiness from art, mainly because man can seize the constant changing possibilities from individual events of the outer world and then transform them into eternity with abstract forms. “Poetry”, just as Chu (1988, p. 94) claimed, originates from bitterness caused by one’s dissatisfaction of the “limitations” in life and is produced with imagination as a pursuit for “infinity”. He also stated, “Poems possess interior and exterior meanings. You will find reasoning from the interior meaning and discover phenomenon from the exterior meanings; only by including both aspects may you compose a poem.” That is, the goal is to pursue boundless imagination with limited vocabulary and construct a poetic imagery which corresponds to logic thinking.

Tu (2010, p. 28) suggests that poetry is a world of beauty in imagination by which a poet uses words to create based on language and experience. In recent days, poetry is considered an expression of spiritual vigor. The process of reading a poem is not only to be intoxicated regarding the content and the spiritual vigor of the poet, but to speculate, explore and appreciate the content and the spiritual vigor of the poet. Poetry must be an art of creation. Creation in metaphysics is a process where something spiritual is created out of nothing, while for physical techniques it means an innovative combination of material or concepts for creating new relationships, new feelings, new understanding and new realms. It could also be an original technique for expression which results in new forms, new semantics, etc.

In recent years, the creative industry has been actively seeking to restart interdisciplinary integration and development from various industries and levels and has thus created designs with a fresh new look. The new interpretation of traditional culture, classical literature and art are the exact sources of inspiration for the culture creative industry. The following are examples of current poetry employments in different fields. (Tsai, 2010, pp. 70-72) has presented some case studies in transforming classical literature. For instance,
Yu, Kuang-Chung’s poem *Kua Fu* adopted and modified the traditional mythology “Kua Fu, in Pursuits of the Sun” to create an innovative imagery with new ideas. Also, Chang, Man-Chuan’s modern “The River Merchant’s Wife” converts the well-known poem initially written by Lee, Po into a new imagery.

There are also application cases for art performances. The internationally renowned Cloud Gate Dance Theatre extracted culture creative elements from the classical literature *Chu Ci*, *The Dream of the Red Mansion*, and Chinese calligraphy. The first example is the play “Moon Water” which originates from the quote, “Flower reflection in the mirror and moon reflection in the water are nothing but illusions” With illusionary scenes such as the water-flowing stage together with the dancer’s reflection in the vertical mirror and in the water, poetic imagery is created for expressing how all beautiful things result in “emptiness”. A second example derives from Tsao, Hsueh-Chin’s *The Dream of the Red Mansion*. The performance began with the stone, originally located under the Qing Geng Peak in the heavenly world, coming down to earth and ended with the main character, Pao-Yu, becoming a monk and severing all links to the human world. The plot conveys the impermanence of life with the quote; “When we see fake as real, real becomes fake; when we take nihility as existence, the actual existence becomes nihility”.

Poetry could also be employed for product design. The work “Shui Tiao Ke Tou” produced by the company Titton extracted the essence from the well-known poem of the Sung dynasty poet, Su, Shih; “Just as the moon waxes and wanes, so do people experience sorrow and joy.” The round form of the product symbolizes the moon, while the crack on the right angle signifies the constant changes in life. Regardless of the changes, however, the relationship between two people will remain solid as the two mutually supporting poles signify. The above cases illustrate how poetry could be employed in related fields. The unique imagery creation and high popularity of these cases definitely suggests that the employment of poetry for the field of culture creative design is certainly worth exploration.

### The Theoretical Foundation for the Creative Conversion of Poetry

Yu (2006, pp. 247-250) once said, “Creativity is a traceable psychological process. With a series of effective training, many people may experience the status of endless energy of creation.” Converting classical poetry provides a platform for creative ideas not only to bloom but also to be able to be put into practice. Therefore, this study has integrated Traditional Chinese Painting Aesthetic, Poetics, and *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* as the theoretical foundation for the creative conversion of classical poetry.

**Following Traditional Chinese Painting Aesthetics**

Chinese poetry has always been the medium to convey the emotions of poets. Therefore it could also serve as the medium for designers’ creative expressions. Research (Yeh, Lin, & Hsu, 2011, pp. 93-94), *Applying Chinese Poetry’s Form and Spirit in Culture Creativity*, has indicated that “The conversion process of transforming poetry into design is similar to that of painting. Take Cheng, Pan Chiao’s (1693-1765) experience in painting bamboo for example. The painting process went from ‘Generating Concept’ to ‘Employing Brush Strokes’; the similarity between converting emotions into painting and converting poetic emotions into product design can correspond.” Also presents, in Figure 1, is “the conversion process of transforming paintings and poetry into design and culture creative experience”, from a further theoretical combination of Painting Aesthetics, Concept of Form and Spirit, and Chinese-Western Comparative Aesthetics. The first phase of this process shows the procedure of Chinese painting. The second phase is the corresponding procedure of converting poetry into design, illustrating how a designer can read a poem (the poetic meaning), stimulating the creative thinking in one’s mind (state of
mind), then converting the poet’s emotions into the process of design (scenario). The last phase is the culture creative design hands-on experience. From the left, it introduces how consumers see the product with their “eyes”, indulging themselves in the beautiful scenario of the poetic culture, leading to reflections drawn by the sentimental feelings, and eventually using it in reality. The ultimate goal for converting poetry into design is thus reached (Yeh, Lin, & Wang, 2013, pp. 269-278).

