

Brief thinking about the “Aesthetics” for the character poster design of “The Wasted Times”

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Abstract: On August 18th 2016, the producers of movie “The Wasted Times” released 26 pieces of role posters to expose the modeling of the starring. No mention about the storyline, the poster design could be concluded by only one word “Aesthetics”. Poster is print ad which belongs to the practical art. As a paid communication form of the public, poster needs to use the art image as the carrier to get the utility. Therefore, the design of film poster is not only a material and economic activity, but also needs profound cultural heritage and artistic intentions. It should have both of the external beauty and inner beauty to convey the real aesthetic value.

The purpose of the film poster design is of course, to promote movie selling, which belongs to the traditional marketing. At present, the promotion methods of film are usually combined with the Internet, which has more and more different network marketing methods. As one of the traditional marketing methods, Poster marketing has been squeezed to the position of auxiliary marketing. On August 18th, 2016, the producers of “The Wasted Times” held “Shanghai Sea” conference at Shanghai, and uncovered the 26 pieces of role poster. Why the producer could be so confident for the poster marketing when the poster marketing was suppressed by plenty of network marketing? Let's see the “aesthetics” of these posters (Figure 1).



Figure 1

1. “Aesthetics” of the Poster Composition

The poster composition design of the 26 pieces of posters for the “The Wasted Times” adopted the Corner composition.

1.1 History of the Corner composition

Corner composition occupies a very important status on the Chinese painting development process. The earliest is created by the Li Tang, one of the “Southern Song Dynasty Four Authorities”. Due to ideological and emotional changes of his living environment, his style changed from the deep and precise framework of Northern Song Dynasty style to the open and brief style. His landscape composition broke the spatial pattern of the panorama composition, used the close-range corner to open the new style of the Southern Song Dynasty landscape painting.

Being affected by Li Tang, Ma Yuan made the “Bianjiao landscape” composition to the extreme. The landscape painting of Ma often intercepted the corner of the mountain. Being right or left along the diagonal of the painting, other space of painting remaining the blank, the painting was extremely concise. Another representative painter is Xia Gui. Xia liked to use bald writing brush

which was full of change. They has since been called “Corner Ma, Half-side Xia” in the Chinese painting history.

1.2 The realm of “A corner, half side”

"Bianjiao landscape" composition created "a corner, half side" type of aesthetic realm for the Chinese painting. The larger area of blank on composition forms the hint space, which is easy to make people generate the associative image. The poetic pursuit of the picture is more intense. Zen thought was popular in Southern Song Dynasty, whose main idea was “To see a world in a Bodhi”. Its performance on the understanding of painting is that all things at the original life are composed by the details. The detail portray to the “Bianjiao landscape” has a distinctive flavor. Since then, the Chinese landscape painting has changed from the fine complex ink panorama composition of the mountain and torrent to the simple and brief corner form. From the aesthetic perspective, the blank has a certain aesthetic value. This aesthetic mood has been further developed, and become the pursuit of the future landscape painting.

1.3 The modern use of the “Bianjiao landscape” composition

The design of modern advertising work also pays attention to composition. The traditional corner composition used in the design of the print ads is mainly reflected on the simplest of the composition. The poster design of “The Wasted Times” is concise in some degree. The 26 pieces of poster can be divided into two groups, half side type and corner type.



Figure 2



Figure 3

The half side composition poster resembles the composition of “Water Map” of Ma Yuan (Figure 2). Ma Yuan's "water map" includes a series of paintings, all of them are transversal with the main image of calm or Pentium "water" that are arranged in the middle and lower part of the painting screen. The posters of “The Wasted Times” are longitudinal pictures with the main image of person and surging waves. The designer uses the light to change the relationship between the foreground and background to one cleverly. The face of the characters turns toward the blank side, giving the breathable space to the screen which is speculative and thoughtful combined with the characters countenance and eyes direction.

Another group of posters used corner composition, which fully demonstrated the essence of the Ma, and used the “cold river alone fishing figure” cleverly (Figure 3). The poster used Pentium waves as the background which was consistent with the film era. The person and props as the prospect were respectively placed on the left, middle and right of the bottom of the picture. And the proportion of the picture also applied contrast, such as the leaf boat and the roaring waves in the vast ocean, the insignificance by contrast makes people feel the fragileness and vulnerableness of life.

In summary, the design composition beauty of the "The Wasted Times" poster series was embodied in the perfect combination of the modern advertising design and traditional painting composition, which creates the movie poster that shows rich traditional culture and conforms to the modern aesthetic taste simultaneously.

2. “Aesthetics” of Color

The second “Aesthetics” of the “The Wasted Times” poster design is the “Aesthetics” of color. It can be seen from the Figure 1 that the color design of poster is not complex. However, the seemingly simple design contained deep meaning.

2.1 Chinese Red

The dress and props in the poster is deliberately designed for poster shooting. The red cheongsam, red staircase, even the sea wave will appear in red on each poster. As Chinese favorite color, red is synonymous with auspiciousness. It is the symbol the summer in four seasons, the direction of the south, and the Mars in the five elements. Currently, the color red symbolizes the revolution. It is the sun, the fire, and the source of life, bringing warmth and hope to human. The movie “The Wasted Times” tells a story happened in the 1930's Shanghai. A large number of progressive people and aspiring youth fought with Japanese invaders and traitors until the end of the old society. The indispensable “red” in the poster shows the vision of love, the hope for life, and the fire of the revolution.

2.2 Cyanine sea

“Xuncius, Exhortation to learning” interpreted that “the dye extracted from the indigo is bluer than the plant.” Green, as a pure color, symbolizes the spring of the four seasons, the direction of the east, and the symbol of the dragon. Blue is a symbol of the power from heaven and immortality. In the modern design color theory represented by Eaton and Kandinsky, blue represents wisdom, fraternity, and serene. The main background color of poster is sea blue. It is sea water blue increased by grayscale. Compared to the higher brightness of the sea water blue, it is more suitable to reflect the background of the film. Through different angles of light, the rolling waves on the poster preform the different levels of the cyanine sea contrasted with red color. The contrast between the warm and cool color does not induce violation. It instead, makes people feel that no matter what kind of storm, we should be rational and calm to judge and think.

2.3 Black and White.

White and black are achromatic colors. White symbolizes the autumn of the four season, direction of west, and noble character. Black symbolizes the winter of the four season, the direction of north. In “The Wasted Times” poster, the cloth color of Zhang Ziyi is white, and the hat color of Ge You and Du Chun is black. Black and white in the poster played an vital role in reconciliation, enhancing the virtual-real comparison and weakening the color contrast at the same time, which creates more harmonious and unified visual experience.

3. “Aesthetics” of Conception

Conception is a traditional Chinese painting terminology, referring to the theme ideas from the observation of painter on the objective things. It can decide whether the work is a masterpiece. The “Aesthetics” of the “The Wasted Times” poster conception can be analyzed from three aspects.

3.1 Vivid Conception

Whether traditional painting or modern design, it must have ideas before creation. Being different from the ideation, conception is the result of the ideation, which conducts the conception during the ideation process to express the author’s ideas more clearly, and gives the work a distinctive “theme”. The “The Wasted Times” poster has vivid conception themed as “surging waves” to illustrate the horrible background. The background image of poster is roaring waves pounding the Shanghai on the 30s of last century. And “Surging Waves” means the ups and downs of life at that turbulent period.

3.2 Magnificent

“Pneuma” is one of the traditional Chinese artistic spirits. Material Pneuma has been spiritual

and life generalization, it is the essence of China's "Pneuma theory". Xie He (the Southern Qi Dynasty) advocated six painting methods in the "Six principles of Chinese painting" using the "rhythmic vitality" as the first general principle of the Chinese painting creation. As the power of the life, pneuma is the flowing "momentum". In traditional painting, "momentum" could reflect the nature of the majestic gas and the noble personality. All things have ecology, which direction it flows, that is the right direction. The poster of "The Wasted Times" is an excellent example of the "sprit" of the traditional painting. Although water does not have the invariant shape, it can flow with strong sense of direction, demonstrating perseverance, broad mind and overwhelming momentum. The souring waves used in the posters as the background with the composition of the indomitable spirit, will provide a horrible tide screen to the viewers to conceive the magnificent momentum for the poster.

3.3 Meaning "hide" deeply

Plenty of details in the posters of "The Wasted Times" would easily be overlooked, but in fact it means a lot. These details is the props which occupied very small proportion in the posters, such as the bathtubs, mahogany tables and so on. The 26 pieces of posters with the props hidden the relationship between roles status and role relationship, leaving conjecture and suspense about the story plot to the audience. In poster, Yuan Quan and Lu Xing stay in the bathtub which looks like a boat on the sea, indicating these two person may be alive at last. Whether Yan Ni wants to seize the hat or throw it? This kind of implicit design captures the very essence of traditional Chinese implicit beauty. In Chinese aesthetics, the art works often pursue "implication". The props in this group of posters is the "meaningful form", the symbol of the meaning "hide" to push fans to come into the cinema.

4. Conclusion

The profound spirit of traditional Chinese aesthetics has high guiding significance and value for the modern art design. The author thought that it is under the guidance of traditional Chinese aesthetic spirit that role poster of "The Wasted Times" fully demonstrate design beauty. Therefore, the modern advertising design should perform its utility purpose and pay more attention to the poetics, realm and taste at the same time, leaving a broader and deeper space for audience to think and carrying forward the spirit of traditional aesthetic thought.

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