Figure 1. The process of Chinese painting and design transforming.

**The Employment of “Six -standpoints” for creative design**

The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons (You, 2010, p. 51) as the integration of the domains of metaphysics and physical phenomena, such as cosmic ontology, cosmos attributes and the formation of the boundless universe, activity phenomenon, function utility, which are all-encompassed by this book. Rated as the macroscopic view of the philosophers, this master piece corresponds to the connections between literature and cosmic ontology, universal world, political society and meanings of life. To establish an objective text evaluation method, The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons – Proper Evaluation raised the concept of “Six-standpoints”: “To understand the sentiments of text, you must observe the six aspects: first view position, second view writing, third view variation, fourth view means, fifth view allusion, sixth view syllable. If evaluations proceed this way, good work may reveal itself”. In general, “Position” is to see the appropriate arrangements between sentimental sense and literary form; “Writing” is the measurement of whether the literary form suits the proper aesthetic norm; “Variation” is to observe the success of the text's inherited convention and innovation; “Means” is the adequate strategy of different writing appearances; “Allusion” is to succeed the correct use of allusion meanings; “Syllable” is to manage the most appropriate syllable for the text. Through the methodology of “Six Viewpoints”, we may explore the six aspects to objectively evaluate the written work. Hence, this research employs this method to measure the most suitable Chinese poetry and devise selecting criteria for product design (Yeh, 2014, pp. 30-31).

Furthermore, to make a guideline for employing the “six-standpoints” principle into design more comprehensive, this research also takes Amabile (1996, pp. 46-47) consensus
assessment technique, CAT) as another reference so as to present all of the design attributes derived from the ‘Six-standpoints” principle with three descriptive indicators, as the eighteen indicators shown in Figure 2. For “position”, there are form, state analysis and time-space structure. For “writing”, symbolic expression, phrasal interrelationship and semantic attributes are considered. Design principles, representation, and neatness are indicators for “variation”. For “means”, emotional expression, aesthetic performance and creative expression are included. “Allusion”, the fifth viewpoint, includes color employment, material application and texture application. Finally, dynamic performance, situation and rhythmical variety are considered for “syllable”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Six-viewpoints” principle guideline</th>
<th>Transform “Six -Viewpoints” into design</th>
<th>Design descriptive indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Genre</strong></td>
<td>The shape &amp; structure of design</td>
<td>Shape Pattern Space-time structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Variation</strong></td>
<td>The principles of design</td>
<td>Design Principles Reproduction degree Concision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Innovation</strong></td>
<td>The emotional &amp; innovation of design</td>
<td>Emotional expression Performance of beauty Creativity and innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Excretion</strong></td>
<td>The material &amp; color of design</td>
<td>Color Application Material Application Texture Application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rhythm</strong></td>
<td>The situations &amp; atmosphere of design</td>
<td>Dynamic performance Situational atmosphere Phonological changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phrasing</strong></td>
<td>The theme &amp; attributes of design</td>
<td>Symbol of expression Statements Relationship Semantic character</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. The employment of the “Six -standpoints” for design.

**Cases of Design Applications Employing the Poetic “Six-standpoints” Principle**

The operational structure of the process for transferring an abstract poetic concept into concrete poetic product design is illustrated in Figure 3. The procedure starts, with analyzing relevant poetry-transfer theories such as the traditional Chinese Painting Aesthetics for concept formation, *The Literary Minds and the Carving of Dragons* from which the “six-standpoints” transfer principle is derived, and the Ambile theory for establishing the “six-standpoints” indicators. Then, for concrete implementation phases, there are conceptualizing the abstract, visualizing the concepts, concretizing the visuals, making the visuals 3-dimensional, and eventually utilizing the 3-D products, as shown in Figure 3. In the first phase, through the selection of themes and analysis of the poetic meaning, the abstract poetic meaning is comprehended and explained so as to produce more diverse and explicit concepts. The second phase involves employing the “six-standpoints” indicators and design principles to visualize the concepts obtained in phase one. Next, after being transferred into design elements and categorized and integrated,
the visualized concepts are transferred into concrete design visual elements. The fourth phase is to consider the factors of appearance and function for turning the concrete elements into a 3-dimensional design. The final phase is to make the 3-D product a life necessity to be used in all aspects of life such as food, clothing, housing, transportation, recreation or education.

The case for illustration is the poem “Chin-Yu-En” written by Southern Song dynasty poet Hsin, Chi-gee (AC1140-1207). The part of the poem reads, “Searching and searching for her thousands of times, a sudden looking-back and she is right there in the dim light.” In the crowded noisy street the lonely author strolls everywhere, searching for his true love. Thousands of times he searches, among the crowd he looks. Desperate and heart-broken, he incidentally looks back, and, there she is! The lady stands right there in the dim light of the few lamps that are still on in late night. The ecstasy of the reunion is beyond words after such a long search effort. Wang Kuo-Wei (1910/2003) in his famous literary criticism "Ren Jien Ci Hua"(On Human Words ) claims that those who obtain great achievements in academics or other fields have to go through three states. The stage of “Searching and searching for her thousands of times, a sudden looking-back and she is right there in the dim light” in Hsin’s poem manifests the third state, the most vivid depiction of the mood when all tasks achieved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptualizing abstract</th>
<th>Visualizing concepts</th>
<th>Conceptualized 2-dimensional</th>
<th>Concretized 3-dimensional</th>
<th>Utilizing 3-D products</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Select themes</td>
<td>Analyze meaning &amp; Produce concepts</td>
<td>Six viewpoints principle guidelines</td>
<td>Employ design descriptive indicators</td>
<td>Transform into design elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the crowd</td>
<td>Repeated times</td>
<td>Genre</td>
<td>Shadow &amp; figures</td>
<td>Male-female figures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>looking back</td>
<td>Turning back memories</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>Emotional expression</td>
<td>Faintly expressed emotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamps</td>
<td>Lights</td>
<td>Exertion</td>
<td>Color Application</td>
<td>Colored lighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudden</td>
<td>Immediately</td>
<td>Rhythm</td>
<td>Dynamic performance</td>
<td>Momentarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That person</td>
<td>The one to love</td>
<td>Phrasing</td>
<td>Symbol of expression</td>
<td>Momentarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamps</td>
<td>Lights</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shadow figures</td>
<td>Male-female figures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Cases of design applications employing the poetic “Six-standpoints” principle.

“In the crowd, thousands of times” could imply “repeated several times”; after being referred to the “six-standpoints” indicators, then design elements transferred and integrated, the focus of the attributes suggests a texture with “multiple layers”. “He, the person” implies ‘the one to love’; referred to the “six-standpoints” indicators and having design elements transferred and integrated, the focus of the attributes could suggest “male-female figures”. “Is right there” could mean “it happens, an encounter”; and referring
to the “six-standpoints” indicators, then transferring and integrating design elements, focused attributes leads to a space-time condition of “simultaneous existence”. “Looking back” could be interpreted as turning back, memories/miss; and the three steps of indicator—referencing, design-element integration and attribute—focusing would bring in the hazy image of “faintly expressed emotion”. “Lamps” here could mean “lights”, and the indicator reference, design-element transfer, as well as the attribute focusing would bring in the texture of “colored lighting”.

“In the dim light of the few lamps” signifies “few, barely detectable” and with the indicator reference, design element transfer, as well as focused attributes, it would suggest “translucent, masked” material. “Sudden” signifies “immediately, momentarily” and so with the indicator reference, design element transfer, as well as focused attributes, it would bring in the motion state of “swiftly shift and then reappear”. Finally, the key words “that person, sudden, lamps” which weave the whole poem up could now be transferred into multi-layered motion visual effects in which red male and green female figures flashing alternatively in red and green lights shifted at odd and even seconds to illustrate the essential significance of the poem. The 40 cm (height) × 30 cm (diameter) table lamp was customized with figures of a man and woman imprinted on the multilayered glass. The image of oneself with their loved ones appears repeatedly as the red and green LED lights flash alternatively. The speed at which the image appears can be adjusted according to one’s moods, thereby enabling a poetic expression of emotions.

**Conclusion**

Poets and artists both possess the abilities of “thoughtfulness” and “observation”. As a result, readers will enter the poet’s heart and enjoy in person his life and affection while reading a poem. Since art is about creation, creative imagination is required; creation does not reveal itself out of thin air however. It is an innovative recombination of existing imageries(Chu, 2003, pp. 56-57). The inspiration for art creation is identical to that for design; it is never creating something out of nothing. Thus, to represent poetic imagery through design, a designer must first convert the original emotional experience of the poet, interpret the content of the poem, then transform the interpretation into design elements with the “six-standpoints” principle, and turn the elements into a 3-dimensional design so the design could be used in all aspects of life.

The five implementation phases of conceptualizing the abstract, visualizing the concepts, concretizing the visuals, making the visuals 3-dimensional, and eventually utilizing the 3-D products completes a concrete step by step process for exploring how the internal meaning and external form in traditional poetry could be transferred and integrated into modern design. There is no doubt that the process of a poet’s converting his feelings into a poem is artistic creation. Creative design with poetry is just as well a re-creation of creation. Applying poetry for creative design also requires inventiveness, poetic sensitivity, and superior techniques from a designer, as poetry does from poets. Creative ability and sensitivity enable a designer to fully appreciate the “poetic meaning” of the original poem, while superior techniques make the recreation of “poetic imagery” possible for providing consumers with opportunities for experiencing the expressions of “poetry” through design products and verifying the emotional experience of “poetry” from the new generation. Along the long lasting history, we sincerely hope that classical Chinese poetry will rise and shine with a new glamour with the dialogue between the present and the past.
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